House of Representatives

Hansard

MONDAY, 15 JUNE 2020

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FORTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—FIRST PERIOD

Governor-General
His Excellency General the Hon. David John Hurley, AC, DSC, FTSE (Retd)

House of Representatives Office Holders
Speaker—Hon. Anthony David Hawthorn Smith MP
Deputy Speaker—Mr Llewellyn Stephen O'Brien MP
Second Deputy Speaker—Mr Robert George Mitchell MP
Members of the Speaker's Panel—Hon. Kevin James Andrews MP, Hon. Sharon Leah Bird MP, Ms Sharon Catherine Claydon MP, Mr Steven Georganas MP, Hon. Dr David Arthur Gillespie MP, Mr Ian Reginald Goodenough MP, Hon. Dr John Joseph McVeigh MP, Ms Maria Vamvakinou MP, Mr Ross Xavier Vasta MP, Mr Andrew Bruce Wallace MP, Mrs Lucy Elizabeth Wicks MP, Mr Richard James Wilson MP, Mr Trent Moir Zimmerman MP
Leader of the House—Hon. Christian Porter MP
Deputy Leader of the House—Hon. Darren Chester MP
Manager of Opposition Business—Hon. Anthony Stephen Burke MP
Deputy Manager of Opposition Business—Hon. Mark Butler MP

Party Leaders and Whips
Liberal Party of Australia
Leader—Hon. Scott John Morrison MP
Deputy Leader—Hon. Joshua Anthony Frydenberg MP
Chief Government Whip—Mr Albertus Johannes van Manen MP
Government Whips—Mr Rowan Eric Ramsey MP and Ms Nicolle Flint MP

The Nationals
Leader—Hon. Michael Francis McCormack MP
Deputy Leader—Hon. David Littleproud MP
Chief Whip—Hon. Damian Kevin Drum MP
Deputy Whip—Mr Kenneth Desmond O'Dowd MP

Australian Labor Party
Leader—Hon. Anthony Albanese MP
Deputy Leader—Hon. Richard Marles MP
Chief Opposition Whip—Mr Christopher Patrick Hayes MP
Opposition Whips—Ms Joanne Catherine Ryan MP and Ms Anne Maree Stanley MP

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<tr>
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<td>Mallee, VIC</td>
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<td>Wells, Ms Anika Shay</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wicks, Mrs Lucy Elizabeth</td>
<td>Robertson, NSW</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Zimmerman, Mr Trent Moir</td>
<td>North Sydney, NSW</td>
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PARTY ABBREVIATIONS
AG—Australian Greens; ALP—Australian Labor Party; CA—Centre Alliance;
IND—Independent; KAP—Katter’s Australia Party; LNP—Liberal National Party;
LP—Liberal Party of Australia; NATS—The Nationals;

Heads of Parliamentary Departments
Clerk of the Senate—R Pye
Clerk of the House of Representatives—C Surtees
Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—R Stefanic
Parliamentary Budget Officer—J Wilkinson
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon Scott Morrison MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for the Public Service</td>
<td>The Hon Scott Morrison MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon Marise Payne</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Cabinet</td>
<td>The Hon Greg Hunt MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Indigenous Australians</td>
<td>The Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister and Cabinet</td>
<td>The Hon Ben Morton MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development</td>
<td>The Hon Michael McCormack MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management</td>
<td>The Hon David Littleproud MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts</td>
<td>The Hon Paul Fletcher MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Population, Cities and Urban Infrastructure</td>
<td>The Hon Alan Tudge MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Regional Health, Regional Communications and Local Government</td>
<td>The Hon Mark Coulton MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Decentralisation and Regional Education</td>
<td>The Hon Andrew Gee MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Road Safety and Freight Transport</td>
<td>The Hon Scott Buchholz MP</td>
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<td>The Hon Kevin Hogan MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon Nola Marino MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon Michael Sukkar MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon Michael Sukkar MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Superannuation, Financial Services and Financial Technology</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jane Hume</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon Mathias Cormann</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Vice-President of the Executive Council) (Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Finance, Charities and Electoral Matters</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Zed Seselja</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management</td>
<td>The Hon David Littleproud MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for the Environment</td>
<td>The Hon Sussan Ley MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Resources, Water and Northern Australia</td>
<td>The Hon Keith Pitt MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Waste Reduction and Environmental Management</td>
<td>The Hon Trevor Evans MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Forestry and Fisheries</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jonathon Duniam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Marise Payne</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment (Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon Alex Hawke MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Minister for Trade and Investment</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>The Hon Christian Porter MP</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>(Leader of the House)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Industrial Relations</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Christian Porter MP</td>
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<td>The Hon Greg Hunt MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon David Coleman MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister for Customs, Community Safety and Multicultural Affairs</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Hon Jason Wood MP</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Education</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Dan Tehan MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister for Vocational Education, Training and Apprenticeships</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Industry, Science and Technology</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Angus Taylor MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Resources, Water and Northern Australia</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Keith Pitt MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister for Northern Australia</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Hon Michelle Landry MP</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Defence</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Veterans' Affairs</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Darren Chester MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Defence Personnel</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>(Deputy Leader of the House)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Defence Minister</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>(Manager of Government Business in the Senate)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Stuart Robert MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Government Services</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Stuart Robert MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister for Children and Families</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Hon Michelle Landry MP</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister for Community Housing, Homelessness and Community Services</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Hon Luke Howarth MP</strong></td>
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<td>The Hon. Anthony Albanese MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Cabinet Secretary</strong></td>
<td>Senator Jenny McAllister</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Deputy Leader of the Opposition</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Richard Marles MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Defence</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Defence Industry</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Assistant Minister for Defence</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Dr Mike Kelly AM MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Penny Wong</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>**Shadow Assistant Minister to the Leader of the</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Attorney-General</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Constitutional Reform</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Reconciliation</td>
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<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Australians</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Ageing and Seniors</td>
<td>The Hon. Julie Collins MP</td>
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<td>The Hon. Brendan O'Connor MP</td>
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<td>Ms Clare O'Neil MP</td>
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<td>Title</td>
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<td>Mr Matt Keogh MP</td>
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<td>The Hon. Amanda Rishworth MP</td>
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The SPEAKER (Hon. Tony Smith) took the chair at 10:00, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

COMMITTEES
Petitions Committee

Report
Mr O’DOWD (Flynn—Deputy Nationals Whip) (10:01): As Chair of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Petitions, I present the 13th report of the Petitions Committee of the 46th Parliament.

The report read as follows—

1. The committee resolved to present the following petitions in accordance with standing order 207:

   Petitions certified on 13 May 2020
   From 3 petitioners – requesting certain assistance measures during COVID-19 (EN1417)
   From 1 petitioner – regarding Medicare discrimination against overseas trained doctors (EN1418)
   From 1 petitioner – requesting certain assistance measures during COVID-19 (EN1419)
   From 2 petitioners – requesting that permanent residency applications be expedited during COVID-19 (EN1420)
   From 11 petitioners – requesting a suspension of foreign ownership (EN1421)
   From 1 petitioner – requesting the closure of schools during COVID-19 (EN1422)
   From 1 petitioner – requesting certain lockdown measures during COVID-19 (EN1423)
   From 2 petitioners – regarding the treatment of law graduates (EN1425)
   From 12 petitioners – regarding domestic violence offence accusations against men (EN1426)
   From 2 petitioners – regarding female violence against children (EN1427)
   From 1 petitioner – requesting assistance for hospitality workers during COVID-19 (EN1431)
   From 1 petitioner – requesting wage subsidies (EN1440)
   From 16 petitioners – requesting assistance for those receiving certain benefits during COVID-19 (EN1442)
   From 55 petitioners – regarding the ability for international medical graduates to assist during COVID-19 (EN1443)
   From 1 petitioner – regarding certain measures during COVID-19 (EN1444)
   From 1 petitioner – requesting that day-care operators freeze charges for non-attendance during COVID-19 (EN1445)
   From 5 petitioners – requesting a Royal Commission into the Port Arthur massacre (EN1446)
   From 2 petitioners – requesting for Medicare rebates to include all GP tele-health consultations (EN1447)
   From 1 petitioner – regarding the processing time for 887 visas (EN1448)
   From 2 petitioners – requesting visa extensions during COVID-19 (EN1450)
   From 2 petitioners – requesting that car washes be banned from operating during COVID-19 (EN1451)
   From 1 petitioner – regarding a ban on video game loot boxes (EN1452)
   From 2 petitioners – requesting a reduction of credit card interest rates during COVID-19 (EN1453)
   From 319 petitioners – regarding discrimination against New Zealand citizens (EN1454)
   From 7 petitioners – regarding restrictions on exports to China (EN1455)
   From 1 petitioner – regarding anti-crisis measures during COVID-19 (EN1457)
   From 1 petitioner – regarding assistance for landlords and businesses during COVID-19 (EN1458)
From 1 petitioner – regarding employment for temporary visa holders during COVID-19 (EN1460)
From 2 petitioners – requesting assistance for landlords during COVID-19 (EN1464)
From 22 petitioners – regarding foreign ownership of Australian assets (EN1466)
From 5 petitioners – regarding imported foods (EN1467)
From 1 petitioner – requesting section 115a of the Copyright Act 1968 be repealed (EN1468)
From 1 petitioner – regarding certain social distancing measures during COVID-19 (EN1469)
From 26 petitioners – regarding vaccinations (EN1470)
From 4 petitioners – regarding tax deductions on food and beverage items (EN1471)
From 1 petitioner – requesting changes to certain visas during COVID-19 (EN1472)
From 222 petitioners – regarding Australia’s relationship with China (EN1473)
From 3 petitioners – regarding nursing registrations for graduates (EN1474)
From 8 petitioners – regarding charity donations (EN1475)
From 7 petitioners – regarding rights for stay at home parents (EN1476)
From 8 petitioners – requesting proof of sunset clauses on executive emergency powers (EN1477)
From 1 petitioner – requesting certain actions by universities during COVID-19 (EN1478)
From 11 petitioners – requesting an exemption to HELP debts for health care workers (EN1479)
From 2 petitioners – regarding lockdown measures during COVID-19 (EN1481)
From 15 petitioners – requesting the resumption of parliamentary sittings (EN1482)
From 9 petitioners – regarding the purchase of baby formula (EN1483)
From 14 petitioners – requesting changes to taxation for certified organic food growers (EN1485)
From 2 petitioners – requesting the extension of entry dates for existing working holiday visas during COVID-19 (EN1486)
From 45 petitioners – requesting a moratorium on the 5G network (EN1487)
From 2 petitioners – requesting a moratorium on space travel (EN1489)
From 11,419 petitioners – regarding implementation of the 5G network (EN1490)
From 40 petitioners – regarding implementation of the 5G network (EN1492)
From 56 petitioners – regarding implementation of the 5G network (EN1493)
From 5 petitioners – regarding quarantine and isolation rules for regional areas during COVID-19 (EN1494)
From 2 petitioners – requesting an extension of working holiday visas during COVID-19 (EN1495)
From 22 petitioners – regarding food and water security and societal changes (EN1498)
From 1,052 petitioners – requesting a freeze to World Health Organisation funding (EN1500)
From 2 petitioners – regarding education (EN1501)
From 514 petitioners – regarding the integration of Chinese medicine into treatments for COVID-19 (EN1502)
From 301 petitioners – requesting a withdrawal of World Health Organisation funding (EN1503)
From 47 petitioners – regarding implementation of the 5G network (EN1504)
From 418 petitioners – requesting a reversal of mandatory vaccinations for visitors to nursing homes (EN1505)
From 2 petitioners – requesting a repeal of the mandatory requirement for crush protection devices on all-terrain vehicles (EN1506)
From 12 petitioners – requesting a ban on the use of credit cards for online gambling websites (EN1507)
From 44 petitioners – regarding Chinese owned assets (EN1508)
From 861 petitioners – requesting hazard allowance and a tax holiday for essential healthcare workers (EN1509)
From 7 petitioners – requesting financial support for self-funded retirees during COVID-19 (EN1510)
From 3,434 petitioners – requesting an extension to certain visas during COVID-19 (EN1513)
From 328 petitioners – requesting that COVID-19 emergency measures be revoked (EN1514)
From 82 petitioners – regarding the World Health Organisation and COVID-19 lockdown measures (EN1515)
From 2 petitioners – requesting that a COVID-19 service medal be awarded for certain public sector workers (EN1516)
From 149 petitioners – requesting changes to property settlement laws (EN1518)
From 40 petitioners – regarding Chinese owned assets (EN1520)
From 32 petitioners – requesting public acknowledgement of the Constitution (EN1521)
From 277 petitioners – requesting an increase to the carers pensions during COVID-19 (EN1522)
From 420 petitioners – regarding trade with China (EN1523)
From 214 petitioners – requesting a Royal Commission into political corruption and conflicts of interest (EN1524)
From 57 petitioners – requesting a public inquiry into the origin of COVID-19 (EN1525)
From 2,955 petitioners – requesting that advice be sought on matters relating to fossil fuel production (EN1526)
From 21,164 petitioners – requesting that influenza vaccines not be made a condition of employment or visitation to aged care facilities (EN1528)
From 51 petitioners – requesting a tax exemption for essential workers (EN1529)
From 208 petitioners – requesting an end to COVID-19 lockdowns (EN1530)
From 11,846 petitioners – regarding influenza vaccinations (EN1531)
From 647 petitioners – requesting the introduction of monitored home quarantine during COVID-19 (EN1532)
From 93 petitioners – requesting a vote in support of the Climate Change (National Framework for Adaptation and Mitigation) Bill 2020 (PN0473)
From 204 petitioners – regarding radioactive waste near Kimba, South Australia (PN0474)
From 511 petitioners – regarding the persecution and organ harvesting of Falun Gong in China (PN0475)
Petition certified at meeting of 10 June 2020

From 1,147 petitioners – requesting the establishment of a Federal Integrity Commission that upholds the Beechworth Principles (PN0477)

2. The following ministerial responses to petitions were received:
Ministerial responses considered on 13 May 2020
From the Minister for Finance – to a petition regarding lowering the voting age to 16 (EN1078)
From the Minister for Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business – to a petition regarding the regulatory strategies, policies and activities of the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) (EN1129)
From the Attorney-General – to a petition regarding a Bill of Rights (EN1140)
From the Minister Energy and Emissions Reduction – to a petition regarding a ban on incandescent lighting (EN1146)
From the Minister for Education – to a petition regarding mandatory first aid training for school aged children (EN1165)
From the Minister for Industrial Relations – to a petition regarding Paid Parental Leave (EN1167)
From the Minister for Home Affairs – to a petition regarding police strip searches (EN1168)
From the Minister for Health – to a petition regarding the regulation of e-cigarettes (EN1170)
From the Minister for Veterans’ Affairs – to a petition regarding the Department of Veterans’ Affairs decision and review practices (EN1172)
From the Minister for Waste Reduction and Environmental Management – to a petition regarding single-use plastic bags (EN1181)
From the Minister for Regional Development and Territories – to a petition regarding statehood of the Northern Territory (EN1188)
From the Minister for Population, Cities and Urban Infrastructure – to a petition regarding regional development in North West Victoria (EN1190)
From the Attorney-General – to a petition regarding breaches of section 44 of the Constitution (EN1198)
From the Minister for Home Affairs – to a petition regarding regional processing and resettlement arrangements for refugees (EN1202)
From the Minister for Superannuation, Financial Services and Financial Technology – to a petition regarding bank lending policies (EN1204)
From the Attorney-General – to a petition regarding withdrawing the Religious Discrimination Bill (EN1224)
From the Minister for the Environment – to a petition regarding a Royal Commission into global warming (EN1231)
From the Attorney-General – to a petition regarding arson offences and associated penalties (EN1233)
From the Assistant Treasurer – to a petition regarding direct debit payments (EN1269)
From the Minister for the Environment – to a petition regarding Australia's natural heritage and building disaster management capabilities (EN1291)
From the Minister for Home Affairs – to a petition regarding the spread of COVID-19 (EN1316)
From the Minister for Home Affairs – to a petition regarding the spread of COVID-19 (EN1332)
From the Minister for Health – to a petition regarding legislation relating to immunisations (PN0460)
From the Minister for the Environment – to a petition regarding seismic testing off the NSW coast (PN0463)
From the Attorney-General – to a petition regarding the addition of a preamble on Indigenous Australians into the Constitution (PN0466)

Ministerial responses considered on 10 June 2020
From the Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction – to a petition regarding leaving the Paris Climate Agreement (EN1116)
From the Assistant Minister for Superannuation, Financial Services and Financial Technology – to a petition regarding EFTPOS fees (EN1130)
From the Assistant Minister for Waste Reduction and Environmental Management – to a petition regarding plastic packaging (EN1142)
From the Minister for Resources, Water and Northern Australia – to a petition regarding a royal commission into the Murray Darling Basin Authority (EN1149)
From the Minister for Employment – to a petition regarding a royal commission into the treatment of the unemployed and single parents (EN1159)
From the Assistant Minister for Customs, Community Safety & Multicultural Affairs – to a petition regarding processing times for skilled regional visas (EN1173)
From the Assistant Minister for Waste Reduction and Environmental Management – to a petition regarding the environmental impact of helium balloons (EN1175)
From the Assistant Minister for Superannuation, Financial Services and Financial Technology – to a petition regarding EFTPOS and withdrawal fees (EN1207)
From the Minister for Finance – to a petition regarding political donations (EN1211)
From the Minister for the Environment – to a petition regarding policy for reforestation of unproductive land (EN1228)
From the Assistant Minister for Customs, Community Safety and Multicultural Affairs – to a petition regarding claims of the Piri family (EN1232)
From the Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management – to a petition regarding firefighting robots and associated training (EN1235)
From the Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister – to a petition regarding the honours list for fire fighters (EN1238)
From the Minister for Health – to a petition regarding Pseudoephedrine Prescriptions (EN1250)
From the Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction – to a petition requesting a citizen's assembly for climate and ecological justice (EN1251)
From the Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction – to a petition regarding legislation for climate change (EN1253)
From the Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management – to a petition regarding bushfire mitigation strategies (EN1267)
From the Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction – to a petition regarding reducing fossil fuel emissions (EN1270)
From the Minister for Finance – to a petition regarding federal politician’s remuneration (EN1275)
From the Minister for Families and Social Services – to a petition regarding female domestic violence against children and men (EN1276)
From the Attorney-General – to a petition requesting an independent commission against corruption (EN1277)
From the Minister for Industry, Science and Technology – to a petition regarding country of origin food labelling (EN1279)
From the Minister for Foreign Affairs – to a petition regarding a suspension of the international development program (EN1280)
From the Minister for Health – to a petition regarding blood donation requirements (EN1283)
From the Minister for the Environment – to a petition regarding Australia's flora and fauna (EN1295)
From the Minister for the Environment – to a petition regarding Australia's flora and fauna (EN1296)
From the Minister for Aged Care and Senior Australians – to a petition requesting a review to tender aged care assessment arrangements (EN1299)
From the Minister for Home Affairs – to a petition regarding international flights coming to Australia (EN1301)
From the Attorney-General – to a petition regarding an independent commission against corruption (EN1303)
From the Minister for Aged Care and Senior Australians – to a petition regarding misleading packaging (EN1304)
From the Minister for the Environment – to a petition regarding a memorial and museum for extinct and endangered Australian species (EN1313)
From the Minister for Indigenous Australians – to a petition regarding the Australian Constitution (EN1321)
From the Minister for Finance – to a petition regarding four year fixed terms for both houses in Federal Parliament (EN1345)
From the Minister for Health – to a petition regarding vaccine safety (EN1356)
From the Minister for Home Affairs – to a petition regarding travel to Korea during COVID-19 (EN1359)
From the Minister for Home Affairs – to a petition regarding Australian boarders during COVID-19 (EN1385)
From the Minister for Education – to a petition regarding helping helping during COVID-19 (EN1403)
From the Minister for Families & Social Services – to a petition regarding Newstart payments (PN0458)
From the Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister – to a petition regarding changing the date of Australia Day (PN0464)
From the Minister for the Environment – to a petition regarding the protection of Australia's natural heritage (PN0472)
Mr Ken O'Dowd
Chair – Petitions Committee

PETITIONS

Mr O'DOWD (Flynn—Deputy Nationals Whip) (10:01): I present the following petitions:

Climate Change

Support the Climate Change (National Framework for Adaptation and Mitigation) Bill 2020
This petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House: Climate change is real with disastrous impact on our natural environment, economy and way of life. Strong national plans are needed to respond to the impact of climate change, to minimise its risks and to develop the economic structure needed for the future: We need - A positive bi-partisan response to climate change - Plans at a national level for the adaptations necessary at both national and global level - National plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that align with scientific advice and State government and international commitments - An independent Climate Change Commission to ensure transparency in monitoring, reporting and accountability.

We therefore ask the House to: Vote in support of the Climate Change (National Framework for Adaptation and Mitigation) Bill 2020
From 93 citizens (PN0473)

Nuclear Waste

Rescind decision to store radioactive waste near Kimba, South Australia
This petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House: The Federal Government has not established a need for a national repository for radioactive waste. Two sources account for over 90% of radioactive waste: the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology (ANSTO) facility at Lucas Heights (85% for nuclear medicine) and 2000 cubic metres of low level waste at Woomera. Bushfires like those of late 2019 and 2020 could engulf the site. The Federal Government is overriding South Australian legislation prohibiting radioactive waste sites. The Federal Government has a track record of failed radioactive cleanups, e.g. Maralinga nuclear test site. The waste site will not facilitate nuclear medicine. ANSTO's decision to produce medical isotopes using uranium powered nuclear reactors compromises the environment. By comparison, the "light" method of medical isotope production, marketed at the LINAC synchrotron facility in Saskatchewan, Canada is a cheap clean method with zero radioactive by-product that ANSTO could have adopted. The Federal Government has stated that there must be broad community support for a radioactive waste site. Having not included the votes of traditional owners invalidates the vote result. Traditional owners of Muckaty Station in the Northern Territory, whose successful 2014 Federal Court challenge to the nomination of a radioactive waste site on their lands, have set a precedent for Barngarla traditional owners to challenge the decision.

We therefore ask the House to: rescind this decision to site a radioactive waste facility in South Australia with no further attempts to commander the lands of traditional owners in South Australia.
From 204 citizens (PN0474)

Falun Gong

Stop the persecution and organ harvesting of Falun Gong in China
This petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House that Falun Gong is a peaceful meditation practice based on the principles of Truthfulness, Compassion and Forbearance. Millions of Falun Gong practitioners in China have been fired, jailed, tortured or killed by the Chinese Communist regime since July 1999. There have been persistent reports of systematic, state-sanctioned organ harvesting from non-consenting prisoners of conscience in China, primarily practitioners of Falun Gong. The Independent China Tribunal, chaired by Sir Geoffrey Nice QC, concluded in its Final Judgement in 2019: "Forced organ harvesting has been committed for years throughout China on a significant scale and that..."
Falun Gong practitioners have been one - and probably the main - source of organ supply" and that crimes against humanity against Falun Gong have been proved "beyond reasonable doubt".

We therefore ask the House to request the Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and Australian Government to: 1. Pass a motion or make a statement to openly an immediate end to the 20-year persecution of Falun Gong in China and the immediate release of all Falun Gong practitioners and other prisoners of conscience; 2. Urge China to immediately end the practice of organ harvesting from all prisoners of conscience and conduct a thorough public education campaign to ensure Australians do not unknowingly participate in forced organ harvesting in China; 3. Deny visas and bar entry to Chinese officials and policemen who are involved in the persecution of Falun Gong.

From 511 citizens (PN0475)

COVID-19: Economy

Suspend rent, loan, mortgage and credit card repayments

Small business and family enterprise in Australia account for almost 98% of businesses and account for 35% of Australia's gross domestic profit and employ 44% of Australia's workforce. Of the 877,744 total employing businesses, 823,551 are small businesses (93.8%), and of those businesses, 627,932 are businesses that employ only 1-4 people, known as micro businesses (76.2%). (Source: Small Business Counts, 07/2019. ASBFEO)

These figures suggest that the most prominent and powerful economic voice in Australia would be the self-employed and small businesses. Yet, in reality, over 8 million people involved in small business are the most vulnerable to the prolonged economic downturn and the increasing financial burden due to the bushfire and COVID19.

Many small businesses have net income well below the average Australian wage with 52% of small business owners earn below $25,000 per annum (ib.) and the current stimulus package focused on larger corporates would not ensure the survival of small businesses. With the imminent recession, the battling mass would fail to pay residential/commercial rents, business/home loans, credit cards and utility bills. Such defaults and bankruptcies would lead to unemployment and loss of homes and further deteriorate Australian economy.

We therefore ask the House to suspend rent, business loan, mortgage and credit card repayments in Australia immediately. Across Europe and USA, similar measures have already been implemented to protect its citizens. As RBA governor Dr Lowe said, "The banking system is well capitalised and is in a strong liquidity position" and it can withstand the suspension of repayments.

From 3 citizens (EN1417)

Medicare

Medicare Discrimination against doctors trained abroad.

Highly trained doctors that are allowed to practice and even teach other doctors in Australia are being discriminated against by Medicare.

Because they completed their degree in a foreign country, they are not eligible to offer Medicare rebates or bulk billing to patients.

Countries like the UK have incredibly high standards of training and their doctors are some of the best in the world.

This ruling is clearly racial discrimination and is causing hardship to the most vulnerable people in our communities.

If a doctor is allowed to practice here, they should also be allowed to offer Medicare.

People should be able to visit their chosen GP regardless of their financial status. Medicare is preventing this.

This ruling is insulting to our doctors and unfair on their patients.

We therefore ask the House to please review and change the discriminatory Medicare ruling regarding foreign trained doctors.

We ask for equality for our doctors and fairness for their patients.

From 1 citizen (EN1418)

COVID-19: Economy

Pandemic Force Majeure

The House must act with urgency to declare Pandemic Force Majeure: to wit, a suspension of rents, mortgages (and upstream payments) household and commercial utility bills for all people and entities that cannot continue to work or operate commercially due to the Coronavirus pandemic. We therefore ask the house to implement the above with the utmost urgency.

We therefore ask the House to enact this measure with the utmost urgency

From 1 citizen (EN1419)

Migration

Fast track of PR Status.

I am a UK trained nurse with over 10 years experience, Currently on 457 Visa granted after Changes. Expiring Oct 2021. I work within NSW Health as a Registered Nurse.
In the current climate and global crisis re COVID-19. I have family in the UK. It may be a case at short notice I may have to return to the UK should I need to support family members. With the recent changes by Prime Minister regarding all overseas travel, only Permanent Residents and Citizens can only return to the country.

Long term plans for myself are to try and remain in Australian, however should I need a temp reprieve there is no route to return and get back to work.

With current health care staffing levels and the possibility that these may reduce to crisis levels, the I ask for consideration that Qualified Health professions be given consideration for PR status fast tracked. Both to allow Australia to retain staff and also an option for them to get back to the country and back to work as soon as feasibly possibly.

We therefore ask the House to consider the above proposal allowing those workers in positions within NSW health and medical fields whom are currently on Visa's such as the abolished 457 to be fast tracked into a Permanent resident status, to allow the country to retain staff throughout the current times and crisis.

From 2 citizens (EN1420)

Business Investment

Suspending Foreign Ownership

Because of our current financial position, I insist that we must suspend foreign ownership until we fully recover. Certain people who will be effected by the encroaching financial situation will become desperate to sell whatever assets that are available to them. Once these assets are gone, it will be too late. I feel this matter is a national emergency, and must be acted upon immediately.

We therefore ask the House to vote to suspend foreign ownership for the foreseeable future.

From 11 citizens (EN1421)

COVID-19: Schools

Close schools down amidst COVID19

We would like the Government or Parliament to enforce this action due to the growing fear among parents, teachers and students that attend school. The ability to focus or concentrate is affected in addition to the growing fears of this coronavirus as more cases and deaths takes place. There is evidence that children have the ability to spread this coronavirus. There is also evidence that this coronavirus is also affecting young children. In our view, the government and health officials around the world are more 'reactive' rather than 'proactive'. This will result in more spread as time is given for the virus to do so especially as we enter the colder months.

We therefore ask the House to close the schools down as soon as possible and take the necessary action to prevent further spread of COVID19.

From 1 citizen (EN1422)

COVID-19

AUSTRALIA TO GO INTO LOCK-DOWN NOW, TO AVERT COVID-19 DISASTER

The COVID-19 outbreak is continuing exponentially in Australia and more drastic measures need to be taken urgently, in order to avert a complete disaster, as witnessed in Italy.

The current social distancing measures are not enough. People may be transmitting the disease at work and in social gatherings, for up to two weeks, whilst being completely unaware of their infection, due to the absence of any symptoms.

Our Health system will be completely overwhelmed by the number of patients that will result, if extreme social distancing is not enforced. Australians will die unnecessarily.

We therefore ask the House to ACT IMMEDIATELY and ENACT LOCKDOWN and extreme social distancing NOW, in order to slow the spread of COVID-19, enabling our medical practitioners to better cope with this unprecedented situation, therefore saving precious Australian lives.

From 1 citizen (EN1423)

Higher Education

Refunds & Compensation For Past & Current Law Graduates/Lawyers

Request urgent Refunds & Compensation For Past & Current; Law Graduates/Lawyers.

- University Students and admitted Lawyers in Australia/USA/UK; have been used as Cash cows in the past and currently
- Our Academic Programs IE Degrees/ Masters/Post Graduate Studies value; have become worthless due to the oversaturation of Law Graduates in the Australian/USA/UK Legal Profession
- We have been abused (both sexually and financially) and overworked; by our senior Principals/Partners; over many years.
- Other reasons

We therefore ask the House to take urgent action to hold various; IE Universities/Law Societies/Legal Services Commissioners; in each Australian State/Territory and other related Departments; to account under the Law and to provide
urgent, overdue remedies and financial compensation and other support/relief; to both Law Graduates and Lawyers in Australia/USA/UK.

To put protective measures in Australia/USA/UK; so that families and students University Investments; have strong Financial and Career value both short and long term for many decades; after they graduate and that there is no oversaturation in any Profession. Universities and Governments to be held to account under the Law; for using Australian or International students as Cash Cows and for free Professional Labour.

From 2 citizens (EN1425)

**Domestic and Family Violence**

Protect Men from staged Domestic Violence Offences/& Other False Offences

Many Men are unfairly & falsely set up by their partners &/or by other parties, then charged & prosecuted by Law Enforcement Agencies & the Judiciary.

Men cannot afford to defend their cases in court. IE There was one Australian Man accused of DVO & other Offences; he was thrown in Jail; his parents paid around $900,000.00 in Court Fees; just to defend his case. He was jailed for many years & then he finally won his case & it was proved that his partner staged the offenses against him. This serious incident; destroyed his life & his parents had to pay out around $900,000.00 to achieve such a result. Most Men & their families; realistically do not have this money; to pay to defend Legal Cases.

We therefore ask the House to act and make urgent reforms; Australia Wide to now Protect Men and their rights during Law Enforcement Investigations at both State and Federal Level and within the Judiciary/Courts/Tribunals systems.

Both Men and Women; should be treated Equally during Law Enforcement Investigations and during Legal Cases/Court Proceedings. There should be no bias/influence or other bad conduct by Law Enforcement Agents and Magistrates and Judges from the Judiciary or from any other; Local/State/Federal Government Department or Agency or related Professions/Commissioners. Law is about the truth and all parties to a dispute; I submit should have a voice to argue their Facts and Arguments to the allegations or case; whether Plaintiff or Defendant.

From 12 citizens (EN1426)

**Domestic and Family Violence**

Stop Female Violence Against Children

Within the year 2015-16, over 45,000 had been abused at their home by a family members, father, uncle, even the very loving mother. The fact is female violence against children has been around since the start. But as society, we have ignored this. Keep it invisible

We therefore ask the House to raise an awareness to the public

From 2 citizens (EN1427)

**COVID-19**

Shut down the country for 12 weeks

Drastic action is needed now to combat COVID-19 before it is too late, and the window to act is almost gone.

We therefore ask the House to lock down the nation similar to Italy now, for at least 12 weeks, and maintain essential services and food supply services. Once infections are at 0 and have remained there for a few weeks to ensure no asymptomatic cases remain, normal activity can begin to be resumed, excepting for the opening of borders, until a vaccine is available.

Action is needed now.

From 1 citizen (EN1429)

**COVID-19: Schools**

Immediate Closure Of All Schools

We, the people of Australia , call on the Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, to immediately close all Schools.

Using our Teachers as Sacrificial Lambs, Baby Sitters, and putting children, teachers and the wider community at risk is unacceptable!

It is now clear that although children do not seem to suffer severe effects when they contract the virus, they can contract it and spread it.

Numerous doctors have pointed out key differences between Australia and countries like Singapore that have kept schools operating.

According to UNESCO monitoring, over 100 countries have implemented nationwide closures.

Many parents and others are concerned of the lack of testing in general. Children could easily contract it at school and bring it home, putting others at risk. Teachers and children are also being put at risk by being left short of sanitiser and soap.
We the people ask the Australian Federal Government to immediately address the teachers who are in high-risk groups because of their age or underlying health conditions, vulnerable family members at home, pregnant, older and at-risk teachers to be immediately sent home.

These are unprecedented times. Now is the time for the Government to demonstrate its obligations to the health and wellbeing of all its employees.

We therefore ask the House to put forth these grievances before Parliament

From 2 citizens (EN1430)

COVID-19

Immediate and targeted support for Brisbane Hospitality workers during COVID-19

Due to necessary social distancing measures, normal trade for all hospitality business is hindered. Small businesses in hospitality in the Brisbane community have been hit with immense drop in trade due to the inability of the public to attend venues they usually would. In addition to drop in trade across the community this has also forced immediate closures in many cases.

Immediate action and financial support is required to business owners so they may be afforded rent free periods, freezes on utilities, taxes and fees and most importantly employees that have suffered immediate loss of income.

We therefore ask the House to implement immediate financial support for employees and business owners within the Brisbane hospitality community

From 1 citizen (EN1431)

COVID-19

Hair and beauty salons need to be shut during COVID-19

Hairdressers and Beauticians are face to face with clientele, we have to be hands on with our clientele and this makes it extremely hard to follow the advice to minimise risk of exposure to the COVID-19 virus. We as a hard working community need to stay healthy for our family, clients and ourselves. Please put the hair and beauty salons on the list of closures while Australia.

We therefore ask the House to add the hairdressing and beautician salons to be on the closure list while the COVID-19 virus is locking down other places.

From 1 citizen (EN1433)

COVID-19: Migration

Government support for people on Partnership Visa

To the house of representatives:

As the COVID-19 has affected the world, Australians are now receiving support payment from the Centrelink. The Centrelink website says that "you will need to get a permanent resident Visa or become an Australian citizen to qualify for Centrelink payments". I believe people like me that have applied for a Partnership Visa and now on a bridging waiting for the Visa to get finalized, should also get support from the Government. I am out of job and soon I will be unable to pay for my rent. Many other people might be in the same condition. We are also at risk! We are asking for some support during this epidemic to be able to help each other until the virus is over!

Thanks to everyone for your support.

We therefore ask the House to allow access to government support, even if only temporary, to people on Partnership visa that are still on bridging. Thank you

From 1 citizen (EN1434)

COVID-19

Repatriate Australian citizens

Repatriate stranded Australian citizens to Australia urgently.

We therefore ask the House to convene an emergency session to approve the supply of airplanes to enable the return of stranded Australians to their families and Homeland. There are no commercial flights for them to return and government action is their only option to return home in this time of crisis.

From 3 citizens (EN1435)

COVID-19: Schools

Fee waiver for all international students studying in Australia

Due to COVID-19 pandemic, all people are suffering and in response to pandemic, Australian government took steps for the sake of Australians but what makes me sad about is, Have they forgot about international students ? Do we have no contribution at all for Australia ? We international students equally love Australia as much as citizens does. But its been a while we have been waiting for announcement by government for providing aid for international students as well since we don't have any jobs and no money to pay rent and groceries. University & Colleges has been closed and most of them has
begun to provide online lectures. There won't be exams anymore and we have already paid tuition fees. Since, no one will be attending University and colleges so tuition fee which we pay is for face to face mode not for online study.

We therefore ask the House to waive tuition fees for all the international students studying internal mode/face to face in Australia. You help for international student would be much appreciated. We are international students but we love Australia as much as citizens do.

Thank You.
From 1 citizen (EN1437)

**Taxation**

Representation for taxpayers on SCV 444 Visa (New Zealanders)
The Illegal Taxation without Representation of New Zealanders in Australia

We therefore ask the House to confer upon NZ persons resident in Australia, Citizenship, for any current resident New Zealanders on SCV 444 Visa's that have contributed to the Tax pool of Australia in the past 19 years.

From 1592 citizens (EN1438)

**COVID-19: Migration**

Help temporary visa holders who lost work during pandemic

A petition for temporary visa holders who lost work and could not return home to be be able to access Centrelink benefits compassionate act to help the vulnerable during covid 19 pandemic

We therefore ask the House to support the vulnerable temporary visa holders who lost their jobs and are also not allowed to go back home. Having access to Centrelink benefits.

From 13 citizens (EN1439)

**Pensions and Benefits**

Subsidise wages before welfare

Stimulus payments towards wages will keep people in jobs and workplaces ready to re engage in trade. Employers can stand employees down with reduced payments. Once matters are settled, the employees can simply return to work without the need to job hunt and go through the employment and ATO registration process. The current trend of welfare payments to cover job loss, will carry substantial administration issues once industry is ready to re open. Employers will need to stand down employees, issue separation certificates, then re hire employees and go through the administration process with the ATO and superannuation, and re qualify employees for jobs.

We therefore ask the House to apply the weekly payments of $550 per week towards wages for people employed in full time, part time, or casual positions. This keeps people in jobs, gives employers the confidence to keep business open, deter employers from considering insolvency or complete business closure, and give employees the confidence of job safety once industry is cleared to re open. Business will be under enough administrative pressure with stock, orders, supply, logistics, the burden of re employment is not necessary and can be avoided. It is far more suitable for employees to go back to work rather then try find work. Payments for those facing unemployment should be made as a partial wage payment and not an unemployment payment.

From 1 citizen (EN1440)

**Pensions and Benefits**

Disability Pension Carers Pension and Seniors stimulus

Disability Pension Carers Pension and Seniors to be included in the $550 per fortnight stimulus. They too need to be included in the stimulus as they too have added costs due to the corona virus. Many have had to still buy daily living basics and havent been able to find them and if they have they have cost them more money or they miss out on eating. Many now have people they care for at home fulltime with school closures and some have even lost their jobs. They wont be allowed to apply for the $550 per fortnight because they dont currently qualify.

We therefore ask the House to please change the stimulus package to include all DSP Carers and Seniors to be included in the $550 per fortnight. Please make it equal for all!

From 16 citizens (EN1442)

**COVID-19: Hospitals**

International Medical Graduates to aid in - COVID 19 situation

Requesting permission for international medical graduates (IMG's) within Australia, who are either awaiting to sit the Australian Medical Council (AMC) exam or have completed AMC part 1 or both, to be allowed to work for the health system. With the increase in demand for Medical practitioner and to support the existing health service, IMG's would be able to bridge the gap and provide more accessibility to health service within Australia.

We therefore ask the House to grant limited/hospital sponsored regional registration to IMG's within Australia so that their qualified services can assist with the current situation.
COVID-19

Don't flatten the curve - stop the curve
There are currently two methods to dealing with C19.
Flatten-the-curve - Herd immunity (projected 60% to 80% infection of population) What Australia is currently heading for.
Stop-the-curve - Virus eradication (reduce infections to zero)
What it means: Flatten-the-curve - See Italy/Spain/UK all failing to cope.
- Long-term 6 to 12 months.
- Closing non-essential business causing millions of unemployed.
- Small business can't cope being closed for 3 to 6 months or longer.
- Huge burden on the economy created by newly unemployed.
- Healthcare overwhelmed.
- High number of deaths.
- Eventually still need a total lock-down.
What it means: Stop-the-curve - See China(hardly any new infections now)/New-Zealand/Malaysia
- 2 to 3 weeks
- Shut the entire country, we're all in this together, locate all cases, isolate, treat and follow contact tracing.
- Small business can survive being closed for 3 weeks, some may need a small amount of government help.
- No businesses closed.
- No additional unemployment.
- No additional burden to the economy.
- On the spot fines for anyone who shouldn't be out, reward for those with relevant symptoms being tested.
- After 2 to 3 weeks, Australia can start to return to normal, knowing all cases are identified and contained.
- Fewer deaths.
- Travel restrictions, vaccine or isolation will be required until pandemic over.
We therefore ask the House to please follow China, New-Zealand and Malaysia to stop-the-curve, saving lives, saving “non-essential” business, saving millions from unemployment and saving the economy.

From 1 citizen (EN1444)

COVID-19: Child Care

Empower day-care operators to freeze charges for non-attendance during Covid-19
During Covid-19 we understand that day-care(DC) AND family day-care(FDC) facilities need to stay open to provide services for certain workers/children.
Currently there are 3 choices for parents:
1. Continue sending children into an environment where either they pose a risk to others (e.g. children of hospital staff), or they are at risk themselves.
2. Formally withdraw children and risk losing extremely difficult to secure DC/FDC places.
3. Mark children 'absent' and continue paying FULL fees indefinitely.
Conversely DC/FDC providers are seeing loss of income as more parents are forced to cancel places.
This situation is untenable - it amounts to a crippling tax on parents passed straight through as a full fee subsidy for DC/FDCs to stay open and mostly empty, until eventually having to close anyway due to cancellations.
We therefore ask the House to immediately issue advice to eliminate this financially devastating situation for everyone. One suggestion is:
1. DC/FDCs must allow parents to "Freeze" enrollment for (X)number of months without losing their place.
2. DC/FDCs may continue claiming the Child Care Subsidy portion of fees for frozen/absent children during this time WITHOUT the need to charge families for their portion.
3. DC/FDCs may offer TEMPORARY places where there is demand but those places are released back to frozen children after (X)months.
This would continue providing Child Care Subsidy to DC/FDCs to operate reduced services WITHOUT making parents pay for services they can't use.
Under no circumstances require parents to pay a single $ for services they cannot use.

From 1 citizen (EN1445)
Port Arthur Massacre

Royal commission
Must be a matter in which the house must act
We therefore ask the House to launch a royal commission in Hobart massacre by Martyn Bryant as information states he wasn't near the the first shooting sight when it started
From 5 citizens (EN1446)

Medicare

Expand Medicare Rebates to include all GP tele-health consultations
Many GP practices have decided to isolate their rooms, and only offer tele-health consultations.
At present a Medicare Rebate is only available in restrictive circumstances related to COVID-19 exposure and to only certain members of the population.
All other patients have NO CHOICE but to pay a fee up to $150 with NO MEDICARE REBATE.
This is grossly unfair to the sick, the elderly, and to those who have experienced job loss or a reduction in income as a result of COVID-19 circumstances.
The Health Minister and the Federal Government need to
We therefore ask the House to ACT NOW to expand the tele-health consultations Medicare Rebate to allow ALL GP consultations to qualify, which will enhance the COVID-19 Social Distancing Protocols by encouraging less face to face contact between GPs and members of the public.
From 2 citizens (EN1447)

Migration

Reduce 887 visa processing time
Reduce 887 visa processing time
We therefore ask the House to reduce the 887 visa processing time
From 1 citizen (EN1448)

COVID-19

Extend temporary visas in-line with the COVID-19 border closures
There are currently over 1 million temporary visa holders in Australia who face an uncertain future during this crisis. With global border closures, flight cancellations, and increased numbers of infected, it is becoming increasingly difficult to arrange safe passage out of Australia. Temporary visa holders with employment sponsorship conditions, in which the businesses they work for have been affected by trading restrictions, may be forced to leave after building a life and contributing to this country. Working holiday visa makers contribute $1bn to our regional cities and towns, pay large sums of money to our tax system and are a needed workforce for countless industries.

With the current situation, tens of thousands of people will be left in limbo when their current visa expires, and do not have a way to remain legally in Australia. An extension will give these individuals peace of mind that they will not be penalised for overstaying their visa when the situation is out of their control.

Other Commonwealth governments including New Zealand, The United Kingdom and Canada have offered extensions to temporary visa holders during this unprecedented time.
We therefore ask the House to extend all current temporary work visas and working holiday visas due to end within the period of border closures and travel restrictions enacted during the COVID-19 crisis. We ask that these visas be extended until such a time that these restrictions and closures are lifted.
From 2 citizens (EN1450)

COVID-19

Ban Car Washes from Operating due to Coronavirus
There are barely any customers who visit the car wash, and we still have to pay the rent to the Landlord. Please pass the law to stop Car Washes from operating due to Coronavirus so that we would not have to risk our lives into stacking up debts to pay the rent.
We therefore ask the House to ban Car Washes from operating due to the Coronavirus.
From 2 citizens (EN1451)

Video Game Industry

Ban loot boxes which cost money from video games
- Requesting that loot boxes which cost real money are banned from video games as this can promote issues like gambling to many gamers, especially children. This can cause addictions to arise in not just adults but also children

CHAMBER
We therefore ask the House to ban the use of loot boxes in video games
From 1 citizen (EN1452)

**Banking and Financial Services**

Banks to Reduce Credit Card Interest Rates

Banks should be encouraged to reduce Credit Card rates to nearer the official cash rate to allow customers to navigate their way financially through COVID-19 crisis. Credit Cards still have on average a rate that is higher than 10%.

