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FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—FOURTH PERIOD

Governor-General
His Excellency General the Hon. Sir Peter Cosgrove AK, MC (Retd)

House of Representatives Office holders
Speaker—Hon. Bronwyn Kathleen Bishop MP
Deputy Speaker—Hon. Bruce Craig Scott MP
Second Deputy Speaker—Mr Robert George Mitchell
Members of the Speaker’s Panel—Mrs Karen Lesley Andrews MP,
Mr Russell Evan Broadbent MP, Mr Alexander George Hawke MP,
Mr Ian Reginald Goodenough MP, Mrs Natasha Louise Griggs MP,
Mr Ewen Thomas Jones MP, Mr Craig Kelly MP, Hon. Charles Christian Porter MP,
Mr Donald James Randall MP, Mr Ross Xavier Vasta MP, Mr Brett David Whiteley MP

Leader of the House—Hon. Christopher Pyne MP
Deputy Leader of the House—Hon. Luke Hartsuyker MP
Manager of Opposition Business—Hon. Anthony Stephen Burke MP
Deputy Manager of Opposition Business—Hon. Mark Dreyfus QC MP

Party Leaders and Whips
Liberal Party of Australia
Leader—Hon. Anthony John Abbott MP
Deputy Leader—Hon. Julie Isabel Bishop MP
Chief Government Whip—Hon. Philip Maxwell Ruddock MP
Government Whips—Mr Scott Buchholz MP and Ms Nola Bethwyn Marino MP

The Nationals
Leader—Hon. Warren Errol Truss MP
Deputy Leader—Hon. Barnaby Thomas Gerard Joyce MP
Chief Whip—Mr Mark Maclean Coulton MP
Deputy Whip—Mr George Robert Christensen MP

Australian Labor Party
Leader—Hon. William Richard Shorten MP
Deputy Leader—Hon. Tanya Joan Plibersek MP
Chief Opposition Whip—Mr Christopher Patrick Hayes MP
Opposition Whips—Ms Jill Griffiths Hall MP and Ms Joanne Catherine Ryan MP

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<tr>
<td>van Manen, Mr Albertus Johannes</td>
<td>Forde, QLD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Varvaris, Mr Nickolas</td>
<td>Barton, NSW</td>
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<td>Vasta, Mr Ross Xavier</td>
<td>Bonner, QLD</td>
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<td>Watts, Mr Timothy Graham</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whiteley, Mr Brett David</td>
<td>Braddon, TAS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wicks, Mrs Lucy Elizabeth</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Wilkie, Mr Andrew Damien</td>
<td>Denison, TAS</td>
<td>IND.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Williams, Mr Matthew</td>
<td>Hindmarsh, SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wilson, Mr Richard James</td>
<td>O'Connor, WA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wood, Mr Jason Peter</td>
<td>La Trobe, VIC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wyatt, Mr Kenneth George AM</td>
<td>Hasluck, WA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zappia, Mr Antonio</td>
<td>Makin, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PARTY ABBREVIATIONS**

ALP—Australian Labor Party; LP—Liberal Party of Australia; NATS—The Nationals;
IND—Independent; NATSWA—The Nationals WA; CLP—Country Liberal Party;
AUS—Katters Australia Party; AG—Australian Greens; PUP—Palmer United Party

**Heads of Parliamentary Departments**

Clerk of the Senate—R Laing  
Clerk of the House of Representatives—D Elder  
Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—C Mills  
Parliamentary Budget Officer—P Bowen
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<td>The Hon. Tony Abbott MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Indigenous Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Nigel Scullion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon. Josh Frydenberg MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon. Alan Tudge MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development (Deputy Prime Minister)</td>
<td>The Hon. Warren Truss MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development</td>
<td>The Hon. Jamie Briggs MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>The Hon. Julie Bishop MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Trade and Investment</td>
<td>The Hon. Andrew Robb AO MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Brett Mason</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Employment (Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Employment (Deputy Leader of the House)</td>
<td>The Hon. Luke Hartsuyker MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attorney-General</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. George Brandis QC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for the Arts (Vice-President of the Executive Council)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. George Brandis QC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
<td>Senator for Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon. Michael Keenan MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Small Business</td>
<td>The Hon. Joe Hockey MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acting Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon. Bruce Billson MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Mathias Cormann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Agriculture</td>
<td>The Hon. Barnaby Joyce MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Richard Colbeck</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Education (Leader of the House)</td>
<td>The Hon. Christopher Pyne MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Education</td>
<td>The Hon. Sussan Ley MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Industry</td>
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<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry</td>
<td>The Hon. Bob Baldwin MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Social Services</td>
<td>The Hon. Kevin Andrews MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Social Services (Manager of Government Business in the Senate)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Mitch Fifield</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon. Concetta Fierravanti-Wells</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Health</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Defence</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. David Johnston</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Veterans' Affairs</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon. Stuart Robert MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance</td>
<td>The Hon. Michael McCormack MP</td>
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Each box represents a portfolio. **Cabinet Ministers are shown in bold type.** As a general rule, there is one department in each portfolio. However, there is a Department of Human Services in the Social Services portfolio and a Department of Veterans' Affairs in the Defence portfolio. The title of a department does not necessarily reflect the title of a minister in all cases.
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<td>Hon Bill Shorten MP</td>
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<td>Senator the Hon Kim Carr</td>
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<td>Hon Bernie Ripoll MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business</td>
<td>Julie Owens MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Cabinet Secretary</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jacinta Collins</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Hon Michael Danby MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Dr Jim Chalmers MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deputy Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Hon Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Development</td>
<td>Senator Claire Moore</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Hon David Feeney MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Cities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Tourism</td>
<td>Hon Julie Collins MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development and Infrastructure</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Hon Warren Snowdon MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for External Territories</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Treasurer</td>
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Thursday, 27 November 2014

The SPEAKER (Hon. Bronwyn Bishop) took the chair at 09:00, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

BILLs

Migration Amendment (Character and General Visa Cancellation) Bill 2014
Returned from Senate
Message received from the Senate returning the bill without amendment or request.

Fair Work Amendment (Bargaining Processes) Bill 2014
First Reading
Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Pyne.
Bill read a first time.

Second Reading
Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (09:01): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Introduction

The coalition's policy to improve the fair work laws was released in May 2013, some four months before the 2013 federal election. As was stated in the policy, achieving higher living standards, better pay and more jobs all depend on having fair, productive and effective workplaces. The reforms we have committed to will ensure that the Fair Work laws provide a strong and enforceable safety net for workers while helping business to grow, create new jobs and deliver higher real wage growth.

There has already been significant progress towards implementing the government's reforms, with the introduction into parliament of the Fair Work Amendment Bill 2014, the Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Amendment Bill 2014 and the Building and Construction Industry (Improving Productivity) Bill 2013.

Today I introduce the Fair Work Amendment (Bargaining Processes) Bill 2014, which further implements reforms included in our workplace relations policy. This bill gives effect to our election commitment to ensure that negotiations for enterprise agreements are harmonious and productive.

Enterprise bargaining is an important feature of the Fair Work laws, however the current framework has led to some outcomes that fail the common sense test.

Currently the Fair Work Act allows industrial action to be taken at an early stage in negotiations, before meaningful discussions have taken place. The current provisions allow for industrial action to be taken as a step of 'first resort'. The current act does nothing to encourage parties to even consider issues of workplace productivity during bargaining, despite productivity being front and centre in the objects of the Fair Work Act. The amendments to the Fair Work Act the government is pursuing will address these issues.
Protected industrial action

When Labor introduced the Fair Work Act, it enabled unions to take protected industrial action before bargaining had even commenced despite promising not to do so in 2007. The act also allows industrial action to be taken at a very early stage in negotiations, before proper, meaningful discussions have occurred or bargaining has been given a chance to get underway. When the 'strike first, talk later' problem was exposed in the JJ Richards case, Labor chose to do nothing about it, even though it was directly contrary to its policy commitments made before the 2007 election in relation to industrial action. Labor's own Fair Work Act Review Panel recommended that the problem be rectified, but Labor still did nothing.

The coalition government has already moved to address this problem with the Fair Work Amendment Bill 2014, which will ensure protected industrial action cannot be taken until bargaining has commenced. The bill I introduce today will complement this reform, ensuring that before someone seeks to take industrial action they have at least attempted to have genuine and meaningful discussions with the employer.

In order to take protected industrial action, an employee bargaining representative must first apply for a protected action ballot order to allow a secret ballot of employees to be conducted so the employees can decide whether they wish to take industrial action. When making a protected action ballot order, the Fair Work Commission must be satisfied that the applicant has been, and is, genuinely trying to reach an agreement. Until now, the Fair Work Act did not provide specific guidance on what it means to be 'genuinely trying to reach an agreement' for this purpose.

The bill will fix this by requiring the Fair Work Commission to have regard to a range of factors in deciding whether an applicant for a protected action ballot order is genuinely trying to reach an agreement. This list of non-exhaustive factors include a consideration of the extent to which the applicant has communicated its claims to the employer and the extent to which bargaining has progressed.

This amendment will provide greater transparency in what applicants for a protected action ballot order need to demonstrate to show they are genuinely trying to reach an agreement. The decision on whether to issue an order will still be made by the independent Fair Work Commission.

The bill also addresses a further problem with the Fair Work Act that allows industrial action to be taken in pursuit of almost any bargaining claim, regardless of how extreme, unreasonable or unrealistic it may be. Enterprise bargaining is a central part of the Fair Work system, but the current rules have allowed industrial action to be taken in pursuit of fanciful pay and leave increases, without any proposed productivity increases. For example, we have recently seen reports of protected action ballot orders made and protected industrial action threatened in pursuit of claims that would increase the salary package of marine engineers in Port Hedland by around 38 per cent over four years. The reports indicated the claim, which includes an additional month of annual leave, is on top of existing salary packages of between $280,000 and $390,000, where employees work six months of the year.

Similar irresponsible conduct was on show in the case of the MUA's negotiations with marine operators in the offshore oil and gas sector in Western Australia in 2010. These negotiations resulted in 30 per cent wage increases in just under four years with no
productivity benefits, following industrial action being taken. Just months following this case, the MUA brought Australian ports to a halt in pursuit of a $46,000 wage increase for workers already earning over $100,000 for 185 days work per year.

The government's view is that the right to take industrial action should not be used as a 'first resort' tool in bargaining. This right must not be exercised capriciously. The bill will require that the independent Fair Work Commission will not make a protected action ballot order if it satisfied that the bargaining claims:

- are manifestly excessive, having regard to the conditions at the workplace and relevant industry; or
- would have a significant adverse impact on productivity at the workplace.

**Enterprise agreement approval**

Despite Labor's talk about how the Fair Work laws would encourage workplace productivity, there is nothing in the current bargaining provisions that requires bargaining parties to even think about productivity when they are negotiating a new enterprise agreement.

For the future prosperity of the country, we need to put productivity back on the bargaining agenda. To ensure this happens, the bill will amend the Fair Work Act to require productivity improvements at the workplace to have been discussed during negotiations, before a new enterprise agreement can be approved by the Fair Work Commission.

There does not need to be an agreement reached about improving productivity—it may be that the workplace has already been progressively making productivity improvements. The key is to make sure parties have at least considered how productivity in their workplace could be improved. This will at least ensure productivity is part of the bargaining discussions.

**Conclusion**

Before the last election, the government committed to keep and improve the Fair Work laws. The government is continuing to deliver on this commitment with the measures included in the Fair Work Amendment (Bargaining Processes) Bill 2014. The bill will amend the Fair Work Act to promote sensible, harmonious and productive enterprise bargaining. It will make sure that industrial action is not a first-resort step in negotiations for an agreement. It will allow the Fair Work Commission to intervene where industrial action is pursued to support claims that are manifestly excessive. And finally, it will put productivity back on the agenda in enterprise agreement negotiations.

The bill implements clearly stated election policies—nothing more and nothing less.

These reforms are needed to help build Australia's prosperity for future generations. I urge members to act to promote harmonious and productive bargaining by supporting the modest and measured reforms included in this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.
Second Reading

Mr KEENAN (Stirling—Minister for Justice) (09:11): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.


The bill will also confer jurisdiction on the Federal Circuit Court of Australia to hear certain Commonwealth tenancy disputes. This is the most cost-effective and efficient forum to hear these disputes.

**Federal Court of Australia Act amendments**

The amendments to the Federal Court of Australia Act will clarify that appeals cannot be made from minor procedural decisions, such as decisions to change hearing dates. This will reduce delays in the court system to ensure more efficient administration of justice.

Additionally, the amendments will clarify that police officers and court sheriffs can use reasonable force to enter premises to execute an arrest warrant for persons who are the subject of proceedings for contempt of court or for summary offences. This resolves current uncertainty about whether officers can use reasonable force. There have been occasions when an arrest warrant has not been executed due to this uncertainty.

**Federal Circuit Court of Australia Act amendments**

The amendments will confer jurisdiction on the Federal Circuit Court of Australia to hear certain Commonwealth tenancy disputes. These amendments are vital in order to provide a suitable forum to hear these disputes.

At present, in most jurisdictions, the applicable law provides for Commonwealth tenancy disputes to be resolved in state or territory tribunals, which can lead to inconsistency of approach. While superior courts may also be able to hear these matters, it is not considered an appropriate use of these courts’ resources as it may lengthen the dispute resolution process and increase costs. This means that there is currently no suitable or affordable forum to hear these disputes. Conferring jurisdiction on the Federal Circuit Court of Australia to hear these disputes provides a cost-effective option and will provide a consistent forum available across Australia.

Additionally, amendments to the Federal Circuit Court of Australia Act will clarify specific limitations on the award of costs prescribed in other legislation, such as public interest disclosure legislation. This will clarify the limitations on the Federal Circuit Court's jurisdiction to award costs and will assist readers to locate related provisions.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, this bill will provide a more suitable and cost-effective forum for the resolution of certain Commonwealth tenancy disputes.

This bill will also improve the operation and clarity of the Federal Court of Australia Act and the Federal Circuit Court of Australia Act, which will contribute towards streamlining and reducing the complexity associated with navigating the justice system.

Debate adjourned.
ACT Government Loan Bill 2014
First Reading
Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr McCormack.
Bill read a first time.

Second Reading
Mr McCormack (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance) (09:15): I move:
That this bill be now read a second time.
The ACT Government Loan Bill underpins the government's decision to provide a concessional loan to the ACT government of up to $1 billion to undertake a loose-fill asbestos remediation program.
The ACT government faces significant challenges in dealing with the remediation of loose-fill asbestos across the territory.
The one-off size and cost of dealing with this issue represents about a fifth of the Australian Capital Territory's annual budget.
Without the Commonwealth's assistance, the ACT's capacity to deal with this issue would have been significantly curtailed and put at threat its own credit rating.
The loan will ensure that the ACT government is in a position to deliver a well-structured remediation program in the coming years.
The bill provides authority for the Commonwealth to enter into a loan agreement with the ACT for an amount that must not exceed $1 billion.
The terms and conditions of the loan will be set out in the loan agreement. The minister administering the Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act 1988 may enter into the loan agreement on behalf of the Commonwealth. The Ministers for Infrastructure and Regional Development has responsibility for that act.
The bill also appropriates $750 million from the Consolidated Revenue Fund in 2014-15 for the purposes of making payments under the loan agreement. The appropriation will be brought into existence on the day after it receives royal assent. The remaining $250 million will be appropriated through the 2015-16 budget.
A portfolio supplementary estimates statement will be tabled in the parliament.
Debate adjourned.

Biosecurity Bill 2014
First Reading
Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Joyce.
Bill read a first time.

Second Reading
Mr Joyce (New England—Minister for Agriculture and Deputy Leader of The Nationals) (09:17): I move:
That this bill be now read a second time.
As you can see from the weight of it, with roughly 650 pages in the bill and 450 pages in the explanatory memorandum, this is a very substantial piece of work and the culmination of over 100 years of experience. Australia has a world-class biosecurity system. The system helps us preserve Australia's unique pest and disease status and protect our environment, human health, the wellbeing of our domestic animals, plants and our way of life.

There is no doubt that all Australians benefit from the system that underpins the security of our agriculture, forestry and fishery industries and enables a competitive advantage in export markets around the world. We have to get biosecurity right, because the stakes are high and getting it right benefits everyone.

The importance of quarantine is highlighted by its inclusion as a head of power in the Australian Constitution. The Commonwealth government is responsible for using this power to ensure Australia is protected from biosecurity risks. It follows that our biosecurity system must be underpinned by a modern and effective regulatory framework. This framework operates to manage the risk of pests and diseases entering Australian territory and causing harm to animal, plant and human health, and the environment and the economy.

The legislation that currently enables us to do this, the Quarantine Act, has been amended no less than 50 times over the last 106 years. While the legislation has served us well in the past, it has become cumbersome to administer, difficult to interpret and incompatible with our needs as our business and our risks change.

A new regulatory framework is needed to provide for a safe and seamless transition of people and goods across Australia's borders.

It needs to be more responsive to the threat of communicable diseases while also avoiding unnecessary burden on international passengers and trade.

Today the government brings forward the Biosecurity Bill and four companion bills to implement the biosecurity legislation. The Minister for Agriculture is responsible for plant and animal quarantine and the Minister for Health is responsible for human quarantine. Accordingly, the legislation is a collaboration between both portfolios, and is jointly administered by them. This legislation will enable the departments to continue to manage biosecurity risks in a modern and responsive manner.

The century-old Quarantine Act was written in a completely different world, when today's technology was not conceived.

When the Quarantine Act came into force there were only two Australian passport holders.

The act was written when people and goods arrived by sea and today's air and sea craft were unimaginable. It was a time when the threat of diseases such as the bubonic plague, smallpox, cholera and measles were at the forefront of policymakers' minds and those of the community.

In 1908 over 5,000 miles of the Australian coastline remained uncharted, and in parts even unexamined.

The population of Australia at the time was around four million, less than the number of people that live in Sydney today.

To contrast this picture, in 2012-13 the Department of Agriculture cleared:

- 16 million arriving international passengers,
about 186 million international mail items,
• 1.7 million sea cargo consignments, and
• 26 million air cargo consignments.

In the past decade, we have seen the volume of air passengers grow by 80 per cent, sea containers by 82 per cent and bulk cargo increase by 16 per cent. So we need legislation that not only safeguards our primary industries, our environment and our people from the increased threat of pest and disease, but also allows us to manage these movements in the most efficient way.

This legislation is designed to support the biosecurity system in any age. The bill is a culmination of many years of work. A number of significant reviews of the system have outlined opportunities to improve the biosecurity system, including the development of new legislation.

During the development of the bill, we have worked with industry, stakeholders and state and territory governments to seek feedback and to ensure the legislation we put in place is robust and effective. This engagement will continue during the development of the regulations and policies that support the bill so that we all have the benefit of the best biosecurity system.

Strengthening the competitiveness and productivity of Australia's agriculture sector is a key undertaking of this government.

Australia is free of many pests and diseases that are common around the world. This allows our farmers to produce higher quality products and increases the demand for those products.

This is essential for our farmers to maintain access to overseas markets and build on our position as a net exporter of the highest quality agricultural goods. In 2013-14 the total gross value of agricultural production was $53 billion.

These exports underpin our robust agricultural industry—and the biosecurity system that protects that industry—without which our farmers, the economy and consumers could suffer serious consequences.

Australia's enviable pest and disease status gives our producers a unique advantage. As well as playing an obvious role in protecting Australia's environment, safeguarding Australia from unwanted pests and diseases also protects Australia's economy.

For example, a recent review commissioned by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences looked at the economic impact of a hypothetical foot-and-mouth disease outbreak in Australia.

In the event of a large multistate foot-and-mouth disease outbreak, the ABARES estimates revenue losses could be more than $50 billion over 10 years. Reflecting international experience, the economic impact of trade restrictions, including the closure of export markets, would be far greater than the cost of controlling the disease.

The bill will help protect the Australian environment from costly incursions by introducing a strong legislative framework that allows biosecurity risks to be managed more effectively.

In recent years, the biosecurity system has evolved to one based on risk, which helps officers target higher risk goods, passengers and mail. This has helped the Department of
Agriculture and the Department of Health to more effectively manage biosecurity risks associated with ever-increasing volumes of trade and passengers moving across our border.

When prohibited goods are intercepted, penalties in the bill will match the offence and be balanced, consistent and reflect the level of biosecurity risk posed.

The bill includes mechanisms to more clearly identify biosecurity risks offshore, onshore and at the border and will manage these risks using a broad range of Commonwealth powers.

In relation to risks posed to human health, the Quarantine Act was enacted before the considerations of individual rights and personal freedoms we have today. Within the bill, the process for managing the threat of a serious communicable disease to human health will be better aligned with modern science relating to treatment and management of such diseases. It will also provide for consideration of personal freedoms and rights to review in human health biosecurity decision-making.

The new legislation will have no fiscal impact on the Australian economy. In fact it will reduce red tape for thousands of businesses that regularly interact with the biosecurity system.

The compliance costs on businesses are estimated to be reduced by approximately $6.9 million per year because of clearer, easier to use legislation and the improved processes it will enable.

The bill modernises overly complex regulatory provisions and administrative practices under the Quarantine Act.

A good example is the introduction of a new scheme to manage Commonwealth-industry partnerships, known as the approved arrangement scheme.

This will replace the duplicative quarantine approved premise and compliance agreement provisions in the Quarantine Act, which can overlap and cause unnecessary costs for businesses. Provisions in the bill will instead allow businesses to enter into a single agreement with the Department of Agriculture, to manage their biosecurity risks in an approved way that better reflects their business operations.

The Biosecurity Bill introduces a new range of enforcement options, including infringement notices, civil penalties, enforceable undertakings and criminal sanctions.

The enforcement work undertaken by the Department of Agriculture is complex and can require a different approach than that traditionally taken by law enforcement.

Biosecurity requirements are grounded in science and not everyone who breaches them will have understood why or have done so deliberately.

Having a range of enforcement options available is important, as it gives the department the ability to effectively penalise those who deliberately breach laws and greater flexibility to deal with those who have inadvertently committed a breach.

Importantly, the bill contains new powers to address the risk posed by people and companies. Previous non-compliant behaviour of individuals or their associates can be considered when issuing an import permit or entering into a Commonwealth-industry partnership through a fit-and-proper person test.

Currently the current Quarantine Act only allows for assessment of the risks associated with the goods themselves.
The bill will provide the Commonwealth with the right tools to manage biosecurity threats, including the human health risks posed to the Australian population from serious communicable diseases.

The human health provisions of the Quarantine Act, particularly those relating to isolation and treatment, have rarely been used in the last 20 years.

It is expected that the human health provisions contained in the bill will be seldom used. However it is important that legislative powers are available to manage serious communicable diseases should they occur.

This has been particularly highlighted by the recent announcements by the World Health Organization of polio and ebola virus disease as public health emergencies of international concern. Importantly, the bill will also seek to further implement Australia's obligations as a signatory to the International Health Regulations 2005.

The Biosecurity Bill also creates powers to enable information gathering to review the biosecurity system. It is intended that these powers will be used by the Inspector-General of Biosecurity.

This will help ensure that the assessment and management of biosecurity risk is subject to regular review and continual improvement. An independently verified system will enhance the overall integrity and robustness of the Australian biosecurity system.

The bill will create and enable partnerships and better collaboration between governments, business and industry.

State governments, business and industries will be able to take a greater role in managing biosecurity risks—where it is appropriate to do so—with support and regulatory oversight from the Commonwealth. In doing so, there will be a more appropriate level or intensity of intervention from the government.

The Biosecurity Bill continues this intent by providing expanded onshore powers for the Commonwealth to cooperatively manage and address pest and disease incursions. Provisions such as the ability to issue biosecurity control orders and the establishment of biosecurity zones enhance the powers available to the Commonwealth to address biosecurity risks within or across jurisdictions, in a consistent way.

This is particularly important where state and territory government regulations may be incompatible or lack the powers required to manage an incident.

The Department of Agriculture has worked closely with states and territories and will continue to do so in the further development and implementation of the Biosecurity Bill.

This bill was several years in the making.

After engaging with industry, state and territory governments, environment groups, health professionals, the general public and our trading partners, the Biosecurity Bill 2014 represents a comprehensive modernisation of the Australian biosecurity legislation.

The bill directly addresses the government's commitment to improving Australia's already world-class biosecurity system.

The departments of Agriculture and Health employ and work with some of Australia's most knowledgeable and experienced plant scientists, veterinarians and medical and clinical experts.
These people are available to our biosecurity officers to provide current advice and guidance on the risks posed by the movement of people, aircraft, vessels and goods.

This bill ensures the Australian biosecurity system can continue to respond to future changes that this shifting world presents and the challenges and opportunities that come with those changes.

For Australian farmers, a strong biosecurity system means crops will be safer from exotic pests and livestock better protected from diseases such as foot-and-mouth.

For the Australian economy, it means an increased capacity for sustained domestic production and international exports from a competitive and profitable agricultural sector.

For the Australian community more broadly, it means everyone can continue to have confidence in the biosecurity system which protects our way of life.

Debate adjourned.

**Biosecurity (Consequential Amendments and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2014**

**First Reading**

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by [Mr Joyce](#).

Bill read a first time.

**Second Reading**

[Mr JOYCE](#) (New England—Minister for Agriculture and Deputy Leader of The Nationals) (09:32): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Biosecurity (Consequential Amendments and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2014 is the first companion bill to the Biosecurity Bill 2014. It will facilitate the transition from the Quarantine Act to the Biosecurity Act. This bill makes consequential amendments to a range of other Commonwealth legislation to reflect the broad scope of managing biosecurity risk. It will also replace references to 'the Quarantine Act' with 'the Biosecurity Act 2014'.

Biosecurity is wide reaching and impacts air travel, shipping and fisheries amongst other matters, with the result that over 20 pieces of Commonwealth legislation will require some minor amendments.

This bill will repeal the Quarantine Act and the Quarantine Charges (Collection) Act 2014. Most importantly, it will allow the Department of Agriculture to provide for a smooth transition from the old legislation to the new regulatory framework.

The bill will do this by ensuring that biosecurity risk managed under the Quarantine Act will continue to be managed following its repeal. For example, if a person is directed not to move a good under the Quarantine Act, that direction will still be valid under the Biosecurity Act. Or if an import permit application is made under the Quarantine Act, it is taken to have been made under the Biosecurity Act.

In some key areas, such as approved arrangement industry partnerships, the transition will take place over a longer period of time so businesses have more time to become compliant with new requirements and both business and the department can better manage the volume of work associated with the change.

Debate adjourned.
Quarantine Charges (Imposition—General) Amendment Bill 2014

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Joyce.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr JOYCE (New England—Minister for Agriculture and Deputy Leader of The Nationals) (09:34): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Three charging bills are being introduced as part of the Biosecurity Bill package. These will allow the Commonwealth to impose charges that appropriately reflect the cost of administering the Biosecurity Act now and into the future. The charging bills do not set the amount of the charges and do not apply any financial impacts on business. The charges and who is liable and exempt from paying these charges will be set and delegated in legislation.

The first charging bill, the Quarantine Charges (Imposition—General) Amendment Bill 2014 will amend the Quarantine Charges (Imposition—General) Act 2014. This bill continues current cost-recovery arrangements to enable effective management of biosecurity risks through the Biosecurity Bill.

This bill will allow the Commonwealth to continue imposing suitable charges for activities and services relating to the administration of Australia's biosecurity system, including scientific analysis, intelligence, inspections and surveillance. This enables the Commonwealth to support and administer a robust, efficient biosecurity system where the appropriate responsibility for costs associated with the system lie with those who oppose the highest risk to our biosecurity status.

The charges will reflect the costs for providing the services, ensuring the department is sufficiently resourced to continue the critical job of protecting Australia's unique animal and plant health status.

Debate adjourned.

Quarantine Charges (Imposition—Customs) Amendment Bill 2014

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Joyce.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr JOYCE (New England—Minister for Agriculture and Deputy Leader of The Nationals) (09:37): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Quarantine Charges (Imposition—Customs) Amendment Bill 2014 is the second of the three charging bills. This bill will amend the Quarantine Charges (Imposition—Customs) Act 2014 relating to the repeal of the Quarantine Act, and will only impose charges when they are considered a duty of customs.

Debate adjourned.
Quarantine Charges (Imposition—Excise) Amendment Bill 2014
First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Joyce.
Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr JOYCE (New England—Minister for Agriculture and Deputy Leader of The Nationals) (09:38): I move:
That this bill be now read a second time.

The Quarantine Charges (Imposition—Excise) Amendment Bill 2014 is the third of the three charging bills. It will make amendments to the Quarantine Charges (Imposition—Excise) Act 2014 relating to the repeal of the Quarantine Act. It will impose charges only when they are considered a duty of excise.

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEES
Standing Committee on Economics
Report

Ms O'DWYER (Higgins) (09:39): On behalf of the Standing Committee on Economics I present the committee's report on foreign investment in residential real estate together with the minutes of proceedings and evidence received by the committee.

Report made a parliamentary paper in accordance with standing order 39(e).

Ms O'DWYER: by leave—I am very pleased to be presenting the economics committee report on foreign investment in residential real estate. Residential housing has been, and will always be, an issue that is at the forefront of community debate and discussion. Owning your own home is part of the great Australian dream. For many, it represents the opportunity to build a future. It represents connection with community and security for family. Buying into the Australian dream does not come cheap. According to a recent International Monetary Fund report, the current ratio of housing prices in Australia to average incomes is 31.6 per cent above the historical average. Is it any wonder then, that many Australians now worry that home ownership may be out of reach for them, their children, or their grandchildren? At the same time, Australians worry about rental and interest costs, and their impacts on the cost of living.

There is no one simple explanation for the decline in housing affordability, although lack of land supply, underdevelopment, state planning laws and regulations, local council red tape, and stamp duty and tax arrangements likely all play a part.

Over the years, however, many in the community have asked the question: what role does foreign investment play in residential real estate? It was timely then that on 19 March this year the Treasurer, the Hon. Joe Hockey MP, commissioned the House economics committee to examine: the benefits of foreign investment in residential property; whether such foreign investment is directly increasing the supply of new housing and bringing benefits to the local building industry and its suppliers; how Australia's foreign investment framework compares...
with international experience; and whether the administration of Australia's foreign investment policy relating to residential property can be enhanced.

Under our current foreign investment framework, as it applies to residential real estate, foreign investment is channelled into new housing so that more homes, units and apartments are built—meaning more opportunity for people to purchase. It also contributes directly to economic activity, generating employment for builders and suppliers.

When it comes to existing homes, there are generally prohibitions and restrictions. Non-resident foreign investors are prohibited from purchasing an existing home, and temporary residents—on visas of more than 12 months—can purchase just one existing home to live in while they are resident in Australia, but must sell this home on their visa expiring. All purchases, whether new or existing homes, are required to be prescreened by the Foreign Investment Review Board, supported by the Foreign Investment and Trade Policy Division of Treasury.

According to FIRB statistics, in the first nine months of this financial year, FIRB approved foreign investment into residential property of around $24.8 billion—44 per cent higher than the $17.2 billion approved during all of 2012-13.

Much of this investment is concentrated in the Melbourne and Sydney markets. Most of the increase is attributable to proposed investment in new property, which at $19.3 billion for the first nine months of 2013-14 is 79 per cent higher than 2012-13. The total number of established property approvals for the first nine months of 2013-14 is 5,755 compared to 5,101 for 2012-13.

Over six public hearings, and after considering more than 92 submissions, the committee has four key findings that translate into 12 practical recommendations. First, there is no accurate or timely data that tracks foreign investment in residential real estate. No-one really knows how much foreign investment there is in residential real estate, nor where that investment comes from. A national register of land title transfers that records the citizenship and residency status of all purchases of Australian real estate would fix this and would allow facts to be injected into discussions about foreign investment, rather than just 'best guesses'. A national register would also help with compliance and enforcement with the foreign investment framework, allowing data to be compared more easily. Other relevant government information should also be captured and made available to FIRB. At present, FIRB cannot access data from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection on departing visa holders. Given the government has this information, this makes no sense. Together, these initiatives would allow authorities to track departing visa holders who may have purchased an existing home but who, under current rules, need to sell that home within three months of leaving.

Second, there has been a significant failure of leadership at FIRB, which was unable to provide basic compliance information to the committee about its investigations and enforcement activity. During the course of the inquiry, it came to light that no court action has been taken by FIRB since 2006. During the entire Rudd-Gillard-Rudd government, not one divestment order was issued, which means not one government sale of illegally acquired property was made. This compares with 17 divestment orders between 2003 and 2007, when foreign investment in residential real estate was at much lower levels. FIRB was also unable to provide basic data on voluntary divestments. It defies belief that there has been universal
compliance with the foreign investment framework outlined above since 2007. The systems
failure at FIRB needs to be repaired and new resources need to be injected into FIRB to
ensure better audit, compliance and enforcement outcomes.

Third, if you are not prepared to enforce the rules, then it is less likely that people will
comply with the rules. This is especially true if the consequences of a breach are not
meaningfully adverse. The ability to more easily sanction people who have breached the
foreign investment framework is critical. Hence, the need to bring in a civil penalty regime
for breaches of the foreign investment framework, along with the need to capture those people
who have previously stood outside the framework but who materially impact the integrity of
our foreign investment regime—for instance, third parties who knowingly assist foreign
investors to breach the rules.

Currently, non-resident foreign investors can profit from the illegal purchase of property.
Given this, the current financial penalty that can be applied to a property, regardless of its
value, is seen by many as simply the cost of doing business. Fines and pecuniary penalty
orders should directly relate to the value of the property concerned. Furthermore, investors
who breach the framework should not be able to profit.

Fourth, currently the Australian taxpayer foots the bill for the administration of the FIRB
and FITPD, not foreign investors applying for approval. This has, arguably, contributed to
underinvestment in FIRB’s audit, compliance and enforcement activities. Just as other
regulators adopt a user-pays model, the committee recognises that a modest administration fee
can be implemented to fund enhanced audit, compliance and enforcement capacity within
FIRB, as well as other new measures outlined in the recommendations.

The Parliamentary Budget Office analysis suggests that a modest application fee of $1,500
would generate revenue of $158.7 million over four years, yet amount to 0.27 per cent or 0.20
per cent of the purchase price for an average home in Melbourne and Sydney respectively.
These practical measures will send a strong message about Australia’s commitment to its
foreign investment framework in practice as well as in words.

This is important. Too often, the signals in recent years have been in the opposite direction.
For instance, in 2008, then Assistant Treasurer, the Hon. Chris Bowen MP, removed the
requirement for temporary residents to notify FIRB of all residential purchases. This rule
change allowed temporary residents to purchase existing homes without notifying FIRB.
Perhaps recognising that this neutered FIRB’s capacity to monitor compliance with the sale on
departure condition under our foreign investment framework, his successor, Senator the Hon.
Nick Sherry, reversed the change and, in the lead-up to the 2010 election, announced a range
of proposed measures to tighten monitoring and enforcement. Some of them are not dissimilar
to those being recommended by the committee. Regrettably, most of those announced
measures were not pursued by his successor, the Hon. Bill Shorten MP, nor by any of the
subsequent assistant treasurers in the last government. The committee strongly recommends
that the government pursue the package of measures canvassed in this report.

Given the recent successes in delivering free trade agreements for the benefit of Australia,
lest there be any confusion it is important to note that residential property has never been part
of any free trade agreement. Accordingly, none of the recent agreements with Japan, South
Korea and China impact the screening arrangements for residential property.
In conclusion, the committee found that the current foreign investment framework should be retained. In practice, the framework has been undermined due to poor data collection, along with a lack of audit, compliance and enforcement action by FIRB. Australians are entitled to expect that the rules are properly enforced, and our committee recommendations strengthen the ability to do this.

I would like to acknowledge and thank all of those people who have helped inform this inquiry. In particular, I thank those people and organisations that made submissions and presented evidence; those who sent letters and provided their views; the Parliamentary Library and the Parliamentary Budget Office for their efficient professionalism; and of course, members of the committee, who took a very collegiate approach to this task. Special thanks go to committee secretary, Mr Peter Banson; inquiry secretary, Dr Kilian Perrem; and the House Standing Committee on Economics secretariat team for their diligent work on this report and their willingness to assist both the chairman and committee members to enable the report to be as comprehensive as possible. Finally, I give a thank you to my incredibly hardworking staff, Tania Coltman and Sarah Nicholson, for their consistently excellent work.

I look forward to the government's response to this report and the many practical recommendations that are contained in it. I commend the report to the House.

Mr HUSIC (Chifley) (09:50): by leave—I also extend my thanks, on behalf of members of the Standing Committee on Economics, to the committee secretariat for all their hard work and their continued diligence. It is very much appreciated. However, I must say the one good thing about this inquiry is that it is over. It was an inquiry less focused on good policy and more on glaring publicity. Three things underpinned it. Firstly, there was a highly questionable and alarmist report by Credit Suisse into projected levels of Chinese foreign investment in residential property; secondly, there was a constant attempt to prove that there were systemic flaws within the way FIRB was enforcing compliance with investment laws; and thirdly, and levering off this last point, there was an obsessive drive to introduce a new tax on foreign investors at a time when the focus should be on improving trade and investment relationships.

Inquiries can be very useful means to spotlight areas demanding reform or improvement, but they need firm foundations to achieve this. This inquiry was sparked by an exaggerated publicity-seeking report by a firm you would expect better of, Credit Suisse. In March, Credit Suisse issued claims that inflated the projected scope of likely Chinese investment in residential property. When the committee sought to question them on the report, they had to be dragged to the inquiry to appear, which is not surprising, because they were no doubt embarrassed by their own claims. They used flagrantly emotive language in their report, including claims that 'The Chinese want to buy your house' and 'The dragon discovers the quarter acre dream'. This fanned reporting of contestable claims that $44 billion of Chinese investment would be ploughed into Australian residential real estate. After sustained questioning at a public hearing we learnt that Credit Suisse had included in its calculations purchases made by permanent residents who were of Chinese background. A lot of people would wonder how permanent residents can be classified as foreign investors. It defies belief.

The problem is that this type of hype reporting helped prompt this inquiry, and the inquiry then became a launching pad for a new tax grab. Make no mistake, the coalition wanted to grab a much bigger tax slice out of foreign investors than was finally recommended. You only
have to refer to the media coverage generated during the course of the inquiry to know this to be the case. The new tax has been scaled back for now. What this inquiry heard on countless occasions was that foreign investment adds to housing supply in this country. It generates demand, spurs growth in jobs and economic activity. It is beneficial to the nation and our economy.

The rules around foreign investment in residential real estate are clear-cut. It is permissible for new developments, and strict rules prohibit the purchase of existing residential property other than for temporary residence. Whilst some marginal changes can be contemplated to these rules, there was little evidence submitted to the inquiry of widespread, systemic noncompliance. This is despite the fact that FIRB's compliance capabilities were subjected to regular public criticism by the coalition and little procedural fairness was extended to FIRB to put public criticisms directly to them and allow them to respond. It was extraordinary that the minister with direct oversight of FIRB and Treasury, no-one less than the Treasurer himself, either failed to defend them from these criticisms or he was happy for his coalition colleagues to launch them. Even more extraordinary was that after the coalition levelled those criticisms the report acknowledged that FIRB has an advisory role, and Treasury needs to shoulder more responsibility for compliance.

The concerns about compliance are being used to justify an up-front impost on investors. I would make a number of points about this. First, the government has to work out if it is in favour of foreign investment or not. It has driven foreign companies, such as Holden's, out of the country, it has blocked investment proposals, such as GrainCorp, and now it wants to siphon funds out of foreign investors. No-one for one minute should be fooled by the words used in this report of a 'modest application fee', which, by the way, the coalition tried to suggest would be between $500 and $1,500, and today it is a firm $1,500.

You cannot trust that this government, which has introduced a range of surprise new taxes or sudden tax increases, will not be tempted to milk revenue out of these investors at a higher rate down the track. The coalition argue that they will use the funds raised by the impost to improve compliance. This does not stack up. There is scope for the Australian National Audit Office, for example, to be engaged to review compliance processes and procedures utilised by both Treasury and FIRB. ANAO can and does conduct performance reviews and could have easily been engaged, and recommended to have been engaged, to assess the way that both Treasury and FIRB undertake compliance and determine if resource allocation for this activity is appropriate. In fact, it should be recommended that ANAO consider doing this as a matter of course ahead of the imposition of any new fee or tax. I would certainly urge them to consider this. They can undertake the activity and they, again, should consider to do so. But all of these reasonable suggestions have been ignored by a coalition determined to find new taxes.

Some of the other recommendations will have questionable effect. The big issue with data in this space is time lag—the distance between an intent to purchase and construct and then the actual construction occurring. A new national register that simply logs residential status of investors will probably do little to alter or change the impact of data lags in this area. While some good might have a chance to emerge from the inquiry, and some modest compliance measures might see the light of day, one hopes this report dissolves from memory, and fast.

Ms O'DWYER (Higgins) (09:57): I move:
That the House take note of the report.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Goodenough):** In accordance with standing order 39(c), the debate is adjourned. The resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

**Reference to Federation Chamber**

Ms O’Dwyer (Higgins) (09:57): I move:
That the order of the day be referred to the Federation Chamber for debate.
Question agreed to.

**BILLS**

**Corporations Legislation Amendment (Deregulatory and Other Measures) Bill 2014**

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr Ruddock (Berowra—Chief Government Whip) (09:57): I rise to speak to the Corporations Legislation Amendment (Deregulatory and Other Measures) Bill 2014. The government has introduced a package of reforms to the Corporations Law to reduce regulatory burden and improve productivity and competitiveness. What I really want to talk about is why this bill is part of an overall package and why it is of fundamental importance to the future of this nation.

I listened to some comments in another context by one of my colleagues, and I am very worried about the personal future of members of the opposition. I am very worried about whether or not they will be able to continue to play a role in public life in this country if they pursue in their personal affairs the arrangements they want this nation to pursue. They see it as being desirable that we should budget for consumption and spending where we do not have the income available. They want us to essentially go out to dinner every night and simply put the tab on our bank card or on our mortgage. If you conducted your personal affairs in the way in which they want the affairs of the nation to be run, you would not be able to survive. When I make this point about their personal affairs, let me just say I am reasonably satisfied that in their personal affairs they would try to ensure that they live within their means, but when it comes to the nation it is regrettable that we do not see the same approach being taken.

I speak to many people around my electorate and they do appreciate very much that the country has to live within its means. In looking at that issue, it is not just how much you spend that is relevant; it is how you go about the earning of your income that is equally important. They are concerned in their businesses about unnecessary costs which make them less competitive and make their businesses more difficult to sustain. I must say that, in my own electorate, people are gratified that we have been able to make some changes in relation to the carbon tax. They are glad that it has gone, because that has made their businesses more competitive. But, equally, the sorts of measures that are contained in this legislation are absolutely important to them, because they find that a lot of the reporting that they have to make builds costs into their businesses, and that makes it extraordinarily difficult for them to be able to effectively carry out those businesses.
In my 41 years in this House, I have never seen such a determined approach by a government to reduce the regulatory burden. What we have seen with the removal of regulations is the freeing up of businesses to be able to do what they do best. I commend the member for Kooyong, the parliamentary secretary, for the work that he is doing in this regard. He is committed to tackling the volume of regulation, which is already too high. It is essential that we do ensure that our businesses remain competitive. I would simply say that this is not a job that has been finished. In an earlier life I was the Attorney-General of Australia, and I was able to work with the states to put in place a single defamation code. The importance of that was that it stopped forum shopping around Australia. When it was put in place, it meant that the volume of litigation was significantly reduced. I am a lawyer. I do not mind litigation, but sometimes litigation can be very unnecessary and very unhelpful.

I was very much focused on personal property securities. We had something like 80 different pieces of legislation across all the states and territories of Australia for personal property securities. You can think of them: bills of sale, hire purchase, maritime liens and floating charges. When you put the myriad different forms of personal property securities across all the states and territories it meant that businesses trading across state and territory boundaries would often have to get complex legal advice about floating charges that they might have over their stock. I can remember a firm that ran a hotel in Mount Gambier and a hotel in Geelong, and they had to get advice because the floating charge over their stock-in-trade was different under South Australian and Victorian law. We are, I might say, somewhat belatedly now—I do not think I have been the Attorney for seven years—seeing a single scheme of personal property security being implemented.

I would encourage the government to continue looking not only at its own regulatory burdens that it imposes upon people but also at the multiplicity of regulatory burdens that are as a result of our Federation. I do not think our Federation arrangements were intended to inhibit successful businesses operating in Australia or to reduce their economic competitiveness, but I suspect that a lot of the regulatory burden which is so often unnecessary imposes those costs. So I do commend the member for Kooyong for his hard work in addressing these issues.

I think this bill, which I will go to, deals with a number of issues that will help to improve our economic competitiveness. If we improve our economic competitiveness, businesses are more successful. Hopefully, they end up paying more taxes. That is helpful for the Commonwealth. It helps our budgetary position. It enables the government to more effectively live within its means. I think we ought to be talking about how governments can live within their means, and I think we need to be quite lateral in the way in which we do it. We need to look at our expenditures. I encourage members of the opposition to come forward. I listen all the time to hear from them as to ideas they have about the way in which we can structure our budget more constructively. I do listen. I don't hear it.
the costs of companies being required to call and hold general meetings. It will improve the remuneration reporting requirements. It will clarify the circumstances in which a financial year may be less than 12 months. It will exempt certain companies limited by guarantee from the need to appoint or retain an auditor. It will improve the operation of the Takeovers Panel. It will extend the Remuneration Tribunal’s remuneration setting responsibility to include certain statutory bodies.

If I can go to some of those particular measures, there is the abolition of the 100-member rule. The government is removing the requirement for directors of a company to hold a general meeting on the request of 100 shareholders. It seeks to strike a better balance between the interests of minority shareholders and the shareholders as a whole, because all of these meetings involve costs which can be quite significant. In large corporations the 100-member rule allows groups holding less than what we can call one per cent of voting shares to force a company to incur significant costs in holding meetings. That has to be questioned. This particular issue is supported by both industry stakeholders, including the Institute of Company Directors, the Governance Institute of Australia and the Business Council of Australia, as well as shareholder groups such as the Australian Shareholders Association. The measure is expected to save businesses around $1.5 million per annum in compliance costs. Isn’t that a desirable outcome?

In relation to remuneration reporting, the government is improving the disclosure of executive remuneration information in Australia by ensuring that it is provided in a form that is useful to shareholders and investors. The measure removes the requirement for unlisted disclosing entities to prepare a remuneration report. This measure is estimated to save unlisted entities from disclosing about $8.5 million in compliance costs. The remuneration report is simply not relevant to those agencies, but it is a regime that imposes very significant and unnecessary costs.

In issues relating to auditor-appointing requirements, the government is removing the nonsensical requirement for certain companies limited by guarantee, which are not required to undertake an audit, to appoint an auditor—that is, you are not required to audit, but you have to appoint an auditor. How ridiculous! Currently all public companies are required to appoint an auditor, even if they are not required to conduct a full audit of their financial reports. This unnecessary regulatory burden imposes $4 million of compliance costs on business. This change is expected to predominantly benefit companies that have a not-for-profit focus.

You can see, Mr Deputy Speaker, why this legislation is of fundamental importance in addressing issues that do go to the costs of running businesses in Australia. Inevitably, it will help in small measure to improve their international competitiveness. We ought not through our regulatory regimes impose costs on businesses in Australia that are quite unrelated to the costs others abroad may face, because that is essentially imposing upon them and their employees a penalty in terms of their competitiveness. This legislation is an important deregulatory package; it is part of a continuing process in which this government is involved. As I said, I commend the member for Kooyong, who has had the responsibility for progressing these issues, for his determination in identifying measures that can effectively reduce compliance costs and that will ensure a far more competitive environment without reducing proper responsibility. This measure deserves support, and I hope that the opposition will have some regard to my earlier observations about the importance of ensuring that we not
only live within our means, but also put in place a more productive economy through the sorts of measures that are contained in this legislation.

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (10:11): Labor supports this bill and I am pleased to offer my contribution in supporting this bill passing the parliament. I do wish to make some comments about the comments just made by the member for Berowra, though I am conscious of his points about reducing red tape, which I find somewhat ironic, given that earlier we had the member for Higgins introduce the report of the economics committee. It actually advocates increasing red tape for foreign investment in Australian property by imposing a proposed levy. I understand that the economics committee discussed a figure of between $500 and $1,500; today we learnt that the committee is now proposing the higher end of the range, $1,500. When we talk about reducing red tape it is easy for those opposite to adopt a holier-than-thou approach on these issues, but we need to be conscious that there was some hypocrisy in the comments of the member for Berowra. Nevertheless, Labor is pleased to support these reforms because they are sensible—they make a sensible addition and sensible changes to our corporate landscape.

Labor has a proud record of improving corporate governance, transparency and accountability in decisions of government, particularly with respect to their obligations to shareholders, workers, customers and the general public. In the course of the last Labor government, a number of reforms were introduced that not only improved safety for workers and the public, ensured greater competition in a number of industries and Australia generally, but also provided reliable accounts and information, particularly on executive remuneration. Over a number of years we have seen outrage in the community from not only shareholders but the wider community about some of the ridiculous remuneration packages and bonuses that were paid to corporate leaders in this country and throughout the world. Through such measures, Labor introduced a corporate regime that is one of the most robust and responsible anywhere in the world. This bill meets those conditions and on that basis we are pleased to offer support.

Items 1 and 2 of schedule 1 of the bill amend the Corporations Act to better balance the rights of shareholders to raise issues with a company against the cost to companies of being required to call and hold general meetings. This relates to the so-called '100-member rule', which creates an obligation on a corporation to hold a general meeting if requested to by 100 or more shareholders. That requirement will be removed by this bill. The requirement that a general meeting be held if requested by five per cent or more of shareholders will remain. Importantly, the proposed amendment does not affect the right of 100 shareholders to put up a resolution to be considered at a general meeting or to distribute a shareholder statement with the notice convening that meeting. So the changes do not affect the ability of 100 or more shareholders to engage in activism. That is very important and that is the way it should be, because shareholder activism is an important component of corporate governance. What these amendments do is ensure that the operation of this provision does not burden companies with the cost of having to hold extraordinary general meetings where this is unreasonable. There have been examples in the past. Woolworths was required to call an extraordinary general meeting on the issue of $1 limits on poker machines—and the cost of convening that meeting was close to half a million dollars. Over many years the NRMA had to call a series of extraordinary general meetings. It is estimated that the cost of those meetings was in the
millions of dollars. The proposed amendment is a sensible reform, one that ensures that an appropriate balance remains between the right of shareholders to put resolutions at general meetings and the need to ensure that, in doing so, the costs imposed on the companies involved are not unreasonable.

The second element of these reforms is improving remuneration reporting. Years ago in Australia, shareholders became increasingly concerned, even outraged, at the size of executive remuneration packages—pay, bonuses, shares and share options. These were being paid even where executives were, by any reasonable measure, failing in their duties, as reflected in the performance of their companies. We saw situations where executives presided over falls in the share price and/or falls in the profitability of their companies yet still commanded outrageous remuneration. This created angst within the community, particularly amongst shareholders. Many saw the outcomes as being unfair and unreasonable.

Labor acted on those concerns. It responded by implementing a fairer system that put shareholders, particularly institutional and mum-and-dad shareholders, first. The current shadow Treasurer, then the Assistant Treasurer, introduced reforms in July 2011. They became known as the 'two-strikes rule', which holds directors accountable to shareholders for executive salaries and bonuses. These reforms have led to a much more responsible and reasonable approach to executive remuneration being taken in this country. I think it is fair to say that the system has worked.

The way the system works is that companies have two opportunities, from the perspective of accountability to shareholders, to get their executive remuneration right. If a company's remuneration report receives a shareholder no vote of 25 per cent or more at an annual general meeting, that is the first strike. If there is another strike in the second year—if the company's subsequent remuneration report again receives a no vote of 25 per cent or more—there can be a vote to spill the board. In other words, there can be a vote on whether or not all directors need to stand for re-election. That subsequent vote to require a re-election of the board needs a majority of 50 per cent plus one to pass. If it does receive that majority, the election for directors has to be held within 90 days. As I said, this is a model which has worked. It has seen companies take a much more reasonable approach to executive remuneration. The stories of outrageous executive salaries and packages have dissipated—and that is a positive thing. Labor is very proud of its record of improving remuneration reporting and dealing with executive remuneration. Concerns were raised by shareholders and users of remuneration reports and we dealt with them.

Labor also supports removing the unnecessary requirement for unlisted disclosing entities that are companies to prepare a remuneration report. Unlike listed entities, they are not required to have their remuneration report adopted by shareholders through a non-binding resolution and they are not subject to the two-strikes test. In this respect, the reform in this bill is supported.

This bill also makes changes so that listed disclosing entities that are companies must disclose the number of options that lapse during the financial year, as well as the financial year in which those options were granted, for each member of the key management personnel. There will, under the changes introduced by this bill, be no obligation to disclose the value of options that lapse or the percentage value of remuneration that consists of options for each
member of the key management personnel. Again this is a sensible reform that has Labor's support.

The bill makes an number of amendments that will improve the value of the information in remuneration reports. This goes to item 6 of schedule 1 of the bill, which clarifies the circumstances in which a financial year may be less than 12 months. There is confusion about conditions under which directors may determine that a financial year is shorter than 12 months, and these reforms clarify that.

Finally, in respect of the appointment of auditors, items 7 to 9 of schedule 1 of the bill amend the Corporations Act to exempt certain companies limited by guarantee from the need to appoint or retain an auditor. Currently all public companies, including companies limited by guarantee, are required to appoint and retain an auditor. This bill amends this so that small companies limited by guarantee, and those companies limited by guarantee that have their financial reports reviewed, are not required to appoint or retain an auditor. This means that companies that are not required to undertake an audit no longer have to retain an auditor. Again, this is a sensible reform that Labor is pleased to support.

The bill also amends the ASIC Act in respect of the operation of the Takeovers Panel. Labor sees this as an improvement and is happy to support it.

On the whole, these are sensible amendments to Australia's corporate landscape. They build on Labor's achievements in government of making our corporate legislation more representative of the interests and aspirations of shareholders, of workers, of customers, of clients and of the Australian public. We believe that these sensible reforms and the Labor reforms that were put in under the previous government should make Australia a more attractive place to invest. On that basis I am happy to commend the bill to the House.

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (10:24): I am pleased to speak on the Corporations Legislation Amendment (Deregulation and Other Measures) Bill 2014. This bill forms part of our government's commitment to repeal counterproductive, unnecessary and redundant legislation and regulations. I would like to start by giving an example from my electorate of Hughes of some of those burdensome regulations that tie the hands of small business. This example in the retail sector shows the absurdity of this regulation, the stupidity of it, and the big task that we have of working through and repealing this red tape to free the hands of entrepreneurs in this nation.