We therefore ask the House to implore the banking sector to reduce the rates during and post the COVID-19 crisis until the economy is in a better state.

From 2 citizens (EN1453)

**Migration**

Stop discriminating against New Zealanders

Unilateral 2001 laws denying Kiwis access to citizenship and social security are having a racially discriminatory effect by throwing mainly NZ-born and Pasifika under the corona virus bus, leaving them homeless and destitute through no fault of their own. These laws directly discriminate based on NZ-nationality. Such discrimination is generally prohibited under international law, as is violating the human rights of this cohort's children.

We therefore ask the House to comply with its international obligations under the ICERD, ICORC, ICCPR (arts. 2&26), and ICESCR (art. 9: Everyone has the right to social security) by amending citizenship and social security laws so that New Zealanders are again treated equally with all others residing in Australia without limitation as to time. Further, that nationality discrimination be prohibited to the extent required by international law.

From 319 citizens (EN1454)

**Exports**

Strict restrictions on exports to China

China is perhaps the most opportunistic nation to date, taking full advantage of the Australian people and its land. The interests of China have and always will be self gain through any method available to them, underhanded or not this will never change. At a time like this, the true motives of China have become apparent to the majority of the world. All vitally essential resources are exported to China, by China, for China, this needs to stop! Australia must put its interest first, considering the harm China can do to this nation through its Communist leadership which at best, is deceptive. The heavy reliance on China's economic power has left Australia as the feeding ground for Chinese investors for years, this needs to change and change permanently.

We therefore ask the House to put in place stringent measures to monitor, control and restrict all locally produced resources for export by foreign investors, peoples or interests. And further more, put in place more stringent land use legislation to control and restrict land right usages from those who would seek to export or abuse land use for foreign interests.

From 7 citizens (EN1455)

**COVID-19**

**COVID-19 Anticrisis Measures**

COVID-19 crisis hits the whole world and Australia in particular. The experts say millions of people may die all over the world this year. For the first time in history all the borders are closed, flights are banned. In the nearest future Australia will experience shortage in doctors and registered nurses, personal protective equipment, hospital beds, drugs, disinfectants, etc.

We therefore ask the House to take actions to stop spreading COVID-19 which include: amend the legislation so that doctors and registered nurses who are temporary residents will be granted permanent residents visas, reduce VAT for drugs, personal protective equipment, medical equipment required for treatment of COVID-19 and its complications, make ambulance services for symptomatic people free of charge.

From 1 citizen (EN1457)

**COVID-19**

Freeze commercial rents and mortgages of businesses affected by COVID19

Request the House intervene to support businesses whose revenues have been affected by COVID-19, and are therefor unable or struggling to pay rent, mortgage or loan repayments. Currently the next step for these companies is default, eviction and liquidation of the company. This is in no-ones best interest - the landlords, service provider, lending institution, employees or the governments. However in approaching 10 commercial landlords and two lending institutions across Australia over the past month due to this issue, only one has agreed to a one month suspension of rental payment. This is disappointing, short sighted and un-Australian.

We therefore ask the House to intervene and support businesses who are trying to save jobs, support their customers and keep the Australian economy going. We ask the House to do everything they can to insist landlords offer their commercial tenants negatively impacted by COVID-19 a rent moratorium of 6 months. And also to approach banks and other lending institutions to offer a similar mortgage and loan repayment moratorium for businesses. These moratoriums on rent, mortgage
or loan re-payments should not attract additional non-commercial terms like extended lease terms, increased lease payments, reversal of previously provided incentives or increased interest.

From 1 citizen (EN1458)

COVID-19

Mandatory dismissal during the Coronavirus periods

I am writing this letter to ask for a help with my currently difficult situation as a foreign worker.

Unfortunately, I lost my job as the sponsor had a financially internally hardship by the Coronavirus spread.

- My contract is terminated by the employer at 16 months term. If new start with new employer, it should be lasting for 2 years again. The experience will not be overlapped to new sponsor.
- Could not fill the visa nominee's minimum working obligation (2 years) under the sponsor by migration law.

Now I am concerning that my unforeseeable future, unstable visa condition (will expire in next few months) and dismissal employment by the sponsor.

I lost my job and, my future plans are all broken down in a short time.

There is nothing that I can do now unless going back to my home country.

We therefore ask the House to

In this coronavirus case, those current migration rules are tightly restricted to the temporary visa holder under the minimum conditions of employment include working terms, sponsor, nominated position.

would that barriers possibly widely be relieved?
From 1 citizen (EN1460)

COVID-19

COVID-19 compensation package for landlord

To the Speaker and the Members of the House of Representatives

When our country encounters such a disaster that has not happened in a century, I believe that everyone has a responsibility to contribute, so that the whole nation can survive.

As landlords, we are willing to support the government's new legislation on tenant protection during the COVID-19 crisis.

We will give rent reduction within our ability those tenants whose income is affected by the COVID-19 crisis, and we will not evict tenants who cannot afford to pay rent during this period.

We landlord are the tax residents of Australia and also need to be protected by government.

Tenants lost their jobs, but some landlords harder than the tenants. The landlords may also lose their jobs, but they still need to pay water, electricity, council rate, land taxes and bank loans bills.

We hope that the government can issue relevant laws and regulations. In this outbreak, if the tenants are unable to pay the landlord, we hope the government can pay the rent arrears instead. And the government should waive the corresponding amount of land tax and council rate to compensate the landlord.

Property investors contribute a lot of taxes and cheap rental houses for the country. When you blow their confidence, who is willing to invest?

We therefore ask the House to discuss and form a compensation package to all landlords affected by the government's recent no eviction regulations and protect all landlords in this country.

From 2 citizens (EN1464)

Foreign Investment

Deny all foreign ownership bids of Australian owned assets.

Due to the devastating impact of Covid-19 and the 2019 and 2020 bushfires on Australian including Australian owned assets, businesses, products, services, utilities, land, environment, wildlife, water and resources, we the people of Australia under the Australian Constitution petition the government acting on our behalf to immediately implement a bill denying foreign ownership or rights either partly or fully by way of sale, licensing or shareholding of Australian owned or partly owned assets as mentioned herein for a minimum term of 4 years with a strong request to extend.

Further, we ask The Federal Government to introduce a bill for all currently foreign owned asset holders to source at least 65% of their products/services and resources from Australian owned businesses.

Already the effects of both Covid-19 and the Bushfires have had a devastating effect on our economy and people, we need to make it a priority where businesses, products, services, utilities, water and land are to remain Australian owned wholly.
Further, we request the Government to source and use Australian owned products and services. Where no Australian owned product, service or resource is available, we request the Government to assist an Australian owned entity to develop this supply so the financial spend can remain within Australia.

We therefore ask the House to immediately introduce these bills to protect Australian owned assets and entities from foreign ownership, and reduce foreign ownership spending overseas and to support the substantial rebuild, restoration and development of our businesses, services, products, people, environment, wildlife, and economy.

From 22 citizens (EN1466)

**Imports**

Supporting Aussies - STOP IMPORTING FOOD
- STOP importing food from overseas. SEAFOOD, MEAT, FRUIT & VEGETABLES!
- We do not want to see food for sale from overseas that Australia is in abundance of
- Stop sending our quality food overseas and importing foods with little to no restrictions on hygiene/growing/preserving
- Keep Australians employed by buying from our own backyard!

We therefore ask the House to STOP IMPORTING SEAFOOD, MEAT, FRUIT AND VEGETABLES from overseas! We do not want to see any of this for sale in our supermarkets.

SURELY THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT HAS HAD THEIR WAKE UP CALL IN RELATION TO COVID-19!!!

We want quality food for our families.

From 5 citizens (EN1467)

**Intellectual Property**

Repeal section 115a of the Copyright Act 1968

Since Section 115a of the Copyright Act 1968 was passed in 2015, the blocking of pirate sites has forced Australians to wait up to a year to access the latest episodes aired in the USA. As a fan of a certain television series, I have been appalled at the wait for the Aussie broadcast of a new episode. I want a reform to copyright law so that Australians can get U.S. programming within weeks, and at an affordable price. Thanks.

We therefore ask the House to amend or repeal aforementioned section (115a) in order to allow quick, affordable airdates of U.S. content within a month or so after the original (U.S.) airings.

From 1 citizen (EN1468)

**COVID-19: Employment**

Getting Australia back to work

This petition is to request Parliament to create a comprehensive action plan to get Australia back to work and to adobe a policy of prolonged social distancing that allows for business to exist.

We therefore ask the House to;
1. Take systematic approach to encourage personal protection or yourself and others by wearing face masks.
2. All industries must have, Temperature testing and a Social Distancing policy with guidelines for staff (see below example for hospitality)
3. Social Distancing rules to be changed to allow for visits to hotels restaurant and bars where social distancing policy is being observed.

GOV PUBLIC MESSAGE

Get out and support your restaurant wearing face mask on your way.
Only go out if you feel well
Observe social distancing policy of one person or household only
Eat well and be merry
Tip staff if you can
CUSTOMER HANDLING
Customers to all be temperature checked
2M Table spacing
Family or 2pax max seating
All food must be cooked
No table cloths unless newly cleaned
All surfaces wiped down before seating
Customers to be provided hand wipes

OPERATIONS
All staff wear masks
All staff temp checked every shift
All staff have been through quarantine
All food suppliers TEMP check staff
All packing arriving is wiped down
All kitchen environment to be sterilized / steam cleaned daily
From 1 citizen (EN1469)

Vaccination

Vaccination Freedom Agenda

Many consider vaccinations poison. Mandatory vaccinations must not become law as we loose more freedom of decision for ourself. Many reports are of people more sick after receiving vaccinations and this petition is for the australian government in full to show live vaccinations by appointed hospitals by the people designated towards the government officials to show that they have no problem taking the vaccination them selves before introducing it to the people and requesting they do. The Pri MINISTER is not passed on this and just have live vaccinations appointed by the people administered by doctors that have no connection to any outside Australia organization such as WHO etc. THIS PROTECTS THE PEOPLE AND SHOWS THE GOVERNMENTS ARE WILLING TO SHOW THEIR PEOPLE THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH VACCINATIONS.

We therefore ask the House to protect the australian people from any medical misuse or freedom abuse. And allow the government to take responsibility and set an example for the people.
From 26 citizens (EN1470)

COVID-19: Taxation

Allow tax and deductions on food and beverage.
To assist the hospitality industry to keep a producing a revenue during the Covid-19 pandemic.

We therefore ask the House to consider allowing businesses and people working from home as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic home claim food and beverage ordered from cafes and restaurants through takeaway and delivery as a tax deduction. Furthermore allow businesses registered for GST to claim back the GST on takeaway and delivery orders.
From 4 citizens (EN1471)

Migration

Modify standards for temporary visa applications and extensions
A large number of travelers are in Australia on visitor visas that are due to expire soon. As a result of travel restrictions they will be forced to stay in the country unlawfully. Those travellers will be subject to consequences including bans and fines.

Travelers on some working visas (e.g. 417 & 462) have been laid off as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of these traveller may not be in a position to afford onward travel or an application for another visa. Those travellers will be subject to consequences including bans and fines.

Many working travellers (specifically on 417 & 462) visas are unable to complete the 3 months of required work that will enable them to apply for an extension.

We therefore ask the House to extend all current working holiday visas (417 & 462) for no less than 12 months OR
Waive all costs associated with the visa application process for 90 days.
From 1 citizen (EN1472)

China

Rethinking Australia's approach to China

Australia faces an increasingly frosty and hostile geopolitical environment that commands greater clarity and direction on the nations positioning towards the People's Republic of China.

We therefore ask the House to adopt the following strategies:

1. Query the Prime Minister, Hon Scott Morrison, as to why there is a one way door of investment capital between Australia and China. Chinese foreign Direct Investment is permitted and encouraged however Australian investment cannot flow into China. This is not a mutual relationship.

2. Formally condemn the Chinese government for deliberately concealing the extent of the COVID-19 outbreak, resulting in a global pandemic that is crippling our economy. Additionally, reparations should be sought - consider the nationalisation of Chinese owned assets in Australia.
3. Formally condemn the Chinese government's economic imperialism and military expansion into the South China Sea and the South Pacific
4. Greater transparency and action on Chinese interference, including the immediate disclosure of Chinese donations to a political party, exposure of lobbying efforts and subversion attempts in addition to limiting influence on student bodies and diaspora media.
5. Diversify the economy to be less reliant on China with the purpose of decoupling to the extent that Australia is no longer vulnerable to economic blackmail.
6. Maintain the foreign Investment bid trigger at zero. All foreign investment should be weighed up against the national interest. We urge a review into Chinese investment into strategic assets, including critical infrastructure and stress that these bids should be blocked under all circumstances.

From 222 citizens (EN1473)

COVID-19

Nursing registration for all graduates Australian citizens

There is lot's of nursing students struggling to get their registration due to the current recommendations of English language proficiency. We are Australian citizens, since 15 years we are living here,. studied with Commonwealth support,. passed all subjects with high marks. However we didn't study our schooling here, so we are not eligible. I studied more than 5 years in Australia but there is a gap.. not a continuous study therefore as per the current rule I am not eligible. I am staying in rural area need to travel main cities for English language test.. it is totally a luck or business. Now because of Covid 19 all locked down.. please help us. It is our passion to become a nurse how much effort we took .. please consider us.. we are Australian too...

We therefore ask the House to make it possible nursing registration for all the Australian graduates. So we won't be a burden rather will be a benefit for community as well as to the government.

From 3 citizens (EN1474)

Charitable Organisations

Charity investigation

This is a matter the house must act

We therefore ask the House to investigate. Charities. That received donations from bushfires as many people are saying they told charity's what happen and proved. Houses burnt down and charity refused to help so with this charity's should be investigated if millions was donated then millions should be justifyed where it went not on wages or anything for charity's. But must go to victims 100%. Not 80or40. But 100% of donated money charity's must itemise the money. If they have not given money they must be deregister. As a charity and fined

From 8 citizens (EN1475)

Homemakers

Woman homemakers deserve workers rights

The reasons are the that woman stand in a very difficult position where they are 24/7 responsible for household, kids and themselves. After all the sacrifice they make for family and the nation, the nation should admit and declare them as full time workers paid from budget. Other option that woman should have the priority when renting and going for mortgage and it should be all backed up by the government. This decision will be for greater good of the nation and AU should give and example to the world how inequality is not just a dictionary phrase. Put he phrase into action.

We therefore ask the House to pass the law covering the most crucial part of the national interest, which is australian families and address the status of woman in this society which is putting them into big risk of abuse every kind.

From 7 citizens (EN1476)

COVID-19

Proof of sunset clauses on emergency powers RE; COVID-19

I petition the House to prove there are sunset clauses to the executive emergency powers enacted when dealing with COVID-19 pandemic. I charge there are civil liberties risks attached if no proof can be given sunset clauses exist on these powers.

I therefore ask the House to prove in writing these sunset clauses exist to limit executive power once the emergency has passed.

We therefore ask the House to - Prove -In writing - Sunset clauses to executive emergency powers exist and will, immediately, end these powers once COVID-19 threat is passed.

From 8 citizens (EN1477)

COVID-19: Higher Education

Suspension of Study session for Session 1, 2020 by Universities

CHAMBER
As per the Student Visa Rules, an international student can study up to one-third of their course online and/or distance learning. In official study sessions (Session 1 and Session 2), international students need to study at least one unit that is face to face teaching and not online or distance. However, due to COVID-19 situation, Australian universities have to transit their course delivery into online teaching. This action makes all the Student Visa holders breach their visa condition. International students are required to pay up to four times more than the domestic students and online teaching in no way will justify the value of such high tuition fees. While the education provider itself should be focused on refraining students to breach any visa conditions, this action is directly contravening their responsibility.

We therefore ask the House to direct the government to choose one of the options.

1. The government can make the education providers provide fee credit from the difference between international fee-paying and domestic fee-paying amount from this session for future sessions.

2. The government may ask the education providers to suspend the delivery of courses for this session and the Department of Home Affairs to renew all the visa expiry date of the international students by at least six months without having to submit any application or fees.

From 1 citizen (EN1478)

**COVID-19: Health Care**

HECS Exemption for Health Care Workers

Frontline health workers have been putting their own health at risk to treat those who have been stricken by the COVID-19 virus, working extraordinary hours and under extremely stressful conditions. Their kindness and unwavering care for our society often goes unrewarded and unrecognised.

We therefore ask the House to consider full exemptions of 100% of any outstanding or accruing HECS debts for those healthcare workers who have been at the frontline of fighting the COVID-19 pandemic and are continuing to put their own health at risk for the health care of others.

From 11 citizens (EN1479)

**COVID-19**

Provide clear criteria for the release of Covid-19 lockdown measures

If you commit a serious crime, you go to jail for a defined term, and you might get out early if you meet specific parole conditions. In Australia's Covid-19 response, we have all been told to hide in our rooms for an undefined period, with no defined circumstances which will lead to our release.

Never before in our lifetimes have we seen such policy change and such expenditure from an Australian Government in such a short time with such limited interrogation and review. We have heard general statements like:

. "This is going to take 6 months" - OK, WHAT is going to take 6 months?
. We can't eradicate the virus, but we can delay it! - OK, so what level of infection rate is acceptable and will lead to the lockdown being released?
. We have to "flatten the curve" - OK, which curve? Total number of cases? Then states need to start reporting recoveries daily.

We are OK with giving up our freedom and livelihoods for good and defined reasons, but not in response to vague assertions for an indefinite period. If we are all in "this" together, we would really like to know what "this" looks like.

We therefore ask the House to define the objectives and the measures of success of the Covid-19 response:

. What does success look like?
. What are the criteria for lifting the lockdown restrictions?
. What are the measures that we will track and report on to show progress?

From 2 citizens (EN1481)

**COVID-19**

Parliamentary sittings including virtual sittings to continue during pandemic

Your petitioners are concerned at the risks to the integrity of Australian democracy and accountability for the exercise of executive powers and spending of public money if the parliament continues to meet infrequently, for brief sittings.

We therefore ask the House to resume sittings of not less than customary annual sittings patterns (an average of only 67 days per year since Federation), and that virtual sittings be introduced to enable sittings with reduced risks to Members and staff of exposure to COVID19. Virtual sittings should be broadcast in the normal manner.

From 15 citizens (EN1482)

**Baby Formula**

Baby Formula Protection with Confirmation of need to purchase.
The need for baby Formula is evident for a Mother with a Baby. A Mother with a baby is a confirmed with the issuance of a Health Care Card that needs to be presented at Welfare Centres for regular checks on the welfare of said baby.

The purchase of baby Formula from any retail outlet for said formula, 1) Needs to be accompanied by the Welfare Card. 2) Needs to be presented by THE mother, not the Father or any other person.

This will prevent unscrupulous hoarding and bulk purchasing of said formula for export to foreign soil that disadvantages Australian Mother. Companies can export them selves without paid bulk buyers of Foreign Nationalities.

We therefore ask the House to:

1) Introduce legislation that provides for retail outlets to demand Welfare Cards as proof of parental need for Baby Formula. 2) For Welfare Cards to be registered and if need be, photo identity to be included.

From 9 citizens (EN1483)

**Organic Food**

"ZERO-TAX" for certified organic food growers 2020-2040

Certified organic food and food products consumption is a way to help ensure the cellular health of Australian citizens and could significantly alleviate future costs in areas such as health and medical support for Australia. Scientific studies show that chemical free soil supports the growth of food containing significantly more useful nutrition and significantly less damaging chemicals to the human body when ingested. Supporting certified organic food growers and producers by offering a no tax incentive would motivate more organic food production and result in better health for Australian citizens in the future and less costs for the government in providing health services of all types which would offset the loss of tax revenue from organic food growers and producers.

We therefore ask the House to provide a 'ZERO-TAX' to all Australian growers and producers of certified organic food and food products for the period of 20 years from July 2020 to July 2040.

From 14 citizens (EN1485)

**COVID-19: Migration**

Extend entry dates for existing working holiday visas - COVID-19

Petition request

That the House of Representatives urge the Government to extend the entry dates on existing working holiday visas for people who are currently offshore and unable to enter the country due to COVID-19.

We therefore ask the House to extending the entry dates of working holiday visas for offshore holders, who are unable to enter the country before their visa expires due to the pandemic of COVID-19. We understand that you currently have more pressing matters to deal with, but once the pandemic is over and it is safe for us to travel we ask that there be a way to extend our visas to allow us to use them.

From 2 citizens (EN1486)

**5G Technology**

Moratorium on the 5G rollout

Dear Minister please ensure that 5G technology is thoroughly and independently tested for potential long-term adverse health effects before it is rolled out in Australia. The health effect issue of 5G is potentially very controversial as the communications industry is massive and 5G technology will be quite pervasive but its long-term health effects on humans are largely unknown.

Thorough and independent testing of 5G technology is crucial before this technology is rolled out in Australia. Current safety limits are insufficient. Apart from the genuine threat of it being carcinogenic, there are numerous health ailments suspected to be caused by exposure to radiation emitted by 5G transmitters. Health is more important than having a faster Internet.

We therefore ask the House to

Until this type of frequency/wave length and the Oxidative Stress on Human and Animal cells produced by the 5G infrastructure/cell towers is proven safe long term. Then please ban the rollout of the 5G network. These towers are going to be emitting radiation 24/7 within close proximity to homes and schools etc... There is already enough overwhelming evidence that current cell towers & wifi have impacted on the health and wellbeing of today's society with the World Health Organisation classing RF radiations as a Group2b carcinogen. The sad part is we won't see the health related implications until 1-3 years of this being rolled out and this is when it will be to late.

Protect your people - do the right thing

From 45 citizens (EN1487)

**Space Industry**

It's time we think ahead - moratorium on space travel.
25 years ago was discussing environmental issues with an elder work colleague prompting him to say, "what happens when you lift the lid of a bottle of champagne? All the gasses escape, and that’s why the hole over the antarctic is getting bigger, too many rockets going through our stratosphere ",. About 10 weeks ago our honourable P.M. announced a sitting committee regarding environmental future planning, then around same time announces Australia joining the multitude of ultra violet protection destroying space rockets when in fact any professor associated worth their salt in these matters would concur there should be no more than 3 or 4 space entries per year leaving the planet, which is everyone’s home. Now we have a voice at the space race table, let’s get a share by all system re satellites, etc., and reduce the global warming race.

We therefore ask the House to utilise whatever means available to promote reduction in space travel in order to protect our planet from accelerated global warming, and to voice a sharing internationally of limited orbital planetary device/plant.

From 2 citizens (EN1489)

5G Technology

Stop the implementation of 5G network

Asking that the house halts the implementation of the 5G network in Australia until members of the public are consulted and a thorough investigation is done in to the health risks associated with the radiation emitted from its excessive use of towers and small cells and also an enquiry as to why the implementation was brought forward while Australia is in lockdown.

We therefore ask the House to suspend further implementation of the 5G network and to start an enquiry into its potential health risks and to take into consideration the amount of Australians opposed to its deployment.

From 11419 citizens (EN1490)

5G Technology

HALT IMPLEMENTATION OF 5G

I’m asking for a halt on the implementation of the 5G network in Australia until members of the public are consulted and a thorough investigation is done in terms of health risks associated with the radiation emitted from its excessive use of towers and small cells and also an enquiry as to why the implementation was brought forward while Australia is in lockdown.

We therefore ask the House to suspend further implementation of the 5G network and to start an enquiry into its potential health risks and to take into consideration the amount of Australians opposed to its deployment.

From 40 citizens (EN1492)

5G Technology

5G Roll Out Australia

The serious implications to the health of Australians due to lack of adequate research on 5G

We therefore ask the House to stop the roll out of 5G and immediately conduct extensive research on the implications the radiation has on the unsuspecting public. Thus publish those findings and inform the Australian people. If the findings conclude that 5G is detrimental to human health abort plans to roll it out in Australia

From 56 citizens (EN1493)

COVID-19

Relax Quarantine and Isolation Rules For Regional Areas

The population density of regional areas poses a significantly lower risk of the contagion spreading, which is reflected by the small number of confirmed cases outside of large population centers. Regional towns have much smaller economies, hence they do not have the same capacity to recover as the business centers in large cities and will be adversely effected by prolonged disruption to trade. Relaxing restrictions in all but the major epicenters of COVID-19 will ease the social and economic effects of the prevailing government action, while quickening the overall national economic recovery.

We therefore ask the House to swiftly, methodically and logically assess the viability and positive effects of quarantining large population centers separate to the rest of Australia for the purposes of easing restrictions on businesses and social interactions in lower risk regions.

From 5 citizens (EN1494)

COVID-19: Migration

Working Holiday visa entry extension request Covid-19

Due to COVID-19, hundreds of working holiday visa holders cannot enter Australia before the expiry of their entry date. These people have dreamt of coming to Australia for years and they’ve changed their lives to do so. Some quit jobs, arranged to give up tenancies to make the WHV work for them. Many of us have our visa expiry dates looming and would still love to enter after the pandemic has passed however at present IMMI has refused to extend the expiry date for the first entry on any working holiday visa. This seems like a very unfair approach from IMMI for all WHV holders, especially for the people who have applied and gained visas just before turning 31 or who have applied from a country that has limited numbers accepted for WHV per year. I’d like to point out that a lot of people apply for the visa and then have to request the time off of work, save money, give notice to their landlords and prepare. There are hundreds of reasons why people wait until the end of their visa
entry date to enter the country. Please hear our voices and extend the first entry date for everyone who has not yet entered Australia.

We therefore ask the House to extend all of the Working Holiday visas that are due to expire during the pandemic and border closures until we can all move from country to country freely again without risking ours or anyone else's health and safety.

From 2 citizens (EN1495)

COVID-19

Australia after COVID-19: Local Food, Water Security and Australian-Made Resources

After the social devastation of COVID-19, Australians need the people who work in OUR government to create hundreds of thousands of meaningful jobs, restore small business, rebuild local manufacturing, reflower life skills, increase health & education, re-empower local decision making, resolve the economic crisis and permanently insulate Australia from global issues such as pandemics, climate changes, economic collapses or any other inevitable disruption to the co-dependent globalised food and resource systems.

We therefore ask the House to fund a massive rebuild of our social-system with:

- Strong local food supplies including more home grown food, polycultural farming (such as Permaculture farms), commercial greenhouses and plant factories (especially for dense populations);
- Water security for personal, agricultural and industrial use, especially redistribution projects such as national piping infrastructure and dam-networks & schemes;
- Greater personal energy security; and
- Industrial-Hemp resource systems to produce, process, manufacture and retail our own biofuels, paper, plastics, clothing, body-care, foods, medicine, furniture, building materials, houses, vehicles and 1000's of other environmentally-friendly products.

This can easily be funded by recreating our National Bank (like the former Commonwealth Bank of Australia model when run by Denison Miller in the early 20th Century) and a decentralised network of Local Public Banks to locally fund necessary service provision and infrastructural expansion. That would be the wisest approach, but at the very least the government can invest some of the billions-of-dollars created-out-of-nothing in these projects.


SIGN-AND-SHARE!

From 22 citizens (EN1498)

World Health Organization

Freeze funding to the World Health Organization

To the Honourable Speaker and Member of the House of Representatives.

We the undersigned petitioners are calling on the Federal Government to freeze funding to the World Health Organization (WHO) due to their mishandling of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic started after the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) 'silenced' Doctors who alerted authorities to COVID-19. The CCP hid this information from the world, closed China's own internal borders but allowed international travel from Wuhan to spread the virus to 'unsuspecting and unprepared' nations around the globe. The CCP claimed the 'Wet Markets' of Wuhan were the virus source.

WHO Director-General, Dr. Tedros, ACCEPTED and SUPPORTED President Xi Jingping's DELAYS, MISINFORMATION, and DECEPTION when notifying the world of unlikely human infectiousness and pathogenicity of COVID-19. The WHO also criticized nations (like Australia) who closed their borders early to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

The same Wet Markets - the 'apparent' source of COVID-19, have now been reopened with the full support of the WHO.

Our Prime Minister and Treasurer berated the WHO's support of China's reopening of wet markets, but, have stalled at withholding $63 million in funding to an organization that has FAILED their global charter, supported CCP propaganda and recklessly mishandled a global pandemic.

We therefore ask the House to freeze funding to the World Health Organization, pending a full and open investigation and public report into the WHO management of, and culpability for, the COVID-19 pandemic, prior to re-considering any further taxpayer funding.

From 1052 citizens (EN1500)

Education

"SCIENCE" the eternal power of 'truth' has discovered the true passage for all Human-Cultures to go forward together, "In a common direction;" enhancing Humanity's capability to Scientifically question, our responsibility towards all Children of tomorrow, and their Children's, Children; "Recognizing our selfish behavior," denying our Children their 'Education-rights'
about anatomical changes to their body organisms, during the past 3.95 Billions-years, the Evolutionary process that created 'ALL' Human-kind; and terrorists use violence for a political purpose, to protect their ancient belief and faith in 'who' made us; that ancient out-of-date mythical 'belief and faith' is no-longer fit for purpose; Politically meaning, "our Scientific legal goal," has always been to right the wrong, by establishing a peaceful transition, from ancient religious-laws, to the Scientific-age of knowledge; Yes! Scientifically refusing to lie, Discriminate, or deceive our Children in any way, will design a legal moral-code to 'Truthfully and Peacefully' govern the conduct of human-affairs. "Please support Humanity's Children."

We therefore ask the House to debate this 'EDUCATION BILL: Education Act, to be amended. Section 1: Introduce one Subject (H.E.E.L / HUMAN-EVOLUTION EDUCATION LAW) that principle law will rule one (COMPULSORY SEPARATE CURRICULUM) in grades 1 to 12, competently Educating all Students in every School-Culture about, "Human-Evolution," which will build a high-quality early Childhood Education for those Students, on their journey through School, and University; Compassionately touched and designed by Science, for every Public School, Private School, religious School, and Independent School. From 2 citizens (EN1501)

**COVID-19: Health Care**

Integrating Chinese Medicine into Treatments for COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 Pandemic has caused enormous health, economic and sociological challenges in Australia.

While there's no known pharmaceutical product or vaccine against COVID-19, China still achieved 93.5% recovery rate as of April 10th,2020, as opposed to Italy's 20.6%. Its reported death rate, 4.7% in Hubei and 0.8% in the rest of China, is distinctly lower than Italy's 12.7%.

Chinese Medicine (CM)—the key differentiator—has contributed greatly to the fight against COVID-19 in China. Above 90% of diagnosed patients received CM treatments. Several tailored CM prescriptions are officially recommended by National Health Commission of China. Two clinical trials in China also demonstrated an above 91% recovery rate of the experimental group with CM.

Currently, CM has not been considered in assisting in the fight against COVID-19 in Australia. Furthermore, CM practitioners in Australia have no access to several scheduling herbs (MA HUANG, FU ZI, XI XIN, KUAN DONG HUA) which are critical in above prescriptions used in China. Little progress has been made since CMBA proposed to alter the scheduling of these herbs in 2017.

Winter, the flu season, is fast approaching. The situation could deteriorate in the next 6 months. We must utilise all appropriate approaches including CM to save more lives and recover a well-functioning society ASAP.

We therefore ask the House to approve CM treatment for COVID-19 Pandemic, implement an emergency solution to allow qualified CM practitioners to access the required scheduling herbs, and add CM related treatments into Medicare Benefits Schedule until the end of 2020 or beyond.

From 2 citizens (EN1501)

**World Health Organization**

Withdraw funding from the World Health Organization

The World Health Organization has proven it is incapable of providing sound guidance during world health emergencies, valuing China's support over the lives of global citizens. Actions such as covering up initial infections, denying the ability of the virus to transmit between humans, silencing doctors that attempted to warn other countries and failing to provide accurate information and data on the virus to other countries. The WHO also criticized nations such as Australia that placed travel bans to reduce the spread of the virus, while praising China for its inaction.

The Chinese government's management of COVID-19 and the WHO's inability to provide competent, accurate and transparent guidance have been detrimental to the entire world causing unnecessary economic and physical harm. The Australian Government cannot, in good conscience continue to fund the WHO without demanding serious reform, including distancing itself from the Chinese government and a change in leadership.

We therefore ask the House to completely withdraw Australian funding of the World Health Organization until the conditions below are met.

A: An independent investigation is undertaken by an suitable entity without affiliation to the World Health Organization into the role of the World Health Organization in the spread of COVID-19, with the findings to be made publicly available.

B: Current leaders of the World Health Organization must resign, particularly those with connections to communist parties and organizations.

C: The World Health Organization recognizes Taiwan as a sovereign state and allows it to become a member of the World Health Organization.

From 301 citizens (EN1503)

**5G Technology**

THE COMMUNITY WANT MELBOURNE TO STAY FREE FROM 5G
There are thousands of peer-reviewed scientific studies evidencing harm from radiofrequency electromagnetic radiation (RF EMR) well below the standards set by ARPANSA.

The ARPANSA Standard has been strongly criticised by independent scientists worldwide as unscientific and inadequate for the protection of human safety. Authorities in other countries have adopted standards ten to 100 times more rigorous than the ARPANSA Standard.

The views of ICNIRP (on whose guidelines the ARPANSA safety limit is based) and ARPANSA are not in line with the opinions of the larger, independent scientific community that has published peer-reviewed research on the biological effects of RF EMR. ICNIRP is not independent of industry and has had numerous conflicts of interest identified over the years.

ARPANSA has acknowledged that further research on the frequencies to be used with 5G is needed: Both the SCENIHR (2015) review in particular mentioned that "considering the expected increase in use of THz technologies, more research focusing on the effects on skin (long-term, low-level exposure) and cornea is recommended."

Multiple peer-reviewed studies have shown an increase in ill health effects in populations living near mobile phone base stations, ranging from neurological damage to breast and brain cancers.

We therefore ask the House to stop roll out of 5G technology and remove already installed masts.

From 47 citizens (EN1504)

**Vaccination**

Reverse mandatory vaccinations for visitors to nursing homes

"Bodily autonomy is defined as the right to self governance over one's own body without external influence or coercion. It is generally considered to be a fundamental human right."

Anyone who has not been vaccinated against influenza by May 1st will be banned from entering any, and all residential aged care facilities.

This includes family and friends, volunteers, tradesmen, health professionals, contract workers, community transport, the cook, the cleaner, the gardener and the delivery driver.

Aged care facilities throughout Australia have already implemented new policies and procedures regarding infection control in response to the covid 19 pandemic. All visitors are required to sign documentation and consent to having their temperature checked.

In addition to this, all healthcare workers have a duty of care to ensure they do not attend the premises if they are unwell. This should be sufficient.

No one should be forced to choose between their right to visit a loved one, and their right to bodily autonomy. Just as one should not be coerced into relinquishing their right to bodily integrity so they can retain their job.

We therefore ask the House to revoke the government mandate on mandatory influenza vaccinations in Aged care facilities, on the grounds that it violates a person's right to bodily autonomy and contravenes a person's right to self determination, personhood, freedom of thought/conscience, and freedom of expression as set out in the International Covenant on Civil and Political rights.

From 418 citizens (EN1505)

**All-Terrain Vehicles**

Repeal ACCC Recommendations for Mandatory Crush Protection Devices on ATVs

The ACCC Recommendations for Mandatory Crush devices on ATVs is a change drafted by disconnected bureaucrats sitting in cities looking at statistics. ATVs are a crucial utility item for large properties due to their increased safe carrying capacity in comparison to Motorcycles, and with a wider access to difficult terrain than cars. Many property owners rely on ATVs for mustering, spraying and other utility requirements.

The mandatory safety requirements are effectively a stealth ban on a vital rural utility item. The ACCC refuses to acknowledge that ATVs with rollover bars are a larger risk to rider safety than a standard ATV, as stated by numerous manufacturers of ATVs (Honda, Suzuki, Yamaha). Instead, the ACCC purposely mislabels Side-by-side off-road vehicles, which are not effective as utility vehicles, as generic ATVs in order to support the requirements. This is despite the fact that side-by-sides are inherently different to ATVs in marketing and application.

The changes have already caused Honda and Yamaha to cease sales of ATVs by 2021. Placing property owners in a difficult position if a crucial utility vehicle requires replacement. The requirements are simply a movement to punish all users of ATVs for the statistics of a minority of users, who in a vast majority of cases, are already breaching the existing safety requirements and recommendations prior to crashes.

We therefore ask the House to repeal the mandatory requirement for crush protection devices on ATVs.

From 2 citizens (EN1506)

**Gambling**

Ban using Credit Cards from Online Gambling websites
I'm raising this petition to propose credit cards be banned from online gambling websites. There is no law in place to legislate the use of credit cards on online gambling website I'm not proposing all credit cards be banned, the customer will still be able to use a debit Visa or debit MasterCard meaning they only use funds that are in their own bank account not borrowed funds at the highest interest rate charged from the bank which currently happens when doing a cash advance to online gambling websites.

In a gaming venue ATM's don't accept withdrawals from credit cards and a max of $200 can be withdrawn at 1 time, online shouldn't be different.

Technology is available to identify the card being used on the website, I am proposing Australian gambling websites have to ban credit cards.

For example the 1st digits of a card identifies it to the bank and card type. Eg. Cards starting with 4557 are NAB Visa cards (props be banned) where as cards starting with 4057 NAB visa debit cards (still to be accepted under new proposal).

With a credit card customers can bet any amount with money charged at often around 20% interest per day. With debts of 10s of thousands of dollars this causes mental health issues.

We therefore ask the House to make it law that online gambling sites ban CREDIT CARDS and only accept DEBIT CARDS. There is technology available they can install on their website to make this possible.

From 12 citizens (EN1507)

**COVID-19**

Sieze Chinese asset's in Australia to pay for Covid-19

Due to the cover-up from the Chinese regime, we, the Australian people, require the federal Government of Australia to seize all Chinese assets in Australia to pay for the economic and social damage caused by Chinas lies! If the assets seized do not cover the estimated 200 billion in allocated stimulus as emergency measures then the federal Government of Australia is to use all options available in the international courts to pursue the Chinese regime for full reparations caused by the Chinese regime's cover-up of the Covid-19 outbreak in Wuhan.

We therefore ask the House to pursue reparations from the Chinese regime for the pain and suffering caused by their cover-up of the Covid-19 outbreak which originated in Wuhan. Initially this will be carried out by the seizure of Chinese corporate asset's in Australia.

From 44 citizens (EN1508)

**COVID-19: Health Care**

Hazard allowance and tax holiday for essential healthcare workers

Among essential workers, healthcare workers including pharmacists and pharmacy staff are real oxygen for treating the patients as they are responsible for maintaining the entire medicine management that every patient receives either in hospital or in community pharmacy settings. While most doctors are consulting online, we remain open and work at frontline. We cannot work from home and must have to turn up to work to potentially save the lives of others. We are working very hard behind the scenes to make sure each patient under our care gets timely supply of their medicines. We are still offering medication, device counselling, education to the patients to practise good personal hygiene and social distancing. We are always bombarded by consumers for masks, sanitisers, and other enquires. A typical pharmacist serves 150 to 220 patients in one shift, making a workload of two minutes per prescription item. Since we would not know whether they have Covid-19 infection, especially those who are asymptomatic, with a three-ply mask as PPE, chances of getting infection and further transmitting to family members increases. Additionally, we have been abused, punched, spat on, and even had medicine bottles thrown at us by patients when we cannot fulfil their request either due to shortage of medicines or fear of stockpiling.

The Government has supported others (excluding us) since the very beginning of this pandemic.

We therefore ask the House to provide the essential healthcare worker with hazard allowance and tax holiday during the Covid-19 crisis

From 861 citizens (EN1509)

**COVID-19: Pensions and Benefits**

Financial Support for Self Funded Retirees during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Many Self Funded Retirees have gone from financial security to insecurity in a matter of weeks. Their struggle to make ends meet is not being recognised by the government and they feel abandoned in their time of need. They are being told they cannot evict tenants and that they are to support tenants who cant pay with an agreed reduction or cessation of rental payments. This has resulted in great financial hardship for many older Australians. There are more than 1.5 million households with at least one investment property, many of whom are no longer receiving rent. More than half of 66-year-olds were not accessing the age pension and these people have been forgotten in this time of crisis while many are receiving more pay than they were before the crisis as a result of the pandemic. Many of them have had to resort to re-mortgaging their home as inquiries for Reverse Mortgages skyrocket! Please support them!

We therefore ask the House to introduce regular payments, similar to JobKeepers, for Self Funded Retirees who have experienced a downturn in their income since COVID 19 restrictions. This is to help them to pay their bills and support their needs.
From 7 citizens (EN1510)

COVID-19: Migration

Extension entry dates for existing WHV (462 & 417) COVID-19

We request an extension for the entry dates of Work and Holiday Visas (subclass 462) and Working Holiday (subclass 417) for offshore holders. This extension would be sought by those who are unable to enter the country before their visa expires due to the pandemic of COVID-19. We understand that you currently have more pressing matters to deal with, but once the pandemic is over and it is safe for us to travel, we request an extension to our visas to allow us to use them. Even if the holders of WHV have exceeded the age of 30 or the visas have expired during the confinement.

We therefore ask the House to urge the Government to extend the entry dates on existing Work and Holiday Visas (subclass 462) and Working Holiday Visas (subclass 417) for people who are currently offshore and unable to enter the country due to COVID-19.

From 3434 citizens (EN1513)

COVID-19: Biosecurity

Free Australia

We, Australia's civil society organizations and members of the public, ask the Australian government to revoke the emergency measures instituted on 18 March 2020 under the Biosecurity Act 2015 since it is now clear that COVID-19 does not meet the requirements stated in Chapter 2, Part 1, Division 2 of the Biosecurity Act, namely "that a power is exercised, or biosecurity measure imposed, only when circumstances are sufficiently serious to justify it, and only if it would be effective, it is appropriate and adapted for its purpose, and it is no more restrictive or intrusive than is required."

The scientific data shows that:
- quarantine measures are not effective,
- the mortality is low,
- the mortality profile of COVID-19 corresponds to natural mortality,
- the mortality is so low that the UK public health bodies no longer consider COVID-19 to be a high consequence infectious disease (HCID),
- excess mortality due Covid19 is likely to be near zero,
- COVID-19 is no more dangerous than influenza,
- the vast majority remain symptom free,
- the pessimistic forecasts that informed decision making were incorrect and have been revised,
- the World Doctors Federation has stated that lockdown measures are "unreasonable" and "counterproductive" and should be reversed,
- the WHO states there is no airborne transmission of COVID-19,
- the restrictive measures lead to more deaths than the virus itself.

We therefore ask the House to revoke the emergency measures instituted on 18 March 2020 under the Biosecurity Act 2015.

From 328 citizens (EN1514)

COVID-19

#FREEAUSTRALIA

THE covid19 pandemic has almost destroyed our beloved economy. THE head of W.H.O has directed Australia into a global scheme to push towards globalism.W.H.O and investors such a bill gates and the bill and Melinda gates foundation have their own desires from a pandemic outbreak that is a big pharma vaccination scheme.

We therefore ask the House to remove the Australian attachments to W.H.O and the United nations and gain back our independence. THE lockdowns are against or constitutional laws of Australia and should be lifted straight away. No citizen in Australia should be forced to have anything done to their personal body against their will. We demand our freedom and it's been proven this pandemic is overly exaggerated to the extent that the Australian people have and still are loosing their life investments and more. There is no reason to demand the Australian citizens to do any the above as vaccinations are proven to be poison to some and the lockdowns are against the Australian constitution to freely travel between states. A pandemic or new laws can not over write the original constitutional laws of our country. Free your people as we feel we are on home arrest and even some worry about the draconian almost tyrannical control and loss of freedom we have all experienced the last few months. Many doctors such as DR SHIVA, DR ANDREW KAUFMAN have come forward and many more but the media does not allow the information to be heard.

From 82 citizens (EN1515)

COVID-19

Award of Covid-19 Service Medal for Public Sector Workers
Suggesting that Public Sector workers medical staff, police, ambulance, care home workers, refuse collectors, post office workers and similar individuals be awarded a Service Medal for the selfless devotion shown in ensuring the country functions. At times putting themselves at risk from the Covid-19 virus caring for the sick and supporting the general public.

We therefore ask the House to authorise the award of a Covid-19 Service Medal to eligible members of the public service, who have ensured the health, safety and wellbeing of all in Australia.

From 2 citizens (EN1516)

**Family Law**

Bring fairness to property settlement laws at time of separation/divorce

We request that the House change property settlement laws to reflect social equality and real justice for couples at separation. Currently in Australia, property settlement is a minefield of litigation.

We therefore ask the House to adopt property settlement rules such as those from Roman Law countries. Marriage prenuptial conventions in Roman Law have 3 main prenup conventions and whatever you choose cannot be changed.

1) Full communion of property/assets. Whatever each member of a couple brings into the civil union belongs to both. This includes inheritances past or future, assets, debts and both are equally liable for each other. At separation everything is valued and shared 50/50, including debts.

2) Acquired communion of assets. Whatever each owns before the civil union, including inheritances, assets and debts belongs to that person, everything else brought into the union after a recognized relationship is established, belongs to both parties and at separation is valued and divided 50/50 including debts acquired after civil union began. Pre-union debts are not factored into the couple's debts.

3) Total separation of assets, neither person in a couple relationship is entitled to anything which belongs to the other party at any stage. Each has to keep track of what they own and at separation, they take what they are entitled to and have no right to claim anything from the other party.

This is plain common sense and people of goodwill should stand by a system which brings true equality and responsibility into couples financial affairs.

From 149 citizens (EN1518)

**Foreign Investment**

Sieze assets with any ties to the Chinese Communist party

In light of China's economic threats against Australia in response to our request for an inquiry regarding the origin of COVID-19, many Australians want to see our ties with China severed.

I call for the federal government to seize any assets owned in full or part by any organisation with ties or links to the Chinese Communist Party.

These companies do not hold Australia's best interests in mind, as we saw with multiple companies under the influence of the CCP pillaging all of our medical supplies right before a crisis.

We need to rid ourselves of China, for the future of Australia depends on it.

We therefore ask the House to seize any assets owned in full or part by any organisation with ties or links to the Chinese Communist Party.

From 40 citizens (EN1520)

**Australian Constitution**

Constitution

This is a matter for the house to act we need a public acknowledgment of the constitution

We therefore ask the House to make public that constitution is above all laws state and constitution laws come first above all state laws and it's entity's the line has become fuzzy on laws state and federal ...

From 32 citizens (EN1521)

**COVID-19**

Increase carers pensions during the Covid 19 crisis.

Carers are now providing additional support to both Aged and Disable clients and need additional income to assist providing the same level of care and support.

We therefore ask the House to increase the Carers Pensions for Aged and Disabled clients.

From 277 citizens (EN1522)

**COVID-19**

Responding to the Communist Party of China

It is highly likely the COVID-19 virus originated from China.
It is highly likely the Communist Party of China (CPC) failed to ensure transparency and manage the outbreak of COVID-19 effectively, resulting in thousands of premature deaths internationally and significantly impacting the economies of the world.

Australia and other nations seek to establish an investigation into the origin of COVID-19.

The CPC has attempted to intimidate and threaten Australian with economic reprisals if it does not stop calling for an international investigation.

The issue is caused by the CPC not the Chinese people.

We therefore ask the House to to remain strong and steadfast in face of such threats, to diversify and prioritize our trade with non communist nations and return critical manufacturing to Australia.

If the CPC continues to make threats, feel free to;

* expel the CPC Ambassador,
* cut off exports of resources to China,
* suspend or stop support for any other activities of China in Australia,
* stop all imports from China and support a made local and buy in Australia program,
* suspend all Government to Government support programs for a critical review.

Given the significant impacts to Australia due to the likely negligence of the CPC in its response to COVID-19, amend legislation (if needed) to seize some or all assets in Australia owned by China as restitution.

Australians despise bullying behavior, we the Australian people, express our solidarity and have our Governments back in implementing the above (or more) if and as required.

Stay Strong....

From 420 citizens (EN1523)

Corruption

Royal Commission into political corruption and conflicts of interest.

I request the House acts on behalf of the citizens of Australia to Investigate and addresses these crimes in Australian politics and surrounding Australian politicians In House Corruption, Sex crimes, Conflicts of Interest, Economic espionage, racketeering, false infection data claims cvod19 and legal corruption including passing new laws without the people of Australias consent.

We therefore ask the House to conduct a public Royal Commission to assure the Australian Public that the politicians of Australia are against corruption as well.

From 214 citizens (EN1524)

COVID-19

A public inquiry into the Corona Virus

China has not cooperated with any measures to investigate and resolve this pandemic, from denying the WHO entry to assess the state of China, to now threatening to halt all Chinese tourism, and Australian Wine and Beef importation, in a bid of economic coercion as Australia pushes for an independent inquiry into Covid-19.

In an interview with the Australian Financial Review, the Chinese Ambassador Jingye Cheng said "Maybe also the ordinary people will say why should we drink Australian wine or to eat Australian beef?". Comments such as these, in conjunction to mass Chinese propaganda suggesting Australia is similar to 'gum' on the shoes of China highlights the vindictive nature and lack of cooperation of the Chinese government during this global pandemic.

We as a nation need to remain sovereign and not bow to the demands of another Nation especially if they are threatening us. This is Australia and we should push for what is right, in these challenging times we need transparency, clarity, and cooperation.

We therefore ask the House to to work to its fullest abilities to pursue this inquiry and not bow to the threats of the Chinese Government. Australia is a sovereign nation and we ask the house to help Australia remain so, regardless of the economic backlash the people of Australia will remain strong and we ask the house to remain so too and continue pushing for an independent inquiry into the handling and origins of Covid-19.

From 57 citizens (EN1525)

Fossil Fuels

Seek ICC advice on criminality of expanding fossil fuel production

The UN Production Gap report (November 2019) warns that planned fossil fuel production to 2030 will lead to CO2 emissions being 2.2 times levels consistent with limiting warming to 1.5 deg C. The largest production gap is for coal, with planned production to 2030 being 3.8 times that consistent with 1.5 deg C pathways. Australia is ignoring this science. Instead of immediately banning new fossil fuel projects and exploration, these activities are still being subsidised to expand production.
Any policy that expands fossil fuel production is opposite to that demanded by the science in the Production Gap report. All countries’ production gaps must be closed to avoid locking in future levels of fossil fuel usage that scientists know would lead to catastrophic global warming exceeding 3 deg C. To close these gaps, production must decrease. Banning the expansion of production will be a small step in the right direction, and will prevent Australia (the world's largest coal exporter) from unnecessarily jeopardising humanity's last chance to limit global warming to 1.5 deg C.

The UN Production Gap report provides the scientific grounds on which to argue that policies or decisions that expand a country's fossil fuel production are immoral. The petitioners assert that Australia's current policy to expand fossil fuel production is anti-science and omnicidal.

We therefore ask the House to seek advice from the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court on whether expanding fossil fuel production could be an act of genocide or a crime against humanity.

From 2955 citizens (EN1526)

**Vaccination**

Stop coercion of Australians to be medicated with Influenza Vaccinations

A directive issued by Prime Minister Scott Morrison on March 18th 2020 based on advice from the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) instructed all states and territories to enforce all residential aged care workers, visitors, and contractors to be injected with the Influenza Vaccination from May 1, or lose employment, visitation with loved ones, and the ability for contractors to work on the premises.

The considerable risk of using these vaccinations due to the serious and often deadly side effects listed on the Manufacturer Information Sheets leaves this directive in breach of national and international law. As listed on the Manufacturer Information Sheets, this medication has not been tested for the potential to cause cancer, genetic mutations, and fertility impairment. These severe health issues are on the rise in Australia alongside our ever increasing use of this medical product; and with the lack of double blind, placebo controlled safety testing for the Influenza Vaccinations in question, we believe this group of people is being coerced to take part in a medical experiment.

Article 7 of the Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 states: "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. In particular, no one shall be subjected without his free consent to medical or scientific experimentation."

We therefore ask the House to remove all federal directives which mandate medication with the Influenza Vaccination in order to maintain employment, visitation of loved ones, and contractor visits to Residential Aged Care Facilities.

From 21164 citizens (EN1528)

**COVID-19: Taxation**

Tax exemption for essential workers.

The essential workers of Australia played a massive role in fighting against the COVID-19. People who are working in industries like deliveries, transport, security, cleaning, hospitality, telecom, grocery store, fuel stations, doctors, pharmacy, nurses, paramedics, police, and every single person that were classified as essential are doing their best to keep moving Australia.

These are the real heroes without honors during the period of the pandemic. They put themselves and their families at risk to keep Australia safe. It is unethical for the Government to collect taxes on their incredible work during the unprecedented time.

We therefore ask the House to consider a tax exemption in order to recognize the efforts of essential workers.

From 51 citizens (EN1529)

**COVID-19**

End the COVID-19 lockdowns

The ongoing COVID-19 lockdowns are devastating Australia's economy and destroying our society.

As data has been collected in other countries, it has become evident that the virus has vastly different fatality rates depending on whether the patient has underlying health conditions. Specifically, for people without underlying health conditions, the virus is several orders of magnitude less dangerous.

For example, as of 2/5/2020, in New York City there have been 10,128 COVID-19 related deaths involving patients who were confirmed to have underlying health conditions. However the number of deaths involving patients confirmed to have no underlying health conditions is 81.

Based on this information, the current policy of a blanket lockdown on all Australians is completely inappropriate.

We therefore ask the House to lift all COVID-19 related restrictions on businesses and individuals in Australia.

Spend the resultant saving of $4 billion per week (or as much as is required) on protecting members of society who have underlying health conditions.

The exact nature of the protective measures should be determined by experts, but several possibilities should be explored, including:
- Provision of contactless delivery to all vulnerable people.
- Caregivers to live on site where possible.
- Bans on non-essential visitors to vulnerable people.
- Mandatory use of the 15 minute COVID-19 test for any unavoidable visits.

The development of the protective measures must be given the highest priority, and completed as quickly as possible.
The lock downs should be lifted immediately after these measures are in place.

From 208 citizens (EN1530)

**Vaccination**

**Disciplinary Action for Employers Coercing Employees into taking Influenza Vaccinations**

The basic human right to decide what pharmaceutical products the population of Australia wishes to use or not use is being violated by employers from many different sectors including department stores, hardware stores, grocery stores, childcare centres, and health care related services.

These employers are issuing unlawful requirements for all employees to receive an Influenza Vaccination to gain, or maintain employment

More than ever, people are extremely fearful of losing their income in the current economic environment and thus, are being coerced into taking this medication in breach of true informed consent as detailed in The Australian Immunisation Handbook. This states that valid informed consent must be gained prior to a vaccination being administered, and “must be given voluntarily in the absence of undue pressure, coercion or manipulation.”

Serious side effects listed on the manufacturer information sheets include nervous system, immune system, and blood disorders such as Guillain-Barré Syndrome, Encephalomyelitis, Anaphylactic Shock, and Thrombocytopenia.

Colloquially, these are called ‘one in a million’ side effects, however, even when tested against a control group being administered another vaccine (rather than a true inert saline placebo) the likelihood of experiencing a ‘rare’ side effect, (according to the information sheet for FLUARIX TETRA) actually starts at just 1 in 1000.

We therefore ask the House to immediately launch an investigation leading to disciplinary action for employers wrongfully and unlawfully pressuring their employees into being receiving the Influenza Vaccination, any vaccination, medication, or medical procedure in exchange for maintaining or establishing employment.

From 11846 citizens (EN1531)

**COVID-19**

**Introducing COVID Monitored Home Quarantine**

In implementing monitored home quarantine for Australians and their families traveling from Hong Kong to Australia, we hope to reunite families who remain separated.

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, many spouses/partners have returned home to care for family members including elderly parents and children who have lost jobs, been sent home from university college and boarding schools.

Many now wish to be reunited with partners who have had to remain in Hong Kong for work. Given the limited annual leave, spending two weeks in a hotel is not an option. Apart from the emotional distress associated with solitary confinement, this would leave virtually no time to spend with the family after quarantine. Nor, if we were to go to HK, do we feel comfortable subjecting children to hotel quarantine upon their return to Australia when it comes time to start university, work or school.

We are proud how Hong Kong has controlled the virus through a combination of testing upon arrival and monitored home quarantine using tracing technology. There have been zero local cases in the past 17 days. We believe the same could be achieved in Australia.

To reiterate we are not requesting free movement, but to simply move away from quarantine in solitary confinement in a hotel and towards monitored quarantine at home.

We therefore ask the House to help reunite expat families by introducing monitored home quarantine for Australian citizens and family members traveling from Hong Kong to Australia.

From 647 citizens (EN1532)

**Corruption**

Establish a Federal Integrity Commission that upholds the Beechworth Principles and restores trust

This petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House: In Beechworth in 1853, miners gathered to herald the beginning of a democratic revolution. They sought to reform the broken and imperfect institutions of their country. They called for those institutions to be accountable to the people they represented, to act solely in the public interest, and to be condemned when they failed to do so. The actions of those people changed Australian democracy forever. Now, at a time when faith in our institutions has never been lower and Australians are losing belief in the ability of politics to improve their lives, we invoke the spirit of these early democrats for another great reform – to establish a Federal Integrity Commission,
with broad jurisdiction, common rules, appropriate investigative powers, fair public hearings and that is accountable to the people.

We therefore ask the House to: Support the passage of a Bill establishing a Federal Integrity Commission that upholds the Beechworth Principles:

- Broad jurisdiction: Everyone involved in Federal public service must be subject to independent scrutiny.
- Common rules: All persons must be held to a single standard of behaviour.
- Appropriate powers: The Commission must be empowered to fulfill its purpose.
- Fair hearings: Investigations should be conducted openly when in the public interest.
- Accountability to the people: The Commission must remain accountable to public, not political interests.

From 1147 citizens (PN0477)
Petitions received.

PETITIONS

Responses

Mr O'DOWD (Flynn—Deputy Nationals Whip) (10:02): I present the following ministerial responses to 70 petitions previously presented to the House:

Voting Age

Dear Mr O'Brien

Thank you for your letter dated 25 November 2019, referring petition number EN1078 to Senator the Hon Zed Seselja, Assistant Minister for Finance, Charities, and Electoral Matters. As the Minister responsible for electoral policy, the matter has been referred to me for response. The petition requested that the voting age be lowered to 16 years of age.

It is important that the right to vote applies from an appropriate age, to ensure that electors can adequately understand parliamentary representation, enrolment and the electoral process. The Government provides funding for a range of educational programs and resources to help young Australians build their understanding of how Australia's system of government works.

The Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 provides that persons aged 16 years and over may enrol provisionally, ahead of becoming eligible to vote when they are 18 years of age. This is an important way of encouraging young people to start thinking about their future rights and responsibilities as voters, before they become qualified to vote at the right age. Young people who have an early interest in politics can begin to participate in public debates in various ways including by making submissions to parliamentary committees or by writing to members of Parliament. The Government has no plans to change the voting age to 16 and would not consider the change the petitioners are suggesting.

I have copied this letter to the Assistant Minister for Finance, Charities and Electoral Matters, Senator the Hon Zed Seselja.

Kind regards
from the Minister for Finance, Senator Cormann

Vocational Education and Training

Dear Chair

I write to you concerning Petition EN1129 in relation to the regulatory strategies, policies and activities of the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA).

The Australian Government is committed to a quality vocational education and training (VET) system underpinned by a trusted, respected and independent regulator that takes appropriate regulatory action to protect students and uphold the integrity and reputation of the system.

On 30 October 2019, I announced $18.1 million towards a program of reforms to enhance ASQA's engagement with the VET sector and ensure its regulatory approach is fair, transparent and effective. The reforms respond to key recommendations from the 2019 Expert Review of Australia's VET System (the Joyce Review) and the 2018 review of the National VET Regulator Act 2011 (the Braithwaite Review).

The reforms include expanding ASQA's role to ensure a broader focus on supporting training providers to understand their compliance requirements, ensuring ASQA's regulatory approach is focused on student outcomes, improving the transparency and consistency of regulatory decisions, and improving ASQA's use and collection of data to help identify and remove poor quality providers from the system. The Government recently passed the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Amendment Act 2020 as the first step towards these reforms.

I also announced a rapid review of ASQA's regulatory practices, governance and culture which will be completed in March 2020. The review is evaluating the effectiveness of ASQA's internal regulatory policies and practices, including how ASQA undertakes audits, and how it makes and reviews regulatory decisions. It is also considering how ASQA's regulatory approach fits within the broader context of the VET Quality Framework and identifying potential areas for change to drive improvements across the sector, as well as evaluating ASQA's governance to ensure it is aligned with best practice regulation.
Stakeholders have been engaged with the process and have provided feedback on ASQA’s regulatory practices directly to the regulatory expert undertaking the review.

In response to initial review findings, I have introduced further legislative amendments to the National VET Regulator (NVETR) Act 2011 into Parliament to give effect to a new governance model for ASQA. This new model revises the current governance model from a three commissioner structure to a single agency head (Chief Executive Officer) supported by additional Senior Executive Service staff and an expert advisory council. This new structure will provide ASQA with more effective and fit-for-purpose governance, including through clearer roles and responsibilities and access to expert advice, to better support effective decision-making and improve accountability. It will ensure ASQA is well positioned to address existing challenges and respond to future reform.

The findings of the review will inform a program of ongoing reform to support ASQA’s continued evolution as a modern and effective regulator. It will ensure ASQA has the capability and capacity it needs to be a strong independent regulator focused on ensuring high quality student outcomes, while expanding its focus to support and foster excellence across the VET sector more broadly.

As the issues raised by the petition will be addressed through this reform agenda, I do not believe there is the need for a Standing Committee to initiate a formal inquiry at this time.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this petition.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business, Senator Cash

Bill of Rights

Dear Committee

I refer to correspondence from the former Chair of the Committee, Mr Llew O’Brien, sent by email on 11 February 2020 regarding petition number EN1140, which requests ‘the House to vote on a Bill of rights to be introduced into the Constitution’ and refers to the importance of freedom of speech as a reason for the action proposed.

Australia affords people the freedom to express their opinions through peaceful and constructive means and encourages all individuals and organisations to engage with our democratic processes and to make a positive contribution to public debate.

The Australian Constitution contains an implied guarantee of freedom of communication in relation to political matters, which the High Court has determined is essential to the proper functioning of Australia’s system of democratic and representative government. This freedom can be limited only by laws which are reasonably appropriate and adapted to serving a legitimate end or overriding public purpose, such as the protection of the community from dangers provoked by material promoting violence.

The rights to freedom of expression and freedom of political communication are fundamental human rights that are enjoyed by all Australians, and all people who are in Australia. However, these rights are subject to limitations that are reasonable and necessary in a free and democratic society to achieve an appropriate balance between freedom of expression and the protection of groups and individuals from offensive or harmful behaviour.

The Australian Government is committed to ensuring that freedom of speech within Australia continues to be protected and promoted. The Government considers that existing mechanisms to protect and promote human rights, including freedom of speech, are appropriate. On this basis, the Government does not propose to introduce a charter or bill of rights at the federal level by way of new legislation or constitutional reform.

Thank you for bringing this petition to my attention.

Yours sincerely

from the Attorney-General, Mr Porter

Energy

Dear Mr O’Dowd

On 12 February 2020, Mr Llew O’Brien MP, former Chair of the Standing Committee on Petitions, wrote concerning petitions EN1146 and EN1147. The Hon Karen Andrews MP, Minister for Industry, Science and Technology, referred petition EN1148 to me as the Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction.

The Commonwealth Government recognises that there are members of the population who are sensitive to light. Visual discomfort may result from the design of a lighting installation through the placement of light fixtures, illuminance levels, uniformity and glare, as well as through the qualities of the products installed. Potential health implications are considered prior to and following the introduction of any lighting regulations, including drawing on international research and expertise in the field.

Some models of tungsten incandescent lighting were phased out under state-based energy efficiency legislation and the Greenhouse and Energy Minimum Standards Act 2012. While these products are prohibited from being sold or offered for supply within Australia, individuals are permitted to import phased out light bulbs directly for personal use.

Minimum standards for quality parameters are already in place for compact fluorescent and halogen light bulbs and are planned for LEDs, including standards to minimise flicker. Energy efficient lighting, such as LEDs, is available that provides
different brightness (lumen) levels and warm diffused light, similar to incandescent lighting. Most standard LED lighting emits no or minimal levels of UV light.

The Government does not have the regulatory power to specify lighting technology in public buildings. Most public buildings, such as schools and hospitals, are the responsibility of state and territory governments.

Thank you for bringing these concerns to my attention.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction, Mr Taylor

Cancer

Dear Mr O’Brien

I refer to your letter of 11 February 2020 concerning Petition No. EN1154 to request increase access and Government investment to support Australian participation in international clinical trials and treatments for paediatric neuroblastoma.

The Australian Government provides financial assistance through the Medical Treatment Overseas Program (MTOP) to eligible Australians and permanent residents with life-threatening medical conditions to travel overseas for treatment, where effective medical treatment is not available in Australia. The MTOP is the only financial support for overseas medical treatment offered by the Government. To establish eligibility for financial assistance under the MTOP the following four criteria are used:

A. that the proposed life-saving treatment or an effective alternative treatment is not available in Australia in time to benefit the applicant;
B. that the treatment is significantly life extending and potentially curative;
C. that there is a real prospect of success for the applicant; and
D. that the treatment is accepted by the Australian medical profession as a standard form of treatment for the applicant’s condition.

In the MTOP Guidelines, under Administrative Eligibility, applicants do not qualify for an assessment where the application is for participation in a clinical trial or to receive experimental treatment. Generally, the results of clinical trials are published in reputable medical journals before the medical profession in Australia accepts a new treatment as a standard form of treatment. This is because the publication process involves peer review by relevant experts to assess the quality and validity of the clinical trials and their suggested results. It would be difficult for the Government to ensure financial assistance is being provided for life-extending, safe, effective treatment in the absence of proven medical evidence.

Clinical trials conducted internationally are also not subject to Australian regulatory, legal and ethical frameworks as they could present significant risks for individuals. Therefore, the Government does not support funding individuals to access such trials.

The MTOP is an important element of the Government’s support for patients with cancer. It acts as a back-stop to the cancer treatment available either through public hospitals or through the support provided for private treatment in the form of Medicare rebates. Some of the most common treatments currently supported through the MTOP are Chimeric Antigen Receptor (CAR) T-Cell Therapy for adults with relapsed or recurrent Diffuse Large B-Cell Lymphoma, and Proton Beam Radiotherapy for rare cancers.

The Government also recognises that health and medical research improves and saves lives and is committed to supporting and encouraging the conduct of trials in Australia. Through the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF), the Government has committed over $1.2 million for research into neuroblastoma, with the aim of ensuring that every Australian child has access to the world’s best childhood cancer treatments. The Government has committed $614 million under the Clinical Trials Activity, with a significant proportion allocated to research focused on rare cancers, rare diseases and unmet medical needs. Recent grant opportunities include $20 million into neurological disorders, $5 million into childhood brain cancer and $15 million to address significant gaps in current research and/or knowledge in rare cancers, rare diseases and areas of unmet medical need.

The MRFF is also encouraging international collaborations to bring the most cutting edge technology and treatments to Australia to benefit Australian patients. Funding of $117.6 million over ten years is being provided to support international clinical trial collaborations to increase Australian leadership of, and participation in, high quality international collaborative investigator-initiated clinical trials.

Since 2013, Cancer Australia and its funding partners have supported six grants with a specific focus on neuroblastoma in children through the Priority-driven Collaborative Cancer Research Scheme and the $4.4 million Investing in medical research — fighting childhood cancer measure. Through the Support for Cancer Clinical Trials program, Cancer Australia also provides support to Australia’s Multi-site Collaborative Cancer Clinical Trials Groups to develop industry-independent cancer clinical trial protocols. This includes $3.87 million to the Australian and New Zealand Children’s Haematology Oncology Group (ANZCHOG) to support the development of cancer clinical trial protocols trials in children, and develop new cancer clinical trial protocols for childhood cancers, including neuroblastoma. ANZCHOG has been involved in the development of six industry-independent trials in neuroblastoma.

The Government shares the desire for affordable treatments for high risk paediatric neuroblastoma patients to become available in Australia, however we must also ensure that all Australians have access to the most effective and safe medical
treatments. Generally, medicines imported into, supplied in, and exported from Australia must be supported by scientific data to support the quality, safety and efficacy of the product for its intended use(s) before they are included in the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods (ARTG), which is administered in my Department by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA).

To facilitate earlier access to potentially life-saving treatments, the Government has implemented two fast track approval pathways: provisional approval (approval based on promising early clinical data) and priority review (faster evaluation). Further information is available at: www.tga.gov.au/hubs/fast-track-approvals. In addition, to specifically encourage applications for breakthrough treatments of rare conditions, there is an existing mechanism that can allow waiving of application and evaluation fees (orphan designation).

The TGA has a responsibility to encourage the use of medicines which have been approved in Australia and included in the ARTG. However, there may be times when approved and available products may not meet the needs of all patients. In recognition of this, there are existing provisions that allow doctors to access experimental treatments that are not registered (also known as 'unapproved') in Australia. These include the Special Access Scheme, Authorised Prescriber scheme, Personal Importation scheme and Clinical Trials Notification/Exemption schemes. Unapproved medicines that have not been evaluated by the TGA can carry significant risks. It is therefore the responsibility of the treating medical practitioner to determine the appropriateness of seeking access to unapproved treatments. Further information is available at: www.tga.gov.au/accessing-unapproved-products, by phone on 1800 020 653 (freecall) or email: EPS@health.gov.au

Although the TGA administers schemes to facilitate access to unapproved products, the actual supply of them is a matter for the patient, the prescriber and the supplier. In addition, medicines accessed by patients through the various unapproved access pathways are not subsidised by the Commonwealth through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. In some circumstances, a pharmaceutical company may be willing to supply an unapproved product at a reduced cost through a compassionate access program. However, this is at the sole discretion of the sponsor and not a decision that can be made by Government.

The Government supports a health system that is designed to be flexible enough to meet the needs of individuals with high risk neuroblastoma while still taking into consideration the need to ensure that patients are receiving medicines and treatment that meet quality, safety, efficacy standards.

Thank you for writing on this matter.

from the Minister for Health, Mr Hunt

Health Care

Dear Mr O’Brien

Thank you for your email of 11 February 2020, regarding support for visually impaired people (petition number EN1155).

There are a range of Government services currently provided to people with visual impairment.

Medicare supports people with a visual impairment by providing rebates for optometry consultations. Medicare does not, however, pay a benefit for the purchase of optical aids such as glasses. The provision of optical aids is a state or territory government responsibility and decisions regarding eligibility and entitlement rest with states and territories.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) provides support to individuals with a permanent and significant disability, who have a reduced functional capacity to participate fully in their community. The NDIS does not fund general vision services. However, where it is reasonable and necessary to do so, it may fund assistive technology products that assist participants who are blind or vision impaired to perform tasks they would otherwise be unable to do.

I would also note that people who are assessed as being permanently blind are automatically eligible for the Disability Support Pension under social security law, which is free of any income or assets testing arrangements.

The Department of Health has invested in a range of programs to address priority areas in eye health, including the National Strategic Action Plan for Macular Disease and the KeepSight Program for National Diabetes Services Scheme Registrants. The Department of Health also funds eye health peak bodies, including Vision2020.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

from the Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme, Mr Robert

Telecommunications

Dear Mr O’Brien

Thank you for your email, dated 11 February 2020, on behalf of the Petitions Committee concerning Petition EN1157 which requests the formation of an independent scientific team to conduct studies into 5G technology and electromagnetic energy (EME).

The Morrison Government acknowledges that there is significant community interest in the risk of exposure to EME, including from mobile phone base stations. Indeed, the Government strictly regulates EME emissions in the context of telecommunications, to protect the health and safety of the public.

The Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA) provides independent expert advice on radiation protection and nuclear safety matters to the Government. In order to provide the best advice on the protection of the Australian public from the effects of radiation, ARPANSA undertakes its own research and reviews the relevant scientific
research. This includes research and reviews of exposure to EME emissions from mobile telecommunications sources. ARPANSA also publishes the *Radiation Protection Standard for Maximum Exposure Levels to Radiofrequency Fields - 3 kHz to 300 GHz* (‘ARPANSA Standard’) which the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) adopts as part of its regulatory requirements for the telecommunications sector.

The effects of EME exposure have been the subject of extensive and rigorous scientific study around the world for many decades. ARPANSA monitors emerging research into the potential health effects of EME emissions. It also consults with the world’s peak health bodies, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP), so that Australia can contribute to and benefit from the best international research and guidance on this matter. Based on the best available research, ARPANSA and leading health authorities advise that there are no known health effects from EME at levels below the ARPANSA Standard.

ICNIRP has released a review of its international guidelines, based on significant consultation and scientific review. ARPANSA advises that the level of protection provided by Australia’s current standard is comparable to that provided by the new ICNIRP guidelines. However ARPANSA will be revising Australia’s Standard to ensure the scientific evidence, measurements and modelling in the new ICNIRP guidelines are addressed in the Australian Standard.

The Commonwealth has funded a national grants program for EME-related research since 1997. These grants, which are currently administered by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), have funded domestic research into possible health effects of exposure to EME from telecommunications sources. For example, the NHMRC granted $2.5 million over five years (from April 2018) to the Australian Centre for Electromagnetic Bioeffects Research (ACEBR) to undertake a range of EME research projects.

ACEBR’s programs include research into human neurophysiology, cellular response studies, dosimetry, and social sciences. Further information about ACEBR’s research is available through its website at www.acebr.uow.edu.au. A full list of grants made under the program can be found on the NHMRC website at www.nhmrc.gov.au/research-policy/research-priorities/electromagnetic-energy-program.

In December 2019, I announced a $9 million package over four years providing funding for more research into EME from telecommunications facilities and for more communications activities about the safety and regulation of EME. While decades of research indicates there are no known harmful effects from low levels of EME used for telecommunications, the Government recognises the need for continued vigilance and contemporary insights, particularly where emerging technologies are concerned.

I hope the information in this letter is of some help.

Yours sincerely

from the **Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, Mr Fletcher**

**Freedom of Speech**

Dear Mr O’Dowd

Thank you for the Committee’s correspondence of 11 February 2020 regarding petition EN1160. The petition requests that the Government repeal section 45D of the *Competition and Consumer Act 2010*.

There will always be a place for peaceful protest in Australia—the right to protest and free speech are central pillars of our democratic nation. However, the right to protest does not mean an unlimited licence to disrupt people’s lives and their lawful business activities.

The Prime Minister has announced that the Government is working across several portfolios to identify possible mechanisms to address this issue and protect hard working Australians in legitimate businesses from unfair financial damage. While this work is in its early stages, the Government is mindful to ensure any mechanisms considered take into account our core democratic values of freedom of speech and the right to protest.

The petition specifically requests that the Government repeal section 45D of the *Competition and Consumer Act 2010*. The Government considers that section 45D remains an important part of the suite of prohibitions on restrictive trade practices in the Act.

As the 2015 Competition Policy Review (Harper Review) noted, secondary boycotts are harmful to trading freedom and therefore harmful to competition. Where accompanied by effective enforcement, secondary boycott provisions have been shown to have a significant deterrent effect on behaviour that would otherwise compromise consumers’ ability to access goods and services in a competitive market.

The Harper Review recommended that the secondary boycott provisions be maintained and that the ACCC pursue such cases with increased vigour (recommendation 36). The Government response supported this recommendation.

Thank you again for bringing this petition and the concerns raised to my attention.

Yours sincerely

from the **Attorney-General, Mr Porter**

Cooper, Mr Andrew

Dear Committee
Monday, 15 June 2020

I refer to recent correspondence of 11 February 2020 in relation to Petition EN1162. I trust that the information below will be of assistance.

The petition references my department's actions in relation to Mr Andrew Cooper under the Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme Act 2018 (the Act). As noted in the petition, Mr Cooper, in his capacity as President of LibertyWorks Inc, was served a notice to produce documents under section 45 of the Act in October 2019.

The Act came into effect on 10 December 2018 and created the Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme (the scheme). The scheme is a significant new transparency measure which aims to provide the Australian public and decision-makers in government with visibility of the nature, level and extent of foreign influence on Australia's government and political process. It does this by requiring any person or entity that undertakes certain activities on behalf of a foreign principal to register under the scheme.

It is important to note that the scheme is concerned with foreign influence rather than foreign interference. All governments, including in Australia, try to influence decision makers. In contrast, foreign interference refers to activities that are covert, coercive, deceptive or corrupting, and are contrary to Australia's sovereignty, values and national interests. Foreign interference is covered by offences in the Commonwealth Criminal Code and dealt with by ASIO and the AFP, and is not the focus of the scheme.

The scheme does not operate as a blacklist and does not prevent people from participating in otherwise lawful activities. Rather, the scheme operates to ensure that, where such activities are done under an arrangement with or at the request of a foreign principal, the involvement of that foreign principal is clearly and appropriately disclosed to the public and decision makers.

This is achieved through the publication of a public register containing details of registrants, their registrable activities, and associated foreign principals. The public register can be viewed at https://transparency.ag.gov.au/.

Whether a person or entity is required to register will depend on a number of factors. Broadly speaking, a person or entity is required to register if:

- they undertake registrable activities or enter into a registrable arrangement
- the activity is, or will be undertaken in Australia on behalf of a foreign principal
- the activity is undertaken for the purpose of political or governmental influence, and
- no exemptions apply.

Under the Act, registrable activities are communications activity, parliamentary lobbying, general political lobbying and disbursement activity. A foreign principal is a foreign government, a foreign political organisation, a foreign government related entity or a foreign government related individual. An activity is undertaken 'on behalf of a foreign principal if it is undertaken under any arrangement with the foreign principal.

Former Cabinet Ministers and people who have recently held senior positions in the Australian Government (such as former members of Parliament, Ambassadors and agency heads) have more extensive registration obligations. This is due to the special nature of the roles that these individuals previously held and is consistent with the recommendation of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security, which reviewed the proposed Bill ahead of it being passed by Parliament in 2018.

The scheme's registration obligations apply equally to any person who undertakes registrable activities on behalf of a foreign principal for the purposes of political or governmental influence irrespective of which country the foreign principal is from and regardless of the viewpoint being advanced.

Where the Attorney-General's Department becomes aware that a person or organisation may have registration obligations, the department makes contact with them to ensure they are aware of the operation of the Act and provide information which would assist them to assess their potential obligations.

To ensure that the scheme's transparency purpose is realised, the Act provides the Secretary of the Attorney-General's Department a number of powers to assist with its administration. This includes powers to request information or documents relevant to the scheme.

These notices do not imply an assumption of guilt or wrongdoing. They are merely a tool to assist with clarifying whether a registration obligation may exist. A notice requesting information will only be issued after other attempts to seek information have been exhausted.

I hope that this information has been of assistance to the Committee. More detailed information about the scheme and its requirements can be found at www.ag.gov.au/transparency.

Yours sincerely

from the Attorney-General, Mr Porter

Schools

Dear Mr O'Brien

Thank you for your email of 11 February 2020 regarding petition number EN1165 requesting the Australian Government to consider mandatory first aid training for school aged children.

Yours sincerely

CHAMBER
The teaching of first aid is addressed in the Australian Curriculum (the curriculum) under the Health and Physical Education learning area. In Years 9 and 10 this can include rehearsing CPR and first aid for use in managing situations where health and safety may be at short or long term risk. More information on the Australian Curriculum Learning Area: Health and Physical Education is available at www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/health-and-physical-education.

While the Australian Government plays a national leadership role in school education, state and territory government and non-government education authorities and individual schools are responsible for the day-to-day delivery of education programs. The curriculum allows teachers and schools to have considerable flexibility in how they deliver curriculum and recognises they are best able to determine the appropriate approach for their communities.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Education, Mr Tehan

Welfare and Benefits

Dear Chair

I thank the Committee for the email of 11 February 2020, sent by former Chair Llew O'Brien MP to the Hon Stuart Robert MP regarding petition number EN1167. The correspondence has been referred to me as some matters raised in the petition fall within my portfolio responsibilities.

Under the Fair Work Act 2009 (Fair Work Act) all eligible employees are entitled to up to 12 months' unpaid parental leave following the birth or adoption of a child. On 5 February 2020, the Australian Government announced it will introduce legislation to amend the Fair Work Act to improve support for parents whose baby is born prematurely or develops complications following birth and requires hospitalisation and parents whose baby is stillborn or dies while on unpaid parental leave.

For parents of premature babies, or babies that experience birth-related complications that require immediate hospitalisation following birth, the proposed amendment would remove a barrier that currently prevents them from agreeing with their employer to 'pause' their unpaid parental leave and return to work for the period their baby is in hospital and resume leave when their baby is discharged. This change would allow parents of babies born prematurely to have more time at home with their baby.

As you would be aware, the Government continues to make decisions in response to the evolving COVID-19 situation in Australia. Unfortunately this has meant that it was not possible to introduce legislation to amend the unpaid parental leave provisions in the Fair Work Act in the autumn sitting period as was originally intended. The Government remains committed to better support families dealing with traumatic situations and will introduce legislation at the earliest opportunity.

I also note that the Government's Paid Parental Leave scheme provides Parental Leave Pay for a maximum period of 18 weeks at a rate based on the national minimum wage, currently $740.60 before tax, to eligible working primary carers of a newborn or recently adopted child. Under the scheme, parents can nominate the date they would like their Parental Leave Pay to start when they lodge a claim.

Parental Leave pay can start from the day a child is born or adopted, or a later date but must be fully paid within 52 weeks from the date of birth or adoption.

I would like to thank the Miracle Babies Foundation for its valuable contribution to the Government's review of the unpaid parental leave provisions in the Fair Work Act.

Thank you again for bringing the concerns referred to in the petition to my attention. I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

from the Attorney-General, Mr Porter

Strip-searching

Dear Ms Elliot

I refer to your correspondence of 11 February 2020 to the Attorney-General, the Hon Christian Porter MP, concerning petition EN1168 received in relation to strip searches conducted by police. Your correspondence has been referred to me as I am the Minister responsible for the matter you have raised.

I note that petition EN1168 raised concerns that strip search powers are being used arbitrarily against minors. At a Commonwealth level, strip searches are not routinely undertaken and are only conducted under very specific circumstances in accordance with relevant legislative provisions.

Police have the authority to conduct a strip search on arrested persons under section 3ZH of the Crimes Act 1914 (Cth) (the Act). There are stringent procedures that must be followed whenever a strip search is conducted. These rules are designed to ensure that any person who is being subjected to a strip search is treated with respect to minimise the associated indignity.

A strip search can only be conducted after a person has been arrested and is brought to a police station. There must be reasonable grounds to suspect that a person has in their possession a seizable item or evidential material, and that the police officer suspects it is necessary to conduct the search to recover that item. Approval to conduct a strip search must be granted by a superintendent or higher.
Section 3ZI of the Act includes the requirement for the search to be conducted in privacy, by a member of the same sex and out of view of a person of the opposite sex, or any person whose presence is not necessary for the purposes of the search.

Further, if the person being searched is at least 10 years of age, but under 18 years, or is incapable of managing his or her affairs, the search:

- may only be conducted if the person has been arrested and charged or if a court orders that it be conducted; and
- must be conducted in the presence of a parent or guardian of the person being searched or, if that is not acceptable to the person, in the presence of another person (other than a police officer) who is capable of representing the interests of the person and who, as far as is practicable in the circumstances, is acceptable to the person.

There are no provisions authorising a police officer to conduct an internal body search.

I also note the concerns outlined in petition EN1168 have also arisen in relation to state police undertaking strip searches. However, issues concerning the operations and conduct of state police forces are the responsibility of the relevant state government and authorities. These issues would be more appropriately directed to state police ministers for consideration.

Some states are already considering these powers, such as the NSW Law Enforcement Conduct Commission (LECC), who are currently undertaking an inquiry into the practices of NSW Police in relation to the conduct of strip searches. The LECC published an interim report in February 2020.

Thank you for bringing petition EN1168 to the Australian Government’s attention.

Yours sincerely
from the Minister for Home Affairs, Mr Dutton

Tobacco Industry

Dear Mr O’Brien

I refer to your letter of 11 February 2020 concerning petition number EN1170.

The Australian Government is taking a precautionary approach to e-cigarettes and continues to monitor emerging evidence about the direct harms they pose to human health, their impact on smoking initiation and cessation, uptake among youth, and dual use with conventional tobacco products. The Government’s position is based on the need to consider overall the impacts that e-cigarettes pose to population health, including on non-smokers and smokers.

Recent reports have highlighted alarming trends in youth e-cigarette use in some countries, such as the United States and Canada, where e-cigarettes containing nicotine are widely marketed and accessible. Increasing evidence linking their marketing and use to nicotine addiction, lung disease and smoking uptake among youth are particularly troubling and reflect the Government’s stance on e-cigarettes.

On 13 September 2019, the Commonwealth Government Chief Medical Officer (CMO) and state and territory Chief Health Officers (CHOs) issued a statement following an outbreak of lung disease associated with e-cigarette product use in the United States. As of 18 February 2020, 2807 cases of lung disease and 68 confirmed deaths have been reported to United States health authorities. This outbreak is still being investigated by United States health authorities and the Government will continue to monitor the situation. The CMO and CHO’s statement is available at: www.health.gov.au using the search term ‘e-cigarettes’.

The Government’s approach to e-cigarettes also recognises the current state of evidence regarding their utility as an aid to smoking cessation. At a population level, there continues to be insufficient evidence to promote the use of these products for smoking cessation. Unlike any e-cigarette product, all smoking cessation products lawfully available for sale in Australia have been evaluated by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) for safety and efficacy and have been registered with the TGA. There are no restrictions on who might apply to the TGA to market a smoking cessation product in Australia. However, no e-cigarettes have been approved by the TGA for smoking cessation.

Currently, nicotine for use in e-cigarettes cannot be lawfully sold in Australia. The sale of nicotine for use in e-cigarettes would require an amendment to the Standard for the Uniform Scheduling of Medicines and Poisons (Poisons Standard). The Poisons Standard is a record of decisions regarding the classification of medicines and chemicals into Schedules for inclusion in relevant legislation of the states and territories. There is a clearly defined process for amendments to the Poisons Standard to be considered and it is important to note this process is independent from Government. Under this process, anyone may make an application to schedule or reschedule a substance.

Although nicotine for use in e-cigarettes is not currently available for sale in Australia, it may be lawful for people to import nicotine for personal therapeutic use in e-cigarettes under the TGA’s Personal Importation Scheme. Under this scheme, an importer must hold a written authority issued by a registered Australian medical practitioner and the possession and use of nicotine for this purpose must also be legal within the importer’s state or territory.

On 25 May 2017, the Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport commenced an inquiry into the use and marketing of e-cigarettes and personal vaporisers in Australia. The Inquiry’s final report was published on 28 March 2018 and is available at: www.aph.gov.au. The Government is considering the Inquiry’s recommendations before providing a response.

Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention.

Yours sincerely
from the Minister for Health, Mr Hunt
Department of Veterans' Affairs

Dear Mr O'Dowd

I am responding to correspondence of 11 February 2020 from the former Chair of the Standing Committee on Petitions regarding petition number EN1172, relating to the recent Federal Court decision in Shafran v Repatriation Commission [2019] FCA 1833 (Shafran).

I note the petition discusses the beneficial interpretation that should be given to the legislation that underpins the veterans' support framework. Relevantly, the Australian Veterans’ Recognition (Putting Veterans and their Families First) Act 2019 (Veterans’ Recognition Act) commenced on 31 October 2019. The Veterans’ Recognition Act includes a statement requiring the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) to adopt a beneficial approach when interpreting legislation and applying a fair, just and consistent approach to veterans’ claims. This has been just one part of our ongoing efforts to transform the culture of DVA.

I am pleased to advise DVA is also progressing a number of procedural changes to address the decision in Shafran. These changes will bolster the opportunity for those applying to the Veterans' Review Board (VRB) to provide comments in relation to material provided under s 137 of the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986 (VEA), before this material is provided to the VRB.

It is widely acknowledged the VEA is unnecessarily complex, particularly in relation to the review provisions which were addressed by Justice Logan in Shafran. This complexity adds to differences in understanding, and at times will require judicial guidance. The fact that these issues required consideration by the Federal Court highlights that the legislation could be clearer in this area. As such, DVA will continue to consider its options in providing additional clarity to clients with particular reference to this area of the VEA.

In the meantime, if any individual considers DVA has acted contrary to the operation of s 137 of the VEA, and that this has adversely impacted consideration of their claim, we would encourage them to contact DVA directly to address this issue.

It is also worth noting that on 27 March 2018, the Australian Government requested that the Productivity Commission (PC) conduct an inquiry into the system of compensation and rehabilitation for veterans and their families. This was a comprehensive inquiry conducted over 15 months, with the PC meeting with veterans, families and their communities throughout Australia. The Government released the final report 'A Better Way to Support Veterans’ promptly, to hear the views of the veteran community, and encourage public dialogue and discussion. The report is over 900 pages long and makes 69 recommendations to improve the veterans' support system, a number of which focus on legislative reform.

The Government will finalise its response to the report in conjunction with the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Inquiry into transition from the Australian Defence Force, and the Veterans’ Advocacy and Support Scoping Study, which have also considered the best ways to support veterans and their families.

Thank you for taking the time to bring this matter to my attention.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Veterans and Defence Personnel, Mr Chester

Environment

Dear Mr O'Dowd

Thank you for your correspondence of 10 February 2020 concerning petition number EN1181 regarding single-use plastic bags.

Single-use plastic bags are one of our biggest litter problems. The Morrison Government recognises the importance of Australia’s environmental sustainability, and both the challenges and opportunities in front of us when it comes to plastics and waste more broadly. That is why our Government is strongly committed to reducing waste, increasing recycling and making sure that we can manage our waste and recycling here in Australia.

To support these aims, the Government has committed $167 million to our Australian Recycling Investment Plan. This Plan includes $100 million, to be delivered through the CEFC, to support the manufacturing of products containing recycled materials, $20 million to identify new and innovative solutions to plastic recycling and waste, more than $11 million for community campaigns to clean up plastic waste from our beaches and rivers, and $16 million toward a Pacific Ocean Litter Project to work with our Pacific neighbours to reduce plastics and other waste in our oceans.

Last year, Australia’s environment ministers agreed to the ambitious yet reasonable target of making 100 per cent of Australian packaging reusable, recyclable or compostable by 2025 or earlier. In September 2019, the Government endorsed industry-led targets to better manage Australia's packaging waste which will see by 2025: 70 per cent of Australia's plastic packaging being recycled or composted; 50 per cent average recycled content included across all packaging, and phasing out problematic and unnecessary single-use plastic packaging through design, innovation or the introduction of alternatives.