There is a shopping centre in my electorate called the Homemakers Centre, at Warwick Farm. It is on the Hume Highway and has six lanes of road on either side. Opposite is Warwick Farm racecourse. In the front of the shopping centre there are two large takeaway outlets. There is a very large car park. There are a lot of shops in there. Next door is the Masterton Homes display village, and on the other side of this is a small motel. It is an ideal location for a shopping centre.

A few regulations were put on that centre at a few retailers. I would like to compare the regulations in my electorate to the regulations in Afghanistan under the Taliban's control. I will quote from a 2001 article by Amy Waldman published in The New York Times. It is a story from Herat in Afghanistan. It says:

Hefozullah, a seller of cooking oil, was arrested at the marketplace for keeping his shop open during Friday prayers. He was sent to jail for four days and became No. 3,183 in a registry of arrests at the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice.
The article goes on and talks about 'the penal code promulgated by the Taliban's leader, Mullah Muhammad Omar', which sets out in copious detail what retailers in Herat—in Taliban controlled Afghanistan—can and cannot sell. I will quote directly from the article. It says:

Those who fly pigeons—a favorite Afghan pastime—will be imprisoned until "their pigeons disappear from their home."

Then it goes on and lists all the things that are banned from sale from retail shops. It says:

A kite seller will be imprisoned for three days.

It lists other things that are banned:

... cinematography, any equipment that produces the joy of music, pool tables, chess, masks, alcohol, tapes, computer, VCR's, televisions ... wine, ... nail polish, firecrackers, statues, sewing catalogs, pictures, Christmas cards.

It goes on:

Nothing was left to chance or the imagination under the Taliban. Merchants importing products like shampoo would find that Taliban customs officials had gouged out the eyes of the female models on the boxes. The merchants were then required to display the products with black tape over female faces, or be subject to a beating or jailing.

The journalist goes on:

It is no wonder that residents here react as if waking from a grotesque dream.

Compare that list of things that were banned under the Taliban from being sold with the recent court decision of the New South Wales Supreme Court. Whereas the Taliban had a Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice enforcing those red-tape regulations, our similar regulations are being enforced by the Land and Environment Court and the New South Wales Court of Appeal.

The case was the Warehouse Group (Australia)—they were the appellant—versus those champions of free market competition, Woolworths Limited. This was a case where three senior judges were involved in the Court of Appeal with Queen's Counsel—a platoon of legal experts—working out what a retail shop in my electorate could and could not sell. There were many days of court hearings and a rather lengthy decision.

I will read through some of the list of things that were banned, not in Taliban controlled Afghanistan but in the electorate of Hughes, which I represent. There is a list here of over 40—it is in roman numerals. It goes to over 50 separate items. I would like to go through a few of them. Item (i): floor coverings were banned from sale. Small plastic containers were banned from sale. Garbage bins were banned. Paint was banned, as were paint accessories—it goes on—dust masks and paint scrapers. Dangerous items that need government control such as kitchen implements, mashers, vegetable peelers, kitchen hand food storage containers, curtains and accessories were also banned. Curtain tassels were banned—we must have laws in this country to control the sale of dangerous curtain tassels! Item (xxx) on the list of banned items is baby goods. Baby bibs were banned from sale, along with baby strollers, baby prams and baby car seats, and item (xxxv) on the banned list is child's potties. In this country we have such red tape and such regulation that we are required to have in the New South Wales Supreme Court Court of Appeal three distinguished and learned judges and a platoon of
lawyers making a decision that a retail shop in my electorate should be banned from selling child's potties.

The list goes on. Other things banned included dog toys—we cannot have anyone selling dog toys! And there are bird cages. While the Taliban would ban the sale of pigeons or anything related, we just ban the sale of bird cages. Toys are banned. Item (xlvi) is sheets. Again, while the Taliban Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice would simply ban any equipment that reproduces the joy of music, at least our court of appeal detailed those things that reproduce the joy of music that are banned. Prerecorded videos were banned, prerecorded CDs, prerecorded audiotapes, blank videos, blank CDs and, item (lix), blank audio tapes. They were all banned from sale. On the Taliban list of banned items it was simply Christmas cards, but of course our New South Wales Supreme Court was able to do better than that—they set out the things that were banned from being sold in a retail shop in my electorate: Christmas goods, Christmas trees, Christmas decorations and, just like the Taliban, Christmas cards. We simply cannot have shops in Australia being unauthorised sellers of Christmas cards. How would we get on without this red tape? At least in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan retail shops could sell bottles of shampoo as long as they gouged the eyes out of the women on the boxes or put black tape over them. In my electorate, thanks to the decisions and the red tape and regulation we have, we simply banned it altogether.

This is just an example of the regulation and red tape that we have. Other parts of my electorate fare even worse. It is not a matter of just having a list of things that they are not allowed to sell—dangerous goods such as potties and Christmas cards and things that reproduce the joys of music. We had in my electorate what was known as the Orange Grove shopping centre. On one side of Orange Grove Road we had a big Officeworks and on the other side a big Harvey Norman complex. Do we know what happened to Orange Grove shopping centre? They did not have a list of goods they were banned from selling—they were simply banned from operating. The red tape and regulation by the then New South Wales Labor-controlled state government simply banned them from operating and selling anything. That was done when former senator Bob Carr was New South Wales Premier—better known now as the senator who complained about not having silk pyjamas on an international flight; he complained about how unfair it was that he had to travel business class and about the quality of food and the types of music he could listen to. The very same Senator Carr was the one who banned a complete retail shopping centre from selling any of those goods. Silk pyjamas were banned, food was banned and of course the sale of any musical item was banned—the very things that Senator Carr complained about when he was forced to put up with the hardship of travelling in business class. These are just some examples of the red tape we have in this country.

This bill is estimated to reduce business compliance costs by around $14 million. The measures in the bill provide a better balance between the rights of shareholders to raise issues with a company and the costs to companies required to hold a general meeting. The bill will improve and reduce remuneration reporting requirements, clarify the circumstances in which a financial year may be less than 12 months, exempt certain companies limited by guarantee from the need to appoint or retain an auditor, improve the operation of the Takeovers Panel and extend the Remuneration Tribunal's remuneration setting responsibility to include certain statutory bodies.
There is some urgency in this action we are taking because we have some serious difficulties in this country. We face the problem of an ageing population. Commodity prices for our largest exports of coal and iron ore that were quite high under the previous government's term are coming back. Perhaps the biggest problem we have to deal with is servicing the interest on Labor's debt. For the past six years the previous Labor government simply—and this is the best way to explain it—ran this country at a loss. In each of those six years they spent more money than they raised.

Mr Bowen: How are you going?

Mr CRAIG KELLY: I note the shadow Treasurer at the table, and I am sure he is familiar with the figures that the government of Australia now has to finance because of the interest bill on their debt. It is $13½ billion a year. To put that in context, that is $570 for every man, woman and child in this country—and that is just for the interest bill that has to be paid. For every family of four the annual interest bill that we must now pay is $2,280.

We can break it down over periods of time. Every month it is $1.125 billion. That is $1,125 million that flow out the door. That is the obligation that we have in interest just in one month. In a week it is $260 million. In a day, today, it is $37 million. On this day, this government will need to find $37 million just to pay the interest. In the next hour it is $1.5 million. That is the obligation that this nation has—to pay interest on a debt that this previous Labor government left.

Why is there some urgency about this? The money that is borrowed to pay for the six years of losses during the Labor government is done through the sale of government bonds. Whether through good luck or good management, we are currently in a period where global interest rates are at record lows. We have been able to borrow most of that money at around 3.5 per cent. The problem is that, even though we have that interest obligation, if we do not only address the interest but pay that debt down, who knows where interest rates will be in 10 years time, when a lot of these government bonds fall due and we have to refinance them. It may not be 3.35 per cent. We know that it could be double. And therefore, rather than having that $500 cost for every man, woman and child, it could be double. That is the urgency; that is the problem. That is why we must repeal red tape and free the hands of our entrepreneurs. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (10:39): The Corporations Legislation Amendment (Deregulatory and Other Measures) Bill 2014 amends the Corporations Act 2001 and the Australian Securities and Investments Commission Act 2001. Items 1, 2 and 10 of the schedule to this bill amend the Corporations Act 2001, and their intent is to better balance the rights of shareholders to raise issues with a company and the costs of companies that have been required to call and hold a general meeting. It would repeal the so-called 100-member rule which creates an obligation on a corporation to hold a general meeting at the request of 100 or more shareholders.

These meetings are often called for protest purposes and almost always, particularly in the case of larger corporations, create a very significant cost to business. For example, Woolworths was compelled to call an extraordinary general meeting in relation to $1 limits on poker machines. Whatever one's views about the worth or otherwise of imposing a $1 limit on poker machines, it can be seen that this was very much a political action using corporate rules. What it did was to impose on Woolworths, as a very direct cost, about $500,000, which was
the cost of notifying its shareholders for that extraordinary general meeting. The resolution when put to the extraordinary general meeting, despite the political action behind it, received just 2.5 per cent support of those attending the meeting.

No-one objects to the fact that people might have different views. No-one objects in any way to the expression of those views. Indeed, shareholders should be able to legitimately raise concerns about the affairs of companies in which they hold shares, through a number of mechanisms, but they should not be permitted to do it at a significant cost to other shareholders. It is not appropriate that a very small number of shareholders be able to impose costs at that level simply for the purpose of making a political point. You could cite as another example that in the two years from late 1999 to late 2001 the NRMA in New South Wales was forced to call 12 extraordinary general meetings to consider resolutions removing directors, each of which incurred several million dollars in costs, and in no case were any of the relevant regulations that were the supposed purpose of those extraordinary general meeting passed by the members of the NRMA.

The proposed changes do not remove the ability of 100 or more shareholders to add items to scheduled annual general meetings and to instigate debate as an agenda item at these meetings. This retains the right for 100 or more members to raise issues of concern, without the often significant cost to shareholders of scheduling extraordinary meetings under the current acts. Shareholder activism is a component of corporate governance. Shareholders should be able to put issues on the AGM agenda and should be able to instigate debate at the meeting. The right is of particular importance to retail shareholders, who have limited opportunities to meet with the company prior to the AGM. These rights will not change with this proposed legislation.

Australia is currently alone in providing for a shareholder test that applies regardless of how much capital the requisitionists hold. It is more common to require that requisitionists must hold at least five to 10 per cent of the shares before they can call a general meeting. Again, no-one disputes the fact that shareholders have a right to question directors and decisions made by a company, but it should not be at a cost to other shareholders. Labor supports this change.

Items 3 to 5 and 10 of schedule 1 to this bill amend the Corporations Act 2001 to improve and streamline remuneration reporting requirements. Currently, disclosing entities that are companies must disclose the value of options that lapse during a financial year for each member of the key management personnel. Disclosing entities that are companies must also disclose the percentage value of remuneration that consists of options for each member of the key management personnel. This bill makes changes so that listed disclosing entities that are companies must disclose the number of options that lapse during a financial year and the financial year in which those options were granted for each member of the key management personnel. There will be no obligation to disclose the value of options that lapse. Under this bill there is no obligation to disclose the percentage value of remuneration that consists of options for each member of the key management personnel.

Also currently, all disclosing entities that are companies are required to prepare a remuneration report, regardless of whether they are listed or unlisted. This bill changes that so unlisted disclosing entities that are companies are no longer required to prepare a
remuneration report. Listed disclosing entities continue to be required to prepare a remuneration report.

Labor supports improving the disclosure of executive remuneration information in Australia. There have been concerns raised by shareholders and users of remuneration reports that currently the reports contain some information that was of limited benefit or can be found at other places in the annual report. Labor also supports removing the unnecessary requirement for unlisted disclosing entities that are companies to prepare a remuneration report. Unlike listed entities, they are not required to have their remuneration report adopted by shareholders through a non-binding resolution and are not subject to the two-strikes test.

Item 6 of schedule 1 to this bill amends the Corporations Act 2001 to clarify the circumstances under which a financial year may be less than 12 months. There is confusion about the conditions under which directors may determine that a financial year is shorter than 12 months. Currently, section 323D sets out how companies, registered schemes and disclosing entities may determine the length of their financial year. While an entity's financial year is expected to be approximately 12 months long, entities can determine otherwise in cases where an entity needs to modify its financial year by up to seven days to accommodate weekly based internal reporting frameworks or an entity needs to synchronise its financial year in order to prepare consolidated financial reports.

However, subsection 323D(2A) allows entities to determine that their financial year is less than 12 months if none of their previous five financial years have been less than 12 months, the shorter financial year commences at the end of the previous financial year and the decision is in the best interests of the entity. Stakeholders have raised concerns about the interaction between this provision and the operation of subsection 323D(2), which requires that a financial year is 12 months long, unless determined by the directors to be a period that is longer or shorter than 12 months by up to seven days.

There is confusion surrounding whether taking advantage of the flexibility in section 323D(2) would trigger the five-year period in which an entity is precluded from accessing the benefits offered by section 323D(2A). Similarly, subsection 323D(3) requires an entity to synchronise its financial year end with that of its parent entity when it becomes a controlled entity. Again, stakeholders have raised concerns that this provision may trigger the five-year period in which an entity is precluded from accessing the benefits offered by section 323D(2A).

The bill seeks to clarify that directors may determine that a financial year is shorter than 12 months by more than seven days irrespective of whether during an entity's previous five financial years the directors have determined that the financial year is shorter than 12 months by up to seven days or determined to synchronise the financial year to prepare consolidated financial statements. Labor supports the amendments in this bill that clarify the circumstances and conditions under which directors can determine the financial year is shorter than 12 months by more than seven days. This removes the unintended confusion arising from changes made in 2010 intended to make it easier for directors to alter financial year end dates.

Items 7 to 9 of schedule 1 to this bill amend the Corporations Act to exempt certain companies limited by guarantee from the need to appoint or retain an auditor. Currently, all public companies, including companies limited by guarantee, are required to appoint and retain an auditor. This bill changes this so that small companies limited by guarantee and
those companies limited by guarantee that have their financial reports reviewed are not required to appoint or retain an auditor. This means that companies that are not required to undertake an audit are no longer required to appoint and retain an auditor. All other public companies are required to appoint and retain an auditor, as is current practice. Labor supports these changes that remove unnecessary costs on business by removing the requirement for companies to appoint and retain an auditor, even if they are not required to conduct an audit. The change is expected to provide the greatest benefit to not-for-profit community organisations, allowing them to better service the community.

Part 1, items 1 and 2 of schedule 2 to this bill amend the Australian Securities and Investments Commission Act 2001 to improve the operation of the Takeovers Panel by allowing takeover matters to be dealt with more efficiently. Currently, the president and members of the Takeovers Panel may only participate in proceedings if they are within Australia. These changes mean the President of the Takeovers Panel may give a direction in respect of members who are to constitute the panel whether or not the president is in Australia. Further, members of the Takeovers Panel may participate in proceedings whether or not the members are in Australia. As technology improves and the world becomes ever more connected, it is sensible to alter legislation to reflect that change. This bill will allow members of the Takeovers Panel to participate in proceedings if they are physically located outside of Australia at the time. Labor supports this sensible change to allow the more efficient resolution of disputes.

Part 1, items 3 to 8, and part 2, item 9 of schedule 2 to this bill amend the ASIC Act to extend the Remuneration Tribunal’s remuneration-setting responsibility to include certain Corporations Act bodies. Currently, the ASIC Act provides that the responsible Treasury portfolio minister determines the terms and conditions—including remuneration—of the chairs and members of the Financial Reporting Council, the FRC; the Chair of the Australian Accounting Standards Board, the AASB; and the Chair of the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board, the AUASB. The ASIC Act also provides that the FRC is responsible for determining the terms and conditions, including remuneration, of the offices held by the members of the AASB and the AUASB.

This bill brings responsibility for determining the remuneration and full-time member recreation leave entitlements of the chair and members of the FRC, the AASB and the AUASB within the Remuneration Tribunal’s jurisdiction. The Remuneration Tribunal has specialist skills in reviewing and determining remuneration and is therefore better placed to determine the remuneration of these offices. Moreover, it will ensure consistency in the remuneration setting arrangements between the three bodies and other statutory office holders.

Currently, the responsible Treasury portfolio minister determines the terms and conditions—including remuneration—of the chairs and members of the Financial Reporting Council, the chair of the Australian Accounting Standards Board and the chair of the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board. The ASIC Act also provides that the FRC is responsible for determining the terms and conditions held by the members of the AASB and the AUASB.

Labor supports the provisions in this bill that bring responsibility for determining the remuneration and full-time-member recreation leave entitlements of the chair and members within the Remuneration Tribunal’s jurisdiction. There is no question that that is the best place
for them and where they ought to be. The changes that are contained in this bill are supported by Labor. They were changes that Labor was progressing through in government and matters that had been worked on with bipartisan support across both sides of this chamber, and within the industry and the sector itself. It is good, sensible policy. I offer Labor's support for these measures and commend the bill to the House.

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (10:53): I rise to speak on the Corporations Legislation Amendment (Deregulatory and Other Measures) Bill 2014 and indicate that the Labor Party and I will be supporting this government legislation that amends the Corporations Act 2001 and the Australian Securities and Investments Commission Act 2001. With the Minister for Small Business and the shadow Treasurer in the chamber we would be quick to acknowledge the important role that corporations play in Australian society, in the protection of the individual and the mustering together of an appropriate response to the risk that comes with business. In fact, much of the development of modern Australia can be traced back to corporations, with people pooling their money and not having an individual risk.

Corporations have evolved over time. Not everything that applies to a corporation is covered in the corporations legislation. Modern corporations are aware of their social licence. It is not something that is written in any particular section of the corporations legislation, but they must have a strong connection with their community and earn the right to carry out things that they do, whether it be the tasks they do, the products they make or sell or the role they play in the community.

Items 1, 2 and 10 of schedule 1 to this bill amend the Corporations Act to better balance the rights of shareholders to raise issues with the company and the cost to companies of being required to call and hold a general meeting. I focus particularly on this because of the point I made earlier about social licence. Obviously, shareholders of the company have the ability to give input at an annual general meeting of a corporation, and say, 'This is what we are concerned about.' But it costs money to set up an annual general meeting and to notify all the shareholders. Even in these days of electronic communications it still costs money to hold such meetings. This amendment to the Corporations Act repeals the so-called 100-member rule, which created an obligation on a corporation to hold a general meeting at the request of 100 or more shareholders. These meetings are often called for protest purposes. I am not saying that those purposes are not legitimate, but there can be significant costs that have to be met by every shareholder in the corporation, and such meetings do create a significant cost to business. These proposed changes do not remove the ability of 100 shareholders to add items to the regular, scheduled annual general meeting. Obviously, shareholders always have the right to instigate debate as an agenda item at any of these meetings. They still have a chance to have their concerns heard as an item at the annual general meeting, whether their concerns are about the financial governance of the organisation or some of the social licence matters. This legislation retains the right of 100 or more members to raise issues of concern, but without the often significant costs to shareholders of scheduling these extraordinary meetings, as exists under the current act.

The 100-member rule is not linked to having five per cent or 10 per cent of the value of a corporation, which is what happens in several countries. For example, for a significant company like Woolworths, only 100 shareholders would be required to compel the company to call an extraordinary general meeting. That is actually what happened with Woolworths
when it came to debating $1 limits on its poker machines. The cost to Woolworths of notifying its shareholders of the meeting was $500,000. When it hosted the meeting the motion received only 2.5 per cent support. Perhaps it might be said that if the motion to put a $1 limit on poker machines had received 10 per cent or 50 per cent support it might have been worthwhile. Irrespective of the merits of the reason for the shareholders calling the meeting in the Woolworths example, Labor has seen that we need to be more sensible about this and not have unnecessary costs attached to corporations. The other example mentioned by the shadow minister, Bernie Ripoll, was the example of the NRMA—

Mr Bowen interjecting—

Mr PERRETT: Sorry, the shadow assistant—

Mr Bowen: He's the shadow minister for financial services.

Mr PERRETT: The shadow minister for financial services—thank you, shadow Treasurer—and member for Oxley. He is my next-door neighbour and a great guy. He gave the example of the NRMA, which in two years was forced to call 12 extraordinary general meetings to consider motions about removing directors. The meetings cost several million dollars and resulted in none of the directors being removed from the NRMA board. It is hard to justify such behaviour.

Items 3 to 5 and 10 of schedule 1 of this bill amend the Corporations Act to improve and streamline remuneration reporting requirements. Currently, disclosing entities that are companies must disclose the value of options that lapsed during a financial year for each member of the key management personnel. So disclosing entities that are companies must also disclose the percentage value of remuneration that consists of options for each member of the key management personnel.

Item 6 of schedule 1 of this bill amends the Corporations Act 2001 to clarify the circumstances in which a financial year may be less than 12 months. This sounds like something out of Yes Minister, but it is actually good business practice every now and then to change the year. There is confusion about the conditions under which directors may determine that a financial year be shorter that 12 months. Currently section 323D sets out how companies, registered schemes and disclosing entities may determine the length of their financial year. While an entity's financial year is expected to be approximately 12 months long, entities can determine otherwise in cases where an entity needs to modify its financial year by up to seven days to accommodate week based internal reporting frameworks or an entity needs to synchronise its financial year in order to prepare consolidated financial reports.

Items 7 to 9 of schedule 1 of this bill amend the legislation to exempt certain companies limited by guarantee from the need to appoint or retain an auditor. Obviously there are significant costs associated with auditors. They perform an important role. Normally when companies get into trouble you find that the auditor has not been doing an appropriate job. Currently all public companies, including companies limited by guarantee, are required to appoint and retain an auditor. This bill amends this so that the small companies limited by guarantee and those companies limited by guarantee that have their financial reports reviewed are not required to appoint or retain an auditor. This means that companies that are not required to undertake an audit are no longer required to appoint and retain an auditor. All
other public companies, however, are required to appoint and retain an auditor. So the public has that security, knowing that auditors will be looking through the books of those companies.

Part 1, items 1 and 2, of schedule 2 of this bill amend the Australian Securities and Investments Commission Act to improve the operation of the Takeovers Panel by allowing takeover matters to be dealt with more efficiently. Currently the president and members of the Takeovers Panel may only participate in proceedings if they are within Australia. This bill makes amendments so that the president of the Takeovers Panel may give a direction in respect of members who are to constitute the panel whether or not the president is in Australia. Further, members of the Takeovers Panel may participate in proceedings whether or not they are in Australia.

Part 1, items 3 to 8, and part 2, item 9, of schedule 2 of this bill amend the Australian Securities and Investments Commission Act 2001 to extend the Remuneration Tribunal’s remuneration setting responsibility to include certain Corporations Act bodies. The ASIC Act currently provides that the responsible Treasury portfolio minister determines the terms and conditions, including the remuneration of the chairs and members of the Financial Reporting Council, the chair of the Australian Accounting Standards Board and the chair of the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board. The ASIC Act also provides that the FRC is responsible for determining the terms and conditions, including remuneration, of the offices held by the members of the AASB and the AUASB.

This bill brings responsibility for determining the remuneration and full-time member recreation leave entitlements of the chair and member positions of the FRC, the AASB and the AUASB within the Remuneration Tribunal’s direction. The Remuneration Tribunal has specialist skills in reviewing and determining remuneration. It looks after members of parliament’s remuneration as well, and it does a good job. It is therefore better placed to determine the remuneration of these officers. Moreover, it will ensure consistency in the remuneration setting arrangements between the three bodies and other statutory office holders.

One of the controversial items in this legislation which has bipartisan support will be the one about 100 members. I revisit that item because so many campaigns are organised when a corporation is perhaps doing something that people are not happy with. We have seen it with union campaigns in the past where perhaps inappropriate workplace practices are taking place. We have seen it when corporations are selling something, farming, mining or doing something that members of the community are not happy with. The 100 shareholders practice has often been used in the past in these cases. I want to stress again that, when compared with other common law jurisdictions that utilise corporations or even civil countries that use corporations and all the benefits that come with corporations, Australia has been a bit stand-alone in letting 100 shareholders, as I said, irrespective of the value of the shares held by those 100 shareholders, take control and basically impose a cost on other shareholders.

That would be the more controversial point, but the other aspects, such as improving remuneration reporting, clarifying the financial year, streamlining the auditor appointments, improving the efficiency of takeover panels and improving the government remuneration process, are not particularly controversial. This is normal, run-of-the-mill government business. I am happy to support this legislation before the chamber.
Mr CIOBO (Moncrieff—Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer) (11:06): I thank those members who have contributed to this debate. This bill makes a number of amendments designed to reduce the regulatory burden on businesses operating in Australia. Schedule 1 of this bill amends the Corporations Act 2001 to reduce the cost to businesses operating in Australia by removing the ability for 100 members of a company to request a general meeting. While this change ensures company resources are no longer spent on meetings requested by only a very small minority of shareholders, we have also made sure important shareholder rights are retained. This change will not impact on the right of a member or members with at least five per cent of the voting shares to request a general meeting. Nor will it impact on the right of 100 members of a company to place items on the agenda of a general meeting.

This bill simplifies remuneration disclosures in Australia. Unlisted disclosing entities will no longer be required to prepare a remuneration report. This bill clarifies when entities can change their financial year end dates. Stakeholders have been calling for this clarity since an amendment to permit companies greater flexibility to change their financial year end date was inserted into the Corporations Act in 2010. Entities will finally be able to access this flexibility with confidence.

Finally, schedule 1 of the bill removes the requirement for companies limited by guarantee, that are not required to undertake an audit, to appoint an auditor. This primarily benefits smaller companies limited by guarantee who feel the burden of the existing requirement most acutely.

Scheduled 2 of this bill amends the Australian Securities and Investments Commission Act 2001 to improve the efficiency of government processes, reflecting the government's commitment to identifying cost savings and efficiencies within its own processes. Schedule 2 also improves the efficiency of the operation of the Takeovers Panel. It further extends the remuneration-setting responsibility of the Remuneration Tribunal to the Financial Reporting Council, the Australian Accounting Standards Board and the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board.

In summary, the amendments made by this bill will reduce the costs borne by Australian businesses because of government regulation. It will permit business to focus on what it is they should be doing—running their business. I commend the bill to the House.

Question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Mr CIOBO (Moncrieff—Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer) (11:09): by leave—I move:

That this bill now be read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

Treasury Legislation Amendment (Repeal Day) Bill 2014

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr FEENEY (Batman) (11:09): I am very pleased to make a fine upstanding contribution to this debate in the context of our next speaker being momentarily detained. The Treasury Legislation Amendment (Repeal Day) Bill is obviously something that the shadow minister for financial services and superannuation looks forward to attending to in just a moment. But let me say that schedule 1 to this bill amends the Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Act 1993 to repeal the pay slip reporting provisions. The pay slip reporting provisions in the SI(S)A require employers to include in employee pay slips information prescribed by the regulations. It was intended that the regulations be made so that employers had to report on pay slips the amount of superannuation contributions and the date on which the employer expects to pay them. This has not occurred. There are existing requirements in the Fair Work Act 2009 and the Fair Work Regulations 2009 for employers to include in pay slips the amount of superannuation contributions they are liable for making.

Schedule 2 of the bill makes mechanical and non-controversial amendments to the Taxation Administration Act 1953 to consolidate duplicated provisions, repeal redundant laws and move longstanding regulations into primary law.

Schedule 3 to this bill amends the Financial Sector (Shareholdings) Act 1998 so that persons who do not hold a direct control interest in a financial sector company will no longer be deemed to have a stake in that financial sector company solely as a consequence of their associate's direct control interest in such a company. Under the existing law, a person must obtain approval from the Treasurer to hold a stake in a financial sector company of more than 15 per cent. A stake is defined in clause 10 of schedule 1 of the FSSA as: 'the aggregate of the direct control interest held by that person and the direct control interest held by associates of that person.' Associates is widely defined in clause 4 of schedule 1 of the FSSA to include a person's relatives, their partners, related companies and other parties.

Where a person acquires a direct control interest of more than 15 per cent in a financial sector company, the associate of the person is also required to obtain approval to exceed the 15 per cent shareholding limit. This can be despite the associate holding no direct control interest or, indeed, any interest. While I am very keen to continue making these points, I must now defer to my colleague, who I know is far more intimate with the material.

Mr RIPOLL (Oxley) (11:12): I thank the member for Batman for dutifully and skilfully negotiating through, as he is well known for doing.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Broadbent): We have just experienced an excellent contribution to the debate.

Mr RIPOLL: A fine and excellent contribution, and that is why he is doing so well. I do rise to speak on the Treasury Legislation Amendment (Repeal Day) Bill 2014. There are a number of measures that I want to speak to, each of them separately. They are all important and make some important changes, in particular to the Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Act 1993, to repeal the pay slip reporting provisions.

The pay slip reporting provisions in the SI(S) Act require employers to include an employee pay slip information prescribed by the regulations. People would be familiar with this when they look at their pay slips and see a number of things that are included, including their superannuation entitlements and payments. It was intended that regulations be made so
that employers had to report on pay slips the superannuation contributions and the date on which the employer expects to pay them. This has not occurred. There were existing requirements in the Fair Work Act 2009 and the Fair Work Regulations 2009 for employers to include in pay slips the amount of superannuation contributions they are liable to make. These regulations are not changing. The requirement for superannuation guarantee payments to be made within 28 days of the end of a quarter is also not changing. The provisions this bill is removing were enacted in legislation but never made a practical reality for business because the regulations needed to enact them were never put in place.

There is no doubt that the intentions of the original changes were good. The reality for employers, though—particularly small business—was increased cost via software and other upgrades. It is arguable whether the requirements being repealed would have any affect at all on those negligent, unscrupulous employers who intend not to pay superannuation. In light of that, these changes have been brought forward.

Employees will still be able to check with their fund whether payments have been made by their employer. That is critically important. Labor will monitor closely the issue of unpaid superannuation payments, as should the government, because this is an important part of an employee's salary and payments. It is just what ordinary people are paid. The same as anybody else, we expect that, when we get a pay slip and it details how much we are paid, it also includes superannuation contributions. There is of course an expectation that those payments have actually been paid into our respective accounts, wherever they might be. We will monitor that and we would expect the government to do the same thing, particularly in light of the importance of superannuation in terms of boosting people's retirement savings.

There is no political party in Australia that has done more to boost the retirement savings of Australians than Labor has. Going back many years, Labor has recognised that ordinary people need to have a mechanism available to them through the superannuation guarantee to set aside money for their independence and financial security in retirement. As noble a cause as it is, it is an important cause for individuals and families. What it also means is a huge saving to government, to the budget and to the bottom line.

This is a good measure. Just last financial year alone, some $6 billion was saved from the budget because of superannuation savings held by ordinary Australians. They are people who, because of their retirement savings, either do not rely at all on the pension system or other welfare payments or rely only in part on government payments. This is something that should be encouraged. It should be grown; it should be leveraged up. The government should do as much as they can to ensure that continues to happen and to ensure the stability of the system. This first schedule is important in making sure that we understand the basis of what is contained on people's pay slips.

Schedule 2 makes mechanical and non-controversial changes to the Taxation Administration Act 1953 and consolidates duplicated provisions. It also repeals redundant laws and moves longstanding regulations into primary law. Labor supports these measures. They are good measures and measures that, in government, we were also moving towards. This is always the case. Regardless of how long you are in government, you cannot do everything all in one day or all in many days. Like all governments, towards the end of a term there is always some unfinished business. This is part of that unfinished business.
Schedule 3 to this bill amends the Financial Sector (Shareholdings) Act 1998 so that persons who do not hold a direct control interest in a financial sector company will no longer be deemed to have a stake in that financial sector company solely as a consequence of their associate's direct control interest in the company. Under the existing law, a person must obtain approval from the Treasurer to hold a stake in a financial sector company of more than 15 per cent. A 'stake' is defined in clause 10 of schedule 1 of the FSSA as the aggregate of the direct control interest held by that person and the direct control interest held by associates of that person. 'Associates' is widely defined in clause 4 of schedule 1 of the FSSA to include a person's relatives, partners, related companies and other parties. Where a person acquires a direct control interest in a financial sector company of more than 15 per cent, the associate of the person is required to also obtain approval to exceed the 15 per cent shareholding limit. This can be despite the associate holding no direct control interest, or indeed any interest, in the financial sector company. This imposes a burden for associates to reasonably comply with the law, particularly where associates are not aware of the requirement to seek the Treasurer's approval.

The measures in this bill mean a person who does not hold a direct control interest in a financial sector company will no longer be deemed to hold a stake in that company solely as a consequence of their associates' direct control interest in the company. Only where a person holds a direct control interest of any size would the interest be aggregated with that of the person's associates to determine the total stake held. For an associate holding a direct control interest in a financial sector company, the associate's stake is equivalent to the aggregate of their own stake and that of other associates, including the person acquiring the actual direct control interest. The associate is required to seek the Treasurer's approval where the aggregated stake exceeds the 15 per cent shareholding limit. It is important to note that these changes will ensure that there is appropriate examination of a shareholder's controlling interest. But it will take away the trap of associates who have no control interest in having to apply to the Treasurer in order to comply with the law. Labor supports removing this unnecessary burden.

Further, schedule 4 rewrites provisions from the Income Tax Assessment Act 1936 into the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997 and the Taxation Administration Act 1953 to unify the definition of 'Australia' for tax purposes. This is a non-controversial mechanical change with no fiscal impact. Labor supports this change as well.

Labor is always prepared to support any fair and reasonable amendments and changes that improve the management and structure of our financial services sector, or other measures that improve consumer protections and also improve the ability of business to deal with regulation properly. Labor understands that good regulation is the best outcome for business, where that regulation is clear and concise and where it provides the right mechanisms for business to get on with their job. Labor wants to make sure that, particularly in the case of superannuation, employees have a clear understanding of what is required by employers in terms of providing their superannuation guarantee. This is in the best interest not only of individuals; it is also in the best interest of employers, companies and business.

It is in the best interest of Australia because it grows our national savings pool, which today stands at more than $1.85 trillion. It is this incredible statistic which puts Australia well ahead of the world in terms of size of population and in terms of our national savings. We
have somewhere around the fifth largest funds under management in the world because of our national savings pool, which is a direct outcome, a direct result, of the superannuation guarantee that exists in this country. Governments should always be enhancing that and growing that, and ensuring that people are not only paid their proper superannuation entitlements but paid on time. Employers should endeavour to always be vigilant around paying the Superannuation Guarantee because it is an important part of people's retirement savings and income, and their financial security in retirement. The changes that are before us are non-controversial and Labor supports them. I commend them to the House.

Mr LAUNDY (Reid) (11:22): Before I begin in earnest, I would like to attach myself to the end statements from the member for Oxley about the importance of employers paying superannuation. As someone that prior to being in this place has paid more than I care to imagine into the accounts of people's superannuation over the last 23 years of working in my father's business and seeing many staff retire from our business and live on their savings afterwards, I cannot agree more, but I will say more about that in a minute.

On the night that we won the election the Prime Minister uttered those now famous words: … I declare Australia is under new management and is once more open for business.

While to a lot of people that immediately means new business, what it means to me as a prior existing business operator in this country is getting out of the way of existing business too. It is to the Prime Minister's credit that he has sought to keep this in his portfolio.

We are talking about the Treasury Legislation Amendment (Repeal Day) Bill 2014, and I want to applaud the Treasurer and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer, the member for Moncrieff, who have taken up the challenge in this set of measures. It is not just the Prime Minister; it is that the Prime Minister took it in his portfolio and put the member for Kooyong, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, in charge of driving this agenda. And I am privileged that, not long after being elected, the member for Kooyong made contact with me, and some other colleagues who will talk shortly on this bill, and asked if I would give him a hand in the great state of New South Wales, given my background. I of course jumped at the opportunity. Over the last 12 months, one of the great things for me has been to work with the member for Kooyong in liaising with other ministers' portfolios in an effort to find ways that we can get out of the way of businesses.

Why is it so important? You have heard, since May, discussion always gravitates in budgets to the expense side of our national profit-and-loss statement. At the moment we are about to have the MYEFO, in which I believe we will find that the discussion starts to move to the revenue side of the profit-and-loss statement as we come under pressure.

But one of the things that we do not realise, in my humble opinion, is that as government we are not just regulators and we are not just legislators. We are ultimately depending upon the company structure or the ownership structure of every business that operates in Australia, irrespective of size. We are a 'shareholder', and the more we can do, irrespective of ministerial portfolio, to get out of their way—and I mean get out of the expense side of their profit-and-loss statement—the more money will flow to their bottom line. Why is that important? Firstly, it is because they make more brass and, secondly, so do we as government. That is where we are battling. And that is the part of this deregulation agenda and narrative that this government, I do not believe, has expressed strongly enough to this point. It is not just about making life simpler for business—yes, that is important; it is about enabling them to increase
their bottom line, their profit. Why? Because we go for the ride. And, at a time when revenue is short and vulnerable, the more we can do this, the better we will be. It will allow us to focus less on the expense side of our national profit-and-loss statement in our budget and focus on where we can better spend our money.

But I draw your attention back to the legislation in front of us, and I note that this bill forms part of our whole commitment. The measures contained in this bill improve and simplify the operation of laws relating to taxation, superannuation and shareholdings in certain financial sector companies. The bill contains a number of measures: it repeals the payslip reporting provisions in the superannuation law that would have increased the regulatory burden on employers beyond that currently imposed under the Fair Work Act legislation; it simplifies the taxation laws by removing inoperative provisions, consolidating duplicated provisions and moving longstanding regulations into the primary law; it reduces the regulatory burden on the associates of individuals seeking to obtain a shareholding of more than 15 per cent in certain financial sector companies; and it rewrites the definition of 'Australia' into a single location in the new tax law, for use across all tax laws in a simple and coherent form.

In terms of employer reporting of superannuation contributions, this government is providing certainty for employers—that they do not need to be preparing for significant changes to the software that generates their pay slips in respect of superannuation reporting. The government will repeal duplicative provisions from the superannuation law that allow for regulations to be created, prescribing additional information to be included on employee pay slips on superannuation contributions. Labor had intended that these regulations would be made, specifying that employers had to report on pay slips the amount of superannuation contributions and the date on which the employer expects to pay them. However, Labor never made the regulations. This measure will not affect the information that employees currently receive on superannuation contributions on their pay slip.

Under the Fair Work Act, employers are already required to at least report details of employee superannuation entitlements that accrue during the pay period on an employee's pay slip. If employers were required to report actual contributions and payment dates, they would need to invest in major upgrades in their software—once again, a large expense on the expense side of their profit-and-loss statement, decreasing their profitability. The benefit for employees on this move would be marginal.

Most employers pay their superannuation. Even if reporting actual superannuation contributions on pay slips were mandated, employers who did not comply with their superannuation requirements would be unlikely to disclose this on their pay slips. Also, employees may not take regular notice of what is reported on their pay slips. I note that 70 per cent of employees who do not receive their superannuation entitlement from their employer do not make a complaint to the Australian Taxation Office until after they have left the employer. This is a real shame. This may be because they do not want to jeopardise their jobs, and changing the information on superannuation contributions required to be reported on pay slips is unlikely to change that. The ATO investigates every complaint received about unpaid super. Their risk analysis work allows the ATO to target actions against high-risk industries and high-risk employers. Employees can now also typically check online via their
superannuation fund whether their employer is making regular superannuation contributions, without having to wait for an annual statement.

The consolidation and repeal of tax provisions measure in this bill simplifies the taxation laws by consolidating duplicated taxation administration provisions contained in various taxation acts into a single location in a single act. It also repeals spent or redundant taxation laws, such as the older harsh penalty regimes, and moves longstanding regulations into primary law. One such item in this bill has to do with the commissioner's power to obtain information. Currently, if a taxpayer wants to know what information the commissioner has the power to obtain, they need to refer to over 10 different acts. As a result of these amendments, a taxpayer will now only have to refer to schedule 1 of the Taxation Administration Act 1953.

The current tax law is complex, difficult to understand and frequently costly to comply with. For example, the current provisions dealing with tax file numbers and investment income reports provided by investment bodies to the Commissioner of Taxation are overly prescriptive and difficult to comply with. They are not sufficiently flexible to allow the commissioner to continue to pursue further ways of reducing compliance costs. Rewriting the tax file number and investment income reporting will increase the Commissioner of Taxation's flexibility to facilitate modern reporting methods, which should reduce compliance costs for investment bodies.

Overall, the changes will result in a material reduction in the size of the taxation laws, with one or two sections replacing in excess of 50 existing provisions. Removing inoperative provisions, consolidating duplicated provisions and moving longstanding regulations into primary law does not alter any of the current tax policies. However, it does make the tax law easier to use and easier to comply with. Tidying up our tax laws in line with good legislative practices is an important part of the care and maintenance of our tax system.

With reference to shareholding approvals in certain financial sector companies, the government in this measure removes an unnecessary burden on the associates of a person—for example, a person's partner, relatives or related companies—who is seeking approval for a shareholding of greater than 15 per cent in certain financial sector companies, such as banks and insurance companies. Currently, when a person is seeking a shareholding of more than 15 per cent of a financial sector company, they must seek approval from the Treasurer for the shareholding. The associates of the person must also seek approval from the Treasurer for the shareholding, as the Financial Sector (Shareholdings) Act 1998 deems the shareholding of the associate to be the same as that of the person seeking more than 15 per cent of the shareholding. This approval requirement applies to an associate even where the associate has no actual shareholding in the company. This measure removes the technical legislative trap that imposes an unnecessary regulatory burden. The changes in this bill do not compromise the examination of a shareholder's controlling interest. Associates with a shareholding are still required to be considered as part of the main applicant's shareholding to determine if they need to seek approval from the Treasurer for that shareholding.

There is the measure to rewrite the definition of 'Australia'. I do not know about you, Member for Bass, but, quite frankly, I found this one to be a little bit bizarre; but it is there. This measure rewrites the definition of 'Australia' as a single location. Who would have thought it? If you want to get something complicated, get government involved in it. They can
do it every time—make no bones about it. This allows it to be used across all tax laws in a simple and coherent form. Finally, we have got Australia sorted, it would seem—at least in the realm of the tax world. This measures addresses the problem that the current definition of 'Australia' for taxation purposes is complex, overly detailed, and expressed differently in different parts of the taxation laws, despite the fact that the laws are intended to achieve a simple and largely equivalent result.

Currently, if an individual working on an oil platform near Australia wanted to determine whether or not they had to pay Australian income tax, they would be required to navigate through the myriad provisions in up to 13 different Commonwealth acts. I refer to my earlier point: if you want to make something complicated, get government involved. To do away with the complex and ad hoc nature of the existing definition, the amendments codify and consolidate in one place a definition of 'Australia' for most tax purposes. Rewriting the tax laws, on average, has reduced the size of the provisions being rewritten by two-thirds. This assists taxpayers to better understand and comply with the laws, reducing their compliance costs. This takes another step towards achieving a single income tax assessment for Australia.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I refer to the commencement of this speech—when there was actually a different Deputy Speaker in the chair—where I stated that the narrative of this government from night one has been that Australia under our governance will be open for business. Whilst many immediately come up with the thought that that is about new business, it is also about what is and will always be the engine room of this economy—small- and medium-sized enterprises. They employ over 70 per cent of the people in this country today.

The best thing that any government can do—and I note that the Prime Minister plans to take this to COAG as a major reform item; and I mentioned earlier my experience in family business pre this place—is to get out of the way of business. This must be an agenda driven through all levels of government—through local government, state government and federal government. Why? It is because by working together and getting out of the way of business, getting out of the expense side of every profit and loss of every business in this country, irrespective of size, it will allow that company to maximise their bottom line. The sooner we as a government work out that we are not just legislators, we are not just regulators, and we make that quantum leap to understanding that we are business partners, the better business will be, the better our budget will be and the better our country will be, not only for us—we are mere custodians of this land—but, more importantly, for our children and our grandchildren. I commend the bill to the House.

Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (11:37): I wonder if any of those on the other side of the House could answer the following question: between this government's red-tape repeal day No. 1 and red-tape repeal day No. 2, how many new regulations did this government pass into law? The answer is 690. While it was crowing about a bonfire of regulations, this government was passing an average of three to four regulations every day. So much for their hatred of regulation—even on the weekends, they did not stop. No weekend day went by that they did not manage to churn out an average of three or four regulations. That, frankly, speaks to the stunt that red-tape repeal day is.

Good governments are always about cleaning up the statute books, making them as straightforward as possible and getting rid of typos. Good governments do not crow about a red-tape repeal day—it is like having a special 'I came to work and had a cup of tea' day. The
minister at the table is saying, 'Now there is an idea.' Perhaps that is what we will see from red-tape repeal day No. 3.

When Labor were in government we repealed over 16,000 redundant acts, regulations and legislative instruments. We changed thousands of pieces of bad punctuation and typographical errors in the statutes, but we did not feel the need to publicly pat ourselves on the back for that. We thought that was merely the engine room work of government. This is a government, though, that thinks that it ought to be particularly proud of its 39 individual amendments, changing the term 'electronic mail' to 'email'; of its several hundred amendments adjusting spelling, grammar and punctuation; and of the repeal of such noted business obstacles as the Dried Fruit Export Charges Act 1927, the Nitrous Fertiliser Subsidy Act 1969 and the Lighthouses Act 1949. Indeed, the way they keep on going we can expect a headland speech from this government on the repeal of the 1949 Lighthouses Act.

The inane nature of so many of these amendments explains why the government, in the case of its first red-tape repeal day exercise, did not bother to bring forward the Omnibus Repeal Bill to the Senate until a few weeks before the second red-tape repeal day. These are hardly the actions of a government which is champing at the bit to reduce the regulatory burden for Australians.

As Senator Ludwig has recently discovered, red-tape repeal stunts under this government are not free. Across agencies the government has set up teams to hunt out typographical errors, to root out the term 'electronic mail' wherever it might exist, to abolish regulations which are troubling no-one. The cost of that exercise in the case of Treasury is $2.1 million a year, while for the industry and social security departments it is costing around $700,000. This bonfire of the regulations is in fact a bonfire of the vanities, and Australians are paying the cost. Australians are paying millions of dollars for this government's war on bad punctuation.

When the government is not getting rid of trivial typographical errors, it is using its red-tape repeal stunts as a way of hiding measures which hurt ordinary Australians. So red-tape repeal day No. 1 involved attempting to gut Labor's Future of Financial Advice consumer protection reforms—reforms put in place in the wake of the devastating collapses of Storm Financial and Trio in order to prevent Australians from losing their life savings. You could tell who benefited and who lost from this by the shiny shoes lining up to defend the government while organisations like Choice and National Seniors were saying that taking away consumer protections on financial advice would be a bad idea. The Australian people managed to see off the attempt to gut consumer protections and to remove those financial advice protections. I pay tribute to those brave senators who stood up to knock off the government's removal of consumer protections.

The government is also using its red-tape repeal stunt as a way of killing off the Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission. The commission is one of those rare regulators that receive strong support from the sector it regulates. Four out of five Australian charities supported the charities commission before this government came to office and, after a year of campaigning in which Minister Andrews with his forceful advocacy hit every TV and radio station in the country to argue for the repeal of the charities commission—after that ferocious PR campaign from one of the government's most charismatic ministers!—what share of Australian charities do you think still supports the commission? Deputy Speaker, I am afraid
it is still four in five; and it is only about one in 20 who support the government's plan to give charities regulation back to the tax office.

Why would you take charities regulation from a bespoke agency, which is handling it well at an economical cost, and give it to the tax office, which is not well set up to monitor charities? The charities commission is good for charities, transparency and Australians wanting to protect themselves against door-to-door scammers. You can go to acnc.gov.au to simply check whether a charity is legitimate or whether the person at your door is trying to line their own pocket.

The real problem with red-tape repeal day is that its reforms are either trivial or take Australia backwards. As the member for Reid has noted of schedule 4 to this bill, it is indeed 'bizarre': unifying the definition of 'Australia' for tax purposes does not seem to be a measure which governments ought to be patting themselves on the back about. Schedule 2 makes mechanical uncontroversial amendments to the Taxation Administration Act 1953 to consolidate duplicated provisions, repeal redundant laws and move longstanding regulations into primary law. That is all unobjectionable stuff, while the measures relating to superannuation are supported by this side of the House—naturally, because Labor have the great superannuation legacy of which we are enormously proud.

This is a government which needs to focus less on trivia and more on substance, and less on unfair measures and more on fair measures that are in the interests of all Australians. We need to know what the future of the $7 GP co-payment is—whether it has been trashed or whether it has just been moved to the witness protection program, whether the government still intends to sneak it in or whether it is indeed an ex-parrot.

This is a government that has gone from bad to worse. It is a government that has not just barnacles on the ship but a fundamentally rotten hull. This government needs to focus on the Australian values of fairness and egalitarianism rather than governing for the very few at the expense of the many.

Debate adjourned.

**Australian War Memorial Amendment Bill 2014**

**Report from Federation Chamber**

Bill returned from Federation Chamber without amendment; certified copy of bill presented.

Ordered that this bill be considered immediately.

Bill agreed to.

**Third Reading**

**Mr McCormack** (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance) 
(11:45): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.
Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2014
First Reading

Bill received from the Senate and read a first time.
Ordered that the second reading be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Treasury Legislation Amendment (Repeal Day) Bill 2014
Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr NIKOLIC (Bass) (11:47): This is the second time in two days I have had the pleasure
to speak about the government's deregulation agenda. There are very few speakers on the
opposite side and I think the reason for that is obvious. That reason is that it reveals Labor's
culpability when it comes to the regulation that they imposed on Australia during their six
years in government. Those opposite, despite the comments by the member for Fraser, know
deep in their hearts how badly they have affected the productive capacity of our economy
with binding coils of regulation—python-like, squeezing the life out of the hardworking
businesses of Australia.

Labor cannot defend the indefensible, although they are certainly building a track record of
doing exactly that. They are intent on bringing back the carbon tax and the mining tax and on
changing immigration policy. Judging from the cavalcade of unaffordable promises they have
made in opposition over just the last 12 months, they are intent on returning to the
unsustainable spending practices that have robbed Australia of its economic freedom of
action.

People must be scratching their heads
about how it is possible, with a record like that
achieved by the Labor and Labor-Greens governments from 2007 to 2013, that the member
for Fraser can stand up in this House and talk about fairness and about 'well
understood' government responsibilities. How can he stand up and talk about the fiscal and economic
responsibilities of government given the record they achieved in just six years? They gave us
nearly $200 billion of achieved deficits, $123 billion of deficits projected across the forward
estimates and peak debt rising to two-thirds of a trillion dollars—$667 billion or $667,000
million, whichever way you like to say it, is an obscene amount of money to have borrowed
in six years. The member for Fraser stands up here and talks about fairness. How is it being
fair to the Australian people and future generations to not only ruin Australia's economic
freedom of action—our capacity to respond to another event like the global financial crisis—but to compound that problem by blocking measures in the Senate and elsewhere that would
allow us to address the effects of their six years in government?

We are here to talk about deregulation. The member for Fraser called it a stunt and a whole
range of other pejorative terms. What a contrast we have seen between just the first year of
this government and the first year of the Rudd government in 2008. In 2008, I was both a
senior Army officer and an acting senior public servant in one of our big national security
agencies, so I got to see firsthand the intention of Rudd Labor when it first came into
government—Mr Rudd's expansive promise that for every new regulation that came onto the
statute books he would take one regulation off the statute books. It was commonly called the
'one on, one off' rule. Who would disagree with that? What a sensible thing to do! It is sensible policymaking to ensure that the regulatory impact of your policies is fully considered in cabinet submissions—that wherever possible we take away those binding coils of legislation and regulation that impede the productive capacity of our businesses.

The problem, though, was that that laudable undertaking was never delivered upon. As with so many of their policies, Labor were long on promise and short on delivery. The member for Fraser talked about how 'good government is about cleaning up the statute books'. I know that the member for Fraser has authored many books that he would probably like to clean up today—they are regularly mentioned in this place—but how can he say good government is about cleaning up the statute books when the net result of six years of Labor and Labor-Greens government was 21,000 new regulations? They did not discriminate either: those binding coils of regulation slithered even tighter, taking the very breath out of efficiency, productivity and investment.

In the five financial years from mid-2007 until mid-2012, multifactor productivity across Australia declined by three per cent. So bad was our performance that, when the Economist Intelligence Unit ranked 51 countries for productivity growth, Australia came in second last, just in front of Botswana. That is the effect that was achieved by those opposite in six years of government. The Reserve Bank governor, Glenn Stevens, has pointed out how vital improvements in this area are. He said this about improving productivity:

Improving productivity growth is just about the sole source of improving living standards …

He drew that linkage between binding coils of regulation, productivity and the living standards of everyday Australians, and he is absolutely right.

In my home state of Tasmania it is a persistent message from business owners, chambers of commerce and numerous other stakeholders that reinforces what a red-hot-button issue this is. The member for Fraser stood up here and—I take offence at this, Deputy Speaker—he spoke in pejorative terms about the team that I am a member of, a team that is led by the member for Kooyong, who by any measure has delivered well beyond his brief when it comes to deregulation. We have the member for Ryan, who is here, and other members like the member for Pearce, the member for Hindmarsh and the member for Reid, who spoke earlier. We go up and we sit with the member for Kooyong, and we take forward problems that really matter in our communities. At two repeal days now, we have come forward and said, 'Here is our response to those problems,' delivering $2.1 billion in productivity improvements, deregulation and legislation improvements. That is not something that you should scoff at, those opposite. And the member for Fraser comes in here and says it is some sort of stunt! These things are making a meaningful difference in the lives of people in my community.

The Treasury Legislation Amendment (Repeal Day) Bill 2014 contains a number of key features, and I will speak to some of those now. It repeals pay slip reporting provisions in the superannuation law that would have increased the regulatory burden on employers beyond that which is currently imposed by the Fair Work regulation. It simplifies the taxation laws by removing inoperative provisions, consolidating duplicated provisions and moving longstanding regulations into the primary law. It reduces the regulatory burden on the associates of individuals who are seeking to obtain a shareholding of more than 15 per cent in certain financial sector companies. It rewrites the definition of 'Australia' into a single location in the tax law for use across all the tax laws in a simple and coherent form.
The member for Reid remarked on this matter of the definition of Australia. For me, the most important thing is to make sure that we do not leave Tasmania off the map. The three members in this House from Tasmania are making sure that they are never forgotten when the map of Australia is drawn.