In support of this, the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation (APCO) and its members are delivering an extensive program of work to drive the delivery of the 2025 National Packaging Targets and Australian governments continue to work alongside APCO to support industry actions. Earlier this month, I launched the new strategic framework outlining how Australia will deliver the 2025 National Packaging Targets with APCO. You can read Our Packaging Future here: packagingcovenant.org.au/news/our-packaging-future-report-launches-to-outline-critical-steps-required-to-deliver-australias-2025-national-packaging-targets
You may also be interested to know that the Government is supporting efforts to reform the labelling of plastic recyclables through the Australasian Recycling Label (ARL) initiative, which will make it easier for consumers to determine what can and cannot be recycled. The ARL provides clear, consistent on-pack recycling information about how to correctly dispose of every part of a product’s packaging - for example, what goes in the recycling bin, what goes in the rubbish bin, and what can be returned to store for soft plastic recycling. The ARL aims to remove confusion and educate consumers while reducing contamination in the recycling system, and it has already started to appear on a number of products, including packaging by Australia Post, Nestle, Woolworths, and Coles amongst others. The information on the ARL, designed with the support of industry associations such as Planet Ark and APCO, are part of an education and awareness campaign which will be rolled out encouraging consumers to look for the label as it appears increasingly on products in stores.

Coles and Woolworths supermarkets have also responded to the challenge posed by plastic bag waste by banning single-use plastic shopping bags in all their stores. Customers can now buy reusable bags that are mostly made from recycled plastic. Once these bags can no longer be used, they can be recycled through the soft plastic REDcycle bins that can be found in all Coles and Woolworths stores.

To help reduce the volume of single-use plastic bags in circulation and subsequently discarded, the majority of Australia’s state and territory governments have banned single-use plastic bags. The Australian Government will continue to work with state and territory governments, and businesses to support these useful initiatives.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

Yours sincerely

from the Assistant Minister for Waste Reduction and Environmental Management, Mr Evans

Northern Territory

Dear Chair
Thank you for your email of 11 February 2020 to the Prime Minister, the Hon Scott Morrison MP, regarding the Northern Territory (NT) Statehood petition (EN 1188). Your email was forwarded to me as I am the Minister responsible for the matter you raised.

The issue of NT statehood is a matter for the NT Government to progress. Since confirming its in-principle support in 2015, the Australian Government remains prepared to consider a proposal by the NT Government on Statehood.

To progress, the NT Government would need to submit a detailed proposal to the Australian Government for consideration. As a minimum, any proposal from the NT Government should have majority support from residents of the NT.

Thank you for bringing this petition to my attention and I trust this is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

from the Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Territories, Mrs Marino

Drought

Dear Mr O’Brien
Thank you for your letter of 11 February 2020 to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development, the Hon Michael McCormack MP, regarding the creation of a new city state in north-west Victoria (petition EN1190). Your letter was forwarded to me as I am the minister responsible for the matters you raised.

The Australian Government is focused on connecting regional centres to capital cities with faster and more reliable passenger rail services, while ensuring options to future proof highspeed rail corridors are considered. In the lead up to the 2019-20 Budget, the Government announced a 20-Year Faster Rail Plan (the Plan) to better align population growth with long term infrastructure investment.

As a first step towards this Plan, the Government invested $20 million in faster rail business cases for Sydney to Newcastle, Melbourne to Greater Shepparton, and Brisbane to the regions of Moreton Bay and the Sunshine Coast. These business cases have now been completed and are informing the Government’s faster rail investment strategy.

The Government has also committed $2 billion to help deliver faster rail between Melbourne and Geelong - a nationally significant commuter corridor. The Government is investing in additional business cases for faster rail corridors between Sydney and Bomaderry; Sydney and Parkes (via Bathurst and Orange); Melbourne and Traralgon; Melbourne and Albury-Wodonga; and Brisbane and the Gold Coast.

To ensure we can deliver better connectivity to our regions and cities, the Government established the National Faster Rail Agency (the Agency) on 1 July 2019. The Agency is working in close partnership with state and territory governments and the private sector to deliver the Plan.

In relation to the establishment of new cities in regional Victoria, the Consolidated Land and Rail Australia (CLARA) business case investigated building two SMART cities between Melbourne and Greater Shepparton in response to Melbourne's expanding population and transport congestion. These cities would be connected by high-speed rail which would significantly reduce travel times and enhance employment and housing opportunities.

The Government is also getting on with the job of building new water infrastructure to meet regional Australia’s needs by providing $3.5 billion through the $1.5 billion National Water Infrastructure Development Fund (the Fund) and the $2 billion
National Water Infrastructure Loan Facility (the Loan Facility). These investments will help identify and build dams, weirs and pipelines that will deliver secure and affordable water for rural and regional Australia.

To date, the Government has committed nearly $1.5 billion from the Fund and Loan Facility to fund the construction of 21 water infrastructure projects with a total construction value of more than $2.6 billion. Through the Fund, the Government has committed $120.8 million to build six new water infrastructure projects and $4.4 million for 11 feasibility studies to identify and plan new water infrastructure projects in Victoria.

The National Water Grid Authority (the Authority) commenced operation on 1 October 2019 and is delivering the Government's commitment to invest $100 million into bringing world best science together to identify opportunities for enhancing water supply and reliability within Australia. In addition, the Authority is working in partnership with state and territory governments to develop a national pipeline of strategic water infrastructure initiatives to help make Australia's water supply more resilient during periods of drought.

In establishing the Authority, the Government is providing national leadership to plan for and meet the water needs of our farmers, businesses and regional communities and to secure the future prosperity of all Australians.

While the Government is not currently considering the creation of a new city state alongside a desalination pipe and high-speed rail line, the Government's policies should assure the petitioners the Government considers planning for Australia's future population to be a priority.

Thank you for bringing this petition to my attention and I trust this is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Population, Cities and Urban Infrastructure, Mr Tudge

Parliamentary Representation

Dear Chair

I refer to the letter of 11 February 2020 from Mr Llew O'Brien MP, former Chair of the Committee, regarding petition number EN1198 concerning a proposal to re-examine all petitions relating to alleged breaches of section 44 of the Constitution, and for those cases to be put to the High Court for determination.

Whether to refer a question concerning the qualifications of a parliamentarian under section 44 of the Constitution to the High Court is a matter for the House of Parliament.

A mandatory qualifications checklist for candidates for the Senate and House of Representatives was introduced by amendments of the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 made by the Electoral Legislation Amendment (Modernisation and Other Measures) Act 2019. Candidates in the 2019 general election were required to comply with the checklist. Parliamentarians' responses to the checklist are available on the internet at the following locations:

- Senators: https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Senators_Interests/RegisterQual46thparl

Thank you for bringing the petitioner's concerns to my attention. I hope this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

from the Attorney-General, Mr Porter

Asylum Seekers

Dear Ms Elliot

I refer to your correspondence of 11 February 2020 from Mr Llew O'Brien enclosing Petition EN1202 concerning the Australian Government's regional processing and resettlement arrangements and the onshore asylum seeker caseload. I appreciate the time you have taken to bring this matter to my attention.

Regional processing is a key pillar of Operation Sovereign Borders and supports the Government's strong border protection policy response to maritime people smuggling. These policies have successfully stemmed the flow of illegal maritime arrivals to Australia, disrupted people smuggling activities in the region and prevented countless loss of life at sea. The success of Australia's border protection policies has enabled the Government to make a generous contribution to addressing the global humanitarian crisis by increasing Australia's Humanitarian Program annual quota to 18,750 places.

Regional processing will continue to be a mainstay in the Government's response to maritime people smuggling. The Government does not want to see the return of mass illegal maritime arrivals and needless deaths at sea. The Government therefore does not see any benefit in repealing amendments made to the Migration Act 1958 by the Migration Amendment (Unauthorised Maritime Arrivals and Other Measures) Act 2013, or the Migration Legislation Amendment (Regional Processing and Other Measures) Act 2012, which introduced the current regional processing legislative framework.

The Government is committed to supporting the Governments of Nauru and Papua New Guinea (PNG) to resolve the regional processing caseload. No refugees under regional processing arrangements in Nauru or PNG are detained in immigration detention. Refugees have permanent resettlement options and are being resettled.

CHAMBER
The Government thanks the United States (US) for its generous agreement to resettle up to 1,250 refugees. This arrangement is progressing well and US officials continue to make decisions and effect departures. The US resettlement arrangement will provide many refugees under regional processing arrangements with a fresh start and all eligible refugees are encouraged to participate.

The Government acknowledges the offer by New Zealand (NZ) to resettle refugees in NZ, but as publicly stated, the Government is currently focused on the much larger US arrangement. The Government's position remains steadfast that no person entering Australia illegally by sea will be permanently settled in Australia.

Australia is committed to providing protection to refugees consistent with the obligations set out in the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, and other international human rights conventions to which it is a party. Protection visa applicants who are granted an associated bridging visa, which allows them to remain lawful in the community while their visa application is being processed, may have access to a range of services offered by the Government such as Medicare and the public health system, education for school aged children, assistance with finding employment, if they have work rights, translating and interpreting services, and if eligible, the Government's Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS) Program.

The SRSS Program supports non-citizens as they engage with the Department of Home Affairs to resolve their immigration status, including people who have lodged valid Protection visas. The SRSS Program provides targeted assistance to eligible clients, such as financial assistance, accommodation, access to health care, access to education for school aged children, case worker support and case management.

The Department aims to finalise Protection visa applications as quickly as possible. However, this is a very complex process and takes some time. The Department makes contact with an applicant or authorised recipient when further information is required or when the application is finalised.

Thank you for bringing this petition to my attention.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Home Affairs, Mr Dutton

Banking and Financial Services

Dear Mr O'Brien

Thank you for your correspondence originally directed to the Treasurer, concerning Petition (EN1204) regarding bank lending policies.

The Government does not prescribe the conditions on which mortgages are provided, other than as stated in responsible lending laws. These are ultimately commercial decisions for banks and the Government does not have any power to intervene in these decisions.

While interest rates and fees are commercial decisions for financial institutions, the Government considers it important that their pricing practices are transparent and understood by consumers. This is why, on 14 October 2019, the Government directed the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) to undertake an inquiry into the pricing of residential mortgage products. The ACCC will deliver a preliminary report by 30 March 2020 and a final report by 30 September 2020.

Many lenders allow purchasing a house with a smaller deposit. Sometimes this means the borrower will be charged for lenders mortgage insurance, the cost of which can be added to the home loan amount. Since different lenders have different lending criteria, it may be possible to find one that better suits a borrower’s needs. Australia currently has over 100 mortgage providers including many small banks, credit unions and building societies which may offer alternative products. ASIC provides further information on credit products, including options for shopping around, at www.moneysmart.gov.au/borrowing-and-credit.

The Government has undertaken a range of measures to reduce pressure on housing affordability in Australia. This includes the First Home Loan Deposit Scheme, which will provide up to 10,000 guarantees per financial year to help Australians realise their goal of owning their own home, by enabling first home buyers to purchase a modest home sooner with a deposit of as little as 5 per cent.

The Government has also successfully implemented all measures announced in the Reducing Pressure on Housing Affordability 2017-18 Budget package, including the First Home Super Saver Scheme which assists savers to build a deposit for a first home inside their superannuation fund by making voluntary contributions, and reducing barriers to downsizing to free up homes for younger families

I trust this information will be of assistance.

Yours sincerely

from the Assistant Minister for Superannuation, Financial Services and Financial Technology, Senator Hume

Religious Freedom

Dear Mr O'Dowd
Thank you for contacting me in relation to petition number EN1224, presented to the House on 8 April 2020, which calls for the withdrawal of the Government's proposed Religious Discrimination Bill on the basis that it offends section 116 of the Constitution.

In broad terms, section 116 of the Constitution prevents the Commonwealth from passing laws establishing any religion, imposing any religious observance or prohibiting the free exercise of religion. Nor can the Commonwealth pass a law requiring a 'religious test' for an office or public trust under the Commonwealth.

The proposed Religious Discrimination Bill would protect Australians from discrimination on the basis of religious belief or activity in specified areas of public life. The term 'religious belief or activity' is defined broadly in the proposed Bill as either holding or not holding a religious belief, or engaging, not engaging or refusing to engage in lawful religious activity. As such, it would protect theistic, non-theistic and atheistic beliefs, as well as the right not to profess any religion or belief. The Bill does not establish any religion, nor does it prohibit the free exercise of religion or require a 'religious test' as qualification for an office or public trust under the Commonwealth.

Thank you for raising this latter with me.

Yours sincerely

don from the Attorney-General, Mr Porter

Climate Change

Dear Mr O'Dowd

Thank you for your correspondence of 8 April 2020, concerning Petition EN1231 to appoint a Royal Commission to evaluate the underlying carbon dioxide theory of global warming.

The Australian Government (the Government) takes its primary advice on climate science from the Bureau of Meteorology and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation. This advice aligns with information provided by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and other national and international organisations, such as the Australian Academy of Science, the World Meteorological Organization, the National Academy of Sciences and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

These world-leading scientific organisations have found that the Earth's climate is changing, and humans are primarily responsible. This finding is informed by long-term observations of air temperatures, the heat content of the ocean, changes to glaciers, ice sheets and sea ice. The Government is integrating climate science into decision-making as a key principle of good environmental policy.

Under the Paris Agreement the Australian Government has committed to reducing emissions by 26 to 28 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030. This national target is achievable and responsible and is part of coordinated global action to deliver a healthy environment for future generations, while keeping the Australian economy strong. We have a clear plan to meet and beat our Paris commitment through our fully funded $3.5 billion Climate Solutions Package that has mapped out, to the last tonne, how to meet our 2030 target.

Thank you for this opportunity to respond to this petition.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for the Environment, Ms Ley

Crime

Dear Mr O'Dowd

Thank you for contacting me in relation to petition number EN1233, presented to the House on 8 April 2020.

The petition requests that the Australian Government reform arson offences and associated penalties.

Under Australia's federal system of government, the Commonwealth, states and territories have different areas of responsibility. Each state and territory manages its own criminal justice system and related programs including policing, administration of the courts and prison systems. States and territories are generally responsible for criminal offences relating to arson.

State and territory governments are therefore responsible for enshrining maximum penalties for arson in legislation, and ensuring penalties are set sufficiently high to allow courts to impose appropriate punishments for the most serious offences. Any change to maximum penalties for arson offences would be a matter for the states and territories.

The sentencing option applied in each case is a matter for the particular court, which distinguishes between more serious and less serious cases of similar offences. To ensure the independence of the courts, which is a fundamental aspect of our constitutional system, governments cannot interfere with the courts exercising their sentencing discretion.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

Yours sincerely

from the Attorney-General, Mr Porter

Transaction Fees

Dear Mr O'Dowd
Thank you for your correspondence, originally directed to the Treasurer, concerning a petition on direct debit payments to businesses (petition number EN1269). Your correspondence has been referred to me as I have responsibility for consumer policy.

The Australian Consumer Law (ACL) does not prohibit businesses from using particular pricing strategies for services such as gym memberships. Rather, the ACL requires businesses to be transparent in their pricing strategies, and therefore not mislead consumers when displaying prices for their services. This means that consumers can feel free to choose what is right for them, knowing what their options are.

Additionally, the Australian Banking Association Banking Code of Practice outlines that a bank may cancel a direct debit if it is contacted by the customer, without needing to engage with the merchant. This allows consumers to cancel direct debit payments at any time by notifying their respective financial institution.

I trust this information will be of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely

from the Assistant Treasurer, Mr Sukkar

Environment

Dear Mr O'Dowd

Thank you for your correspondence of 9 April 2020 concerning petition EN1291 about preventing the destruction of Australia's natural heritage and building disaster management capabilities. The Australian Government is implementing a range of measures that protect, enhance and rehabilitate our natural environment.

In October 2019, the Government announced the commencement of the independent review of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act). The independent review of the EPBC Act will consider all ideas put forward to ensure our national environmental law remains fit for purpose. A discussion paper was released by the independent reviewer, Professor Graeme Samuel AC, on 21 November 2019. Details about the review and how to be involved are available on the review website at www.epbcactreview.environment.gov.au.

The Australian Government is an international leader in how it is responding to biodiversity loss. Last November, I was delighted to co-launch Australia's Strategy for Nature 2019-2030 with my state and territory ministerial colleagues.

Australia's Strategy for Nature 2019-2030, along with Australia's Nature Hub website, are a key part of our commitment to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity. The Strategy has generated a significant amount of interest within the international community for the innovative and inclusive approach it promotes.

Australia's Strategy for Nature 2019-2030 represents a new way of doing business for Australia. The Strategy provides the opportunity to expand conversations on biodiversity conservation, recognising the important role biodiversity plays in all land and sea scapes, including in production areas and cities, and the critical links to human health.

A progress report on the Strategy is to be provided to environment ministers every two years. Publicly available progress reports will be published every four years, aligning with Australia's reporting to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

As part of Australia's response to climate change, the Government is taking real and practical action to reduce our emissions. The Government's response to climate change includes mitigation to reduce emissions, and resilience and adaptation to prepare practically for climate change, such as supporting renewable generation technology and funding research into new technology.

The Australian Government is working closely with states and territories to assess the environmental impact of the recent bushfires, including on matters of national environmental significance such as threatened species. This involves sharing information and data on mapping the extent and severity of the fires across a range of tenure and landscapes, including the National Reserve System. Working with states and territories, we have 'boots on the ground' undertaking ground truthing exercises to verify what mapping information is telling us about the ecological impact of the fires, including what it means for species of interest.

In response to this summer's devastating bushfires, the Government has established a $2 billion recovery fund.

As part of the $2 billion recovery fund, we have announced an initial investment of $50 million for the protection and restoration of affected wildlife and habitat.

• $25 million will be used to establish an emergency critical intervention fund to assist the immediate survival of affected animals and plants.

• $25 million will be made available to support wildlife rescue, zoos, and conservation groups with on the ground activities.

A panel of experts, led by Threatened Species Commissioner, Dr Sally Box, has been established to advise the Government on critical interventions required, and to develop a strategy to build back up animal and plant populations, ensuring their resilience into the future.

This initial investment supports the immediate work to protect wildlife, as well as plan for longer term protection and restoration of Australia's environment.

The Australian Government supports environmental science through the National Environmental Science Program (NESP), a long-term commitment to environment and climate research with funding of $145 million over the six years, from 2015-16.
to 2020-21. This year the Government has committed a further $149 million in climate and environmental science targeting plastic waste, threatened species, climate systems and a range of key environmental issues.

Through NESP, six research hubs are supported, including the Threatened Species Recovery Hub and the Clean Air and Urban Landscapes Hub. Ecological recovery and restoration are priority areas of research for these Hubs.

The Australian Government is investing in environmental rehabilitation and resilience through a range of programs. The National Landcare Program is a nationwide effort to address problems such as loss of vegetation, soil degradation, the introduction of pest weeds and animals, changes in water quality and flows and changes in fire regimes.

This represents a billion-dollar commitment by the Government to protect and conserve Australia's water, soil, plants, animals and ecosystems, as well as support the productive and sustainable use of these valuable resources. This is a very significant investment, which is in addition but complementary to, the bushfire recovery work.

The Australian Government is also investing $100 million, over four years from 2019-20 to 2022-23, to help ensure our environment is protected for future generations, through the Environment Restoration Fund.

The Environment Restoration Fund builds on the Government's $1 billion investment, over six years from 2017-18 to 2022-23, in the National Landcare Program. The Government's investment in the Fund is helping to deliver national environmental priorities, including the protection of Matters of National Environmental Significance such as listed threatened and migratory species and ecological communities and Ramsar wetlands.

Further to the National Landcare Program and the Environment Restoration Fund, the Government is investing about $20 million this financial year through the Communities Environment Program to support a wide range of small-scale, on-ground projects that aim to conserve, protect and manage our environment.

Management of the six national parks, 58 marine parks and the Australian National Botanic Gardens are internationally regarded. The six land-based national parks are part of the National Reserve System (NRS), Australia's network of protected areas. The NRS is based on a scientific framework, it is the nation's natural safety net against our biggest environmental challenges.

The petition makes specific reference to the use of Per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFASs) as a fire retardant. All Australian governments, including state and territory governments, are sharing information on PFAS contamination with the aim of managing the potential impacts to environment and human health. I can confirm that the PFAS National Environmental Management Plan, version 2 (PFAS NEMP 2.0) was agreed by Heads of EPAs in October 2019. It provides nationally agreed guidance on managing legacy PFAS contamination at affected sites.

The Australian Government has in place, a number of plans that focus on the security and sustainability of our national assets and primary production sectors. For instance, the national security of our national biodiversity is recognised through Australia's Strategy for Nature 2019-2030, referred to earlier, and the Threatened Species Strategy. Australia's Strategy for Nature recognises that high biodiversity can act as insurance against change; the more variety we maintain in nature, the greater the chance that some species will survive and adapt in the future. Maintaining high biodiversity and healthy ecosystems is the best way to build resilience, the ability to recover from the impacts of threats, pressures and disasters.

The Australian Government's Threatened Species Strategy outlines a bold new and action-based approach to protecting and recovering our nation's threatened plants and animals. The Threatened Species Strategy sets out a road map and highlights how our approach of science, action and partnership can be used to achieve the long-term goal of reversing species declines and supporting species recovery.

Plans for national security of other sectors and assets are in place and are overseen by other Ministers. For example, the Hon Angus Taylor MP, Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction is responsible for the security of domestic and international supply chains for electricity, gas and liquid fuel.

The National Energy Productivity Plan (NEPP) is a COAG Energy Council agreed package of measures to improve Australia's energy productivity by 40 per cent between 2015 and 2030. The NEPP takes a whole-of-system approach to energy policy and covers electricity, gas and transport fuels. In addition, the Government is undertaking a National Energy Security Assessment (NESA) and a Liquid Fuel Security Review to help deliver affordable and reliable energy in Australia. It will contribute to the NESA and will inform Australia's approach to return to compliance with the International Energy Agency (IEA) treaty.

On 22 April, Minister Taylor also announced the Australian Government is boosting the nation's long-term fuel security by taking advantage of dramatic falls in global oil prices and building on our historic agreement with the United States to access their Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR). Under the new measures, Australia will establish its first Government-owned oil reserves for domestic fuel security worth $94 million. This will include a deal with the United States to store Australian Government owned crude oil in the US SPR.

In regard to the petition's broader point about building Australia's disaster management capabilities, on 20 February, the Prime Minister announced a Royal Commission to lead an inquiry into the devastating Black Summer bushfires. The inquiry has a national focus and is looking at three key areas:

- Improving natural disaster management coordination across all levels of government;
- Improving Australia's preparedness, resilience, and response to natural disasters, across all levels of government;
- The legal framework for the Commonwealth's involvement in responding to national emergencies and how that works with state and territory legal frameworks.
The findings from this inquiry will be considered by relevant ministers and COAG, in due course.
Thank you for bringing these concerns to my attention.
Yours sincerely
from the Minister for the Environment, Ms Ley

COVID-19

Dear Mr O’Dowd
Thank you for your correspondence of 9 April 2020 concerning petition EN1316 to stop COVID-19 from spreading further in Australia. I appreciate the time you have taken to bring this matter to my attention.

The World Health Organization announced that COVID-19 is a pandemic.
The Australian Government is working hard to slow the spread of COVID-19 and save lives and livelihoods.

Acting on the latest health advice from the Chief Medical Officer and the Government's health authorities, the National Cabinet on 20 March 2020 moved to close Australia's borders to non-citizens, permanent residents and their families.

From Saturday 28 March 2020, the Government introduced a mandatory 14 day quarantine period in a designated facility for anybody returning from overseas. These measures are temporary and are reviewed regularly.

The Government will continue to work hand-in-hand with its medical authorities and act on the best possible advice to keep Australians safe.

Thank you for bringing petition EN1316 to my attention.
Yours sincerely
from the Minister for Home Affairs, Mr Dutton

Vaccination

Dear Mr O'Brien
I refer to your letter of 11 February 2020 on behalf of the Standing Committee on Petitions concerning Petition PN0460 for legislation related to immunisations. I regret the delay in responding.

The Australian Government is a strong supporter of immunisation in recognition that it is a safe and effective way to prevent the spread of many diseases in the community that can cause hospitalisation, serious ongoing health conditions, or even death. However, it is not compulsory and people maintain the right to choose whether to vaccinate their children.

Regarding your request to set up an Independent Vaccine Safety Commission, the Government already has an Advisory Committee on Vaccines (ACV) which provides independent medical and scientific advice to myself, and the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) on issues relating to the safety, quality and efficacy of vaccines supplied in Australia. This includes issues relating to pre-market assessment, post-market monitoring and safe use in national immunisation programs.

There is overwhelming public support for a tough stance on immunisation - parents across Australia need to be confident that their children will be safe from preventable diseases.

While parents take responsibility for decisions affecting their children, the Government recognises that if a parent chooses not to vaccinate their child against the infectious diseases, they are not only putting their child's health at risk, but also the health of everybody else's children. Therefore, the Australian Government introduced the No Jab, No Pay legislation.

While the Government appreciates the No Jab, No Pay may affect some families' financial circumstances, it has formed the view that the benefits of vaccination to the community are sufficiently important to warrant the policy.
In addition to the Government No Jab, No Pay legislation, some states have legislated immunisation requirements for attendance at childcare and preschool, known as No Jab No Play. The Australian Government Department of Education and Training is currently leading work on a national approach to No Jab, No Play legislation, in consultation with states and territories. However, in the first instance I recommend you contact the relevant state Health Minister.

Thank you for writing on this matter.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Health, Mr Hunt

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Environment

Dear Deputy Chair

Thank you for your correspondence of 2 March 2020 concerning petition PN0463, seeking a ban on seismic testing off the coast of New South Wales to protect marine wildlife, the environment and the health of residents.

The National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority (NOPSEMA) is the sole environmental assessor for offshore petroleum and gas activities in Commonwealth waters, following a strategic assessment in 2014 under Part 10 of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act).

NOPSEMA is Australia's independent, expert offshore regulator, providing one of the most robust regulatory regimes for offshore oil and gas in the world, with strict safety and environmental standards. In 2018, following a rigorous assessment, NOPSEMA accepted an environment plan submitted by Asset Energy to conduct a seismic survey off the NSW central coast and determined that the plan met all required acceptance criteria. The seismic survey was subject to strict controls which NOPSEMA put in place, including conducting the activity outside scientifically recognised whale migration periods, and ensuring that trained marine mammal observers were on board the vessel.

NOPSEMA places a high priority on compliance activities and has a wide range of response options available to it, including monitoring, investigation of incidents and inspections. Further information about NOPSEMA is available at napsema.gov.au or by calling (08) 6188 8700.

Thank you for writing on this matter. I have provided your letter and a copy of this response to the Minister for Resources, Water and Northern Australia, the Hon Keith Pitt MP, who is the Minister responsible for NOPSEMA.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for the Environment, Ms Ley

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Australian Constitution

Dear Deputy Chair

Thank you for your letter of 2 March 2020 regarding petition PN0466, which asks the House [of Representatives] to 'accept' a preamble that recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, and to legislate for this to occur in the Australian Constitution. I appreciate the time you have taken to forward this petition.

The House of Representatives cannot insert a preamble into the Australian Constitution through ordinary legislation. Section 128 of the Constitution requires that a referendum be held in order to make any change to the Constitution. To be effective, a proposed amendment of the Constitution must be approved at a national referendum by a majority of voters overall and by majorities in a majority of States (that is, in four of the six states). These requirements mean that only proposals with very widespread support succeed at a referendum.

The Government is committed to advancing a proposal for change to the Constitution to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, encourages all Australians to become involved. The Australian Government is also committed to improving local and regional decision-making and considering options for a national Voice. The Government has allocated $7.3 million for the co-design of models to improve local and regional decision making and options for constitutional recognition. The Government recognises that a bipartisan process to assess the prospects of success of any proposal at a referendum will be important.

For further information on Constitutional Recognition, members of the public may wish to visit the website of the National Indigenous Australians Agency at https://www.niaa.gov.au/indigenous-affairs/constitutional-recognition.

Thank you for bringing the petitioner's concerns to my attention. I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

from the Attorney-General, Mr Porter

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Climate Change

Dear Mr ODowd

I refer to Mr O'Brien's correspondence of 25 November 2019 concerning petition EN1116, on the issue of Australia's commitment to the Paris Agreement.

Australia ratified the Paris Agreement on 9 November 2016. The Liberal National Government is committed to the Agreement and to conserving and protecting our environment for future generations. Like all countries, Australia has a responsibility to play its part in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The Government is committed to doing so, while making sure we have affordable electricity and a strong economy.
It is in Australia's national interest to support an effective international response to the global issue of climate change. The Paris Agreement sets a common, multilateral platform for action by all countries. For the first time, all countries, including major developing economies, have committed to take domestic action to limit or reduce their national emissions from 2020. This moves past the previous approach under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) which required only developed country Parties to adopt emissions targets.

The Paris Agreement employs a bottom-up model. Countries' targets, policies and measures are nationally determined. This approach allows each country to take the action most appropriate to their national circumstances. The Agreement's strong accountability and transparency provisions give countries mutual visibility of each other's progress and national emissions, providing assurance they are acting in concert with others.

The Paris Agreement has near-universal participation from countries. There are 189 countries that have ratified the Paris Agreement. These 189 countries represent 93 per cent of global emissions, 96 per cent of world population, 94 per cent of global GDP and 100 per cent of Australia's exports, imports and two-way trade.

Following the withdrawal of the United States (due to take effect on 4 November 2020), there will be 188 countries to the Paris Agreement, representing 81 per cent of global emissions, 91 per cent of world population, 79 per cent of global GDP, 94 per cent of Australia's exports, 86 per cent of imports, and 90 per cent of Australia's two-way trade.

Regardless of its level of participation in the Paris Agreement, the United States has stated it remains committed to emission reductions, including through the use of cleaner technologies and energy efficiency. The United States' national emissions in 2017 (the most recent year data is available) were 13 per cent lower than 2005 levels, and three per cent lower than emissions in 2015 (when the Agreement was adopted). The US remains a world leader in new investment in clean energy, investing $329.5 billion USD since 2015.

Thank you again for bringing this matter to my attention.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction, Mr Taylor

Transaction Fees

Dear Mr O'Dowd

Thank you for your correspondence, originally directed to the Treasurer, concerning Petition EN1130, relating to EFTPOS fees. Your correspondence has been referred to me as I have responsibility for this matter.

There are a number of different electronic payment systems operating in Australia, including various card options. The costs to merchants associated with using individual payment systems can be passed on to the consumer by the merchant, for example, through a card surcharge. Alternatively, the merchant can absorb these costs or potentially reflect them in the prices they charge for goods and services.

The Government has taken action to improve credit card surcharging arrangements to achieve a more efficient system and fairer outcomes for consumers, merchants and system providers.

The Government's ban on excessive card surcharging ensures customers are charged no more than the amount necessary to recover the merchant's costs of acceptance. This ban came into effect for transactions with large merchants such as airlines and major hotel and ticketing agencies on 1 September 2016. The ban began to apply to all merchants from 1 September 2017.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) is responsible for enforcing the ban on excessive surcharging and more information is available on the ACCC website.

I trust this information will be of assistance.

Yours sincerely

from the Assistant Minister for Superannuation, Financial Services and Financial Technology, Senator Hume

Environment

Dear Mr O'Dowd

Thank you for your correspondence of 10 February 2020 concerning petition number EN1142, regarding a change to packaging laws.

The Morrison Government is committed to reducing plastic and packaging waste by managing its impacts and increasing opportunities for recycling. We are focussed on ensuring that these opportunities are achieved through providing effective national leadership and coordination on the issues.

The current approach to manage packaging waste in Australia is through the Australian Packaging Covenant, which is underpinned by the National Environment Protection (Used Packaging Materials) Measure 2011. The Covenant is agreed between industry and Commonwealth, state and territory governments and administered by the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation (APCO). The Covenant brings industry and government together to find the best solutions for packaging efficiency and sustainability in Australia.

Last year, Australia's environment ministers agreed to the ambitious yet reasonable target of making 100 per cent of Australian packaging reusable, recyclable or compostable by 2025 or earlier. In September 2019, the Government endorsed
industry-led targets to better manage Australia's packaging waste which will see by 2025: 70 per cent of Australia's plastic packaging being recycled or composted; 30 per cent average recycled content included across all packaging, and phasing out problematic and unnecessary single-use plastic packaging through design, innovation or the introduction of alternatives.

In support of this, APCO and its members are delivering an extensive program of work to drive the delivery of the 2025 National Packaging Targets and Australian governments continue to work alongside APCO to support industry actions. Earlier this month, I launched the new strategic framework outlining how Australia will deliver the 2025 National Packaging Targets with APCO. You can read Our Packaging Future here: packagingcovenant.org.au/news/our-packaging-future-report-launches-to-outline-critical-steps-required-to-deliver-australias-2025-national-packaging-targets.

 Austalians care deeply about recycling, and they want to do it correctly. The Australasian Recycling Label (ARL) has been endorsed by all Australian governments to help make recycling easier. The labelling system was developed by Planet Ark, PREP Design and APCO to help consumers better understand how to recycle packaging. APCO industry members who use the ARL have committed to the design, manufacture and use of packaging that will ensure recyclable packaging.

The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment also administers the Product Stewardship Act 2011, which provides a framework to effectively manage the environmental and health impacts of products. To enable greater levels of recycling across Australia, the Government has committed $20 million for a Product Stewardship Investment Fund to accelerate work on new industry-led schemes and increase recycling rates of existing and new schemes.

At their meeting in November 2019, Australian environment ministers reaffirmed their commitment to working together to deliver practical environmental outcomes that address the range of challenges facing our environment. They agreed to a new plan of national action on waste and recycling, including ambitious national targets that make Australia a world leader in resource management and recovery.

On 13 March 2020 the Prime Minister and Premiers agreed to introduce a ban on the export of waste plastic, paper, glass and tyres, fulfilling the commitment they made in August 2019. The ban will be phased in, commencing with glass from 1 July 2020; tyres from 1 December 2021; mixed plastics from 1 July 2021; single resin plastics from 1 July 2022; and mixed paper from 1 July 2024.

A national response strategy was also endorsed, and this aims to drive implementation of the ban and help reduce the amount of waste ending up in landfill. In line with the response strategy, governments will expand on work with industry to invest in growing the Australian recycling industry and build markets for recycled products. The response strategy can be found at: coag.gov.au/sites/default/files/communique/phasing-out-waste-exports-response-strategy.pdf. Further information on the ban can be found on the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment website at: environment.gov.au/protection/waste-resource-recovery/waste-export-ban.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

Yours sincerely

from the Assistant Minister for Waste Reduction and Environmental Management, Mr Evans

Murray-Darling Basin Authority

Dear Mr O'Brien

Thank you for your letter of 24 February 2020 concerning the petition on the Murray-Darling Basin Authority, the Murray-Darling Basin Plan and the Federal Water Act 2007 (En1149).

The Australian Government does not support calls to establish a federal Royal Commission as this would divert valuable resources from the important task of implementing the Basin Plan. There have already been a number of recent reviews into various aspects of the Basin Plan. These include the review of the water for the environment special account; the inquiry by the Interim Inspector-General of Murray-Darling Basin Water resources into the water sharing arrangements in the southern Basin; and the independent review of socio-economic impacts of the Basin Plan.

In addition, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's inquiry into water markets in the Basin and the Senate inquiry into multi-jurisdictional management and execution of the Basin Plan are still in progress.

The government will consider the recommendations of these reports over the coming months and work with Basin state governments to continue to improve the management of the water resources of the Basin in the interests of all Australians.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Resources, Water and Northern Australia, Mr Pitt

Welfare and Benefits

Dear Mr O'Brien

Thank you for your email of 11 February 2020 to the Hon Stuart Robert MP, Minister for Government Services, regarding Petition Number EN1159 - Employment Services. As this matter falls within my portfolio responsibilities as Minister for Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business, your email was referred to me for reply.

The goal of the Australian Government's employment services is to support job seekers into work. Mutual Obligation arrangements recognise that as a condition of receiving taxpayer-funded income support, job seekers do everything they can to look for, and find, work. The Targeted Compliance Framework is focused at the small minority of job seekers who persistently and deliberately do not meet their requirements.

CHAMBER
A number of protections are in place to ensure that job seekers do not face financial penalties or payment cancellation for reasons outside of their control. For example, job seekers generally would not face a financial penalty until their sixth failure without a good reason and only then if two separate assessments (by their provider and Services Australia) find the job seekers requirements appropriate for their individual circumstances, and no undisclosed barriers affected their ability to comply with their requirements.

Where a participant is affected by a suspension of payment or a financial penalty, they may apply for a review of that decision. This protects vulnerable participants ensuring that their mutual obligation requirements match their circumstances and capabilities.

Most participants in receipt of income support have mutual obligation requirements, such as attending employment service provider appointments, job interviews and undertaking activities to improve their job prospects.

Work for the Dole provides work-like experiences to help participants, who have been unemployed for 12 months or more, to gain skills, experience and confidence to move from welfare to work while giving back to the local community. Recent studies show that Work for the Dole provides improved employment outcomes for participants, reduces reliance on income support payments, and builds 'soft skills' such as the ability to work with others and self-confidence.

The Government recognises that not all participants have the same ability to look for work or participate in activities. A participant's requirements are based on their individual circumstances, including their age, their caring responsibilities and the state of the local labour market.

For this reason, a principal carer parent on an income support payment generally has part-time mutual obligation requirements and these differ to the requirements for a person receiving the Age Pension.

For example, parents can meet their requirements through paid work, study or a combination of these. Those choosing to fully meet their requirements in this way are not required to look for work or remain connected to employment services providers. Further to this, if a principal carer parent is unable to obtain suitable child care during the school holidays and if appropriate care and supervision for their children is not available or affordable then they are not required to attend Work for the Dole or other activities outside of their home.

To recognise these personal and family circumstances, payments such as the JobSeeker Payment and Parenting Payment are made to and for the individual. The Government also provides support to help relieve the pressure on families who are struggling with the costs of raising children and paying for school and childcare fees through the Family Tax Benefit and childcare support.

Overall, the Government has strong expectations that all taxpayer-funded employment services providers and Work for the Dole organisations are of a high quality and that their programs are professionally delivered. The Department has arrangements in place to assist participants in resolving any concerns and, where appropriate, may require an employment services provider to take action in relation to the issues or complaints that they raise.

It is important to note that employment services providers are required to meet minimum standards of service as agreed to in their contract with the Department of Education, Skills and Employment. This includes a Service Guarantee and a unique Service Delivery Plan, which set out the expected levels of service and requirements of individual employment services providers to ensure participants receive quality and specialised assistance.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business, Senator Cash

Visa Processing

Dear Mr O'Dowd

I refer to correspondence of 11 February 2020 concerning Petition EN1173 regarding processing times for Skilled Regional (subclass 887) visas. Your correspondence has been referred to me as the Assistant Minister for Customs, Community Safety and Multicultural Affairs as the matter falls within my portfolio responsibilities.

The Department of Home Affairs acknowledges the time and resources applicants invest into their Skilled Regional (subclass 887) visa applications.

Processing timeframes may be affected by a number of issues, including current application pipelines, completeness and quality of applications, and the need for integrity checking to verify claims. The majority of applications for this subclass are not lodged decision-ready, as multiple follow-ups are often required from applicants before a decision can be made, which increases processing timeframes.

The current average processing timeframe for 75 per cent of Skilled Regional (subclass 887) visas is 24 months, with 90 per cent processed in 28 months.

A person who holds a Skilled Regional (Provisional) (subclass 489) visa, and is waiting on the outcome of their permanent visa application, can continue to live, work and study in a specified region of Australia, and travel to and from Australia as many times as they like. The Skilled Regional (Provisional) (subclass 489) visa is valid for four years.

For migration purposes, most locations of Australia outside major cities, such as Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, are classed as designated regional areas. This ensures that migrants are provided with a range of opportunities to live and work in Australia's smaller cities and regions.
The Australian Government works closely with state, territory and local governments, and local communities to attract migrants to regional areas. Skilled migrants settling in regional Australia have a diverse range of available occupations to match their experience, skills and qualifications. This assists migrants to establish themselves in the Australian labour market and settle into life in Australia.

Thank you for bringing Petition EN1173 to my attention.

Yours sincerely

from the **Assistant Minister for Customs, Community Safety and Multicultural Affairs, Mr Wood**

**Environment**

Dear Mr O'Dowd

Thank you for your correspondence of 10 February 2020 concerning petition number EN1175, regarding the standing committee on petition - impact of helium balloons.

The Morrison Government takes the issue of marine debris and its impacts on the environment and wildlife very seriously. That is why we are working with the states and territories to reduce litter and other wastes, including from balloons, to reduce their impact on the environment. Australia's governments have released the National Waste Policy Action Plan and agreed to phase out problematic and unnecessary plastics by 2025.

The National Plastics Summit hosted by Minister for the Environment, the Hon Susan Ley MP, in Canberra on 2 March 2020 was the first such event ever held in Australia. The one-day forum convened a cross-sector of over 200 senior individuals from government, industry and community sectors. The Summit showcased and identified new solutions to the plastic waste challenge and will mobilise further action from governments, industry and non-government organisations. The Summit included five roundtable discussions where delegates discussed the plastic waste challenge, including a roundtable on \"Plastics in our oceans and waterways\" that considered ways to reduce marine plastic debris. I understand the issue of balloon debris was discussed in this session. Information and ideas discussed at the Summit will be made available online shortly at: environment.gov.au/protection/waste-resource-recovery/national-plastics-summit.


A cross-sector reference group involving government and non-government organisations, industry and business representatives will provide advice and help guide the implementation of the National Action Plan.

There are also targets and agreements in place to ban the export of waste plastic, paper, glass and tyres, commencing on 1 July 2020; reduce total waste generated in Australia by 10 per cent per person by 2030; record an 80 per cent average recovery rate from all waste streams by 2030; significantly increase the use of recycled content by governments and industry; halve the amount of organic waste sent to landfill by 2030; and make comprehensive, economy-wide and timely data publicly available to support better consumer, investment and policy decisions. The Government has also supported new packaging targets that increase recycling, increase recycled content in packaging and reduce unnecessary single-use packaging.

The Government has also developed the Threat Abatement Plan for the impacts of marine debris on the vertebrate wildlife of Australia's coasts and oceans (2018). This plan prevents waste from entering the oceans and becoming marine debris. Through the Reef Trust, the Government has engaged Tangaroa Blue Foundation, working in partnership with Conservation Volunteers Australia, to deliver a five-year $5 million program of local actions to clean up and prevent debris from entering the waters of the Great Barrier Reef.

The program will also raise awareness and educate communities on the dangers of marine debris as well as preventing the flow of debris into the reef lagoons. Marine debris, such as balloons, plastic bags and bottles and discarded fishing nets, is a significant risk to reef ecosystems and wildlife, including turtles, dugongs, coral and seabirds.

I hope this background serves to demonstrate that plastic wastes including balloons is a major priority for the Morrison Government and that the Commonwealth is undertaking a comprehensive and ambitious program to address this significant national challenge in close collaboration with industry and state and territory governments.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

Yours sincerely

from the **Assistant Minister for Waste Reduction and Environmental Management, Mr Evans**

**Banking and Financial Services**

Dear Mr O'Dowd

Thank you for your correspondence, originally directed to the Treasurer, concerning Petition EN1207 relating to EFTPOS and withdrawal fees.

Decisions about fees charged by banks for services such as withdrawing cash are commercial decisions for individual banks. I note that many banks offer low- or no-fee account options, and the Government encourages people to shop around to find a bank that best suits their needs.
The Morrison Government is taking a range of actions to boost competition in financial services and deliver better outcomes for consumers, including the introduction of an Open Banking regime which makes it easier for customers to switch between banks.

With regard to ATM fees, ultimately it is a decision for the owner of an ATM to decide whether to charge customers to withdraw cash from that machine. It is important to remember that the majority of ATMs in Australia are not owned by banks or other financial institutions, but are instead owned and operated by businesses that rely on ATM withdrawal fees to generate revenue and pay for the upkeep of the machine. A ban on all ATM withdrawal fees would mean these businesses may cease to operate, significantly reducing Australian's access to cash withdrawal services, particularly in rural and remote areas.

However, the Government has taken action to improve credit card surcharging arrangements to achieve a more efficient system and fairer outcomes for consumers, merchants and system providers. The Government's ban on excessive card surcharging ensures customers are charged no more than the amount necessary to recover the merchant's costs of acceptance. The ban began to apply to all merchants from 1 September 2017.

I trust this information will be of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

from the Assistant Minister for Superannuation, Financial Services and Financial Technology, Senator Hume

Donations to Political Parties

Dear Mr O'Dowd

Thank you for your letter dated 8 April 2020, referring petition number EN1211 to Senator the Hon Zed Seselja, Assistant Minister for Finance, Charities, and Electoral Matters. As the Minister responsible for electoral policy the matter has been referred to me for response.

This petition requests legislation be passed to:
- enforce the immediate disclosure of all political donations;
- abolish the capability for direct donations to Members of Parliament and political parties; and
- require all future political donations be made to the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) for disbursement to parties and independents equally.

Australians enjoy the freedom to engage in democratic discourse that is consistent with the implied freedom of political communication under the Australian Constitution. Participation in this process includes Australians financially supporting candidates and political parties of their choice through political donations.

The AEC administers an impartial and independent electoral system for eligible voters in accordance with legislation. This impartiality may be impacted or perceived to be impacted by any involvement of the AEC in the receipt or disbursement of public and private political donations.