In some of the other provisions in this bill, the government is providing certainty for employers that they do not need to be preparing for significant changes to their pay slip software in respect of superannuation reporting. We will do this by repealing duplicative provisions from the superannuation law that prescribe additional information on employee pay slips on superannuation contributions. Labor had intended that these regulations would be made, specifying that employers had to report on pay slips the amount of superannuation contributions and the date on which the employer expects to pay them. But, as I said earlier in my speech, on this issue, like so many other policy matters, Labor was long on promise but short on delivery and never made these regulations, so we are going to tidy that small matter up in this bill.

Importantly, this measure will not affect the information employees currently receive on superannuation contributions on their pay slip. Under the Fair Work Act, employers are already required to at least report details of employee superannuation entitlements that accrued during the pay period on an employee's pay slip. If employers were required to report actual contributions and payment dates, they would need to invest in major upgrades to their software, and the benefit for employees would be marginal at best. A lot of what we do is about cost benefit. It is about accepting a little bit of risk so that we do not impose unnecessary and additional cost on those who are making a living, who are adding to the productive capacity of our country.

Most employers pay their superannuation. Even if reporting actual superannuation contributions on pay slips were mandated, employers who did not comply with their superannuation requirements would be unlikely to disclose this on pay slips, so what is the point? I note that 70 per cent of employees who do not receive their superannuation entitlement from their employer, as the member for Reid said, do not actually make a complaint to the ATO until after they have left the employer, so changing the information on superannuation contributions required to be reported on pay slips is unlikely to change that.

It is also important to note that the ATO already investigate every complaint received about unpaid super by that small number of employers who do the wrong thing. Their risk analysis work allows the ATO to target actions against high-risk industries and employers. But, as I said, the vast majority do the right thing and pay their staff their super entitlements. In 2014, as we know, employees increasingly can typically check online, via their super fund, whether their employer is doing the right thing. So the mechanical, handraulic need for this measure is certainly reduced.

We are going to consolidate and repeal some tax provisions in this bill. We are going to simplify the taxation law by consolidating duplicated taxation admin provisions contained in various taxation acts into a single location in the act. We are also going to repeal spent or redundant taxation laws, such as the older harsh penalty regimes, and move longstanding regulations into the primary law. Overall, the changes will result in a material reduction in the size of the taxation laws, with one or two sections replacing in excess of 50 provisions. Removing inoperative provisions, consolidating duplicated provisions and moving
longstanding regulations into the primary law do not alter any of the current tax policies. However, it does make the tax law easier to use and easier to comply with—and I say hooray to that. Tidying up our tax laws in line with good legislative practice, contrary to what the member for Fraser said, is an important part of the care and maintenance of our tax system.

Another measure in this bill removes an unnecessary burden on the associates of a person, for example a person's partner, relative or related company, who is seeking approval for a shareholding of greater than 15 per cent in certain financial sector companies, like banks and insurance companies. This approval requirement applies to an associate even where the associate has no actual shareholding in the company. The measure removes the technical legislative trap that imposes an unnecessary legislative and regulatory burden. Importantly, this change in no way compromises our ability to examine a shareholder's controlling interest. Associates with a shareholding are still required to be considered as part of the main applicant's shareholding to determine if they need to seek approval from the Treasurer for that shareholding. In addition, the Treasurer retains authority to block shareholdings where practical control can be asserted by an associate and the Treasurer is satisfied that it is in the national interest that the shareholding be divested.

Earlier I talked about a team led by the member for Kooyong, with some of the members here present as part of that team, doing what I consider to be good work twice a year that will continue in the future. These repeal days are making a meaningful difference in relation to that binding regulation in Australia at the moment. But that is only part of the equation. Every portfolio minister has to search for and come up with red-tape reduction measures, and in relation to this bill the Treasurer had done exactly that. I congratulate the Treasurer for delivering on part of that deregulation agenda that is so important to the future multifactor productivity of our country.

This bill takes another step towards achieving a single Income Tax Assessment Act for Australia. It reinforces the government's resolve to implement our vital deregulation agenda, to strip away the binding coils of as much red tape as possible in our community and to help Australians more easily navigate their way efficiently through legislation and regulation. It is one contribution to this government's bonfire of bureaucracy, but an important step, nevertheless, on the long road to sensible economic reform. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (12:02): The Treasury Legislation Amendment (Repeal Day) Bill forms part of the government's repeal day stunt. The government makes a lot of grandiose claims about their deregulation agenda. We have heard feverish talk of a 'bonfire of regulations'. The government claims that they will achieve savings in compliance costs of up to $1 billion dollars from their repeal day theatrics.

Mr Nikolic: It is $2.1 billion.

Mr DREYFUS: There is more rhetorical nonsense from the member for Bass, who is one of the chief culprits in this area. They are not able to say where this fanciful figure of $1 billion, or the fanciful figure of $2.1 billion, was plucked from. Much of repeal day is nothing more than smoke and mirrors. With tremendous fanfare and much boasting—including from the member for Bass, who is one of the more boastful of those on the other side about the supposed marvels of the deregulation activity that the government is engaging in—on each of its two repeal days this year the government has introduced a statute law revision bill and an amending acts repeal bill. With all of the talk of bonfires and wars and slashing red tape on
the part of the Prime Minister and the member for Kooyong—the leader of this exercise, according to the member for Bass—and their colleagues, you would think that pieces of legislation like this contained some kind of bold reform. You would be wrong, though. The statute law revision bills are nothing more than housekeeping exercises. Every year Australian parliaments pass these bills, which correct typos, update drafting, and improve formatting and numbering, among other things. Is this the Liberal Party's idea of slashing red tape? How many businesses are held back by typos in obscure Commonwealth acts of parliament? How many Australians feel burdened by numbering errors in old statutes? Given the pomp and ceremony attached to the repeal day media stunt, you might be underwhelmed to discover that one of the bold reforms this government is progressing is the removal of the hyphen from the word 'email' wherever it appears in Commonwealth law.

The amending acts repeal bills are even more farcical. I am sorry that the member for Bass, after all the rhetorical froth we just heard from him, has left the chamber and is not here to hear what is actually going on with this repeal day stunt. All these bills do is to repeal legislation which amends or repeals prior legislation. Technically, these bills are still on the books—but they have no effect. Their operation is spent. Their removal has not one scintilla of real legal consequence. Indeed, the repealed bills will remain on the Commonwealth's legislation register in any case as historical acts! The only purpose of these bills is to let the Liberal government crow about the number, not the substance, of regulations they have repealed. What hollow numbers they throw around. When the Liberal government says they are repealing 10,000 pieces of legislation, they neglect to mention that the vast bulk of those pieces of legislation have not been in force for decades. We should expect nothing more from a government already, just a year into its term, known for its disingenuousness.

Of course, the Labor Party has a genuine belief in lightening the load of regulation where that is appropriate. We are the party of meaningful deregulation. We are the party of banking sector liberalisation, sweeping competition reform, the floating of the dollar and the slashing of tariffs. We do not shy away from removing regulations which do not serve a worthwhile purpose. We believe, unlike the government, that we need regulation to protect our environment, to protect labour standards and to protect consumers, but we have never supported regulation for its own sake. So, when the government puts forward measures like those in this bill, we are happy to support them.

This bill amends several acts dealing with taxation, superannuation and shareholdings in certain financial sector companies. The member for Riverina, when speaking to this bill, compared it to removing 'small grains of sand from an engine'. It does remove a small number of regulations and makes some mechanical changes to some legislation.

Schedule 1 to this bill amends the Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Act 1993 to repeal the pay slip reporting provisions. The pay slip reporting provisions in the Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Act, the SIS Act, require employers to include in employee pay slips information prescribed by the regulations. There is no political party in Australia that has done more to boost the retirement savings of Australians than Labor. Unpaid superannuation liability is a problem that some Australians have to face. Recent estimates place that figure at approximately $1.3 billion, so it is right that there are measures on the statute books that try to remove that problem and that try to ensure that superannuation which is required to be paid is paid. There are current protections under the Fair Work Act for
the reporting of superannuation liability on pay slips. These require the payments either made or liable to be made to be reported on the pay slip, and they are not being changed.

The requirements for superannuation guarantee payments to be made within 28 days of the end of a quarter are also not changing. The provisions that this bill is removing were enacted in legislation—that is, in the Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Act—but have never been a practical reality for businesses because the regulations that were needed to enact them were never put in place. Just to make that clear, there are current protections in the Fair Work Act; that is good. The government is not changing those current protections. What the government is doing here is removing a legislative requirement that never actually came into effect for any Australian business because the regulations that they called for were never put in place.

There is no doubt that the intentions of the original changes were good. The reality for employers, particularly small businesses, was potentially increased costs via software and other upgrades. It is arguable if the requirements being repealed would have any effect at all on those negligent and unscrupulous employers who intend not to pay superannuation. Employees will still be able to check with their fund if payments have been made by their employer. Labor intends to closely monitor the issue of unpaid superannuation payments. We will examine closely options to ensure that compliance by employers is insisted on, because we believe in the superannuation guarantee as a means of boosting retirement savings of Australia. But let us not overstate the effect of the repeal that is occurring here. There are already protections under the Fair Work Act. That is good thing; they will remain.

Schedule 2 makes some mechanical and non-controversial amendments to the Taxation Administration Act 1953 to consolidate duplicated provisions, repeal redundant laws and move longstanding regulations into primary law. It is not something that one could point to as having a dramatic impact on Australian business.

Schedule 3 to this bill amends the Financial Sector (Shareholdings) Act 1998 so that persons who do not hold a direct controlling interest in a financial sector company will no longer be deemed to have a stake in that financial sector company solely as a consequence of their associates' direct control interest in the company. Under the existing law, a person must obtain approval from the Treasurer to hold a stake in a financial sector company of more than 15 per cent. A stake is defined in clause 10 of schedule 1 of the act as the aggregate of the direct control interest held by that person and the direct control interest held by associates of that person. 'Associates' is widely defined in clause 4 of schedule 1 of the FS(S) Act to include a person's relatives, partners, related companies and other parties.

Where a person acquires a direct control interest in a financial sector company of more than 15 per cent, the associate of the person is also required to obtain approval to exceed the 15 per cent shareholding limit. This can be despite the associate holding no direct control interest or, indeed, any interest in the financial sector company. This imposes a burden for associates to reasonably comply with the law, particularly where associates are not aware of the requirement to seek the Treasurer's approval.

The amendments in this bill will mean a person who does not hold a direct control interest in a financial sector company will no longer be deemed to hold a stake in that company solely as a consequence of their associates' direct control interest in that company. Only where a person holds a direct control interest of any size would the interest be aggregated with that of
the person's associates to determine the total stake held. For an associate holding a direct control interest in a financial sector company, the associate's stake is equivalent to the aggregate of their own stake and other associates, including the person acquiring the actual direct control interest. The associate is required to seek the Treasurer's approval where the aggregated stake exceeds the 15 per cent shareholding limit.

Schedule 4 rewrites provisions in the Income Tax Assessment Act 1936 and the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997 to unify the definition of 'Australia' for tax purposes. This is a non-controversial, mechanical change without any fiscal impact.

The member for Riverina's muted description of this legislation is appropriate. These are worthwhile, if not earthshattering, measures. Labor is happy to support them. But we must complain when the passage of legislation like this, with our support, is used as an excuse by those opposite to grandstand about the supposed regulatory overreach of the last Labor government and to tout their own supposed credentials in deregulation. Perhaps we can forgive the coalition for forgetting about the at least 6,000 redundant or obsolete regulations repealed by the last Labor government. We did not feel the need to throw a stunt like Repeal Day to celebrate this achievement. The use of a light touch in regulation, the removal of regulations which no longer serve their purpose, and keeping a keen eye on any unintended effect of regulation on business and the community are part and parcel of how modern Labor governs.

If you ignore the rhetoric of the Liberals, the facts indicate that Labor governments are not in any sense prone to overregulation. The Liberals like to say that the last Labor government was responsible for some 21,000 new regulations. But, again, their numbers are deceptive.

Mr Tudge: You were not responsible? It was someone else's fault!

Mr DREYFUS: No, in answer to the interjection, I am going to explain what they were. Fully 4,200 of these regulations were, in fact, tariff concession orders—regulations that reduce costs for businesses and that were requested by businesses. More than 3,400 of these regulations were airworthiness directives, which address safety issues.

Are tariff concession orders requested by business the kinds of regulations that the Abbott government thinks are holding back our nation? Is that the kind of regulation that the Abbott government thinks is holding back the country? Are airworthiness directives the kinds of regulations that the Abbott government thinks are holding back our country? Is anyone from the Liberal Party seriously saying that we do not need airworthiness directives to uphold air safety standards in our country? I doubt it. It simply makes the point that, at all times, in the case of all regulation, it is necessary to examine the purpose that is being served by the regulation.

This kind of mad incantation of raw numbers gets us nowhere, because it removes attention from the purpose for which the regulations were created. The mad incantation of: 'We have repealed 1,000 acts,' or 'We have repealed 10,000 regulations,' as I have attempted to make clear in this speech, ignores the actual substance of what is being repealed. Repealing amending acts of parliament from 1901 to 1967, which was the exercise on the first repeal day, or repealing the amending acts passed by the parliament from 1967 through into the seventies achieves precisely nothing, and the Liberal Party should not boast or pretend that it, in fact, has achieved something. In fact, if we must throw around raw numbers, the all-time
record year for added pages of regulation was not under either of Labor prime ministers Gillard or Rudd but in 2006, under the Liberal Prime Minister John Howard.

As I have said, Labor is happy to support measures like those in this bill. When the government proposes real, useful deregulation, we are happy to work with them. But it is hard to stand the self-congratulation, the media stunts and the misrepresentation of Labor's record which has come alongside the government's supposed deregulation bills. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (12:17): The former speaker from the opposition claims that this bill is no more than good housekeeping. I suggest to him that, if his self-titled modern Labor had kept their own house in order during the chaotic years of the Labor-Greens-Labor alliance for the last six years, we would not need to be here today cleaning up the mess that they left. I rise today to speak on the Treasury Legislation Amendment (Repeal Day) Bill 2014. Yet again, the coalition government is presenting a bill that seeks to reduce the amount of duplication between various pieces of legislation and reduce the compliance load on business and, at the same time, ensure businesses are not, by omission, breaking the law.

Under the Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Act 1993 employers are required to report on pay slips the amount of superannuation contributions earned and the date on which the employer is expected to pay them. Of course, this is quite unreasonable since cash flows within businesses change on a near-daily basis. But, of course, those opposite have no idea about running a business. They might have had a hand in running a few into the ground but not in successfully employing people and keeping a business prosperous, which is why they think this minor amendment is about trying to hide superannuation contributions from employees.

This again demonstrates to those of us on the government side how little faith the ALP have in themselves and their ability to craft good laws. The Fair Work Act 2009 and Fair Work Regulations 2009, both written and passed by those opposite, require employers to report on pay slips the superannuation entitlements earned or actually paid. Is their own legislation so dodgy that they have no faith in it?

What we have is three separate acts of parliament that each require employers to report superannuation entitlements. How do you suppose that should appear on a pay slip? Should it be just once, because that fulfils the requirement of all three acts, or as separate line items? Would that make an employee believe they are actually receiving three times as much superannuation? Common sense must prevail, and the system has to be made easier for both employees and employers.

But in order to do that some tough decisions need to be made by those opposite. Do they want to be part of the solution, or are they content with continuing to be the problem? Stop being negative for the sake of it and support this bill that simplifies the reporting of superannuation contributions on pay slips, as well as deleting some spent provisions and continuing the rewrite of tax legislation begun under the Keating government. Short-term opportunism is no substitute for long-term thinking and planning. Labor has no plan for the future, no plan beyond the next electoral cycle and probably no plans after lunch but sniping from the sidelines and suffering relevance deprivation. But, of course, I am exaggerating, because, as we know, Labor does have one plan. Indeed, they have a plan to re-introduce the
world's biggest economy-wide carbon tax, which was not effective in lowering carbon emissions by one single gram.

The government is not trying to hide workers' superannuation entitlements. We are just trying to make it as simple to understand as possible. Surely, simplicity in understanding how your retirement nest egg is working is something all workers want. When I look at my payslip I want to easily see what my contribution to my superannuation is. This allows you to plan for your future and your family's future, and an easy to understand single number is the best way to do that.

Those opposite continue to grasp at straws in trying to discredit this government because they know they have no real ammunition. This is a government of responsible fiscal management. This is the government Australia needs after the years of poor and reckless financial management by the Labor-Greens alliance. The coalition government will lead Australia back to financial prosperity, although Labor did send businesses to the wall and hurt consumers.

The other important measure this bill takes is to define 'Australia' for taxation purposes. While this may seem self-evident, the standard definition of Australia does not cover seabeds or any oil, gas or other precious and semi-precious material under the sea. This bill defines those areas above and below sea which fall under the provisions of the Australian Taxation Act. When you consider the vast potential of the Joint Petroleum Development Area in the Timor Sea, this is an important measure to get right. So I again ask those opposite whether they are part of the solution or remain the problem. I call on them to show genuine bipartisanship in the interests of Australia and vote this bill through. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (12:23): I rise to speak on the Treasury Legislation Amendment (Repeal Day) Bill 2014. I have listened with interest to the contributions, the chest thumping, coming from those opposite about this. It is almost as if the government see this bill as the pinnacle of their legislative achievements. I was here for the first repeal day, and I was here for the second repeal day. I want to contrast the speeches made about that and the speeches that we have had over the last few days and weeks about the loss of former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam and former Queensland Treasurer Wayne Goss. These speeches about repeal day need to be seen through the prism of these political leaders of vision. The shadows this casts on the political pygmies opposite are unbelievable. It shows how small their vision is. We have had people coming in here to talk about what is effectively 'turning up for work day'. It is not repeal day; it is just 'turning up for work day'. This is what every government does. Every government needs to get rid of redundant bits of legislation when they can.

Those opposite talk about their vision, about where their great ship of state is headed with Prime Minister Abbott at the tiller. But he has no vision at all. He is worried about the barnacles and what needs to be taken off, but he has no vision whatsoever as to where the ship should be heading. They come up and say: 'Everyone that has turned up at work today, you need to be celebrated. In fact, we need to give you a medal.' They call it repeal day, but it is really just the work of good government. Regulations are not inherently evil, as those opposite seem to be suggesting. Most of the front bench of the government were here under the
Howard government in the 41st Parliament. Most of the front bench of the government today were members of the Howard government. They were part of the government that brought—

Mr Tudge: What a government that was!

Mr PERRETT: As the member would acknowledge, the Howard government brought in more regulations than any government in the history of Australia. He is inherently saying that a government is good if it brings in regulations. So all the political pygmies opposite who have come in beating their chests and saying repeal day is a wonderful thing have somehow flipped? I can understand why the front bench has not changed. They are still set firmly in their ways from 1955 or 1956—whatever year it is that they have calibrated as being the perfect year. But the fresh blood of the 44th Parliament come in here and say, 'We turned up for work today and the people of Australia should be proud of us.' Even in the military, where they do give out medals for service, you have to be in the service for at least three years before you get that medal. But you have been here for one year, you are in your second year, and you are saying, 'This repeal day is our most magnificent achievement.'

We have heard valedictory speeches from both sides of the chamber about Wayne Goss—I just delivered mine up in the Federation Chamber—and Gough Whitlam and their incredible vision for Australia. And what does 'Rear Admiral Abbott' have to offer the people of Australia? Repeal day. 'Ladies and gentlemen, we've hunted down some commas. We've changed the words 'electronic mail' to "email". Please give us an Order of Australia or some appropriate recognition. Bring back knight and dame honours'—because we have tracked down a comma or something! This shows the paucity of vision from the Liberal and National parties. Unbelievable! The sooner that front bench gets changed the better. Bring in some of the new blood—the people that actually have a bit of vision and a bit of hope for a future Australia—not the idiots that have swallowed this line that somehow we should not pay a little bit now rather than make future generations pay a lot more. That is fundamentally what has happened.

Maybe it is something to do with the people that came through the Howard government. They just have not seen beyond 2007 when the Howard government finished. They did not come to government as a group of adults with a vision. They set out their principles before the election; I will give them credit for that. I read their booklets and I heard their speeches about no taxes, no cuts to the pension and no cuts to education; I heard it so often I know it better than I knew my own campaign slogans. The reality after the election is that the only political currency which counts—trust—was broken time after time after time. We see it with the GP co-payment, which surely personifies red tape. They are going to have red tape on every visit to the doctor, with $2 in red tape for every sick person and $5 given to the never-never. And the way they have sold this! This morning the health minister, the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Senate were all over the shop. It is like they have read William Custer's playbook about how to sell a policy to people. It is unbelievable!

But back to the legislation before us, the Treasury Legislation Amendment (Repeal Day) Bill 2014, which, as I said, I am calling the 'Turning up for Work Day Bill,' celebrated by those opposite, a government that on every single day they have been in office have brought in three or four regulations, even on the weekend! I am not making fun of them for doing that; that is what governments do. Regulations are not inherently bad. But for them to turn around and say: our greatest achievement—and the people of Australia should celebrate the fact—is
that we hunted down a couple of commas and changed the word "electronic mail" to "email". It is unbelievable.

You can see the proper context for how that first repeal day should be treated. Some of the new people in the 44th Parliament were here, reading out their prepared lines about how wonderful it was that they had got rid of a couple of commas. But what happened to the legislation? We pay the people in Treasury $2.1 million a year to track down these stray commas. But what happened to it? Did they rush it over to the other place to ensure that it was turned into law? No. Nothing happened with it until almost the second repeal day. It is smoke and mirrors. The smoke should be blown away and the mirrors should be smashed to reveal that this is what governments do.

Governments look over legislation and most of these regulations are doing good things—for example, regulating aircraft safety—unless those opposite want to sign up to only flying planes that have not had regulations in terms of their safety signed off on; I do not want to do that—and are not hurting anyone. They are not an albatross around the neck of Australia. One particularly puerile comment from a member opposite was that it was a python squeeze, a cobra strike—I cannot remember which one—but the serpentine reference was completely deluded. This legislation is what governments do; they turn up and sort out things.

Labor is supporting this legislation; it is not particularly controversial. But the fake chest beating is controversial. I find it repugnant, hypocritical and hard to swallow, as do the people of Australia. However, schedule 1 in this bill amends the Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Act to repeal the payslip-reporting provisions. I heard the member for Ryan, my neighbour on the other side of the Brisbane River, say that this was a bad thing. I am not sure whether the member for Ryan has had the experience of a business going belly up or of a constituent coming in after thinking they had a superannuation payment going on for years and then finding out that the superannuation had not been paid and that the business was belly up. The modern equivalent of the GEERS will not pay superannuation and, for people who are close to retirement, this can be heartbreaking.

I noted the contribution of the member for Reid where he, as a former employer of a business that employed many people in the pub industry, made the point about how important it is that your workers understand where their superannuation contribution is going and that it has been paid, because it can be particularly heartbreaking.

As I said, the Labor Party is supporting this legislation. When it comes to superannuation, I will stand on the Labor Party's record any day. We have done more to boost retirement savings of Australians than those opposite have ever done. They are fundamentally opposed to superannuation. They attack it whenever they can, but, thankfully, after difficult implementation times under the Hawke and Keating governments, Australians now accept that superannuation is a part of life. Accumulation schemes have obviously brought in an incredible amount of superannuation, with approximately $1.3 billion now being managed. It will continue to increase. Incidentally, because of that, we can now look to providing those funds management services in Asia. As the middle class emerges, the skills that Australians have when it comes to managing money can now be retailed and taken over to other countries. That is something that we do particularly well. That is a part of the Asian focus that we need to have in selling our services and engaging with the emerging markets of India, China, Indonesia, Malaysia and the like. Obviously, despite the snickering from those
opposite when that was announced as an election policy back in 2006-07, we have managed to do that and will continue to do so.

The amendments in this legislation are not particularly troubling. As I said, the Labor Party will be supporting it. But I do take issue, as I said, with this repeal day stunt and all the government's grandiose claims about the deregulation agenda. Unless you look at what the regulations do, you cannot make those sweeping statements. In fact, time and time again, the government has been saved by the opposition in the House of Representatives and by other people in the Senate from themselves. They are so focused on talking about bonfires, slashing red tape and all that emotive language that they have not done the real hard yards. It is a typical conservative government, which, in terms of economic reform, are not prepared to do the hard yards and to make significant changes. When it comes to managing the economy, it is up to Labor to do the hard yards. The government now moan about the AAA credit rating given to the Australian economy by the three ratings agencies, something never achieved by those opposite. These are not left-wing agencies; these are the ratings agencies of the world.

I note the Treasurer has particular challenges, but I am waiting for him to come in and apologise to the House after hearing him, year after year, talking about how economic challenges were irrelevant. He never acknowledged the global financial crisis and the challenges that it brought to the people of Australia. He never acknowledged what it would be like to have 200,000 people out of work and the havoc that that wreaks upon communities and individuals—the tears in school playgrounds, the suicides and the heartache associated with unemployment when it hits particular communities. No. I am yet to hear the Treasurer come in and actually acknowledge some of those challenges. Well, now, as revenue starts to collapse for this government—as iron ore goes below US$70, with the challenges that will bring, and as coal comes off the high prices that it was at during the 40th and 41st parliaments, when John Howard and Peter Costello just watched the money trickle into the Treasury coffers—it will be interesting to see whether the Treasurer has the ticker it takes to lead this ship of state, the ticker it takes to lead a government and a nation during difficult times. And I can tell you this for free: having these cheap-stunt days will not fool anyone in the Australian community at all.

Mr SUKKAR (Deakin) (12:38): It gives me great pleasure to rise and talk on the Treasury Legislation Amendment (Repeal Day) Bill 2014, if for no other reason than that the member for Moreton has ceased that tirade. To the members of the public in the gallery, I apologise, because what you have seen is the worst example of Australian politics. If you were up there in the gallery, drifting in and out of consciousness as that tirade went on, you would have been convinced that the member for Moreton would end his contribution by saying, 'And I oppose this bill, because it is so bad, and I've spent 15 minutes talking about how bad this bill is.' But no: he will support this bill. You heard 15 minutes of a contribution on a bill that he supports, believe it or not.

Mr Tudge: Imagine if he disliked it!

Mr SUKKAR: Yes, imagine if he disliked it. I tell you what, he has fire in the belly. But I say to all members of the public in the gallery, thanks for hanging in there. What we saw from the member for Moreton was a continuation of Labor's denial: the denial that over their six years of government we saw a budgetary position that is now a ruinous position—the words of Wayne Swan. It was a government that said, 'We did for small business what no
government has done before'. All they did was increase the number of regulations by 21,000. But there was nothing wrong with that; nothing to see here! In the world view of the member for Moreton, or the view of those last six years, there is nothing to see here: 'We were a great government, and there were no problems.'

So, fundamentally, it is an example of the Labor Party just not learning their lesson. The member for Moreton also said that today's bill and all the repeal days are just a matter of turning up for work today, and this is what governments do. Does he not see the great irony when he says that—that the clear inference is that for six years the Rudd, Gillard, and Rudd governments did not turn up for work, and did not do what governments are supposed to do? If that was the case, why did the number of regulations increase by 21,000, strangling small businesses in this country? Every time he says that there is no problem, that there is nothing to see here, he absolutely condemns all the small-business owners in my electorate who have said to me that for many years—and it got so much worse under the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd governments—they have been strangled in regulation and costly red tape.

Having grown up in a small-business family myself, I saw firsthand the costs of red tape. It is not just a theoretical exercise that we discuss in this House. My parents and I have very vivid memories of me growing up and seeing my parents sitting at their desks filling out paperwork until all hours of the night. They would be at work during the day. At six o'clock in the morning they would get up and go to work. They would get home at probably seven or eight o'clock at night, try to enjoy some time with the family and then get started on the paperwork at 10 or 11 o'clock for a couple of hours. This has a real impact on people's lives. So, when the member for Moreton, the member for Fraser and the member for Isaacs sit there whingeing and moaning about today's bill and then vote for it, that suggests to me that they have no understanding of small business and no desire to engage with the government on this task that we are trying to achieve—for the first time in many decades, to actually reduce the regulatory burden that the Australian government imposes on our citizens. And I am not so surprised to see it from the member for Fraser and the member for Isaacs—two academic, bookworm types who probably have absolutely no idea about small business. But I think I expected a bit more from the member for Moreton, and unfortunately I was left wanting.

But I do want to get to explaining some of the substance of the bill in front of us—the Treasury Legislation Amendment (Repeal Day) Bill 2014, which implements a range of improvements to Australia's laws and, as we have been talking about, removes costly and unnecessary red tape. The government does recognise that while some degree of regulation is of course necessary, bad regulation and too much regulation hurts productivity and deters innovation and investment, and that ultimately costs jobs. There is a real-life dimension to the issues we are discussing today. The member for Fraser, in a sort of nasty, snide way, had a go at us for our coalition deregulatory task force, which I am a member of and which is ably led by my friend the member for Kooyong. The whole purpose of the coalition's deregulatory task force, of which I was the Victorian member, was to give members of parliament an opportunity to bring real-life examples from our electorates—on the frontline, not theoretical examples or examples from peak bodies, but examples of where the interface between a small business and government is causing issues for constituents of ours. I found the process extraordinarily worthwhile, and a number of fantastic outcomes have been achieved by that task force. So, I want to again congratulate the member for Kooyong for leading that. It was a
privilege to be a part of it. But it is a whole-of-government approach. Our task force was quite a minute part of that.

We have set up in every department specific deregulation teams to search for those deregulatory changes that we can make in each and every portfolio. This led to our holding of the first two repeal days. We said before the election that we would repeal $1 billion of red tape each year. After our second 2014 repeal day, a net reduction of $2.1 billion in compliance costs was achieved. There is quite a complex process in determining that $2.1 billion reduction, but the benefits of a $2.1 billion reduction in red tape flow into many, many billions of dollars. The multiplier effect is quite phenomenal.

Ultimately, we want to make it easier for businesses and individuals to get on and spend their precious energy on what they do best, and that is improving their bottom lines, creating a better life for their families and also creating more jobs. Particularly in the small business sector, I can tell you now that employees are more like family than employees. There is nothing better than a small business that can have their employees grow with them, develop with them and, hopefully, share in the spoils of a successful small business.

If this bill helps that process in any way, I think in this House it would be much more gracious of people like the member for Moreton, who is a friend of mine, to get up and say, 'I support this bill and I support it for these reasons.' If he only talks for a couple of minutes, that is fine—talk for two minutes—but to go on a 15-minute tirade, absolutely pillorying the bill, and then conclude by saying, 'And I commend the bill to the House,' is embarrassing. It is the worst feature of Australian politics. I remember when I was a private citizen observing Australian politics. You would sort of sit there and you would want to grab the TV screen and say, 'Just say you agree with this.' There is enough going on in this House that members opposite can get an opportunity to try and whack us on, but, where we agree, let's just agree and move on. I think it was a very ungracious contribution.

The bill before us contains a number of features that other speakers have gone into much more detail on than I will, but for completeness I want to cover off on them. Schedule 1 repeals the pay-slip reporting provisions in the SIS(S) Act that increase the regulatory burden on employers beyond what is currently imposed under the Fair Work legislation. The changes, which have been spoken about by other members, remove some duplication in reporting what superannuation contributions have been made. It is relatively uncontroversial and makes sense. Schedule 2 to the bill is something that is quite close to my heart. It contains a range of changes that simplify the tax laws by consolidating duplicated tax administration provisions and it also bundles a whole lot of tax acts into a single set of provisions. I was one of those unfortunate people in the tax profession, in my former life as a tax lawyer, trying to juggle a half a dozen different acts with certain provisions that were cross-referenced into an entirely different act. If you had put all of the tax acts that I had to deal with on a daily basis on a set of scales, they would have weighed something like six or eight kilos. It is quite extraordinary. So anything we can do to achieve what I hope is the ultimate outcome of a single tax act—the process was started in the mid-nineties and we sort of got half the way there but never actually concluded it—is good news. Schedule 2 is definitely a standout feature of this bill for me.

Schedule 3 to the bill amends the Financial Sector (Shareholdings) Act by making some sensible changes around associate tests and reporting for associates who may or may not have
an interest in a company. These sorts of associate tests are often there for really good reasons, to ensure that we avoid collusion and conflicts of interest, but here I am quite convinced that the changes proposed will not end up with a diminution of any protections; they just remove quite a redundant rule. Schedule 4 rewrites the definition of Australia into a single location in the tax law. Over the last few weeks, I have heard lots of members opposite deriding this change. We should not overstate it, but I can tell you right now that having multiple definitions in different tax acts cross-referenced against each other is extraordinarily difficult for any type of understanding of the tax law. I dealt with small businesses, medium-sized businesses and large businesses on a very regular basis. Anything we can do to make the tax affairs of Australian taxpayers easier should be applauded in this House and should not be derided. So I think rewriting the current definition of Australia is outstanding.

I want to conclude by saying that I think our approach here is working. When we discuss legislation like this and when we have our repeal days, we are saying to the public, 'We have a determination from the Prime Minister down to the humblest backbencher to make your lives easier in any way we can.' I welcomed the words of Jennifer Westacott, the CEO of the Business Council of Australia, who put it quite succinctly: 'Finally, we have reached a turning point in dealing with the high costs and inefficiencies faced by business and individuals in Australia every single day.' I think that is right. For too many years now we have accepted that a new government or a new minister want to put their touch on a particular policy area, and so we just pile on more regulations. In contrast, this government has said, 'We want to get out of your lives to the greatest extent possible.' We are not going to throw the baby out with the bathwater and remove necessary regulations for protections of our citizens, but we do not want to wedge ourselves into your life where it is unnecessary. So I say to my electorate, the people of Deakin, that, whilst this is not particularly sexy stuff, I can assure you that we are doing the hard work behind the scenes to make your life easier, to make it easier for you to grow your businesses and employment opportunities for your employees, which will hopefully mean greater opportunities for your children as well. I commend the bill to the House and again congratulate everybody for their wonderful work in this space.

Ms BUTLER (Griffith) (12:52): I rise to speak to the bill that is before the House, the Treasury Legislation Amendment (Repeal Day) Bill 2014. I listened with interest to the contribution of my friend the member for Deakin. He made a point about the way we deal with legislation in this House and the way it is spoken about. He suggested that people should be a bit more straight-up in the way they talk about a bill such as this one and should not pillory the government's approach by saying it is some sort of stunt. He suggested that people should just stand up and say they agree with the content of the bill and not complain about the way in which the bill is presented by the government and the messaging around it—the spin, in more blunt language. But the difficulty with that proposition is that this bill and the bill that preceded it in the House today are part of spin. This suggestion that these worthy but pedestrian parts of the business of the parliament somehow constitute a magical red tape repeal deregulation agenda is wrong. This bill and the preceding bill are, as I said, just part of the ordinary work of the parliament—reviewing laws and making small, incremental changes to respond to community needs. So to make a song and dance about these bills as though they are a part of some sort of magical repeal and deregulation achievement of this government invites the sort of contribution that the member for Deakin has complained about.
If you want to talk about spin, the corporations legislation deregulation bill that was before the House this morning was not a deregulation bill at all; it was actually about a very important issue. It was about striking the balance between the right to protest and the rights of shareholders in public companies to have value for their shares. That is a really important concern for our democracy. You have to give people the right to protest the decisions of companies in which they hold shares. Equally, you have to strike a balance that prevents the small minority from causing damage to the value of the shares of the majority.

Protest is a really important part of what makes our democracy very strong. For example, today in the electorate of Bonner, which is next door to my electorate, casual employees at a factory have been protesting for equal pay for casual employees. They are protesting in a traditional form. Similarly, under the 100-member rule, which was the subject of the previous bill, shareholders might want to call an extraordinary general meeting of a company and seek to ventilate concerns via a motion of that company. The previous bill, which we supported, quite properly sought to strike that balance by saying that you cannot use the 100-member rule to get an EGM but you can use 100 members to get an issue onto the agenda of an AGM. It is a very important issue: how do we strike that balance to allow for the proper ventilation of genuine concerns and, at the same time, not allow smaller groups or minorities to cause damage to the interests of a company? Of course, when you are talking about the interests of a company, you are talking about the interests of its shareholders.

Instead of spinning that bill as being about that issue, it was spun as a deregulation bill. Those sorts of funny approaches to spin are, unfortunately, very common from the coalition. Who can forget the names of some of the bills during the Howard era? For example, they gave workplace relations bills names such as 'More work, better pay' when in fact they were going to have the opposite effect. If the member for Deakin is concerned about contributions being made that deal with views about the messaging around bills then perhaps some straighter approaches to the naming of bills and the reduction of spin for those bills might go some way to assisting with that.

Similarly the Treasury Legislation Amendment (Repeal Day) Bill 2014 has a little bit of spin in the title as though it were some massive achievement for the repeal of red tape. In fact, it is very straightforward legislation that deals with four groups of items that are important, useful and supportable; but this is part of the ordinary, everyday work of the parliament and no fanfare is required to do it. 'Look at me, look at me! Aren't I great? I'm doing a repeal day bill.' This sort of nonsense is not that helpful. This sort of legislation should be discussed in the straight-up way suggested by the member for Deakin previously.

The first schedule of the bill goes to superannuation reporting on pay slips. This is an important issue. It is going to repeal the provision that will require an employer to state on pay slips the amount of superannuation contributions and the date on which they are expected to be paid. There is already an obligation to state the liability for superannuation on the pay slip.

This provision in the SIS Act that is the subject of the current bill is slightly different, in that it would require the amount of the contribution and the date on which it is expected to be paid, and that is important. It is important because there are, unfortunately, unscrupulous or disorganised employers out there who fail to pay superannuation on time. That can usually be rectified pretty quickly via paying the superannuation guarantee charge once the mistake is
noticed or to rectify a deliberate omission, but if the company goes broke, if the company ends up in insolvency, it can be extremely difficult to recover superannuation contributions from the company. Of course, there are entitlement protection schemes in place, but that just socialises the loss to the taxpayer, when in fact the obligation ought to have been borne by the employer itself.

I guess the other issue that arises when superannuation is not paid is that, if there is a gap in the payments of superannuation contributions, there can sometimes be a gap in the superannuation fund taking income insurance premiums through that superannuation process. If a person then suffers an injury and seeks to rely on their income protection insurance, or the other insurance that they thought they had via their superannuation scheme, but the premiums have not been met, that can leave people—and this has happened—in a situation where they do not have the income protection insurance. They do not have the insurance provided under their superannuation that they thought they had. If you have been injured to the point where you cannot work, that can be catastrophic for a household. So when we are dealing with superannuation reporting issues they are very important. They are issues of significance that should be debated in a proper way.

Labor is always happy to talk about superannuation. We introduced compulsory superannuation. The massive superannuation sector that Australia has, this massive amount of national savings that is such a great buffer for our country, was a great nation-building reform of a previous Labor government. We are always very proud to talk about superannuation in this country for that reason. We are certainly very proud of the way that superannuation funds have grown and developed and we are proud of the fact that we are helping Australians to plan for their own retirements. We have always supported superannuation, unlike the coalition. I think it was a very well-known coalition member of parliament who described superannuation as the ‘greatest con job of all time’. Of course, that was some time ago. There is at least on the surface, at least ostensibly, bipartisanship around the value of superannuation.

Having said that, we know that this year, regrettably, the superannuation guarantee increase was pushed back further by this government on two occasions. There was an argument made to the Australian people that the money would be in their pockets instead of locked away in their superannuation funds. That is actually a very silly argument, for a couple of reasons. Firstly, a lot of Australians are covered by enterprise agreements that already have pay rises locked away for the next few years and will not necessarily be in a position to have higher pay rises as a consequence. It will be difficult for them to renegotiate the pay. But, secondly, there is no obligation on the part of employers to increase pay to compensate employees for the superannuation that they thought they were going to be getting and now will not be because of the decision making of the Abbott government. It is fundamentally an attack on superannuation, and a shocking one at that, because we all know that we need to increase Australians’ retirement savings. We need to continue to work on superannuation and to increase the level of the superannuation guarantee charge.

Of course, that is not the only regressive and unfortunate step that this government has taken in respect of superannuation this year. We have also seen the government moving to abolish the low-income superannuation co-contribution, which is a superannuation tax break for the millions of people who earn $37,000 per annum or less—predominantly women. The
government, in its questionable wisdom, decided to take away the low-income superannuation co-contribution at the same time as forgoing some tax revenue that sensibly ought to have been collected from people with very high superannuation balances. So at the same time as they are giving tax breaks to the rich they are taking away tax breaks from people on $37,000 per annum or less.

That is unfortunately typical not just of this government's approach to superannuation, the coalition's traditional scepticism of superannuation, but also of the coalition's inverse approach to taxation policy and to social policy generally. This idea that you give tax breaks to the rich while taking away tax breaks from the very poor is unfortunately very consistent with the coalition's approach to public policy—another obvious example being the paid parental leave scheme where, the more you earn, the more taxpayer support you get. You could not imagine a more regressive policy, I think. It is funny—you mention it to people from overseas and they are just shocked that a so-called conservative government would come up with such a large cash splash from the public purse. But it is unfortunately consistent with what this government wants to do. It wants to redistribute money towards the well off and away from the less well off. It wants to contribute to inequality, not tackle it.

We know that this government has come under a great deal of fire and pressure not just from economists and community groups but from its own backbench to scrap the ridiculous $20 billion paid parental leave scheme. I hope that it is one of the so-called barnacles that will be scrapped. But, as I say, it is consistent with the way that this government has approached public policy generally.

They unfortunately have these very, very odd ideas about what an appropriate use of taxpayer money is—another example being forgoing five tax evasion loophole closure mechanisms that Labor proposed last year. They voted against the tax evasion bill that Labor proposed last year. And the list goes on when it comes to the way that this government has been approaching the issues of fairness and equality, because tax evasion and tax loopholes go to the heart of fairness and equality. If you allow people and companies to avoid paying taxation, that has a direct effect on government's ability to provide services to the community.

Turning to the other parts of the bill, schedule 2 makes mechanical and non-controversial amendments to the Taxation Administration Act to consolidate duplicated provisions, repeal redundant laws and move longstanding regulations into primary law. I note the member for Deakin was very supportive of these changes. The fact is that of course legislation should be made easier to read, of course it should be made more practical for practitioners and laypeople alike, but it is just a job. It is the everyday job of this parliament to do those things; it is not something that requires a great big fanfare. I do not think the government needs to jump up and say, 'Ta-da! We've managed to do our job!' Just get on with it guys. Schedule 3 amends the Financial Sector (Shareholdings) Act 1998 in respect of— (Time expired)

Mr WILLIAMS (Hindmarsh) (13:07): Before commencing my contribution to the debate on the Treasury Legislation Amendment (Repeal Day) Bill 2014 I will address a couple of comments made by the member for Griffith about this being the ordinary work of the parliament. She reiterated that at the end, saying that this is the everyday job of government. Let us go back into the history of her predecessor, former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, and have a look at how he did with the ordinary work of government.
Those opposite promised one-in one-out. What was the result? Let us have a look at their performance: 21,000 extra regulations. One-in one-out? No, 21,000 extra. How did you perform? How did you do in your ordinary work of government, I ask the member for Griffith. How many out? There were 21,000 in, so there were not many out. It is no wonder that last September the Australian people said, 'You have failed in your performance. You have not done the ordinary work of government that you are supposed to do, far from it.' We know the history. We will not go into the detail too much.

What have we done? Let us compare and contrast. In only a year we have added a huge amount of legislation which is repealing a huge amount of regulations—10,000 on our first repeal day. More recently, we have had another thousand, adding up to around $2 billion worth of regulations being removed. These are tangible outcomes that have significant results, which the member for Griffith decides is the ordinary work of government. That may be, but you have to perform in this world. You have to get results, whether they be ordinary or not.

Let us look at the public gallery after the speech of the member for Moreton. The member for Deakin in his speech reflected on the public gallery and its opinion of the speech of the member for Moreton. The member for Moreton does say some good things from time to time. I do enjoy his company. Those in the public gallery departed very quickly after his speech. As the member for Deakin said, his speech could have been far more constructive. He could have recognised that, yes, the coalition has done some good work and Labor acknowledges you for that. The member for Fraser, too, talked about substance. He did not want to mention the free trade agreements that have been signed. He mentioned fairness but he did not talk about the interest bill of over $30 million that we are forced to pay back every day on the former Labor government's debt. Speaking of fairness, the money we pay on that interest bill could go to social infrastructure, to so many things that our community needs, but, no, we are paying it on debt. That is the clincher. That is where debt does matter and how it has an impact on the community, which members opposite fail to acknowledge.

I mentioned recently in the House when speaking about another of these fine bills through which we are getting great results in eliminating compliance and red tape. A recent study is Shaping the Future of South Australia, by KPMG, Bank of South Australia, CEDA, Flinders University and the government of South Australia. One of the top 10 actions in the study was 'Reduce the burden of regulation to drive economic growth.' I congratulate the government of South Australia on this initiative. I looked through the actions to see what they proposed. Let us remember that after 12 years in power in South Australia the Labor Party have finally realised that they need to do something on so many fronts, and need to take some action on regulation and red tape. They are establishing industry and government roundtables. After 12 years they are establishing things. What have they been doing? They have been asleep at the wheel, like some others we have seen.

What have we done in one year? We have had significant outcomes: over $2 billion and 12,000 regulations removed. They are doing consultation. Congratulations! In a year we have done significant consultation, whether it be with the Logistics Council, Medicines Australia and so many other industry groups around Australia that my colleagues in the deregulation task force have reached out to and obtained input and suggestions from. When I speak to some of these national bodies, they say, 'Yes, we're talking to Josh Frydenberg. He's onto it and he's looking at ways to address our concerns about the overburdensome compliance of red
tape.' I congratulate the member for Kooyong on his excellent leadership on this, which is
being driven by the Prime Minister.

When those opposite talk about consultation they might like to take a leaf out of our book
too. We have requested that ministers work with departments and create to regulation units
within every portfolio. That is the template, South Australian Labor, go and do it. Do not just
mess around for another four years.

Another of South Australia Labor's action items is the one-in one-out rule. Well done! We
have heard that before haven't we? The one-in one-out rule was tried by the previous federal
Labor government, and look where that got them. Do not follow the previous federal Labor
government, South Australia, follow the coalition government. Jay Weatherill and the
Treasurer, do something for the state, get some results, get some action and stop talking.

In closing, I will go through some points on the bill. Whether it be superannuation,
the consolidation and repair of tax provisions, or rewriting the definition of Australia, they are not
headline grabbers but they are important. They are significant. They add to better government.
They are good policy. We are getting good outcomes and we need to be acknowledged for
that.

Mr COLEMAN (Banks) (13:14): It is great to follow my friend the member for
Hindmarsh on his remarks on this important piece of legislation. Regulatory burdens are a
terrible thing and they should be minimised wherever possible. Of course, you cannot get rid
of all regulation. We do need some regulation. But there is an enormous amount of
government regulation which is counterproductive. As I said in the House the other day, one
of the very good examples of counterproductive government regulation is the whole system
of international tariffs, which the world is in the process of dismantling. That is a particularly
egregious example, but there are many, many examples of red tape and bad regulation that get
in the way of people getting stuff done.

The problem is that in the six years which we have just seen pass from 2007 to 2013—the
Rudd-Gillard-Rudd era—the regulatory problems in this nation just got worse and worse.
That was because the Labor Party do not fundamentally understand how to get rid of red tape
and they do not fundamentally believe in their hearts that it is important. Part of the reason for
that is that they have absolutely no experience at ever managing an organisation or trying to
get something done in the private sector. That big government style of saying, 'We'll set up a
committee, we'll talk about some things, we'll establish a few rules, we'll put out a press
release and then we'll go and have a cup of coffee at Aussies,' is not the way to govern. We
must always govern with the interests of the Australian business community at heart because
they are the people who create jobs.

What is interesting is that the last government commissioned an independent review into its
approach to regulation and reducing regulatory burdens. I am sorry to say that that review
came back with some very, very damning results. It was not a good report card at all that the
previous government got from the independent review which it commissioned—so much so
that The Australian in October 2012 chronicled some of the shortcomings listed in the
Borthwick Milliner review into government regulation. To quote from its article:
GOVERNMENT ministers are flouting requirements that the impact of new regulations be assessed
before decisions are made …
That is not at all consistent with the notion of getting rid of regulation, because if the ministers in charge of getting rid of regulation are not considering regulation prior to passing new legislation there is a pretty fundamental problem in the process.

To quote directly from the review:

None of the ministers consulted saw that regulatory impact statements had any real relevance to their, or cabinet's decision-making …

That was from the report commissioned by the previous government into their own process in relation to regulation. The independent panel found that none of the ministers consulted saw that regulatory impact statements had any real relevance to theirs, or cabinet's, decision making. In that one sentence, any shred of credibility that the previous government would lay claim to in relation to reducing red tape is gone, because none of the ministers consulted by this independent review saw that regulatory impact statements had any impact on their decision-making processes.

There are some other interesting quotes in this very well-written review of the regulatory impact process by Borthwick and Milliner. This one is quite intriguing:

… most agencies indicated that in the majority of cases, a RIS is prepared after the relevant decision has already been made …

That is an interesting way of doing it—to make the decision, commit to a course of action and then look at the regulatory impact and the red tape burden you are creating after you have already made a decision. I might be unusual in this sense, but I always find the way to approach things is to consider the issues prior to making a decision. Once you have made a decision, if you have not considered something, then by definition it has not been in your thought process. As I say, most agencies indicated that, in the majority of cases, regulatory impact statements were prepared after the relevant decision had been made.

There is another interesting quote in the Borthwick Milliner review. I commend that review to you, Deputy Speaker. It was published back in April 2012. The authors said:

… the evidence before the Review suggested that things were often left too late with there being a last minute scramble to pull the RIS—regulatory impact statement—together. Often this results in ministers being uninformed or frustrated by the time taken to prepare a RIS which is seen as holding up rather than informing their decision.

This is a very difficult image. It is very sad to hear that ministers were upset and frustrated by the regulatory impact process, but the report says there was a last-minute scramble to pull the statements together and that this resulted in the minister being uninformed or frustrated. I am not sure which is worse. You would think it would clearly be good for them to be informed. They should not have been frustrated because this is a fundamentally important task that is central to discharging your duty as a minister to minimise the regulatory impact on society. But they were either uninformed or frustrated, according to this independent review.

It also says in the review:

If the … Process were operating and performing as intended, Ministers … would rely on and refer to the analysis and evidence contained within it in coming to their decisions – however, this rarely happens in the cases discussed during the Review’s consultation.
So, again, there was no actual consideration of the regulatory impact and crushing burden of red tape prior to it being implemented. This is a very, very important point because the independent review commissioned by those opposite into themselves found that they were completely disinterested in the issue of the regulatory burden they were imposing on the Australian community. It is impossible, then, for them to argue that they were, in fact, concerned with that when the independent review found the opposite. I will come to a little more about what the previous government did in this space a little bit later.

The report goes on to make a number of other observations. One of the concluding comments is a bit of a sad note. It talks about the importance of the impact statement being embraced by ministers and then it says:

If this seemingly low hurdle is an obstacle, it begs the question whether there is, in fact, a ‘real’ Government commitment to take ownership of RIA.

No government commitment. The other point from the review was:

It is clear from the consultation undertaken by the Review that none of the participants or stakeholders believe that the RIA Process (and the RIS) is delivering the benefits that the OECD suggests it should.

It is really just an absolutely damning report into the complete and blatant disregard for the crushing imposition of red tape by the previous government. Rarely is there such a black and white, clear-cut independent condemnation of government policy as we see in this sterling report.

Of course we know how bad a job Labor did in this space. We know that the OECD ranked Australia last year 124th out of 148 nations on the burden of government regulation—this is a list that you want to be at the top of, not at the bottom. Our regulatory burden was deemed to be worse than Colombia. It is really quite frightening. We just beat Iran in terms of the level of government regulation, but we could not quite top Colombia. That is a damning estimate of our position.

And of course the Productivity Commission has weighed in on this and said: ‘The cost of regulation in the economy is as much as four per cent of GDP.’ Getting rid of these burdens would improve GDP by as much as four per cent.

Given the extraordinary record of the previous government in this space, so eloquently confirmed by the Borthwick-Milliner review, it is remarkable that just a few weeks before the election on 24 July 2013—about six weeks before the election—the Labor Party put out a press release. ‘Labor delivers real reforms to cut red tape’, it grandly announced. It was such an important issue that they had to have three different people release this exciting information. There was Senator Wong, of course; the Hon. Mark Dreyfus QC MP; and someone who is no longer with us in this House, the previous member for Lindsay and Assistant Treasurer, David Bradbury. He has been rightly removed from his role by the people of Lindsay and replaced by a far more effective current member who is a very strong advocate for the people of western Sydney.

We had the independent review that basically said Labor did nothing in the regulatory impact area and did not care about it—to summarise it in a sensible fashion. That is basically what the report said. But Mark Dreyfus QC said:
Reducing red tape and removing redundant laws, particularly in the customs portfolio, improves the efficiency of businesses engaged in importing and exporting and makes things simpler for all Australians.

So why did they introduce 21,000 new regulations? Why would they put out a press release just six weeks before the election when they had done such an appalling job in this space for the preceding 34 months? It really does beggar belief that they would claim any credibility whatsoever in this area.

There are a number of changes in this bill. Frankly, when you look at the bill, you see they are good changes—very sensible changes. You wonder why they need to be made, because you wonder why the previous government would not have sorted this stuff out before. There have been sensible changes such as some technical issues around the definition of 'Australia', which obviously needs to be cleaned up, as well as a range of other matters which include, of course, those provisions around the definition of 'associates' and the reporting requirements in relation to what associates need to do when involved in a transaction—which is an important point.

Also, there is an important area in the superannuation administration removing the pay slip reporting provisions which were to be introduced and which would have significantly increased the compliance costs for small businesses; that is clearly not something that is in anyone's interests. It also removes some of the various redundant and other inoperative provisions, specifically in the area of taxation. So these are good and sensible changes. It is good that the opposition is supporting these changes; we do welcome them to the cause. We do welcome them to the cause of removing red tape so ably led by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister. That is what we are entirely focused on.

It is very easy to say red tape; it is two words. It is a whole lot harder to actually do something about it. The Borthwick-Milliner review, that very detailed and considered review from April 2012, is a horrendous indictment on the complete lack of interest in this area by the previous government. They do not have experience in actually running enterprises. They do not have experience in employing people. They do not know what it means to actually be there on the front lines of the economy, employing people, making things happen. They do not know how crushing the burden of red tape can be. That is why they did nothing in the six years they were in government. That is why the Borthwick-Milliner review in its even tone condemned the previous government and all of those opposite so comprehensively. We have to fix up that mess, and that is what we are doing through this legislation.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): Order! It being just about 1:30 pm, the debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 43. The debate may be resumed at a later hour.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Health Care

Ms BUTLER (Griffith) (13:29): What a shambolic day it has been for this coalition government. When it comes to the GP tax, probably one of the least popular policies in the history of the Federation, we have had the Prime Minister telling journalists that there would not be a GP tax and we have had the Treasurer telling people that they still intended to bring the GP tax before the parliament. They still wanted to bring the GP tax before the parliament.
Don't we know what a rotten policy this is and how much people hate it! I have to say, in my by-election earlier this year, the Prime Minister came to town and the foreign minister came to town and said, 'There's not going to be a GP tax—it is all scaremongering on the part of this woman.' My electorate was told it was all scaremongering. What did we see? We saw the Commission of Audit recommend a GP tax. Then we saw a budget in which this government said that there would be a GP tax. And haven't they looked ridiculous, to the point where one of their own senators is saying that he might cross the floor if the GP tax does go back to the parliament. We have the health minister saying, 'We might do it by regulation.' He is refusing to rule out doing it by regulation. It is an absolute mess. It is an absolute disgrace.

Who are the people who are affected by this shambolic government's uncertainty? They are the consumers of this country, people already trying to bear the cost-of-living pressures that they already face. It is the Abbott government policy to tax people every time they go to the doctor, with $3.5 billion worth of taxes on people when they go to the doctor. Someone in this government surely knows what is going on— (Time expired)

St George and Sutherland Shire Table Tennis Association

Mr COLEMAN (Banks) (13:31): I rise today to recognise the great work of the St George and Sutherland Shire Table Tennis Association. In late September, I was pleased to welcome 180 of the best junior table tennis players from right around the nation to Hurstville, when the association hosted the 2014 Australian Junior Table Tennis Championships. Our community is very proud to have hosted such an event in the electorate of Banks, and I was very pleased to attend and help open that important event.

Just last week, I visited the association and presented Banks Outstanding Sporting Achievement Awards to: Ethan Chow, Matthew Leung, Jayden Lam, Lucy Koh, Celina Un, Alex Yeung, Jayden Leung and Roy Lin. I want to congratulate all of them on their fantastic efforts during this season at the St George and Sutherland Shire Table Tennis Association.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank the members of the committee. They are fantastic advocates for the table tennis community in our region. In particular, I thank Graham Boyton, Stephen Bruton, Connie Chan, Steve Eggleton, Stephen Gillespie, Marie Pinkewich, Anita Un, Leonie Whiteford, Douglas Flood, Gillian Hutchison, David Sutton, Clinton Wood and Angela Wang. The table tennis community is a critical part of the St George region, and I commend all of the players and the organising committee on the fantastic year they have just had.

Health Care

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (13:32): Budgets are about choices and priorities and this Prime Minister has shown his colours in his cruel, unfair and unnecessary choices and broken promises. The $3.5 billion GP tax is a prime example. We all know the opening line of that now famous election eve oath, 'no cuts to health'. And we know by heart the other promise, 'no new taxes'. And yet here we have a double breach of faith: a cut and a new tax. And, more than that, an attack on our universal healthcare system, a frontal attack on Medicare, an attempt to Americanise our internationally lauded health system.

Deaf to public outrage, deaf to doctors' advice, deaf to specialists and experts, deaf to calls that it will increase costs in hospital care: this Prime Minister, assisted by his Minister for Health, the member for Dickson, has persisted in his crusade to cruelly tax every sick
Australian. Blocked at the front door by the parliament Australians elected to represent them, who have made it plain that this measure will not get through, it appeared briefly yesterday that they had seen sense and were prepared to drop it. But no. Rather, we get shambolic governance. And it seems, still deaf to sense, the Prime Minister has climbed back on his horse today determined to sneak his sick tax in by regulation. I call on the Prime Minister to do the honest thing, to honour his promises. *(Time expired)*

**Hume Electorate: Sergeant Parry Memorial Day**

Mr Taylor *(Hume)* (13:34): Speaking of horses, the spirit of our colonial past is alive and well in Jugiong in the south-west of my electorate. In a recent memorial day, the community paid tribute to Sergeant Edmund Parry of the Gundagai constabulary and to his relentless pursuit of justice. On 16 November 1864, Sergeant Parry was escorting the Gundagai to Yass mail coach when he was shot dead by bushranger John Gilbert at Black Springs near Jugiong. The event was a turning point in the battle to protect the safety of travellers on New South Wales country roads. It resulted in radical legislation to stamp out bushranging.

Johnny Gilbert himself was tracked down and shot by police a year later near Binalong. One hundred and fifty years ago, the Hall gang was infamous in much of the region, which is now the Hume electorate—from Yass, Collector and Binda, to Ben Hall's Cave in the Weddin ranges near Grenfell.

There was a gun battle between the bushrangers and Parry on that fateful day in 1864, and the recent commemoration for Sergeant Parry included an outstanding re-enactment of the battle. There was also a street parade and memorial ball, which I was delighted to attend.

Congratulations must go to Senior Constable Wes Leseberg of the Yass police, Leading Senior Constable Steve Magnone of the Jugiong police and Matt Butt of Jugiong, together with the entire memorial day committee, for bringing this important piece of local history to life for Jugiong and for all of us.

**Petitions: Medicare**

Mr Giles *(Scullin)* (13:35): In September this year, I tabled a petition signed by 8,139 people to save universal health care. I spoke then of more 'Save Medicare' petitions coming in from concerned constituents. Today, I table these petitions, signed by a further 926 people—a grand total of 9,065 petitioners from the Scullin electorate. There is deep community concern, indeed outrage, in Scullin and right across Australia about the actions of this government. It is chiefly directed at this rotten GP tax. While the Prime Minister may glibly refer to the attempted destruction of Medicare as a 'barnacle', the Australian people rightly see this as an attack on the social compact in Australia—that, if you are sick, your bank balance will not determine whether or not you can afford assistance.

I note conflicting reports in the media today about the government's intentions with regard to the GP tax. This chaos shows how desperate and how divided this government are. They talk about talking points. But I say this to them: it is not the fact of talking points that matters; it is their quality—and theirs could be greatly improved. The Abbott government cannot get parliamentary or community support for its GP tax, so it now plans to introduce this tax through the back door by circumventing parliament. How contemptuous of the Australian people.
Labor will continue to fight the Abbott government's GP tax and its false claims about overservicing by doctors. Like the people of Scullin, we have our story straight. It is time this government did likewise and supported Australians through supporting this great Australian institution.

The petitions read as follows—

To the Honourable The Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives

This petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the House that:

- There are deep concerns with the proposed changes to Medicare through the Abbott Government's 2014-15 Federal Budget.
- Notably, the $7 co-payment for GP visits, blood tests and x-rays will mean families and pensioners will pay more for their health care.
- Currently over 93% of GP services are bulk billed in the Scullin electorate.
- We ask the House to opposed this Budget measure of a $7 co-payment and take urgent steps to reject Tony Abbott's plan to end universal bulk billing.

from 430 citizens

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- Currently over 93% of GP services are bulk billed in the Scullin electorate.
- We ask the House to opposed this Budget measure of a $7 co-payment and take urgent steps to reject Tony Abbott's plan to end universal bulk billing.

from 496 citizens

Petitions received.

**Bowman Electorate: Imago Project**

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (13:37): The early years are the most important in life, and there is no reform more important that we can bring in this place than looking after our zero- to five-year-old children, identifying and acting on developmental delay, making sure they get every chance when they get to school and every chance in life.

I would like to commend the Imago Project conceived by the Greater Metro South Brisbane Medicare Local and CEO Simon James, who came down from Brisbane to launch that event here in Parliament House. The members for Indi, Mitchell, Durack, Hindmarsh, Bendigo and Tangney were all there.

The commitment that this place has towards early intervention will be measured in Bowman by the first universal trial of the use of Medicare item numbers to look after, through chronic disease management plans, children who are struggling. We will see the engagement of allied health and ATAPS resources for behavioural issues for children aged zero to five, to build the critical mass so that we have allied health, Medicare funded workers visiting childcare centres throughout the seat of Bowman and reverse referrals, because childcare workers raise their capacity to identify developmental delay. The Imago Project offers us this
promise with virtually no new resources, but just using existing resources better. No child between zero and five deserves to turn up at school unable to hold a pencil or not knowing how to open a book. The Imago Project is the first step in turning this around for Australia.

**InSight: Australia's Regional Competitive Index**

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (13:38): I rise today to tell the House about the value of data produced by the Regional Australia Institute to support better regions, and policymaking for rural and regional Australia. On Tuesday, I had the pleasure of attending a breakfast showcasing a wonderful online tool called InSight: Australia’s Regional Competitiveness Index. InSight provides data to inform regional decision making. It enables regions to build on their strengths and competitiveness, and it highlights where best efforts can be applied.

For example, on Tuesday, I spoke in this House about the Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Deregulation) Bill 2014 and called for the extension of the universal service obligation to cover mobile services, and data from InSight supports my position. For example in my electorate of Indi, Wangaratta rates as 396th for mobile coverage out of 624 regional profiles, Wodonga rates at 224th—and these are key regional cities. InSight data tells me that in my shires: Murrindindi rates at 372nd, and Towong rates at 508th.

This data can and will be used to support my call for action to increase our regional liveability and competitiveness in the pursuit of greater outcomes for all communities in Indi, and in fact right across regional Australia.

My thanks goes to the CEO, Sue McCluskey, and all at the Regional Australia Institute. Great data and sound research. *(Time expired)*

**Tasmania: Cycling**

Mr NIKOLIC (Bass) (13:40): Chris Froome, winner of the 2013 Tour de France and one of the world's best known and most iconic bicycle racers, will be visiting Tasmania in December 2014. Chris, along with his Team Sky riding partner, Tasmania's Richie Porte will be a joined in an elite men's race by approximately 100 of Australia's best national road series riders. This boosts the profile of the race, the Stan Siejka cycling classic, and Tasmania, showcasing our state and providing an opportunity to further diversify our tourism sector. That is one reason why we are also building the Derby and Blue Tier mountain bike trails, where the next two Australian Championships will be held.

I thank Richie Porte for his promotion of cycling and promoting his home state to the world, and in attracting Chris Froome to Tasmania. As patron of cycling in Tasmania, I can inform the House that it is one of the most popular forms of exercise. In a typical week, almost a hundred thousand Tasmanians, just over half the households in our state, have access to a bike and ride recreationally. I also commend the staff and volunteers of the Stan Siejka cycling classic for their efforts in promoting cycling locally and providing support to Tasmania's many cyclists. I give a quick plug as well for Sally's Ride, a charity event which is being run by the Rotary Club of Central Launceston on Sunday, 7 December. I encourage people to go to the website and join this festival of cycling in Tasmania.

**Health Care**

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (13:42): There are now three competing versions on the future of the $7 co-payment, as reported today. They range from benching it, modifying it and
pursuing it through regulation. While chaos and confusion reign supreme in the Abbott government, one thing is clear: universal health care is part of our social fabric, part of our DNA, and Australians and Canberrans are strongly opposed to any changes.

The Abbott government’s plan to undermine universal health care with Medicare and PBS co-payments will affect every Australian, particularly those who can least afford it. In my electorate of Canberra that means the clients of the Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service. Earlier this year the clients, staff and friends on Winnunga signed a petition to say no to the government’s proposed changes to Medicare and the PBS because the changes are unaffordable and unfair. Clients of Winnunga simply do not have $7 to pay each time they visit a doctor or $5 for each prescription. They often have complex health problems that require multiple scripts and visits to the doctor every month.

Winnunga services clients from Wollongong to Wodonga, from Wagga Wagga to Batemans Bay. So I would hope the member for Eden-Monaro, Hume, Riverina and Gilmore are listening because it is your constituents who rely on the services of Winnunga. It is your constituents who have signed this petition. Labor will fight to protect universal health care for all Australians in the interests of fairness and good health policy. (Time expired)

**Australian Defence Force**

*Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (13:43):* Christmas is fast approaching and now is the time for us to think about those who have not got the opportunity to join in celebrations, particularly those men and women who are serving with our Defence forces overseas. They are unable to be with their family at this very special time and, indeed, most of them will miss Christmas. The school students in my electorate, like the school students up in the gallery from the electorate of Lindsay, are very excited because they are preparing a very special card and they are writing in that card a message for the serving troops. I encourage my colleagues on both sides to do something similar so that the troops overseas can decorate their accommodation, where they are staying and deployed, to give them a memory of home.

I would encourage everyone to send a care package. The closing date for this year is 8 December. I encourage people to have some innovative ideas—not just the Twisties, the Tim Tams and the Vegemite, which I am sure are still very popular. I would also encourage them to do something like my CWA branch did, who, mindful of the cold temperatures in the Middle East at this time of year, knitted balaclavas and scarves for them. I encourage everyone to be involved. Contact your local federal member, and they will help you think about the troops representing and serving Australia overseas this Christmas.

**Health Care**

*Mrs CLAYDON (Newcastle) (13:45):* The chaos around the GP tax shows just how divided and shambolic this Liberal government is. Is it in or is it out? Dead or alive? Either way it stinks. It is bad policy. It is bad for the community, bad for patients, bad for health professionals and bad for service providers. The thousands of people in Newcastle who have attended rallies, talked to me at community offices or signed my petition against the GP tax know this is an unfair tax.

My GPs are telling me that Novocastrians have already been putting off going to see their doctor because they think the tax is already being applied and they cannot afford it. A local GP told 1233 ABC Newcastle this morning that she would be very pleased if the GP tax was
abandoned. Another area of concern is the impact of the tax on diagnostic imaging. With up-front costs of up to $500 for patients, service providers and specialists are telling me that there is a high risk that patients will decide that they cannot afford to be diagnosed, which will have devastating impacts for those patients and increase downstream costs for the broader health system.

In response to the ongoing misinformation from this government, the AMA tweeted this morning:

Our Health spending growth at record lows. Government claim that it's out of control is completely wrong.

We know this is part of the government's plan to end Medicare and universal health care as we know it. Labor will stand up to the Prime Minister's $3.5 billion GP tax— *(Time expired)*

**South Australia: Defence Procurement**

Dr SOUTHCOTT (Boothby) (13:46): Defence investment and jobs are critical to South Australia. This year the Australian government will spend $1 billion on defence procurement and sustainment work, including building the Air Warfare Destroyers and sustaining the Collins class submarines at Osborne. We will spend $4.2 billion over the next four years in South Australia on 44 acquisition projects and 58 sustainment programs.

It is important to make a few points on the Future Submarine Project, which has attracted some interest lately. The Joint Committee on Public Accounts, which I chair, has this year delivered several reports on defence procurement. A strong theme which emerges is the importance of making well-informed decisions and the cost of poor decisions. Major projects undergo a rigorous two-pass approval of cabinet. The National Security Committee of the Cabinet need to consider all available options and assess them on the basis of risk in terms of cost, schedule and capability. At this stage we need to trust the Navy and the DMO to come up with the best option for our future submarine needs. Our goal must be to get the best submarine we can for a reasonable price and in a way which boosts investment and jobs in South Australia. None of this is mutually exclusive. I remain confident that there will be significant investment and jobs for South Australia at the world-class ASC site at Osborne.

**Health Care**

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (13:48): The AMA summed up the government's GP tax debacle in less than 140 characters this morning this way:

PM must clarify position on #copayment now. Confusion reigns.

And it does. Our suburban GPs are very much small businesses and they face considerable uncertainty at this time because of the government's incompetence and dissembling. Consider the decisions they have to make. The 24-hour clinics and after-hours clinics currently do not handle cash. If they have to have cash on the premises, will they need new security? Will they have to renovate? Will they have to add more physical barriers? What about the safety of their staff? Who takes the cash to the bank? What about the OH&S issues related to that? Will it even be viable to continue to open for extended hours? Will they need to take on more staff to take on the role of tax collector? If they suddenly need to take credit cards—and they currently do not—will they need new telecommunications to set up as a credit card merchant? What about the staffing and the training requirements for that? Will they or won't they need to consider these matters? How
will the holding of the money on the premises affect their insurance premiums? Will they have fewer patients because of a GP tax? Will they need to consider cutting costs elsewhere—yes or no? At this point they just do not know.

In opposition, Tony Abbott promised no cuts to health. He also promised certainty and a government of no surprises. Well, surprise, there is no certainty. The GP tax is raining confusion on the sector. The government should show the guts of a government and clearly state their position. If they intend to keep pushing, they should say so. They should bring certainty to the sector.

Reid Electorate: Barnwell Park Golf Club

Mr LAUNDY (Reid) (13:49): Whilst the eyes of the golfing world are on the Australian Golf Club today, and many may think that kicks off Sydney's golfing season, I am here to tell you that they are wrong. Two weeks ago, on Sunday, 9 November, Barnwell Park Golf Club in the electorate of Reid held their pro-am—the first one they have held in 20 years. It was put together by a great group of locals. The major sponsor was Jason Meares from Centenary Advisory Group, with local professional golfer Greg Engall, and the amazing new restaurant at the clubhouse, Novus, was integral to it. All the local businesses came together to sponsor it, hole by hole. The Australian PGA ran it. Darren Baynes did an amazing job. The pro-am committee were board members Wade Martlew, Grant Marshall and Richard Johnson—excellent work, guys. This was all brought together under the amazing tutelage of Craig Delaney—a great golfer himself. I had the pleasure of growing up with him in the area and playing a lot of golf with him. They were the days.

To the board, the players and the volunteers, I congratulate you on what you have done. I know you mentioned on the day that you are doing it next year. I was unable to join you this year, due to prior commitments. I joined you for the presentation, which was great, where I awarded the prize to long-term local and my good mate Craig Parry. I am going to play next year, and my message to you, Popeye, is simple: I'm coming to get ya.

Health Care

Mr CHAMPION (Wakefield) (13:51): Confusion reigns with the GP tax—this cascading tax. It is there every time you go into a doctor's waiting room, every time you get a blood test, every time you get a scan. But, like Frankenstein's monster, it lives. We thought it had died, but it lives. We know it lives because the AMA Media today tweeted:

PM must clarify position on #copayment now. Confusion reigns.

I saw one of the members opposite last night on Peter van Onselen's show. He was confused. He did not know what was happening. Malcolm Farr tweeted:

PMO was last night briefing GP co-payment was buried. Today the tomb was wrenched open by other ministers. Who's not talking to whom?

That was re-tweeted 48 times. Daniel Hurst tweeted:

'Our policy stands, our policy stands': Hockey on GP fee. Asked why govt had briefed out that it was dumped, he says: 'I haven't heard that'

The Treasurer is confused. Michelle Grattan must be a bit confused because she tweeted:

Wouldn't it be good tactics for gov to just plainly say what it plans on Medicare? Or does it enjoy its barnacled boat taking water?
That is what Michelle Grattan tweeted. Latika Bourke tweeted:
This is the look of a Govt that knows what it's doing and in control.
That is what she tweeted with a link to a story about the GP co-payment.

We know that this is an assault on Medicare; it is an assault on everybody who goes into a waiting room, everybody who gets a blood test or who gets a scan— *(Time expired)*

**Longman Electorate: Economy**

**WYATT ROY** (Longman) (13:52): Prosperity is returning to my region. As I make my way around talking to local businesses, they tell me they are employing more locals for the first time in a very long time. Why? Because we have a strong economic action strategy. We have repealed Labor's carbon tax, and businesses like Kennedy's Timber in Narangba are saving $120,000 a year. They have just put on five new staff, including a new trainee, since we got rid of the carbon tax.

We are getting rid of over a billion dollars a year in red tape which doubled our target—it is actually $2 billion this year—and that is helping businesses like R&R Hire in Caboolture where we have removed some of that red tape and they have just doubled their workforce over the last six months.

We are getting on with our infrastructure agenda. Over $50 billion has been put into infrastructure and about $3 billion is going into the highway between Pine Rivers and Gympie, unlocking the economic potential of our region. We are signing landmark free trade agreements with our major trading partners—Korea, China and Japan. That is helping farmers in Elimbah who are selling nuts; it is helping businesses like Packer Leather in Narangba that send leather products into China which used to attract a 14 per cent tariff, but that has gone. We have unlocked $800 billion on projects across the country, including projects like North-East Business Park. In our local community we have created 20,000 jobs over 15 years. We are getting on with the job. *(Time expired)*

**Health Care**

**Mr STEPHEN JONES** (Throsby) (13:54): My challenge this afternoon to all of those coalition backbenchers is to stand in this parliament today and defend the GP tax and defend their minister, because, God knows, he is looking very lonely indeed. Not the Prime Minister's office, not half the cabinet—if we can believe what we have read in this morning's newspapers—are willing to stand there and defend this rotten tax. There is a good reason for that. One of the great things about being an Australian is that, when you go to the doctor, it is your Medicare card, not your credit card, that matters. That is one of the great things about being Australian. Not for us the US system, where people die of preventable diseases because they cannot afford to go to the doctor. It is not free—people know they pay their Medicare levy—but it provides a universal system of health cover which is the envy of the rest of the world.

After breaking his solemn promise to the Australian people that there would be no changes to Medicare, the Prime Minister has been at sixes and sevens on this issue over the last 24 hours. I think things could not get worse: cabinet ministers briefing against cabinet ministers, but we had the minister out on the doors saying, 'It's not dead; it's just resting.' Well, put it to bed. *(Time expired)*
Lindsay Electorate: School Visit

Ms SCOTT (Lindsay) (13:56): I would like to welcome the children from Lakes Christian College who are sitting in the gallery. The children have come all the way from Castlereagh. To be here today they have written a 90-second statement, and I would like to read the children's comments to you:

Good afternoon politicians, we would like to let you know that we pray for you to make good decisions for our nation. We are from a small independent school located in Castlereagh at the foot of the Blue Mountains. We have a great school environment with amazing students and fabulous staff such as Mrs Donoghue, Mr Fowler and Mr Bell. To help Australia we would like you to continue being wise with money and consider the future generations. An example of this foresight was shown by previous politicians in the planning and construction of the Sydney Harbour Bridge to ensure that it is still useful today. We would also like to see more opportunities in our area to play and have fun. Thank you for listening and working long hours to keep our Country running smoothly.

I would really like to thank the students for their very insightful speech. I would also like to thank Victor Glanville, who has driven the students here today, and the Penrith Rotary Club, who ensured that the students could make the journey to enjoy question time today and to see us all.

Drought

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter) (13:57): Coalition members representing rural and regional seats have been lining up to declare the minister's Drought Assistance Package for farmers a failure. The minister's only response is to continually promise to put more money into the fund. The problem is that he cannot spend the money already in the fund. Farmers cannot access the concessional loan scheme or the Farm Household Allowance package. It is time for the minister to concede that his drought package is a failure and to think about some new directions.

There are two components to the drought package which have met with some success. One was the Water Infrastructure Grant Scheme that had a small amount of money and was oversubscribed almost overnight. The second was the strategy to deal with wild dogs, one of the biggest challenges facing those on the land. The minister needs to put some of his money into the wild dogs program as a practical way of helping farmers. He can also have a look at freight subsidies so that farmers can get concessional feed to where it is needed most—a scheme which does not differentiate between regions and is properly weighted so that discrimination does not occur. These are practical things the Prime Minister and his ministers could be doing for farmers.

The drought continues to bite hard in every state in this country, including Victoria, where— (Time expired)

Hindmarsh Electorate: Veterans

Mr WILLIAMS (Hindmarsh) (13:59): I rise today to recognise the newest RSL sub-branch in my electorate and the work they do. This year I was privileged to attend the service of remembrance held by the Hilton RSL. I would like to thank Cliff Kerwin, the president, for hosting me, and his members and volunteers for the moving ceremony and the fellowship at the lunch that followed. I also recently attended the Plympton-Glenelg dinner with my wife. We had a wonderful evening. I thank Will Smith and the branch for their hospitality.
I would also like to mention the William Kibby VC Veterans Shed. An issue for the Vietnam veteran Barry Heffernan, the shed and the memorial garden are named after William Kibby, an Australian recipient of the Victoria Cross. With Ian Anderson and Graham Rose, we had a great remembrance service. The shed is doing amazing things for the veterans community and is changing the lives of former Defence personnel, as the Minister for Veterans' Affairs learnt. I also want to acknowledge John Kain from Kain and Corporate—a great lawyer who is assisting South Australian businesses and who is in the gallery today.

The SPEAKER: It being 2 pm, in accordance with standing order 43, the time for members' statements has concluded.

CONDOLENCES

Withers, Rt. Hon Reginald (Reg) Greive

Report from Federation Chamber

Order of the day returned from Federation Chamber for further consideration; certified copy of the motion presented.

Debate resumed on the motion:

That the House record its deep regret at the death on 15 November 2014 of the Right Honourable Reginald Greive Withers, former Senator for Western Australia and Minister, place on record its appreciation of his long and meritorious public service, and tender its profound sympathy to his family in their bereavement.

The SPEAKER (14:00): The question is that the motion moved by the Prime Minister be agreed to. As a mark of respect, I ask all present to signify their approval by rising in their places.

Question agreed to, honourable members standing in their places.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Health Care

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:01): My question is to the Prime Minister. Australians want to know: is the Prime Minister still committed to forcing families to pay his new GP tax every time they visit a doctor?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:01): I am very committed and the government is very committed to keeping our Medicare system sustainable. That is what we want: a sustainable Medicare system. We want a sustainable Medicare system. A decade ago, Medicare cost us $8 billion. Today it costs us $10 billion.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence on my left as the answer is listened to.

Mr ABBOTT: In a decade's time, it will cost us $34 billion. It was $8 billion 10 years ago, it is $20 billion today and it will be $34 billion in a decade's time. We have to make our great Medicare system sustainable. That is the first point to make. The second point to make is that there is nothing wrong with having price signals in the system—nothing wrong at all with having price signals in the system. It was in fact the great former Prime Minister Bob Hawke who first proposed a price signal in the Medicare system. The Labor Party's Assistant
Treasurer supports a price signal in our health system. The member for Jagajaga supported a review process.

_opposition members interjecting_

The SPEAKER: When questions are asked, I am not going to have this perpetual wall of noise and interjection going on while an answer is being given. If it is to continue, many people will leave the chamber. Those who want early marks can have them!

Mr ABBOTT: The third principle is that we do want to fund the Medical Research Future Fund.

_opposition members interjecting_

The SPEAKER: I warn the member for Moreton!

Mr ABBOTT: We do want to ensure that Australia’s outstanding medical researchers, those who are so good at creating the treatments and cures of the future, are properly supported in the years to come.

_opposition members interjecting_

The SPEAKER: I warn the member for Ballarat!

Mr ABBOTT: We need a sustainable Medicare; we think there should be price signals in the system—we think that is good policy; we do want to see the Medical Research Future Fund take shape; and we are talking constructively and collegially with crossbench senators. We would be happy to talk to members opposite! If only they were not so determined to sabotage good public policy, we would be happy to talk to members opposite—if they were prepared to be part of the solution, having created the problem.

Ms Rowland: You are the problem.

The SPEAKER: The member for Greenway!

Mr ABBOTT: That is what is happening. We want a sustainable Medicare, we want to see price signals in the system, we want to see the Medical Research Future Fund take shape and we are talking to the crossbenchers in the Senate to bring about all these good ends.

Victoria State Election

East West Link

Mr TONY SMITH (Casey) (14:04): My question is to the Prime Minister. I ask the Prime Minister to advise the House how infrastructure projects will create jobs and strengthen the Victorian economy. Can he further advise the House what threats there are to the Victorian economy?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:05): I thank the member for Casey for his question and I thank him for his support for the East West Link, which will do so much for the people of his electorate and for the people of Melbourne.

_opposition members interjecting_

The SPEAKER: The member for Chifley will leave under standing order 94(a).

The member for Chifley then left the chamber.

Mr ABBOTT: Melbourne is a great city, but it is a great city that is currently choking on its own traffic. Victoria is an economic powerhouse, but it needs the infrastructure of the 21st
century, particularly the roads of the 21st century, if it is to grow as it should. I say to everyone who has ever been stuck in traffic on Hoddle Street, Flemington Road or Alexandra Parade—and that must be just about everyone in Melbourne: vote for the solution; do not vote for the problem.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Corio and the member for Melbourne Ports are warned!

Mr ABBOTT: Vote for Denis Napthine, who will build the East West Link, not for the Labor Party, who want to tear up the contracts. The East West Link stage 1 will get rid of 23 sets of traffic lights, it will give back to inner city residents their suburbs and their parks, it will save 20 minutes every single day for the occupants of 100,000 cars and trucks, and—best of all—it will create almost 4,000 jobs. The East West Link stage 1 will create almost 4,000 jobs.

Ms Rowland: Why don't you say that in Melbourne? Don't say it here; say it in Melbourne.

The SPEAKER: The member for Greenway is warned!

Mr ABBOTT: Combined with East West Link stage 2, that is 7,000 jobs for Melbourne. I have said it any number of times in Victoria, including just a couple of weeks ago.

Ms Rowland interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Greenway will leave under standing order 94(a).

Mr ABBOTT: I am invited to hold a press conference on this tomorrow. I might suggest that the Leader of the Opposition should revisit this subject, because who said this: 'The new East West Link is crucial to jobs and economic growth'? I wonder who said that? It was someone called Bill Shorten, National Secretary of the Australian Workers Union. Speaking of press conferences, who said this of East West Link: 'Doing nothing is not an option'? Again, it was someone called Bill Shorten—and Brendan O'Connor, Julia Gillard and Nicola Roxon. What has got into them? I tell you what: they are now putting Greens preferences ahead of the infrastructure and the jobs that Melbourne needs. Shame on them.

Ms Butler: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order on the correct use of titles.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence on my right!

Mr ABBOTT: I am invited to hold a press conference on this tomorrow. I might suggest that the Leader of the Opposition should revisit this subject, because who said this: 'The new East West Link is crucial to jobs and economic growth'? I wonder who said that? It was someone called Bill Shorten, National Secretary of the Australian Workers Union. Speaking of press conferences, who said this of East West Link: 'Doing nothing is not an option'? Again, it was someone called Bill Shorten—and Brendan O'Connor, Julia Gillard and Nicola Roxon. What has got into them? I tell you what: they are now putting Greens preferences ahead of the infrastructure and the jobs that Melbourne needs. Shame on them.

Ms Butler: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order on the correct use of titles.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence on my right before I give the call to the honourable Leader of the Opposition, and that includes on my right. The honourable Prime Minister.

An honourable member interjecting—

The SPEAKER: He did have the call.

An honourable member interjecting—

The SPEAKER: For your benefit alone, I will repeat it: the honourable Prime Minister had the call.
Health Care

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:08): My question is to the Prime Minister. If the Prime Minister genuinely believes that taxing the sick and the vulnerable every time they go to the doctor is in Australia's long-term national interest, will the Prime Minister take his unfair GP tax to the next election?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:09): I know the Leader of the Opposition is doing a fine line in indignation, but if he is so indignant about the proposal for a Medicare co-payment, a proposal that his one-time mentor—

Mr Champion interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Wakefield is warned!

Mr ABBOTT: former Prime Minister Bob Hawke, actually put in place—if he is so indignant about a Medicare co-payment—when is he going to remove the PBS co-payment?

All of the arguments that the Leader of the Opposition is making against the co-payment apply with equal force to the PBS co-payment—so, yet again, more budget vandalism from the Leader of the Opposition. He is not content with opposing everything that this government is putting forward. Now he is suggesting to the Australian people that, if he gets elected, the PBS co-payment will go. Isn't that what he is—

Mr Shorten: Madam Speaker, I raise a point of order. It just goes to relevance. I asked the Prime Minister a straight question—

The SPEAKER: There is no excuse for repeating the question. Just do the point of order.

Mr Shorten: Why won't the Prime Minister ever answer a straight question in the parliament?

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr ABBOTT: I challenge the Leader of the Opposition—

Ms Claydon interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Newcastle is not in her seat and may not speak at all.

Mr ABBOTT: to say where he stands on the PBS co-payment because, if he thinks the PBS co-payment is a good idea—if you think that is fair, if you think that is reasonable, if you think that is just, if you think that is moral—how can he object to the Medicare co-payment, because the principle is identical?

There is a difference between this government and the opposition. This a government which is serious about tackling Australia's fiscal problem. That is an opposition which created the fiscal problem and is now sabotaging every—

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: I can hear guffawing again on my left.

Mr ABBOTT: effort that this government makes to fix it. This is probably the most irresponsible opposition in Australia's history. It is the most irresponsible opposition in Australia's history. They were incompetent in government and they are wreckers in opposition.

Ms Ryan interjecting—

CHAMBER
The SPEAKER: The member for Lalor has moved from her seat. She is not entitled to interject, and if she insists she can leave under 94(a). The choice is hers.

Economy

Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (14:12): My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer outline how the government is building a stronger economy? How does a stronger economy help the people in my beautiful, majestic home state of Victoria?

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney—The Treasurer) (14:12): I thank the honourable member and thank him for being such a—

Mr Butler interjecting—
Ms Collins interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The members for Port Adelaide and Franklin will desist!

Mr HOCKEY: successful, long-term member for a great and memorable part of Victoria. I recognise that building the East West Link is going to be to the great benefit of the people of Gippsland and particularly to all those farmers that are getting their produce to the great Melbourne port.

Of course, over the last 12 months alone we have seen good government from the coalition in Victoria, supported by good government from the coalition here in Canberra, deliver real outcomes—real outcomes to the benefit of the people of Victoria. Under Bill Shorten, the Leader of the Opposition, as the then Minister for Workplace Relations, last year 800 jobs a month were created in Victoria. This year, under the coalition, 3,200 jobs per month have been created in Victoria. So job growth in Victoria is now four times higher under the coalition than it was under Labor. Four times higher under the coalition—

Mr Feeney interjecting—
Mr Marles interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The members for Batman and Corio will leave under 94(a).

The members for Batman and Corio then left the chamber.

Mr HOCKEY: That is two fewer jobs on the Labor side but greater productivity! Maybe a few more can go as well. The outcome, of course, is that, if on Saturday—

Ms Collins interjecting—

The SPEAKER: And the member for Franklin can join them under 94(a).

The member for Franklin then left the chamber.

Mr HOCKEY: the people of Victoria vote in Labor, you are going to tear up 7,000 new jobs associated with the East West Link. I would say to the people of Victoria: if you care about 7,000 new jobs—

Mr Albanese interjecting—

The SPEAKER: If the member for Grayndler wishes to join them, he can too.

Mr HOCKEY: vote for the Liberal and National parties on Saturday. I say to the people of Victoria: if you care about $3 billion of new road funding to build the East West Link, do not give it up by voting Labor on Saturday. Vote for the Liberal and National parties. And I say to the people of Victoria—
Mr Albanese: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The Treasurer is misleading parliament. There is no new money; it is money that was taken off the metro.

The SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat. He knows that is an abuse of the standing orders and if he does it again he will be asked to leave.

Mr HOCKEY: And he knows it is wrong. Why? Labor are so indignant about the $3 billion we are committing to the East West Link that they want to give it back to us.

Mr Champion interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Wakefield has pushed the edge too much and will leave under 94(a).

The member for Wakefield then left the chamber.

Mr HOCKEY: Not only that; we have other states that are now preparing to bid for that $3 billion if Labor gets into government in Victoria on Saturday. The small businesses of Victoria want to see the East West Link built. The producers, the farmers, the traders of Victoria want to see the East West Link built. The commuters of Victoria want to see the East West Link built. And, importantly, 7,000 prospective workers in Victoria want to see the East West Link built. The only people who want to trash it are the Australian Labor Party.

Mr Ripoll interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Oxley is warned!

Health Care

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:16): My question is to the Prime Minister. Last night there were reports that the Prime Minister was planning to scrap his unfair GP tax for now. This morning, Senator Abetz said the unfair GP tax ‘remains our policy’; then the Minister for Health said that different options were being considered to replace the tax. Given that the government’s own ministers cannot get their lines right, is this not just the latest example of an incompetent government in utter and complete chaos?

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister has the call—

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: and there will be silence for the answer.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:16): This from the Leader of the Opposition, who backstabbed two prime ministers. Really and truly—this from the Leader of the Opposition, who showed such loyalty that he knifed two leaders of his own party.

Ms Owens interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Parramatta is warned!

Mr ABBOTT: This is a government that thinks of Medicare GP co-payments as a better way of operating a health system—

Ms Hall interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Shortland is warned!

Mr ABBOTT: The change should hardly hurt at all. As economists have shown, the ideal model involves a small co-payment, not enough to put a dent in your weekly budget but enough to make you think twice before you call the doc.
Ms O'Neil interjecting—

The SPEAKER: As is the member for Hotham warned!

Mr ABBOTT: The idea is hardly radical. It is a very good position, and it is the position of Labor's shadow Assistant Treasurer.

The SPEAKER: There are to be no props. The member for Fraser will put that down and hand it to the attendant.

Mr ABBOTT: Our position when it comes to the Medicare co-payment is exactly the same as Bob Hawke's position and it is exactly the same as the shadow Assistant Treasurer's position and it is the position that we are doing our best to negotiate with the Senate crossbench now.

Mr Pyne: Madam Speaker, on a point of order: the shadow Assistant Treasurer is not in his correct seat. He is waving around props. You asked him to put it away; he continued to wave it around in defiance of what you had indicated to him. The opposition is an absolute rabble today—a cacophony of noise. I ask that you give a general warning, and that the shadow Assistant Treasurer be dealt with.

The SPEAKER: I am aware of the position of frontbenchers moving on the frontbench, and in fairness to the member I did ask him to hand the prop to the attendant and he did attempt to, but the attendant walked past him. To be perfectly honest, I could not see the prop in the first instance because it was being blocked by the splendid head of the Leader of the Opposition!

East West Link

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (14:19): My question is to the Prime Minister. Yesterday and today the Prime Minister said in question time that the East West Link will give inner-city residents their parks back. Can he please advise the House which parks?

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: I am glad the question was asked of the Prime Minister—I could not hear it because of the noise. If there is not silence then more people will leave this chamber. If they want to catch an early plane and do not want to represent their constituencies, so be it. The wall of noise has got to stop.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:19): As the member for Melbourne should well know, Hoddle Street, Flemington Road and Alexandra Parade, which should be suburban boulevards, have become traffic canyons. That is what they have become—they have become absolute traffic canyons. The people who are living in and around these streets, the people who are living in the suburbs surrounding these streets, deserve to have their suburbs and their parks back. The Leader of the Opposition thinks East West Link is a good idea—or at least he did until he was intimidated by the need for Green preferences into changing his position. One of the many advantages of East West Link stage 1 is that it will mean that Royal Park is a much better park for the people of inner-city Melbourne to enjoy.

Building and Construction Industry

Ms O'DWYER (Higgins) (14:20): My question is to the Minister for Education, the Minister representing the Minister for Employment. Will the minister update the House on the
government's progress in restoring law and order on worksites in Australia? Who stands in the way of restoring the rule of law in the building and construction industry?

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (14:21): I thank the member for Higgins for her question because she, like all members on this side of the House, believes in restoring the rule of law on building and construction sites in Australia, and that is why we are attempting to bring back the Australian Building and Construction Commission. When it was last in existence under the Howard government it saved the Australian economy $7½ billion and improved productivity in building and construction by 16.8 per cent. It was scrapped by the now Leader of the Opposition when he was the Minister for Workplace Relations. Who is standing in the way of restoring the rule of law on building and construction sites? It is the Australian Labor Party. In Victoria, right now, we have a state election where the Leader of the Opposition there, Daniel Andrews, has indicated that he will rip up the Victorian building code—he will rip it up and allow the law of the jungle to operate on building and construction sites in Victoria. The choice on Saturday is between the coalition government, which believes in the rule of law in building and construction, or the Daniel Andrews led Labor Party, which believes in the law of the jungle.

I am asked who is standing in the way. Unfortunately, the person who is most influential on Daniel Andrews in industrial relations is a man called John Setka, the secretary of the CFMEU in Victoria. It is worth finding out who this John Setka is. He has quite a charge sheet. He was allowed to speak at the Victorian ALP conference. He is allowed to donate to the Victorian ALP. He is a member of Daniel Andrews's Socialist Left faction and he is the most influential person in the Victorian Labor Party. If Daniel Andrews wins on Saturday, John Setka will be the second most powerful person in Victoria.

He did 60 days in jail for contempt of court in 1990. He did four months in jail for contempt of court, a second offence, in 1990 as well—in prison. He was convicted for threatening behaviour by the Federal Magistrates Court in 2008 and fined $6,000. He was found guilty by the Magistrates' Court of the criminal offence of threatening or intimidating a Grocon manager in 2003. He was charged with five charges—two of assault, two of obstruction, and intimidation of Commonwealth officials—in 2009. This is the person Labor wants to put in charge of industrial relations in Victoria.

On Saturday, a vote for the Napthine-Ryan government will keep the rule of law on building and construction. A vote for the Daniel Andrews opposition will put John Setka back at the cabinet table in Victoria, a man with a charge sheet as long as his friend Mick Gatto's.

Minister for Defence

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:24): My question is to the Prime Minister. The Minister for Defence has failed to apologise for insulting the highly skilled workforce at the Australian Submarine Corporation. If he will not say sorry, why don't you just sack him?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:24): The minister has repeatedly said how much he regretted that statement, which was something that was said in the heat of debate and which should not have been said. Again, I remind the Leader of the Opposition of his own record when he was in government. The Leader of the Opposition cut $16 billion from the Defence budget. Members opposite, all of whom sat around the cabinet table under
the former government, were responsible for cutting $16 billion from the Defence budget. They were responsible for taking defence spending as a percentage of GDP down to the lowest level since 1938.

The debate in question was a debate about the Australian Submarine Corporation. It was a debate about the air warfare destroyer project. As the Australian National Audit Office found, thanks to the mismanagement of members opposite, thanks to the chaos and confusion of the former government, this project was at least $300 million over budget, and it was at least 21 months behind schedule. Over budget, behind schedule—yet another mess that Labor created; yet another mess that this government is fixing. I want to thank the minister. I want to thank the Minister for Defence and the Minister for Industry for getting this matter in hand and for solving a problem that the Labor Party created.

Ms O'Neil interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Hotham will leave under 94(a).

The member for Hotham then left the chamber.

Crime

Mr SUKKAR (Deakin) (14:26): My question is to the Minister for Justice. Will the minister update the House on the government's achievements in taking a tough stance against organised crime and corruption in Australia? How will these measures make the streets in my electorate of Deakin safer?

Mr KEENAN (Stirling—Minister for Justice) (14:26): I thank the member for Deakin for that question, and I congratulate him on his energetic representation of his constituents since he arrived here 14 months ago. He understands that since we have come to office we have taken a tough stance against organised crime. We have worked hand-in-hand with our Victorian state counterparts in doing that, unlike the Victorian Labor Party, which seems content to let criminality fester within its ranks.

Indeed, the Victorian ALP is in thrall to a rogue union, the CFMEU, with John Setka at the helm. This is a man who has vowed that the CFMEU will remain a militant union, and he has vowed that the CFMEU will continue to break the law a bit. This is hardly a surprising attitude from a union boss whose associates include criminal gang members and who has been called by Mick Gatto a 'close mate'.

Since coming to government, the coalition has been working hard to detect and disrupt organised crime, particularly through the National Anti-Gang Squad. We have worked hard with our Victorian counterparts to establish the Victorian Strike Team, which sees Victoria Police and Australian Federal Police officers sitting side by side. I was pleased to announce that strike team with Premier Napthine, and with my friend and colleague the Minister for Police and Emergency Services Kim Wells, in Victoria just over a year ago.

The key to the success of this strike team is undermining the profit motive of organised crime. We have been progressing, along with our Victorian counterparts, national unexplained wealth laws. At the most recent Law, Crime and Community Safety Council, which met in Geelong, Victoria's largest regional city, all state and territory ministers agreed to continue to develop a national cooperative approach to unexplained wealth. In addition to this the Victorian government has promised to tighten asset forfeiture laws for ice dealers. The
coalition will continue to work with our Victorian counterparts to do all we can to crack down on organised crime peddling ice and destroying regional communities in particular.

We on this side of the House are committed to taking a tough stance against criminal behaviour. When Labor were in government they refused to unlock the proceeds of crime account, money which we have now unlocked since we have come to government and we are using to fight crime, investing over $3 million of proceeds of crime in Victorian electorates—Deakin and others—on CCTV and other crime prevention initiatives. On this side of the House we will continue to work against organised crime; we will not accommodate it like the Victorian Labor Party and its leader, Daniel Andrews. A vote for Labor on Saturday will be a vote for the CFMEU and will see the Victorian government turning a blind eye to corrupt and criminal behaviour.

"Opposition members interjecting—"

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition will not get the call until there is silence, and if that wall of noise starts again it will be randomly asked that members leave.

"Opposition members: Randomly?"

The SPEAKER: Randomly, because a general warning is in place and you are all warned. The honourable Leader of the Opposition has the call, but unless there is silence many more of you will be having that early mark you clearly want.

Minister for Defence

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:30): My question is to the Prime Minister.

Mr Pyne: Madam Speaker, on a point of order: is it in order, while you are admonishing the opposition, for the members for Grayndler and Hunter to actually be interjecting on you as the Speaker?

The SPEAKER: The answer is no, and there shall be no more of it.

"Opposition members interjecting—"

The SPEAKER: All three of you perhaps should consider your positions.

Mr SHORTEN: My question is to the Prime Minister. The Minister for Defence has failed our Defence Force men and women by cutting their real wages and conditions, including Christmas and recreation leave. If he will not say sorry for cutting the real wages of our Defence Force men and women, why won't you just sack him?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:31): No-one regrets more than I do that we cannot afford to pay people more at this time. No-one regrets that more than I do. I have been to Defence base after Defence base over the last 14 months. I have visited our Defence forces in all sorts of different contexts. I deeply respect—nay, I revere—our Defence forces. No-one is more deserving of the best possible deal than our Defence forces.

But it comes a little ill of the Leader of the Opposition, who helped to put us into the parlous fiscal position that we are in, to complain about the necessary consequences of the situation that he created. This is someone who not only knifed two prime ministers but played a large part in the economic policies of the former government which gave us debt and deficits stretching out as far as the eye can see.
Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, on a point of order: surely on a question about our Defence Force the Prime Minister can be relevant.

The SPEAKER: The question was a very wide ranging one and, when asked for action which is anticipated by the Leader of the Opposition as appropriate, the Prime Minister is perfectly entitled to answer it.

A government member interjecting—

Mr Fitzgibbon: He is interjecting again, Madam Speaker, while you were speaking.

The SPEAKER: The member for Hunter, who was also interjecting, can leave under 94(a).

Mr Fitzgibbon: Madam Speaker, the Leader of the House was making a point of order complaining that members were interjecting on you while you were speaking. He has done nothing but—

The SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat and leave under 94(a).

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, a point of order—

The SPEAKER: Is the Manager of Opposition Business anxious to join the member for Hunter?

Mr Burke: No, I am not. But if I have the call I will take a point of order.

The SPEAKER: Indeed.

Mr Burke: How is the member for Hunter meant to resume his seat and leave the room?

The SPEAKER: He can do it sequentially. It is quite clever.

Mr ABBOTT: The job of the Minister for Defence is to ensure that our Defence Force personnel have the best possible deal under all the circumstances. I can assure members opposite that no-one in the public sector will be getting a better deal than our Defence Force personnel, because our Defence Force personnel deserve the very best from the Australian people and the Australian government.

Mr Butler interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Griffith will leave under 94(a).

Mr ABBOTT: They will get much better from this particular government than they did from the last one, which cut $16 billion off them and reduced defence spending as a percentage of GDP to the lowest level since 1938.

Infrastructure

Mr WOOD (La Trobe) (14:34): My question is to the Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development. Will the minister inform the House how the government is delivering world-class infrastructure in beautiful Victoria? Are there any risks to these plans?

The SPEAKER: I call the honourable Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development.

Mr BRIGGS (Mayo—Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (14:35): Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to respond to the question from the
member for La Trobe, who is a fantastic member. It is great to have him back in this chamber, fighting for the people of the eastern suburbs of Melbourne. He knows how important this weekend is for the people of the eastern suburbs of Melbourne, because he knows how important the $3 billion commitment that the Abbott government has made to both stages of the East West Link project is. We are committed to this project because it will cut travel times for people living in Melbourne. It will increase our productivity and make Australia stronger. That is why the infrastructure Prime Minister is so focused on delivering this project with an infrastructure Premier in Denis Napthine, who deserves to be re-elected this weekend.

The first stage, the one that the member for La Trobe is particularly interested in, is a project where the contracts have been signed. The contracts have been signed by a Lend Lease led consortium that is made up of overseas companies as well. In fact, two-thirds of the construction work will be conducted by overseas companies. In addition to that, while Lend Lease have the contract, they have been at market, seeking the debt and the equity to fund the construction of this project, and that is well underway.

Mr Albanese interjecting—

Mr BRIGGS: No, in the last month, actually, Member for Grayndler—and you should know how important this is, because the shadow Treasurer knows how important this is. If you rip up this contract this weekend, you lift the sovereign risk of our country. You do what Swannie did with the mining tax: you put sovereign risk for Australia right back up-front—don't you, Member for Lilley? That is what you will do if you rip up these contracts this weekend.

The shadow Treasurer made a very important point just a few weeks ago. He made a very important point and we agree with the point that he made. We agree with the point that the member for McMahon made:

... Labor honours contracts. Labor in Government honours contracts entered into by previous governments. Even if we don’t like them for issues of sovereign risk Labor honours contracts in office signed by previous governments.

It is just a pity that the Leader of the Opposition does not like the shadow Treasurer and will not take his advice. He wants to take the Greens’ advice—he wants to take the advice of the member for Melbourne—because he needs their preferences. He used to support the project.

Mr Albanese: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. We want to take Infrastructure Australia’s advice.

The SPEAKER: The member will leave under 94(a).

The member for Grayndler then left the chamber.

Mr BRIGGS: The Leader of the Opposition used to support the East West Link project, not just once but twice, in two submissions. When he was the leader of the AWU, the Australian Workers Union, he wrote for the comrades’ submission: ‘The Australian Workers Union believes that the new East West Link is crucial to jobs and economic growth.’ Hear, hear! The problem with this Leader of the Opposition is that you cannot trust him. Julia Gillard could not trust this Leader of the Opposition. Julia Gillard could not trust the man to stick with her. Wayne Swan knows that you cannot trust this Leader of the Opposition. Victorians on the weekend should know that they can trust this Leader of the Opposition with their jobs as much as Julia Gillard could with hers.
Minister for Defence

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:38): My question is to the Prime Minister. It is clear that the Prime Minister lacks the leadership to sack the Minister for Defence today. Prime Minister, will Senator Johnston still be the defence minister when parliament resumes next year?

Mr Pyne: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. We are very tolerant of the Leader of the Opposition's questions, but the first part of that question was an assertion and the second part of it was entirely hypothetical and could not possibly be in order.

Mr Burke: If the Prime Minister's view is the same as that of the Leader of the House, we are happy to leave it at that.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. You can have a rephrasing of the question although I am tempted simply to rule it out of order because it is not in conformity with the standing orders.

Mr SHORTEN: Prime Minister, will Senator Johnston still be the defence minister when parliament resumes next year?

The SPEAKER: That was not really a very successful rephrasing of the question. We will move on. The member for Reid has the call.

Mr Laundy: My question is to—I might yield.

Mr Abbott: Madam Speaker—

Ms Hall interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Shortland will desist. She is not in her place.

Mr Burke interjecting—

Mr Pyne: Why don't you mind your own business?

The SPEAKER: I think the interjections across the chamber will cease. The Prime Minister on a point of order.

Mr Abbott: Madam Speaker, I would crave your indulgence to actually answer the question that the Leader of the Opposition put.

The SPEAKER: I think the better way to solve this is we will move to the question from the member for Reid and then the Leader of the Opposition may re-ask his question. The member for Reid.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: I have ruled that the member for Reid has the call.

Mr Burke interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat.

Mr Danby: Reid yielded! Reid yielded!

The SPEAKER: I cannot see who is yelling. Was it the member for Melbourne Ports?

Mr Danby: I cannot tell a lie.

The SPEAKER: In that case, you may leave under 94(a).

The member for Melbourne Ports then left the chamber.
Mr Burke: I just want to inquire about the ruling you just gave. Is that a suggestion that that would be in place of our ordinary question after the member for Reid's question or is it an additional one?

The SPEAKER: No, it is not additional. I will return to the Leader of the Opposition following the question by the member for Reid.

Trade

Mr LAUNDY (Reid) (14:41): Thank you, Madam Speaker. That yielding is a lot overrated! My question is to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Might I add that it is lovely to actually have her in the country. Will the minister update the House on how the government has strengthened Australia's relations with our major trading partners in Asia and the benefits this will have for the Australian economy?

Mr Ripoll interjecting—

The SPEAKER: This really does feel like the last week of sitting. This is normally the behaviour we get in the last week. However, perhaps if we hear a splendid answer from the Minister for Foreign Affairs we may have some decorum return to the chamber.

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin—Minister for Foreign Affairs) (14:42): I thank the member for Reid for his question. It is indeed a delight to be in the country, because over the last few weeks we have demonstrated how this government delivers on opportunities for our exporters and opportunities for Australians to get jobs. We know that Australia's prosperity and Australia's security depend on trade and engagement with our region. We know that Australia's reputation as an open, export oriented market economy is important, because we need to ensure that we can create jobs for the 21st century. That is why we have placed China, Japan and South Korea as key priorities in our foreign policy based on economic diplomacy. Just as traditional diplomacy aims for peace, so economic diplomacy aims for prosperity. Our policy finds its expression in the completion by our magnificent Minister for Trade and Investment of three free trade agreements with the major economies of North Asia. In the case of China, we will be able to slash tariffs on 95 per cent of goods and our exporters will have greater access to a $10 trillion economy. In Japan, 100 per cent of our resources, energy, manufacturing exports will have tariff-free entry. Korea, the minister tells us, will add $650 million to our economy annually. This is a result of these three free trade agreements. We said we would negotiate and conclude three free trade agreements and we have delivered. This does demonstrate our ability to focus on what matters most to Australians—that is, opportunities for our young people to have jobs and opportunities for our businesses to grow with new sources of capital, new markets and an enhanced existing markets. Labor said that free trade agreements were overrated. That was just an excuse for their lazy incompetence.

Through commitment, we have been able to ensure that our relationships with our three major trading partners are better than they have ever been before. These are backed up by high-level dialogues with our Prime Minister, who welcomed Prime Minister Abe to Australia in July, President Xi to the G20 and to Canberra for the joint sitting of the parliament, and President Park to the G20. The trade minister and I meet frequently with our counterpart ministers. This is what the New Colombo Plan is also about—building connections and networks between the leaders of the future. Our relationships with our three trade major trading partners—China, Japan and Korea—have never been better as a result of commitment,
dedication and an understanding of what matters: to create new jobs and to create new markets for our exporters.