If donations were directed to parties and independents equally, contrary to the intention of donors, this would induce people to run for election who lacked genuine support in the community. Moreover it could be unconstitutional as re-directing donations contrary to the intention of donors may conflict with the implied freedom of political communication under the Australian Constitution. We would never consider such a change.

The Government has a record of reform in relation to electoral political finance. In 2018, we passed the Electoral Legislation Amendment (Electoral Funding and Disclosure Reform) Act 2018 which improved transparency by extending funding and disclosure requirements beyond political parties and candidates, to capture all key political actors that incur significant political expenditure, including third party campaigners.

I have copied this letter to the Assistant Minister for Finance, Charities and Electoral Matters.

Kind regards,

from the Minister for Finance, Senator Cormann

Forestry

Dear Mr O'Dowd

Thank you for your correspondence of 8 April 2020, concerning Petition EN1228 presented in the House of Representatives on the matter of reforestation of unproductive cleared land with native species.

You will be pleased to know that the Australian Government is already undertaking reforestation efforts through programs such as the 20 Million Trees Program. This program was established in 2014 with the aim to plant 20 million trees by 2020 to re-establish green corridors, urban forests and threatened ecological communities. The program is also part of the Queen's Commonwealth Canopy initiative, a network of Commonwealth countries who contribute to forest protection.

There have been three competitive grant rounds and three Service Provider tranche rounds funded under the Program. Competitive grants are being delivered by individuals and organisations, and large-scale tree-planting projects procured by the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment are being delivered nationally by Service Providers CO2 Australia, Greening Australia and Landcare Australia.
Service Providers will deliver 14.46 million trees through 44 projects worth $37.687 million and 189 grant projects worth $24.32 million are delivering approximately 5.6 million trees under the Program.

Reforestation of unproductive cleared land with native species is a key component of the 20 Million Trees Program, with approximately 95 per cent of all 20 Million Trees projects (including 100 per cent of Service Provider projects) supporting EPBC listed threatened species and/or threatened ecological communities’ habitats. In addition, Service Providers develop a Climate Adaptation Data Collection and Management Plan for each project to facilitate future research into how native tree species respond in a changing climate.

The Program is on track to plant 20 million trees by the end of 2020. As at March 2020, project reports indicate that 19.3 million trees have been established through a mix of seeding and planting of tube stock. The number of established trees is revised as reports continue to be submitted and approved, with funding recipients being required to conduct a final plant survival survey at the end of each project.

The 20 Million Trees Program was a precursor of large-scale tree-planting programs in Australia, with private enterprise now investing in similar programs. AstraZeneca’s ‘AZ Forest’ global initiative to plant 25 million trees in Australia (50 million trees worldwide) is a good example of private enterprise investment.

All funds under the 20 Million Trees Program have been allocated to specific approved projects and no further grant funding is available. Further information about projects funded under the 20 Million Trees Program is available on the program’s webpage nrm.gov.au/national/20-million-trees.

Revegetation will continue as part of the 20 Million Trees Program and other Government initiatives.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for the Environment, Ms Ley

Migration

Dear Mr O'Dowd

Thank you for your correspondence of 9 April 2020 enclosing Petition EN1232 concerning reconsideration of protection claims for the Piri family. Your correspondence has been referred to me as the Assistant Minister for Customs, Community Safety and Multicultural Affairs as the matter falls within my portfolio responsibilities.

Due to privacy considerations, it would not be appropriate to provide specific information about this matter, however, I am able to provide the following general information.

Assessments about whether an asylum seeker engages Australia’s protection obligations are not based on broad assumptions about the safety of particular countries. Each case is assessed on the merits of the individual circumstances, and in light of the different requirements of the Refugees Convention and other international human rights treaties, to which Australia is a party.

All claims for protection made by asylum seekers in Australia are individually assessed in accordance with Australia's domestic legislation in the Migration Act 1958. These provisions are based upon Australia's interpretation of its non-refoulement obligations (obligation not to return) in the 1951 Convention relating to the status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Thank you for bringing petition EN1232 to my attention.

Yours sincerely

from the Assistant Minister for Customs, Community Safety and Multicultural Affairs, Mr Wood

Australian Bushfires

Dear Mr O'Dowd

Thank you for your correspondence of 15 April 2020 regarding petition EN1235 concerning the procurement of firefighting robots and associated training.

Under Australia's constitutional arrangements, state and territory governments have primary responsibility for the protection of life, property and the environment within their jurisdiction. This includes bushfire suppression and containment measures.

While the Australian Government supports the development of cohesive, evidence based policies, strategies, programs and technology that builds a more disaster resilient Australia, the decisions over the use of new firefighting equipment remain a state and territory consideration.

Notwithstanding, the Government acknowledges the public expectation for national leadership on these issues. In particular, the need for more coordinated and targeted action across jurisdictions and sectors to reduce disaster risks and losses, particularly in the context of the changing climate.

On 20 February 2020, the Prime Minister, the Hon Scott Morrison MP, announced the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements. Broadly, the Royal Commission is focusing on improving Australia's preparedness, resilience and response to natural disasters across all levels of government.
Importantly, the Royal Commission will also consider the legal framework for the Commonwealth's involvement in responding to national emergencies and where actions can be taken to enhance preparedness efforts.

The outcomes from the Royal Commission will help to guide the Government's future actions, including what new measures need to be taken to prepare for, and respond to, natural hazards.

Thank you for bringing petition EN1235 to my attention.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Agriculture, Drought, and Emergency Management, Mr Littleproud

Australian Bushfires

Dear Mr O'Dowd

Thank you for your letter dated 9 April 2020, addressed to the Minister for Finance, Senator the Hon Mathias Cormann, enclosing petition EN1238, which requests national recognition for firefighters and emergency services personnel involved in the recent Black Summer Bushfires. I am responding as Minister with responsibility for Australian honours policy.

The Government has acknowledged that the response to the 2019-2020 bushfire season has been unprecedented with thousands of volunteer and paid responders working around the clock, day and night, week after week to protect property and save lives.

The service of volunteer and paid responders has been extraordinary, and will be formally recognised through the National Emergency Medal.

On Australia Day the Prime Minister, the Hon Scott Morrison MP, and I announced that the National Emergency Medal would become available to emergency service volunteers and personnel who have given sustained or significant service during the 2019-20 bushfires. In making the announcement the Prime Minister acknowledged the extraordinary commitment of these individuals.

Our brave fire, police, ambulance and emergency services volunteers and workers, along with Defence Force personnel and reservists and overseas personnel, will be eligible to receive the National Emergency Medal in recognition of their service and sacrifice during the current bushfire season.

The announcement was made after the Governor-General, His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd) agreed to a recommendation from the Government that the current bushfire crisis be declared a nationally significant emergency for the purposes of the Medal.

The National Emergency Medal is an operational service medal which recognises service in response to a nationally-significant emergency. Nationally-significant emergencies must be declared by the Governor-General under the National Emergency Medal Regulations 2011. The Governor-General's declaration will include specific eligibility criteria for the awarding of the Medal.

The detailed criteria for the National Emergency Medal will be determined in the coming months following appropriate consultation and consideration. Consultation is now underway. As part of its assessment process, the National Emergency Medal Committee will consider both the scale and community impact of the disaster, as well as the nature of the deployment and service response that was required during the emergency.

Once the declaration has been made, the Australian Honours and Awards Secretariat at Government House will advise on timing for lodging applications. Once the medal is available to be issued, relevant organisations will be notified and an announcement will be made.

Service to Australia or to humanity at large may also be recognised by other awards in the Australian honours system. Appointments to, and awards in, the Order of Australia are the primary means of recognising at a national level those who make a significant contribution or provide outstanding service to Australia or humanity. In instances where bravery has been demonstrated, personnel can be nominated for Australian Bravery Decorations (Cross of Valour, Star of Courage, Bravery Medal, Commendation for Brave Conduct and the Group Bravery Citation).


In addition to these awards, each of the State and Territory Emergency Service has a suite of honours available to acknowledge and award emergency services personnel. Details can be found on the individual service website.

Thank you for bringing this petition to the Government's attention.

Yours sincerely

from the Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister, Mr Morton

Illicit Drugs

Dear Mr O'Dowd

I refer to your letter of 9 April 2020 regarding a petition requesting that pseudoephedrine be made a prescription-only drug (Petition Number EN1250).
By way of background, the circumstances under which medicines can be accessed by the Australian public are determined through a classification process known as ‘scheduling’. Medicines and chemicals are classified into schedules, which are published in the Poisons Standard. Classification is based on the risk of harm and the level of access control required to protect public health and safety. The scheduling process is managed by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA), which is part of the Department of Health.

Anyone can make an application to amend the current Poisons Standard. The application form and information on how to lodge an application, with supporting evidence, can be found on the TGA website at: www.tga.gov.au/industry/scheduling-forms-poisons-standard-amend.htm.

My Department has previously taken steps to address the diversion of pseudoephedrine through the scheduling process. In October 2005, the decision was made to increase restrictions on supply of pseudoephedrine in order to counter diversion into the illicit drug market. This resulted in all liquid preparations containing more than 800mg of pseudoephedrine and all other preparations containing more than 720mg of pseudoephedrine moving to Schedule 4 (Prescription Only Medicines).

Liquid preparations containing less than 800mg of pseudoephedrine and preparations containing less than 720mg of pseudoephedrine are Schedule 3 medicines (Pharmacist Only). These products are located behind the counter in pharmacies and are only available on professional advice from the pharmacist.

The record of reasons for the scheduling decision on pseudoephedrine can be found at: www.tga.gov.au/sites/default/files/ndpsc-record-44.pdf.

The current scheduling aims to achieve a balance between people's legitimate need to access these medications and protecting the community from the possible diversion of pseudoephedrine into illicit substances.

It was recognised, however that pseudoephedrine has an important place in the treatment of acute rhinitis. Should pseudoephedrine be listed as Schedule 4, it would place a significant burden upon the public in terms of access to an effective medication for a condition that generally does not require a doctor's visit, but by inclusion in Schedule 3, it could only be provided by a pharmacist.

Scheduling of pseudoephedrine through the Poisons Standard is only one part of a broader approach to preventing the diversion of pseudoephedrine. The implementation and enforcement of the Poisons Standard is through relevant state and territory legislation. The states and territories can place additional restrictions on the supply of medicines and poisons. Specifically, due to its potential for misuse, jurisdictions have placed additional controls on the dispensing of products containing pseudoephedrine. In some jurisdictions, this includes requiring a pharmacist to ask for identification and make a record of the sale or supply, which can then be accessed by the jurisdiction's Department of Health and Commissioner of Police.

Thank you for writing on this matter.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Health, Mr Hunt

Climate Change

Dear Mr O'Dowd

Thank you for your correspondence of 16 April 2020 regarding Petition EN1251. I appreciate the time you have taken to bring this matter to my attention.

Australia has a responsibility to play our part in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, while also making sure we have affordable electricity and a strong economy. Our role in the global response to climate change can go well beyond reducing our own emissions. The pathway to meaningful impacts on global emissions is through development and deployment of new technologies. The answer is not a new tax or more bureaucracy but practical change driven by science and technology. This is where Australia can have the biggest impact on reducing global emissions.

While it is not widely reported, Australia's emissions are coming down. In fact:

- Australia's emissions are lower now than when the Coalition came to Government in 2013.
- Australia's emissions are more than 12 per cent lower than 2005 levels (the year from which our 2030 Paris target is measured). This compares to a two per cent reduction for Canada and a four per cent increase for New Zealand, over the same period.

Looking forward, Australia's 2030 target is for a 26-28 per cent reduction on 2005 levels. On a per person basis, our target is more ambitious than the European Union, Germany, Canada, New Zealand or Japan have committed to over the same period.

The $3.5 billion Climate Solutions Package maps out how we will meet our 2030 target down to the last tonne. The latest official projections show that we are on track to meet and beat our 2030 target by 16 million tonnes. Under United Nations rules, countries including Australia are able to use emissions budgets to account for their Paris Agreement targets. For example, an emission budget approach is central to how the European Union acquires its targets.

The Liberal National Government has already invested $10.4 billion into more than 670 clean energy projects with a total value of $35 billion. These projects include the largest pumped hydro scheme in the southern hemisphere, Snowy 2.0, hydrogen demonstration projects and biofuels. Our investments are supporting new jobs, reducing power prices and improving the reliability of our electricity grid while lowering emissions.
Australia is a world leader in renewable energy. Around a quarter of our electricity is sourced from renewables and this is projected to increase to more than 40 per cent in the National Electricity Market by 2025. According to Bloomberg, Australia invested $7.7 billion or $308 per person in new renewable energy projects in 2019. This places us ahead of countries like the United States, Japan and the United Kingdom on a per person basis and more than triple the per person investment of countries like Denmark, France and Germany.

The key challenge to ensuring power prices continue to come down and continued strong growth in renewable energy is to drive down the cost of storage and backup. That's why the Government has established a $1 billion Grid Reliability Fund to support investment in the new generation, energy storage and transmission needed to keep bringing power prices down and make sure the lights stay on. All of this is focused on achieving our emissions obligations while maintaining a strong economy.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction, Mr Taylor

Climate Change

Dear Mr O'Dowd

RE: Petition EN1253

Thank you for your correspondence of 9 April 2020 regarding on global climate change. I appreciate the time you have taken to bring this matter to my attention.

This summer's devastating bushfires have severely impacted many parts of Australia, including in my own electorate of Hume. I acknowledge the inspirational efforts of all those who have played a role in the firefighting effort, as well as those who are taking action to help families and communities recover. In response, the Liberal National Government is focussed on deploying a $2 billion recovery fund to ensure affected families, farmers and business owners get the support they need as they rebuild.

Australia has a responsibility to play our part in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, while also making sure we have affordable electricity and a strong economy. While it is not widely reported, Australia's emissions are coming down. In fact:
- Australia's emissions are lower now than when the Coalition came to Government in 2013.
- Australia's emissions are more than 12 per cent lower than 2005 levels (the year from which our 2030 Paris target is measured). This compares to a two per cent reduction for Canada and a four per cent increase for New Zealand, over the same period.

Looking forward, Australia's 2030 target is for a 26-28 per cent reduction on 2005 levels. On a per person basis, our target is more ambitious than the European Union, Germany, Canada, New Zealand or Japan have committed to over the same period.

The $3.5 billion Climate Solutions Package maps out how we will meet our 2030 target down to the last tonne. The latest official projections show that we are on track to meet and beat our 2030 target by 16 million tonnes. Under United Nations rules, countries including Australia are able to use emissions budgets to account for their Paris Agreement targets. For example, an emission budget approach is central to how the European Union acquires its targets.

But there is much more to do and our role in the global response to climate change can go well beyond reducing our own emissions. The pathway to meaningful impacts on global emissions is through development and deployment of new technologies. The answer is not a new tax or more bureaucracy but practical change driven by science and technology. This is where Australia can have the biggest impact on reducing global emissions.

The Government has already invested $10.4 billion into more than 670 clean energy projects with a total value of $35 billion. These projects include the largest pumped hydro scheme in the southern hemisphere, Snowy 2.0, hydrogen demonstration projects and biofuels. Our investments are supporting new jobs, reducing power prices and improving the reliability of our electricity grid while lowering emissions.

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The key challenge to ensuring power prices continue to come down and continued strong growth in renewable energy is to drive down the cost of storage and backup. That's why the Government has established a $1 billion Grid Reliability Fund to support investment in the new generation, energy storage and transmission needed to keep bringing power prices down and make sure the lights stay on.

All of this is focused on achieving our emissions obligations while maintaining a strong economy.

I trust this information is of some assistance.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction, Mr Taylor

CHAMBER
Australian Bushfires

Dear Mr O'Dowd

Thank you for your correspondence of 15 April 2020 enclosing Petition EN1267 concerning bushfire mitigation strategies to protect and build a better future for all Australians. I appreciate the time you have taken to bring this matter to my attention.

Under Australia's constitutional arrangements, state and territory governments have responsibility for the protection of life, property and the environment within their jurisdiction. It is necessary for state and territory governments to make relevant decisions affecting their areas of responsibility. This includes resources to support bushfire mitigation, suppression and containment measures.

Notwithstanding, the Australian Government acknowledges the public expectation for national leadership on these issues. In particular, the need for more coordinated and targeted action across jurisdictions and sectors to reduce disaster risks and losses, particularly in the context of changing climate.

The Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements that was announced by the Prime Minister, the Hon Scott Morrison MP, on 20 February 2020, will consider the majority of matters raised in the petition.

Broadly, the Royal Commission is focused on improving Australia's preparedness, resilience and response to natural disasters across all levels of government, and the legal framework for the Commonwealth's involvement in responding to national emergencies. This will include consideration of hazard reduction measures, ways in which the traditional land and fire management practices of Indigenous Australians could improve Australia's resilience to natural disasters, and where actions can be taken to enhance preparedness efforts.

In relation to water supply, the Government is building new water infrastructure to meet regional Australia's needs by providing $3.5 billion, of which $1.5 billion is through the National Water Infrastructure Development Fund, and $2 billion National Water Infrastructure Loan Facility. These investments will help identify and build dams, weirs and pipelines that will deliver secure and affordable water for rural and regional Australia.

Thank you for bringing Petition EN1267 to my attention.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Agriculture, Drought, and Emergency Management, Mr Littleproud

Climate Change

Dear Mr O'Dowd

Thank you for your correspondence of 8 April 2020 regarding Petition EN1270. I appreciate the time you have taken to bring this matter to my attention.

Australia has a responsibility to play our part in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, while also making sure we have affordable electricity and a strong economy. While it is not widely reported, Australia's emissions are coming down. In fact:

- Australia's emissions are lower now than when the Coalition came to Government in 2013.
- Australia's emissions are more than 12 per cent lower than 2005 levels (the year from which our 2030 Paris target is measured). This compares to a two per cent reduction for Canada and a four per cent increase for New Zealand, over the same period.

Looking forward, Australia's 2030 target is for a 26-28 per cent reduction on 2005 levels. On a per person basis, our target is more ambitious than the European Union, Germany, Canada, New Zealand or Japan have committed to over the same period.

Australia has a history of overachieving on our emissions reduction targets. We beat our first Kyoto target by 128 million tonnes and are on track to beat our 2020 target by 411 million tonnes (including past overachievement). It is important that no country is penalised for beating its target - this is the basis for greater ambition. Australia will only use past overachievement to meet future domestic targets to the extent necessary and unlike some other countries Australia is not proposing to trade or sell past overachievement as credits.

The $3.5 billion Climate Solutions Package maps out how we will meet our 2030 target down to the last tonne. The latest official projections show that we are on track to meet and beat our 2030 target by 16 million tonnes. Under United Nations rules, countries including Australia are able to use emissions budgets to account for their Paris Agreement targets. For example, an emission budget approach is central to how the European Union acquires its targets.

But there is much more to do and our role in the global response to climate change can go well beyond reducing our own emissions. The pathway to meaningful impacts on global emissions is through development and deployment of new technologies. The answer is not a new tax or more bureaucracies but practical change driven by science and technology. This is where Australia can have the biggest impact on reducing global emissions.

The Liberal National Government has already invested $10.4 billion into more than 670 clean energy projects with a total value of $35 billion. These projects include the largest pumped hydro scheme in the southern hemisphere, Snowy 2.0, hydrogen demonstration projects and biofuels. Our investments are supporting new jobs, reducing power prices and improving the reliability of our electricity grid while lowering emissions.

Australia is a world leader in renewable energy. Around a quarter of our electricity is sourced from renewables and this is projected to increase to more than 40 per cent in the National Electricity Market by 2025. According to Bloomberg, Australia
invested $7.7 billion or $308 per person in new renewable energy projects in 2019. This places us ahead of countries like the United States, Japan and the United Kingdom on a per person basis and more than triple the per person investment of countries like Denmark, France and Germany.

The key challenge to ensuring power prices continue to come down and continued strong growth in renewable energy is to drive down the cost of storage and backup. That’s why the Government has established a $1 billion Grid Reliability Fund to support investment in the new generation, energy storage and transmission needed to keep bringing power prices down and make sure the lights stay on. All of this is focused on achieving our emissions obligations while maintaining a strong economy.

The Government will soon be releasing a Technology Investment Roadmap for public consultation. The Roadmap can only succeed through partnership with other levels of government, research institutions and the private sector. Consultation on the Roadmap will inform the development of the first annual Clean Technology Statement, which will identify technology priorities and ensure the Government’s investment portfolio can be refined and updated.

The Government has also committed to develop a Long-Term Emissions Reduction Strategy ahead of COP26. Australia’s long-term strategy will be framed around technology pathways for key sectors, recognising that technology presents opportunities for Australian businesses to boost productivity, create jobs and remain globally competitive in a world where markets increasingly value low emissions. This will be particularly important as Australia and the world recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The long-term strategy will also draw from and integrate relevant work underway across government, including the Technology Investment Roadmap, National Hydrogen Strategy, Electric Vehicle Strategy and the work of the Carbon Expert Panel chaired by Mr Grant King. The Government will be consulting widely on the long-term strategy and we look forward to your ongoing engagement in this process.

I trust this information is of some assistance.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction, Mr Taylor

Parliamentarians’ Remuneration

Dear Mr O’Dowd

Thank you for your letter of 9 April 2020 referring matters raised in petition number EN1275 for my attention. I am happy to provide the following advice in respect of the matters that fall within my portfolio responsibility.

3. Abolish the use of private secretaries

Parliamentarians engage staff under the Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984. The number of electorate officer positions allocated to each parliamentarian can vary based on the size of their electorate, noting that some electorates are larger than Sweden. The Prime Minister also allocates personal staff positions to certain parliamentarians having regard to their parliamentary duties. The classifications of these positions are detailed in the Commonwealth Members of Parliament Staff Enterprise Agreement 2016-2019 (the Enterprise Agreement). There is no classification of private secretary under the Enterprise Agreement, with the role and functions performed by each employee determined by their employing parliamentarian.

5. Limit electorate offices to essential requirements only

As the Minister responsible for the Parliamentary Business Resources Act 2017 (the PBR Act), I determine electorate office accommodation. Like all public resources provided to parliamentarians under the PBR Act, it is a requirement that expenditure on electorate office accommodation provides value for money to the Commonwealth.

6. Investigate politician’s spending on ‘entertainment’ costs

The PBR Act provides resources to enable parliamentarians to undertake their parliamentary business. No Commonwealth resources are provided to meet entertainment costs for parliamentarians.

My Department has referred the remaining issues raised in this petition to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet for response by the Prime Minister and the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service as these matters fall within their respective portfolio responsibilities.

Kind regards

from the Minister for Finance, Senator Cormann

Domestic and Family Violence

Dear Mr O’Dowd

Thank you for your email dated 9 April 2020, concerning petition (EN1276) female domestic violence against children.

I understand you are concerned that children are being exposed to family violence as a result of parenting orders issued by family law courts permitting violent mothers to have access to their children. The Australian Government is opposed to violence in any form and I can assure you the Family Law Act 1975 (the Act) does not contain any presumptions in relation to gender. The Act establishes the best interests of the child as the paramount consideration in parenting disputes. To reinforce this principle, the Act focuses on the rights of children and the responsibilities that each parent has towards their children,
rather than on parental rights. In particular, the Act aims to ensure that children can enjoy a meaningful relationship with each of their parents, and are protected from harm.

In determining what is in the best interests of the child, the court can consider any incidence of family violence or family violence order concerning the child or a member of the child's family. The court is also required to ensure, to the greatest extent possible, that any parenting order it makes is consistent with existing family violence orders, and does not expose a person to an unacceptable risk of family violence. The court may include in the order any measures that it considers necessary to ensure the safety of those affected by the order.

Under Australia's federal system of government, the criminal aspects of family violence are primarily a state and territory government responsibility. Each jurisdiction manages its own criminal justice system, including criminal laws, policing, courts and corrections. Child protection issues are also dealt with by state and territory governments. As such, your comments about fathers being unable to access help from the police, child safety and magistrates would be better directed to state and territory governments.

In Australia, at least one child is killed by a parent each fortnight (Filicide Offenders, Australian Institute of Criminology). This study also shows that just under a third of incidences (30 per cent between 2000-01 and 2011-12) were categorised by previous domestic violence incidences between the offender and their intimate partner. Proportionally, more male filicide offenders were recorded by police as having a history of domestic violence (43 per cent), compared with female offenders (16 per cent).

The Australian Government has zero tolerance for domestic, family and sexual violence, which is why a record investment of $340 million has been committed to the Fourth Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022 (the National Plan).

The National Plan acknowledges that men and boys can also be victims of family, domestic and sexual abuse and recognises that domestic and family violence can include physical, sexual, emotional, financial and psychological abuse and that any behaviour that causes the victim to live in fear is unacceptable.

The Government values the lives of men, and the Fourth Action Plan will support all victims of domestic, family and sexual violence, regardless of gender, sexual orientation or cultural background. The Commonwealth's significant contribution to the Fourth Action Plan also promotes positive male role models, including encouraging men in their role as fathers.

Based on extensive research by the World Health Organisation, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS), and Our Watch, disrespectful attitudes towards women and gender inequality are among the main causes of family and domestic violence. This is why the Fourth Action Plan has made significant investments in primary prevention, including the Stop it at the Start and the Doing Nothing Does Harm campaigns, the Men as Male Role Models grant round, creation of the National Primary Prevention Hub, and many more. These policies and programs will help lay the foundations for generational change; a vital step towards reducing domestic and family violence across Australia.

In addition, the Government is continuing to fund the delivery of Mensline Australia, a national telephone and online support, information and referral service for men with family and relationship concerns, including men who experience violence in their relationships.

Times of crisis can increase the occurrence of family and domestic violence. On 29 March 2020, the Government announced a $1.1 billion package to boost mental health services, domestic violence support, Medicare assistance for people at home, and emergency food relief. The package includes $150 million to support Australians experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence due to the fallout from the Coronavirus pandemic. In addition to the record $340 million Fourth Action Plan, this $150 million will provide much needed assistance to a broad range of domestic violence counselling and support services.

If you or anyone you know are experiencing, or have experienced, domestic violence, I encourage you to contact 1800RESPECT (1800 737 732, www.1800respect.org.au) or Mensline 1300 789978 www.mensline.org.au

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

Yours sincerely,

from the Minister for Families and Social Services, Senator Ruston

Federal Independent Commission Against Corruption

Dear Mr O'Dowd

Thank you for your correspondence of 9 April 2020 regarding Petition EN1277, which seeks the establishment of a federal anti-corruption commission. I welcome the opportunity to respond to this petition.

The Australian Government condemns corruption in all its forms. The Government is committed to ensuring our federal integrity framework is as robust as possible to maximise public confidence in our national institutions.

That is why the Government has committed to establishing a Commonwealth Integrity Commission (CIC) to enhance national integrity arrangements across the federal public sector.

The CIC will be an independent, centralised, specialist centre for the investigation of corruption in the public sector. In addition to its investigative functions, the CIC will also work with agencies to build resilience to corruption and bolster agency capability to detect, deter and investigate corrupt conduct. At the conclusion of an investigation, the CIC will be able...
to refer a criminal brief of evidence to the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions for consideration and possible prosecution.

The CIC will be established as an independent statutory agency, led by a commissioner and two deputy commissioners. The CIC will have a broad jurisdiction, including over parliamentarians and their staff, departments of state, Commonwealth companies and statutory agencies. It will comprise a public sector integrity division and a law enforcement integrity division, ensuring targeted attention to corruption across the entirety of the public sector.

Through the CIC, the Government is targeting serious criminal corruption that presents a threat to good public administration. The CIC will not duplicate the roles of existing bodies, but instead it will provide an expert investigative capability to respond to allegations of serious criminal corruption across the public sector.

I note the petitioners’ support for an anti-corruption body that holds proceedings in public. While the CIC must be equipped with strong powers to effectively address corruption, I am committed to ensuring that it also provides due process of law and natural justice to those who fall within the CIC’s jurisdiction. For this reason, the public sector integrity division of the CIC will not be able to hold public hearings. This will promote natural justice in investigations and preserve the role of the courts as arbiters of a person’s guilt or innocence.

The Government has been consulting widely to ensure that the model for the new Commission strengthens federal integrity arrangements without compromising fundamental principles of our criminal justice system.

Further information on the CIC model can be found in the consultation paper available at https://www.ag.gov.au/Consultations/Pages/commonwealth-integrity-commission.aspx.

The Government is currently finalising draft legislation to implement the CIC, which will form the basis of further public consultation. The legislation to establish the CIC is complex. It is important that sufficient time is dedicated to drafting and consulting on the legislation to ensure the new body has both the resources and powers that it needs to investigate allegations of criminal corruption across the public sector.

The petitioners may wish to consider the draft legislation and provide comments once it is released for public consultation.

Thank you for bringing this petition to my attention.

Yours sincerely
from the Attorney-General, Mr Porter

Food Labelling

Dear Mr O’Dowd

Thank you for your email of 9 April 2020 concerning Petition EN1279, which called for Country of Origin Labelling (CoOL) for food to be expanded to include information about the country of majority-ownership of the product’s manufacturer.

The Australian Government recognises the importance of providing consumers with information about the origins of food products they buy. The 2016 CoOL reforms were designed to provide consumers with more information about the origin of food products, so that they can make purchasing decisions that align with their personal preferences. While country of majority ownership of food manufacturers was not included in the scope of the CoOL reforms, I understand this is also an area of interest for some consumers.

The Government will evaluate the effectiveness of the CoOL reforms in 2020-21. The evaluation will undertake broad consultation with both industry and consumers to consider whether the scope of Australia’s CoOL requirements continue to meet their objective of improving consumer access to information about the origin of food and clarifying the origin claims businesses can make about their products, without imposing excessive costs.

This evaluation will provide consumers with a valuable opportunity to express their views on the current scope of Australia’s CoOL requirements.

Thank you for writing on this matter.

Yours sincerely
from the Minister for Industry, Science and Technology, Ms Andrews

International Development Assistance

Dear Mr O’Dowd

Thank you for your email of 9 April 2020 regarding petition EN1280, which seeks the temporary suspension of the Australian Government’s international development program to enable funding to be redirected towards domestic priorities.

These are indeed extraordinary times for Australia. Drought, the recent bushfires, and now the COVID-19 pandemic have all impacted heavily on many Australians, devastating their homes, livelihoods, health and well-being.

I assure the signatories to this petition that keeping Australia and Australians safe continues to be the Australian Government’s highest priority.

In 2019-20, the Australian Government will provide $4.0 billion in official development assistance, (ODA) with over one third of this funding (approximately $1.4 billion) directed to our immediate neighbours, the Pacific. Australia’s total international development program represents less than one per cent of the Federal Budget.
Australia benefits when countries are well governed and able to achieve strong and sustainable economic growth. To this end, Australia's international development program reduces poverty and increases resilience and stability in neighbouring countries, and helps address issues that could affect Australians and our national security. The deepening impacts of COVID-19 in the Indo-Pacific will pose profound challenges to Australia's economic interests. A slow or uneven regional recovery will directly affect Australia's ability to rebound and restore Australian jobs. Providing development funding supports those in need, and is in our national interest.

Health security forms an important part of our national security. In response to COVID-19, the Australian Government has adapted the international development program to ensure that critical health services in our region can continue to function, and to help these countries manage the immediate economic impacts of the pandemic. We are working across all levels of government, and with international and regional partners in our efforts, and supported by our Australian NGO partners.

As we have all witnessed in recent weeks, COVID-19 respects no borders. The health and stability of our neighbours is of critical importance to Australia. By helping them to respond to, and prepare for managing the impacts of this pandemic, we are also helping to keep Australia and Australians safe.

Australia's international development program does not take away from the assistance the Government makes available to support those in Australia affected by the recent bushfires or COVID-19 financial hardship. We have the resources to help people here in Australia as well as overseas.

I thank the signatories for drawing this important issue to the Parliament's attention.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator Payne

Blood Donation

Dear Mr O'Dowd

I refer to your petition (Petition Number EN1283) concerning blood donation requirements and deferral periods, which was presented to the House of Representatives on 8 April 2020.

The Australian Red Cross Lifeblood (Lifeblood) is responsible for collecting blood donations in Australia in accordance with a Deed of Agreement with the National Blood Authority, acting on behalf of all Australian governments, and regulatory requirements determined by Australia's Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA). Under these arrangements, Lifeblood can be required to defer donors from giving blood when there is considered to be a higher risk of infections being transmitted through blood transfusions.

Deferrals are determined on the basis of the risks assessed from available scientific and clinical evidence and information. Deferrals can apply for varying periods or indefinitely, and can be applied in a range of circumstances depending on the risk presented by the particular donor (such as their existing health status or other relevant health issues that could, for example, increase the risk of transmitting Hepatitis B or C), or a category of donors (such as those who are residents or former residents of the UK).

Deferral policies are regularly reviewed by Lifeblood. These reviews are underpinned by the most up-to-date clinical and scientific evidence to ensure Australia continues to maintain one of the safest supplies of blood in the world. As standard practice, Lifeblood also periodically establishes external committees to inform the development and review of policies.

Lifeblood has undertaken a review of current sexual activity-related deferrals, including the deferral policy relating to men who have sex with men. The review included consideration of any impact of potential changes to the donor panel, and issues relating to the sufficiency of the blood supply. The process engaged a combination of current donors, potential donors, and people who are currently deferred based on their sexual activity. It also considered any issues in relation to the processing (fractionating) of donated blood into blood products. Medical experts have considered relevant issues, including international and local evidence, to inform the usual in-depth clinical risk assessment and broader review. Lifeblood made a submission to the TGA in January 2020 proposing that the deferral period for donors with a sexual activity-based risk factor be reduced from the current 12 months to three months since the last sexual contact, for whole blood donations.

On 15 April 2020, the TGA announced its approval of this proposed change based on the evidence provided in Lifeblood's submission and advice received from the TGA's Advisory Committee on Biologicals. Further information on the TGA decision is on its website at: www.tga.gov.au/tga-approves-reduction-deferral-period-whole-blood-donors-sexual-activity-risk-factors. Lifeblood has recently made a further submission to the TGA proposing to align the deferral period for users of pre-exposure prophylaxis HIV prevention to three months.

Decisions on deferral periods (in relation to sexual activity and otherwise) involve multiple parties because there are multiple elements that inform such decisions. Following the TGA's approval, there must now be consideration by the Commonwealth and state and territory governments who make policy decisions and fund and indemnify Lifeblood's activities.

In addition to blood donor deferral periods, Lifeblood also requires donors to complete a Donor Health Questionnaire prior to each donation. This questionnaire contains a number of questions about the donor's health, including medical condition(s), travel history and personal activities. Based on the answers to these questions Lifeblood has a comprehensive eligibility framework which guides its staff on the best course of action, including the application of a deferral period if necessary.

Lifeblood uses sophisticated testing mechanisms to test each blood donation for transfusion transmitted infections, however even the most sophisticated of tests cannot reliably detect the early signs of an infection in what is referred to as the 'window
Lifeblood screens all donors using the Donor Health Questionnaire for all relevant risks before collecting their blood. It can identify potential infectious diseases including: HIV, hepatitis B, hepatitis C, syphilis, and human T-cell lymphotropic virus which may not be picked up by testing in its early stages and protects the patient from being passed a serious infection through the blood they receive.

The safety and wellbeing of both blood donors and recipients of blood products is foremost in any decision making. The Australian Government would like to make it easier for all Australians to give blood, while ensuring Australia’s blood and blood products continue to be as safe as possible.

Thank you for writing on this matter.

Yours sincerely
from the Minister for Health, Mr Hunt

Dear Mr O'Dowd

Thank you for your correspondence of 9 April 2020 concerning petition EN1295, regarding a range of environment matters.

The Australian Government is committed to sustainable and effective management of Australia’s diverse ecosystems, using a combination of the precautionary approach with adaptive management that uses science and practical experience.

On 8 November 2019, Australian, state and territory Environment Ministers endorsed a new approach to biodiversity conservation through Australia’s Strategy for Nature 2019-2030. The Strategy is supported by a dedicated website, Australia’s Nature Hub. I also draw your attention to a range of other Australian Government initiatives and programs related to the matters raised by the petitioners.

The National Environmental Science Program (NESP) is a long-term commitment by the Australian Government to environment and climate research. The Government is investing a further $149 million into the NESP to continue delivering world-class, practical, science-based measures to inform decisions, developed in partnership with local communities to sustainably manage the environment, and to better understand Australia’s past, present and future climate and climate drivers.

The Australian Government is investing up to $22.65 million through the Communities Environment Program (CEP) to support a wide range of small-scale, on-ground projects that aim to conserve, protect and manage our environment. The program seeks to support community groups including those that may not be able to compete in larger and more competitive grant programs to address local environmental priorities. The program also seeks to encourage the community to connect with their local natural environment and to build and strengthen local communities.

The Government is also currently developing a National Soil Strategy in collaboration with all states and territories by June 2021. This Strategy will aim to provide leadership and coordination to more effectively address national priorities. It will work with soil related programs and networks to promote the latest technologies and regenerative practices aimed at improving the profitability and sustainability of our soils, including exploring the use of compost tea to improve soil biology and fertility.

The Australian Government will deliver actions to improve recovery of organic waste, including food organics and garden organics to deliver on the National Waste Policy Action Plan, which was agreed by Australia’s environment ministers in November 2019. As part of this work the Australian Government will partner with state, territory and local governments to develop distributed infrastructure solutions to process organic waste, including composting infrastructure.

The Australian Government is also committed to reducing Australia’s food waste by 50 per cent by 2030 and has provided nearly $50 million to-date to achieve this. Government funding has included:

- $30 million to the Fight Food Waste CRC to research food waste throughout the supply and consumption chain
- $1.37 million to implement the National Food Waste Strategy
- up to $18 million to reduce food waste in the primary production sector
- $2 million to fund Freeze Dry Industries to trial low-energy, mobile freeze dryers that preserve fresh fruit, vegetables and other raw materials that might otherwise become waste
- $1.2 million to support four food rescue organisations - Foodbank, Secondbite, OzHarvest and Fareshare to help reduce their operational costs and improve their energy efficiency.

Thank you again for bringing this petition to the Government’s attention.

Yours sincerely
from the Minister for the Environment, Ms Ley

Dear Chair

Thank you for your correspondence of 9 April 2020 concerning petition EN1296, seeking aerial food drops for wildlife and regeneration of habitat after the recent bushfires.
The impact of the bushfires across Australia has been severe. People have tragically lost their lives in the course of the fires, including brave volunteer firefighters. These devastating bushfires have had a significant toll on families, communities, businesses and the environment.

The Australian Government acknowledges the inspirational efforts of all those who played a role in the firefighting effort, including firefighters, emergency response personnel and wildlife carers, as well as those that are taking action to support communities.

In response to this summer's devastating bushfires, the Government has established a $2 billion recovery fund. As part of the $2 billion recovery fund, we have announced an investment of $200 million for the protection and restoration of affected wildlife, species and habitat.

A panel of experts, led by Threatened Species Commissioner, Dr Sally Box, has been established to advise the Government on critical interventions required and development of a strategy to build back up animal and plant populations, ensuring their resilience into the future.

This investment is supporting immediate work to protect wildlife, as well as plan for longer term protection and restoration of Australia's environment. It includes activities aligned with the those outlined in the petition, including but not limited to:

- Feeding support for the Mountain Pygmy Possum in Kosciuszko National Park, which will continue until late May/early June when the possums begin to hibernate.
- Ongoing food support for the Brush-tailed Rock-wallowaby in Mt Kaputar (near Narrabri) and north-west of the Blue Mountains.
- Identification and support for surviving populations of small mammals, birds, bats, plants, reptiles and invertebrates across South Australia.
- Seed collection, propagation and repairs to fences to replace and protect threatened plant species in New South Wales, as well as reseeding of important plant communities in Victoria.
- Direct plantings and maintenance of native trees and understory seedlings over two years in the Cudlee Creek fire-affected area of Adelaide, to support unique bird species.
- Seed collection and establishment of seed production areas for threatened plants in the Stirling Ranges region of Western Australia.
- $5 million for Greening Australia, which will enhance the protection of native habitats, build capacity in our native seed and nursery industry, and deliver a ten-year native seed and landscape restoration strategy.

Even as Australia deals with the challenges of COVID-19, the importance of addressing the loss of countless iconic wildlife and habitats through fires remains an important focus.

On 1 April 2020, I announced the availability of up to $12 million in grants to fund emergency recovery actions for bushfire-affected wildlife and habitat under the Wildlife and Habitat Bushfire Recovery Program. Grants from $100,000 to $1 million are available to individuals and organisations for projects that can commence as soon as possible and finish on or before 30 June 2021. To ensure organisations are given enough time to apply, grants will be staged over two tranches. Tranche two of the grants opportunity is now open and applications will be accepted until 28 May 2020.

To stay updated on bushfire recovery for our environment, including funding opportunities, Australians can visit www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/bushfire-recovery.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for the Environment, Ms Ley

Dear Mr O'Dowd

Thank you for your correspondence dated 9 April 2020 on behalf of the Standing Committee on Petitions concerning Petition EN1299. This petition asks the House of Representatives to review the decision to tender for the provision of Aged Care Assessment Services to ensure aged care assessments arrangements in Victoria are delivered by public health services and the expertise of practitioners in Aged Care Assessment Teams (ACATs) is retained.

Delivering a consistent, uniform, efficient and integrated aged care assessment process that meets the needs of senior Australians and their families is a top priority for the Australian Government. The Commonwealth has agreed to work with the state and territory governments across Australia to make this happen.

The Commonwealth has confirmed that it is not proceeding with the tender process. Over the longer term the Commonwealth will take advice from states and territories and from the Royal Commission about what the exact delivery mix should be.

Working together with states and territories to improve aged care assessments in Australia will ensure that the expertise of existing aged care assessment services and the experienced and qualified health and medical practitioners who undertake comprehensive aged care assessments is best utilised.
Every year, there are more than 440,000 assessments for home support services, home care packages and residential care. I can assure you the Government is committed to the delivery of independent, quality aged care assessments to look at a person's care needs as well as the types of care and services they may be eligible for.

Further information on any changes to the delivery of aged care assessment services will be published on the Department's website as it becomes available.

Thank you for raising this matter.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Aged Care and Senior Australians, Senator Colbeck

COVID-19

Dear Mr O'Dowd

Thank you for your correspondence of 15 April 2020 concerning petition EN1301 to temporarily close Australian borders to inbound China flights until COVID-19 is contained. I appreciate the time you have taken to bring this matter to my attention.

The World Health Organization announced that COVID-19 is a pandemic.

The Australian Government is working hard to slow the spread of COVID-19 and save lives and livelihoods.

Acting on the latest health advice from the Chief Medical Officer and health authorities, on 20 March 2020, the National Cabinet moved to close Australia's borders to foreign nationals other than Australian citizens, Australian permanent residents and their families. These measures are temporary and are reviewed regularly.

The Government will continue to work hand-in-hand with its medical authorities and act on the best possible advice to keep Australians safe.

Thank you for bringing petition EN1301 to my attention.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Home Affairs, Mr Dutton

Federal Independent Commission Against Corruption

Dear Mr O'Dowd

Thank you for your correspondence of 9 April 2020 regarding Petition EN1303 about federal integrity arrangements. I welcome the opportunity to respond to this petition.

The Australian Government condemns corruption in all its forms. The Government is committed to ensuring our federal integrity framework is as robust as possible to maximise public confidence in our national institutions.

That is why the Government has committed to establishing a Commonwealth Integrity Commission (CIC) to enhance national integrity arrangements across the federal public sector.

The CIC will be a centralised, specialist centre for the investigation of corruption in the public sector. It will also work with agencies to build resilience to corruption and bolster agency capability to detect, deter and investigate corrupt conduct.

The CIC will be established as an independent statutory agency, led by a commissioner and two deputy commissioners. It will comprise a public sector integrity division and a law enforcement integrity division, ensuring targeted attention to corruption across the entirety of the public sector. The CIC will have a broad jurisdiction, including over parliamentarians and their staff, departments of state, Commonwealth companies and statutory agencies.

Through the CIC, the Government is targeting serious criminal corruption that presents a threat to good public administration. It will not duplicate the roles of existing bodies, but instead it will provide an expert investigative capability to respond to allegations of serious criminal corruption across the public sector.

I note the petitioners' support for an anti-corruption body that is able to investigate, prosecute and impose punishment. While the CIC must be equipped with strong powers to effectively address corruption, I am committed to ensuring that it also provides due process of law and natural justice to those who fall within the CIC's jurisdiction.

For this reason, at the conclusion of an investigation, the CIC will be able to refer a criminal brief of evidence to the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions for consideration and possible prosecution before the courts. It will then be for the courts to determine sentencing, including any applicable terms of imprisonment. This will promote natural justice in investigations and preserve the role of the courts as arbiters of a person's guilt or innocence.

The petitioners also support the establishment of an anti-corruption body Inspector, and further propose that all appointments to the body be subject to bipartisan approval. The Government is committed to ensuring that the CIC is subject to appropriate oversight and checks and balances, and will continue to consider and evaluate possible arrangements in further refining the CIC model.

Further information on the CIC model can be found in the consultation paper available at https://www.ag.gov.au/Consultations/Pages/commonwealth-integrity-commission.aspx.

I note the petitioners' request that the federal anti-corruption body be established as a matter of urgency. The legislation to establish the CIC is complex. It is important that sufficient time is dedicated to drafting and consulting on the legislation to...
ensure the new body has both the resources and powers that it needs to investigate allegations of criminal corruption across the public sector.