Budget

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (14:45): My question is to the Prime Minister. Today senior Australian Financial Review journalist Laura Tingle described the Prime Minister's budget strategy as 'dead, a seriously ex parrot'. Does the Prime Minister agree that his budget strategy and unfair GP tax are dead? Or, Prime Minister, is it just a flesh wound?

Ms Hall interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Shortland will leave under 94(a).

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:46): I will take the opportunity of this moment at the dispatch box to say that I have full confidence in the Minister for Defence. I will say this of the Minister for Defence: he wants to be the minister; he is doing a fine job as the minister. If you look at the outcomes under members opposite, Labor had three defence ministers in six years. Their first defence minister was sacked, their second defence minister resigned and their third defence minister wanted another job. That is what Labor defence ministers were like.

Mr Bowen: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The Prime Minister has had three questions on which he could have expressed confidence in the minister, but he is not being relevant on this one.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. If you want to call a point of order, there is a proper way to do it and you know very well there is. One more breach of the standing order protocols and you will leave too.

Mr ABBOTT: The point I am making is that the idea that this fine minister should somehow be disqualified from serving because of a mistake made in the heat of the moment is simply absurd.

On the question of the budget, our budget strategy is simple. It is to get the budget back to surplus as quickly as we can and as responsibly as we can. Members opposite know that that is the right strategy because we had statement after statement from members opposite saying that we needed, to quote the Leader of the Opposition, 'a budget surplus for a strong economy'. They all know that a budget surplus matters. The problem is that they never delivered it. In the famous statement of the member for Lilley, he said: 'The four years of surpluses that I announce tonight.' He announced that in 2012. Labor has not delivered a surplus since 1989. On the form that members opposite show, Labor is simply congenitally incapable of delivering a surplus.

We heard the Leader of the Opposition on radio the other day. He said: … we're more likely to get back to surplus under a Labor government than this current mob. Really? They have opposed every savings measure. This Leader of the Opposition has opposed every savings measure, including his own. He is not trying to create a budget surplus; he is trying to sabotage a budget surplus. He says he wants a budget surplus, but he is not prepared to support a single measure designed to deliver it. This is a Labor Party that has absolutely given up on governing or even pretending to govern this country. They were
incompetent in government. They are wreckers in opposition. They are budget saboteurs par excellence.

**Trade with China**

*Mr TEHAN* (Wannon) (14:49): My question is to the Minister for Trade and Investment or, as he is more commonly known, 'Mr Trifecta'. Will the minister outline how local industries and service providers in my home state of Victoria will benefit from the Australia-China free trade agreement?

*Mr ROBB* (Goldstein—Minister for Trade and Investment) (14:50): I thank the member for Wannon. He is a wonderful advocate for agriculture and a man with a big future. His electorate is set to benefit big-time from this free trade agreement that was concluded a couple of weeks ago. Agriculture is worth $1.47 billion to the Western District as a region strong in dairy, beef, lamb, wool, wine and horticulture. With the free trade agreement, the Western District will see that tariffs of up to 25 per cent for beef will go, tariffs of up 23 per cent for sheep and lamb will go—

*Mr Kelvin Thomson*: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Will the minister assist the House by tabling the agreement to which he is referring?

*The SPEAKER*: The member for Wills will leave under 94(a). That is an abuse of standing orders.

*Mr ROBB*: The coalition is following the practice of the Labor Party and will table the text once it is fully completed and has been lawyered.

This agreement will remove tariffs on wine of up to 30 per cent for the Western District. It will remove tariffs on fruit and vegetables. Tariffs of up to 30 per cent will go. Wool will secure a new duty-free quota of 30,000 tonnes, to grow by five per cent every year. Of course, dairy is the really big winner. Tariffs of up to 20 per cent will go.

*Ms Parke*: Madam Speaker, on a point of order: government members have been asking and answering questions all week about the China free trade agreement—

*The SPEAKER*: You are to speak to the standing order. What standing order are you referring to?

*Ms Parke*: Standing order 100(d)(i): 'Questions must not contain statements of fact unless they can be authenticated.'

*The SPEAKER*: The member will resume her seat. Indeed, having sat down she too will leave under 94(a) sequentially.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

*The SPEAKER*: Firstly, I will say there has been a general warning. Secondly, I will say the number of times that the standing orders are abused by members of the opposition trying to make argumentative and debating points in a standing order—about the standing order they are trying to draw—is totally and utterly unacceptable. I suggest, Mr Manager of Opposition Business, you conduct a clinic for your members so that they can see how to do it properly.
Mr Burke: On the point of order, Madam Speaker: you have just ejected a member of parliament for taking a point of order in which she precisely quoted the standing order it was referring to. How is that an abuse?

The SPEAKER: Because that was not the abuse she was ejected for; it was the argument that she put into the question, which is totally against the way you raise a point of order.

Mr Bowen: On the point of order, Madam Speaker: the member for Fremantle raised a point of order. You asked her to identify the standing order, which she proceeded to do. At that point you asked her to leave exactly at the time she named the standing order that she was referring to. I would ask you to clarify for the House, for the benefit of honourable members, what her offence was when she named the standing order which you were alleging was abused.

Mr Pyne: Madam Speaker, on the point of order: clearly, on the points of order that have been taken by the opposition, the Manager of Opposition Business in the House should explain to the member for Fremantle that the standing order which she was quoting was about questions—not answers. Therefore it was totally out of order. And the fact that she had to read it indicates she was put up to it in the first place. The opposition should stop trying to disrupt the parliament and trying to make life difficult for the government when they actually should be asking questions and eliciting answers.

The SPEAKER: I thank the Leader of the House for a quite useful intervention. And indeed the Manager of Opposition Business will also know that the only standing order that relates to the question of the way answers may be given is the one that relates to relevance. None of the other standing orders do, and speaker after speaker has pointed it out to the chamber. The minister has the call.

Mr ROBB: Clearly those opposite have no interest in seeing their constituents have explained to them opportunities for growth and jobs. The opportunities for dairy in the Western District extend to infant formula, milk powders, liquid milk, ice cream, yoghurt and cheese and so much more. This free trade agreement is rich not just for the Western District but for the whole of Victoria. The agreement has the potential to deliver enormous benefits. These will only be achieved if the increase in the higher value production can be delivered to the Port of Melbourne cost-effectively. In this regard, the construction of the east-west tunnel is fundamental to the seamless connection of the Tullamarine Freeway to the Port of Melbourne. Without the east-west tunnel, many of the competitive gains of a free trade agreement will be compromised or lost through higher freight charges.

Mr Thistlethwaite interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Kingsford Smith is warned!

Mr ROBB: Not only that, but the higher investment encouraged by the free trade agreement will be discouraged by the highly irresponsible actions of the state Labor leader, who has promised to tear up the contracts. He is a walking sovereign risk. So many of the benefits of the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement—

Mr Thistlethwaite interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Kingsford Smith will leave under 94(a).

The member for Kingsford Smith then left the chamber.
Mr ROBB: are under threat in Victoria if Labor wins the state election this weekend.

Mr Burke: The minister was quoting from the free trade agreement. I ask him to table the document that he was quoting from.

The SPEAKER: Is the matter that the minister was quoting from confidential?

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Can we have some silence!

Mr ROBB: The notes I was quoting were not the free trade agreement. The free trade agreement documentation is currently being translated into Chinese, as was the case with the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand contract that Labor was responsible for, which took six months before you tabled the text—six months.

The SPEAKER: I am not sure whether that was a question or whether you were really asking for the tabling of documents.

Mr Burke: I was asking for the tabling of documents.

The SPEAKER: So it was not a question. In that case I call the member for Sydney.

Victoria State Election

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:58): My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister, sometimes described as box-office poison, be visiting Victoria tomorrow, or has Denis Napthine told him to stay away because he is no John Howard?

Mr Pyne: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The question is clearly out of order. It offends standing order 100 and should be ruled out of order and we should move straight to the government member.

The SPEAKER: If the member for Sydney wishes to rephrase her question and make it in order then she may do so.

Ms PLIBERSEK: My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister be campaigning in Victoria tomorrow?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:58): I have been campaigning in Victoria three times—three times since the election was called. Once was to talk about our infrastructure improvements that have been done jointly with the Victorian Premier, and those infrastructure improvements are not just East West Link, vital though that is, but also the widening of the Tullamarine Freeway, an absolutely vital infrastructure improvement that will only happen under a coalition government here in Canberra and in Victoria as well. So I was there for that.

Mr Perrett interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Moreton!

Mr ABBOTT: I was there to stand shoulder to shoulder with Premier Denis Naphine to announce a police task force—

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence!
Mr ABBOTT: to investigate abuses by the CFMEU, abuses which people like the Leader of the Opposition effectively support—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr ABBOTT: Let us hear the Leader of the Opposition—

Mr Conroy interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Charlton will leave under 94(a).

The member for Charlton then left the chamber.

Mr ABBOTT: stand up and repudiate the CFMEU. I ask the Leader of the Opposition to stand up and repudiate the CFMEU. The Leader of the Opposition wants John Setka to be the most powerful man in Victoria. That is what he does. By contrast, I was in Victoria standing shoulder to shoulder with Premier Denis Napthine to announce a joint Commonwealth-Victoria police task force to investigate—

Ms Plibersek interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Sydney has asked her question.

Mr ABBOTT: and prosecute union criminality, which has been connived at for years by members opposite.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker—

The SPEAKER: Member for Watson, I am not calling for your point of order.

Mr Burke: No, it is about asking for a comment to be withdrawn. He has imputed motives to the members opposite—

The SPEAKER: I am sorry, there is no—individually, no. The member for Lingiari?

Mr Snowdon: Madam Speaker, I ask the Prime Minister to withdraw the imputation that I connived with criminals.

A government member interjecting—

Mr Snowdon: He did.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The member for Lingiari will take his seat or else leave. The choice is his.

Mr Perrett interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Moreton will leave under 94(a).

The member for Moreton then left the chamber.

Trade

Mr PITT (Hinkler) (15:01): My question is to the Minister for Agriculture. Will the minister inform the House how the world-renowned Hervey Bay seafood industry will benefit from recent free trade agreements?

Ms MacTiernan interjecting—

Mr JOYCE (New England—Minister for Agriculture and Deputy Leader of The Nationals) (15:01): I thank the honourable member for his question.

The SPEAKER: The member for Perth will leave under 94(a).

The member for Perth then left the chamber.
Mr Joyce: The honourable member comes from a farming family, so has great experience in farming. I was reading about the honourable member and also found out he was the Queensland electrical apprentice of the year. So he also has experience as a tradesman. This is very important. We might return to that later on.

It was also great to have the seafood industry down here today. We had a barbecue, and some of that product was an absolutely exemplar of why Australia can export $1.2 billion worth of seafood a year. Because of the work that the trade minister has done—it is not just in the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement; it is in all three trade agreements—we have a great new expansion of markets. With Korea, a 20 per cent duty on rock lobsters and a 10 per cent duty on bluefin tuna are going to be removed. They are going to be removed because of the work the coalition do to try and make sure that we expand our economic base. Under the free trade agreement with Japan, which is a very important market for Australia, the tariff on lobsters, crustaceans and shellfish will be immediately eliminated. The tariff on Australia's largest seafood exports, tuna and Atlantic salmon, will be phased out over 10 years. In the Chinese free trade agreement, for abalone, a major market, a 10 to 14 per cent tariff will be removed over four years; rock lobster, 15 per cent removed over four years; prawns, five to eight per cent removed over four years; crabs, 10 per cent removed over four years; whole fish, 10 to 12 per cent removed over four years; and shellfish, 14 per cent removed over four years. This means that money is going back into the Australian economy.

This means we are getting a better price for our product. This means that we have a greater economic future because of the work this side of the chamber does to grow our nation's economy. We should have realised that would happen, because we saw what happened to the exports from New Zealand when they had a free trade agreement—the massive increase in exports that New Zealand had. But, of course, whilst we were frustrated, the Labor Party were in government. So what did they do? They did nothing. Well, they did suggest that they would have the world's largest marine park, and they actually closed people down, put people out of work. It is not just the fishermen and it is not just the shop owners; it is also the tradespeople.

I was thinking, if we have the former Queensland electrical tradesperson of the year, how many tradespeople are on the Labor Party side? How many do you have? Just put up your hands. Who has actually got a trade there these days? Who has got a trade? None. Yet they say they represent the Australian people. I know that the member for Oxley actually does have a trade, but I cannot see another one there. Not one. Yet you are supposed to be the party of the working man and woman. But you have no-one these days with a trade, and that is why you are so out of touch.

Health Care

Ms King (Ballarat) (15:04): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to the AMA President's comments today about the unfair GP tax, and I quote: 'It would be bad, particularly for vulnerable patients, and if you cannot win over the parliament or the population it is time to admit there is a problem with the policy instead of being petulant.' Why is the government so intent on introducing an unfair GP tax by any means to make vulnerable Australians pay just to see their doctor?

An opposition member interjecting—
Mr DUTTON (Dickson—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (15:05): If the member opposite does not have the guts to ask me a question, I will answer it anyway. Let me say this—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr DUTTON: Rumpole, come on.

Mr Dreyfus: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would ask you to direct the minister to withdraw the disgraceful imputation that he has just made.

The SPEAKER: There was so much noise, I could not even hear it. If the minister has, in fact, made an imputation, it would assist the House if he would withdraw.

Mr DUTTON: I am happy to withdraw it. When the Labor Party were in government—people will remember the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd years—it was six years of absolute disaster in this country. It was an absolute disaster. They received two separate reports telling them ‘the health system is currently unsustainable’. What did the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd governments do about it? Nothing at all. They spent more money on health bureaucracy and they took money away from front-line services. The commitment of this government is to get more money back to doctors and nurses and away from Labor’s spin doctors. It is true here and it is true in Victoria as well, because the Victorian government, under the leadership of David Davis, has got the health system back on track. He has got it back on track in primary care and in tertiary care as well.

When it comes to Medicare, 10 years ago, as the Prime Minister rightly pointed out before, we were spending $8 billion a year on Medicare. Today we are spending $20 billion a year; bearing in mind that from the Medicare levy we raise $10 billion a year, there is a $10 billion gap and it is growing rapidly. In fact, over the last five years, it has grown by 34 per cent, and we know that within 10 years time it will almost double again. Now, the only people who say that that is sustainable are, really, when you look at it, the Labor Party. The Labor Party are the only ones who suggest that giving away millions of services each year is somehow free.

The proposal by the coalition government is to make sure that we can provide support by retaining bulk-billing for those who cannot afford a $7 co-payment, but we have said we will ask for a modest co-payment so that we can strengthen Medicare. At the same time, yes, we do want to put money into the Medical Research Future Fund. Why? Because in states like Victoria we know that, for every dollar that we put into medical research, we get a $2.17 return, and in states like Victoria we have the great capacity to put those jobs into place in areas like the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, an outstanding institution within Victoria.

If we can put more jobs into Victoria, we can find the cures of tomorrow. We would not have Gardasil today if we had not invested in medical research in years past. The money that we put into medical research today will provide better care models so that we can have a sustainable health system into the future. Not only will we have more jobs in the medical research sector in areas like Victoria; we will also provide for tomorrow’s cures. That is the commitment of this government. We will make Medicare sustainable, we will take care of those that need to be protected and we will strengthen the health system of the 21st century.

National Rental Affordability Scheme

Mrs McNAMARA (Dobell) (15:09): My question is to the Minister for Social Services. Would the minister update the House on the National Rental Affordability Scheme?
Mr ANDREWS (Menzies—Minister for Social Services) (15:09): I thank the member for Dobell for her question, and I commend her for her representation of the people of Wyong and The Entrance, and all those areas in that part of New South Wales on the North Coast.

The answer to her question about the National Rental Affordability Scheme is that it simply has not delivered the benefits that were expected of it. Why hasn't it delivered those benefits? It is because of its poor and incompetent administration by the Labor Party.

In June 2014, only 19,000 of the 35,000 dwellings had been built and 16,000 dwellings had not been delivered. Not only had they not been delivered in the member for Dobell's state of New South Wales but hundreds of dwellings had not been built in Victoria and other states around Australia. Why was that? It is because of the poor design, and incompetent administration, of the NRAS. For example, foreign students were allowed to take up dwellings that had originally been designated for ordinary workers in this country. Trading incentives occurred rather than actually building dwellings around the country. More recently we have discovered, again because of the totally incompetent administration of the scheme by the Labor Party, alleged fraudulent use of incentives.

So we are about improving the administration. We have put in place a use-it-or-lose-it situation in relation to the remaining incentives, and we are not going to proceed with the last round, which is going to save the Australian taxpayer millions of dollars.

This is typical of the Labor Party's incompetent administration. This is also the case, as the Auditor-General pointed out in his report on the Building Better Regional Cities Program, in which he said:

… the BBRC program has been implemented in a way that gave insufficient attention to the program’s objective …

The guidelines have been ignored. The importance of achieving value for the expenditure of the taxpayer of Australia was simply ignored. I wonder who was responsible for this. It is not an easy answer because they had six ministers responsible for housing under the Rudd-Gillard Labor government. But who made a mess of it? It was none other than the member for Sydney. She was the one primarily responsible for the abject failure of this scheme and for the incompetent administration of this scheme.

But what happens when you are a failure over there? You get promoted! She got promoted so she could then make a mess of the health system in Australia, as the Minister for Health has pointed out. Having failed twice, she is now the deputy leader. If she fails again she will be the leader!

Mr Abbott: I ask that further questions be placed on the Notice Paper.

QUESTIONS TO THE SPEAKER

Parliamentary Behaviour

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (15:13): At risk of adding to the total, I should note that 18 people being ejected in one question time is an all-time record since Federation.

Mr Pyne: Madam Speaker, on a point of order: it is very apparent, and the Australian public should know, that the Labor Party have run a deliberate strategy of ejection from the House today. They have deliberately attempted to be thrown out, and if they intend to
continue to behave like idiots then they will deserve to be thrown out. And trying to now make a political point out of it is so transparent and so pathetic. They are so transparent. They have so few members left because you told them all to get thrown out, and now you want to try to make the point that the Speaker has thrown your people out. We are behaving and you are not.

The SPEAKER (15:13): I would simply say to the Manager of Opposition Business that the behaviour today was an absolute disgrace. Looking at the list, I can see that quite a few of them are indeed Victorian members, who perhaps wish to go back and campaign. Others may wish to have early planes, but there was a deliberate campaign of noise and disruption, and I am fortunate in having standing order 94(a) with which to deal with it, otherwise it means naming people and taking up the time of the House. Simply to stand there and try to say that you all behaved like little angels and that you were picked on is pathetic.

An opposition member interjecting—

The SPEAKER: You did. That was your inference—

An opposition member: Not at all.

The SPEAKER: and I simply will not bear it.

Ms Plibersek: Most biased Speaker ever!

The SPEAKER: The member for Sydney is reflecting on the chair and will withdraw.

Mr Pyne: You are appalling.

Ms Plibersek: I withdraw.

Mr Pyne: You are a real piece of work.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the House will also withdraw.

Mr Dreyfus interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Isaacs will desist!

Mr Pyne: Madam Speaker, the campaign continues from the opposition; but, if it assists the House, I withdraw.

The SPEAKER: At every moment there was nothing but disrespect and there was nothing but noise—and a wall of noise. It was quite deliberately done.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (15:14): Madam Speaker, I seek to make a personal explanation.

The SPEAKER: Does the member claim to have been misrepresented?

Mr SHORTEN: I most grievously have. Today during question time the Prime Minister asserted that I effectively supported criminal abuse. Madam Speaker, of course I do not. In fact, the Prime Minister reannounced my policy of a joint police task force that I called for in February this year.
AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORTS
Report No. 9 of 2014-15

The SPEAKER (15:15): I present the Auditor-General's performance audit report No. 9 of 2014-15 entitled Performance audit: the design and conduct of the third and fourth funding rounds of the Regional Development Australia Fund: Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development.

Ordered that the report be made a parliamentary paper.

DOCUMENTS
Presentation

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (15:15): Documents are presented as listed in the schedule circulated to honourable members. Details of the documents will be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Abbott Government

The SPEAKER (15:16): I have received a letter from the honourable Leader of the Opposition proposing that a definite matter of public importance be submitted to the House for discussion, namely:

The Government’s incompetence, broken promises and complete failure to provide leadership and vision for Australia.

I call upon those members who approve of the proposed discussion to rise in their places.

More than the number of members required by the standing orders having risen in their places—

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (15:16): This government has reached a tipping point in what has been the worst week so far in the life of the Abbott government. Australians know that the Abbott government have let them down, and 446 days after they were elected there is a mood of national disappointment in the conduct and the decisions of the Abbott government. This has been a week of chaos and lies. We see the communications minister contradicting the Prime Minister. We see a hypothetical defence minister cutting the pay of our Defence men and women and defaming thousands of people who work at the Submarine Corporation. And then we see the Prime Minister's performance in question time all this week as a metaphor for a government adrift. They have had an opportunity to talk about their vision for the future; instead, they have descended into petty politics.

We have seen the veneer of civilisation slip from the Prime Minister’s mask, and we have seen old Tony come back—the man more happy being in opposition than being in government. Life was simple when he was the opposition leader. All he ever had to do was oppose. But upon coming to government we have seen confirmed that this is a government bereft of vision. It is bereft of a plan. In May of this year they brought down arguably the most unfair budget in living memory. For six months this government has flailed around trying to put propositions to the Australian people which the Australian people will not accept.
Then this week we saw the farcical situation of the government announcing for the sixth time that they are going to reboot the budget. They had a council of war. They are going to de-barnacle the hull of the budget. They are going to remove the obstacles. They are going to get back to basics. But, in fact, what we have seen about their hateful ideology for this country, their unfair approach, is that last night the Prime Minister's Office had their media spinners talking to the people in the press gallery, saying: 'We've got this all under control. This is the Titanic. We've got it under control.' What they said last night to the media is: 'We're going to drop the GP tax for now. We're going to drop it. We're not going to talk about it now.' No doubt, there were 30 or so marginal-seat members breathing a sigh of relief. But this is such a confused, chaotic and incompetent government that, this morning, out rushed the notorious charm offensive of the government! For Australians who do not know whom I am referring to, I refer to Senator Eric Abetz. That would be the triumph of hope over experience, sending him into charm people! He said, 'No, we're sticking to our policies.' Then, of course, you have got the worst health minister in living memory coming forward and saying, 'We are going to do whatever it takes.' He said that, whatever it takes, they will get the GP tax. What Labor informs Australians is that, even if this government does change its tactics, it has not changed its mind. It wants to make Medicare not universally accessible. We listened in question time to this hypocritical Prime Minister say that he is the best friend Medicare has ever had. With best friends like that, you do not need enemies.

It has not just been their backflipping, their uncertainty, their chaos and their inability to line up their ducks when it comes to the issue of the GP tax. We hear rumours that the backbench members of the government do not like this idea of $100,000 university degrees. Well, do you know what? They are right. Australians do not like the idea that their university fees will double and triple. They do not like the idea of 20 per cent of the universities' budgets being cut, and they certainly do not like the idea of $100,000 degrees. Australians do not like the idea that women who go to university and who will have broken service in their working careers because they choose to raise their children and take time out of work are going to be in debt for the rest of their lives to Christopher Pyne. Why would you like that idea?

So it is not just the GP tax where this government has got the wrong idea for the future of this country, and no vision. It is not just on higher education that this government cannot be trusted with the future of Australia. We saw them this week have a ridiculous argument about: 'Are they cutting the ABC? Is it an efficiency dividend? Did Tony Abbott lie?'—all of the issues. We saw our poor Prime Minister tie himself up in knots because he just cannot be straight with the Australian people. The poor old member for Wentworth was left holding the proverbial 'ABC baby'. He said, 'Well, yes, it's not an efficiency dividend; it's a cut.' I give him points for honesty. The poor old member for Wentworth lost to the Prime Minister on the republic, he lost the leadership and now he has lost the ABC fight. He is forced to be just a rubber stamp for Tony Abbott's cruel cuts to the ABC.

This is a government that is adrift domestically, and everyone knows that the minibudget which the Treasurer has to bring down in December is the last shot in the locker for 2014 for this government. This is the government that has wasted a year and a quarter of government. This is a government that has done little, but we hear them talk about the G20. Saturday a week ago the Prime Minister had the opportunity, scripted by Wayne Swan, Julia Gillard and Kevin Rudd, to address the leaders of the world. Labor wanted the nation to perform well.
The Prime Minister of Australia, the chief spokesperson for Australia, had an opportunity to demonstrate that Australia is a forward-thinking, visionary country with a plan for the future. What did he say for eight excruciating minutes? For eight excruciating minutes Tony Abbott had a cry about the fact that Australians do not like the GP tax and they will not back the higher education reforms. It was cringeworthy, weird, bizarre and a missed opportunity. Even more than that—

Ms Henderson: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I would ask that the Leader of the Opposition refer to members by their correct title.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition will refer to people by their correct title.

Mr SHORTEN: Thank you for your guidance, Madam Speaker. The Prime Minister missed the opportunity of peacetime foreign policy in Australia, the like of which we will not see again in this generation. Instead of talking about climate change—which he never wanted to do—he never saw President Obama walking away and having a policy on the future, unlike the 'little Australia' mentality of this current government. He blew the opportunity; instead he was like one of those carnival show or sideshow-alley hucksters, barking, 'Roll up, roll up.' Let us see Australia's pathetic answers on climate change.

What he did was give the Australian people a bad character reference. He complained about the Australian people to the rest of the world. Who is this Prime Minister to complain about the Australian people when they do not like his GP tax? Who is this Prime Minister to complain about the Australian people to the rest of the world to say that we are anti reform and anti change and that we do not have a vision for the future? And that is all because he broke his promises before the last election.

This is a government adrift in every sense of the word. Have a look at this debacle over Defence. I know the jungle drums are beating within the government: 'Who will get Senator Johnston's spot?' I know the Prime Minister is stubbornly refusing to give him up, but we on this side predict that it is only a matter of time before we have a new Minister for Defence in this country, as we should. The pay of our Defence Force is not keeping pace with real wages and real prices, and that is an effective pay cut. We also know that, when it comes to dealing with all of the issues, this is a government adrift: the budget is adrift; the GP tax is a rotten idea going nowhere fast, even if the government want it; higher education policies in this country are adrift. We know that the treatment of pensioners in this country is adrift, with the cut to the indexation rate of pensions. Every government member knows that their budget is adrift. They have no domestic policy. On the world stage we missed the opportunity of the G20; the nation missed the opportunity of the G20. I admit that the member for Kooyong got his head on TV during the G20—he personally had a good G20—but the government and the nation had a very bad G20.

The difference with Labor is that next year we will demonstrate what a plan should look like. We will demonstrate the power of positive ideas. We intend to win the next election, not because we are not the government, not based on the list of the government's lies, but because we have a view about the future and we have faith in the Australian people. We will keep defeating your rotten measures this year and next year, right up to the next election.
Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister) (15:26):

It was the 16th President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln, who said:

You can fool all the people some of the time, and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time.

That is what explains the result of the 2013 election, because the fraud and the failure that today's Labor Party saw them get the worst defeat in the history of our Federation, the lowest primary vote in 100 years—worse than Scullin in 1931, worse than Whitlam in 1975, worse than Keating in 1996. What explained that result? The debt and deficit disaster of the Labor government—the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd experiment. They saddled the Australian people with $667 billion worth of debt, $25,000 for every man, woman and child, and an interest bill of $1 billion a month, climbing to $3 billion a month. This is despite the member for Lilley standing at this dispatch box claiming that he was announcing four years of surpluses.

It is that fiscal record that saw 21,000 cheques of $900 sent to dead people; that saw 21,000 additional regulations strangulate small business; that saw 400,000 jobs lost in small business; that saw free trade agreements stay on the side bench not being concluded by a government that did not care about the trading opportunities in our region; that gave us a carbon tax that nobody asked for and nobody wanted; that gave us a mining tax that was projected to produce $49.5 billion worth of revenue but only produced a few hundred million dollars of revenue and introduced the dark spectre of sovereign risk.

Of course the member from Maribyrnong raises the issue of Defence. The record of those opposite on Defence is second to none in being derelict in their duties to protect the Australian people. In fact, Defence spending went down to its lowest level since 1938, at 1.56 per cent of GDP. What about the NBN?, the NBN that started out as a $4.7 billion federal commitment signed on the back of a coaster when Senator Conroy had to hop on a plane with Kevin Rudd just to get a minute of his time? In six years of Labor, we saw a rollout that did not even reach three per cent of Australians.

That is the record: 21,000 cheques to dead people; 21,000 additional regulations; a carbon tax and a mining tax; hundreds of thousands of jobs lost in small business; the IMF, the Parliamentary Budget Office and the Commission of Audit saying to us that we cannot continue with business as usual; and this ballooning, growing budget deficit and its associated debt—the intergenerational theft that the Prime Minister talks about. Today's children will be paying off Labor's debt of yesterday. There is what is called a Burkean compact. It is a 'partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living and those who are dead, and those who are to be born'. Labor effectively broke that compact through its fiscal mismanagement.

We are today debating not just our record in government but also the legacy of debt and deficit that Labor left us. I was at the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry dinner last night when the chairman got up and said that, by any fair benchmark, the Abbott government has achieved much in its first year. Let us start with the free trade agreements with Korea, Japan and China which the Labor Party failed to conclude because it is beholden to vested interests.

We are proud of the fact that we are getting access to the markets of these huge economies. China has 1.2 billion people, is moving 10 million people from its regions to its cities every year, has more than 90 cities with more than five million people and already has more fast rail
and autobahns than the entire European Union. We now have access to that market that every other Western nation dreams of having. We already have two-way trade of $150 billion with China, and that will go from strength to strength under this free trade agreement. The agreement gets rid of tariffs on many of our resources. The tariff on coking coal, for example, goes immediately, while the tariff on thermal coal will go over the next couple of years. We have ensured that our agriculture, whether it is beef, dairy or horticulture—mangoes, potatoes and nuts—will get straight access into the Chinese market. And what about services? Services make up 70 per cent of today's Australian economy but only 17 per cent of our exports. Now we will get into the Chinese market, a massively growing and lucrative market, because of the work that Andrew Robb and the Prime Minister have done to get that free trade agreement.

What about the success of the G20? The Leader of the Opposition referred to the G20. It was a golden period, the goldene medina for Australian foreign and economic policy. Eighty-five per cent of the world's GDP was represented here in Australia, as well as 75 per cent of the world's trade and two-thirds of the world's population. Concrete agreements were reached, including a commitment to an extra two per cent growth which, when implemented, will create trillions of additional dollars for the world economy and millions of jobs for Australians and for others around the world.

What about the infrastructure hub that will be established in Sydney? We will bring together information about the pricing, construction and prioritisation of infrastructure projects. What about the discussion on tax and the proper treatment of multinationals? What about shadow banking and over-the-counter derivatives—and what about trade and rebooting the multilateral trade round? Bilateral trade agreements are only insurance for when multilateral trade liberalisation stalls. That is what was agreed in Brisbane; that is what our Prime Minister, together with the Treasurer, led on from the front; and that is why we are very proud of our record.

What about what we are doing to get rid of red tape? We have announced more than $2 billion worth of savings, after the Labor Party gave us an additional 21,000 regulations. What about infrastructure? What about the East West Link, which is going to produce 7,000 jobs in Victoria? What about WestConnex in New South Wales? What about the decision to build a second airport at Badgerys Creek, after 50 years, half a century, of indecision? That is something the member for McMahon and his side could never have achieved, but we on this side have achieved it.

What about the hard, hard task of budget repair? It has only been given to us because Labor could never do it. Through our budget announcements, we are trying to ensure $300 billion worth of fiscal consolidation over the next decade. We are trying to introduce an earn-or-learn strategy. With our medical research fund, we are trying to boost innovation and entrepreneurship in this country. We want to create the jobs of tomorrow, not just the jobs of today. We want to unshackle small business through, for example, our decision to ensure that nearly half a million small businesses do not have to participate in the PAYG system. We are removing that red tape. More than 40,000 small businesses will no longer have to complete a BAS, because they are not paying any GST. Those are just some of the measures we have announced.

We have a forward-looking agenda. Our federalism white paper will be aimed at making the federal-state compact work much more effectively, and the Prime Minister has already
reinvigorated COAG. We will be doing a tax white paper. Ken Henry came up with a number of good ideas, but the Labor Party only picked one, and that was the disastrous mining tax. He found that there were 125 taxes in Australia and that 115 of those taxes were producing just 10 per cent of the revenue—10 taxes were producing 90 per cent of the revenue—so there is a lot we can do there. Then there is the Harper review into competition policy. That is extremely important. It is going to give us a way forward to boost competition, to boost jobs and to boost growth in this country. In addition, the Commission of Audit has given us a blueprint for the consolidation of government entities and the like.

We are so proud of what we have done in just one year, but it is only the start. I know that the next speaker from our side, the member for Bennelong, as well as the member for Robertson, the member for Mallee and the member for Reid are just as proud of what we have achieved. (Time expired)

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (15:36): The people of Australia look to their federal government for a vision, and they look for that government to be competent in delivering that vision. When they look at this government, they see a government whose vision is for every Australian to have to pay to go to the doctor; whose vision is to rip up the universality of health care, to wreck Medicare, that great social compact; to give Australia's pensioners, who have worked hard all their lives, an unfair system of indexation; to take $80 billion out of the health and education systems of Australia; to deliberately create an underclass of Australia's young people by denying them access to Newstart; and to rip away family tax benefits. That is the extent of the vision that this government intends to give the nation. And it is even incompetent in delivering that cheap and nasty vision for the nation.

This is a government which likes to talk about being calm and methodical. We hear it all the time: how calm and methodical this government is. The last 24 hours have been about as calm and methodical as schoolies week on the Gold Coast! We have had chaos in policy implementation. We had the Prime Minister's office last night fanned out across the building, talking to journalists, saying: 'You can write with great authority that the GP tax is dead. Tony Abbott's killed it.' You can just imagine them over there in the Prime Minister's office saying: 'We've got an election on Saturday. You know what we do about election time? We mislead people about our intentions. That's what we do at election time in the Liberal and National parties. Let's brief out that we're killing the GP tax, authorised by the Prime Minister's office, talking to journalists right across the building.' There was only one little problem. Nobody told the Treasurer, the Minister for Finance, the Leader of the Government in the Senate or the Minister for Health, apparently.

Calm and methodical? This bunch, this cabinet, led by the Prime Minister, are marauding about, attacking the social compact of Australia, attacking those things which have been part of our social compact for 40 years—a 40-year community standard in Medicare. This gang of marauders cannot even shoot straight. They cannot even shoot straight in their attack on Australia's social compact. If you give us a cheap and nasty vision, at least be competent as you implement it. At least provide a bit of consistency and a bit of logic as you implement it. But the government cannot even do that. They cannot even trash Medicare competently. They cannot even abolish universal health care with the degree of competence that the Australian people look for.

Mr Giles: They have been trying for 40 years now.
Mr BOWEN: For 40 years they have been trying. You would think they would get it right. This is a community standard which even John Howard did not attempt to attack, which Gough Whitlam implemented against huge opposition from the predecessors of the members opposite, which Bob Hawke and Paul Keating implemented against opposition from John Howard and the Liberal and National parties. But even John Howard, who once declared that he would destroy Medicare, came to accept that community standard. Even he said: 'I accept that I've lost the debate. Medicare is here to stay. Universal health care is here to stay.'

Medicare is important to the nation that Australia has become and aspires to be, but this Prime Minister just does not get it. He says: 'No, I'm going to out-conservative John Howard. I'm going to rip up the social compact that is Medicare.' But he cannot even do it competently. And when he backtracks, when he tries to admit defeat, it lasts less than 24 hours, and you have the Treasurer out there countermanding the Prime Minister and saying, 'No, the Prime Minister's wrong.'

This Treasurer stood at that dispatch box and brought down that unfair budget when he considered himself a substantial figure, and he was seen as the substantial figure of the government, the person providing the government's narrative backbone—remember that? Actually, it was not that long ago when he was the government's most substantial figure. Now the Treasurer is in danger in a slight breeze! That is how substantial he is these days. You have got to hope they have got him tethered down! Senior Liberals are speculating that he might not make it to the election as Treasurer because of his incompetence. He says: 'No, we're sticking by it. We've got an alternative vision for the nation.' He says, 'Just because you lose in the Senate, you don't let a little principle like that get in your way; you keep going.'

They have an alternative vision for the nation, and it is a cheap and nasty one. It involves making people pay to go to the doctor. It involves ripping off pensioners. It involves cutting $80 billion out of health and education. It involves ripping away Newstart benefits from young people. They will not accept it in the Senate. When the parliament and the people say no, they say, 'No, we're going to keep going.' That is what they say. This is what they say to the Australian people: 'We might not be able to implement it now.' But we know what they want to do in their hearts. They are making it very clear. If they ever have the numbers in the other place as well as in this, we know what they want. We know what they want to implement, and it is a very poor vision for Australia. *(Time expired)*

Mr ALEXANDER (Bennelong) (15:41): Australia is a great country. As someone who has travelled widely and lived overseas for a good portion of my life I am able to say this with some authority. We have been the Lucky Country from riding on the sheep's back and through mining booms. The tyranny of distance at times has been our best friend, but now the world is a smaller place and more competitive, and it is now up to us to make our own luck. Australia is a great country, a lucky country, but can we withstand bad government and bad leadership? The governing of a country is a serious business. It impacts every one of us and can impact generations to come. The government can change the direction of the very future of our country and our people. We have suffered six years of irresponsible and wasteful government, littered with poor judgements, motivated only by tomorrow's headlines. Short-sighted in the extreme, Labor's only concern was their popularity—no concern about how much that might cost.
On election night our Prime Minister announced that Australia was under new management, open for business, and would provide stable and certain government for business and all Australian families: ‘We will build the roads of the 21st century. We will be a government of infrastructure.’ The moment of elation was followed swiftly by attack after attack. He, as he did in opposition, worked with his team, and what a team it is. It is a team that reflects the very definition of 'team': a group of people with a full set of complementary skills required to complete a task, a job, or a project. Team members (1) operate with a high degree of interdependence, (2) share authority and responsibility for self-management, (3) are accountable to the collective performance and (4) work towards a common goal and shared rewards. A team becomes more than just a collection of people when a strong sense of mutual commitment creates synergy, thus generating performance greater than the sum performance of its individual members. This is a pretty apt description of our team, our government.

In the face of adversity and criticism of work undertaken, our policies have been implemented—policies that were reduced to a few words and ridiculed but that have in fact stopped the boats and rid us of the carbon tax and the mining tax. In the face of tragedy, our team leaders have maintained their calm and their dignity and have represented us on the world stage in a way that made all of us proud and comforted us during these times of distress. During all of this, our team have put the foundations in place for a golden era, with free trade agreements with our most important trading partners in the region—Korea, Japan and China. In this short period our team has rebuilt the live cattle industry and restored our tattered reputation for sovereign trust—a reputation hard-earned but so easily sullied and harmed by the previous government. Our team has also worked to repair the damage done by the previous government in installing the ambitious NBN program, now on track.

I know our Prime Minister in a number of ways. He is a loving and considerate husband; he is a loving and caring father. He is highly intelligent and educated, and he is a very hard worker—and one hell of a tough competitor. He provides his party with leadership that inspires. He has not sold his achievements well enough. In the party room the other day, he said, ‘I do not have a degree in skiting.’ I would much rather have hard work, intelligence and results than empty promises of things that never eventuate.

Ms KING (Ballarat) (15:47): I am pleased to speak on this matter of public importance, which is about the chaos, incompetence and broken promises of the Abbott government. There has been no clearer display of that than what we saw this morning. Yesterday we had the Prime Minister's office briefing senior journalists—very serious journalists—in our press gallery that the GP tax was dead. This policy has been around for 12 months, the news broken first by Samantha Maiden in December last year that the government was contemplating it. The government denied it, it went back and forth forever and finally it was announced in the budget, the government coming clean with the Australian people. Here we had the Prime Minister's own office briefing senior journalists. They do not just make stuff up. There were senior journalists reporting this morning that the Prime Minister's office had said that the GP tax was dead.

What an absolute debacle we had this morning. The Minister for Health was nowhere to be seen anywhere in the media—it was left to Minister Abetz to go out there and try to clean things up. We had the Prime Minister last night saying that the GP tax was back on and that they think it is the best thing since sliced bread, and we then had the Minister for Health, Peter
Dutton, out there saying that they were going to proceed with this and would do anything to get it through; they would take any measure possible to get it through. We then had the Treasurer saying that they were going to go through the parliament and would only do it by parliamentary means; they would only do it through legislation. Then we had the Assistant Minister for Health over in the Senate during question time saying that they will do it anyway—they might do it by regulation but they will do it anyway. I felt sorry for the poor old member for Gippsland during an interview on ABC. In an interview on his local radio station he was left hanging out there, having to say, 'Look, I really don't know what is going on; I am sure someone will tell me at some point.' How embarrassing—a senior, long-term member of the government left out there hanging this morning, unable to say whether the government was finally going to have the ticker to get rid of its GP tax. What an absolute chaos of a government we saw this morning.

The member for Bennelong was saying it is all about messaging and that the Prime Minister is sorry he has not got his messaging right, but it is not the messaging that is wrong; it is the policy. Why does this government fail to understand that this is not health policy? This is about taxing people who go to the doctor. This is about putting a barrier in the way of the most efficient part of our health system, the part of our health system that has not experienced this blow-out in growth. Yes, it is steadily growing, but not beyond any sustainable means. The MBS item for doctor visits is sustainable, so why would you put a barrier in the way of the most efficient part of the health system—going to see a doctor?

The Australian public do not like this policy, and nor do the Australian Medical Association, the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, the Doctors Reform Society, the Nurses and Midwives Foundation or health practitioners across the country. It is not just about general practitioners: it is about, for example, radiography. Every time you go for an X-ray, an MRI or a PET scan, every time you go for a blood test or other pathology test, it is a tax on every single primary care part of our health system. That is what the government wants to do—tax you every time you go to the doctor, go for a blood test or get an X-ray.

What sort of government is it that has as almost its sole health policy blocking people going to a general practitioner? This government has decided that there are a million visits a year that should be stopped. That is its health policy. What sort of chaotic, irresponsible government is it that thinks it is decent health policy to stop people accessing a general practitioner? We have been encouraging people to go to the doctor to manage their chronic disease, to prevent ill-health, to go and find out what they need to do to keep well and to manage episodic illness. It is the part of the system that keeps Australians well and that has been serving this country for over 100 years. General practice visits are an important part of our healthcare system. Yet here we have this chaotic government that, it is suggested, cannot get its messaging right. But it cannot get its policy right. This policy stinks to high heaven. Everybody in the healthcare sector, anyone who knows anything about health, knows that the government should ditch this policy. They have been told to ditch this policy, but we know the only way to ditch it is to ditch this government. (Time expired)

Mr LAUNDY (Reid) (15:52): Mr Deputy Speaker Scott, on indulgence—whilst we have been sitting here, the tragic news has broken that Phillip Hughes, the cricketer that was hit in the back of the head with a cricket ball a couple of days ago, has passed away. What a
tragedy. I am not much in the mood to argue politics. It was his birthday on Sunday; he would have turned 26. I met him a few times in my former job. My family own hotels; Carlton & United Breweries is a large company that we buy a lot of beer through, and they are major sponsors of cricket. I had the opportunity to interact with Phil on a fair few occasions.

You would not meet a better young guy. He had his whole life in front of him, and I just cannot imagine what his family must be going through this afternoon. Twenty-six on Sunday. It puts life into perspective. My heart goes out to his family. My heart goes out to his friends—his cricket friends and his friends right across the board. My heart also goes out to Sean Abbott, the young New South Welshman who was the bowler.

Phil played 25 tests for Australia and 26 one-day internationals. I remember when he blazed onto the scene as a youngster, on a tour, and there were centuries galore. They could not work out how to get him out. It was the South African tour. They just could not work out how to get him out. He had such an aggressive style of play. He literally lived and died by the fact that the best form of defence was attack, for him.

I would just like to take this opportunity to throw my thoughts to his family, to acknowledge his life and his passing today, and to pass on my best wishes to all involved. I cannot begin to imagine, thank goodness, what they are going through, but my heart goes out to them. I would like to ask the House for a minute's silence.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): I respect the member for Reid's call. I think this is something that would want to be taken up by the whole parliament with the Leader of the House, the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. I think that a moment probably will be accommodated. I cannot, from this place, anticipate that. I allowed indulgence during MPI for those comments. I think we are all shocked at the tragic loss of a wonderful young Australian who had so much potential, and I really respect your call, but I think I should leave it to the Leader of the House. We would want all in the parliament to have an opportunity to participate in sending a message to the family.

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Throsby) (15:52): Mr Deputy Speaker Scott, on indulgence—I appreciate the sensitive way that you have dealt with this matter. Can I just foreshadow that, at the appropriate time, members of the opposition wish to make appropriate comments on this matter—hopefully, this afternoon. In the meantime, we associate ourselves with the comments of the member for Reid.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I did allow indulgence in the MPI and I will now return to the MPI. I call the member for Scullin.

Dr GILLESPIE (Lyne) (15:56): I start by echoing the very eloquent and moving contribution of the member for Reid and take this opportunity to extend my condolences to the family and friends of Phil Hughes. Member for Reid, I thought it was important that you acknowledged the terrible circumstances that Sean Abbott must also be facing at this time. If he and those close to him can understand that in this place we are thinking of him, I think that is a useful contribution we can all make. I am a cricket follower and have had the pleasure also of watching Phil Hughes play. Regardless of his status as a sportsman, I think the thing we should all be reflecting on is the tragedy of a young life full of promise, full of aspirations—aspirations that are very public, having regard to the nature of his calling and his talents—very tragically cut short. I am sure, as you have noted, Deputy Speaker, and the
member for Throsby as well, that there will be an opportunity for us to appropriately recognise the tragic events that the member for Reid has brought before us today.

Having said that, we are here to debate a matter of public importance, and it is a matter of genuine public importance. I would like to raise one critical question that I believe underpins the matter before this House: can it be said that the grown-ups are in charge of Australia's government today? Today we had an extraordinary question time, which followed what has been an extraordinary week in Australian politics. What I think this week shows us about 14 months into the life of this government, what it emphasises, is that after hubris must come nemesis. Pride always comes before a fall.

When I think of members opposite talking about the age of entitlement, I think really of the behaviour of members opposite, in particular the now Treasurer when he made his infamous speech in London on this topic, their entitlement to rule. While it has been said often that this is a government that said one thing before the election and another after, I think the failings of this government are much, much worse than that—for all their arrogance, their sense of entitlement, this born-to-rule attitude, seems to exist only in the hearts and perhaps in the mirrors of government ministers. The record now speaks for itself. We have before us a litany of failure, as highlighted most effectively in the health portfolio this week—I was going to say by my friend the member for Ballarat but really it has been done by the full range of government ministers and members, from the Prime Minister down. We have seen the chaos and confusion extend to broken promises and misunderstandings between the Prime Minister and senior ministers over the status of decision making in relation to the national broadcaster. The Leader of the Opposition spoke about a mood of disappointment in the community, but in this I fear he was being very generous.

I asked whether the grown-ups are in charge. The evidence this week is pretty clear, but I will add to that. Being grown-up should mean being able to admit to mistakes and being able to say sorry. Clearly, members opposite have had plenty of practice and plenty of opportunities to learn this lesson. Sadly, practice has not made perfect.

I want to touch very briefly on the two additional matters beyond incompetence that this matter of public importance puts before the House—firstly, broken promises. It is extraordinary how this government has sought to rewrite the history of its commitments to the Australian people prior to the election. I do not want to touch on the specific commitments, all of which I think have been broken, but I do want to speak on the biggest broken promise of all, which is the now Prime Minister's insistence that he would restore trust in politics. He spoke at great length on this. By the standards of this week, we might call these 'rhetorical flourishes'. Since then we have seen the eroding of trust every day, the eroding of faith in politics. This is a government that has become mean and tricky very early. This is compounded by the contempt it shows not just for the Labor Party but for this parliament and, through it, for the Australian people.

But the biggest failing of all is the poverty of this government's vision, shown on the world stage at the G20, where the Prime Minister chose to whinge about the attitudes of the Australian people rather than be a constructive middle power and global actor. In this government they are indeed rebels without a cause, defining themselves by what they are against, which is the modern Australian social compact.
Mrs WICKS (Robertson) (16:01): I, too, would like to associate myself with the remarks of the member for Reid and the member for Scullion on the passing of Phillip Hughes. It is a very sad day for Australia.

But I am glad that the opposition has put forward this matter of public importance today, because it gives me the opportunity not only to refute it but also to place on record the coalition government's achievements since we came to office just over a year ago. Several excellent members on this side of the House have already outlined during this debate that we are not only committed to but are already delivering on many of our election commitments, and we are demonstrating great leadership as a government, led by a great Prime Minister, Tony Abbott—great leadership of this country that Labor never showed.

Great leadership impacts the everyday lives of Australian people and businesses, particularly people in my electorate of Robertson on the New South Wales Central Coast, the best region of the best country in the world in which to live. These same people were so sick of the complete failure of the Labor Party during their six years in government that they voted them out. I am sure that members opposite love to keep saying that only Labor offers people a grand vision—a grand vision like returning the budget to surplus, except of course they did not; or whacking the world's biggest carbon tax onto families and businesses; or opening Australia's borders to more than 50,000 illegal boat arrivals. I could go on and on about this, but of course history speaks for itself. We know that the people of the Central Coast in Robertson and Dobell, and indeed right around Australia, rejected Labor and its incompetence, its broken promises and its complete and utter failure to provide real leadership and real vision for our nation.

Instead, people voted for positive change. While Labor talk about their vision and their leadership, the coalition government, led by Prime Minister Tony Abbott, is getting on with the job of actually doing it. We have scrapped the carbon tax and delivered Australian families and businesses the biggest drop in electricity prices on record. Overall, households on the Central Coast are forecast to be $550 a year better off now that the carbon tax has been repealed. We are creating around 8,700 jobs per year due to the construction of the M1-M2 missing link, which will start next year. It is a vital piece of road infrastructure that will save the average commuter in Robertson 30 minutes a day travel time to the Sydney CBD. This is a commitment that was talked about for years by Labor, but which we are already delivering.

Unlike those opposite we believe in the future of the Central Coast as a region of excellence and opportunity and we are investing in this belief with a purpose-built building for the ATO and other Commonwealth agencies, with 600 new jobs right in the heart of Gosford. It is a real game-changer for our region, and a key election commitment that we are delivering on. But all we have heard from Labor so far is a refusal to back these 600 jobs for Gosford, and constant criticism of the Central Coast. In contrast, our policies, our leadership and our commitments are backed by our community. In fact, just yesterday, The Daily Telegraph called our commitment a 'wave of jobs for the Coast'. The coalition make no apologies for our determination to methodically deliver what we committed to in our growth plan for the Central Coast, which was more jobs, better infrastructure and a stronger future for our region.

But perhaps members opposite are thinking, 'What about the NBN? What about a vision for a connected Central Coast?' In my view, actions speak far louder than words. While I know
the former member for Robertson loudly trumpeted to all and sundry that only Labor could deliver the NBN for the Central Coast, the facts, quite sadly, tell a different story. After six long years of talking about and promising the NBN, how many households and businesses on the Central Coast did they connect to the network? Was it 10,000, you ask? Was it 5,000? Was it 500? No, sadly, the fact is that, despite Labor's fanfare, all the people of the Central Coast got after six long years was 203 premises connected to the NBN. But I am pleased to say that since then we have been working to get the NBN to homes and business that need it the most. And, again, we are delivering. We are now rolling it out to more than 50,000 premises across the Central Coast in my electorate using the right mix of technologies to get the NBN delivered sooner, more cheaply to taxpayers and more affordably to consumers.

I conclude this contribution by reflecting on a very important principle—that it is our job as elected representatives to represent the hopes, concerns and aspirations of the people who live in our communities, and it is the government's role to create the best possible environment for them to succeed. Thanks to the Abbott government, we are doing just that. After six long years, finally the people of the Central Coast are seeing a government deliver on what is most important, and what they so richly deserve.

Ms O’NEIL (Hotham) (16:06): There are moments in this House when all of us are called to order in the things we are talking about and in the way we are behaving. We get to have a moment when we remember what is really important and what matters to us and to the Australian people. This is one of those moments. I want to associate myself with the comments of the member for Reid in expressing my condolences to the family of Phil Hughes and to Sean Abbott.

I do not pretend to know a lot about cricket—it is not something in my past—so I will not be speaking at length about his performance as a batsman. But I would say that it is a tragedy for any family to lose a young man of 25, in the prime of his life and with a future ahead of him—none of us will never know now what he would have achieved. I feel so bad for his family, for his parents. It is a tragedy for anyone to lose a young man like that. I am very sorry that this has occurred.

For those who do not know, an MPI is often a bit of a rambunctious occasion for the House to trade a few jibes across the chamber. Obviously that is not appropriate today and we will not conduct the rest of the debate in that way. I will just say that I think that the preference of both sides of the House would probably be that this debate not continue, but it has to continue—that is the request of the House. In that vein, I will make a few comments about some of the things that have happened this week in politics, as insignificant as they now seem to those around Australia who are mourning that loss.

It is my belief that this past week has been a little bit of a tipping point in Australia. For a year now, the Australian community has been trying to make up its mind about this Prime Minister and what it is that this man is made of. There are two incidents in the past week that I would point to that I think have been quite decisive in Australians making up their mind. The first was the announcement about making cuts to the ABC and SBS. I believe the ABC and SBS provide essential services. Representing a community that is as multicultural as mine is, I see SBS on television screens very frequently right across my electorate, and we know the important role the ABC plays in protecting Australians against natural disasters and in representing rural and regional communities. There are many Australians who are not SBS
and ABC viewers—I accept that—but the really important issue is that this went right to the heart of the question of trust. Many Australians will have watched the 15 seconds of footage of Tony Abbott on the night before the election making a series of promises that there would be no cuts to education, no changes to health, no changes to the pension, no changes to the GST and, of course, no cuts to SBS or the ABC. This week we went through to the last of those. Every single one of those promises has been broken. I really think that this was the straw that broke the camel's back, as it were, for the Australian community.

I also want to make mention of the G20. What a missed opportunity it was. This was Australia's big chance, a once-in-a-generation opportunity to have global leaders come to our beautiful country and hear our big ideas for the future of the globe and our nation. What Prime Minister could not make this into a huge win for the country? Instead, we saw someone who thought it appropriate to raise political issues that were so domestic and so small-minded in nature when he had the eyes and ears of these global leaders who are so important to driving Australia's future. We saw the Prime Minister and other leaders of the government desperately trying to take climate change away from the agenda, yet because climate change is so important and so crucial to Australia's future and to the world's future it was right there in the centre of the agenda. Instead of Australia being part of that conversation and helping to shape and drive it we were left out in the cold. We had Tony Abbott, the Prime Minister, bragging about the great leap backwards on climate change while two of the biggest economies in the world made a profoundly important deal on cutting carbon emissions. I contrast him with US President Barack Obama, who has, probably, similar polling problems as the Prime Minister, but that guy has got some guts, he has some energy, he has some leadership. He was willing to stand out there in front of Australians, saying what the Prime Minister should have been saying—that is, that we need to have some vision and leadership on these important issues. I conclude my comments there.

Mr BROAD (Mallee) (16:11): I would like to associate myself with the words of the member for Reid. My sincere prayers and condolences go to the family of Phillip Hughes. They are very interesting words to put in an MPI: 'failure to provide leadership'. I remind those on the other side of the chamber of something about leadership. John Curtin once campaigned on the most controversial issue in the Australian parliament, conscription, and went to the parliament saying he would be vehemently against conscription. When he became Prime Minister, John Curtin—arguably Australia's greatest Prime Minister—introduced conscription, because the person who represented the seat I now occupy crossed the floor to the Labor Party. That is how history defines leadership: someone who did something that was contrary to what they believed but knew they had to do it for the benefit of the country.

We took government thinking that we had an $18 billion deficit in our operating budget. It turned into a $30 billion deficit. Then, when the figures came in, it worked out at $48 billion. We hear a lot about cuts to the ABC. We hear indignation about trying to find $50 million of savings out of our public broadcaster. The irony of it all is that $50 million will only pay the interest on our national debt for 33 hours. Think about that for a moment. The challenge we have is to get our economy back on track. A strong economy affords us the opportunity to build a great society. What separates the people who have a Conservative understanding, and an understanding of business, from those who do not is that we know that money does not grow on trees. We have to pay for it. We have to have a strong economy so that we can grow,
develop and deliver things we want. A great society is one that has a good defence system. A great society is one that provides for those who are unwell. A great society is one that provides education for our children. A great society is one that believes, looks after and honours individual achievement, individual freedoms and individual endeavour. We want to build that great society, but we know that we can only do that if we have a strong economy.

Those opposite claim there has been a 'failure to provide leadership'. When I look at what the Prime Minister of this country, Tony Abbott, inherited compared to what Prime Minister Kevin Rudd inherited, I would argue that he has provided leadership. Sometimes it has been on things that I as a backbencher have not always approved of. Sometimes it has been on things that I know are unpleasant for the Australian people. But has he provided leadership? There is no doubt about that. Leadership is about taking the people with you on a journey through something that is difficult. Leadership is about facing the challenges and saying, 'We can do this together.' Leadership is not whingeing and moaning. Leadership is not shirking your responsibilities. Leadership is making hard choices.

I remind those in the Labor Party that their greatest Prime Minister had to go against everything he originally stood for to provide leadership at the time of Australia's greatest crisis. We are not in a war, but we are in an amazingly difficult financial situation. It is a situation we have never found ourselves in before, with a national debt we have never seen so big. It is the leadership of Prime Minister Tony Abbott that is going to lead us through that. I think it would be very fair to say that we have adults in the room, adults who know that strong leadership is about making hard choices, not just making populist choices.

Mr RIPOLL (Oxley) (16:16): on indulgence—Labor is shocked and saddened, as I am sure members of the House and the Australian community are, by the tragic news of the death of Phillip Joel Hughes today. The circumstances around Phillip's injury and death have deeply touched not just the Australian community but also the international community. The outpouring of expressions of support and grief for Phillip Hughes and his family has touched all of us. The great character of Phillip and the friendships he enjoyed have been well recognised, as has been the respect for him from his fellow cricket players, particularly through the support Phillip received from his South Australian teammates and the broader cricket community from around the world. I want to express the Labor Party's deepest sorrow. I am sure that in the coming days the parliament will fully express its condolences also. His death is a great loss for Australia and cricket and an even greater loss for his family. Our thoughts are with them.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): Order! The discussion is now concluded.

BILLS

Carbon Farming Initiative Amendment Bill 2014
Australian Education Amendment Bill 2014
Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority Amendment Bill 2014
Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (2014 Budget Measures No. 6) Bill 2014
Private Health Insurance Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2014

Assent

Message from the Governor-General reported informing the House of assent to the bills.

Treasury Legislation Amendment (Repeal Day) Bill 2014

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Ms SCOTT (Lindsay) (16:18): After the shocking and sad loss of Phillip Hughes, I also would like to add my voice to these very, very sad times. He was a young man of nearly 26, with his birthday on Sunday, a man of so much talent in what really is the one sport that unites our entire country. We might divide on rugby league, rugby union and AFL, but cricket unites us all. We have lost a talented young batsman. When you see balls such as that which ultimately took this young life, it takes you back to the days of bodyline and Don Bradman and the bouncers that he faced. It makes you look at what cricket means to our country. I have been sitting here in the last few moments looking through Twitter at the outpouring of emotion from his cricket mates, friends and family, and it is just heartbreaking. I, too, would like to place on the record my sadness over the loss of Phillip Joel Hughes. May he now rest in peace.

Today I rise in support of the Treasury Legislation Amendment (Repeal Day) Bill 2014. I rise today in support of all business, big and small. For too long these businesses, especially small businesses, have been burdened by unnecessary red tape which has placed heavy demands on owners as well as reduced productivity and investment, stifled job creation, generated uncertainty and sapped confidence. Today I stand here in support of the Treasury Legislation Amendment (Repeal Day) Bill 2014, which reduces compliance burdens on business owners. The bill implements a range of improvements to Australia's laws and removes costly and unnecessary red-tape, a promise we made during the election and a promise we will continue to fulfil way into the future.

This year, we cut $2.1 billion worth of red tape to make life easier, help small business, strengthen our economy and create more jobs. For the first time in history, the Abbott government, to which I am proud to belong, has dedicated two days of parliament each year to removing red tape. During the spring red-tape repeal day on 29 October, nearly 1,000 pieces of legislation and regulation, totalling 7,200 pages, were scrapped.

I have listened to the concerns of the people of Lindsay about the burden of red tape right across the electorate, from large manufacturing businesses in St Marys, such as Baker & Provan, a business that has been manufacturing Supercats that will join our military, to specialty businesses along high street Penrith and my regular cafes, such as Belle Saveur and Henri Marc. They are all concerned about too much paperwork. They want running their businesses to be that much easier. That can only be done by reducing unnecessary regulation.

As a result of the recent red-tape reduction, nearly half a million small businesses are now exempt from pay-as-you-go requirements, and around 1.4 million myTax users will be able to use pre-populated income tax returns, saving countless hours and costs. Access to government services is now much simpler with seven services now available through the one myGov. 
website. There is practical red-tape relief across the board, from one-stop shops for environmental approvals to major projects that hire companies no longer needing to register concrete mixers as vehicles.

Local businessman and Executive Board Member of the Penrith Valley Chamber of Commerce John Capes has experienced firsthand what it is like to run his own business. He wrote to me describing his experiences and how this bill will help his printing business in Penrith. John said: 'I am a small business owner and have been so for over four years. I am an owner of a local weekly newspaper; I have a consulting business and I assist my partner in running her printing business. Prior to that I worked in the corporate sector for in excess of 20 years. Small business is the largest employer collectively in Australia but a small voice when compared to other industries. My lovely partner, Sharon, and I have four boys and are very much entrenched in the local community of Penrith. As an active member of the community, I sit on charity boards. I am an active member of the New South Wales Rural Fire Service. I sit as an executive at the Penrith Valley Chamber of Commerce, which we are very passionate about—and we are passionate about being part of the community of Penrith.

'Vexperience in the corporate sector hid the challenges that small business owners face every single day in running their own businesses. Now, as a small business owner, I can fully appreciate the issues that we all face in dealing with all levels of governments and ensuring compliance with legislation and regulations. This is no more evident than dealing with the taxation laws at the ATO, which I have found my fair share of issues with. Most of us, I am sure, find taxation laws cumbersome, complex and time-consuming.'

Mr Capes went on to say: 'Unlike most corporate employers, small businesses are usually required to deal with meeting all of their reporting outside of normal trading hours as their lives continue with running their businesses. Their focus can be drawn from one thing to another as they focus on just trying to make a living. Currently, I would spend in excess of 10 hours per week on paperwork that ensures I am compliant with one or more levels of government. If the changes in taxation and superannuation under repeal day allows easy and simplified reporting for businesses, this needs to be congratulated, although more needs to be done to improve the time which small business spends on the area of taxation.'

The Penrith Valley Chamber of Commerce also commented on this bill: 'The Penrith Valley Chamber of Commerce congratulates the government on its reduction "redpeal" day. Gina Field, President, applauded the simplifications made today in reducing particularly complex provisions and simplifying the administrative burden in the superannuation act as positive for employers and employees alike. We would urge the government to continue simplifications similar to this. Anything that makes legislation easier to understand and implement can only be viewed as positive.'

As you can see, this bill makes legislation easier and takes stress out of paperwork. In amends various laws relating to taxation, superannuation and shareholdings in certain financial sector companies to implement a range of improvements to Australia's laws. Schedule 1 of this bill amends the Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Act 1993 to repeal the pay slip reporting provisions. Under the Fair Work Act, employers are already required to report details of employees' superannuation entitlements that accrued during a particular pay period on an employee's pay slip. Repealing the pay slip reporting provisions will save
employers from investing in major upgrades in their payment system software with minimal
benefits to their employees.

Schedule 2 simplifies taxation laws by consolidating duplicated provisions from various
taxation acts into a single set of provisions in the Taxation Administration Act 1953. This bill
also repeals redundant taxation laws such as the harsh penalty regimes and moves
longstanding regulations into primary law. Cleaning up tax laws is very important in taking
care of our tax system.

Schedule 3 amends the Financial Sector (Shareholdings) Act 1998 to remove the deemed
shareholding applied to an associate where the associate has no actual shareholding in the
company.

Schedule 4 addresses the fact that the definition of 'Australia' for taxation purposes is
complex, overly detailed and expressed differently in different parts of the taxation law.
Schedule 4 rewrites the definition of 'Australia' into a single location in the tax law for use
across tax laws in a simple, coherent form.

It is with great pleasure that I note that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister is
here today. He needs to be commended. We went to the last election saying $1 billion year on
year, but he has delivered $2 billion, so a gold star to the member. This is fabulous legislation.
This is legislation that is actually going to make life so much easier for so many small
businesses right across our country. This is why it is important we get this legislation through.
That is why it is important that we are out there making life easier for Australians when they
interface with government, be it with the tax office, Centrelink or any of the other
administrative services that we work with. The work that has been done here through so many
pages and pages of legislation is absolutely commended. I do absolutely thank the member for
his assistance.

Those opposite left us with 21,000 new regulations. Those are regulations that burden so
many Australian businesses. It put so many shackles around the necks of so many businesses
right across Lindsay. Leading into the last election, it was one of those things that small
business owners would come and speak to me about. They were angry about the constant
regulation and changing of the rules—the shifting of the sands. They want to see a
government that is there for them, making their life easier. That is what this legislation is
about. That is why I stand here today again with this repeal day legislation. Every time the
parliamentary secretary puts another repeal day up, I will be speaking on the great work for
the people of Australia.

Debate interrupted.

ADJOURNMENT

The SPEAKER (16:29): I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

Dawson, Ms Liz OAM

Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (16:29): After 18 months on kidney medication, Patrick's teeth had
been all but destroyed. He was 39 years old, and he:

... grew a five-inch beard to hide his mangled mouth; his four children were embarrassed about the way
he looked.
Patrick was ultimately the beneficiary of a dental program put in place by a Salvation Army worker by the name of Liz Dawson. Liz saw Patrick not as somebody to be feared but as somebody to be helped. That is the way she was: helping Canberrans wherever she could. In another of her projects, she enlisted the help of her own hairdresser, Angelo Cataldo, to provide free haircuts to those who could not afford them in order to make a difference to their self-esteem. One of the hairdressers, Sheldon Brown, said:

You forget how important [it is] and how much your hair and your appearance affects how you feel as a person and gives you the confidence to overcome challenges.

When she was made a state finalist for the ACT for Australia's Local Hero in 2012, Liz Dawson's citation mentioned her work as a speech therapist, a teacher, a public servant and a counsellor; her work on providing dental treatment to clients on pension cards; her work with free haircuts; and, critically, her work in bringing the Common Ground project to Canberra.

Liz never stopped. She was an inspiration to so many of us. In trying to bring Common Ground to Canberra, she once stood outside Old Parliament House knowing that then housing minister Brendan O'Connor would be arriving to speak at a breakfast. It was one of those sub-zero Canberra mornings, with everyone else huddled inside, but Liz, cancer already advancing, stood outside in the freezing cold with her cane—which she called Emily—until she had a chance to speak with Brendan and make the case to him for a Common Ground in the ACT. She did so too with Prime Minister Julia Gillard, and ultimately the funding was provided, and Common Ground Canberra will open next year.

Liz asked people for things and, because of who she was, she delivered. In fact, at her funeral, one of the eulogies noted a comment by Liz: 'The great thing about having terminal cancer is no-one ever says no to you.' She tasked my landscape architect wife, Gweneth, with getting a bit of advice on the gardens around Common Ground, and she formed a choir by asking every musically inclined person she knew to join her. She wrote a book called Where is My Left Eyebrow?, talking about her battle with cancer and her loss of 96 per cent of her sight. She wanted to tell her story and speak to others.

Liz was always engaged in politics. As a life member of the Labor Party, she was constantly asking questions. Even when I went to visit her in Clare Holland House just a few weeks ago, she was interested in what was happening in this place. Liz was just a firecracker for change. She was constantly working to make Australia and Canberra better. She fought for smaller class sizes here in the ACT, she fought for opportunities for the most vulnerable and she epitomised what Franklin Delano Roosevelt apparently used to say to progressives who would come to him in the White House and ask for change: 'Go out and make me do it.' Liz would go out and make people do it. She saw that parliamentarians were not to be feared but were to be used. Katy Gallagher, at Liz's memorial service, spoke about how Liz kept on turning up at every opportunity. Eventually Katy Gallagher realised she was not going to get away from Liz until she said yes to the social justice project Liz wanted.

Ultimately Liz's cancer took her life. It is a great loss, but she is so greatly remembered, of course, by her family: Kate, Julie, Sophie, and her extraordinary husband, Peter, who is in his own right a great Canberran and a great campaigner for change here, documenting the innovative businesses here in Canberra. Liz enriched our lives and made us better parliamentarians and individuals in Canberra. May she rest in peace.
Victoria State Election

Mr WOOD (La Trobe) (16:34): This Saturday, Victorians go to the polls to elect their government for the next four years. On offer is the very trusted and respected Napthine government, with a very respected Premier, versus Daniel Andrews and his crew, including the militant CFMEU, a union which he has very close ties with. But, if the polls are right, the Victorian Labor Party and Dan Andrews will be in power on Sunday.

I do love Victorians, but sometimes we Victorians have very bad memories and we are very forgiving. But let me remind my fellow Victorians of the Victorian Labor Party’s record just four years ago. Four billion dollars of Victorian taxpayers’ money was spent on a massively oversized and unnecessary desalination plant. Victorians still, every single day, pay $1.8 million to pay back Labor’s desalination plant—every day, $1.8 million—and it has not even produced one glass of water. This will occur for the next 27 years, and every man, woman and child in Victoria will be paying for this burden. Then we have $1.5 billion—again, Victorian taxpayers’ money—wasted on the myki ticketing system, a ticketing system costing $1.5 billion. Then we have another $750 million spent on the North-South Pipeline to bring water from northern Victoria to Melbourne. Again, the pipes are going rusty—another wasted project from the former Labor state government.

And now the Victorian Leader of the Opposition wants to rip up the existing contracts for Melbourne’s vital East West Link project. Can you believe that? He is going to waste $1 billion of taxpayers’ money, and he is also putting in jeopardy the $3 billion promised by the Abbott government. He does not realise how important this project is to Victorians. The Victorians know it is important because they say that in every poll. It is going to create 6,700 jobs. It is going to improve freight for Victorians. It is going to be good for business. In my electorate of La Trobe it is going to take pressure off the Monash Freeway. I already get so many local residents complaining about the traffic congestion.

On a brighter note, we do have the Napthine government and what it is promising to do. For instance, $115 million has been promised for 12 intensive-care and 12 day surgical beds at the Casey Hospital. I congratulate the member for Gembrook, Brad Battin, for his work in securing this funding—also, Narre Warren North candidate Amanda Stapledon; Narre Warren South Liberal candidate Susan Serey; and Liberal candidate for Cranbourne Geoff Ablett, who all fought for this money.

In Narre Warren South, $266,000 will be spent on the Berwick Springs Reserve for new seating, netball courts, cricket equipment and a veranda. I again congratulate candidate Susan Serey and candidate Amanda Stapledon. And $2.5 billion will be spent on the upgrade of the Cranbourne-Pakenham train line. I always hear from the Greens that the state Liberals are spending nothing on public transport. Well, I think $2.5 billion is a lot of money to spend, and I again congratulate those local members and candidates. And $310 million has been committed to an upgrade of the intersection of the Western Port Highway and Thompsons Road. Well done, again, to candidate Geoff Ablett, candidate Amanda Stapledon and candidate Susan Serey.

Then we have $1.8 million being spent on the Emerald SES. Labor has not matched this funding. This is such a vital work. The Emerald SES is the busiest in the state, and I recently met with them. They have 45 volunteers doing amazing work, attending more than 1,000 turnouts per year. I again congratulate the member for Gembrook, Brad Battin, and also the
Liberal candidate for Monbulk, Mark Verschuur, who know how important this project is to the Dandenong Ranges. Victorians: do not go back, continue to support the Napthine government and vote Liberal this Saturday.

Hughes, Mr Phillip Joel

Western Australia Government: Remote Communities

Ms MacTIERNAN (Perth) (16:39): I start off by joining the other members of the House in expressing my deepest sympathy to the family and colleagues of Phillip Hughes, and also to say that our thoughts go out to Sean Abbott in what must be a very difficult time.

When I first became a minister in 2001, I had representations to me from a group of people wanting justice for the people of Moola Bulla in the Kimberley. This was a group of people who had been on a big Aboriginal property in the 1950s when a government decision was made that this was a dysfunctional community and it was going to be closed down. Subsequently, these people, in the middle of the night, were put on cattle trucks and moved into Halls Creek and into Fitzroy Crossing. The level of dysfunction that followed from that dreadful move was far worse than the problems that were existing at that time on the station of Moola Bulla, and it is a legacy that we still live with today. Unfortunately, it appears that we are about to go down exactly that same path again. The federal government has unilaterally decided that it is going to bail out of its municipal funding of these remote communities. That is 164 communities in remote Western Australia, largely in the Pilbara and the Kimberley, that will no longer receive that funding.

Now, a bucket of money has been handed over to the Barnett government in order to do some transition—no planning, just a bucket of untied money that has gone over to the Barnett government. What we know is that Mr Barnett has started absolutely no planning. Just yesterday, finally, with only seven months to go, the local authorities got a letter telling them that a committee is going to be set up and that this committee is going to work out how we are going to deal with this problem.

The local government and the Aboriginal communities are desperately worried about the impact of this movement to close down all of these remote communities and move people into towns like Derby, Halls Creek and Broome. Some of the projections that were done in a study in 2009 on what might happen indicate that, in Kununurra, you could see family households going from 4.7 people per house to 17.8. In Halls Creek, it could go from 7.3 persons per household to 19.7. There has been no thought given to what happens to schooling. Money is currently being invested in a whole range of remote area schools to try to bring them up to standard. If you suddenly close these communities down and move these thousands of people into the larger centres, it is going to create absolute chaos.

Brian Sampson, for example, who is the chairman of WDLAC and the head of the Martu people, is desperately concerned about what will happen to his community of Jigalong if the surrounding communities of Punmu, Cotton Creek and others are closed down. He says: ‘We are already struggling trying to manage this. If you bring in other people from outside, our ability to manage is going to be severely compromised.’ We have got local authorities like Port Hedland that are very concerned about the health, welfare and safety of Indigenous communities. We have Kerry White from the Shire of Ashburton say she is very scared about what the impact of this is going to be on their towns and their Aboriginal communities. We
have people like Bishop Saunders expressing his concern that the state and federal
governments are turning their backs on the needs of our First Australians, and promising a
new dispossession that can only result in further injustices and great suffering.

This is something that we really need to address. We cannot depend on the state
government to get this right. Just this morning Mr Barnett said, 'I am not going to close down
any communities; I am just going to turn off their water and power.' What is going to happen
to these people if he turns off their water and power, and closes down their schools? What are
these communities going to do? This is a national disgrace. We are repeating the tragedy of
the 1950s.

**Petition: East West Link**

*Ms HENDERSON* (Corangamite) (16:44): I rise to present a petition on the importance
of the East West Link, which was found to be in order by the Petitions Committee. The stack
is right here, Madam Speaker.

*The petition read as follows—*

To the Honourable The Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives

This petition of Corangamite and Geelong residents draws to the attention of the House that: the East
West Link is a vital infrastructure project which will deliver more than 6,000 construction jobs and cut
tavel times for Geelong commuters. Only a Coalition Government will build East West Link. State
Labor!

has vowed to stop it, threatening $3 billion of Federal funding and thousands of jobs. It is critical that
Federal Labor MPs including in Geelong, western Melbourne and Ballarat support this project.

We therefore ask the House to: stand up for more than 6000 new jobs and back East West Link.
from 489 citizens

Petition received.

The petition garnered more than 550 responses and 489 signatures. It reflects our absolute
determination each and every day to fight for jobs across the Geelong region. There is no
more important project for jobs than the East West Link: 6,700 jobs—3,700 in stage 1 and
3,000 in stage 2. The $3 billion contribution from the federal government is so important and,
of course, in jeopardy if Labor is elected on Saturday. Construction on the western section,
starting at the end of 2015, will absolutely boost Geelong. It will deliver a second river
crossing. It will unblock the terrible quagmire on the West Gate Bridge.

Currently, some 14,000 people from Geelong commute to Melbourne, and during peak
hour it is an absolute nightmare. We are investing in the infrastructure of the future to resolve
a massive problem for the Geelong economy. Currently, the West Gate Bridge is clogged with
200,000 vehicles a day. The western section of the East West Link will carry 100,000
vehicles. It will be an absolute boon to our local economy. It will drive business investment. It
will give businesses the confidence to move down to Geelong and it will give more families
the confidence to move to Geelong and invest in our great city.

Of course, as we have heard today, Daniel Andrews is a walking sovereign risk. His
commitment to rip up the East West Link contracts is the most economically reckless and
politically irresponsible action by any political leader that we have ever seen in Victoria. The
consequences are dire. We will as a state incur more than $1 billion in damages for a road that
will never be built. He will shut down our state. The only ones who will be getting a boost to
their business will be the CFMEU. Unfortunately, the Leader of the Opposition is not a man who has the courage of his convictions. Previously, he backed the East West Link. Now what we have from those opposite is deafening silence. Shame on members opposite.

Tomorrow at pre-polling and on Saturday, Victorians have a chance to re-elect a Napthine government—a government which is driving jobs growth and investment; a government which Victorians can trust. There is a wonderful op-ed in today's Geelong Advertiser by Liberal leader Denis Napthine, which sets out his case—the wonderful commitments. Denis Napthine has an incredible commitment to jobs growth. We have seen that with the recent announcement about the Australian Bureau of Statistics. I was very proud to join the Premier for the announcement of 250 new jobs for our great city, with the ABS Centre of Excellence moving to Geelong. The NDIA headquarters will provide 300 jobs. This is another great partnership between the state and the Commonwealth. The Princess Highway duplication, the Great Ocean Road upgrade and the Geelong Region Innovation Investment Fund will deliver well in excess of 700 jobs. Across the private sector, several thousand jobs will be delivered by GMHBA, Coles and Energy Australia. And, of course, there are another 550 jobs, following another great initiative by this Premier in moving WorkCover to Geelong.

We saw so many Labor disasters when they were in power, and more are to come. The Bellarine will be in dire straits with the Bay West proposal. It is an environmentally destructive proposal. Look at desal and the $1.8 million a day that Victorians are paying because of Labor's incompetence. We are delivering better schools, better local hospitals, bypasses. To build a better Geelong and a better Victoria, I urge Victorians to put their support behind Denis Napthine and a coalition government on Saturday.

Hughes, Mr Phillip Joel

G20 Leaders' Summit

Ms BUTLER (Griffith) (16:49): As other speakers have done before in making a contribution to the adjournment debate, I want to record my condolences to the family of Phillip Hughes and, in fact, to the entire cricketing community. It is a very sad loss and one that has been felt most keenly around Australia and in this place. We express our hopes for Sean Abbott, who I am sure is going through a very difficult time in his life right now.

I want to make a contribution to the adjournment debate about the G20 summit that was held in my electorate of Griffith recently. I specifically want to thank the residents and the businesses in South Brisbane and West End for their patience during the summit. An event of this size obviously brings with it considerable inconvenience for those in the local area. A lot of the local businesses have let me know that they were significantly affected by the disruption. In fact, a lot of the business in the local South Brisbane and West End area started to see some drop-off in trade from October, when the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre car park was closed. Some of the restaurants had group bookings cancelled and some businesses actually closed their doors in the lead-up to and during the G20. Those who did stay open over that period of the G20 weekend saw their businesses affected. The turnover for some was down by up to 60 per cent. Of course, that has a massive effect on the cash flow of local businesses, who still have to pay suppliers, rent and utilities. I was told that some of the businesses reduced the staff they had on duty during the period. In an area where a lot of local people are employed in small businesses, that has a flow-on effect for the ability of those locals to patronise other local businesses.
Businesses were led to believe that they would see an upturn in trade over the G20 weekend, but unfortunately the local information that was distributed in the lead-up to the summit was more about the inconvenience that people would encounter by going into the area. The road closures and the impacts on public transport had the effect of people deciding to stay away from the inner city and from South Brisbane and West End. It was not really until a week out from the summit that the Premier, the Lord Mayor of Brisbane and Brisbane Marketing finally got the message out that people were welcome in South Brisbane during the event.

It is very disappointing, and businesses are now saying that they felt that they were ignored. I want to encourage people to patronise those local businesses. If you are in Brisbane, and particularly if you are a local on the south side of Brisbane in my electorate of Griffith, please go out and support South Bank, South Brisbane and West End businesses. There has been a lot of support here this week for the Shop Small campaign, and the member for Parramatta organised Parliamentary Friends of Australian Fashion Week to promote local designers to encourage people to shop small. It is very true that there are some fantastic local designers and boutiques in my electorate of Griffith. I participated in Parliamentary Friends of the Australian Fashion Week, wearing a dress from a local boutique called Suki, which is run by a woman who also lives in the electorate and whom I know.

That is a very important part of shopping small, but I wanted to remind everyone of some of the other great local small businesses on the south side, some of which did it quite tough during G20 weekend. We have some of the best restaurants and cafes and bars in Brisbane. There are certainly too many to list them all, but there are some great places like Era Bistro, Archive, Loft and the newly opened Charming Squire—the charmingly named Charming Squire. I would suggest there are plenty of venues for Christmas celebrations, a nice meal with a family member or a beverage after work or on the weekend. Or people might like visit Peter and Maria at the Swiss Gourmet Delicatessen for a coffee and some absolutely delicious cannoli—I can say that from firsthand experience. I do encourage locals and visitors alike to get out and support those local South Brisbane, South Bank and West End businesses. It is hugely important.

We wonder what the benefits of the G20 summit will be. Obviously, it was a wonderful opportunity to showcase the local area to the world but, more broadly, we are all waiting to see what impact the G20 Leaders’ Summit had on our nation and the benefits we might obtain. I certainly hope that we see those benefits. (Time expired)

Hughes, Mr Phillip Joel
Levey, Mr Peter

Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (16:54): In this great parliament in this great southern land when there are moments that speak to the time and to the events. The death of Phil Hughes today is one of those moments for me, and my condolences go to Phil Hughes's family, the cricketing fraternity and the Australian nation that will mourn the death of this champion cricketer. To be a local grade cricketer at A-grade level you have to be pretty good; to be a cricketer a little up from that—a country side or even state cricket—you have to be absolutely fantastic; to be a test cricketer you have to be one out of the box. And he was one.
This morning I got the message that a local hero of mine, Peter Levey, had lost his battle with cancer just after 7 am. In these days of technology, I had been notified by 7.30 that he had passed away. He was having his own wake next Sunday at Port Fairy—at Port Fairy Yacht Club—and I had been asked to attend as someone who grew up with him and his family in Koo Wee Rup, played junior and senior football and cricket with Peter, his brothers, Earl and Wayne, and his cousin. Peter was a great competitor; he was very good at everything he did; he was academically well qualified; he gave his life as a teacher to kids to make their lives better.

The last time I saw Peter was at the centenary of the Aswan Primary School that has now closed, sadly. He was a principal there for quite a number of years, and we enjoyed that day, that 100th anniversary, reminiscing about who we were when we were children. In losing the battle today to a cancer he had been fighting for 10 years, I do not think that he lost the battle with his illness; I think he won the battle that he fought for 10 years. The sadness that he could not get to his own wake on Sunday shows the strength of the person who, even with the debilitating illness of cancer, was prepared to plan for the future. That was his spirit—that, even knowing his last days were approaching, he planned for the future. I think that, through his investment in his life's work as a teacher in all those children, he was planning for the future in the same way that he planned for his own future.

I said before he was a great competitor. He was not of great physique and not even of marvellous capacity but played A grade in everything that he did: he was an A-grade schoolteacher and an A-grade principal; he was an A-grade husband, an A-grade brother, an A-grade friend.

Tonight when we stand in the quietness of this place, as the adjournment debate finishes this rowdy week, there is a pall over this place with the death of Phil Hughes. But there will be many mourning for Peter Levey today—many, many mourning—for his roots in the Jackson and the Levey families that run throughout our district. His family have contributed so greatly to everything that has happened in sport and other activities around that community—that tiny community of Koo Wee Rup, where everyone is so tight and so committed. He was a premiership player in football, in cricket and other activities. He was a premiership teacher and a premiership family member. All I can say tonight is this: if we as a nation can contribute the way he contributed and if we as members of parliament can contribute in the way he contributed, this nation will be all the better for it. For the life of Peter Levey, I say that the generations he has left behind will be the great legacy of his life. Vale, Peter Levey. My special condolences to his wife, family and friends.

Debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 17:00

RESPONSE TO REQUEST FOR DETAILED INFORMATION

Mr Conroy asked the Speaker, in writing, on 4 September 2014:

Since 7 September 2013, what (a) has been the cost of the fit-out of ministerial offices (including Assistant Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries), and (b) is the breakdown of these costs by category of expenditure, including but not limited to, furnishings and information technology.
Mrs Bronwyn Bishop: The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

The total DPS cost of fit-outs to ministerial offices, including Assistant Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries, for the period 7 September 2013 to 31 August 2014 was $7,950. The cost relates to a new bookcase installed in the Attorney-General’s Suite.

The total cost of the bookcase was $15,442 (excluding GST), of which the Attorney-General’s Department paid $7,492, with DPS funding the remaining $7,950. The DPS funding contribution reflected the fact that the bookcase is a DPS asset.

DPS has carried out routine maintenance activities for the same period in ministerial offices, including Assistant Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries which included painting, tiling, carpet replacement and door installations.
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott) took the chair at 9:30.

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Calwell Electorate: Community Awards

Ms VAMVAKINOU (Calwell) (09:30): I want today to take the opportunity to talk about a very important project in my electorate funded under the previous Labor government's Better Futures, Local Solutions. Unfortunately, that has been terminated by the present government, but this particular project, Expanding School Community Hubs into Secondary Schools, recently received an award from the Hume City Council. The project was initiated in May last year with 12 months seed funding under the Local Solutions Fund. I am very pleased that it was formally recognised as the winner of the Outstanding Team category for the Hume council 2014 Teachers' Scholarships.

The scholarship awards, presented on 13 November, are a key part of the Hume council and the Hume Global Learning Village priority for lifelong learning. That comes under the banner of the Hume City Horizons 2040. Maria Axarlis Coulter, former government action leader of the fund, was a member of the judging panel who chose the winning project. Maria was able to describe the absolute joy and thrill of the principals from the Ilim Islamic College, the Penola Catholic College, and the Mt Ridley P-12 College, who were very grateful to receive the $4,000 prize money. This money, together with dedicated internal resources, will sustain the secondary hubs initiative and allow it to continue to focus on improving student's education, retention and attainment.

This award was the first of its kind—a cross-sector initiative—and was noted as making a difference to the students and the broader community. The award money will contribute to the planning for the inaugural 2015 interschools student leadership forum. The schools award reinforces the importance of place based funding to support the harnessing of local expertise and energy for better futures for local students, particularly those who are vulnerable, such as many of the students in my electorate.

The expanding school hubs program will be featured along with other local, national and international projects as part of the major Hume conference on education, which is due to take place in my electorate in early June next year.

Last week I also had the great privilege of welcoming the Labor shadow minister for foreign affairs, Hon. Tanya Plibersek, to my electorate to attend a very big luncheon that was organised with women in my electorate. The theme of the luncheon was the notion of women coming together to get to know each other and to help in developing a more cohesive and peaceful community.

Bass Electorate: Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Mr NIKOLIC (Bass) (09:33): I rise to highlight the unnecessary and misguided disinvestment by the ABC in rural and regional Australia. When it comes to interpreting their own charter, their duty to the taxpayers of Australia, their duty to regional and rural Australia, the ABC board and its managing director have failed dismally. Most prominent is ABC myth-
making about the relatively modest efficiencies being imposed by the government and the quite duplicitous linking of those efficiencies to ABC program and personnel cuts.

In Tasmania they have closed the TV production unit, reduced staff in news departments, cut radio and TV resources, and heavily diverted regional programming. Meanwhile, resources are being centralised in Sydney and Melbourne in direct contradiction of the ABC’s duty to regional and rural Australia.

Over 50 per cent of the ABC staff is based in New South Wales, centralised in Sydney, and nearly half of its reporters live in mutually Left-leaning supporting enclaves in either New South Wales or the ACT. What this centralisation of resources in Sydney shows is how far the ABC board and its managing director have drifted from their most important purpose. It is a breathtaking failure of leadership and they should consider their position urgently. The ABC needs someone to correct that failure of leadership, and Mark Scott is not that person. His address to the ABC last Monday confirms he intends to continue reducing regional services, and my home town of Launceston is being particularly impacted by the downgrading of these services.

In radio, the regional content director position is being downgraded. Statewide Afternoons programming is moving to Hobart, and the ABC in Tasmania has become Hobart-centric at the expense of the north and the north-west. Mark Scott has also said there will be a restructure of state directors, and that office will also likely be affected. On a daily basis, between the Breakfast show and the Drive program in the afternoon, there will be nothing coming out of ABC Launceston.

It is also interesting that all five regional offices being closed are in coalition seats: Nowra in Gilmore; Gladstone in Flynn; Port Augusta in Grey; Morwell in Gippsland; and Wagin in O'Connor. Rockhampton, Newcastle and Launceston all will have job cuts and service reductions. So my questions to Mr Scott are: what is the specific dollar figure being saved by the closure of these offices and why is it not being re-invested in saving other regional services; and how will he fund the new regional division, yet another ABC bureaucracy?

I want to know how the Tasmanian director of the ABC board, Jane Bennett, allowed this to happen in her own backyard. When did she find out about the cuts to Tasmanian services? More importantly, I want Mr Scott to put a specific number on the percentage of the ABC budget that is actually spent by the ABC on the regional networks. It is time for answers from Mr Scott.

Mr SWAN (Lilley) (09:36): It was the night before the election and Mr Abbott looked down the barrel of the SBS camera and told the Australian people there would be no cuts to education, no cuts to health, no changes to pensions and no changes to the ABC and the SBS. In January we had Mr Abbott make the contemptible claim that the ABC:

…but takes everyone's side but Australia's.

In May we had Mr Abbott break the promises on pensions, health and education and, at the same time, announce cuts of $43.5 million over four years from the base funding of the ABC and the SBS, as well as cancelling the contract for the Australia Network, valued at $220 million over 10 years.
But, of course, the hatred of the ABC did not stop back at the budget. Last week the final assault on the ABC began. The government announced that, all up, they would be cutting the ABC's budget by $254 million over the next five years. Why would the Prime Minister—a man who has staked more on telling the truth than any other politician in Australian history—cut funding to the ABC and SBS, given that he already had a very large box set of broken promises? It is because the ABC is one of those institutions that this government, with its right-wing, Tea Party agenda, has always loathed—and we have just heard it in the comments from the member for Bass—because the ABC is the voice of the middle ground. It is the voice of the ordinary Australian.

It is one of the most successful and popular broadcasters and public institutions in our country. Therefore, it is a threat to the government politically and it is a threat to the commercial interests that back the government. It is a threat to those interests that protected the government for three years before the election and protected it every day in the tabloid newspapers of the Murdoch press, running a protection racket for the government. The ABC is a threat to that. So, to repay these commercial interests and to protect its political stance, it is out there trying to muzzle and silence the SBS and the ABC.

More than anything, the Abbott government is driven by hatred and driven by revenge: a hatred of the ABC, a hatred of universal health and education and a hatred of our social and industrial safety net. The ABC must be silenced because the commercial interests that back this government do not want an independent voice where Australians can put their views fiercely and fairly. The need for a fair go in Australia is opposed by the Abbott government. It has got a viciously unfair agenda. It needs to muzzle the ABC because its political interests are served—and those of its masters are served—by not having an independent public broadcaster and a voice for the people.

International Day of People with Disability

Mrs SUDMALIS (Gilmore) (09:39): On 3 December we will recognise the United Nations International Day of People with Disability. My first association with disability was my grandmother's blindness—although, apart from cooking, it did not stop my grandma from doing just about everything else.

But let me first describe a lesson when, as a rookie local councillor, I referred to the disabled toilets in a particular development application. A long-term councillor stood and said: 'We're not speaking of "disabled toilets". We want them to work! More importantly, we're discussing toilets for people with a disability.' That happened in 1995, and I recall it as if it were yesterday.

Later I was approached in my fudge factory to take on an employee with a disability. Crissy Suffolk started working with us and became an outstanding machine operator and process worker and a good friend. I even learned to sign. She remained in the business for almost 20 years. Felicity Kriss was our next recruit. Being told that she could not count past 10, we devised a masking-tape grid on the bench—four columns and 10 spaces for the 40 pieces that would go into the display box. She soon outgrew that counting tool. During her many years in the factory, she became one of the fastest packers and the best system checker and even prepared cartons for freight to send interstate. Ever since, I have held the belief that we should never, never doubt the potential of a single human being. I am truly inspired by the work of Slice of Life.
Australia in employing so many with disabilities. Young Matt has become a local hero. Congratulations, Karen Anstiss.

This week I attended the 2014 National Disability Awards. I was inspired to meet so many who work in the field of service provision for those with a disability. My local business Jervis Bay Wild—who have done amazing work to make sure that wheelchair users can take the cruise to watch dolphins and whales in the bay just like everybody else—were nominated. While they did not receive the accolade of coming first, they are, to me, winners, being one of only 23 to reach the finals.

By a lucky chance, I was sitting next to another group, Touched by Olivia. They did win, and they are already planning to come to Nowra with their creative, inclusive playgrounds. This brings the wonderful sequence of coincidence to the picture. Rebecca from that group has had discussions with a very passionate advocate for—would you believe?—toilets for people with a disability but, more important, Changing Places. Annette Pham begins her emails with her name and the following message:

... I am the mother of Liam who is 12 years old and profoundly disabled. I am writing this letter to you to make you aware of a problem you possibly do not know even exists.

At that time, I did not. Liam is a young man, not a boy anymore. Annette is a slightly built young woman but strong. Her dilemma, after travelling overseas, was that she needed to change Liam on the floor of a disability toilet. Before 3 December, I would encourage you to check the internet for these facilities—Changing Places toilets—around Australia. Perhaps we can all work together to help.

Asbestos

Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (09:42): I seek leave to table the Fluffy Owners and Residents' Action Group impact statement, 'Hope in grief: confronting Mr Fluffy's toxic legacy in Canberra and Queanbeyan'.

Leave granted.

Dr LEIGH: For people outside the ACT, the name 'Mr Fluffy' probably calls to mind something fun and frivolous. But fun and frivolity have been pretty scarce over the last few years for the Canberra families who discovered their homes had been pumped full of crushed raw asbestos by a dodgy contractor trading under the name Mr Fluffy. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Mr Fluffy pumped the toxic material into the walls and roof cavities of over a thousand homes across the ACT and Queanbeyan as insulation against the Canberra cold. Although it was only in business for a few short years, it left a potentially deadly legacy scattered through our community.

Today it is clear that none of the Mr Fluffy homes is safe to live in. Every single one must be demolished to protect the owners and the surrounding community from the risk of exposure to deadly asbestos fibres. The families affected by this calamity, some of whom are here in the chamber today, will see their treasured homes reduced to rubble. As if that were not painful enough, they also face years of uncertainty as they wait to find out whether anyone they love will fall sick from asbestos exposure.

The statement I am tabling today tells these families' stories in their own words and with no filter over the raw grief, loss and worry that so many feel. I would like to share with the
House just two stories which express the intense heartache created by this discovery. Sixty-six-year-old Christine from Ainslie writes:

I love my home: it is filled with a lifetime of our family's memories. I despair over having to leave my community where I attend church, volunteer at the local primary school and have the love and support of my friends and neighbours.

Christine, we are all so sorry for your loss. Then there is Matt from Duffy. His anger and frustration practically leap from the page when he writes:

My wife and I had also thought about having another child but now we're too scared: not only because of all the stress and fear we have at the moment, or bringing another child into a home that is dangerous, but also because financially there is no way we can afford another child …

I urge members opposite to read the full impact statement and then ask yourselves: has the government really done all it can do to support the Mr Fluffy families in Canberra and Queanbeyan? To all the families who shared stories for this statement—including Janet and Mike Ilchef, Rhonda Fleming, Elisa Thompson, Lisa Ziolkowski, Nathan Hitchcock, Chris Pilkington, Petra Wiesner, Chris Brown, Fiona Matz, Luke Brown, Kim Grant, Felicity Anne Prideaux, Becc Rohrlach, Annabel Yagos, Emma Macdonald, Tim and Brianna Heseltine, Jorge Woods and Mike Desmond—thank you, and your community is here with you.

Flynn Electorate: Coal Seam Gas

Mr O'DOWD (Flynn) (09:45): Today I would like to give an update on the progress of the Gladstone-Curtis LNG QGC project, which is one of three companies developing coal seam gas in Central Queensland. The first shipment of gas out of Gladstone will happen in December 2014, which is not too far away. The initial construction phase of the project is nearing completion. They are preparing to commence LNG production as a world first from gas produced from coal seams. Natural gas from the pipeline has been on site at QGC for a few months now, and the first flare was lit in August. The site is now powered by gas turbine generators. Detailed planning is underway to shift the focus from the project's construction to efficient operation and performance over a two-year transition period. All the while, QGC continue to invest in the communities in which they operate.

I will give a little bit of detail of statistics on the project. Upstream there are over 2,060 access agreements with property owners, over 2,000 wells have already been started up, 3,500 kilometres of pipeline has been laid, 12 compression stations have been erected and four central processing plants have been established, as have two major water treatment facilities. There is over 200 kilometres of gas collection headworks pipelines and 340 kilometres of pipeline from your area, Mr Deputy Speaker Scott, in Maranoa, to Gladstone. The LNG plant will consist of two trains producing 8.5 metric tonnes per annum, or 1.3 billion cubic feet per day, required for plateau production. Two LNG storage tanks and a jetty especially for gas have been erected.

There has been a lot of water produced—20,000 megalitres since January 2013. The aim is to make up to 97 per cent of all CSG water produced available for beneficial use—so 90 per cent of the water coming from the coal seam gas will be used in ways beneficial to farmers, working through SunWater. Even in the summer months, it is expected to produce at least 50 megalitres per day.
The total workforce has been up to 14,000—this is only for one company, mind you. There are approximately 8,000 workers on the site at this very moment. This will gradually decline to about 3,600 workers by 2019. *(Time expired)*

**Domestic Violence**

**Ms O’NEIL** (Hotham) (09:48): I rise to make a statement about one of the most critical issues facing Australia today, and that is the issue of family violence. The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence is an international campaign which commenced on 25 November, the day that the United Nations General Assembly has designated as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. We make no bones about this: family violence is gendered violence. It is true that there are some men in the Australian community who experience this, but we know that one in three Australian women will be the victims of family violence at some stage throughout their lives.

I want to acknowledge the Australian men who have used this opportunity over the last couple of days to make their own voice heard on their opposition to family violence. I particularly point out the member for Gellibrand, who has shown really significant leadership in starting a parliamentary group against family violence, joined by the members for Hasluck and Mallee.

Some of us in Australia like to believe that family violence can be seen in some groups but not in others. But, actually, when you look at the reality and when you look at the data, what you find is that family violence does not discriminate. We see it across all socioeconomic communities. We see it across all cultural communities. We see it in the city and in the country. We see Australian victims of family violence who come from all different walks of life.

We have come a long way in our understanding of the causes of family violence. We know that it is men that cause family violence because of their decision to use violence in their relationships. We know that family violence is about power. What studies all over the world show us is that it is in countries where women are not able to control economic resources, where women do not have positions of leadership and where women and men are fundamentally not equal that family violence is the biggest problem. I think that suggests that there are lots of gender issues in this country that we need to look at very seriously because, when we understand the research, we understand that all of these problems are related.

What is a little bit worrying is that, when we look at survey data, we do see evidence that there continues to be confusion in the Australian community about what it is that causes family violence. We know that there are sizeable portions of the Australian population today who will still say that there are circumstances in which violence against women can be excused. We know that eight in 10 people continue to say that they cannot understand why women who are experiencing violence do not just leave the relationships, which indicates a complete misunderstanding of how these relationships work and the type of manipulation that goes on.

I want to mention the important work of groups in Hotham who are doing work on this, including two councils, who are leading through their enterprise agreements: the City of Monash and the City of Greater Dandenong. Family violence is a scourge in the community, and I encourage all those there to speak out against it. *(Time expired)*
Lindsay Electorate: Shop Small Campaign

Ms SCOTT (Lindsay) (09:51): Today I rise to urge the people of Lindsay to shop small this Christmas. I know in this place we can all be a bit parochial, with each of us believing that our electorates are the best and that our retailers are that little bit more special. But, when it comes to Lindsay, we are definitely spoilt. Recently, Queen Street, St Marys, was recognised by the Shop Small campaign for its unique shopping precinct. I would like to congratulate city centre manager Paulette Adams for her marvellous work in bringing this wonderful street back to life. Her work, of course, has been supported by so many retailers up and down Queen Street—in fact, right around the community: Jamjo Home and Gifts, Joanne Tomic; Hobbypro, which relocated from High Street, Penrith; Graham's Hobby Centre, run by Ian and Diane Shelley; the Bridal Outlet, a mother and daughter operation with Lisa and Hyatt; Daily Fresh, which offers a wonderful range of fresh fruit and veg every single day, run by Rafiq; Bula Fiji; and many cafes and businesses—people like Cassandra, James, Maria and Sue-Anne.

I must appeal to your own palate, Deputy Speaker. I would be in so much trouble if I were not to mention a wonderful little shop called Scottish Fare. I am told, by my very good Scottish friends Brian and Glenda Cartwright, that David's haggis, square sausage, black pudding and tattie scones are the best—as good as you can get in Scotland. Deputy Speaker, if you are ever out in Lindsay, I recommend that you come and shop small in Lindsay, and we will find you some of the best Scottish fare that you could also enjoy.

An honourable member: No black pudding!

Ms SCOTT: He will love the black pudding! Small business is the engine room of the economy, and it is essential that we support all our local retailers. Local retailers employ local people. Buying more locally means that more money stays within our home communities. Small business provides so much employment and longevity for our communities. It is so important this Christmas when we shop for Christmas gifts that we do support each other and support our local communities.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): It sounds like the Deputy Speaker has to come to Lindsay sometime.

Ms SCOTT: I would love you to come to Lindsay, and we will get you some tattie scones.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you.

Indigenous Affairs

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (09:54): As the representative of a community that has a strong, proud, and active Indigenous culture, and is moving to strengthen its recognition of Indigenous people and its efforts to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, I have been heartened to hear from a number of constituents who utterly reject the proposed forced closure of approximately 150 remote Aboriginal communities in Western Australia through the colluding neglect of the Abbott and Barnett governments. The Abbott government has decided to shirk and shift its responsibility for supporting remote Aboriginal communities and, in so doing, has effectively invited the Barnett government to abdicate its duty of care to some of our most vulnerable citizens. That is in addition to the Western Australian government's proposed changes to the Aboriginal Heritage Act, which stand to...
seriously reduce the rights and input of Aboriginal people and the protection of Indigenous heritage.

As others have observed, we have long followed the principle of universality of service in Australia and—though we have not always been able, or in some cases willing, to fully deliver on that principle—it has been a reasonably consistent feature of government policy and administration. It is hypocritical in the extreme for the cessation of support to Aboriginal communities to be put forward on the basis that the communities in question are small and unsustainable. As Guy Rundle has written, universality of service is a:

… necessary principle for a vast country, where the economic tides come and go … If we didn't respect that we'd wind up half of rural white Queensland, which costs us far more money than Aboriginal communities do.

In Western Australia, we have seen the Royalties for Regions program provide funding for many important and a few reasonably curious projects; we have seen the government prepared go to quite extraordinary lengths to support some questionable residential property developments in part of the north-west; and we know that the proposed closures, without proper planning, let alone consultation, will in fact produce greater costs in addition to the absolutely unacceptable and unconscionable social harm involved. Noting the absence of consultation with Indigenous people, Wayne Bergmann, former head of the Kimberley Land Council, has said:

The only solution is the Government has to empower Aboriginal leadership in the local organisations and the local communities …

Former federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and this year’s Senior Australian of the Year, Fred Chaney, has said that proceeding to defund and dissolve remote communities will have catastrophic impacts on the lives of Indigenous men, women and children. His open letter to the Premier and the Prime Minister states:

I see no sign that any government is prepared for the consequences. If governments simply let things rip by withdrawing services and driving people into towns without careful and comprehensive preparation, the outcomes will be shameful. That shame will reflect on you and your governments and on all of us.

Mr Chaney has said that Aboriginal people are entitled to be treated as human beings and as citizens of Australia and not just as some kind of fiscal problem. It is astounding that in 2014 this kind of eminently sensible point even needs to be made. I can only hope that the Premier of WA and the Prime Minister, who makes so much of his interest in the lives of Indigenous Australians, will come to their senses.

**Telstra Business Women’s Awards**

Ms GAMBARO (Brisbane) (09:57): It is with great pride that I inform the House that the Telstra Australian Business Woman of the Year for 2014 is Anne Cross, the CEO of UnitingCare Queensland, who just happens to be one of my constituents in the federal seat of Brisbane. Might I say as well that this is the second year in a row that a Queensland woman has taken out the prestigious national award, with the 2013 award being won by QSuper CEO, Rosemary Vilgan. There is something about us Queenslanders, Mr Deputy Speaker, wouldn’t you agree?

Anne is a former front-line social worker and a champion of the not-for-profit sector who has reshaped the way that healthcare, community and aged-care services are delivered in
Queensland. To give you some insight into the transformational role that Anne played in health and the community sector service, consider this: within a year of her being appointed as CEO in 2003, Anne used her business nous to consolidate more than 100 separate organisations into four service groups—Blue Care, UnitingCare Health, UnitingCare Community and Australian Regional and Remote Community Services. Indeed, it was Anne's ability to bring together such a fragmented group, to enhance service delivery for society's most disadvantaged people, that truly impressed the judges. Today, UnitingCare is a mature, focused, integrated organisation where Anne oversees some 16,000 employees and 9,000 volunteers across 400 locations.

I would like to acknowledge and congratulate the other six truly brilliant women who are national winners in the 20th year of the awards. They were: Kate Weiss of Table of Plenty in Victoria, who won the Business Owners Award; Susan Lloyd-Hurwitz of Mirvac in New South Wales, who won the Private and Corporate Sector Award; and the two winners of the Business Innovation Award, Andrea Galloway of Evolve Housing in New South Wales and Assistant Commissioner Donna Adams of the Tasmania Police. The Young Business Women's Award winner was Tina Tower of Begin Bright, in New South Wales. As Kate McKenzie, Telstra's Chief Operations Officer and Telstra Business Women's Awards Ambassador, said at the awards last night:

Australia's economic future depends on the leadership and innovation of women like these, and the inspiration that they are giving younger women.

I wholeheartedly agree. I congratulate all of the winners and I again commend Telstra for such a wonderful and important initiative, the Telstra Australian Business Women's Awards.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): Order! In accordance with standing order 193 the time for constituency statements has concluded.

BILLS

Australian War Memorial Amendment Bill 2014

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr HUTCHINSON (Lyons) (10:01): It is a pleasure and an honour to be able to speak on the Australian War Memorial Amendment Bill 2014, which is probably not the most auspicious piece of legislation that I will have an opportunity to debate; nevertheless, remembering the sacrifice that so many over so many years have made for our country in the field of war, in the role of peacekeepers, in support roles and in active service is something that every Australian and future generations would do well to contemplate from time to time.

The Australian War Memorial is truly an icon in Australia. My family, my brother and his wife and daughters recently visited Canberra and as a family we went to see the War Memorial. Whilst it was a venue to enjoy a lunch, for me it was quite intriguing to watch the reaction of my young boys in particular to the amazing collection they have at the War Memorial. It was interesting to see the vividness of the display at the back of the War Memorial—the lights, the activity and the interactive display they have there—and observe the impact it has on young people. We are often critical of young people about living in a different world and about the way they engage with the community and with others. They
move through life perhaps at a faster pace that you and I might have. For me it was truly eye-opening to see the way they were absolutely captivated by the images and the stories they were seeing.

Another recollection I have of that day was the absolutely broken wreck of an aircraft that forms part of a display in the War Memorial. Indeed, it compels you to contemplate the time and the place and how that came to be. It was special. I think it is something that every Australian should do. They should take the time. We did not give it enough time, but we will make sure that we have an opportunity at some point in the future to revisit that amazing memorial to people who served, many of whom gave their lives for the sake of this country.