The Government has been consulting widely to ensure that the model for the new Commission strengthens federal integrity arrangements without compromising fundamental principles of our criminal justice system. The Government is currently finalising draft legislation to implement the CIC, which will form the basis of further public consultation. The petitioners may wish to consider the draft legislation and provide comments once it is released for public consultation.

Thank you for bringing this petition to my attention.

Yours sincerely

from the Attorney-General, Mr Porter

Food Labelling

Dear Mr O'Dowd

Thank you for your correspondence of 9 April 2020 concerning a petition received by the Standing Committee on Petitions about labelling of vegan products and the potential to mislead consumers (EN1304).

Australian food and consumer laws are designed to provide consumers with the information they need to make an informed choice. It is unlawful for a business to make a representation that is false or misleading.

The Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (Code) requires the name of the food to be a name or description that is sufficient to indicate the true nature of the food, and that it be included on the label (Standard 1.2.2, section 2). A requirement introduced into the Code, which took effect on 1 March 2016, allows for the use of the food name with additional descriptors (Standard 1.1.1, subsection 13(4)). For example, the descriptor 'soy' for soy milk makes it clear to the consumer that the food they are purchasing is not a dairy milk product to which the dairy standard applies.

The Code also requires ingredient information and a nutrition information panel, which assists consumers to make an informed choice about what is in the food they are purchasing and how it compares with other products.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) is an independent statutory authority whose role is to enforce the Competition and Consumer Act 2010, which incorporates the Australian Consumer Law (ACL). Amongst other things, the ACL prohibits businesses from engaging in conduct that is misleading or deceptive or likely to mislead or deceive, or from making a representation that is false or misleading about the quality, quantity, composition or origin of food products.

Whether the labelling of a plant-based substitute product may be misleading under the ACL depends on the overall impression conveyed to a reasonable consumer by the labelling and packaging. Any such consideration takes into account matters such as specific statements made and images used and their relative prominence, placement and size, and does not hinge on the use of any particular word (such as 'meat') or particular image.

I note the petition requests an investigation of labelling systems for vegan products. I can advise that labelling of plant-based alternatives to meat and dairy products has been examined by the Australia New Zealand Ministerial Forum on Food Regulation (Forum).

In October 2018, the Forum asked the Food Regulation Standing Committee (FRSC) to develop an options paper on how foods standards, including labelling, definitions and other elements, can be used to address potentially misleading descriptions of food. Following receipt of the options paper, the Forum discussed the issue of labelling of plant-based alternatives to meat and dairy products at its meeting on 15 November 2019. The Forum recognised the value of the meat and dairy sector to the Australian and New Zealand diet and economy, but also recognised the growing value of the alternative products sector. It agreed that both have a place in the market for consumers. Further work is being conducted by FRSC in relation to labelling of synthetic foods, such as cell-based meat grown in laboratories. Updates on this work can be found at: www.foodregulation.gov.au.

Further, in 2016, the Forum considered a Report on Dairy Substitute Beverages. This report explored a number of issues in relation to plant-based dairy substitutes, including naming conventions and the use of the word 'milk'. The report found that dairy substitute beverages are adequately regulated by current permissions in the Code, including consideration of naming conventions. This was agreed by the Forum Ministers at that time.

The ACCC advises that it has received very few contacts from consumers claiming they had been misled by the labelling used for plant based substitute products. The ACCC has reviewed the labelling of some of such products where concerns were raised, however the ACCC considered that the overall impression conveyed by the labelling of these products was unlikely to be misleading to an ordinary consumer.

As an economy-wide regulator, the ACCC focuses on issues that have the potential to seriously harm the competitive process or result in widespread consumer or business detriment. The ACCC will consider allegations raised with it about misleading labelling of plant based substitute products against its Compliance and Enforcement Policy, which can be found at: www.accc.gov.au.

Thank you for raising this matter. Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Aged Care and Senior Australians, Senator Colbeck

Environment

Dear Mr O'Dowd
Thank you for your letter of 9 April 2020 concerning the presentation of Petition EN1313 to establish a National Memorial and Museum to Extinct and Endangered Australian Species in Canberra.

The Australian Government takes the threat of extinction seriously. We appointed Australia’s first Threatened Species Commissioner and established the Threatened Species Strategy to bring a national focus to threatened species recovery efforts. The Strategy sets out our approach of science, action and partnership, and establishes ambitious targets to recover priority threatened species. This has been backed by significant investment, which reaches beyond the priority species and contributes to the Strategy’s key action areas of tackling feral cats, creating safe havens, improving habitat and emergency interventions to avert extinctions.

Thank you for bringing the proposal to establish a National Memorial and Museum to my attention. Engaging the community and raising awareness about the species and threats they face is immensely important in the fight against extinction. Proposals to establish a new national memorial in the ACT are the responsibility of the Canberra National Memorials Committee who are empowered by the National Memorials Ordinance 1928, to approve the location and character of national memorials. More information about the Committee is available on the National Capital Authority’s website.

The statutory review of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) is underway and I am encouraging all Australians to have their say. The signatories of the petition may wish to make a formal submission to the review reflecting their views on a National Memorial. Information about how to make a submission is available at https://epbcactreview.environment.gov.au/.

I have copied this letter to the Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Territories, the Hon Nola Marino MP, who is responsible for the administration of National Memorials Ordinance 1928.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for the Environment, Ms Ley

Australian Constitution

Dear Chair

Thank you for your representation of 9 April 2020 concerning petition EN1321. The petitioners requested the Australian Government initiate a process to amend the Australian Constitution to include a statement of recognition for First Nations Peoples as a preamble.

As noted, Indigenous Australians are not acknowledged in the Constitution, which was drafted at a time when our shared history was not recognised. It is not uncommon for countries with similar histories to our own to take steps for Indigenous peoples to have a greater say in the policies and services that affect them.

In our country today, Indigenous Australians experience a significant gap in outcomes compared to non-Indigenous Australians in a number of key areas such as health, mortality, literacy and numeracy, and imprisonment. Having Indigenous voices heard and involved in the policy debate to address these issues is an important step towards reconciliation.

The Australian Government remains committed to holding a referendum to recognise Indigenous Australians in the Constitution, once there is sufficient consensus on the way forward and at a time it has the best chance of success. It is important that we have rigorous discussion and that the views of all Australians are considered. Only eight out of 44 past referenda have been successful and it’s important we learn from this and agree to a set of words that are acceptable to the majority of Australians. We must be pragmatic and consider options that provide the greatest chance of success.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Indigenous Australians, Mr Wyatt

Federal Government: Fixed Terms

Dear Mr O'Dowd

Thank you for your letter dated 9 April 2020, referring petition number EN1345 to the Assistant Minister for Finance, Charities and Electoral Matters. As the Minister responsible for electoral policy this matter has been referred to me for response.

The petition proposes a change to four-year terms for both the Senate and the House of Representatives. Parliamentary terms can only be changed by amending the Constitution through a referendum. There have been a number of unsuccessful attempts to alter the terms by changing the Constitution, with the most recent attempt in 1988.

The petition also proposes that preferential voting be made optional. Full preferential voting, as applied in Australian federal elections for over a century, requires a candidate to build an absolute majority of support in an electorate, rather than a simple majority.

The Government has no plans to hold a referendum on introducing four-year terms, or to amend the Electoral Act to introduce optional preferential voting. However the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters is currently holding its inquiry into the conduct of the 2019 election and this is an opportunity to consider the issues such as the ones you have raised. That committee has considered these issues in previous inquiries in past parliaments.

I have copied this letter to the Assistant Minister for Finance, Charities and Electoral Matters.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely
from the Minister for Finance, Senator Cormann

Vaccination

Mr O'Dowd

I refer to your letter of 9 April 2020 on behalf of the Standing Committee on Petitions concerning Petition EN1356 on vaccine safety.

The Australian Government is a strong supporter of immunisation in recognition that it is a safe and effective way to prevent the spread of many diseases in the community that can cause hospitalisation, serious ongoing health conditions, or even death. However, it is not compulsory and people maintain the right to choose whether to vaccinate their children.

Regarding your request for the Government to fund vaccine safety studies, the Government already has in place, an Advisory Committee on Vaccines (ACV) that provides independent medical and scientific advice to myself, and the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) on issues relating to the safety, quality and efficacy of vaccines supplied in Australia.

This includes issues relating to pre-market assessment, post-market monitoring and safe use in national immunisation programs.

There is overwhelming public support for a tough stance on immunisation - parents across Australia need to be confident that their children will be safe from preventable diseases.

While parents take responsibility for decisions affecting their children, the Government recognises that if a parent chooses not to vaccinate their child against the infectious diseases, they are not only putting their child's health at risk, but also the health of everybody else's children. Therefore, the Government introduced the No Jab, No Pay legislation.

While the Government appreciates the No Jab, No Pay may affect some families' financial circumstances, it has formed the view that the benefits of vaccination to the community are sufficiently important to warrant the policy.

In addition to the Government No Jab, No Pay legislation, some states have legislated immunisation requirements for attendance at childcare and preschool, known as No Jab No Play.

Thank you for writing on this matter.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Health, Mr Hunt

COVID-19: Korea

Dear Mr O'Dowd

Thank you for your correspondence of 13 May 2020 concerning Petition EN1359 to issue a travel ban or compulsory quarantine for people travelling from and through the Republic of Korea. I appreciate the time you have taken to bring this matter to my attention.

On 12 March 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 as a pandemic.

Acting on the latest health advice from the Chief Medical Officer and health authorities, on 20 March 2020, the National Cabinet moved to close Australia's borders to non-citizens, permanent residents and their families.

From 28 March 2020, the Australian Government introduced a mandatory 14-day quarantine period in a designated facility for anybody returning from overseas.

The Government will continue to work hand-in-hand with medical authorities and act on the best possible advice to keep Australians safe. These measures are temporary and are reviewed regularly.

Thank you for bringing this Petition to my attention.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Home Affairs, Mr Dutton

COVID-19: Biosecurity

Dear Mr O'Dowd

Thank you for your correspondence of 13 May 2020 concerning Petition EN1385 concerning closing Australian borders. I appreciate the time you have taken to bring this matter to my attention.

On 12 March 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 as a pandemic.

Acting on the latest health advice from the Chief Medical Officer and health authorities, on 20 March 2020, the National Cabinet moved to close Australia's borders to non-citizens, permanent residents and their families.

From 28 March 2020, the Australian Government introduced a mandatory 14-day quarantine period in a designated facility for anybody returning from overseas.

The Government will continue to work hand-in-hand with state and territory health authorities and act on the best possible advice to keep Australians safe. These measures are temporary and are reviewed regularly.

Thank you for bringing this Petition to my attention.

Yours sincerely
COVID-19: Higher Education

Dear Mr O'Dowd

Thank you for your email of 13 May 2020 concerning petition number EN1403: outstanding Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) debt, which was submitted to the Standing Committee on Petitions. I appreciate the time you have taken to bring this matter to my attention.

The Australian Government is committed to maintaining a sustainable higher education system, so that it remains accessible for future students. HELP enables students to access the benefits of higher education by removing upfront financial barriers. The Government funds access and participation in higher education through HELP as higher education plays a crucial role in creating opportunities for individuals, by providing the skills needed to boost our economic productivity and competitiveness. It is reasonable for the Government to require students, who have benefitted from deferring their higher education tuition costs through HELP, to repay those costs through the taxation system on an income contingent basis. This ensures HELP remains sustainable for future students. Remitting all outstanding HELP debt would undermine the sustainability of higher education funding, and shift the whole cost of a student's higher education onto all taxpayers, including taxpayers who did not undertake higher education.

In regards to the concerns you have raised about the financial burden of HELP debt repayments, HELP is income contingent, meaning repayments of outstanding HELP debt are only required if a debtor's income meets a compulsory repayment threshold. The repayment rate for each threshold increases in scale, so that the repayment rate is less for lower incomes. For 2019-2020, no repayment is required for an income less than $45,881. As such, HELP debtors who have seen their incomes reduce due to the impact of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) will repay lower amounts if their income reduces below their usual repayment threshold. If a HELP debtor's income reduces below the minimum repayment threshold, they will not be required to make a repayment. In addition, there is no real interest charged on HELP loans. Instead, HELP loans are indexed each year in accordance with the Consumer Price Index, allowing the debt to maintain its real value in line with changes in the cost of living.

HELP debtors experiencing financial hardship can apply to the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) to defer or amend the compulsory repayment of their HELP debts. Further information is available on the ATO's website at: www.ato.gov.au/Individuals/Study-and-training-support-loans/Deferring-repayments.

The Government is committed to supporting Australians and the Australian economy during this difficult time. In addition to other COVID-19 related programs and supports, on 12 April 2020, the Government announced the Higher Education Relief Package containing measures to support students, displaced workers, and the economy. More information about the Higher Education Relief Package is available here: www.dese.gov.au/covid-19/higher-education/higher-education-faq.

I would like to thank the petitioners for raising their concerns. I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for Education, Mr Tehan

Newstart Allowance

Dear Mr O'Brien

Thank you for your letter dated 11 February 2020, concerning Petition PN0458 - Current rate of $40 per day for Newstart. I apologise for the lengthy delay in responding. As you can imagine my office has been occupied with the bushfires, and now the coronavirus crisis.

The petitioner calls for a raise to the rate of Newstart Allowance and similar working age payments by at least $75 per week as a matter of urgency. The petitioner believes the Newstart payment does not provide proper support, and it forces many people into a circle of deprivation, social isolation and humiliation.

The Australian social security system aims to support the basic living standards of all Australians and increase their social and economic participation. The Australian Government is committed to a welfare system that supports the most vulnerable, encourages those who are able to work or study, and is sustainable for future generations. One of the Government’s key objectives is to ensure that people who have the capacity to work, support themselves to the fullest extent possible.

Newstart Allowance (now known as JobSeeker Payment) is the main income support payment for people of workforce age, while they are unemployed. It is designed to provide a safety net for people who require financial assistance, and to provide incentives to enable them to join or return to the workforce.

JobSeeker Payment is indexed twice a year in March and September, in line with movements in the cost of living as measured by the Consumer Price Index. Payment increases are calculated according to provisions in social security legislation.

To address the global health crisis related to Coronavirus (also known as COVID-19), the Australian Government has recently announced that it is temporarily expanding eligibility to income support payments and establishing a new, time-limited Coronavirus supplement to be paid at a rate of $550 per fortnight. This supplement will be paid to both existing and new recipients of JobSeeker and other payments. These changes will apply for the next six months.

from the Minister for Home Affairs, Mr Dutton

COVID-19: Higher Education

Dear Mr O'Dowd

Thank you for your email of 11 February 2020, concerning petition number EN1403: outstanding Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) debt, which was submitted to the Standing Committee on Petitions. I appreciate the time you have taken to bring this matter to my attention.

The Australian social security system aims to support the basic living standards of all Australians and increase their social and economic participation. The Australian Government is committed to a welfare system that supports the most vulnerable, time-limited Coronavirus supplement to be paid at a rate of $550 per fortnight. This supplement will be paid to both existing and new recipients of JobSeeker and other payments. These changes will apply for the next six months.

CHAMBER

Monday, 15 June 2020

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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The Government will also provide for two Economic Support Payments to provide financial assistance and help people through this uncertain time and support economic activity. Payments will automatically be made into eligible recipients' bank accounts from 31 March 2020 and from 13 July 2020.

Thank you again for raising this matter with me.

Yours sincerely

from the **Minister for Families and Social Services, Senator Ruston**

**Australia Day**

Dear Ms Elliot

I am writing in relation to your letter dated 2 March 2020 to the Prime Minister, the Hon Scott Morrison MP regarding a petition to ask the House to declare 27 May the new official date for 'Australia Day' (PN0464). The Prime Minister has asked me to reply on his behalf.

Australia Day is a day to reflect on our shared history, its highs and its lows, to respect the stories of others and celebrate our nation, its achievements, but most of all its people. On Australia Day we welcome our newest Australians alongside the world's oldest living culture and celebrate our diverse background and the extraordinary achievements that have made Australia a successful multicultural society.

On occasion the Government has heard some suggestions, such as the request of this petition, to change the date of Australia Day. Whilst I thank the petitioner for their suggestion, it is the Government's view that Australia Day should continue to be celebrated annually on 26 January.

Australia Day is a time to reflect, respect and celebrate the story of Australia. It's a time to reflect on the past 60,000 years of Australian history, our many successes, and our failures, and to be grateful for the free and fair democracy we have created for ourselves today.

Yours sincerely

from the **Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister, Mr Morton**

**Environment**

Dear Mr O'Dowd

Thank you for your correspondence of 9 April 2020 concerning petition PN0472 about preventing the destruction of Australia's natural heritage and building disaster management capabilities. The Australian Government is implementing a range of measures that protect, enhance and rehabilitate our natural environment.

In October 2019, the Government announced the commencement of the independent review of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). The independent review of the EPBC Act will consider all ideas put forward to ensure our national environmental law remains fit for purpose. A discussion paper was released by the independent reviewer, Professor Graeme Samuel AC, on 21 November 2019. Details about the review and how to be involved are available on the review website at www.epbcactreview.environment.gov.au.

The Australian Government is an international leader in how it is responding to biodiversity loss. Last November I was delighted to co-launch Australia's Strategy for Nature 2019-2030 with my state and territory ministerial colleagues.

Australia's Strategy for Nature 2019-2030, along with Australia's Nature Hub website, are a key part of our commitment to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity. The Strategy has generated a significant amount of interest within the international community for the innovative and inclusive approach it promotes.

Australia's Strategy for Nature 2019-2030 represents a new way of doing business for Australia. The Strategy provides the opportunity to expand conversations on biodiversity conservation, recognising the important role biodiversity plays in all landscapes and seascapes, including in production areas and cities, and the critical links to human health. A progress report on the Strategy is to be provided to environment ministers every two years. Publicly available progress reports will be published every four years, aligning with Australia's reporting to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

As part of Australia's response to climate change, the Government is taking real and practical action to reduce our emissions. The Government's response to climate change includes mitigation to reduce emissions, and resilience and adaptation to prepare practically for climate change, such as supporting renewable generation technology and funding research into new technology.

The Australian Government is working closely with states and territories to assess the environmental impact of the recent bushfires, including on matters of national environmental significance such as threatened species. This involves sharing information and data on mapping the extent and severity of the fires across a range of tenure and landscapes, including the National Reserve System. Working with state and territories, we have 'boots on the ground' undertaking ground truthing exercises to verify what mapping information is telling us about the ecological impact of the fires, including what it means for species of interest.

In response to this summer's devastating bushfires, the Government has established a $2 billion recovery fund.

As part of the $2 billion recovery fund, we have announced an investment of $200 million for the protection and restoration of affected wildlife, species and habitat as well as plan for longer term protection and restoration of Australia's environment. A panel of experts, led by Threatened Species Commissioner, Dr Sally Box, has been established to advise the Government on
critical interventions required, and to develop a strategy to build back up animal and plant populations, ensuring their resilience into the future.

The Government supports environmental science through the National Environmental Science Program (NESP), a long-term commitment to environment and climate research with funding of $145 million over the six years from 2015-16 to 2020-21. This year the Government has committed a further $149 million in climate and environmental science targeting plastic waste, threatened species, climate systems and a range of key environmental issues.

Through NESP six research hubs are supported, including the Threatened Species Recovery Hub and the Clean Air and Urban Landscapes Hub. Ecological recovery and restoration are priority areas of research for these Hubs.

The Australian Government is investing in environmental rehabilitation and resilience through a range of programs. The National Landcare Program is a nationwide effort to address problems such as loss of vegetation, soil degradation, the introduction of pest weeds and animals, changes in water quality and flows and changes in fire regimes.

This represents a billion-dollar commitment by the Government to protect and conserve Australia's water, soil, plants, animals and ecosystems, as well as support the productive and sustainable use of these valuable resources. This is a very significant investment, which is in addition, but complementary to, the bushfire recovery work.

The Australian Government is also investing $100 million, over four years from 2019-20 to 2022-23, to help ensure our environment is protected for future generations through the Environment Restoration Fund.

The Environment Restoration Fund builds on the Government's $1 billion investment, over six years from 2017-18 to 2022-23, in the National Landcare Program. The Government's investment in the Fund is helping to deliver national environmental priorities, including the protection of Matters of National Environmental Significance such as listed threatened and migratory species and ecological communities and Ramsar wetlands.

Further to the National Landcare Program and the Environment Restoration Fund, the Australian Government is investing about $20 million this financial year through the Communities Environment Program to support a wide range of small-scale, on-ground projects that aim to conserve, protect and manage our environment.

Management of the six national parks, 58 marine parks and the Australian National Botanic Gardens are internationally regarded. The six land based national parks are part of the National Reserve System (NRS), Australia's network of protected areas. The NRS is based on a scientific framework, it is the nation's natural safety net against our biggest environmental challenges.

The petition makes specific reference to the use of Per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFASs) as a fire retardant. All Australian governments, including state and territory governments, are sharing information on PFAS contamination with the aim of managing the potential impacts to environment and human health. I can confirm that the PFAS National Environmental Management Plan, version 2 (PFAS NEMP 2.0) was agreed by Heads of EPAs in October 2019. It provides nationally agreed guidance on managing legacy PFAS contamination at affected sites.

The Australian Government has in place, a number of plans that focus on the security and sustainability of our national assets and primary production sectors. For instance, the national security of our national biodiversity is recognised through Australia's Strategy for Nature 2019-2030, referred to earlier, and the Threatened Species Strategy. Australia's Strategy for Nature recognises that high biodiversity can act as insurance against change; the more variety we maintain in nature, the greater the chance that some species will survive and adapt in the future. Maintaining high biodiversity and healthy ecosystems is the best way to build resilience, the ability to recover from the impacts of threats, pressures and disasters.

The Government's Threatened Species Strategy outlines a bold new and action-based approach to protecting and recovering our nation's threatened plants and animals. The Threatened Species Strategy sets out a road map and highlights how our approach of science, action and partnership can be used to achieve the long-term goal of reversing species declines and supporting species recovery.

Plans for national security of other sectors and assets are in place and are overseen by other Ministers. For example, the Hon Angus Taylor MP, Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction is responsible for the security of domestic and international supply chains for electricity, gas and liquid fuel.

The National Energy Productivity Plan (NEPP) is a COAG Energy Council agreed package of measures to improve Australia's energy productivity by 40 per cent between 2015 and 2030. The NEPP takes a whole-of-system approach to energy policy and covers electricity, gas and transport fuels. In addition, the Australian Government is undertaking a National Energy Security Assessment (NESA) and a Liquid Fuel Security Review to help deliver affordable and reliable energy in Australia. It will contribute to the NESA and will inform Australia's approach to return to compliance with the International Energy Agency (IEA) treaty.

On 22 April, Minister Taylor also announced the Government is boosting the nation's long-term fuel security by taking advantage of dramatic falls in global oil prices and building on our historic agreement with the United States to access their Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR). Under the new measures, Australia will establish its first Government-owned oil reserves for domestic fuel security worth $94 million. This will include a deal with the United States to store Australian Government owned crude oil in the US SPR.

In regard to the petition's broader point about building Australia's disaster management capabilities, on 20 February, the Prime Minister announced a Royal Commission to lead an inquiry into the devastating Black Summer bushfires. The inquiry has a national focus and is looking at three key areas:
Improving natural disaster management coordination across all levels of government.

Improving Australia's preparedness, resilience, and response to natural disasters, across all levels of government.

The legal framework for the Commonwealth's involvement in responding to national emergencies and how that works with state and territory legal frameworks.

The findings from this inquiry will be considered by relevant ministers and COAG in due course. Yours sincerely

Yours sincerely

from the Minister for the Environment, Ms Ley

PETITIONS

Statements

Mr O'DOWD ( Flynn—Deputy Nationals Whip) (10:02): Due to the unique circumstances that we've found ourselves in because of the COVID-19 pandemic, this is my first presentation of petitions since I was appointed chair of the committee in March this year. I would like to sincerely thank those members of the committee who have presented the petitions on my behalf in that time. It was a priority of the committee to ensure that the petition process would continue with minimum interruption, and through these presentations and regular meetings via teleconference we have been able to uphold that process.

Much has happened in the last few months which has impacted on us all in different ways. The numerous petitions I present today regarding COVID-19 are indicative of genuine concern felt through our nation, our neighbours, our loved ones and ourselves. Many requests that the petitioners have made for the House to take action on the pandemic matters have already been addressed through the government's responses, but these petitions will nevertheless be referred to the ministers responsible for each matter with a request for a formal response in the usual way.

These petitions aren't all about COVID-19. Petitions continue to request action on longstanding issues such as taxation, climate, energy and communications. This serves as a good reminder that, through the pandemic that has been at the forefront of our minds, there are other genuine concerns that persist, and our committee will continue to facilitate the passage of petitions. I look forward to updating the House on the work of the committee in future addresses.

COMMITTEES

Procedure Committee

Mr VASTA ( Bonner) (10:04): As the Chair of the Standing Committee on Procedure, today I want to give a brief update on our inquiry into practices and procedures relating to question time. Questions without notice have always been a feature of the House. However, it wasn't until 1950 that they were recognised in the standing orders or included in the order of business. Question time now is one of the most visible parts of the parliamentary day. It has evolved over time to play an important part in the House's role in keeping the government of the day accountable and keeping the public informed, but the feedback that we have been hearing is that question time is not always playing this role as well as it could be.

As a committee, our job is to consider the practices and procedures of the House and see whether there are changes that we can recommend to help the House carry out this important function. We started our inquiry with a public survey. It had more than 3,000 responses, and I would like to once again thank everyone who took the time to have their say. This has given us great insights into where people see opportunities for change, along with some practical suggestions for specific changes. We've also met with many of our parliamentary colleagues to hear their views and suggestions. We will be exploring the ideas and hearing more ideas, I'm sure, over the coming months.

Our next phase of evidence gathering is to hold public hearings. We began with our first public hearings by teleconference last week when two former speakers of the House and other expert witnesses gave us their valuable perspectives and insights. We are looking forward to hearing more from witnesses in the coming months. If you want to tune into our hearings, all the details will be available on the APH website as each hearing is scheduled.

Joint Standing Committee on Migration

Mr LEESER ( Berowra) (10:07): On behalf of the Joint Standing Committee on Migration, I wish to make a statement concerning the committee's inquiry into migration in regional Australia. In August 2019 the committee commenced an inquiry into migration into regional Australia to examine ways the Commonwealth government could more effectively encourage migrants to settle in regional areas to both fill known skills gaps and boost population growth outside our major cities.

The committee received 113 submissions and held 11 public hearings for the inquiry. It also conducted four site visits in regional South Australia in Murray Bridge, Mount Gambier and surroundings. In March 2020, in light of
the COVID-19 pandemic, its economic impact and the likely effect this would have on regional areas, the committee resolved unanimously to suspend the inquiry. The subsequent courses of events led the committee to resolve in June 2020 to conclude the inquiry. As the inquiry has been curtailed, the committee did not have the opportunity to fully interrogate the issue or draw conclusions which could form agreed recommendations. However, the committee has decided to note some of the recurrent issues raised both in submissions and evidence to the committee in a short report, which will be tabled in the coming days.

Regional Australia contributes around 30 per cent of Australia's GDP, but, with declining populations and an estimated 60,000 job vacancies when this inquiry was established, many of our smaller cities and regional areas were struggling to fill the jobs available. This represented a serious challenge for Australia's economy. If jobs cannot be filled, the survival of industries in regional Australia is threatened—a point memorably illustrated by evidence from the Australian wine industry, which is worth more than $2 billion to the economy. In the Clare Valley the wine industry has not filled all its jobs for fruit pickers over the last couple of vintages. The industry also struggles to get people to staff their cellar doors and restaurants. Without workers the industry cannot pick their harvest or market their wine. This impacts on the growth opportunities and fulfilment of exports and, over time, risks the contraction of the industry.

We heard strong evidence that skilled migrants create jobs for Australians. In Mount Gambier we visited the Metro Bakery and Cafe where the migration of two skilled pastry chefs from the Philippines to do a job in a location where no Australian was willing or qualified has resulted in those migrants training five apprentices, leading to the businesses expanding and employing 45 people, including at-risk Australians.

The committee received a range of views on the new regional visa classes, introduced in November 2019, and related issues around pathways to permanent residency. Despite the economic benefits of migration, the committee has received significant evidence that it was becoming more and more difficult to employ migrants in regional Australia. One such matter raised in evidence related to the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations—ANZSCO. Many submitters and witnesses to this inquiry noted that ANZSCO is out of date and requires both an immediate review and regularly scheduled updates. At present, ANZSCO doesn't reflect the full range of skills needed to drive the Australian economy. By using it to inform the list of skilled occupations which are in shortage, businesses are left disadvantaged by being unable to access the skilled workers required to grow their businesses.

The Temporary Skilled Migration Income Threshold, or TSMIT, is another issue that holds ongoing relevance. In short, many of those who engage with this inquiry believe that the setting of this threshold at a national level disadvantages regional areas where the cost of living and income levels can be lower than our major cities. Many submitters argued that a flexible approach that takes account of regional variations, the cost of living and income would be beneficial to employers seeking skilled workers that cannot be provided by the existing Australian population. In addition, complaints were raised about the Skilling Australians Fund levy and the extent of labour market testing.

The committee also received a range of feedback on the negotiation of Designated Area Migration Agreements, or DAMAs. While some of this feedback noted the difficulty of navigating these agreements to access concessions to the migration rules in employing skilled workers, particularly for small and medium enterprises, DAMAs were nonetheless viewed as a valuable tool. This is because they help regional areas to negotiate and access concessions that more effectively take into account specific local conditions, whether that be in relation to income, skill shortages, age limits or a range of other factors.

The committee also received feedback on the availability of settlement services and housing in regional areas of Australia. A consistent view was put that, in many regional and rural areas, there was a lack of settlement services available to assist migrants to settle and stay. All submitters agreed that availability of settlement services in regional areas was important so that both primary and secondary migrants seeking to settle in regional Australia could gain access to things such as housing, transport, employment and English language tuition.

The committee would like to thank everyone who made a submission to the inquiry, hosted the committee at site visits or appeared at the hearings. I'd like to acknowledge the committee members, including the deputy chair. The committee will inform the House of its observations through its report, whose publication is imminent.

Ms VAMVAKINOU (Calwell) (10:12): I'd like to associate myself with the remarks made by my colleague and the chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Migration, the member for Berowra. This inquiry was progressing and producing some clear and detailed evidence on strategies to increase migration into Australia's regional areas before the disruption of COVID-19. That disruption took over all aspects of our lives, including the labour market, which has regrettably led to the unanimous decision of the committee to cease our inquiry. The volume of evidence we did receive, however, speaks to the engagement and commitment of the people of rural...
Australia to the urgency of their calls and to their dedication to ensuring the longevity and vibrancy of their local communities.

I want to thank everyone who engaged with the committee during the course of this inquiry. In particular, though, I want to thank the communities of Mount Gambier and Bright in South Australia and the wonderful people we met during our public hearings there before COVID-19 struck. I also want to thank the community representatives from Kalgoorlie-Boulder whose evidence was taken via teleconference in March, making the migration committee the first to conduct public hearings via teleconference in the COVID-19 social-distancing period. It was, indeed, an experience—one that went very smoothly, with minor technical glitches.

While the inquiry did not reach a point where the committee felt it was able to draw solid conclusions and make recommendations to government, this evidence nonetheless provides an excellent resource for anyone interested in migration in regional Australia. The evidence spans a wide range of migration issues, from the ability of businesses to access the skilled workers they need to build their businesses and local economies to the settlement of humanitarian migrants in regional areas, the invaluable work undertaken by volunteers to ensure that every migrant has the best settlement experience they can and the role played by all three levels of government.

The committee received evidence from many different sections of the Australian community. Submissions were made by state governments, local councils, peak bodies, volunteer organisations, unions, academics, migration agents and many others. It was heartening to see the commitment of all these groups and people to the future of regional Australia, and I’d like to encourage them to continue their advocacy on behalf of regional Australia and its residents.

As the public hearings were curtailed, committee members did not have the opportunity to fully consider much of the evidence received, some of which expressed some conflicting views. We hope there will be opportunities in the near future to further consider the effectiveness of labour market testing and the current temporary skilled migration income threshold, both issues impact in various ways on different communities, regions and workforces.

Like the member for Berowra, I’d like to note my appreciation to everyone who assisted in this inquiry. The committee heard some remarkable stories in its hearings and saw some incredible places during its site inspections. Of course, we are disappointed that COVID-19 denied us the opportunity to visit other regional areas and communities as planned. But on the basis of what we did see I think I speak on behalf of my committee colleagues in saying that the future of regional Australia is in good hands, and never has it been more apparent that we must work together to ensure and advance the social and economic viability and progress of regional Australia.

I also look forward to the presentation of the committee’s report on this inquiry. I want to thank my committee colleagues for the efforts in pursuing this inquiry. I very much look forward to working with them in the future. Many thanks, of course, to the amazing support of members of our secretariat. To Pauline Cullen, James Bunce, Belynda Zolotto, Kristy Altieri and Tanya Pratt, thank you very much for the incredibly important work that you do and the assistance you have provided us.

DELEGATION REPORTS

Australian Parliamentary Delegation the 40th General Assembly of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly in Bangkok, Thailand, and to the Philippines and Malaysia

Mr HOGAN (Page—Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister) (10:16): I present the report of the Australian Parliamentary Delegation to the 40th General Assembly of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly in Bangkok, Thailand, and to the Philippines and Malaysia. I am pleased to present the report of the delegation to the 40th general assembly of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly.

Last year, the member for Groom, Senator Gallacher and I visited Thailand, the Philippines and Malaysia. Our trip had two aims. Firstly, we were observers at the 40th General Assembly of AIPA. Secondly, our visit formed part of the annual program of parliamentary visitors to ASEAN countries. We began at the AIPA general assembly in Bangkok. AIPA can trace its origins back to 1977. It was created to contribute to the attainment of ASEAN goals and aspirations through interparliamentary cooperation. The general assembly is held annually and Australia participates as an observer. This general assembly, which was hosted by the National Assembly of Thailand, had the theme of advancing parliamentary partnership for sustainable community.

As delegation leader, I was honoured to make a statement to the first plenary session of the assembly. I spoke not only about the significant economic relationship with Australia that ASEAN enjoy but also about our strong government to government relationships and people to people connections. Since Australia’s cooperation
programs with ASEAN commenced in 1974 cooperation has expanded and adapted to match the progress ASEAN countries have made over this time.

As well as attending the plenary sessions, we met formally and informally with other parliamentarians. A dialogue session focused on deregulation and gave us the chance to hear from AIPA member countries about their relationship with Australia and some of their priorities. We also held bilateral meetings with representatives from South Korea, Canada and Malaysia. And throughout the assembly we met parliamentarians from many other countries. We also met with AIPA's Secretary General, The Hon. Sunthornvut, who was concluding his term, and learnt more about the history of AIPA. The Secretary General shared with us the hope that AIPA could build deeper relationships with observer parliaments such as Australia.

After AIPA concluded, we travelled to Manila. Here we met with members of the Philippine congress and learnt more about their parliamentary system. We also met with Stratbase ADR Institute, an independent strategic research organisation, and with the local Australia New Zealand chamber of commerce. The Philippines has both broad and deep links to Australia, including strong people to people links. However, we heard from the chamber of commerce and from the Australian embassy briefings that there are opportunities for a stronger trade relationship between our two countries.

The final part of our program was spent in Malaysia. Over the course of our two days in Kuala Lumpur we met with ministers, other parliamentarians and civil society and had briefings from our own High Commission. Malaysia has had a longstanding relationship with Australia as an important trading partner. It has been undergoing a significant period of parliamentary reform, and we heard about the diverse resources that the Malaysian lower house is drawing on to develop its own practices and procedures. This includes our own House of Representatives Practice.

We concluded our time in Kuala Lumpur with a visit to the Malaysian House of Representatives, where I enjoyed meeting the Speaker again and had the opportunity to observe the public accounts committee hearing and tour the parliament. On behalf of the delegation, I would like to thank the Malaysian speaker and all the other people who met us during our visits to each of the three countries; the National Assembly of Thailand; the IPA secretariat; and Australia's diplomatic missions in Bangkok, Manila and Kuala Lumpur for the support provided during our visits.

This was the first time the delegation to IPA was combined with the regular country visits to ASEAN nations. This followed a suggestion from the 2018 parliamentary delegation to Vietnam, Thailand and Brunei that ASEAN country visits should be timed to coincide with IPA meetings to maximise the delegations' interaction with regional parliamentarians. Our delegation agreed that there is a natural alignment between observing the IPA general assembly and then visiting two of the member countries to see their parliamentary environment in practice. Our engagement with parliamentarians in the Philippines and Malaysia were richer because the meetings were held during IPA. However, I wanted to note for future planning that our stay in Thailand was heavily focused on IPA, so there was not the same opportunity of engagement with our counterparts in the hosting country as there was in the two other countries.

The delegation also saw an opportunity for the Australian parliament to develop a more formal engagement with IPA such as through a strategic dialogue on a matter of common interests—say, marine debris or road safety. This could help our parliament to deepen its relationship with IPA. I commend the report to the House.

COMMITTEES

Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit

Report


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

Mrs WICKS: One of the key functions of the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit is to ensure the transparency and accountability of public administration and expenditure in the Commonwealth. Accordingly, examining the efficiency and effectiveness of the administration of government programs ties directly into the statutory responsibilities and interests of the committee. This report is presented to the parliament pursuant to section 8(1) of the Commonwealth Public Accounts and Audit Act 1951 and details the committee's findings from the inquiry into the Auditor-General's reports of 2018-19 as referred to in the motion.

The purpose of this inquiry was to examine the efficiency and effectiveness of the administration of a range of government programs across a variety of subject matters and Commonwealth agencies. The committee identified
several common themes across the seven Auditor-General's reports which were examined, including the importance of strong governance structures, the effective measurement and management of program performance and appropriate stakeholder engagement. These elements are critical to the success of all government programs, and the committee's findings are relevant to all government agencies undertaking program management on behalf of the Commonwealth.

In examining the operations of these programs, the committee has made 11 recommendations to agencies, including to the Department of Home Affairs, relating to externally reported key performance indicators and an electronic tracking system for applicants seeking citizenship by conferral; to the Department of Finance in reference to cost-recovery guidelines and benchmarking activities by cost-recovery entities; to the Australian Taxation Office regarding improvements to data analysis and systems designed to report on debt arising from compliance activities; to the Department of Social Services, relating to risk management and public reporting for the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022; and to the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment and the Australian Taxation Office in relation to policy objectives, key performance indicators and risk assessments for the Farm Management Deposits scheme.

In presenting this report I would really like to acknowledge the work of the committee secretariat in this inquiry. I’d like to thank all members of the committee for their cooperation and their assistance—and also the deputy chair—and indicate that this is a bipartisan report. I commend the report to the House.

Mr HILL (Bruce) (10:24): I thank the chair for her remarks. It is indeed a bipartisan report, continuing the tradition broadly for around 100 years of striving for bipartisan work through this committee. I think you used to be a chair of this committee, Mr Speaker, some years ago and would understand the breadth of its work. It is a bit of a monster report, this one. It is seven individual audit reports all stapled together. In that vein, I would also extend thanks to the secretariat, particularly given they were still getting up to speed when we held these hearings late last year. A lot of work went in.

Of those seven reports, there were probably a few things that got gold stars. Efic, I think, had one of the most positive audit reports I've read in my time here. There were some moderate issues identified—cost-recovery principles in particular and issues of overcharging of fees and charges, particularly in the agriculture sector and the maritime sector, which need to be addressed. As the chair mentioned on DSS's work in family violence, the committee was concerned that, despite all of the activity, the government didn't have an appropriate performance framework to actually measure and report on what the outcomes were. Of course, in such a complex area, with Commonwealth-state cooperation, it's really important we're assured that taxpayer funding is achieving outcomes and not just being expended. Similarly, the scandal which was broken some years ago in relation to the Australian tax office's treatment of small businesses and collection of tax debts was the subject of an audit report. To summarise, most of the hopes for improvement hung on a massive IT upgrade that the tax office was doing over Christmas. So hopefully that's all gone well and has addressed most the concerns.

The two areas I want to make a couple of brief remarks on included, firstly, the citizenship audit report. This was nothing short of a scandal. It was a total administrative failure, and it was one of the most damning audit reports that I've read in my time here. It found that the number of citizenship applications stuck in the pipeline had blown out by 771 per cent and that almost 250,000 people were waiting for citizenship as of 30 June two years ago. That means hundreds of thousands of permanent residents of this country who wanted to confirm their commitment to Australia were stuck in the department's black hole, waiting for something to happen. It would just be a coincidence that they weren't allowed to get on the voting roll before the last election, wouldn't it? But there is no need for colourful phrases; the report speaks for itself. The direct and damning conclusions of that report were that applications for citizenship by conferment had not been processed efficiently by the Department of Home Affairs. They had not been processed in a time-efficient manner. They had not been processed in a resource-efficient manner. Processing times had increased. There were significant periods of inactivity evident for both complex and non-complex applications. In plain English, what that means is that the Auditor-General had a look around the department and found stuff literally sitting in filing cabinets and tambour units for years in which nothing had happened and the Department of Home Affairs had not checked the quality of its decisions for a year.

They're quite serious matters and, indeed, the Federal Court did the department for an unreasonable delay under the Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Act—quite rightly so. The interesting thing I'll just note is that, despite a very clear finding—and the euphemistic blind Freddie could see that the department were not being efficient on this—the department bowled up a curious submission which said at the outset, 'We don't agree that we weren't being efficient,' and then went on to outline pages of things that they were doing to become more efficient. I just pay tribute to—a peculiar thing you might think given I've just blogged the department's performance—the first assistant secretary who appeared. I think he was superb. He was not defensive. He was a model that perhaps the secretary of that department can seek to emulate in dealing with parliamentary committees. He provided
reasonable and rational answers as to what improvements have been undertaken. As the committee said, I do hope that they lead to some improvement.

This issue is dear to my heart, given my electorate. I’ve had men sitting in the foyer week after week crying from being separated from their families for five, eight or 10 years because, until they become citizens, they aren’t allowed to have their family reunion applications processed. They haven’t seen their wives and kids, in some cases, for over a decade because of this cruel policy.

The final comment I will just make is on the Farm Management Deposits scheme. There are a couple of concerning aspects to that. The minister decided, as is the minister’s right, to unilaterally say that they were increasing the cap for the Farm Management Deposits scheme from $400,000 to $800,000. However, no cost-benefit analysis was undertaken. Indeed, it became apparent through the inquiry that a very small number of farmers would in fact benefit and all from the big end of town, so to speak. It was also of concern to some members that, in 20 years of the operation of this scheme, despite the obvious opportunities for rorting, there had been no enforcement action undertaken. But, as we noted in the report, it is an interesting case study about the views of a big agency on what constitutes risk—the Australian tax office versus a small agency in agriculture. I commend the report to the House.

STATEMENTS

Joint Select Committee on Australia’s Family Law System

Mr ANDREWS (Menzies) (10:30): On behalf of the Joint Select Committee on Australia’s Family Law System, I wish to make a statement concerning an update on the activities and progress of the committee. As with other committees, the way we have carried on our work has changed because of the restrictions in place over the past three months as a result of COVID-19. Despite these restrictions, the work of the committee has continued, and I’d like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of the committee, both in this place and in the other place, for their contribution.

To date the committee has received and is currently processing over 1,500 individual submissions and almost 200 organisational submissions to the inquiry. We continue to receive and to consider submissions. The committee has also held a number of hearings this year. We were fortunate to travel to several communities in Queensland and New South Wales in early March, where we conducted public and in camera hearings. We also had a number of hearings scheduled in Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia, the Northern Territory and Western Australia. While we have been unable to travel since mid-March, the committee has continued to conduct in camera hearings and to hear from individuals about their experiences of the family law system. We've also begun to hear from organisations in public hearings by using the videoconferencing facilities here in Canberra. Since COVID-19 restrictions came into place we've conducted five in camera hearings and one public hearing. We will continue to conduct hearings in this way for the foreseeable future.

A number of themes have begun to emerge from the evidence. We've heard about the costs associated with the family law system, delays in the court system and the appropriateness of our legal framework. We look forward to further interrogating these and other themes as we continue this important work. On behalf of the committee I thank all the submitters and witnesses to this inquiry, especially those children, parents and grandchildren who have been through or are currently involved in the family law system. I say to each of them: thank you for your courage in coming forward to share you story and your suggestions on how we can work together to make the family law system fair for all parties who engage with it and who are affected by it here in Australia.

BILLs

Fair Work Amendment (One in, All in) Bill 2020

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Bandt.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr BANDT (Melbourne—Leader of the Australian Greens) (10:33): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

On 24 April 2020—so, not that long ago—the Treasurer put out a media release, and it said this about the so-called one in, all in principle:

Once an employer decides to participate in the JobKeeper scheme and their eligible employees have agreed to be nominated by the employer, the employer must ensure that all of these eligible employees are covered by their participation in the
scheme. This includes all eligible employees who are undertaking work for the employer or have been stood down. The employer cannot select which eligible employees will participate in the scheme.

During this pandemic we have seen many people lose their jobs, and we've seen Depression-era dole queues. We've seen the government bring forward the JobKeeper scheme, at the urging of many parties, like the Greens, saying that it is time to ensure that people get some wage guarantees. But what we've also found is that some employers are picking one or two of their employees to be covered and leaving other people behind. As the Treasurer noted as recently as April, that is not the point of the JobKeeper scheme. The point of the JobKeeper scheme is one in, all in. If an employer picks one person to be covered then they should all be covered.