The bill itself is about ensuring that there will never be the ability to charge parking fees at the War Memorial. It may not seem the most significant thing. Nevertheless, based on the observations, if nothing else, that I have made of the impact that the memorial had on my young boys, it is a special place in Australia. It is one of the most visited tourist attractions in the country, and for every Australian, when they come to Canberra, there should be no barriers to them visiting the War Memorial, because it is a special place and a place for reflection.

Getting back closer to home, no doubt it is true right around Australia, but, within my electorate of Lyons, which covers over 50 per cent of the south island—the island state of our great nation—there are many communities. There are literally hundreds of small communities. Without thinking too hard, I did start making a list last night of all the little towns around my electorate that I am aware of that have memorials to the Boer War, the First World War, the Second World War, the Korean War or the Vietnam War, as well as peacekeepers’ memorials or memorials to Afghanistan or other conflicts. Truly, they have been focal points for those communities. I hesitated to complete the list because I was sure that I would miss some communities, but one town that springs to mind, a very, very small community, is Avoca in the Fingal Valley. I had the privilege of speaking at the 11 o’clock Anzac Day service at Avoca last year. Indeed, the work that they have done has been successful in attracting a little funding out of the Centenary of Anzac commemoration memorial fund. That has given them an opportunity to do some work that was overdue in upgrading their memorial.

Further south, in the beautiful Derwent Valley, up towards the Florentine and those iconic ‘working forests’, as they are—or were, at least—within my electorate, there is the town of Fentonbury. Those who take the road up the Derwent Valley through New Norfolk, past Bushy Park and Glenora, end up at Westerway. If you turn off there to go towards Ellendale, you pass the small town of Fentonbury. On the right-hand side as you head towards Ellendale, there is a memorial. It is in a privately owned paddock. This memorial somewhat resembles the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Every time I drive past it, I stop and I ponder. I have had conversations with the local mayor because I would love to see a way of working with the private landowner and, if it were deemed appropriate by the local community, perhaps consideration of moving that memorial to a place where it could once again be a focal point for that community—because we should always remember and reflect on and take the time at appropriate moments during the year to contemplate those who have made the ultimate sacrifice.
This debate gives me an opportunity also to reflect on the Centenary of Anzac program. It is a really valuable program right across the 150 electorates around the country. My observation might be that in an electorate such as Lyons, where every 10 kilometres down the road I have got another little town that has got another little memorial, the capacity to make $125,000 go further is probably more challenging than it may be in a smaller inner-city electorate. Nevertheless, it has been a really valuable process. I acknowledge the instigation of the same by the previous government and the work that Minister Ronaldson has done subsequently, adding $25,000 to those grants that were available to every electorate around the country.

The process that we went through was one of consultation. We had a committee and the committee was chaired by a former Professor of History at the University of Tasmania, retired, Michael Roe, and representatives from around the north and south of my electorate with people who have a connection either through the Returned Services League or their participation in the armed forces. It was a really constructive process on which they embarked. I have had a number of highlights. We are about halfway through the announcements that we are expecting. Understandably, they are being scrutinised properly by the department, as should be the case when public money is being used. So far we have had some announcements. For example, a little over $1,000 was approved for the very small community at Liffey that had small plaques disappear from trees that were planted in 1918. That money will go to re-establishing those plaques and in some cases replacing those trees. It is a small thing for a small community.

I had the privilege a couple of weekends ago of going to the small town of Woodsdale in the Southern Midlands in my electorate for the opening of another very small Centenary of Anzac program that they announced. It was $1,200 for a plaque to remember those people from that community who had gone away and served their country in the First World War. One of the things about my electorate is that the same names from different parts of the community keep coming up. No doubt previous members for this electorate—there have only been a few since the Second World War in this seat—when they heard the name 'Wilson' knew they were from somewhere between Parattah and Woodsdale and would start in the Southern Midlands. When you hear the name 'Dare', almost certainly they will be from Woodsdale in the Southern Midlands. It was a special occasion. I think there would have been close to 100 people who came to the opening of the park and the little memorial garden that has been established in that very, very small community there.

In the time I have left to speak, I would also comment on the wonderful work that has been done at Sheffield, 'the town of murals', which some would know. I would encourage anyone who is visiting my beautiful state to take the time to visit Sheffield. It truly is a wonderful thing. The RSL there have just completed a stunning memorial mural and garden. It is almost, if you like, designed to be a three-dimensional image. As you drive in from the eastern side of Sheffield into the town it is in a very prominent place and I think in time it will become in and of itself a reason for people to make the journey to Sheffield. It is a wonderful commemoration of not only people who served in the First World War in this instance but also the people who have served in many theatres of war since that time.

Whilst this is not the most auspicious piece of legislation, the War Memorial is nevertheless absolutely one of Australia's must-visit memorials. The Australian War
Memorial in Canberra truly is a national treasure. It is a small measure that this bill enacts to make sure that those visiting are given as easy access as possible by making sure that there can never be parking or entry fees imposed on the War Memorial. It is also making sure that the Australian War Memorial Act 1980 continues to meet the current needs of the memorial and, most importantly, of the community that it is there to help reflect on those that have given their lives.

Mr SNOWDON (Lingiari) (10:15): It gives me great pleasure to participate in the debate on the Australian War Memorial Amendment Bill 2014 and to use this opportunity to speak about the Australian War Memorial, which is arguably Australia's most important national cultural institution—although it is not just an institution; it is a monument and a memorial to Australians who have sacrificed their lives in war.

It is worthwhile, I think, to reflect for a moment at least on the origins of this great place. It arose, really, out of the work of Charles Bean. He, of course, was an official war correspondent for the First World War, and so he visited not only Gallipoli but also the Western Front. After he had been to Gallipoli and seen the horrors of Gallipoli, he witnessed Australia's first big battles on the Western Front, at Fromelles and Pozieres, in July 1916. Bean made some graphic observations about those events. It is worthwhile reminding ourselves, I think, that on 19 July 1916, at the Battle of Fromelles, 5½ thousand Australians were either killed, captured or wounded. Around 1,800 were killed in that one period. It is Australia's highest loss in battle over a short time. In commenting on Pozieres, which followed Fromelles, Bean made these observations:

One knew that the Brigades which went in last night were there today in that insatiable factory of ghastly wounds. The men were simply turned in there as into some ghastly giant mincing machine. They have to stay there while shell after huge shell descends with a shriek close beside them—each one an acute mental torture—each shrieking tearing crash bringing a promise to each man—instantaneous—I will tear you into ghastly wounds—I will rend your flesh and pulp an arm or a leg—fling you half a gaping quivering man (like these that you see smashed around you one by one) to lie there rotting and blackening like all the things you saw by the awful roadside, or in that sickening dusty crater. Ten or twenty times a minute every man in the trench has that instant fear thrust tight upon his shoulders—I don't care how brave he is—with a crash that is a physical pain and a strain to withstand.

Then a month later, as the Bills Digest informs us, the idea of a memorial museum for Australia was born, as Bean's confidant AW Bazley later recalled. He said:

I remember in August 1916 when after his busy days tramping the Pozieres battlefield and visiting units in the line he would roll out his blankets on the chalk firestep of the old British front line … on the edge of Becourt Wood and Sausage Gully. We used to sleep feet to head—C.E.W.B., Padre Dexter, myself, and others—and although I cannot recall the actual conversations today I do remember that on a number of occasions he talked about what he had in his mind concerning some future Australian war memorial museum.

So the founding fathers of this museum, this great monument, became Charles Bean, our official First World War historian, and John Treloar, who became the director of the memorial between 1920 and 1952. But it was not until 1941 that we finally saw the opening of the basic buildings for this great place. In 1918, Bean conceived how the memorial would appear. He said:

… on some hill-top—still, beautiful, gleaming white and silent, a building of three parts, a centre and two wings. The centre will hold the great national relics of the A.I.F. one wing will be a gallery—
holding the pictures that our artists painted and drew actually on the scene and amongst the events themselves. The other wing will be a library to contain the written official records of every unit.

Of course, subsequently, it became a memorial not only to the First World War but to subsequent conflicts—the Second World War, Korea and beyond. As a former Minister for Veterans’ Affairs and Minister for Defence Science and Personnel I have visited war museums across the world and I have to say that the Australian War Memorial is unique among them. I know the Australians who visit this wonderful place understand the gravitas that hits you once you are there. But it is really very important that we understand its significance both nationally and internationally.

At the beginning, Bean had hoped that the memorial would incorporate a roll of honour, which it does, listing the Australian dead of the war. Now that list is 102,000 men and women. As a result of changes which were made by the War Memorial Council last year, under the leadership of Ken Doolan as chair and as Dr Brendan Nelson as director, dead peacekeepers have been added to the Roll of Honour, which is as it should be.

The really significant thing, in my view, in those periods post-1941 in terms of the development of the War Memorial is the Hall of Memory, which was completed in 1959. It is inspiring. We recall well Remembrance Day of 1993 when then Prime Minister Paul Keating spoke, as the remains of a soldier killed in the battlefields of the Western Front, name unknown, were placed in a marble covered tomb in the Hall of Memory. At that time, Paul Keating said:

We do not know this Australian's name, we never will … He is one of them, and he is all of us.

That says what it is. When you comprehend those 102,000 names and then all of those missing in action, names unknown, burial places unknown, it really is a really, really significant thing. That Hall of Memory and the Roll of Honour is a repository for our soul. We as a nation are all the better for it.

There are some who would have argued in the past that somehow or other the War Memorial is a glorification of war, which of course it is not. It tells a story of war. It tells a story of our role in past conflicts. It reminds us, if anything, of the stupidity of war—of the need for us, every day, to strive to fight for peace. That, of course, is why we have such great confidence in the men and women of the Australian Defence Force, because that is their role. When we think about this War Memorial and see it as the monument that it is and recognise its role for us, for all Australians, in telling our national story, then we are all enhanced by that knowledge.

There have been significant developments at the War Memorial over the years. I mentioned some. But as the Centenary of Anzac comes upon us, a number of things have happened, one of which I was happily involved in as the former minister responsible for the War Memorial: the former Labor government made available $28.7 million to fund the redevelopment of the First World War galleries within the War Memorial, with $3.82 million from the War Memorial's own financial resources and $1 million from BHP Billiton. Last night members of this parliament had the opportunity to preview those galleries. I was fortunate enough to get a tour around those yet unfinished galleries, as they were last week, and I have to say they enhance the visit to the War Memorial greatly. I want to publicly thank and acknowledge the work of all those involved in these new galleries. I am sure most if not every member of parliament will have been there and will know the dioramas that exist there. Now there is a
chronology so, when you walk into those First World War galleries, you start at the beginning of the war and work your way through. It is a fine monument and tells a really significant story, this story of Australians at war in the First World War on the Western Front and elsewhere. I say to those people who have not had the opportunity to visit: please do so. You will walk away with a great sense of pride in what has been achieved.

It has not been achieved without leadership. That leadership has been provided by the War Memorial Council. The current members of that council are Rear Admiral Ken Doolan, who of course is the national president of the RSL; Air Chief Marshal Geoff Brown AO, who is the Chief of Air Force; the Hon. Graham Edwards AM, a former member of this fine parliament, a veteran himself and president of the Western Australian branch of the RSL; Mr Peter FitzSimons AM; Vice Admiral Tim Barrett AO CSC, the Chief of Navy; Dr Allan Hawke; Lieutenant-General David Morrison AO, the Chief of Army; Major General Paul Stevens AO (retired); Ms Gabrielle Trainor; Mr Les Carlyon; Ms Jillian Segal; and Mr Kerry Stokes.

Mr Stokes has been a wonderful contributor to Australia's war history. He has been a benefactor of the War Memorial and a benefactor of keeping these memories of Australians at war alive. His purchase of the pictures of Vignacourt, which record Australians away at the front during the First World War and are now on show at the gallery at the War Memorial, is a tribute to his philanthropy but also, most importantly, to his dedication to keeping these memories alive.

I want to also talk about Dr Brendan Nelson, who of course is the Director of the Australian War Memorial. I was in the fortunate position of being involved in his appointment, and I have to say what a wonderful appointment it has been. To his predecessor, Steve Gower, who spent many years as the director of the War Memorial, I want to say thank you for your contribution, Steve. I have not had the opportunity to publicly say this, but you made a wonderful contribution.

To Brendan and his staff, should they be listening, I say thank you for your leadership, Brendan, but, most importantly, I thank those people you have around you, who make the place work and who provide you with advice and insights: the historians, who do such wonderful work, the curators, the guides, the cleaners and the people who look after the landscape around the War Memorial—all of those involved. I say thank you on behalf of a grateful nation for keeping in a proper way this national icon, this national monument, this national museum.

Ms HENDERSON (Corangamite) (10:30): I rise to speak to the Australian War Memorial Amendment Bill 2014, which will deliver our government's 2013 election commitment to amend the Australian War Memorial Act 1980 to prohibit the levying of entry or parking fees at the Australian War Memorial premises in Campbell in the Australian Capital Territory. At the 2013 election, the government committed to legislate to prohibit the levying of entry and parking fees at the Australian War Memorial. If we go back to 2010, it was revealed that the memorial's council was being forced to consider charging entry and parking fees, as well as to consider closing one day a week, under some pressure because of the previous government's failure to properly resource the Australian War Memorial. As a result, in February 2011 the coalition announced that, if elected, it would legislate to prevent the levying of parking and
entry fees at the memorial. This is an incredibly important commitment—another important commitment that we are delivering on.

As we heard from the member for Lingiari in his contribution, the memorial must be a place for all Australians to visit free of charge, not only to pay their respects to the fallen but to learn the important story of Australia, and of Australians, at war. If we are to pass on to future generations the story of the Anzacs who served at Gallipoli and in other campaigns over a century of service, then we must ensure that these stories can be told and commemorated at no charge. This is particularly important for the hundreds and hundreds of schools which visit the memorial as part of school trips to Canberra each year. We must do all we can to ensure the Australian War Memorial's invaluable collection is not only protected for the future but able to be enjoyed by all visitors to the memorial at no cost.

As we heard in the fine contribution by the member for Lingiari, the Australian War Memorial is the nation's home of commemoration, reflection and remembrance. It is unique as both a memorial and a museum. Its cloisters contain the names of 102,000 Australians who have been killed in action as a result of service in war in the Australian Defence Force. The museum contains a world-class trove of memorabilia collected by soldiers, sailors and air men and women and left in perpetuity to the people of Australia as a reminder of the story of Australians at war. The galleries feature Australia's military engagements from Australia's colonial engagements in Africa in the 19th century through to recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan and various peacekeeping operations. As we heard from the member for Lingiari, in February next year a $30 million redevelopment of the First World War galleries will open. This is the first major redevelopment of these galleries in 30 years. The much-loved dioramas depicting Australians at war at Gallipoli, on the Western Front and in Palestine have been upgraded, and this will be an even greater reason to visit the memorial from early next year.

Every year close to one million people visit the Australian War Memorial, including almost 200,000 school students. Of course, around the country Anzac Day services are becoming more and more popular. More and more people are attending Anzac Day services to reflect, to commemorate and to remember. This includes the national ceremony and the national remembrance day at the Australian War Memorial, which in 2014 had unprecedented numbers of people attending.

In fact, in June 2014 the Australian War Memorial was listed by TripAdvisor as the No. 1 tourist destination in Australia. It was also the only Australian institution listed in the world top 20, ranked 17. At this point I also want to concur with the recognition by the member for Lingiari of Kerry Stokes for his incredible contribution to the War Memorial and of the wonderful leadership of Dr Brendan Nelson, who is doing an absolutely outstanding job at this very important time in our nation's history. Of course the Centenary of Anzac next year will be the most significant period of commemoration, I think it is fair to say, in our nation's history. The date of 25 April 2015 will mark 100 years since that first fateful landing at Gallipoli. This will be a very important and special time for every Australian, young and old.

Some 15 years ago I visited Gallipoli—not for Anzac Day; at another time of the year—but even standing on those beaches and looking up in awe at the cliffs was incredible. I do not think there was a person who stood with us at that time who did not have tears in their eyes. It is a place so many Australians visit, and it is incredible to see that the story of the Anzacs continues to resonate so much as it does today.
Through my electorate of Corangamite winds the world's largest war memorial: the Great Ocean Road. As I said in my first speech, this is a journey made possible by the sweat and toil of returned soldiers of the Great War who built this iconic road between 1919 and 1932. But I think that at this time it is also very important not to forget that we must pay tribute over the next few years to the service of all men and women of the Australian Defence Forces who have served our country over the past hundred years. The date of 18 August 2016 marks another very significant day: the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan, Vietnam Veterans Day. This will be a very important opportunity to pay tribute to the service of Vietnam vets, a contingent of men and women who were not properly recognised, many of whom were condemned and ostracised and who paid the price for many years. In fact, one of my staff members, Kerry Ridgeway, is a Vietnam vet. We went along to a Remembrance Day service just a few weeks ago, and he came along with me and wore his medals with pride. It was absolutely wonderful to see.

The government is rolling out a very important program commenced by the previous government. The Anzac Centenary Local Grants Program is all about recognising the incredible commitment the communities throughout my electorate and, of course, around the nation are making to commemorating the Centenary of Anzac, and $125,000 has been made available to each federal electorate to help fund various commemorative programs. I particularly want to commend and pay tribute to Senator Hon. Michael Ronaldson, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC and Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, who increased the amount in each electorate by some $25,000. I must say he is doing an incredible job representing our government at this very important time.

I thought I would talk about a couple of the projects which have already been announced. Bannockburn Primary School has been awarded some $3,000, and that will help to enhance their remembrance garden. It is wonderful. I went along when we announced the grant with the children of Bannockburn Primary School. It is actually a school I am a great supporter of. It is wonderful to see that a new primary school is being delivered by the Victorian government. I am fighting very hard to make sure they get their secondary school too, but it is really fantastic to see that school's dedication to commemorating the Centenary of Anzac through a really wonderful project.

Another project we have announced is in Apollo Bay. Some $2,000 has gone to Apollo Bay Arts Incorporated for a literature reading event which has already been held, called Warm Winter Words. Again it commemorates 100 years since the outbreak of the First World War by exploring the Anzac Centenary and its connections with Indigenous Australians. At that event the guest speakers included Professor Mick Dodson, Bruce Elder and Bruce Pascoe. It was wonderful to be able to recognise and support that important event.

Just a couple of weeks ago I went along to Belmont Fire Brigade. Belmont Fire Brigade have received some $3,200 to support a project paying tribute to nine members of the brigade who fought in World War I. It was absolutely wonderful. There were, of course, both volunteers there and full-time firefighters. How much focus and how much pride they had in celebrating the achievements of previous members of the brigade who had so proudly represented them in the First World War. It was really a very special time for me, I have to say.
There are many other wonderful applications that have been made and they will be rolled out over the next few months. I thought I would just mention some of the great projects that are before us at the moment. The Ceres community organisation is looking to restore its First World War memorial gates. Belmont Primary School has applied for funding to build a special commemorative area and to install a new flagpole. The Colac RSL sub-branch is hoping to restore its war memorial site at Cressy Recreation Reserve, including a new flagpole. The money will greatly assist with upgrades to the site, including recording the details of soldiers from both world wars.

The Torquay RSL has been working incredibly hard—another great project—to construct a memorial garden at the Torquay Bowls Club. Recently that has been upgraded. It was a great job, I have to say, by the member for South Barwon in delivering a commitment to see a major upgrade of the Torquay Bowls Club, which is now home to the Torquay RSL. So that is a wonderful project.

In another fantastic project, the Military Historical Society of Geelong does incredible military re-enactments and they are looking to do a very large scale event next year. Christian College is also looking to invest in a remembrance garden. Then there is the Torquay and District Historical Society, and I want to say something about the Torquay Anzac Day service. It is an incredible service. Some 15,000 people gather at Point Danger on the cliffs at Torquay. The Torquay community and RSL do an incredible job holding a very moving service, as do so many of the other RSLs across Corangamite. They are looking to install a new plaque to commemorate local World War I diggers at Point Danger.

There are other projects by the Lorne RSL. Surf Coast Shire are looking to create a Winchelsea walk, and this particular walk is very significant. It will honour 64 Victoria Cross recipients from World War I. The first recipient was, of course, Albert Jacka, who was born in Winchelsea. That too is a wonderful project and there are some other fantastic projects from the Golden Plains Shire and the Borough of Queenscliffe. The light and sound production service there needs some assistance.

This is just an array of the projects that we are hoping to fund as part of our local commemorative grants program. In relation to Queenscliffe, I want to recognise a commitment from the Liberal candidate for Bellarine, Ron Nelson, who just yesterday announced a new visitors hub and café and other facilities at the Ocean View car park, where the Anzac Day service is held. That will provide power and really provide a lot more facilities for that very important service overlooking the back beach of Queenscliffe and overlooking the rip—a very important part of Queenscliffe's history. So that was a great commitment, part of a $3.6 million commitment for the Queenscliffe community made yesterday, as I say, by Ron Nelson.

At this time I want to take the opportunity to thank the members of the Anzac Centenary Local Grants Program electorate committee for Corangamite: Graham Rawlins, Councillor Bob Merriman and Keith Hankin. The committee has worked with me to assess these applications. They have done a wonderful job. It is very much appreciated. They have applied great due diligence and I really do want to express my thanks for their work. And very briefly, I would like to congratulate Keith and his wife, Elaine, who have just celebrated 65 years of marriage.
Mrs ELLIOT (Richmond) (10:45): I am very pleased to be speaking on this Australian War Memorial Amendment Bill 2014 today. I note that previous speakers also acknowledge the remarkable role of the War Memorial, and also, quite rightly, the many commemorations around the country that have occurred and are occurring with the Centenary of Anzac. I too will be touching on many of those events in my electorate.

It is certainly the case that the War Memorial here in Canberra, in our nation's capital, commemorates the service and sacrifice of Australian service men and women who have died in the wars and conflicts in which Australia has participated. It is, indeed, a cultural institution of great international standing. It is of huge significance to Australians. The primary mission of the War Memorial is to assist Australians to remember, interpret and understand the Australian experience of war and its enduring impact upon our society.

In reference to this bill specifically—as we have heard the previous speakers say—it amends the Australian War Memorial Act to prohibit the levying of entry or parking fees at the memorial premises in Campbell, where it is located. This is a very important initiative that I support.

The Australian War Memorial was officially opened on Remembrance Day, 11 November 1941, by the then Governor-General, Lord Gowrie, himself a former soldier whose honours included the Victoria Cross. As we know, the War Memorial is a magnificent institution. It has three very distinct sections. The shrine, which is a commemorative area, includes the Hall of Memory and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. It is an amazing premises. It is very moving when you are in there and see the whole shrine and the entire area.

It also has other galleries which consist of the museum and the research centre. We have heard some previous speakers talk about some of the wonderful upgrades to those particular areas. There is also an outdoor sculpture garden. These are very distinct areas that provide great information and wonderful areas of reflection for visitors. Indeed, this amazing military museum is widely regarded as one of the most significant memorials of its type in the world, which we should be all be very proud of.

During times of reflection on war, the Australian War Memorial is quite rightly the nation's central focus. But it is only part of a much wider appreciation displayed right around the country for those brave men and women who served our nation. That appreciation can be seen in towns and other countries, particularly on Anzac Day and Remembrance Day.

The Anzac Centenary is also very significant. It is a milestone of very special significance to all Australians and one that will be recognised and commemorated around the nation. It is the centenary of Australia's involvement in the First World War. The Anzac Centenary aims to encourage all Australians to reflect upon and learn more about Australia's military history and its impacts upon our nation and our communities and families. During the Anzac Centenary, we will remember not only the original Anzacs who served at Gallipoli; we will commemorate more than a century of service by Australian service men and women. The Anzac Centenary program encompasses all wars, conflicts and peacekeeping operations in which Australians have been involved. The program aims to give all Australians the
opportunity to honour the service and sacrifice of those who served our country, including the more than 102,000 who have made the supreme sacrifice.

As we have heard previous speakers say today, it was the previous Labor government that established the Anzac Centenary Advisory Board in October 2011 to provide strategic advice and recommendations on the development of a program of commemorative activities for the Anzac Centenary.

An initiative from this was the undertaking to insist on and encourage communities right across the nation through the Anzac Centenary Local Grants Program to carry out their own Anzac Centenary projects. These projects were to commemorate the service and sacrifice of Australian service men and women in the First World War. These particular grants are really a fantastic initiative. I note also from previous speakers today the very strong bipartisanship from the current government and all members in terms of this wonderful program in which we are seeing $125,000 being allocated per electorate for these very important commemorations—commemorations that will reflect each electorate's local communities and the different ways that they wish to commemorate this.

I would like to refer to some of the projects and the committee and the individuals involved in my electorate of Richmond. I had initially contacted the local RSLs asking their organisations to of course play a very vital role on the Richmond electorate committee for the Anzac Centenary Local Grants Program. The response was immediate and very enthusiastic. The committee, of course, once appointed, met straightaway to begin the consultation process with their communities and to develop an approach to commemorate the centenary which best represented their communities' views.

The electorate committee of Richmond was chaired by Dr John Griffin, Secretary of the Tweed Heads and Coolangatta RSL Sub-Branch. I would like to particularly thank and acknowledge the wonderful work of Dr John not just in the Tweed Heads RSL but particularly on this committee. It was outstanding working with the RSLs and other community groups as well. Of course, many applications were received from a whole range of very diverse organisations—schools, RSL organisations, RSL care centres, theatre groups, local artists. It was fantastic to see the diversity.

The RSLs became the focal point to assist community groups with their applications and in the promotion of the program. This was also provided by local councils and schools through their newsletters and of course also by the local media. All these organisations and individuals called on to assist did so with great enthusiasm, which is a real testament to their support of what is a very worthy initiative.

I would like to mention some of the wonderful applications and projects the Richmond committee have put forward for consideration, some of which have been announced and some not announced yet. They are a great array and it really shows the diversity of projects and ideas that they have. First of all is the Byron Bay RSL Sub-Branch which, with the support of the local community, put forward their project to refurbish the existing First World War Memorial Gates and build a sheltered cenotaph for ex-service personnel, veterans and local communities to commemorate Anzac Day. There have been extremely generous offers of in-kind support and donations for the project. This demonstrates the high level of support for the project right throughout the local community.
A similar project is the upgrade of the war memorial at Cudgen Public School. Indeed, Cudgen school has a very long and proud association with the Anzac ceremonies and the local community. They have worked very closely with the Kingscliff RSL over the years with respect to this particular project. It has been wonderful to see attendance at this memorial service increase significantly over the years, so they now require a larger and, of course, more focused facility.

The Mullumbimby RSL has put together a proposal for a wonderful art exhibition which engages World War I descendants and local schoolchildren. A local ceramics artist will conduct the workshops and the artwork will be displayed locally for all of the community to enjoy. So it is a great project that will be really hands-on and involve a lot of locals.

Another wonderful initiative of the Mullumbimby community is the application made by the Drill Hall Theatre Company. The Drill Hall itself, it is interesting to note, may possibly be one of the only remaining buildings in the Richmond electorate to have been built for the training of soldiers for World War I. The Drill Hall Theatre Company is commissioning a play called The Signaller, which is about a young soldier who enlists in the Australian Light Horse just before meeting and falling in love with his young wife. The play will provide nine evening performances for the general public and four matinee performances for the elderly and also for schoolchildren. Again, it is another wonderful and very different initiative but it is great to see that happening.

The Murwillumbah RSL have undertaken to compile a Tweed roll of honour for World War I. The roll of honour will consist of those who originated from the Tweed and served with the AIF in World War I. This project will be displayed for the community to view at local service clubs, shopping malls and local shire offices. It is wonderful to have that roll of honour in such an array of different places.

I would also like to comment on the Tweed Heads and Coolangatta RSL and their proposal, which is a very worthy project of quite grand proportions. Their proposal is to re-enact the Gallipoli landing at Jack Evans boat harbour in Tweed Heads. I am very enthusiastic about this project. It is very exciting and has a huge amount of local support. It is a very large undertaking. When we were first talking about this project and word spread about it, early predictions were that more than 10,000 people would be likely to attend. They already have huge numbers at the dawn services. Now some people are saying that perhaps up to 20,000 will be involved because of the size, scale and location, and the interest that people have in attending to commemorate and remember.

The project was conceived to portray the Anzacs by re-enacting the Gallipoli landing, preceding the dawn service, using this wonderful boat harbour at Tweed Heads. It will be a significant event and it has support from a wide range of groups in the community—the local RSL, the surf clubs, all the local clubs, the council and local police from both sides of the border. New South Wales and Queensland police will assist with traffic management on the day. The project is also looking to have a live video feed of the event strategically placed so all those in attendance will be able to properly view the occasion. This reflects the fact that they are expecting such a large number of people and they do not want anyone to miss out on the great occasion. They want a live video feed on a number of screens around the boat harbour.
Congratulations to them and to all the applications that were put together. I think it shows the great array of different and wonderful ideas they have to commemorate the Centenary of Anzac. They are all very significant events for the electorate, as I am sure they will be in all electorates throughout the country. Next year at a variety of times, communities will gather to remember the sacrifices of those who served and died in wars and conflicts. Indeed, there are lots of other wonderful events throughout my community as I am sure there will be in other electorates, with lots of RSLs and groups looking at organising events. All of these ceremonies with their symbols of commemoration will help us remember the sacrifices that have been made.

These events reflect the permanent work that we see at the War Memorial, and the important role the War Memorial plays. It is often a highlight for schoolchildren from my electorate when they visit Canberra and the many other people from my electorate who visit here. It is absolutely one of their highlights. Quite rightly, the War Memorial is regarded as a special and unique place. The exhibitions in the memorial's galleries take advantage of the exceptional and diverse national collection to deliver some very interesting interactive visitor experiences that are engaging, informative and educational. What is also important is the commemorative focus. The memorial provides a very personal link and an emotive experience for those who served the nation in times of war. It is important for families and descendants to be able to find out information and to have the time for reflection.

I, like others, have been pleased to speak about the wonderful benefits the War Memorial brings to our nation. I support the Australian War Memorial Amendment Bill 2014. It amends the Australian War Memorial Act to prohibit the levying of entry or parking fees at the War Memorial premises. In conclusion, I commend this bill to the House, as we continue to recognise the role that the War Memorial plays within our community and congratulate them for the extensions and improvements to it. I particularly note around the country all those individuals and organisations involved with the ongoing services to commemorate all those who served in defence of our nation.

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (10:58): For both sides of this chamber to speak about our famous War Memorial is a great opportunity and one that is rarely afforded to us. TripAdvisor ranks the War Memorial as No. 17 in the top 20 tourist attractions in the world, narrowly edging out the Big Banana in Coffs Harbour and the wave pool in my colleague's electorate in Western Sydney! This is a magnificent place to visit. I have been visiting World War II and World War I battle scenes and cemeteries for a long time but had not actually gone to the War Memorial as a child. A million Australians and foreign tourists pass through the War Memorial every year, and 200,000 students—but that is not every Australian student. It should be the goal of this place to make sure that every young Australian gets to see the Australian War Memorial.

While this bill, the Australian War Memorial Amendment Bill 2014, is about ensuring that charges are never paid to walk through those hallowed doors or to park there, I do not for a moment think that, however bad we have thought the previous six years of Labor government were, they ever would have fallen to charging for the War Memorial. I acknowledge now that putting it in legislation is a smart move, but I do not for one moment doubt that both sides of this chamber respect the Australian War Memorial for the wonderful job it does, both in commemorating those 102,000 Australians who have given their lives for the democracy and
freedoms that we enjoy, and in telling their stories. Many of us as Australian families—and I would count mine among them—do not actually have veterans who served overseas, so those stories were not passed through to me directly. So it is so vital. I was a 10-year-old in the 1970s, when turning up to Anzac Day parades was not only optional but probably undesirable. That turned around, and Australians realised what we were missing out on and what we potentially could lose as we saw our veterans becoming older each year. Australia seized that opportunity, and we have successfully grasped it. We have now continued that connection to those who served in the two great wars and before.

What many people do not realise is that the War Memorial covers all of Australia's engagements, right back to 19th century colonial engagements in Africa. It goes all the way through to, obviously, Iraq and Afghanistan and, most importantly, also where Australia's service is increasingly becoming world renowned, and that is in peacekeeping missions. Australia deployed in over a dozen locations around the world in the last 10 years. Peacekeeping missions are just as important. Peace building and peacekeeping with our United Nations partners is increasingly the new order. We can stabilise parts of the world that otherwise would descend into war by prompt responses from an alliance of nations, often those that are most closely bound to it. We need to find local and regional solutions to these challenges. It is not up to the great powers and the advanced economies to be stepping into every internecine disagreement that we find in the far corners of continents often far from our own.

So Australia does a great job, but I would like to take this opportunity that I have to mention one great omission, and that is that since the end of World War II we have not recognised, in the form of a simple medal, those people who gave their lives for our country. It was cancelled straight after World War II. It was known as the Mothers' and Widows' Badge, and I concede that it was not the best conceived plan at a time when Australia really had financial problems postwar. Sending out a mothers medal by sending a letter in the mail saying, 'Please pick it up at the post office,' was simply not good enough. We can do far better than that. The leading democratic nations whom we would call partners and allies have an arrangement where the next of kin are recognised. The people who, on service papers, are identified as next of kin deserve, I think, no less than a palpable physical token of our absolute appreciation for someone who makes the ultimate sacrifice serving overseas. We should be doing what Canada, the US in the form of their Purple Heart, the UK, many European countries and even New Zealand do. I believe that that is—and if it is not it should be—coalition policy. The cost would be infinitesimal. It does not add to the complexity of the military medal system, because it is a medal to the next of kin; it does not qualify as a military medal.

When we take this concept one step further—and I made my references to peacekeeping—perhaps someone in Australia who gives their life in the service of our nation in a peacekeeping role deserves not the same medal but a similar medal, because that sacrifice, for those parents, is no less. If you give your life serving an Australian NGO, for instance, in Africa, in a highly unstable location where there could be either terrorist activity or intertribal disputes where our aid workers are caught up and ultimately also pay with their lives, then I think that we should recognise that in a formal way. The first question that one would be asked is: who should be eligible? That is quite simple. There is the Humanitarian Overseas
Service Medal, the HOSM, which clearly identifies areas of service that are supported by the Australian government. That lists right back for many decades, clearly identifying the periods and the organisations that are eligible. If an Australian serves in a way that is eligible for the Humanitarian Overseas Service Medal, I think they should, if they make the ultimate sacrifice, be formally recognised. It is a great omission in our awards, and I think it is one that the current government could examine.

In conclusion, we are fixing another problem today. I know that those visiting the War Memorial for years and decades to come will go back to Hansard and re-read the debate that we are having today about guaranteeing free entry, because there is no more important story—not only the commemoration of service but hearing the stories about people who were just like us. They came from families just like ours. As we travel around Australia, many of us who live in the cities often forget the extraordinary price in numbers that regional parts of Australia paid. You can visit a town like Scone or Orange or other smaller regional cities in Queensland and see enormous numbers of names—mostly of young men but also women who served overseas and gave their lives. To those country towns that staffed and filled the rank and file of our military in those two wars, I think we who live in the city and now enjoy the dividends of their service should be eternally grateful.

Ms SCOTT (Lindsay) (11:05): I rise today in support of the Australian War Memorial Amendment Bill 2014. It has long been recognised that the Australian War Memorial is the nation's home of commemoration, reflection and remembrance. Charles Bean wrote in his immortal words in 1948:

Here is their spirit, in the heart of the land they loved; and here we guard the record which they themselves made.

Charles Bean could not have said it any better. The War Memorial stands today as a tribute to those who served, their friends and the families of all the service men and women—those that fell and those that came home—but, most importantly as well, to all Australians for all time. It is right for us as a nation to recognise their loss and this enduring legacy. It is for this reason that the War Memorial must be a place that all Australians are able to access free of charge, to be able to pay their respects and to honour the fallen. But it is also important to remember the legacy and to teach the foundations of our country to our children and our children's children, and for all Australians to acknowledge the war commitments of our predecessors.

As we enter into a period of remembrance and reflection like never before—as we enter the year of the 100th anniversary of the Great War, the Centenary of Anzac and the 70th anniversary of World War II, taking place in 2015 and in 2018 and on significant dates in between—I would like to take this opportunity to place on the record my sincerest gratitude to all our Australian Defence Force personnel, men and women, both past and present, and those that are playing an important role in shaping our nation's rich history.

In 1915, recruiting committees were formed in nearly every town throughout Australia. In the central west of New South Wales a movement began which became known as the Gilgandra snowball. Under the leadership of WT 'Captain Bill' Hitchen, 20 or so men marched off to Sydney. Gathering other recruits along the way, they numbered about 300 by the time they reached Sydney. This was known as the Coo-ee March. The Coo-ee March marched right through my electorate of Lindsay. Their example was soon followed by other
marches from right around New South Wales and Queensland: the Waratahs, Kangaroos, Wallabies, Dungarees, Men from Snowy River, Kurrajongs, Kookaburras, Central West Boomerangs and North Coast Boomerangs. They all relied on the support of the communities they passed through, which was often very enthusiastic. The total number of men involved was only 1,500, but the marches attracted wide publicity and may have encouraged fundraising and enlistment more generally. One commemoration of the Centenary of Anzac is a re-enactment of the Coo-ee March and it is expected to arrive in the seat of Lindsay on or around 8 November 2015. These ex-servicemen will have spent 25 days walking from Gilgandra to Penrith and eventually on to Sydney in time for Remembrance Day.

If we are to pass on to future generations the story of the Anzacs who served at Gallipoli and the campaigns over a century of service, we must ensure that these stories are available at no cost. This is particularly important for the hundreds and hundreds of thousands of school students that come to the memorial as part of their school trips to Canberra each and every year.

I have spoken to the two RSL clubs that are within the seat of Lindsay. They have both provided statements which I would like to read to the House. From the City of Penrith RSL Sub-Branch, the president, Mick McConnell, wrote:

The AWM—
the Australian War Memorial—
is to remind the community that it was built on the blood of our nation and you cannot put a price on that.
It is a monument to our Australian (military) history and it displays a myriad of records and all types of memorabilia for community members to view and reflect on our history from the beginning of our nation.

Australians who went to war helped to provide us with a free world.
The collection of records, mementos, collectables and relics that are placed on display is paramount to all members of the community so they can pass on—
their legacy—
to … other family members—
and—
the memories they gained from their experience.
People travelling from all regions of Australia who have already paid for travel and accommodation do not deserve to pay for parking or entry into the AWM, particularly those who wish to have access to the Research Centre where they can research their family's military history.
It is a place where it provides first hand education for Australian school students and a place—
to—
enhance the development of teachers.
The AWM holds an abundance of unreplaceable artefacts, which is unique to this country, and they belong to all Australians, the tax payers of this nation.
Every family has a history of some member of their family having served our country or have lost their lives defending it.
The AWM is … like a Mecca to our Australian people where it becomes a central location to pay homage to our fallen.
When commemoratives services and parades are conducted on the grounds, politicians and guests do not pay for parking, so why should members of the community, the tax payer, attending these events have to pay?

The new parking arrangements that were introduced on 1st July 2014 seem appropriate but 4 hours limit can be a restriction to those enthusiastic visitors.

The Government of the day has always provided funding, but maybe the Members of Council could look at—

other ways of funding the Australian War Memorial. His recommendations include:

… to encourage more organisations to become Friends of the Memorial,
… perhaps increase the membership fee to Friends of the Memorial,
… maybe enhance the content of the AWM shop,
… entice more organisations to place advertisements into the magazine (quarterly issues I think),
… actively seek more funds and regular donations by way of additional sponsorship from large business corporations, mining corporations, RSL Clubs and the like …

Finally, he recommends:

… maybe have a government policy introduced that all clubs and registered organisations donate a small % of poker machine profits.

I would like to thank Mick McConnell from the Penrith RSL for his contributions.

I also had feedback from Tony Fryer, the honorary secretary of the St Marys RSL Sub-Branch. He says: ‘I believe that the members of the St Marys ESOs, St Marys Outpost of the Vietnam Veterans Association and St Marys RSL Sub-Branch fully support the maintenance of free access to parking at the Australian War Memorial and free entry to the Australian War Memorial so that ESO members and the general public alike can continue to be exposed to the reality of Australia's past conflicts and Australia's rich military history and culture and to truly understand the price paid by our forebears in maintaining the freedoms that all Australians enjoy today.’ I would like to thank Tony also for his contribution.

As you can see from the service men and women in the RSL clubs that I represent in Lindsay, it goes without saying: to keep the War Memorial free to all Australians is absolutely paramount. I would like to thank my RSL clubs for their support. I would like to also thank my RSL clubs for the work that they are doing to have a wonderful dawn service for Anzac Day. Both Penrith and St Marys do phenomenal jobs. In that vein, I would like to commend the bill to the House.

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (11:14): There are some things in our lives that should be sacrosanct. Unconditional love for your children and love for your country are two that spring to mind. The ability to pay your respects to those who so loved their country that they gave their lives in defence of it should be another. It is well known that the idea of the Australian War Memorial came from Australia's official war correspondent and official World War I historian the great Charles Bean one night while talking with others after days of inspecting the battlefields of Pozieres in August 1916. His confidant, AW Bazley, would later say:

I cannot recall the actual conversations today I do remember that on a number of occasions he talked about what he had in his mind concerning some future Australian war memorial museum.
Bean was among those who landed at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915 and was well aware of the human sacrifice men were making for their country. To him it seemed fitting that such sacrifice was properly and respectfully memorialised.

Bean's vision for a memorial was given life by another who landed at Gallipoli that fateful and nation-defining day, Captain John Treloar. In 1917, Treloar was appointed head of the Australian War Records Section in London and it is the work of his team that provides the Australian War Memorial with so many of the relics from World War I that give life to the collection today. With the aid of his team and orders given to soldiers to do their own collecting for the envisaged war museum, 25,000 pieces were collected and formed the backbone of the first collection of the Australian War Memorial.

Like the design of Canberra itself, a competition was run for the design of the Australian War Memorial in 1927. However, no single entry was able to fulfil Bean's vision for the memorial, which he stated as:

… on some hill-top-still beautiful, gleaming white and silent, a building of three parts, a centre and two wings. The centre will hold the great national relics of the A.I.F. One wing will be a gallery—holding the pictures that our artists painted and drew actually on the scene and amongst the events themselves. The other wing will be a library to contain the written official records of every unit.

Two designers were asked to submit a joint entry and it is this design by Emil Sodersteen and Jon Crust that was constructed and opened in 1941. Prior to the opening of the memorial building, the collection was displayed first in Melbourne from 1923 to 1925 and then in Sydney until 1935. The memorial building was expanded with the addition of the wings in 1971 to house the growing collection. Prior to this, some of the memorial's collection had to be sold due to space constraints. The most recent update is a new World War I gallery, which was only opened last night, in time for the Centenary of ANZAC. Through all these many years, the Australian War Memorial has been open at no charge to all those who wish to come and pay their respects to our country's fallen. This bill, the Australian War Memorial Amendment Bill 2014, ensures entrance and access to the Australian War Memorial will always remain free.

Since 1860, from the Maori Wars in New Zealand through to current engagements, 102,787 Australian men and women have given their lives in defence of our country. Among them are members of my own family. There are 102,787 reasons the Australian War Memorial should be free forever for everyday Australians to go and pay their respects to the people whose blood gave us the country we have today. There are 102,787 reasons why this government believes it is important enough for parliament to legislate free access to the Australian War Memorial and not just leave it to fate. This is a matter close to my heart. My family has a long history of service to our nation through the ADF and its predecessors, and I understand their desire to serve.

I have heard people say that the Australian War Memorial glorifies war. I would respectfully say to those people that they have never visited the Australian War Memorial and sat by the Pool of Reflection on a sunny morning, or attended the extraordinarily moving Last Post service conducted each evening. The Australian War Memorial does not glorify war. It remembers and recognises the struggles we have faced as a nation and those brave men and women who gave their lives for our freedom. And I do not believe that a child visiting this hallowed place is any more likely to grow up to become a soldier than anyone else. A visit
reminds them that the privileges they enjoy in their lives lie at the feet of those who have gone before them and those who had the courage to stand up for what is right.

A schoolchild visiting the Australian War Memorial as part of their year 7 Canberra trip should not have to pay to enter what is a special place. As well as the museum and war records wings, the Australian War Memorial contains the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The remains of this Australian soldier, killed on the Western Front, were interred in the Hall of Memory in 1933 to serve as a symbol of the sacrifice made by all who served and died—a man that Prime Minister Keating referred to in his 1993 eulogy as 'all of them' and 'one of us'.

I believe that visiting the Australian War Memorial gives children a greater sense of the world around them and emphasises just how fortunate we really are. Yes, 102,787 lives are a lot for such a small nation, but when compared to other countries we are fortunate. We are indeed fortunate that evil leaders like Pol Pot, Hitler, Stalin and Idi Amin have never held power in our country. We are fortunate that our allies share our beliefs and our ambitions not only for our countries but for the whole world. And we are fortunate that we have men and women who choose of their own free will to don the uniform of the Australian Defence Force. We should all be grateful to every man and woman who dons the uniform. I am grateful to their families who support them. And I am grateful that, because of this bill, honouring our fallen heroes will remain the right of every Australian until the end of time.

I finish with a further quote from Mr Keating about just what the unknown soldier and all those honoured by our War Memorial represent:

We have gained a legend: a story of bravery and sacrifice and, with it, a deeper faith in ourselves and our democracy, and a deeper understanding of what it means to be Australian.

It is not too much to hope, therefore, that this Unknown Australian Soldier might continue to serve his country—he might enshrine a nation's love of peace and remind us that in the sacrifice of the men and women whose names are recorded here there is faith enough for all of us.

I commend this bill to the House and trust there is not one person in this House or the Senate who will vote against it.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Whiteley): I thank the member for her contribution. The debate has been very interesting and respectful, and I am sad in one sense that I have not been able to contribute today because I have been sitting in the chair for the roster. I also take the opportunity to encourage everybody to visit the new World War I gallery. I note that the member for Wills is in the chamber; both he and I were there last night at the invitation of the War Memorial. It is absolutely fantastic and I encourage all members to visit. Given that the minister responsible for this bill is not in the chamber to sum up, I am going to move to suspend the Federation Chamber.

Sitting suspended from 11:24 to 11:28

Mr TONY SMITH (Casey) (11:28): I join in speaking on the Australian War Memorial Amendment Bill 2014 and supporting the very important measures in it to ensure that there are no parking fees at the War Memorial. I want to very briefly associate myself with the remarks of members on this side who have spoken on this bill.

The War Memorial is one of Australia’s foremost institutions. It has the names of 102,000 Australians who made the ultimate sacrifice. My friend and colleague the minister and I have spoken about this in the Centenary of Anzac. The memorial bears the names that are on all the
cenotaphs in all the local towns in my electorate down in the Yarra Valley, and in the towns of the minister's electorate in Queensland. Over these four years it is going to be a focus like never before, with school groups going to the War Memorial and looking up the names that they have seen on their local honour boards. This bill is an important bill. It is one that was foreshadowed some years back by our Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Senator Ronaldson, when he was the opposition spokesman—he carried it through in a clear policy prior to the last election. It has my strong support that we are dealing with that today.

Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Assistant Minister for Defence) (11:30): Let me thank all members of the House that have made contributions here this morning. I thank the member for Ryan and the member for Casey especially for their contributions not just to the debate but also to our service men and women and our veterans throughout not just their electorates but the country.

The Australian War Memorial Amendment Bill gives effect to the government's election commitment to prohibit the imposition of parking and entry fees at the Australian War Memorial. Every year, close on to a million Australians visit the memorial to pay their respects to the fallen and to visit the world-class museum. As I say to all guests that come here internationally, be they presidents, prime ministers, foreign dignitaries or diplomats, you will never understand Australia and its people unless you have been to the cauldron itself—the Australian War Memorial. At the memorial, visitors can see and experience the Roll of Honour, the Hall of Valour, the dioramas and the Hall of Memory containing the Tomb of the Unknown Australian Soldier.

The bill amends the Australian War Memorial Act 1980 to ensure that entry to and parking at the memorial remain free so that everyone has access to a world-class shrine, a museum and an archive that commemorates and remembers the unique Australian military service that has so defined the nation.

I commend the bill to the House.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Ordered that this bill be reported to the House without amendment.

CONDOLENCES

Withers, Rt Hon. Reginald (Reg) Greive

Debate resumed on the motion:

That the House record its deep regret at the death on 15 November 2014 of the Right Honourable Reginald Greive Withers, former Senator for Western Australia and Minister, place on record its appreciation of his long and meritorious public service, and tender its profound sympathy to his family in their bereavement—

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (11:32): Condolence motions are times of sadness, but they also allow us to bring back, to the extent we can, positive memories about the person about whom we speak. So it is with Reg Withers, former minister and leader of the Senate. I did not know him well but, as a young staffer to Senator Sir John Carrick, I recall Reg Withers as one of the great characters of the Whitlam-Fraser years. To me he was larger than life. Indeed, for a newcomer to Old Parliament House, his presence was felt throughout the corridors of the
Senate. Back then, in the much closer confines and limited space in which we operated, as Senate leader Senator Withers ruled with a strong hand. They were difficult days which saw the sacking of Gough Whitlam and the election of the Fraser government, and, while I am certain those opposite will disagree, his actions as leader of the Senate during those heady days were supported by the electorate a few short months later.

His take-no-prisoners attitude during his time as Senate leader earned him the nickname 'the Toecutter'—which his son Simon tells us Reg always found a little bit odd, but I am sure he enjoyed the name. However, as tough as his reputation was, there was always a sense of humour. Reg Withers was one of a number of former servicemen from World War II who turned to politics and with that background brought a blunt realism to this parliament. Peter Shack's comments in *The Australian* a few days ago captured his essence. Just one piece of sage advice the elder statesman gave to the then new member for Tangney was: 'Don't trust anyone, not even me.' Another piece of wisdom, this time for ministers, was: 'Too many people believe that in every situation something must be done. Not true. A good nothing is better than a bad something. Save us please from the nonsense that "we must appear to be doing something".' His son Simon said Reg was just interested in getting the sensible thing done.

Reg cut his teeth in politics in local council with a stint on the Bunbury municipal council before being called to fill a Senate vacancy following the death of Senator Sir Shane Paltridge. He was the son of a trade unionist turned ALP MP but, like his siblings, became a staunch Liberal—we can only imagine those Christmas gatherings!

While he will be best remembered as the leader of the Senate during the final days of the Whitlam government, he would want us to recall the fact that he was, first and foremost, a family man who devoted himself to the service of his country because of his family. Service to Australia ran deep in him as a senator but also as a member of the Royal Australian Navy during World War II. I believe his desire to serve his country in the best way he saw fit was pivotal to his ability to hold a fractious Senate team together while it was under great duress in 1975.

Upon leaving the Senate, Reg Withers continued his service to his community with a successful and visionary tenure as the Lord Mayor of Perth. His foresight in building underground rail services and more apartments in Perth has been credited as the impetus for Perth becoming a revitalised city. He was a delegate for the monarchists at the 1998 Constitutional Convention, continuing his extraordinary history of service to his fellow Australians.

Reg and his wife, Shirley, were married for 61 years. By any measure, that is a magnificent achievement. They had three children and four grandchildren, who will obviously miss their father and grandfather very much. I wish to pass on to Reg's family my heartfelt condolences for their loss. While he lived to 90, the loss of a loved one is never easy to reconcile. Reg Withers leaves us with a record of service but, importantly, with a raft of memories of a time when politics thrived on the strength of character and good humour of a generation of great Australians who served their country in war and in this parliament. Senator Reg Withers was and remains a great Australian.

Ms MacTIERNAN (Perth) (11:37): As the member for Perth I think it is most appropriate that I do recognise the passing of a former Lord Mayor of Perth—a lord mayor under whom I
served when I was on the Perth City Council. I entered Perth City Council in 1988, and Reg was elected as lord mayor in 1991. I will be honest: I was part of a generation of people from Western Australia that very much saw Reg as something of an antichrist because of the role that he had played in bringing down the Whitlam government and, in our view, contravening the conventions of guaranteeing supply. Notwithstanding that, when Reg and I came to work together on the Perth City Council, we had a very cordial relationship. We were both able to put the party politics aside. I found Reg was always very straightforward to deal with, and, as Peter Walsh has gone on the record as saying, whilst Reg might have been very cynical, he was never hypocritical. He was always someone I found to be very much a straight shooter.

I do note some of the commentary about Reg's vision for the city. I always remember Reg giving me a book he had just read, *Edge City*, about American cities, which seemed to have been written by someone who was saying that the future of the inner-city areas was over and that, in the future, there would be massive rejuvenation or expansion out on the edges of cities, with Walmarts moving out to the edge of cities—that was where people were moving; that was where jobs were moving—and that the inner city was dead. Whether Reg was fascinated by this book because he thought that was inevitable or because he thought that was a trend that we should resist was never entirely clear to me. Nevertheless, it was certainly an interesting period in the history of the city of Perth. In my second reincarnation as a local government person as mayor of Vincent, I worked very closely with his son, Simon, who was the mayor of the adjoining tiny town of Cambridge. We forged, I think, a very good working relationship on a number of issues, so it has been interesting to work closely with two generations of this family. I pass on my condolences to Shirley, who I met many times during her time as the lady mayoress and who was always a very gracious person, and to Simon and all of the family.

*The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Porter)*: I understand it is the wish of honourable members to signify at this stage their respect and sympathy by rising in their places.

*Honourable members having stood in their places—*

*Ms MARINO (Forrest—Government Whip) (11:40)*: I move:

That further proceedings be conducted in the House.

Question agreed to.

*Goss, Hon. Wayne*

*Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (11:41)*: When I was a young man growing up in the progressive political movement in the 1980s, people from my home state of New South Wales used to make fun of Queensland and Queenslanders. The joke used to be that, when you crossed the Tweed River into Queensland, you had to wind back your watch 10 years. Of course there was an element of parochialism in such remarks; people from New South Wales and Queensland have always been friendly rivals, and that age-old rivalry is played out each year in State of Origin matches. But, for most of the 1970s and 1970s, there was also an element of truth to the charge that there was something wrong in Queensland. People knew that, while the weather was fantastic up north, the political atmospherics were, to be generous, somewhat cloudy.

Wayne Goss changed all that. This mild-mannered lawyer, politicised by the dismissal of Gough Whitlam in 1975, was a genuine hero. Although he was in office for only six years,
Wayne Goss brought fundamental change to Queensland—change that dragged the state out of the political dark ages and into the light.