The problem is that that is not what is happening at the moment. Not only have we got millions of workers excluded from the scheme because they're short-term casuals or temporary visa holders and not only are many now, like childcare workers, about to lose their subsidy because the government decided to end it early; at the moment, even where there are workers who are lucky enough to be eligible for the payment, there is no guarantee they will receive it, and they are currently not receiving it. The problem is that, despite the Treasurer's big words about one in, all in, there's no mechanism in any of the legislation that has been passed for an employee who's been excluded from the scheme to get their employer to take the scheme up. In other words, on our understanding and on our advice, somewhere in the order of 500,000 people across the country have complained and said: 'Hang on. My employer is bringing some employees in but not me. What can I do about it?'

The answer at the moment is nothing, and we need to fix it. If their employer is entitled to get the JobKeeper payment but they are not getting it because they haven't registered, then there has to be a place employees can go to have this dispute resolved.

As I noted, the one in, all in principle requires that employers participating in the JobKeeper scheme must ensure that all eligible workers are nominated for the payment. When the government established the JobKeeper scheme, they left a gaping hole where support for workers should have been. The government denied workers the ability, the power and the recourse to challenge decisions that would exclude them from the payment. The jurisdiction of the Fair Work Commission has been limited to cover only a small number of issues, and the ATO, the Australian tax office, is only responsible for the administration of the scheme and does not have the power to rule on eligibility disputes. Some workers have been advised that, if their employer is not including them, they should make a tip-off to the ATO if they have concerns, but privacy laws prevent the ATO from providing updates or outcomes as a result of tip-offs let alone helping resolve individual cases. This has created a very troubling situation—one that continues to leave many workers behind.

I wrote to the Treasurer expressing my concerns over a month ago. Questions have been asked during the Senate COVID-19 committee hearings. There have been reports in the media about well-known employers denying their workers access to JobKeeper. The government is aware of this issue, and I can only conclude that the government has decided not to act, that the government does not care if people who are eligible for JobKeeper aren't getting it. At the same time as the government is running wall-to-wall ads about how great JobKeeper is, it is turning a blind eye to hundreds of thousands of people being denied JobKeeper because they have no place to go if their employer decides not to give it to them.

That is why I am introducing this bill today. The Fair Work Amendment (One In, All In) Bill 2020 amends the Fair Work Act to give the Fair Work Commission the power to deal with disputes relating to workers' eligibility for the JobKeeper scheme. This bill will allow the Fair Work Commission to deal with disputes about whether a worker of an employer participating in the JobKeeper scheme is eligible for the JobKeeper payment. An application can be made by an employee, an employer, an employee organisation or an employer organisation, and the dispute can be dealt with by arbitration, mediation or conciliation. When dealing with disputes, the Fair Work Commission must give effect to the one in, all in principle, and it can tidy up those situations where an employer has chosen not to include all the employees, violating the one in, all in principle. Although the Greens have argued and will continue to argue that JobKeeper should be extended, including past its September date, this bill will end on the current proposed JobKeeper end date so there is no reason for the government to object to the bill. This is something the government should be fixing. This is a sensible proposal that won't result in the government incurring any additional costs other than what they have budgeted for and is completely consistent with what the government says is the principle behind its own legislation.

I want to say to the government that this is having real-world effects on people. One of my constituents in Melbourne, Maxima De La Rosa, has been denied access to the JobKeeper payment, despite being employed as a casual worker with her current employer since 2016. They claim Maxima's employment has not been regular and systematic because she has only worked 40 out of 52 weeks in the previous 12 months and is therefore ineligible. She contacted the ATO and the Fair Work Commission, who said they can't intervene because the government hasn't given them power to act.
She sent her employer information that is available on the Fair Work Commission's website supporting her argument that she meets the eligibility criteria, but her employer still refuses to nominate her for JobKeeper. She contacted my office, written to the Treasurer, worked with her union and gone to the media. What she hasn't been able to do is officially dispute her employer's decision. This is unacceptable. A government scheme that purports to save jobs and maintain a relationship between workers and employers currently has no way of resolving disputes. This bill will ensure that workers like Maxima can go to the Fair Work Commission and formally challenge their employer's decision to exclude them from the JobKeeper payment. This bill will give workers a voice to make sure they are receiving the financial support they're legally entitled to.

There is no excuse for not supporting this bill. All it does is take the Treasurer at his word that it's 'One in, all in', and give someone the power to resolve disputes about it. There are, I suspect, based on the advice we received, hundreds of thousands of people at the moment who are entitled to the government's JobKeeper payment but are not getting it because their employer has arbitrarily—or perhaps mistakenly—decided not to include them, but there is nowhere they can go to sort it out. This means less money to pay the rent and less money to buy food. It means less money to get by at a time when—as the Prime Minister keeps telling us—we're all in this together. That enough is reason to fix it.

The government is currently running wall-to-wall ads telling people the purpose of JobKeeper is to maintain the relationship between employers and employees and to support people through this difficult time. But the government is also excluding hundreds of thousands of people who are eligible for JobKeeper simply because they have no way to hold the government to its word and enforce the 'one in, all in' principle. Between March and April this year, people who began, left or lost a job increased over ninefold, up to 847 per cent. People who worked less almost quadrupled to 286 per cent. As we hurtle towards the September cliff, where people will find themselves in strife, the government should at least ensure that its own principle of 'one in, all in' is complied with and people have a place to go.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Zimmerman): Is the motion seconded?

Mr Wilkie: I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate is made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Amendment (Sustainable Procurement Principles) Bill 2020

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Wilkie.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr WILKIE (Clark) (10:44): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Amendment (Sustainable Procurement Principles) Bill 2020 would enshrine principles of sustainability in federal government procurement decisions. Indeed the bill amends the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 to create a positive duty for the accountable authority of a Commonwealth entity to procure recycled goods.

Importantly, the accountable authority of a Commonwealth entity must ensure that at least 30 per cent of the entity's procurement of goods is of recycled goods. This is not an aspirational target, but a baseline minimum, one to be built on by successively more ambitious targets to help us move towards a circular economy.

The bill also introduces mandatory sustainable procurement principles which must be taken into account in making purchasing decisions. Goods and property which can be reused, repaired or recycled should be considered, and goods which themselves contain recycled material should be given preference.

Environmental impacts, and fair and ethical sourcing practices, must also be considered by the decision-maker. This means goods and services which have lower adverse environmental impacts across their entire lifespan, and socially responsible supply chains, will be given preference.

This bill is necessary because, while currently the Commonwealth Procurement Rules do note a requirement to consider environmental sustainability, they provide little detail, and that which is provided is only as an afterthought in a list of non-financial costs and benefits. Yes, the National Waste Policy does make it clear that government procurement is an essential part of sustainable waste management, but it fails to set clear targets or binding obligations. And yes, all the environment ministers did meet last year to update the policy, but they did
not set any concrete procurement targets for the public sector. In other words any progress regarding government procurement is way too slow and out of sync with the first element of the national waste export ban, which is scheduled to begin shortly.

The Waste Management and Resource Recovery Association of Australia is the peak body for waste management in Australia and it has consistently called for the federal government to take the lead by committing to the procurement of recycled materials. The association argues that a mandatory 30 per cent target for procurement of recycled goods will assist in the creation of a strong remanufacturing sector and show leadership for state and local governments. In other words the industry is waiting for the government to act and to lead, and this bill provides a simple first step that can be taken to kickstart the waste material market in Australia.

To put the need for this bill in context, Australia creates approximately 70 million tonnes of waste annually and only about 55 per cent of that is recycled. This is more waste and less recycling than the average for developed countries. And when we drill down into these broad figures the details are staggering—for instance, that each year we use 3.3 billion plastic bags, 2.6 billion coffee cups, 2.4 billion plastic straws and 1.3 billion plastic bottles; that about 80 per cent of our plastic is destined for landfill and that about 95 per cent of our household food waste, that's more than eight million tonnes a year, also ends up in landfill, making us one of the highest per capita food wasters in the world. Remember, glass in landfill can take up to a million years to decompose. And then there's the e-waste, which accounts for about 70 per cent of the toxic chemicals in our rubbish dumps.

And making matters even worse right now, is the finding of the Australia Council of Recycling that the COVID-19 pandemic is adding to the problem because households have increased their waste output by some 10 per cent.

No wonder Australia now hosts the largest landfill in the Southern Hemisphere, and this is only set to grow as the waste export ban is implemented.

On a positive note, though, just about everything can be re-used or recycled, thereby saving our resources, reducing dependence on international supply chains and helping to clean up the environment. Why, just one tonne of paper recycled saves 13 trees, 26,500 litres of water, 2½ barrels of oil and 4,100 kilowatt hours of electricity. Moreover cardboard in particular can be recycled up to eight times.

Recycled goods have of course a wide range of uses. Obviously paper and cardboard can be recycled and used again in the office. But old timber can also be re-used, or recycled into any number of engineered construction products. Steel, aluminium and glass can all be recycled. And even tyres can be recycled and used as a form of road gravel, or for reprocessing into products as diverse as wastewater treatment filters and soundproofing for walls. All of which obviously reduces the need for new materials and creates an internal market for Australia's waste resources.

But it will take strong and sustained political will to achieve this, which is why the Federal Government's recent commitment to tackle Australia's recycling crisis is good news. But it's news that will turn out to be just rhetoric unless and until Australian governments develop and apply the detailed policies, and spend the big money, needed to help create the reprocessing and remanufacturing infrastructure required.

It will also take the creation of markets for recycled goods if Australia's recycling crisis is to be addressed, because to create a genuinely circular economy Australia needs to have, or to create, the markets for the recovered materials. Only then will we be positioned to sustainably collect, recycle and reuse the country's waste, in other words to close the loop.

The waste and resource recovery industry has repeatedly noted that the waste export ban should be seen as an opportunity to create genuine Australian markets for Australian recycled materials. In other words the current Australian waste crisis is an economic opportunity for effective and long-term industry reform. And any new industry will undeniably create new employment opportunities, which is particularly important at the moment seeing how Australia is in an economic and financial hole, and that we must look at environmentally sustainable opportunities to create employment.

To that end this bill capitalises on the government's purchasing power to create a big new market for sustainable products and drive the shift to a circular economy, because the influential purchasing power of the federal government will encourage greater certainty in the remanufacturing market and drive demand for recovered resources.

I will now invite the member for Melbourne to speak about the bill, which he is seconding, in my remaining time.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Zimmerman):** Is the motion seconded?
Mr BANDT (Melbourne—Leader of the Australian Greens) (10:52): I second the motion. Australia has a problem with waste. People are doing the right thing and are trying to do the right thing. People are separating their recycling and trying to buy less, and people are trying to do things that ensure that there is less waste. But the government isn't stepping up to the plate. Although people are being asked to do more, and most people are, the government isn't matching that with its own behaviour. The government is not buying enough material made out of recycled goods when the government spends billions and billions of dollars each year. If the government decided that a proportion of the goods that it bought or which it got other people to procure had to be recycled, it would go a long way to minimising the waste we have in this country.

One of the other big problems that we have with waste is that we don't have enough domestic capacity to recycle products and to turn products into something else. As China closed its doors and said, 'We're not taking any more of Australia's waste,' what we haven't done is build recycling plants here in Australia. The latest crazy idea is that we'll just burn the waste and will convert waste to energy, as if that's somehow a solution. But that is not a circular economy. What we need to do is make sure that Australia has its own domestic recycling capacity, and an increased one, to deal with the fact that people want to do the right thing and that people want to separate their waste and see what can be recycled actually being recycled.

Government must be a model citizen here. Government must lead by example and lead by acting, and that's what this bill does. I commend the member for Clark for introducing it and I commend my fellow Greens colleague, Senator Peter Whish-Wilson, for his work on the waste inquiry that has led to a number of these proposals and that has led to the government starting to take waste seriously. If government wants to be taken seriously and it wants to ask people to reduce their waste then it should start by doing it itself, and this bill is a good start.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Zimmerman): The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Family Law Amendment (A Step Towards a Safer Family Law System) Bill 2020

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Perrett.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (10:55): I move:
That this bill be now read a second time.

So far 2020 has been a bizarre year: the world has changed dramatically in just a few months.

After the bushfires and before the pandemic set in, Australians were shocked in February by the callous murders of Hannah Clarke and her three young children, Aaliyah, Laianah and Trey—four Queenslanders murdered on a suburban Brisbane street by Hannah's estranged partner; the children's father. It was horrendous and it shocked this House and the country.

Their horrific murders created an outpouring of grief and promises by leaders to 'act'; to make a 'difference'.

In the four months since Hannah and her children were murdered, nearly 20 women have been murdered by their current or former partners. Thus far in 2020 a total of 25 women have been murdered by a current or former partner—25 mothers, daughters, sisters, friends; 25 distraught families broken forever.

In the month of May eight women were murdered by the person who once loved them. This national crisis is worthy of this parliament's attention.

And yet, we have had report after report tabled in this parliament, like this—and just in the last 2½ years another 93 recommendations—and most now are fine words gathering dust.

Before Hannah Clarke's murder, Women's Legal Services Australia teamed with Rosie Batty to call for 'Safety First in family law'—five steps to creating a family law system that keeps women and children safe.

Launched in October last year, this campaign was endorsed by more than 90 frontline organisations, including men's support organisations.

One of the first tasks in the five-step program is to remove the presumption of equal shared parental responsibility from the Family Law Act—Phillip Ruddock's 2006 amendment.

Immediately after Hannah Clarke's murder the Women's Legal Service again called for action to keep women and children safe. They asked for legislation to remove the presumption of equal shared parental responsibility and create an emphasis on safety in the Family Law Act.
There were fine words spoken in the aftermath of Hannah Clarke's murder but they echo hollower and hollower every day that they are not followed up with simple, no-cost action—that is, legislation.

It's difficult to implement change from opposition. It requires the will of the government or for the Liberal and National Party MPs to have a free vote, for any meaningful legislative change to occur.

I know the coalition needs the votes of One Nation in the other place and this bill will annoy that political party; nevertheless, today I will commence the journey towards legislative change.

The coronavirus has taught us many things—not just how to wash our hands properly but also that when there is a genuine will Australians can work together and achieve great things.

The Great Southern Land has done better than most in containing the coronavirus. We listened to the expert advice and, importantly, we acted on it, apart from the odd Black Lives Matter rally.

Sadly, we can't say the same about domestic violence.

The experts have been giving us advice since 2006 when the 'equal shared parental responsibility' provisions were first included in the Family Law Act.

The then shadow Attorney-General Nicola Roxon's second reading speech to the Family Law Amendment (Shared Parental Responsibility) Bill 2005 said:

…some victims of family violence may develop the false view that they cannot stop their abuser from having contact with their children. I am advised by some service providers in the sector that this is already happening, mostly involving women who, despite their fears and concerns, feel that new laws mean they will have to accept equal time.

In report after report, concerns have been raised about the presumption of 'equal shared parental responsibility'.

This bill implements the first of the three urgent priorities put forward by the Women's Legal Service.

This bill repeals section 61DA of the Family Law Act. That section contains a presumption that it is in the best interests of the child for the child's parents to have equal shared parental responsibility for the child. There are two exceptions to the presumption: where there is abuse of the child or another family member; or where there is family violence.

Although these exceptions are in the legislation, they have not been effective in preventing inappropriate applications of that presumption.

Research shows that the exceptions are not often applied. Parents are forced to continue their parental relationship even where there is a history of family violence.

A report published by the Australian Institute of Family Studies in 2010 evaluating the 2006 amendments found that where both family violence and child abuse had been alleged, over 75 per cent of cases resulted in orders for equal shared parental responsibility. Where the allegation only concerned family violence, almost 80 per cent resulted in orders for equal shared parental responsibility.

It is clear that the 2006 exceptions don't work as Attorney-General Ruddock intended.

A report by the Australian Institute for Family Studies in October 2019 found that in matters where litigation was started but resolved before judgment, orders for shared parental responsibility were made in 94 per cent of cases.

In many families the abuse continues when parents are forced to share parental responsibility for their children after separation.

Misconception

There is a widely held misconception that 'equal shared parental responsibility' means 'equal shared care', that is, parents will spend equal time with their children—30 minutes each per hour effectively.

This misconception sets up a false expectation that parents have some right to guaranteed equal time with their children.

This can incentivise an abusive partner to litigate their parenting dispute. It may lead to a parent agreeing to an unsafe parenting arrangement in the belief they have no choice.

As a judge of the Family Court of Australia, Justice Richard O'Brien, observed in a speech in 2010:

A law that cannot be understood by the people affected by it—or worse still lends itself to being actively misunderstood—is a bad law. That is particularly so when we are talking about a law which affects families and children.

Best interests of the child

Anyone who works on the front line of the family law sector will tell you that no two families are the same.
To quote Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, 'All happy families are alike; but an unhappy family is unhappy after its own fashion'.

It is stating the obvious to say a presumption presumes that all families, or at least most families, are the same—with the same problems and requiring the same solution.

That is simply nonsense.

Actually, all parents have a common law duty of parental responsibility from the birth of their child. Common law parental responsibility is held jointly and severally by each parent and is only displaced by a specific court order conferring parental responsibilities.

This bill does nothing to displace the common law duty of parental responsibility. What this bill does is ensure that when that common law duty is displaced by a court order, that order will be made in the best interests of the child.

Every child deserves to have decisions made about their life, made in their best interests and only their best interest.

The current presumption is a dangerous fiction that urgently needs to be repealed.

The repeal of this section will ensure that in every decision made about a child the only consideration will be whether the proposed order is in the best interests of that child.

**Repeal of section 65DAA**

This bill also repeals section 65DAA of the Family Law Act. That provision compels a court to consider, where an order is made for equal shared parental responsibility, that the child spend equal time with each of the parents or substantial and significant time with each of the parents.

The 2019 ALRC report unequivocally recommended that section 65DAA be repealed. In their final report they said of this section:

… the convoluted and complex decision making pathway, that must be arrived at through an understanding of the combination of legislation and case law, adds significantly to the time and cost of any parenting matter, and ultimately to the overall delays within the courts.

The Australian Institute of Family Studies report from October 2019 found that 97 per cent of parents don't go to a court to decide their parenting arrangements when love has soured.

Section 65DAA provides an extremely difficult path for judges to navigate and makes it impossible for parents to predict what order a court would be likely to make in the event they cannot agree to their own parenting arrangements.

**Conclusion**

The amendments contained in this bill will ensure that all parenting orders, including orders for parental responsibility and the time the children spend with each parent, will be made in the best interests of the children in accordance with the legislative framework contained in part VII of the Family Law Act.

This private members bill will not fix everything that is wrong with the family law system.

But it is a start—a small step.

We've seen in the past few months the enormous benefits that flow from listening to experts.

For many years family law experts have said loud and clear that the amendments contained in this bill will make the family law system safer for families.

I'm introducing this bill, not as a party-political stunt, but in a genuine effort to address a longstanding problem that already has a known solution. And I genuinely believe that this piece of legislation can save lives and can change lives.

I'm introducing this bill for Hannah Clarke and for her children, Aaliyah, Laianah and Trey; I'm introducing this bill for the more than 25 women already murdered this year; I'm introducing this bill so that we can start to fix a system that somehow allows a woman in Australia to be murdered every week, a system that is putting children's lives at risk.

I commend this bill to the House.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Zimmerman):** Is the motion seconded?

**Ms CLAYDON** (Newcastle) (11:05): I'm very happy to second this important motion towards a safer family law system and reserve my right to speak.
The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The time allocated for the debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

MOTIONS

Sheean, Ordinary Seaman Edward (Teddy)

Mr BRIAN MITCHELL (Lyons) (11:06): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) in 2019 the independent 11-member Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal did unanimously recommend that the extraordinary bravery of Ordinary Seaman Edward 'Teddy' Sheean should be recognised with the posthumous awarding of the Victoria Cross; and

(b) the Government rejected the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal's unanimous recommendation; and

(2) calls on the Prime Minister to take immediate action to reverse the Government's rejection of the tribunal's recommendation, and take the actions necessary to progress the tribunal's recommendation.

The matter of whether Teddy Sheean deserves a Victoria Cross is settled. The 2019 report of the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal outlines in comprehensive and compelling detail why the Tasmanian 18-year-old should be awarded the Commonwealth's most distinguished military honour. I urge every member to read it.

The issue bedevilling the government is not whether Sheean deserves the Victoria Cross; it's about the paperwork. Defence has an internal policy that compelling new evidence or evidence of maladministration must be provided in order to consider a retrospective application for the Victoria Cross. It's a policy. The High Court has considered the matter of policy and what weight should be placed on it. It has held that, while a general policy may be taken into account, a decision-maker must not preclude themselves from considering a matter on its merits. More recently, the Federal Court also discussed the issue:

The boundary is clear: policy is not to become a rule of law. The statute is the expression of the rule of law. Executive policy cannot, in form or more importantly in substance, be perceived by decision-makers as, or operate as, a rule ...

And yet it is this policy that the Prime Minister is treating as holy writ—as a rule. He has commissioned a new panel to examine the sole question of whether the tribunal's recommendation abides by the policy. In commissioning the Nelson review, this Prime Minister has elevated an internal bureaucratic mechanism which has no legislated authority behind it above eligibility criteria which is laid out in statutes.

Let us be clear: if the Nelson review returns with a verdict that the policy has not been met then, irrespective of whether legislated eligibility criteria have been, the government will continue to block Teddy Sheean's nomination. In effect, Prime Minister Morrison is prepared to deny Teddy Sheean the Victoria Cross not because he is unworthy but because someone didn't do the paperwork. It is, frankly, inconceivable to me that any serviceman or servicewoman should ever be denied consideration for combat decoration because of bureaucratic inconvenience. The only consideration should be to assess whether action in the face of the enemy meets the eligibility criteria for the decoration in question.

And there is no doubt—none—that Teddy Sheean exceeds the requirements for the awarding of a Victoria Cross. Conspicuous gallantry in the face of the enemy: Sheean made the conscious decision to man the aft cannon rather than obey the order to abandon ship. He decided upon this action himself; he required no order. Furthermore, Sheean was ordinarily the cannon's loader, not its gunner. In strapping himself to that weapon and firing that gun, bringing down at least one enemy aircraft, he went above and beyond what was expected both of his station and of his training. Self-sacrifice: Sheean did not hesitate to place himself in mortal danger to save his shipmates from being machine-gunned in the water. Badly wounded and unable to stand, he continued firing until the Armidale sank with him below the waves.

I urge all in this place to read the stories of the 181 men who earned the Victoria Cross in World War II, and I defy anyone to say that Sheean does not deserve to be in their company. This boy who, in the last minutes of his life, personified the values of this nation—courage, mateship, a larrikin spirit and self-sacrifice—deserves better than to have his legacy held hostage by bureaucracy. It find it extraordinary that there can be such unity on the merits of Sheean's actions but such deep division over how those actions should be recognised.

In short, according to this Prime Minister and the mandarins at Defence, merit is not enough: the paperwork has to be right because, if the paperwork isn't right, it may upset the British Admiralty or perhaps the Queen herself. If we are to have a fight with the British over the awarding of the Victoria Cross for Sheean, then let's stop wasting time and have at it. The Prime Minister must abandon the folly of this panel he has announced and, instead, come into this parliament to declare that he will now advance Teddy Sheean's deserved nomination for the Victoria Cross. This entire parliament and, indeed, every man, woman and child in Australia will be behind him. Let the
British, if they dare, seek to deny our Australian son the award that he earned with his last breath and his last drop of blood. Let the British admirals sweat and worry at the thought that the Australians are coming and will not be denied.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Zimmerman):** Is the motion seconded?

**An opposition member:** I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

**Mrs ARCHER (Bass) (11:11):** Edward 'Teddy' Sheean was born in Lower Barrington on Tasmania's north-west on 28 December 1923, the youngest of the 14 children of labourer James Sheean and his wife, Mary Jane. He was educated in Latrobe before gaining casual employment on local farms—an ordinary life and not uncommon for many young men of his age at this time. Like many, Teddy heeded the call to serve his country, enlisting in the Royal Australian Naval Reserve in April 1941.

In 1942, Teddy began his service as an Oerlikon anti-aircraft gunner on the newly commissioned corvette HMAS *Armidale*. This led to an act of extraordinary courage by this young, unassuming man from rural Tasmania. Teddy Sheean's actions are well worth repeating, and the following description comes from the Australian War Memorial collection:

In October 1942 Armidale's captain, Lieutenant Commander David Richards, was ordered to Darwin and, on 29 November, the corvette began her last operation. Along with two other vessels, she was to undertake a resupply and evacuation mission to Japanese-occupied Timor.

Having been seen by Japanese reconnaissance pilots shortly after leaving the port, Armidale was destined for a dangerous journey. She and the other corvette on the operation, HMAS Castlemaine, missed the rendezvous with the third ship, in Timor's Betano Bay, but met her later some 100 kilometres off-shore. The plan having gone awry, Armidale was ordered to return to Betano the following night. Facing a long day in enemy waters and the certainty of attack, the crew waited.

When in the mid-afternoon she was hit by two aircraft-launched torpedoes, Armidale began to sink fast. Sheean was wounded and, rather than abandon ship, he strapped himself to his Oerlikon and began to engage the attacking aircraft even as the ship sank beneath him. He shot down two planes, and crewmates recall seeing tracer rising from beneath the surface as Sheean was dragged under the water, firing until the end. He died on 1 December 1942 aged just 18. Only 49 of the 149 men on board survived the attack and subsequent ordeal on rafts and in life boats.

Many of the survivors attributed their lives to Sheean's actions, and his story of incredible bravery and valour has become legendary in Tasmania. Sheean's actions were recognised with a posthumous mention in dispatches and the er 1942 aged just 18. Only 49 of the 149 men on board received recognition with a posthumous mention in dispatches and the er 1942 aged just 18. Only 49 of the 149 men on board survived the attack and subsequent ordeal on rafts and in life boats.

Let me be absolutely clear: there is no-one here—not my colleagues, nor I and certainly not the Prime Minister—who has ever disputed his valour. The Victoria Cross for Australia is our most pre-eminent Australian gallantry decoration. We must always uphold the integrity of the Victoria Cross and everything that it stands for. Today, we see a shameful display by Labor and others, playing politics for their own gain. What has transpired over the past few weeks has been nothing short of appalling. It's important to note that in January 2013, after a two-year inquiry into 13 cases of unresolved recognition for past acts of gallantry, which covered over 166 submissions from 125 individuals and organisations, the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal found that there was no manifest injustice with the award of the mention in dispatches and that there was no new evidence to support the consideration of Sheean for the Victoria Cross for Australia.

There are, clearly, different views on whether there is compelling new evidence about Sheean's actions in 1942. As the Prime Minister stated last week, overturning a decision relating to a Victoria Cross nearly 80 years after Sheean's heroic actions in 1942 would need compelling reasons. Consideration of the awarding of a retrospective Victoria Cross should only occur in light of compelling new evidence, or if there was evidence of significant maladministration. Given the differing views, the expert panel put together last week will examine all available evidence and provide advice. My colleague the member for Braddon, Gavin Pearce, an esteemed veteran himself, my Liberal Senate colleagues and I have consistently advocated for Teddy's actions to be recognised. This panel will provide rigorous examination of the evidence while also upholding the sanctity of the Victoria Cross. It provides a pathway forward that is above politics, as it should be. How terribly sad that the actions of one incredibly brave Tasmanian have so quickly become a quest for political gain by a desperate opposition grasping for relevance.

**Ms COLLINS (Franklin) (11:16):** Those of us on this side of the House are just stunned by the speech from the member for Bass, who is essentially saying, 'We think that Teddy Sheean deserves some recognition but maybe not the Victoria Cross.' Let's be very clear about this: Teddy Sheean and his family have fought for this recognition for a long time, supported by the majority of Tasmanians. This led to the Defence Honours And Awards Appeals Tribunal unanimously recommending that a Victoria Cross be awarded to Teddy, following a merits based review and hearings held in Tasmania last year. That is what has happened. And it has been the
Prime Minister and the people on that side who have made a political decision not to recommend the awarding of a Victoria Cross to Teddy Sheean. That's what's happened here. They are the ones that made this political. It is outrageous of them to come in here and accuse us, when we are standing up for a Tasmanian and his family who have been fighting for a very long time for his actions to be recognised, and recognised in a way that has happened in the past.

Let's be very clear about this. Tasmanians joined the defence forces in numbers disproportionate to our population—way above. We have a long history of disproportionate service to our nation through the defence forces. For a very small island state, we also have a disproportionate number of Victoria Cross awardees. I have quite a few in my own electorate. Tasmania has 14 Victoria Cross recipients at the moment. We should have 15, let's be clear about that. Teddy Sheean would be the 15th if the Prime Minister hadn't made a decision not to recommend the awarding of this Victoria Cross. That is the bottom line, and those on the other side need to accept that that is the bottom line.

Instead, the Prime Minister has concocted this new process, one that nobody's ever heard of before and that's never been done before. Why has he done it? That is the question. Has he done it because he can't admit he made a mistake and he wants to overturn the decision? Or has he made it because he's hoping the issue will go away and nobody will notice if, a few weeks down the track, the VC is not awarded? What is the point of this, seriously? The Prime Minister could make a decision today to overturn his previous decision and recommend the awarding of a Victoria Cross for Teddy Sheean. The Prime Minister could do that today, in line with the unanimous decision of the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal. He could do that today, but instead we've got this process. And nobody can really tell us why the Prime Minister won't just come in, admit he was wrong and change his position. That is what he should do, that is what he could do, and, indeed, that's what those of us on this side of the House and the majority of Tasmanians want him to do. We want him to come into this place and say, 'Look, I'm sorry. It should be recommended; we're going to fix it.' And then the decision is up to the British monarch once that recommendation is made. If the Queen wants to make a different decision, that is up to her, but the Australian Prime Minister has the unanimous decision of the process that has already occurred to recommend the awarding of this Victoria Cross, and the only thing stopping it is the Prime Minister proceeding with that recommendation. That is the only thing stopping this award.

Now, yes, those of us on this side of the House and particularly the member for Lyons and our senator from the north-west coast, Anne Urquhart, have been fighting very hard for Teddy Sheean for quite some time. And, yes, Anthony Albanese, as Leader the Labor Party, has written an opinion piece because he understands that a unanimous decision was made to recommend this award. Those people on that side of the House seem to pretend that that never happened. It did happen, and your government and your Prime Minister have the power in their hands to fix this today. Instead we're having this new process and we may or may not hear about the decision sometime in late July. That's not good enough, and this House should say that's not good enough. It's not good enough for the proud history of Tasmanians who have served in the Defence Force. It's not good enough for Teddy Sheean and his family, who have been fighting for this recognition. And it's not good enough to uphold the integrity of the Victoria Cross and the processes that have passed before. That is what should happen. (Time expired)

Mr PEARCE (Braddon) (11:21): The award that is the Victoria Cross is our pre-eminent award for valour. It is the highest award in the Australian honours and awards system and recognises:

… persons who, in the presence of the enemy, perform acts of the most conspicuous gallantry, or daring or pre-eminent acts of valour or self-sacrifice or display extreme devotion to duty …

That is clearly written in the procedure for awarding such an award, and I would urge all in this place to take note of procedure and the protocols that surround this sacred award. From somebody who has served more than half their life defending the nation, we look at this through a different lens. We're the ones who have had the rifle in our hands and we understand full well what the VC means. This is not a chook raffle and it shouldn't be denigrated to this place. It is not this place's role. It is indeed written in the protocol for awarding the Victoria Cross, and I would urge all to return to that.

The second thing that I would like to make very clear is the fact that I have always, along with my state colleagues, advocated for higher recognition for seaman Edward 'Teddy' Sheean. This was a young bloke who on 1 December 1942 had a way out. Contrary to some reports, he was not injured at the time that he was at the lifeboat station. This young bloke made the conscious decision to leave the sanctity and the safety of those lifeboats, return to a 20-millimetre antiaircraft weapon and shoot down a number of enemy aircraft, saving a number of his friends and his mates on that ship. He made a conscious decision to leave safety and return to danger just like so many of our young service men and women do.
I applaud the Prime Minister and cabinet's decision to have this looked at for a final time. We have conflicting reports. In fact, the first report, the Valour report of 2013, recommends that no Victoria Cross or any other valour award be awarded to Teddy Sheean. It recommends further to that that the ships HMAS Perth, Rankin, Sheean, Waller and Yarra be perpetuated in the Royal Australian Navy after their present named ships are decommissioned. This report was differed with by the final report and, as a consequence, cabinet was faced with conflicting reports.

In my opinion, the Prime Minister has taken the right decision in the formulation of the final expert panel, which will be chaired by former Minister for Defence and Director of the Australian War Memorial the Hon. Dr Brendan Nelson AO. It will also comprise former Solicitor-General Mr David Bennett AC, QC; former Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet Dr Peter Shergold AC; and senior curator and historian at the New South Wales Anzac Memorial, Mr Brad Manera. The panel will report to the Prime Minister with its findings by 31 July this year, and I look forward to those recommendations.

There is no doubt that the actions of Ordinary Seaman Edward 'Teddy' Sheean are worthy of such an award. However, it's not my place to say that; it is the findings of the tribunal. Ultimately, the Minister for Defence makes that recommendation to the Prime Minister and cabinet, and then the sovereign approves that award, which is awarded through decree by the Governor-General of Australia.

It is not this place's job to determine the merits nor the procedure. It is not this place's job to kick this around like a football or like a can down the road. It is this place's job to implore respect and honour for not only the award but the individual involved. The historic and extraordinary selfless actions of Ordinary Seaman Edward 'Teddy' Sheean cannot be denied. As an ex-serviceman, I welcome the degree of rigorous examination that this panel will no doubt give. There is not one person in this space—(Time expired)

**Dr LEIGH (Fenner) (11:26):** 'What more can you ask of a man or a boy than to give his life for his country and to save his mates.' These are the words of Garth Sheean, the brother of Ordinary Seaman Edward 'Teddy' Sheean. This is Teddy Sheean's story—a story of bravery, of sacrifice, and of underacknowledged valour.

Almost 80 years ago, at just 17 years of age, Teddy Sheean followed in his brother's footsteps and joined the Royal Australian Navy. It was there he met his mate, Able Seaman Jack Bird. The now 96-year-old Jack says Teddy Sheean 'could fight like a thrashing machine'. It was both combat and comradery that he'd be remembered for.

Less than two years after enlisting and just shy of his 19th birthday, Teddy Sheean was on board the HMAS Armidale when it was sent to the waters north of Australia. He and his crewmates were tasked with helping evacuate exhausted troops and civilians from occupied Timor. On 1 December, en route from Timor, they came under repeated attack from Japanese aircraft. For hours, they fought back.

Almost three hours later, nine bombers, three fighters and a float plane attacked the Armidale. Hit by two torpedoes and possibly a bomb, it began to sink. As men took to the life rafts, the Japanese Zetos stopped attacking the sinking ship and began strafing those in the water. Teddy Sheean was shot twice. For reasons we'll never know, he returned to his Oerlikon cannon, strapped himself in and began shooting back. As enemy aircraft fired on his friends and fellow sailors in the water, he shot down one plane and damaged two others. Crew mates recall seeing him dragged under the water, firing as he vanished under the waves.

Ordinary Seaman Russel Caro afterwards reported, 'None of us will ever know what made him do it, but he went back to his gun and strapped himself in.' Teddy died strapped to a sinking ship, hundreds of kilometres from his home in Tasmania. This is a teenager who gave his life for his friends and for his country. Forty-nine of the 149 men on board the Armidale survived the sinking and lived to be rescued—many survivors credited Teddy Sheean's actions.

Teddy Sheean's sacrifice is a reminder of all that his family lost. Speaking about Teddy Sheean, I can't help but think of my own great-grandfather Roland Stebbins who also enlisted in the Navy at age 17. In war, we ask teenagers to do extraordinary things. I'm here only because my great-grandfather came home from World War I. Many of Teddy Sheean's mates survived World War II because he did not. Just last year, when marking the anniversary of the sinking of the HMAS Armidale, the Defence Force noted:

Ordinary Seaman Sheean's bravery has become synonymous with the Navy's values of courage and loyalty.

In his funeral oration, after the first battle of the Peloponnesian War, Pericles spoke of those whose test of worth was to be found in their closing scene—soldiers who 'reckoning this to be the most glorious of hazards, joyfully determined to accept the risk'. Such warriors, said Pericles, received that 'renown that never grows old', the glory 'to be eternally remembered'. Heroes, he said, 'have the whole earth for their tomb'.

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**CHAMBER**
Many have told Teddy Sheean's story to their children. In 1999 a submarine was named after him. The war memorial holds a painting depicting his final moments, but he never received a Victoria Cross.

Victoria Crosses are forged from bronze taken from captured 19th century cannons and inscribed with 'For Valour'. Teddy Sheean's extraordinary valour merits the award, and there's something particularly apt about a man who took to the guns to defend his mates now posthumously receiving an award cast from the barrel of a cannon.

Garry Ivory has led the family campaign to see his uncle get a VC for more than 25 years. He said:

There's a lot of tributes been paid to Teddy, but the VC is what he deserved …

Last year the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal unanimously recommended it. And it's not just Labor; Liberal Guy Barnett has backed the campaign too. It should have happened when Teddy Sheean's parents were alive to see it, but it's time now we acknowledge Teddy Sheean's heroism in the greatest way our country knows. It's time his valour was recognised with a Victoria Cross.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Zimmerman):** The time allocated for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

**United States of America**

*Mrs McIntosh* (Lindsay) (11:31): I move:

That this House:

(1) acknowledges that this year marks the 80th anniversary of the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between the Commonwealth of Australia and the United States of America;

(2) recognises the diplomatic relationship is the foundation of the broader strategic, defence and economic partnerships between Australia and the United States;

(3) acknowledges the:

(a) significance of the recent state dinner between President Trump and Prime Minister Morrison on 20 September 2019; and

(b) appointment of United States Ambassador to Australia, Mr Arthur Culvahouse Jnr, on 19 February 2019;

(4) encourages that the anniversary be a reaffirmation of our shared commitment to promote and uphold democratic values, freedoms and the rule of law at home and abroad;

(5) further acknowledges that a strong, bilateral relationship is vital for our continued shared economic prosperity and national security, as Australia and the United States:

(a) face increasingly complex and frequent threats that aim to undermine the integrity of democratic institutions and national sovereignty; and

(b) share the benefits of a robust trade and investment relationship valued at US $1.1 trillion that creates and sustains jobs; and

(6) commemorates the bravery, service and sacrifice of United States firefighters Captain Ian H MacBeth, First Officer Paul Clyde Hudson, and Flight Engineer Rick A DeMorgan Jr who tragically lost their lives while fighting bushfires in the Snowy Monaro area, New South Wales, on 23 January 2020.

Former President Theodore Roosevelt said that the greatest prize in life is a chance to work hard at work worth doing. This year marks the 80th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Australia and the United States. It is worth acknowledging and celebrating, because, for 80 years, Australians and Americans have been working hard at work worth doing: creating, maintaining, strengthening and deepening the diplomatic relationship between our two nations.

While our shared history dates back more than 80 years, it is important that we recognise the significance of the diplomatic ties that bind us and provide the foundation upon which to build the great successes of our bilateral relationship. I speak a great deal in this place about aspiration—the aspiration I see each and every day in my electorate of Lindsay. People in our community are driven to create a better life for themselves and their families, driven to support each other and driven to make Western Sydney a great place to live, work and stay. We share this aspiration with our American friends—it's what makes our relationship thrive.

In so many of our nations' successes we have been at each other's sides, from the great Australian general Sir John Monash, who commanded 50,000 US soldiers as they scored a decisive victory breaching the Hindenburg Line in World War I, to the station at Honeysuckle Creek in New South Wales as the world held its breath, broadcasting Neil Armstrong taking his historic first steps on the moon.

Our relationship is not just one for those great achievements but also for our darkest days. In September of 2001, I was meant to be heading to New York for a business trip, booked in to stay at the Twin Towers. My trip was cancelled merely days in advance of 11 September. Instead of being in those towers, I watched on in horror from an office in Sydney, wondering what might have been. Wounded and torn, the United States could then and
could always rely on Australia. The challenges we face today with the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, as difficult as they have been from a health perspective, have also helped us identify both our countries' keen interest in strengthening our supply chains. We have a shared focus on advanced manufacturing. I think there is so much we can do to learn together and to boost capacity for both our countries. I'm doing this in my electorate of Lindsay, with a Lindsay Jobs of the Future Forum and an advancing manufacturing task force. I think educating our kids in both our countries and sharing our experiences is key to success in the future.

This is exactly what my former workplace, the United States Studies Centre at the University of Sydney, was tasked to do by my former boss Prime Minister John Howard back in 2006—to deepen Australia's understanding and relationship with the United States, particularly through education. This is why I established at the centre a think tank program on women's economic empowerment and leadership and worked with world-leading academics from the US on projects. Today it is women that have been hit hardest economically by the coronavirus pandemic.

While our two countries still have quite a lot to achieve in this space, I would like to acknowledge my friend and senator for Western Sydney, Minister for Foreign Affairs and also Minister for Women, Marise Payne, for the outstanding work she's doing in this space during these challenging times for both our countries. I would also like to acknowledge the US Ambassador to Australia, Arthur B Culvahouse Jr, who shares our commitment to the 'unbreakable alliance' and who in his words understands that his position is 'not a diplomatic assignment but a sacred trust'. I know the ambassador and I share a strong interest in supply chains, and we have discussed the importance of backing our manufacturing through advanced manufacturing opportunities.

While it is important to acknowledge our strengths and aspirations for the future, we must also not shy away from our challenges and our past. The last few weeks have been very difficult for many Americans and Australians. I want to echo the sentiment of the Minister for Indigenous Australians, Ken Wyatt, who said: … through genuine partnerships we can continue to protect and enhance culture, unlock opportunity and build a brighter, more prosperous future for Indigenous Australians.

(Time expired)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Vamvakinou): Is there a seconder for the motion?

Mr Hastie: Yes, I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

Mr Byrne (Holt) (11:37): I rise to support the motion of the member for Lindsay, noting that this year marks the 80th anniversary of the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between Australia and the United States. For me in particular, reflecting on this relationship, I want to acknowledge Prime Minister John Curtin and some words that he said in the darkest days of our nation's history in 1941 and 1942. I am from the party that I believe gave the nation one of its greatest treasures, which is John Curtin, a humble man who stood tall and proud for our country in the darkest days of World War II. He stood tall. He stood for our nation alongside giants such as Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt. Our Prime Minister, who was described as a one-time mild-mannered trade unionist, addressed his nation's first direct radio broadcast from Canberra to American citizens on Friday 14 March 1942. Praising the American people during peak-hour broadcasting, Prime Minister Curtin spoke of their shared commitment to total warfare and the importance of preserving Australia as a democratic bastion between the United States west coast and the then Axis enemies. 'I say to you,' he said, 'that the saving of Australia is the saving of America's west coast.' He also said:

I speak to you from Australia. I speak from a united people to a united people, and my speech is aimed to serve all the people of the nations united in the struggle to save mankind.

He said:

Our legislature is elected the same as is yours; and we will fight for it, and for the right to have it, just as you will fight to keep the Capitol at Washington the meeting place of freely-elected men and women representative of a free people.

Those words, in my mind, cemented this great bond that exists between Australia and the United States, a bond that's been forged in blood, a bond that has been forged with lives—Australian lives and American lives.

Collectively, the United States and Australia have worked to protect democracy when it has been under attack, be it in Afghanistan or in other theatres. We've worked together to combat that threat, as nations that share strong values. I have been to the United States on several occasions. I note that the Chair of the Intelligence and Security Committee is here as well, and he'll talk more about our intelligence relationship. One thing that strikes me is that these are not formal relationships. These are bonds of friendship, of shared values, of a shared sense of purpose, of shared support for each other, of a shared sense of mission.

We can see, as we mark the 80th anniversary of our relationship with the United States in a formal sense, that those values for which we have fought for a long period of time are under threat. Democracy is being challenged...
aggressively by adversaries, by great powers, that are seeking to reshape the world order. From my perspective, as someone who is a strong supporter of the United States alliance with Australia, I would like to see the United States more involved in world fora. The Americans cop a lot of criticism. I'm always interested in the criticism that's provided by those of the United States about its role in the world, about what it does.

I reflect, when I think about that, about America and its plan after the Second World War to rehabilitate Europe through the Marshall Plan—its plan to help reconstruct Japan after the Second World War. These are the actions of a great power that sought to insert itself in the world order as a force for good. I'd like to see that force for good continue. Australia and the world needs America to be completely participating in these international fora, and I encourage discussion that America continue the strong role it's played from the 20th century to the 21st century.

Mr HASTIE (Canning) (11:42): I rise today to second the motion put by the honourable member for Lindsay and I congratulate her, as a long-time champion of the Australia-US alliance, on this initiative. She is someone who understands the importance of relationships at the local level as well as at the strategic level, and it's worth reflecting on our deep and abiding relationship with the United States, not just as a security partner but also as a trading partner and as someone who shares the common values that we hold dear as democracies.