Let’s consider Queensland in the 1970s. It was run by a right-wing populist. Joh Bjelke-Petersen was a reactionary who derided education. He refused to introduce a prep year for Queensland schools, meaning that Queenslanders were a year behind children in southern states when they finished school. It was a corrupt state. Police were on the take. Conservative politicians collected donations in brown paper bags. It was a police state. Protests on anything from workers’ rights to the right of people to protest were met with truncheons. It was a morally bankrupt state. A South African rugby union team chosen on racial grounds was welcome while anti-apartheid protesters were not.

Wayne Goss was there that day in 1971 when police tore into anti-apartheid protesters with batons. Like hundreds of thousands of Queenslanders, he grew up living in the shadow of an arrogant government with no respect for civil rights. As a young lawyer he would have heard National Party politicians swearing blind that there were no illegal casinos in Brisbane, even though he could see such establishments openly operating. He also watched as the National Party entrenched its power with a political gerrymander.

Part of the problem was the weakness of the Labor Party of the time. It was run by a small group which was unable to build the political momentum to confront the Bjelke-Petersen regime. But by 1983 the party had shifted after an intervention by then federal Labor leader Bill Hayden. A new group of leaders emerged—a new group of leaders that understood that Labor needed to endorse candidates with broader political appeal. Wayne Goss was one of their first draftees.

He entered parliament in 1983 in the seat of Salisbury and by 1988 Wayne Goss was Leader of the Opposition. One of his first decisions in that role was to hire the then young Kevin Rudd as his chief of staff. Together with Wayne Swan, then Labor’s Queensland party secretary, the trio led Labor to victory in the 1989 election, helped by the fact that the Fitzgerald inquiry had finally laid bare the police and political corruption that had flourished under the coalition.

Goss’s list of achievements in government is impressive. He implemented the findings of the Fitzgerald inquiry, eliminating the gerrymander and creating proper institutions to prevent a re-emergence of police and political corruption. He decriminalised homosexuality. He abolished the much-hated police Special Branch, which the Nationals had used to keep track of political opponents. He ended logging on Fraser Island. He created parliamentary committees, including budget estimates committees, to increase the power of the parliament to keep the executive honest. This was, of course, critical, given the Queensland parliament has no upper house.

Above all, Goss restored pride to Queenslanders. Before Goss, Queensland was the political badlands, a place where dodgy dealings were common and went unnoticed due to a lack of proper institutions. After Goss, Queensland was respectable again. No government can ever completely stamp out corruption and wrongdoing, but Goss did what any government should do: he put in place the proper checks and balances that are part of any well-functioning democracy. This took immense courage and strength.
Wayne Goss was also a dedicated Labor man who entered politics because he wanted to deliver opportunity for all. He knew from his own experience that education is the great enabler. He understood struggle. Wayne Goss grew up in a housing commission home in Inala, in Brisbane's south. He was the oldest of six children and the first of his family to attend university. He learned from his own experience that education and hard work represent the pathway to personal social mobility. Having risen from a housing commission home to the highest office in Queensland, Goss wanted to make sure others would have the same opportunity. That is why he lifted education funding.

While Goss had a soft heart, he also had a hard head. He was a no-nonsense Labor man who knew no amount of opportunity can change a person's life if they do not learn the value of personal responsibility and self-reliance. Once asked by a journalist whether his government was providing enough welfare support for the poor, Goss shot back, 'The best form of welfare you can give a person is a job.' This was why his period in office was marked by careful economic management that aimed to grow the Queensland economy and thereby grow jobs for his fellow Queenslanders.

Wayne was endorsed to contest the safe Labor seat of Oxley in the 1998 federal election. The illness that finally took his life intervened, preventing him from bringing his intellect and leadership to the national stage. In the wake of Wayne's death, there has been some criticism of the fact that tributes to his life have stressed the shortcomings of the Bjelke-Petersen era. Bjelke-Petersen's supporters claim his period in office was not as bad as has been claimed by people reviewing Goss's achievements. I would like to finish today by respectfully rejecting this view. Bjelke-Petersen did oversee a dark period in Queensland history. Anyone who wants to view that era through rose-coloured glasses ought to read the report of the Fitzgerald inquiry. Wayne Goss liberated Queensland from a period of its history which should be remembered for its lack of proper governance. It took great strength and immense integrity. He deserves our gratitude.

These days, entering Queensland is not regarded as a step back in time. Wayne Goss was forward looking and dynamic, and his approach transformed Queensland permanently. His efforts ensured Queensland's natural beauty was harnessed for the benefit of Queensland and the entire nation. In fact, many Australians move there from the southern states, knowing the bright sunshine is matched by a political system that sets a standard for openness and accountability.

In recent years Wayne spent considerable time in Sydney on business. On a number of occasions, he would take me aside and offer advice on issues of the day or more general political analysis. He was always a very intelligent man and humble about his own achievements. His advice was always well considered, thorough and strategic, and I benefited from that advice.

I express my condolences to Wayne's friends, particularly his good friends Kevin Rudd and Wayne Swan. I also express my sincere condolences to his beloved wife and life partner of 32 years, Roisin, and his children, Ryan and Caitlin. Wayne Goss's legacy is extraordinary and I pay tribute to this great Queenslander.
never forgot his roots. Wayne Swan, the member for Lilley and former Deputy Prime
Minister, described him as a leader of 'exceptional quality' and a 'breakthrough' leader—
absolutely true and completely accurate.

He was inspired by Gough Whitlam and his legacy, and he did so many good things for
Queensland: law reform; implementation of improved public administration; overseeing the
implementation of the Fitzgerald inquiry recommendations, delivering tangible and enduring
action across that area; rebuilding the public hospital system, the education system; improving
infrastructure. My good friend David Hamill, the former member for Ipswich and former
transport and education minister in the Goss Labor government, said of Wayne Goss that 'he
restored dignity to the processes of government'. He reformed the electoral system. He ended
the gerrymander, having overcome it in December 1989. I can recall vividly being involved in
campaigns in the 1980s in Ipswich, as one of the campaign workers in David's campaign. I
remember being there with Ross Platz, the campaign director, as we tallied seat after seat after
seat falling in 1989, scarcely believing that we could eventually win. We had enormous faith
and enormous respect for Wayne Goss. We many times in many elections the pain and
anguish of defeat, but it was always Wayne who had that faith, drive, determination, work,
discipline and focus which was required to overcome the gerrymander.

I do pay my condolences to his wife, Roisin, and his children, Caitlin and Ryan, on behalf
of my electorate of Blair.

Wayne Goss was not an arrogant man, as some have said. He was a shy man and I do recall
after he had decided to leave state politics that it was agreed that Wayne would be our
candidate in the federal electorate of Oxley. At that stage Oxley covered most of what is now
Blair. As David Hamill's campaign director I recall travelling around the branches in Ipswich.
When Wayne was introducing himself, it was quite ironic that he was introducing himself to
branch members as a pre-selection candidate in the seat of Oxley, when they knew him very
well because he had been the Labor leader and Premier of Queensland.

In my meetings with him, Wayne always struck me as a shy man and a retiring figure. He
was not someone of whom you thought hail-fellow-well-met. What struck me many times
was his fundamental integrity and decency. I recall thinking in those branch meetings that
here was the former Premier of Queensland with hands shaking while he was talking to
branch members. This was something new for him. He had never been a pre-selection
candidate.

It is a great loss. I pay my respects to the current member for Oxley, my good friend Bernie
Ripoll, who I think has done a fantastic job for that region. For two terms he was my federal
member. Wayne was a great loss to the federal parliament. He would have been a senior
minister in a future Labor government, I am sure. He was a man whom I thought really knew
where he was going. I recall meeting him in his office on occasions when there were issues of
pre-selection concerning my area. This is when he was the opposition leader. He said,
'Shayne, you will know when it is time to leave the law.' I never forgot it, because on more
than a couple of occasions I had the opportunity to go into either local or state politics, but I
never really felt it was the right time to do it. Wayne's sage advice to a young bloke, as I was
in those days—I had a lot more hair than I have at the moment!—was extraordinarily wise. I
always respected him because he was someone who committed so much of his time to the
service of land rights, representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and being
involved in law reform. He was involved in legal aid services in Queensland—establishing them, building them and promoting them—and in delivering justice and representation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

But he had a greater vision and focus. He wanted to rebuild Queensland, which had been left run down for a long time. I remember former state member for Ipswich West Don Livingstone saying to me when he was elected to parliament in the late 1980s that there were absolutely no road projects or serious infrastructure plans for Ipswich West at the time. The Goss government started to build. They built roads, rebuilt schools and rebuilt hospitals, all vital community infrastructure that had been run down.

There are a lot of people who want to rewrite the history of the period of the Bjelke-Petersen regime in Queensland, and the premiers after that. It was characterised by a comment that David Hamill made about a conversation he had on numerous occasions with Russ Hinze, who, in the 1980s, was actually the 'minister for everything' in Queensland. He famously would drive through the valley and say he could not find any brothels or illegal casinos anywhere, even though they would all be there on the very sides of the roads. Russ Hinze said to David on more than one occasion, 'Young fellow, you would be a mug if you did not make money out of politics.' So, according to Russ Hinze, conflicts of interest were more confluences of interests. There was an extraordinary degree of lack of integrity and probity in government at that particular time. As the member for Grayndler said, 'If you doubt there was corruption and darkness and despair at that time in Queensland, go and have a read of the Fitzgerald inquiry and see what Wayne had to do.'

Wayne did in fact establish merit-based appointments in the public service and he supported the work of the Criminal Justice Commission, now the Crime and Corruption Commission. Wayne was broader than that, though. There were so many environmental reforms, the establishment of national parks, the decriminalisation of homosexuality and a whole range of areas that Wayne devoted himself to. He was a runner who took his discipline as a runner and brought it into political life.

Wayne served with distinction after he left politics. When he left politics, he said a famous thing which is reported many times in Queensland media:

Thank you, Queensland. You've been good to me. I hope I've left you a better place.

He certainly did. He certainly left Queensland a much better place. He was a moderniser and a reformer—our Gough Whitlam. He changed Queensland for the better. The member for Lilley was absolutely accurate when he said: Wayne changed Queensland, the state we love, for the better. He dragged it into the sunlight after 32 years in the darkness.

He will never be forgotten. Wayne Goss is a legend in Queensland and a Labor legend. He changed our state for the better. I hope that people in other states will look to him as a role model for reformism. It is a tragedy and a shame that he never got to display his incredible talents, character and ability on the national stage here in parliament, but in Queensland we will not forget him.

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (12:01): I associate myself with the remarks by the member for Blair and commend him for his kind words about the late Wayne Goss. I would like to follow suit. Wayne Goss's historic contribution to Queensland basically included restoring
respectability to Queensland, crushing corruption and introducing fair electoral reforms—basically 'one vote, one value' in a state that had had a gerrymandered system for years and years. Wayne Goss was the man who ended 32 years of conservative government ruling Queensland and ushered in Tony Fitzgerald's corruption-busting reforms in 1989.

Wayne grew up in Inala, a working-class suburb right on the edge of my electorate of Moreton. He worked as a solicitor and with the Aboriginal Legal Service before setting up his own practice. After the dismissal of the Whitlam government in November 1975, Wayne joined the Australian Labor Party. It is sad for the Labor Party that we have been acknowledging the death of both of these Labor legends in the last few weeks.

Wayne Goss entered state politics as the member for Salisbury in 1983 and was later elected as the member for Logan before taking over as the Leader of the Opposition in March 1988. The suburb of Salisbury falls right in the centre of my electorate of Moreton, on the south side of Brisbane. Wayne also lived for a long time in Sunnybank Hills, a suburb I also know very well, on the southern end of my electorate. The former Premier's close connection with the south-side community and its people is both heart warming and inspiring.

In preparing this speech, I consulted with Matt Foley, who was the Attorney-General in the second Goss government, and he told me many amusing tales—some of which I cannot repeat! I know that Wayne Goss was a true Labor believer. He both personified Labor values and worked incredibly hard to make sure that all Queenslanders could get the benefits of Labor policies. He served as Premier between December 1989 and February 1996.

While many aspects of Wayne's past have been touched on, I want to particularly focus on his first term, when he was both the Premier and the Minister for the Arts. It is his role as arts minister that I wish to dwell on, because I do not think it has been particularly acknowledged. As a lawyer, as a leader and as a Premier he was a standout person, but his role in the arts in Queensland was symbolic of that change in attitudes in my state, from a time of ignorance and not respecting achievements through to now celebrating Queensland's role in the arts community. I say this as both a writer and a lover of music and the arts. I remember seeing Wayne often at the Queensland Theatre Company. Back before I had children, when I could go to the theatre, and before I was a politician, my wife and I used to go, and we would often see Wayne and Roisin at shows and at other arts events. After leaving the position of Premier of Queensland, Wayne was chair of the Queensland Art Gallery Board of Trustees from 1999 to 2008.

Wayne increased Queensland's reputation in the international arts community. Whilst Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide are well respected for their contribution to the arts, I think people saw Brisbane as a bit of a backwater, but now, as we saw with the G20 and many of the programs instigated by Wayne Goss, Queensland is able to hold its head high. Queensland is the most decentralised state, so what did Wayne Goss do? He developed the Regional Arts Development Fund, a highly successful state and local government partnership. The state government would put in money if the local governments stumped up money, and they often went to private donors as well. It supported local artists and arts and cultural activities throughout Queensland. That was a great boon to the state.

Wayne was instrumental in attracting the Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art to Brisbane and had the foresight to buy the land for GOMA. If you are in Brisbane, you must go to the Gallery of Modern Art at South Bank. Wayne Goss set aside the money to purchase...
that. It was quite visionary at the time. GOMA has been extremely successful and is, I would argue, what has made Brisbane a truly international city, as we saw recently at the G20. As Premier and also in his role with the arts Wayne made a special point of reaching out to all people, not just those who could afford to go to the opera, the ballet or the Queensland Theatre Company. He took art to the people. You see it still in Brisbane. I know this, having young children. If you go to GOMA and the Art Gallery, you will see that they have a summer program, when it is hottest in Brisbane, to engage young kids. You see people coming in from the burbs to engage with artists in lots of different programs. That was the Wayne Goss touch—the boy from Inala who had a global vision that Brisbane had the right to stand up as a world city.

Wayne's work brought music festivals to life across the state. The old Warana, as I think it was called, has evolved into the Brisbane Festival. He had a passion for music and love for the arts. I think his favourite band was the Rolling Stones. He even said that his favourite song was *Sympathy for the Devil*, one of my top songs as well, but it was quite controversial when he said it. He really understood music. He had a combination of political vision and a literary or artistic heart, a fantastic combination. So we saw a significant era of change within the Arts portfolio under Wayne Goss and his government. As touched on by the member for Oxley, there was the idea of bringing back peer review and openness in the funding department for arts. Instead of just fear or favour, he was saying, 'What are the benefits of the programs?'

I admire his political courage as well. In 1992, he went to the election with a jobs plan, because unemployment was a significant issue. We see it is an issue for this government now, with 70,000 more unemployed people under the Abbott government. Under the Goss government, unemployment was emerging as a problem, so Wayne Goss said in 1992, 'Vote for us and we will put a tax on you.' He went to the people saying he would put a tax on tobacco to fund the jobs plan. That is real courage, the understanding that, 'You need to vote for me, but there'll be something associated with that—it's being done for the best of intentions and for good reason.' Wayne Goss trusted the people and spoke honestly to them about what his intentions were. Surely the most valued currency in politics is trust. Wayne Goss certainly had that in spades. People understood what the state would need to contribute to enable the introduction of a scheme that would secure jobs for many Queenslanders. He argued that case before the election and then, on election day, he was returned. He had great respect for the Queensland people. He was open about his beliefs, and this honesty created great respect for him in return.

In those six short years, the Goss government took a raft of actions to advance the civil liberties of Queenslanders, and I will just go through some of these. He appointed Queensland's first female judge and the first female Labor minister in cabinet. He reformed the electoral system and public administration to ensure each vote across the state was fair and of equal value. He introduced freedom-of-information legislation. He introduced whistleblower protection. He decriminalised homosexuality, although there is still a bit of work to be done in terms of the age of consent for male homosexuals.

He provided for judicial review of administrative decisions. He implemented the Fitzgerald recommendations for overhauling a formerly corrupt police force. He upheld children's rights by enabling the custody of exnuptial children to be considered in the Family Court along with
children born in wedlock through a referral of legislative power to the Commonwealth. He legislated to grant land rights for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders well before the High Court's Mabo decision and subsequent native title laws. He outlawed discrimination on a wide range of grounds: sex, marital status, pregnancy, parental status, breastfeeding, age, race, impairment, religion—note that religion is not something that you can act on in the Commonwealth parliament—political belief or activity, trade union activity and lawful sexual activity. He enhanced the rights of the elderly and infirm by introducing laws to establish an enduring power of attorney. He legislated for principles of juvenile justice, allowing detention of juveniles in custody only as a last resort. That is especially important in a state that puts children—17-year-olds—into adult prisons.

Wayne Goss was a great Australian, and he was a truly great Labor man. He created a climate of free speech that flourished across Queensland. He was an Inala kid with a world story. There is no doubt he modernised Queensland and his passing is a great loss. Vale, Wayne Goss.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hawke): Order! There being no further statements, this item is concluded.

COMMITTEES

Education and Employment Committee

Report

Debate resumed on the motion:
That the House take note of the report.

Ms BIRD (Cunningham) (12:11): I rise to speak today in support of the committee's report TAFE: an Australian asset. This report by the House of Representatives committee was convened to finish an inquiry that was started during the 43rd Parliament, referred by Labor minister at the time, Hon. Chris Bowen. The 44th Parliament committee was re-established in November last year, and in February this year Minister Ian Macfarlane referred the issue to the committee again with amended terms of reference.

There has been some comment about the decision of the Senate committee to take up the commenced inquiry of the previous House committee and to conduct their own inquiry, which tabled its report in May this year. It is my view, I have to say, that the critical point we have reached in many states regarding the need for support of TAFE into the future means that the dual inquiries should only be viewed as a positive, as they have allowed multiple opportunities for stakeholders to put forward their issues and their concerns.

The 172 submissions and transcripts from the previous parliament were brought forward for the current inquiry, and the current committee held 11 hearings and inspections across capital cities and regional areas. I would like to thank the committee for taking up an idea I had to conduct an online survey. This ensured the maximised opportunity to hear directly from students—current and past students as well as those who may plan to study in the future. This was a significant task, and I would particularly like to thank the committee secretariat for their work in undertaking and assessing that survey.

The survey was launched in May and closed at the end of July. It received a total of 6,635 responses, which covered both quantitative and qualitative feedback.
The report title very appropriately identifies that TAFE has a broad social and economic task that is unique to a public provider and that this has made it an important national asset for decades. In the report's introduction it references the Kangan report. The Kangan report underscored the recurrent nature of the themes that recur with TAFE. In 1974, the Kangan report said:

The main purpose of education is the betterment and development of individual people and their contribution to the good of the community. Technical and further education should be planned accordingly. Emphasis on the needs of the individual should lead to easier access to learning, to better physical conditions of learning, to suitable student and teacher amenities, to welfare facilities, and to the highest standards of health and safety in workshops and laboratories.

It went on to say that the demand for education throughout life can be expected to grow, not simply because of changes in technologies and social organisation but also because people will become increasingly aware of the practical advantages that it gives an individual in respect of employment and livelihood. Forty years later, it would be hard to argue that those themes are not as important to communities now as they were in the seventies.

The committee took extensive evidence of the value and trust that many individual learners and employers place in TAFE and heard many examples of situations where TAFE was the critical provider in ensuring, in particular, that thin markets were covered and accessibility and affordability were ensured.

The first identified task in the committee's terms of reference was to consider 'the development of skills in the Australian economy'. The committee concluded:

While the COAG framework broadly recognises the important role of public VET providers, the crucial position and role of TAFE within VET is not explicitly recognised. For the Committee this is integral to the issues raised in the inquiry and is a deficiency that should be rectified. As stated above, it became evident to the Committee over the course of the inquiry that a foundational articulation of the role and function of TAFE is necessary.

The first task was obviously a particularly important one to the committee, and the evidence pointed quite clearly to the need for a nationally recognised agreement on the role of TAFE. This is encompassed, I would argue, very effectively in the first recommendation of the report, which says:

The Australian Government should, through the Council of Australian Governments, make a value statement comprehensively defining the role of TAFE within the VET sector together with its future direction in the competitive training market, from a national perspective.

This statement should recognise that the affordability and accessibility of the training market is underpinned by a strong public sector provider and acknowledges the following functions that TAFE, as a major and significant not-for-profit public provider, can uniquely bring to the VET sector …

It then goes on to outline nine specific, unique contributions that TAFE, as a public provider, makes and that need to be protected. The importance of this recommendation is that it identifies the unique role that TAFE, as the public provider, plays. It begins the task of identifying, from the evidence presented to the inquiry, the efforts that would be lost if TAFE were only required to operate simply as another competitor in a privatised market. I have said before—and I will put it on the record in this debate—that there would be nothing more tragic than for all of us, at all levels of government and across community and industry sectors, to only appreciate the true value of TAFE once it was lost.
The first recommendation calls on the federal government to take responsibility for coordinating an agreed national statement—between federal and state governments—that defines this role and outlines the future direction for TAFE in any competitive market with a view to protecting, if not enhancing, the capacity of TAFE to do the many public-good tasks that we ask of it. It is, therefore, critically important that the minister and the government accept all the recommendations of the committee and urgently seek to implement them.

The second and third terms of reference required an investigation of the pathways that TAFE provides for further education and employment. The survey of students, in particular, contained powerful evidence of the transformative role that TAFE had played in connecting vulnerable learners, or those who needed a second chance at education, with appropriate courses and significant support services. The report contains much evidence directly from students on this issue. This is, in itself, a good reason for many of those listening to take the opportunity to read the report of the committee.

It would be fair to acknowledge that, in many of these submissions, survey responses and direct evidence to the committee, the affordability of TAFE—and more recent changes to fee structures—was consistently raised as a barrier is sue for students. This led to recommendation 3, which encourages governments to look at how these price structures might be acting as barriers.

The other persistent theme that came consistently through the evidence was the negative impact of aggressive behaviours by some private providers in the sector who are using unscrupulous marketing and recruitment practices and delivering poor-quality training and assessment. While the private sector was not a referred issue in the terms of reference, the committee did feel that the evidence directly impacted the fourth term relating to the role played by TAFE in ‘the operation of a competitive training market’.

This led the committee to recommendation 2, providing options for tightening the content and assessment of national training packages; recommendation 4, supporting strengthening of the role of the regulators; and recommendation 5, where the intention is to be able to identify through an independent source, such as the NCVER, the funding efforts of all governments for the VET sector but TAFE in particular.

TAFE is a highly valued and trusted provider of education and training across all communities and states. Its importance can be seen in the significant place it fills in current debates in pending state elections—in particular, Victoria on Saturday. I am pleased that the Labor shadow minister in Victoria, Steve Herbert, has outlined a strong Labor policy for the election on TAFE, in particular the important task of rebuilding the TAFE system, which has been decimated under the Napthine government. On the weekend the Labor shadow minister in New South Wales, Ryan Park, also outlined a very strong TAFE policy to also take to the next election there.

I would like to finish by thanking the committee chair, the member for Herbert, Ewen Jones; the deputy chair, the member for Perth, Alannah MacTiernan; and all my committee colleagues who worked in a very bipartisan way to produce what I think is an excellent report. I would also like to sincerely thank the committee secretariat—secretary Dr Glenn Worthington; inquiry secretary Mr Robert Little; research officer Ms Rebeka Mills; and administrative officers Ms Katrina Gillogly and Ms Jessica Ristevska—for their dedicated and professional work. (Time expired)
Mr WILLIAMS (Hindmarsh) (12:19): I rise today to speak on the Standing Committee on Education and Employment report, *TAFE: an Australian asset*, and acknowledge the comments by my committee colleague, the member for Cunningham. I appreciate her input into the inquiry as I do the many valuable contributions by other committee members to the inquiry this year.

It is commonly recognised that TAFE is a great national asset. The message of the value of TAFE in the Australian community was very strong throughout our various discussions, and as such we believe that the Australian government should acknowledge this value with a statement through the Council of Australian Governments. TAFE has unique functions out there in the community as a major public provider that contributes to our society and economy. It has got an invaluable role in reskilling and providing, often mature-age workers, new opportunities. As our economy transitions, this becomes more prevalent. It is an important provider for second-chance education and is often a pathway to employment and university, avenues which are frequently supported through partnerships with industry and universities.

Skills development is a clear focus of TAFE and always has been. Can I just say on this issue that the skills and training that TAFE provides in Australia is internationally recognised. We heard from many industry associations and bodies about the high regard of TAFE in Australia from international experts and others. It was often compared to the tertiary system in Germany in terms of the quality of courses and outcomes.

The significant role played by TAFE as a provider of opportunities for those in positions of disadvantage and vulnerability was also a clear message that we heard and acknowledge. In some cases we heard stories of students where TAFE had literally turned their lives around. These were inspiring stories of how they undertook a course in various TAFEs around Australia and the transformation of their lives was significant.

We also took evidence in relation to the unscrupulous marketing practices by private training providers and other practices of concern. This is something that needs addressing going forward for there to be a more level playing field in the tertiary education system. How to do this is the next question. We met with ASQA, the Australian Skills Quality Authority, a number of times. We support the continued work of the Australian government through ASQA and other parties involved in addressing loopholes that allow high-risk and unscrupulous practices to endanger the experience of students, and in particular the reputations of training providers and outcomes. Too many times we heard, for example, of those who work in the resources sector having to climb and jump on a huge grader yet there had been no testing in that area by the training provider. So their training was not aligned to the actual job. There were times when there were hairdressers who came through some short course offered by a private training provider and they also failed a basic test of skills. There were too many stories. It was too common to hear of such instances, and this needs to be addressed.

In terms of the way that TAFE works with industry I would like to raise a few points. It was widely acknowledged when we were in Adelaide that TAFE had close links with industry, with companies like Redarc. I acknowledge the member for Kingston, whose electorate covers where Redarc is based. I know Redarc has been a star in the South
Australian economy. We need more stars like that. We need more Anthony Kiddles and more Redarcs around Australia and the same growth in small business.

Also, we had hospitality—Cordon Bleu and international hospitality schools that were based at Regency Park, linking well, using the facilities, training great chefs and those involved in hospitality management. There is potential growth in our economy coming from Asia, especially given the number of tourists, whether it be out of China, India or other areas of the world. They see Australia as a great tourist destination. There will be more jobs in hospitality and we will need more courses. We heard of examples where some courses for those involved in patisserie and other highly skilled areas in hospitality were not being adequately funded. This is a major deficiency. Some state governments, and I refer in particular to the South Australian state government in this respect, were not identifying and adequately funding the need.

I would like to say a few words about ASC, the Australian Submarine Corporation, because they were another industry participant that worked very closely with TAFE to get some great outcomes. I want to put on record my support for the workers at ASC, many of whom reside in my electorate. I know they do some good work there. They do have some challenging projects, such as the air warfare destroyers. We know there are some improvements being made and there is much work to still be undertaken. But I reiterate that I have been down to ASC and I respect the work they do.

Moving to the South Australian government and the way they have treated TAFE, I want to quote from a few recent articles in the media. In July, retired TAFE chief Jeff Gunningham commented that the South Australian government was ripping resources out of TAFE. He said they were being driven by Treasury in South Australia and were ‘all about reducing costs. At the end of the day, quality costs money.’ He said, ‘TAFE lost 18 per cent of their revenue and 15 per cent of their staff over the first 18 months of the reform.’ How can the South Australian Labor government be serious about resourcing the necessary courses at TAFE when they are ripping resources out of the system?

We see this translating into jobs. With the South Australian government and economy crying out for opportunities, TAFEs are being devastated by job cuts. David Pisoni, the shadow minister for education, who holds the government to account extremely well, made the good point recently on morning radio when he said there were cuts of around 500 jobs by 2018, again, directed by the South Australian state Labor government and their Treasury. They have had six training ministers in six years. It resembles the previous Rudd-Gillard-Rudd government in respect of the turnover and lack of stability. Also, there is $90 million less in the training budget because the South Australian state government cannot manage money and cannot fund the necessary social infrastructure that is needed.

In closing, I want to pay tribute to the committee. The chair, Ewen Jones, did a great job. I also thank the secretariat, Robert, Rebeka and others, and, importantly, the TAFEs around Australia. Those service providers do such a great job. I have met many of the administrators of TAFE around Australia during this committee. I congratulate them on their efforts and their work; continue to keep up the good work. The Australian government recognises what you do and supports you all the way because of the vital role you play in the Australian economy.
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hawke): Order! It being 12.30, the debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr WILLIAMS (Hindmarsh) (12:30): I move:
That the Federation Chamber do now adjourn.

Higher Education

Mr SWAN (Lilley) (12:30): Australia has one of the most egalitarian and socially mobile societies in the world and we would not be where we are today, ranked second on the United Nations Human Development Index, if it were not for the hard work that has been put in over the years to build the institutions and the norms which allow the people of Australia to reach their full potential. This, of course, does include constructing a higher education system which allows all Australians, regardless of their background or wealth, the opportunity to attend university. We are now told by the government that we should junk our current model in favour of an American education model and also health model across the board. This government loves American models and they want one here which would replicate the sorts of outcomes we have seen in the United States—a society where over the past 30 years social mobility has gone backwards and where the middle class has been hollowed out because opportunities through higher education have been fewer and fewer for the millions of people in their system.

I remember our higher education system when it was first introduced in 1974. I was at the University of Queensland and I remember how the feeling on campus changed. I remember how we opened up our higher education system and there was new life in our institutions, which had for too long been dominated by the wealthy elites of our society. I remember how, for the first time, a university education was no longer a dream for ordinary Australians—it would and did become a reality. The changes to higher education in 1974 and again in 1989 changed the cultural mindset of our society, and we reaped the benefits through higher university participation and through that higher economic growth as our society and education systems matured.

Now the Abbott government is attempting to tear down this higher education model and, as I said before, take us down the American road. The Abbott government is attempting to return Australia to the 1960s, when a university education was only there for those who were wealthy, particularly from the North Shore of Sydney. Before the election, Mr Abbott and Mr Pyne promised that there would be no changes to higher education. They said that there were no plans to increase fees and, of course, in the same interview where Mr Abbott promised no cuts to the ABC and SBS, he promised there would be no cuts to education. On Insiders one week before the election, he gave us an absolute assurance there would be no cuts to education. That is not what occurred. It was an absolute assurance and today we stand here with the higher education system $5.8 billion worse off.

The government has also announced plans to slash funding for student places by up to 37 per cent. This means that universities will be forced to increase their fees by as much as 60 per cent for some degrees just to cover the funding cut. They also plan to cut $1.1 billion of funding for Commonwealth supported places and to remove caps on undergraduate fees, thereby allowing universities to charge whatever they like. This will result in many vital
degrees like nursing and teaching more than doubling in cost, saddling students with enormous debts that are disproportionate to what they would earn in the years ahead and making it almost impossible for them to pay back these debts and making those occupations very unattractive.

This is a radical and regressive agenda. Essentially what it boils down to is $100,000 university degrees, which will make students think twice about pursuing a university education, and this will particularly be the case for those from lower-income backgrounds, those who may earn intermittent income—particularly women who might want to take time off to have a child—and so on. It is an incredibly regressive agenda, which will discourage participation, which, after all, lies at the very core of what we must do in our society if we wish to grow and prosper economically.

As Joe Stiglitz pointed out when he was in Australia recently, the United States' system is one in which student debt is now in excess of $1.2 trillion. It is a system which has failed that country and is producing regressive outcomes. So the fight is on. There are those who will stand for a fair Australia, where there is a high degree of social mobility which flows from universal access to quality health and education, and a decent industrial safety net. The battle is still ongoing and it is happening here on the floor of the parliament every day. The Labor Party are going to stand for fairness in our system and we are going to ensure that one more barnacle is scraped off that rotten hull of the Abbott government—that is, the Hockey barnacle—and these university charges with it.

Calare Electorate: Anson Street School

Bathurst Seymour Centre

Mr JOHN COBB (Calare) (12:35): I proudly stand here today to praise two outstanding organisations in my electorate. These organisations continue to go above and beyond the call of duty to help members of the Orange and Bathurst communities. They are often relied upon to help some of the central west's most vulnerable people, and the way they continue to cater for people with specific needs is nothing short of outstanding.

Firstly, I would like to talk about a little school in Orange that is doing wonderful and big things. That little school is Anson Street School. It caters for around 90 students. This is not just any ordinary school. Anson Street School caters for students with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities. A large number of students have communication, motor and sensory impairments, and many have high-support needs. An individual education plan is provided for each student, with programs being developed by staff in collaboration with parents and caregivers, and other relevant personnel. This ensures quality educational outcomes for all of these students. But the best thing about Anson Street School is the fact that parents and carers know the students are provided with a safe, caring and very good learning environment. I have attended quite a lot of events at Anson Street over the years and the continued development of programs has been very impressive and amazing.

In May last year I was involved in the school's opening of two permanent new buildings. The federal government provided $3.8 million in funding and that is money well spent, as this school continues to go from strength to strength.

Finally, I would like to make a special mention of principal Gary Brotherton and his staff. They all do an amazing job, teaching and providing for these students. It is an honour to be
involved with them because they are very special people. The efforts of Gary Brotherton and his staff do not go unnoticed.

Having spoken about those younger students who need a hand, I would also like to speak about those in Bathurst who are older. The Bathurst Seymour Centre, BSC, is the second organisation I would like to talk about.

The Bathurst Seymour Centre is a centre-based day-care centre, providing for older people who are frail aged, people with a disability and their carers who live in the Bathurst area. The service aims to enable people to live independently and to participate in community life. To realise this vision, BSC provides a range of centre-based services designed to enhance the wellbeing and the quality of life of people who are frail aged, people with dementia and people with disabilities. The BSC provides support for their carers. This is no light thing. BSC services promote opportunities for social interaction and participation in a great range of activities. I have seen how well looked after they are and how much they enjoy it.

It has 12 full-time employees and more than 50 volunteers. It could not happen without those volunteers, who assist more than 70 people in the region. They are doing a wonderful job for those who need this attention and they also provide respite for the carers of these people. Respite is a very big issue in these circumstances. Any centre that offers a safe, friendly and welcoming environment so that people can learn new skills and are encouraged to keep healthy and active should be embraced. That is why I want to draw attention today to both these organisations—for those who give their professional time, certainly, but also those who volunteer for it. I have always said no government can ever provide what volunteers provide. At any of the three levels, the amount of money they save the organisation and the actual ‘get up and go’ are irreplaceable. I am saying a big thankyou to centre manager Terisa Ashworth, her staff and the valued volunteers. You are doing an amazing job and setting a great example to all of us.

Banking: Remittance Services

Ms ROWLAND (Greenway) (12:40): I wish to raise a matter of great concern to many migrant communities around the country: the decision by Australian banks to close the bank accounts of remittance companies. Remittance services play a vital role in many migrant communities in Australia. Indeed, they are the lifeline of many communities right around the world. In Australia's rich multicultural community, many migrants rely on remittance services to be able to transfer funds to their families living overseas. Remittance businesses provide much-needed services to the community, offering low-cost, efficient and secure transfers to developing and underprivileged countries which in many cases do not have established banking networks or modern forms of electronic funds transfer capabilities. Remittance services are in many cases the only way for many communities to support their families still living in their country of origin. As someone of Fijian heritage I am acutely aware of the importance of remittances for emerging economies and economic security.

In recent times, though, major banks around Australia have determined to close the bank accounts of these remittance companies. This has created an immense practical barrier for many people in Australia who wish to provide for their loved ones overseas. I note that, during the recent visit to Australia by Indian Prime Minister Modi, he stressed in his Sydney address the importance of Australia's Indian community giving funds to improve their villages of birth. This is a similar theme for many who have come to make Australia home.
According to banks, their decision to close such accounts has been made in part for national security and money laundering related reasons, which are justifiable. But I do not believe a blanket closure of all accounts is either justified or a proportionate response. I welcome the statement by Australia's anti-money-laundering and counter-terrorism-financing regulator, the Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre, or AUSTRAC, on 25 November, which states:

AUSTRAC encourages banks to continue to assess the particular risks relating to their customers in line with the risk-based approach. Further, AUSTRAC encourages banks to engage with alternative remitters on measures that the sector could take both immediately and in the longer term to meet banks' internal risk standards.

AUSTRAC will continue to work with alternative remitters and banks in conjunction with other Government agencies to address the complex set of issues underlying this problem.

One of the last remaining banks to keep open these accounts, Westpac, has recently made the decision to close these accounts. This has caused great anxiety in the community, including in the Somalian and Eritrean communities in Melbourne, and the Pakistani and Filipino communities in Sydney. I welcome the shadow finance minister's decision to make a formal request to the finance minister asking that the government take action on this. It is vital that these communities find a way for remittance services to be resumed. There are occasions when specific transactions can and should be stopped for national security reasons, but to stop all remittance services in the manner that has occurred is, as I said, a disproportionate response and prevents many Australians from providing vital assistance to their family members, who are in many cases completely reliant on the finances received via remittance services.

I wish to note the strong advocacy on this issue by the state member for Melbourne, Ms Jennifer Kanis MLA, who has been engaging with affected communities and working to ensure a positive outcome for all involved. As the shadow minister for finance told the parliament yesterday:

It is within the grasp and the gift of the government to work with the banks and have this issue fixed.

I wholeheartedly support this statement and give this commitment to have this issue remedied. I urge Australian banks to take note of the deep community concern on this matter and to act accordingly.

Petrie Electorate: Petrie Shield

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (12:44): I rise today with great excitement for the graduating students throughout the Petrie electorate. Whether graduating from primary school or high school or moving on to the next-year level, students in Petrie have a lot to be proud of. I am very privileged to have met many of the students throughout the 40 or so schools in the Petrie electorate over the last 12 months. Whether it is presenting flags at the schools and attending their school fetes and fairs, getting involved with local school fun runs or even showing some of the students around Parliament House, we really have some wonderful students throughout Petrie.

Most recently I have been visiting the schools for their awards evenings and have had the chance to present many students with the Petrie Shield. I launched the Petrie Shield this year to acknowledge the valuable contribution of students from schools throughout the Petrie electorate. The award is presented in the spirit of Mr Andrew Petrie, after whom my
electorate is named. While I grew up in the Petrie electorate down in Bracken Ridge and have lived there for over three decades, I had not really had a chance to find out how the electorate was named until the last few years. When I came across the story of Andrew Petrie, I was inspired and felt that the story should be known and that young people who have exhibited the character of Andrew Petrie should also be recognised.

Andrew Petrie was born over 200 years ago, in 1798. He was a local builder, entrepreneur and explorer. He was hardworking and he was the first white man to climb Mount Beerwah, one of 10 volcanic peaks in the Glass House Mountains up in Queensland. Even after losing his eyesight he continued to run his construction business. Mr Andrew Petrie was also a very generous man. He would invite homeless people in for a meal and would help the unemployed to find work. Today his legacy lives on in many of the buildings and foundations around the Moreton Bay region. But this is not his legacy just because he built these buildings and constructed these places. They are his legacy because he inspired others to help him. He inspired others to discover their strengths and to contribute to the local community.

This year I have presented the Petrie Shield at many of the local high schools over the last few weeks and look forward to presenting many more over the next month or so as primary schools celebrate their awards evenings. There are many students who have been rewarded at these schools, and I would like to mention a few quickly. I think of Jacob, Jordan and Corey from Arethusa College, a school working with disenfranchised young people by providing alternative education as a special assistance school. These three boys are getting on with their lives, overcoming adversity and getting their lives back on track.

I would also like to acknowledge Lauren Wylie, who has just finished year 12 at The Lakes College. She is an exceptional young woman who definitely deserved the Petrie Shield. There is Caitlin Farrant from Southern Cross Catholic College; Daniel Devlin and Josh Maskelyne from Clontarf Beach State High School; Kayne Missen, Caitlin Wells and Jade Eldridge from Mueller College Middle School; Ella-Rose Gynther, Robert Smith and Ruby Gleeson from Mueller College Primary School; Kelsey, Aaron, Annabella and Kevin from St Benedict's Catholic Primary School; and Stefan, Vi and Jack from Redcliffe State High School. There are Lily Nairn, Caitlin Alletsee and Liam Stanton from St Paul's School.

All these students have been awarded these shields for academic success, sporting excellence and showing dedication to music and the arts but also for their commitment to leadership and the community in general. They are all definitely deserving of these awards. They will receive their own Petrie Shield, and there is a perpetual shield that stays in the school each year. And, just like Andrew Petrie, every single one of these students has excelled.

I would also like to particularly acknowledge their parents, their teachers, their principals and everyone involved with their education because, as these students succeed, so too do the parents, teachers and leaders throughout the school.

**Lingiari Electorate**

Mr SNOWDON (Lingiari) (12:49): Over the last few weeks I have been travelling widely across the Territory, across my electorate. In just the past couple of weeks I travelled from as far west as the Cocos Islands in my electorate to communities north-west and north-east of
Alice Springs—Haasts Bluff, Papunya and Arlparra in the Utopia region—talking to people about the issues that might be of importance to them.

In the case of Haasts Bluff and Papunya, I attended the opening of two community stores, which were cause for great celebration and delight because these iconic stores were funded out of the Aboriginal Benefit Account, which is money derived from royalty equivalents, as a result of mining and other activities on Aboriginal land in the Northern Territory. This money, which has been provided to invest in these two new stores at Haasts Bluff and Papunya, came from Aboriginal people's earnings off their own land. It is a tribute to those communities, and indeed the ABA committee, for making the recommendation that these funds be made available. I am proud to say that they were made available during the last government. It is a very effective use of these resources and it now gives people, in these two very remote communities, stores which you and I would be proud to have in our own communities. The Papunya store is a relatively large supermarket. It is a very isolated community. If you can imagine living in one of these communities, which are very isolated and where store infrastructure is, to say the least, modest, having this new infrastructure and new product on the shelves is extremely important.

But I want to raise issues which are of constant concern to people in these remote communities. Many people are unemployed or live off benefits; there are some who have got very good jobs. The roads are very crook—‘real crook’ is a way to describe them—and people drive on these roads for long periods. One of the issues for those communities is the need for additional infrastructure and resources for road infrastructure. It has been a constant issue over the time I have been in this parliament. I first arrived here 27 years ago, and nothing has changed in that context. Money has been invested in roads in the bush but not sufficient money. We need to do a lot more to ensure that infrastructure is made available.

But, even if you had good roads, one of the key issues confronting Aboriginal people and people in these remote places is the price of fuel. You can imagine, when it already costs you $2.20, $2.30 or, in some cases, $2.50 per litre, the compound impact of having the fuel excise actually indexed and the disproportionate effect it will have on these communities. Because the fuel excise is only one part of the price of fuel—the GST also applies to this fuel excise—you get a disproportionate impact on these communities. If you are paying $1.50 or $1.55 a litre in a major city, the impacts of the tax arrangements on you are far less than they are on people living in remote communities. It is a disproportionate impact. It is unfair, unreasonable and inequitable. These communities need to drive long distances. If, for example, they need to attend medical, specialist, legal or business appointments in a place like Alice Springs, which may be 250, 300 or 400 kilometres away, then it is an extremely expensive business. Yet there seems to be no consideration of that by this government when contemplating the impact of the indexation of fuel.

I say to the government: not only do we need more infrastructure but we need you to be fair and reasonable, to understand the plight of people who live in regional and remote Australia, and to understand the stupidity of indexing fuel and its impact on these communities, because you do not understand it. And, if you do understand it, you have demonstrated that you just do not care. And, if you just do not care, then that is unfair. And, if it is unfair for those people, what does it say about those people opposite who represent regional seats—bush seats? Of course, they have sat mute and have not said a word about
protecting the interests of the people who live in those communities, who are affected so poorly by this stupid decision. (Time expired)

**Robertson Electorate: Broadband and Employment**

*Mrs WICKS (Robertson) (12:54):* Tomorrow a start-up company will open its operations centre at Koolewong, and I rise to congratulate Solar Monitoring Australia on its decision to base itself in the heart of my electorate of Robertson on the Central Coast of New South Wales. It is a great local success story—a small business promoting leading-edge technology—and tomorrow will be a great day for Solar Monitoring Australia and the wider Central Coast, because its decision is a vote of confidence in our local economy and it is a great endorsement of the coalition's NBN rollout, which is already delivering superfast broadband to businesses and households on the Central Coast faster and more affordably than was the case under the previous Labor government.

When new businesses arrive on the coast, I am delighted to welcome them with open arms, because we know it is not government that creates jobs; it is business that creates jobs. While the number of jobs being injected into our local economy by Solar Monitoring Australia will be modest at first, at around six, they predict they will expand to 16 employees over the next six months. For a residential suburb like Koolewong, on the shores of the beautiful Brisbane Water, this is a genuine vote of confidence and opportunity. It reflects on a wider scale what the coalition government's policies are delivering in terms of benefits and opportunities for people and businesses who want to invest on the Central Coast.

Just 15 minutes up the road, in Gosford, this government is delivering 600 new jobs for Gosford in a purpose-built Commonwealth agency for the Australian Taxation Office—a centre of excellence on the Central Coast. The economic multiplier effect of this will be significant. In fact, yesterday's *Daily Telegraph* carried the headline that there will be a 'wave of jobs' for our region, with hundreds more employment opportunities to come from the flow-on effect of this agency. Five hundred of these roles will be with the ATO, with an additional 100 jobs to come from other Commonwealth agencies that will reflect the right skill mix for our region. Just think of the demand for hundreds more coffees, lunches, newspapers, haircuts and other retail and professional business services for 600 more people working in Gosford every day. For a region that has more than 30,000 commuters in my electorate, this is a game changer for Central Coast families, for local businesses and for our region. There will be additional jobs generated in the construction of a purpose-built building for the ATO. With expressions of interest to build the agency closing next month, we are already underway to delivering this important commitment.

This is great progress and great news for start-ups like Solar Monitoring Australia, which has ambitions to grow from its base in Koolewong. The company's research shows that solar installers and customers are asking more and more for the sorts of services they provide. Solar Monitoring Australia provides a cloud based online software platform that enables the remote management of solar equipment. It is Australian designed, developed and manufactured technology that aims to make it easy for installers and retailers to manage large fleets of residential and commercial solar PV systems through a single portal. They have set up their space in Koolewong; they have already signed up a number of partners.

What is also significant about this investment is the vote of confidence that it represents in this government's commitment to delivering superfast broadband on the Central Coast. In fact,
I have been advised that one of the main reasons the company chose this location is its access to the NBN. We know fast broadband is crucial for small businesses like this. Thanks to this government's commitment to delivering the NBN on the Central Coast faster and more affordably than under Labor, we have seen decisions like this from great companies like Solar Monitoring Australia.

Recently another 25 suburbs have been included in the national rollout on the Central Coast, in addition to suburbs like Point Clare, Koolewong and Tascott, which were announced in April. This means that superfast broadband is now a giant step closer to reality for tens of thousands more households and businesses on the Central Coast. Contrast that with the previous Labor government's record of 203 premises connected in the six years they were in government. Over the coming weeks, people can expect to see workers out in their streets planning the new network to get the rollout closer to completion. They can have confidence that other companies are looking to invest in the coast, and I am looking forward to telling more success stories to the House about local businesses like these in the near future.

So congratulations to co-founders Mark Locchi and Mark Elliott for backing the Central Coast. They chose the coast ahead of locations like Queensland because they could see the benefits and opportunities for our region's growth. They have indicated they can link up with programs being offered by the University of Newcastle, and this government is all about generating the sorts of job opportunities that we have seen with a decision like this today.

Question agreed to.

Federation Chamber adjourned at 13:00
QUESTIONS IN WRITING

Live Animal Exports
(Question No. 403)

Mr Fitzgibbon asked the Minister for Agriculture, in writing, on 3 September 2014:

In respect of the review into the Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (ASEL), (a) will he publicly release the outcome and commence the development of a Regulatory Impact Statement; if so, when, (b) will he consider re-establishing the Livestock Export Standards Advisory Group; if so, when, and (c) can he confirm that there are no inversion boxes being used by any countries importing Australian livestock.

Mr Joyce: The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(a) The final report of the review of the Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock and draft standards developed by the steering committee was released on the 20th of May, 2014 and is available on the department’s website: http://www.daff.gov.au/biosecurity/export/live-animals/livestock/about/history/review-of-the-asel-lesag. The report will be considered, including any need for a Regulatory Impact Statement, in line with the government’s reform agenda for livestock exports.

(b) The Livestock Export Standards Advisory Group was reviewed under the former Labor government in 2012 and has subsequently not reconvened.

(c) Inversion boxes that are consistent with World Organisation for Animal Health standards have been used in some approved supply chains under ESCAS since 2011.

Department of Veterans’ Affairs: Commonwealth Grants
(Question No. 431)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, in writing, on 22 September 2014:

In 2013-14, how many Commonwealth grants were approved by the Minister’s department, and at what total cost, and of these, how many recipients have (a) signed funding agreements, and at what total cost, and (b) received payment, and at what total cost.

Mr Robert: The Minister for Veterans’ Affairs has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

All approved grants are published on the Department of Veterans’ Affairs (DVA) website. The information recorded is in accordance with Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines (5.2 web-based reporting). Lists of all approved and executed grants, as per the web-based reporting guideline, can be found at:


Department of Agriculture: Staff Overseas Travel
(Question No. 439)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Agriculture, in writing, on 22 September 2014:

In respect of departmental staff overseas travel since 7 September 2013, what (a) was the total cost, (b) is the breakdown of this cost ie, airfares, accommodation, hospitality, official passports and minor incidentals, and (c) was the travel for.
Mr Joyce: The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

(a) The total cost for Department of Agriculture officials travelling overseas from 7 September 2013 to 31 August 2014 is: $5,145,433.

(b) The breakdown of total cost for Department of Agriculture officials travelling overseas in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overseas Travel 1 September 2013 to 30 June 2014 *</td>
<td>$4,523,158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas Travel 1 July to 31 August 2014</td>
<td>$163,774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Fares</td>
<td>$41,194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>$397,307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Overseas Travel 1 July – 31 August 2014</td>
<td>$622,275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total overseas Travel 1 September 2013 – 31 August 2014</td>
<td>$5,145,433</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Prior to July 2014 overseas travel costs were not broken into categories.

Hospitality Cost

Overseas hospitality costs are not identified under the travel finance reporting mechanism.

Official Passports

During the period 7 September 2013 to 31 August 2014, 108 passports were issued. The provision of Official Passport costs would entail a substantial diversion of resources. It is complex to identify which passports were requested on an urgent basis and would have been charged an additional fee.

(c) Department of Agriculture officers undertake travel on an ‘as required’ basis and in accordance with the Whole of Australian Government Travel Arrangements and entity policy.

Department of Veterans’ Affairs: Staff Overseas Travel

(Question No. 449)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, in writing, on 22 September 2014:

In respect of departmental staff overseas travel since 7 September 2013, what (a) was the total cost, (b) is the breakdown of this cost ie, airfares, accommodation, hospitality, official passports and minor incidentals, and (c) was the travel for.

Mr Robert: The Minister for Veterans’ Affairs has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

(a) and (b) The following table identifies the cost of overseas travel by departmental staff for the period 7 September 2013 to 30 September 2014.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Airfares</td>
<td>$808,056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>$201,293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official Passports</td>
<td>$10,656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meals and allowances (including incidentals)</td>
<td>$179,197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$1,199,202</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The spend on hospitality in relation to overseas travel undertaken by departmental staff is not readily available. The financial systems do not easily separate hospitality costs from the overall costs of a particular project or mission.

(c) The majority of overseas travel by departmental staff is associated with: commemorative events and activities in France and Turkey; inspection and maintenance of war graves in Papua New Guinea and Malaysia; arranging, and accompanying veterans on, overseas missions; bilateral discussions with the New Zealand government.
Questions in Writing

Department of Veterans' Affairs: Corporate Credit Cards
(Question No. 468)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, in writing, on 22 September 2014:
Since 7 September 2013, how many corporate credit cards have been issued to departmental staff, and what is the total cost of all transactions made on them.

Mr Robert: The Minister for Veterans' Affairs has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:
Of the 242 credit cards currently issued to DVA staff, 22 have been issued since 7 September 2013. The total cost of all transactions made on those 22 cards is $150,980.97

Department of Defence: Executive Training
(Question No. 506)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Defence, in writing on 21 October 2014:
Since 7 September 2013 to 30 June 2014, what training has been provided for (a) Executive, and (b) Senior Executive Service, level departmental officials, and what (i) total sum has the Minister’s department spent, and (ii) is the breakdown in cost, for such training.

Ms Julie Bishop: The Minister for Defence has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:
(a) and (b) For the period 1 September 2013 to 30 June 2014, Defence executive and senior executive service staff completed 12,909 courses, including mandatory awareness training courses such as ethics and fraud, work health and safety, security and workplace behaviour. As many of the courses completed were also common to employees at all classification levels, it is not possible, within available resources, to apportion the expenditure attributable solely to the executive levels. Expenditure on procured training for all Defence APS employees, across all classifications, during this period was $26.9 million.

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade: Vehicles
(Question No. 521)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 21 October 2014:
Can she provide details in respect of the procurement of specialised and recreational vehicles as per tender agency reference number DFAT/CPO/017, and what is the (a) use for, and (b) itemised cost of, these vehicles.

Ms Julie Bishop: The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:
Armoured vehicles procured by DFAT for use by overseas Missions are all commercial vehicles modified and security-enhanced by third-party manufacturers using Toyota, Mercedes-Benz and BMW base vehicles. The vehicles are used only for official purposes for the safe and secure transport of Government personnel and visiting VIPs at posts located in high-threat locations where there is a need for blast and/or ballistic protection. This need is determined according to the level of security threat assessed by the department for each relevant post. Using the United Nation’s Standard Products and Services Code, the department’s armoured vehicles are technically classified for procurement and reporting purposes as ‘specialised and recreational’. The cost of armoured vehicles ranges from between AUD200,000 and AUD525,000 depending on the security threat of the vehicles’ deployment location and protective fit-out requirements.
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade: Consultants

(Question No. 524)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in writing, on 21 October 2014:

Since 7 September 2013 can the Minister provide details as to the use of all consultants within his/her department, including reasons for engaging their services, and the costs involved.

Ms Julie Bishop: The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

The department engages consultants where it requires specialist expertise or when independent research, review or assessment is required. Details of contracts valued at or above $10,000, including consultancies, are available on AusTender. Details of the consultancy arrangements entered into by the department each financial year are also published in the department’s annual report available from the department’s website.