This motion is especially timely in the year of the 80th anniversary of the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between the Commonwealth of Australia and the United States of America. This relationship, this friendship, this union of nations is built, firstly, on a shared set of values—a common commitment to democracy, to the rule of law and to upholding the dignity of individuals, no matter who they are. In our way of life, minority voices are protected and upheld no matter how disagreeable they might be to us. But this is no easy task for two of the world's oldest democracies, and it's one that we must refresh every single day. We live in an imperfect world inhabited by imperfect people. Therefore, democracies cannot afford to take for granted our freedoms, our political institutions and the relationships that we enjoy. Against the backdrop of a strategic setting increasingly shaped by revisionist and expansionist authoritarian powers, it's time for democracies like the United States and Australia to close ranks, to not come apart. It's a time to affirm our shared values and not focus on our differences.

And it's a time to strengthen those cords of connection that bind us, whether they be political, cultural, diplomatic or economic, or those that secure our shared commonwealths.

A great Australian, the Governor of Western Australia, the Hon. Kim Beazley, a man better known for deeds in the House, last year answered a sceptic of the US alliance by saying, 'If you want to understand the Australia-US Alliance, go granular, look at it in detail.' So let's look closely at the relationship. We can look at the Marine Rotational Force in Darwin, which was established first in 2012 under Prime Minister Gillard with only 200 Marines and which now has a force of 2,500 Marines that rotate through Darwin. Surely, that is a sign that we have a very close relationship from a security perspective. Look at Joint Defence Facility Pine Gap near Alice Springs, where a huge number of Australians and US personnel work together to secure the interests not only of our two countries but also of our allies. Look at the number of exchange programs across defence, intelligence and law enforcement between Australian and US personnel.

Look at our recent military history in Afghanistan. It was US helicopters and crew who flew us on missions. It was US helicopters and crew who gave us close air support. It was US helicopters and crew who airlifted our wounded and dead from the battlefields. Personally, I know that on every single mission I led I planned our flight path through the Afghan valleys with US pilots and air crew. Whilst this is a great thing, it perhaps reflects poorly on our Defence Force that during that whole war we never deployed our Tiger aircraft nor our Black Hawks, but that's another story altogether.

The point is, if you want to understand the strength of our alliance, go granular. You will find networks of like-minded people committed to the same causes, working in dangerous places, sometimes under immense pressure, to secure our mutual interests. Our uniformed men and women have been doing this since Australia-US troops first came under fire at the Battle of Hamel in 1918 on the Western Front. We fought together through two world wars. It was the United States who had our backs in the battles of Coral Sea and Midway and in the Pacific War. The Australian-American Memorial at the end of Kings Avenue on Russell Hill bears testament to our relationship during the Pacific War. It was paid for and erected by previous generations of Australians who recognised the sacrifice of US personnel to protect Australia from Japanese ambitions in the Pacific.

Our security relationship is just one part of our very large relationship with the United States. Our economic ties are huge. The Alcoa refineries and mines in my electorate, which have created thousands of jobs over the last 50 years, are just one small aspect of that relationship. Today I support this motion.

Mr DICK (Oxley) (11:47): This morning I'm honoured to speak on the 80th anniversary of the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between the Commonwealth of Australia and the United States. I do so in a bipartisan manner, in response to the motion moved by the member for Lindsay. I thank her for the opportunity to
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raise my voice in support of the Australia-US Alliance. As the world continues to unfold from the effects of coronavirus and with an economy that will take time to recover, Australia remains grateful for and committed to its strong alliance with the United States. There are strong formal structures of cooperation between Australia and the United States, spanning foreign policy, strategic defence and security, intelligence development, energy, environment, education, law, trade and investment. In today's remarks, I will highlight the wonderful opportunities between our two countries, especially in relation to my home state of Queensland.

We know that Australia and the United States established diplomatic relations on 8 January 1940, following the establishment of Australian and US diplomatic representations in March and July, respectively, in 1940. In today's motion, I also want to acknowledge the achievements of Mr Arthur Culverhouse Jr, who was appointed the United States Ambassador to Australia in February 2019, and place on record the great work he has done to achieve partnership between our two great countries in a short time. I am yet to have the pleasure of meeting Ambassador Culverhouse, but I look forward to doing so as restrictions are eased.

Over the last 12 months, Australia welcomed—before COVID-19—815,000 visitors, including tourists from the USA, to our great country and we are grateful for the economic benefit this has brought to Australia, particularly to the tourism sector in my home state of Queensland.

The United States is the largest foreign direct investor in Australia, making up 22 per cent of the FDI stock in Australia, with two-way investment reaching $1.6 trillion in 2017. The US was also Australia's third-largest trading partner in 2018-19, with $76.4 billion in two-way goods and services and trade, only after China and Japan. Alongside this, exports and imports have increased fivefold since 1985.

One of the areas that has exploded greatly has been the entertainment industry, which has seen a great deal of benefit from this strong relationship. A growing number of Australians in the entertainment industry are taking on starring and supporting roles on American movie and television screens, with—I'm proud to see—many winning great awards.

In my home state of Queensland, the Queensland government, led by Annastacia Palaszczuk, has gone to enormous lengths to create thousands of jobs and boost the Queensland economy by attracting films from the USA to be filmed in Queensland—a little known secret, but it's paying huge dividends in my home state.

Established in 2015, the Queensland government's production attraction agency has brought over 4,800 employment opportunities for cast and crew and has lured some of the world's biggest blockbusters to Queensland, as part of what is now known as a billion dollar industry. Famous films include Thor, the upcoming Dora the Explorer and DC Comic's film Aquaman, which is the highest grossing Extended Universe film and surpassed $1 billion at the global box office. This film not only promoted world-class facilities in Australia but injected $144 million into the local economy and employed more than 1,700 local cast and crew.

This year the 80th anniversary is a great reminder to us about the shared commitment to promote and uphold democratic values, freedom and shared interest in economic growth, in particular to growing new economies. In 2018 Australia and the United States marked a centenary of mateship. We've just heard from the member for Canning about a friendship first formed in the trenches of World War I.

The strong relationship between America and Australia has been seen in countless efforts over the years. This year, on 23 January, three American firefighters died after a C-130 water tanker aircraft crashed while battling a blaze in southern New South Wales. Captain Ian McBeth, First Officer Paul Clive Hudson and flight engineer Rick A DeMorgan Jr. risked their lives for the safety of Australians. These brave and selfless men risked and ultimately gave their lives while trying to protect others. This is the definition of mateship. That is the spirit which has joined our two countries together: the spirit which is selfless, brave and courageous and one that is willing to, ultimately, give up your life for your mate. This is the true definition of our alliance.

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEES

Regional Australia Select Committee

Reporting Date

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie—Assistant Minister for Community Housing, Homelessness and Community Services) (11:53): On behalf of the Deputy Prime Minister, I move:

That the resolution of appointment of the House Select Committee on Regional Australia be amended to replace 'final report no later than 31 July 2020' in paragraph 2 with 'final report no later than 31 March 2021'.

Question agreed to.
Northern Australia Committee
Membership

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Vamvakinou) (11:53): The Speaker has received messages from the Senate informing the House that Senator Waters has been discharged from the Joint Standing Committee on Northern Australia and Senator Siewert has been appointed a member of the committee.

BILLS

Commonwealth Registers Bill 2019
Treasury Laws Amendment (Registries Modernisation and Other Measures) Bill 2019
Business Names Registration (Fees) Amendment (Registries Modernisation) Bill 2019
Corporations (Fees) Amendment (Registries Modernisation) Bill 2019
National Consumer Credit Protection (Fees) Amendment (Registries Modernisation) Bill 2019
Health Insurance Amendment (General Practitioners and Quality Assurance) Bill 2020

Returned from Senate
Messages received from the Senate returning the bills without amendment.

Treasury Laws Amendment (2019 Measures No. 3) Bill 2019

Consideration of Senate Message

Bill returned from the Senate with amendments.
Ordered that the amendments be considered immediately.

Senate’s amendments—

(1) Clause 2, page 2 (at the end of the table), add:

8. Schedule 4 The day after this Act receives the Royal Assent.

(2) Page 71 (after line 3), at the end of the bill, add:

Schedule 4—Financial reporting obligations for large proprietary companies
Part 1—Repeal of instrument
ASIC Corporations (Exempt Proprietary Companies) Instrument 2015/840
1 The whole of the instrument
Repeal the instrument.
Part 2—Grandfathered exemption
Corporations Act 2001
2 Subsection 1408(6) (table item 7)
Repeal the table item.
Part 3—Application
3 Application
(1) This item applies to a company if, immediately before the commencement of this item, the company was exempted from complying with subsection 319(1) of the Corporations Act 2001 by the ASIC Corporations (Exempt Proprietary Companies) Instrument 2015/840.
(2) Despite the amendments made by Parts 1 and 2, that exemption continues to apply to the company in relation to the 2019-20 financial year.

4 Instruments that provide relief from requirements of Corporations Act—Lodgment of annual reports by large proprietary companies
(1) Despite anything contained in the Corporations Act 2001, ASIC may not make a legislative instrument, however described, if that legislative instrument would have the effect of relieving the class of companies referred to in subitem (2) of the requirement to comply with subsection 319(1) of the Act for a financial year.
(2) The class of companies is the class of large proprietary companies that was relieved from the requirement to comply with subsection 319(1) of the Corporations Act 2001 due to the operation of the ASIC Corporations (Exempt Proprietary Companies) Instrument 2015/840 as in force immediately before the commencement of this Schedule.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Vamvakinou): I understand it is the wish of the House to consider the amendments together. I call the minister.

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie—Assistant Minister for Community Housing, Homelessness and Community Services) (11:55): I move:
That the amendments be disagreed to.

The government does not support this last-minute amendment to an unrelated bill prior to the government's response to the relevant Senate committee's report being considered. Accordingly, the coalition does not accept this amendment.

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Whitlam) (11:55): We're calling on all members of this House to support the amendments. They're considered amendments, and they are important amendments. For the life of me, I don't know why the government hasn't explained why they won't be supporting them. Let me go to the details. The Senate, when it considered this bill on Friday, moved a series of amendments which would remove an anomaly in the corporations legislation that enables approximately 1,000 large proprietary companies to avoid the obligation of reporting and providing those reports to the Australian Securities and Investments Commission. This is a carry-over from the original incorporations arrangements dating back to the mid-1990s. At the time that the grandfathered arrangements were put in place, it was actually a Liberal member in the other place who pointed out these should be a short-term arrangement, and that there should be a review conducted by the Australian Securities and Investments Commission. It was the expectation of all members that these exclusions would be removed from the law over time.

When this matter was debated in the other place, the minister was invited on a number of occasions to explain to the Senate and to the Australian people the public interest case for this exemption. Not on one occasion but on several occasions it was put squarely to the minister to explain what the public interest case is for these exemptions. It was pointed out that, of the long list of companies that are covered by this exemption, quite a number of them are donors to the Liberal Party. I don't say that that is the reason that the government is today so adamantly resisting these amendments. But it does raise a question about why the government does not accept what on the face of it is a very sensible amendment.

It's not just the Labor Party and it's not just the crossbenchers who have thrown their support behind these amendments. In fact, in the Senate Standing Committee on Economics inquiry into tax avoidance and minimisation, the Australian Securities and Investments Commission itself has recommended that these amendments should be removed. In its submission to that inquiry, No. 32, ASIC pointed out that these amendments really had no further work to do, and that they in fact created an inequity between certain forms of incorporated businesses. There is an important point here. When public companies produce reports on their financial arrangements and lodge them with the Australian Securities and Investments Commission, not only does it make that information available to the public at large but it also enables the Australian Securities and Investments Commission and the Australian Taxation Office to ensure that all affairs are in order in relation to taxation payments. A lack of financial transparency is one of the mechanisms by which large corporates in this country are able to avoid paying tax. So, if the minister and the government are opposing these amendments, it's important that they explain why. They should explain to the Australian people why it is more important to continue an outdated protection for around 1,000 large proprietary companies, many of whom are political donors. Why is it more important that those companies continue to enjoy that exclusion from the reporting requirements?

If they vote against these provisions today, they are saying quite clearly that those other provisions of the bill which go to providing relief to financial advisers are less important to members of the Liberal Party—that it is less important to members of the Liberal Party to provide the relief in relation to professional qualifications than it is for them to continue to protect the interests and the lack of transparency for these large proprietary companies. It's up to members of the Liberal Party to make the case as to why this should continue. They've failed to do it to date.

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (12:00): The Treasury Laws Amendment (2019 Measures No. 3) Bill 2019 is a sensible amendment. It will increase transparency and consistency in our corporations law. The amendment, of course, removes the exemption that allows certain proprietary companies to avoid lodging financial reports with ASIC under our corporations law. This is a regime that was put in place in 1995, and it was only ever meant to be a temporary regime. It wasn't meant to be a lasting legacy around transparency and accountability in our corporations law. It does provide an exemption to some of the wealthiest individuals in the country who run private proprietary companies so they can avoid that transparency and accountability. Any company established since 1995 is required to lodge their financial reports with ASIC.

When Labor was last in government we established the new transparency and accountability regime relating to proprietary companies and their taxation affairs, and that was established to ensure that all Australians had an indication and the facts about the amount of tax and the turnover of very large companies that were avoiding transparency and accountability because they simply weren't required to report on an annual basis what their turnover and their taxation arrangements were. We put that regime in place and we attempted to remove the exemption for the companies that we're talking about here—that is, those that had a turnover of more than $100
million per annum. That would have increased transparency and accountability around the taxation affairs of those companies. More Australians would have known how much tax some of those companies were paying.

Some of this regime has survived. Some of it was watered down by the coalition government when they teamed up with the Greens to reduce the number of companies that were covered by that particular provision. It's quite interesting reading, when those figures come out on an annual basis, because they uncover the fact that there are quite a number of large proprietary companies in this country that have multibillion-dollar turnovers but pay no tax at all in Australia. Australian society is not benefitting from the wealth that's generated for these proprietary companies in our community. When the coalition was elected, as I mentioned, they reversed some of the changes that were made by the Labor Party and they did it on the basis of some outrageous claims, one of those being that there would be an increase in kidnappings if this particular provision remained in our corporations law.

We all know the term 'astroturfing'. In politics it's a term that refers to creating a false impression that there's a grounds swell of community support for a particular issue, and when we look behind it we see that it's being driven by certain MPs and certain individuals who stand to benefit from the particular issue being pushed. A great example of astroturfing, if you were to look up the word in the dictionary, should be the coalition's response to Labor's laws on transparency and accountability around taxation, because their claims about kidnapping and the other evils that would come from this particular law if it remained in place simply weren't there. It was a made up campaign by those opposite who were seeking particularly to support big businesses in this country that were avoiding their obligations to report the amount of tax that they pay.

The average Australian worker can't do that. The average Australian worker who goes to work on a daily basis, works hard and pays their PAYG tax can't avoid that transparency; they can't avoid having to pay their fair share of tax in this country. Why should big proprietary companies do so? That's why this amendment is a sensible amendment. It adds transparency and accountability to Australia's taxation system for some of the biggest corporate players in this country. That's why all MPs should be voting for that increased transparency and accountability.

Ms SHARKIE (Mayo) (12:05): I wish to speak briefly on this amendment that originated from my Centre Alliance colleague Senator Rex Patrick. I think Senator Patrick must be commended for identifying this longstanding inequity in our tax system that has created and then protected a privileged class of exceptionally wealthy Australians and their private companies. These private companies are benefitting from an unfair loophole that allows them, and only them, the special privilege of not having to lodge reports with the government regulator, the Australian Securities and Investments Commission. This creates an unfair two-tier system where transparency and accountability are applied to most but are absent for a special select few. The ASIC is on the record: it supports the removal of this exemption. A fundamental aspect of the rule of law and, indeed, democracy is that we should all be treated equally before the law. It is such a fundamental principle that it finds its origins in Solon's laws in ancient Athenian democracy in the sixth century BC. And yet, in this place, we're allowing a two-tier system. It's time for the government to prove that they stand for democratic equality before the law and not for special deals for mates. I can't think of a single reason why any member on the other side of the chamber would not vote for this amendment. So I call on the House to support the amended bill from the Senate.

Dr LEIGH (Fenner) (12:07): Louis Brandeis famously said that sunlight is the best disinfectant, and the issue we're facing here is squarely an issue of sunlight. As the member for Mayo has highlighted, it's also an issue of consistency. Why should a company that was formed before 1995 be treated differently to a company formed after 1995? The coalition likes to talk about new businesses and about the importance of level playing fields. Well, this is the very antithesis of that. This is advantaging older businesses and it's tilting the playing field towards them. Why should 1,500 firms that were established before 1995 have access to a different transparency regime than every other private firm? It makes no sense whatsoever and it is a bizarre quirk of history.

As the member for Whitlam and the member for Kingsford Smith have outlined, the grandfathering provision was put in place in 1995. It was intended to be temporary. But the next year the Howard government won office and made a temporary grandfathering measure permanent. We're now 25 years on. The grandfather has become a great-grandfather, and it is time to get rid of it. Labor supported the removal of this grandfathering provision in 2015 when former Senator Ricky Muir, backed by Nick Xenophon, moved it. I note in passing that at the time the Greens did not support that measure in the Senate. In 2018 the Greens had had a change of heart and moved for the abolition of this exemption. Labor, again, consistently supported it.

I note, as other members have said, that ASIC supports the removal of this exemption. How could they not? It is a simple matter of consistency. The private companies on this list are not tiddlywink firms; some of them are significant entities. As a Guardian report from 2018 highlighted, a sixth of them are government contractors or political donors. It is only right that they should be subject to the same reporting regimes that a new firm has to sign up for. As a matter of consistency and basic ethics, it makes no sense whatsoever to allow these firms to hide
under the cloak of darkness. Firms can't even get themselves off this list if they want to. Former Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull reportedly attempted to get one of his companies off the list of 1,500 and was unable to do so. It is a bizarre anomaly, intended to exist for a few years in the 1990s, which persists on the books of our tax laws today.

Labor's stance in favour of transparency on this issue is consistent with our fighting for tax transparency across the board. As the member for Kingsford Smith has noted, it was Labor who put in place tax transparency for Australian firms, saying that firms with a turnover of over $100 million should be required to disclose through the ATO total income, taxable income and tax paid. But that was wound back for two-thirds of private companies by a dodgy deal between the Liberals and the Greens that took two-thirds of the large private firms out of the tax transparency net. The Liberals have some made bizarre claims over the years about the impact of transparency, suggesting that it would cause kidnap risk—suggesting that it would somehow cause a flight away from private firms. I haven't seen any evidence that that has come to pass with the firms that have been disclosed. That is why Labor took to the last election a policy to restore the $100 million threshold for private firms.

We also took to the last election policies to make country-by-country reporting public; to offer US-style rewards for whistleblowers who report entities evading tax to the tax office; to require that if a firm is doing business in a tax haven it disclose that matter to its investors as a material tax risk; and that a firm that wants a government contract should disclose, through the tendering process, its country of tax domicile, so we can ensure that firms that are located in tax havens disclose that to the Australian public. We required public reporting of AUSTRAC data showing aggregated cash flows sent to overseas jurisdictions, including tax havens, and that the dodgy phoenix directors be named and charged. Labor stands for tax transparency.

Dr MULINO (Fraser) (12:12): Thank you for the opportunity to speak today in support of this very sensible amendment. Before speaking specifically on the amendment, can I make a couple of observations about the Treasury Laws Amendment (2019 Measures No. 3) Bill 2019. This is yet another bill in relation to taxation that we face in this place that is not particularly objectionable but that is incredibly narrow, unambitious and just not good enough for the circumstances that we face.

As earlier speakers on this side—the shadow Assistant Treasurer, the member for Kingsford Smith and the member for Fenner—have pointed out, there are many significant issues that no bills that we face in this place deal with. Not only is this bill a bill which fails to deal with an inconsistent exclusion—I'll get to that when I talk about the amendment—but this is a bill that's failed to deal with broader issues of transparency. As the member for Fenner just pointed out and the member for Kingsford Smith pointed out, there are issues to do with international taxation that we should be looking at in this place. Base erosion and profit shifting is a major issue for the Australian economy and all advanced economies. These are issues that we should be debating in this place, but instead we get bill after bill after bill which corrects semicolons, and it's not good enough. The people of Australia and the economy of Australia deserve better.

The OECD and the G20 have set up a major program with 135 participating countries developing 15 actions—a major suite of policies to deal with base erosion and profit shifting. We don't discuss any of that in this place in relation to specific bills—substantive bills—that are put forward. Instead, we deal with minor technical amendment after minor technical amendment. We're happy to support those going through if tweaking the tax bills are necessary, but what we also need to see in addition to fixing up minor technical issues with taxation legislation are substantive framework issues to improve the tax base, to improve the efficiency of our tax system. Let's look at the specific amendment that Rex Patrick has put forward and that I will also speak in support of. Rex Patrick's amendment removes an exemption that allows certain proprietary companies to avoid lodging financial reports with ASIC.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Vamvakinou): Minister, on a point of order?

Mr Howarth: The member needs to refer to senators by their correct titles.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Will the member for Fraser refer to members—

Dr MULINO: I will refer to Senator Patrick in the future by his name.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you.

Dr MULINO: I love the fact that those opposite aren't speaking at all on the substance of this. The only contribution in Hansard on this debate from those opposite will be correcting the reference to the senator. That's fine; I will refer to the senator by his name.

Mr Howarth interjecting—

Dr MULINO: I look forward to seeing the strong defence from the assistant minister opposite on why this exemption should continue. I look forward to seeing a very strong defence from him on that.
As the shadow Assistant Treasurer pointed out, there is a strong onus on those opposite to explain why this exemption should continue. It is an exemption that doesn't make any sense. It is an exemption that was only meant to be temporary, but it's 25 years later and we are still discussing it.

As earlier speakers on this side have pointed out, in government we proposed getting rid of companies with turnovers of more than $100 million from this list. The coalition in concert with the Greens overturned that change on the basis that it could lead to kidnapping or other unintended consequences. Well, if that is a genuine argument in favour of the exemption, one has to wonder why it applies to only a subset of companies that managed to somehow fall into this exemption prior to 1995 but not those after. Presumably kidnappers are somehow aware of when companies fell into or out of this exemption. This is a group of kidnappers who are extremely familiar with corporation regulations and have easy access to ASIC records. It is a bizarre argument.

Frankly, it is a two-tiered system that no longer works. The member for Mayo pointed out that where you have a two-tiered system there has to be a very good reason for it. Surely the presumption in our tax laws, as in any laws, should be that everyone is treated equally. This is an exemption that was only meant to be temporary. It is an exemption that should be removed. It is an exemption that is resulting in a whole raft of companies not being subject to the transparency that companies as a whole are. Transparency, it has been shown, is one of the key regulatory mechanisms that underpin the effectiveness of regulating our financial services sector. The banking royal commission, which we had called for 28 times before it finally arrived, showed that. It is time that the law reflects the benefits of transparency by removing this exemption.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the amendments be disagreed to.

The House divided. [12:22]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ......................55
Noes ......................53
Majority ................2

AYES

Allen, K
Andrews, KL
Bell, AM
Chester, D
Connelly, V
Drum, DK (teller)
Entsch, WG
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hawke, AG
Joyce, BT
Leeser, J
Littleproud, D
Martin, FB
McIntosh, MI
O’Brien, T
Pearce, GB
Porter, CC
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Sharma, DN
Stevens, J
Taylor, AJ
Thompson, P
van Manen, AJ
Wallace, AB
Wicks, LE
Wilson, TR
Young, T

NOES

Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP
Bowen, CE
Burney, LJ
Butler, MC
Chalmers, JE

Aly, A
Bird, SL
Burke, AS
Burns, J
Butler, TM
Chesters, LM
Monday, 15 June 2020

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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NOES

Clare, JD  Claydon, SC
Coker, EA  Collins, JM
Conroy, PM  Dick, MD
Dreyfus, MA  Elliot, MJ
Fitzgibbon, JA  Gorman, P
Gosling, LJ  Haines, H
Hayes, CP  Hill, JC
Husic, EN  Jones, SP
Katter, RC  Kearney, G
Keogh, MJ  King, CF
Marles, RD  Mitchell, BK
Mulino, D  Murphy, PJ
O'Connor, BPJ  Perrett, GD
Phillips, FE  Plibersek, TJ
Rishworth, AL  Ryan, JC (teller)
Sharkie, RCC  Shorten, WR
Smith, DPB  Stanley, AM (teller)
Steggall, Z  Templeman, SR
Thistlethwaite, MJ  Thwaites, KL
Watts, TG  Wells, AS
Wilkie, AD

PAIRS

Alexander, JG  Byrne, AM
Buchholz, S  Champion, ND
Christensen, GR  Freelander, MR
Coleman, DB  Georganas, S
Evans, TM  Giles, AJ
Flint, NJ  Khalil, P
Goodenough, IR  King, MMH
Hastie, AW  Leigh, AK
Hogan, KJ  McBride, EM
Howarth, LR  Mitchell, RG
Irons, SJ  Neumann, SK
Laming, A  Payne, AE
Landry, ML  Owens, JA
Marino, NB  Rowland, MA
McVeigh, JJ  Snowdon, WE
Morton, B  Swanson, MJ
O'Brien, LS  O'Neil, CE
O'Dowd, KD  Vamvakinou, M
Wood, JP  Wilson, JH
Zimmerman, T  Zappia, A

Question agreed to.

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie—Assistant Minister for Community Housing, Homelessness and Community Services) (12:26): I present the reasons for the House disagreeing to the Senate amendments and I move:

That the reasons be adopted.

Question agreed to.

COMMITTEES

Health, Aged Care and Sport Committee

Report

Mr ZIMMERMAN (North Sydney) (12:27): On behalf of the Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport I present the committee's report entitled Walking the allergy tightrope: addressing the rise of allergies and anaphylaxis in Australia together with the minutes of proceedings

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

Mr ZIMMERMAN: by leave—Today I present the report of the Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport entitled Walking the allergy tightrope: addressing the rise of allergies and anaphylaxis in Australia. Australia has been called the world's allergy capital because of the high prevalence rates of allergies in Australia, and it's on the rise. In fact, it is estimated that allergies now affect one in five Australians. It's not a title any nation
would aspire to, because, while allergies can be mild for some people, for many others they can be both life-threatening and extremely debilitating.

During this inquiry we heard from those with direct experience living with allergies, from those who have lost loved ones to Australians who live every day in trepidation either for themselves or for their children. We heard of lives that were forever shaped by the shadow of allergies and anaphylaxis. That's why this inquiry was so important, and I want to start by thanking all of those who, either through their submissions or at the public hearings, shared their experience—particularly the mums, who seem to do the heavy lifting when it comes to advocacy. Their testimony moved the committee and made us more resolute in understanding the importance of our task.

Allergic disease includes several different conditions, the most common of which are food allergies and drug allergies. Other allergies, including eczema, hay fever, hives, allergic asthma, insect bite and sting allergies and latex allergy, were also considered by the committee. Anaphylaxis is the most severe form of allergic reaction and is life threatening if not immediately treated. The reason for the rise in allergies is the subject of intense research and speculation, but there is no one answer or even agreed certainty about the causes. Theories range from the germ hypothesis—have we sanitised our lives to the point where we have weakened the maturing of our immune systems?—through to vitamin D deficiency. Our experience in seeing the growth of allergies is not globally unique and does seem to be more pronounced in wealthier nations like our own.

Australia is currently a world leader in allergy research, but further research is necessary in order to understand and treat allergic disease. This report recommends the establishment of a national centre for allergies and anaphylaxis to undertake research on current and emerging allergies and to establish a national register for anaphylaxis and drug allergies.

The report makes 24 recommendations in total about how we can improve the support given to people who are living with allergies. In addition to increasing our research capacity and knowledge base, some of our key priorities include improving access to specialists and training for the medical workforce to overcome the unacceptably long delays faced by many individuals and families in receiving diagnosis and treatment. Too many Australians, including infants, are waiting months and in fact years for the most basic assessment by a specialist in the public health system.

The second priority is improving financial support for those with severe allergies and their carers, including by ensuring appropriate MBS items for food challenges, access and carer payments. Third is improving food labelling. So many times we heard from parents about the nightmare of simply going to a supermarket when your child's life could be at risk from one misstep in the shopping trolley. Better food labelling is basic but vital. The fourth is addressing the occasional but worrying shortages that Australians face in the supply of EpiPens, a product that is the first line of defence for someone experiencing an anaphylactic attack. The fifth is ensuring support for the treatment of insect and other allergies, including tick allergies and, unique to our country, jack jumper ant allergies. Finally is better management of drug allergies, including ensuring that drug allergies are not being overdiagnosed, resulting in constraining treatment options for patients.

During the inquiry many individuals, especially parents of children living with food-related allergies, advocated for the increased availability of food immunotherapy. This is an area that will benefit from further research in Australia, and this report recommends that clinical research be undertaken with the aim of being able to offer well-understood and safe immunotherapy in the future.

I would like to thank the individuals and organisations who took the time to write submissions and appear at public hearings. The quality of those contributions was outstanding. I hope the recommendations in this report will lead to changes that assist people living with allergic disease to have a better quality of life in the future. I also want to thank the Minister for Health, who is in the chamber today with us, for referring this matter to the committee. We appreciated the opportunity to make what I hope is an important inquiry.

Finally, my sincere thanks to all committee members for their engagement with this inquiry. I am especially grateful to several committee members who contributed their own medical expertise and knowledge of this topic, including our deputy chair, the member for Macarthur. I particularly want to acknowledge the role of the member for Higgins, whom we were fortunate to have join the committee for this inquiry. Dr Allen is one of Australia's foremost experts on allergies, and her role during this inquiry was invaluable. I also want to thank committee staff Joel Bateman, Rebecca Gordon, Tegan Scott and Tamara Palmer for their outstanding support to the committee during this inquiry. I commend this report to the House and hope it does lead to meaningful change for the growing numbers of Australians who suffer with dreadful problems associated with allergies in this country. I commend the report to the House.
Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Cabinet) (12:34): by leave—I want to thank and acknowledge the member for North Sydney, the member for Macarthur, the member for Higgins and all of the members of the House of Representatives Health Committee, and just to acknowledge that this report on allergies and anaphylaxis will be read with great interest. The goal is to take the recommendations to look at how they can be applied and to provide Australians who have allergies with greater support, greater care and greater attention going forward. I think this is an immensely important contribution made on a bipartisan basis. It represents the best of the House of Representatives and the parliamentary system in action. It's about caring for those Australians and their families who are suffering from allergies.

Dr FREELANDER (Macarthur) (12:35): by leave—I cannot underestimate the importance of this report of the Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport entitled *Walking the allergies tightrope: addressing the rise of allergies and anaphylaxis in Australia*. I would like to thank the minister for referring this important topic to our team. As the deputy chair, I would like to thank very much the chair, the member for North Sydney, and, in particular, I'd like to thank the member for Higgins for contributing her enormous expertise to this inquiry.

It gives me great pleasure to speak on this report. I would like, first of all, to record my thanks to our wonderful secretariat—led by the formidable Rebecca Gordon as the inquiry secretary together with Joel Bateman, as the community secretary, and Tamara and the rest of the team—for their hard work in facilitating the inquiry and dealing with a very complex health issue in a very comprehensive and all-encompassing manner. I thank them. I would like to also thank my other parliamentary colleagues on the committee for their contributions.

I'm pleased to stand here today and assist in the handing down of this bipartisan report which really does set out, in a way that few other parliamentary reports I've seen have done, a very systematic approach to the increasing issue of allergy and anaphylaxis in Australian society. I have a grandchild who is prone to severe anaphylaxis due to nuts. I have been made increasingly aware of the effect on the family of what is really a quite difficult problem now that she's of school age. We've outlined over 20 recommendations. I won't go through them all, but they are all very important. The most important, of course, is that of committing more research in a comprehensive and structured way to the issue of allergy and anaphylaxis. It would not have been possible for the committee to formulate these positions and recommendations without the work of many, many people and the many organisations that contributed throughout our inquiry and provided lots of submissions. I would like to thank each and every person who made a contribution to our inquiry.

As a paediatrician, I of course recognise how important this issue is for families. I would like to thank all the families who've made submissions, and I would like to assure them that we will continue to fight for this issue and for recognition of this issue. I'd like to thank, in particular, Ms Maria Said from Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia and her team, who made comprehensive submissions to the committee. I would like to personally thank Professor Connie Katelaris for her unceasing work with allergy, anaphylaxis and, in particular, severe eczema and for her contribution to the granting of PBS listing for dupilumab for severe eczema.

With allergies and anaphylaxis on the rise in our society, the committee has developed a list of recommendations, as outlined by the committee chair. The first recommendation, for the establishment of a Commonwealth national centre of allergies and anaphylaxis, as I've said, is the most important one. I believe such a national institution would be able to institute more comprehensive research and ensure that we have the best practice nationwide in our management.

I commend the report and the work of the committee to the parliament and encourage the government and the minister to take heed of the recommendations laid out herein before the House today.

Mr ZIMMERMAN (North Sydney) (12:39): I move:

That the House take note of the report.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Gillespie): 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

Mr ZIMMERMAN (North Sydney) (12:39): I move:

That the order of the day be referred to the Federation Chamber for debate.

Question agreed to.
Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Ms BUTLER (Griffith) (12:40): I rise to support the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Amendment (Coronavirus Economic Response Package) Bill 2020 and to move to the second reading amendment circulated in my name:

That all words after "That" be omitted with a view to substituting the following words:

"whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading, the House notes that Coalition governments have mismanaged and politicised the Great Barrier Reef, which is a job-generating, economic and environmental powerhouse of global significance, that Australians need to preserve for future generations".

Labor welcomes this bill, as it provides relief for Great Barrier Reef tourism operators who've been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. So many parts of the country have needed support as a result of COVID-19, and the tourism industry has been among the hardest hit. This bill supplements a measure that passed the parliament earlier in the pandemic period—back in March—to waive the environmental management charge from 1 April 2020 to 31 December 2020. Combined, these measures effectively ensure that the EMC is waived for the entire 2020 calendar year.

The environmental management charge fee paid by operators is usually determined by the number of visitors to the reef and is charged to them as a visitor fee. It's only fair that tourism operators aren't burdened by this cost in 2020, so Labor welcomes this sensible measure. We're also pleased the Minister for the Environment has assured Australians that there will be no reduction in the revenue that goes to the management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park as a result of this amendment because, while the pandemic has meant many parts of our lives have been paused, time still marches on and the threats to the future of the Great Barrier Reef are on a tight and unforgiving deadline.

While Labor welcomes this relief for tourism operators in the North and the Far North, the government has been woefully lacking when it comes to supporting tourism and the reef in the long term. To support tourism, the government needs to support the reef. And, to support the reef, the government should work towards the overall health of the reef. Importantly, it should resist the deniers in its ranks, commit to serious action on climate change at home and show leadership internationally.

The Great Barrier Reef is a great asset to Australia. Our country is so fortunate to be the home of one of the seven wonders of the natural world. It is the largest coral reef on the planet and the largest living structure on earth. As a kid growing up in Cairns, I spent a lot of my childhood on the reef. Family and friends had great memories of visiting the islands. It was common for people to take up scuba-diving or at least to have used a snorkel. As well as enjoying the reef as locals, everyone really understood that the reef was a great drawcard for the many overseas visitors we saw in the streets of our town. There were jobs in cruise operations and in dive schools, but the economic reach went much further. Local small businesses—like my mum's small business and like my grandfather's small business—had a lot of tourism based customers too, all because of the breathtaking beauty of this natural wonder.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park covers 344,400 square kilometres. That's bigger than Victoria and Tasmania combined and larger than the United Kingdom, Switzerland and Holland combined. While many people across the globe can and do appreciate its wonder and environmental significance, it is Queenslanders in regional communities up and down the coast, like the one I'm from, who are most keenly aware of its value environmentally, economically, culturally and socially as part of the Australian identity. Those Queenslanders include, firstly, more than 70 Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal traditional owner groups who've had a continuing relationship with the Great Barrier Reef over millennia. They include the Queensland based scientists, as well, who've studied the reef their whole lives and are evermore urgently advocating for it. They include, too, around 64,000 Queenslanders who rely on the reef for work—for their livelihoods.

Deloitte Access Economics published a report that calculated the site's full economic, social and iconic brand value. The title of the report is the same question we asked those opposite: At what price? What will this government's failure to preserve the reef cost us?

The report found that the reef contributed $6.4 billion to the Australian economy in one year and that the reef is a $56 billion asset. To continue to provide all those values—the economic values as well as, of course, the
environmental, social and cultural values—the reef needs to be strong and it needs to be healthy. We need to protect it as if our livelihoods depend on it, because in Queensland they do. But, under the Morrison government's stewardship, we have seen the outlook for the reef downgraded from 'poor' to 'very poor'. Their actions in relation to reef funding have been under a cloud since the outrageous backroom deal of $444 million, which fell afoul of the Auditor-General.

Distressingly, earlier in the year we saw the third major bleaching event in five years. Australia can't afford yet another blow to our tourism industry, already hit so hard by the pandemic. But, under this government's watch, the reef is going backwards. In his first report, the Morrison appointed reef envoy, the member for Leichhardt, brushed over the impacts of climate change inaction, water quality and crown-of-thorns starfish. Instead, he devoted his attention to plastics. Tackling this issue is important, but a focus on plastics cannot be allowed to be a fig leaf for the Liberal-National government's failure to face up to the major challenges facing the reef. The government's own agency, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, states that single-use plastics constituted only a small proportion, around one or two per cent, of the overall marine debris collected at the reef.

The disproportionate emphasis on plastics in relation to the reef is a decoy for the other real challenges Queensland regional communities face. The member for Leichhardt is on the record as denying the greatest threats to the reef, as well as the science of coral bleaching and climate change, when he said in relation to climate change, 'It's been happening for millennia.' Instead of being a champion for the—

Mr Tim Wilson interjecting—

Ms Butler: True! I hear the interjection from the member for Goldstein. As I said, the member for Leichhardt is on the record as denying the science of climate change. Instead of being a champion for the reef, as its envoy, the member for Leichhardt is being used to detract from the damage being done to it. Instead of championing the reef, the reef envoy has questioned the science of two of its greatest threats. Of course, he's not the only impediment to real progress on protecting the reef. While not-for-profit organisations, environmentalists, scientists, experts, farmers, tourism operators, the Palaszczuk Labor government and many others are working to raise awareness about the true impacts on the reef, the member for Dawson, who I see is here in the chamber, is on the record as denying the science on water quality. This is in addition to his rejection of climate science. The Morrison government's policy has been hijacked by the extreme right wing of the party. How can Australians have faith that this government will protect the reef if the government can't even be honest about the major threats to it?

It's important to acknowledge the work of organisations big and small who've had to step in and do the work of government over the years. I want to acknowledge the work of the Australian Marine Conversation Society, who've briefed me on a number of significant issues over many years, including threatened species, corals and the mass bleaching events. The most recent mass bleaching event was the most extensive, but tragically it was the third event to have taken place in only five years.

I don't want people to think, though, that they shouldn't visit the reef. There is still so much to see, and we need people to visit the reef. People need to understand its wonder and how beautiful it is so that they feel moved to try to work to protect it. During this pandemic, the requirement for all of us to stay indoors has made Australians really miss the outside world. I think we have a new-found appreciation for the outdoors; I certainly do— the park down the road, the beach or just anywhere you can get fresh air. Queensland has already lifted its internal travel ban, so Queenslanders should go to visit the reef. It is one of the world's seven natural wonders and it happens to be in our own backyard. Queenslanders should already know that the Ekka show holiday has been moved to a Friday to encourage everyone to get out and see Queensland for a long weekend. Those considering a visit to the north or far north of the state should be assured that, despite the Morrison government's lack of environmental action, there is still a great deal of beauty and wonder to be experienced on the Great Barrier Reef. The reef is one of the best tourism experiences on the planet and it's right on our doorstep. Not only will you get to see the amazing natural diversity and beauty of the reef; you'll be supporting thousands of Queensland jobs, and I think that's absolutely worth doing.

Many of the tourism operators and other local small businesses supported by tourism are struggling, and they're currently relying on support to survive. There are estimates from the tourism sector nationally that up to 400,000 jobs might be at risk when JobKeeper ends. The sector won't simply be able to snap back if support isn't extended. The Prime Minister, I've got to say, is completely woefully out of touch if he thinks snapping back to the way things were before is likely.

Thankfully, though, the Palaszczuk government has provided support for the tourism industry during this difficult time, with additional funds, tools and support programs. Australia's greatest national icon is open for business, and it remains one of the best tourism experiences on the planet. That doesn't mean we can be in denial about the challenges to the reef. Denial about the reef's future puts it at even greater risk.
Whilst the federal government's attention during this pandemic must be directed towards saving lives, protecting incomes and securing the safety of all Australians, we must also plan for the recovery now. Australia will need to leverage our natural advantages into economic growth, supporting jobs and bringing back international tourists once it's safe to do so. The reef has an extremely important part to play in the recovery. But with the Morrison government we're seeing asset devaluation, poor maintenance, vast sums of money being allocated without proper processes and no plan to preserve its value for the stakeholders of the reef, all Australians. If the coalition government was a private sector asset manager for a $56 billion asset and they managed it this poorly they'd be sacked in a heartbeat. The reef is a job-generating economic and environmental powerhouse for all Australians.

Deputy Speaker Gillespie, the government really abandoned reef communities when it decided to use such a poor process to hand over almost half a billion dollars of public money to a private foundation. They have had to spend a lot of time scaling up their operation. When the deal was done, they only had six full-time staff. It was so controversial—and people will remember this—that the Australian National Audit Office had to investigate the way the grant was handled. They found that the government failed to comply fully with the rules designed to ensure transparency and value for money. Further, the Auditor-General found that there wasn't adequate scrutiny of the foundation's proposals, specifically the capacity and capability of the foundation's delivery partners to scale up their activities, the foundation's past fundraising performance and the total administration cost of the partnership model, with basically no consideration given to the administration costs of the foundation's delivery partners.

While some of the projects and investments in the reef that are currently being explored involve incredible science and ingenuity—like shading to cool reefs by cutting sunlight to lower ocean temperatures, stabilising reef structures and helping corals adapt—these extraordinary efforts are just not enough when we have a government that will not accept the science of climate change and will certainly not do enough to do something about it. The five years to 2019 were the five hottest on record for our oceans. Ocean warming can now be observed at a depth of 1,000 metres. A warming of just one degree Celsius in our oceans is significant. One of the most challenging issues, I think, for dealing with people's confidence in whether the government is responding well to the challenges that face the reef is the way that the grant to the Great Barrier Reef Foundation was handled. That's because people need to have confidence in and transparency of governance if they are going to have confidence that a government will do the right thing, rather than thinking they have a government that will hide things, hide their own failures, not face up to the science and fail to deliver for regional communities.

I think it's regrettable the Liberals and Nationals deliberately politicise the reef in this way. They did so when they used a very shonky process to hand almost half a billion dollars to this small foundation, and I don't want to see them continue to politicise the reef. We need cooperation to save the reef because it's managed at all levels of government. But we've recently seen Liberal and National members fall afoul of that. Look no further, if you want an example of that, than the Liberals and Nationals using their position in the Senate to set up an inquiry for the purpose of trying to smear the Queensland state government over water quality laws. They should be focused on saving the reef and protecting regional economies. But, in September last year, they established a Senate inquiry that was—'Oh, what a coincidence—Diedre Chambers!'—timed to report just before the Queensland state election. They're trying to take Queenslanders for mugs, as usual. But Queenslanders can see through these sorts of games any day of the week.

Lately we've all had to change the way we do things. Can I offer some advice to those opposite? Now is the time to realise the worth of the reef and the importance of bringing people together, informed by science, to make sure its beauty and wonder is available for generations to come. The government's own reef agency, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, in its outlook report, states:

Inshore water quality is improving on a regional scale, but too slowly; poor water quality continues to affect many inshore areas of the Reef. The rate of reduction of pollutant loads has been slow, reflecting modest improvements in agricultural land management practices. Future initiatives need to deliver timely, best practice agricultural land management over a wider area to improve water quality.

Those of us who are here, in this place or in the other place, need to take our positions here very seriously, and not use the privilege of being here to score cheap political points while at the same time putting regional communities at risk by actively campaigning against science based decision-making. There are no winners in politicising science or the reef. There are no winners in focusing on short-term politics at the expense of protecting the 64,000 jobs that exist which rely on the reef. They exist in regional economies like those around Cairns, Townsville, Mackay and beyond. There are no winners in failing to protect the health of our inshore rivers that are connected to the reef, or the pristine nature of the shores and waters.
I want to protect the reef and our natural environment more broadly; it's part of the reason I'm part of a party that has advocated for and set up the institutions that have helped to preserve the reef. Federal Labor first protected the Great Barrier Reef by creating the marine park in 1975, and we're proud of our broader achievements for the environment in government. Labor ratified the World Heritage Convention, making Australia one of the first countries to do so. It was a Labor government that protected Queensland's Wet Tropics. Environmental institutions that are now fundamental to preserving our environment were created by Labor, including the proper funding and management of Australia's national parks and the implementation of environmental impact assessments. Labor governments also led the world in ozone layer protection action, commenced Australia's first serious action on greenhouse gases and led action to protect the Antarctic. On the ground Labor saw the united goals of conservationists and farmers, and established Landcare. We have stood for constantly making sure that the national government acts responsibly in relation to matters of national environmental significance. Australians are living and breathing the tangible results of Labor's record on the environment. It's imperative that this is not undone.

I would encourage all Queenslanders who have the means to do so to visit the reef. It's a beautiful place: the people, the sun and the corals. Whether you head up to Port Douglas and go out to the Low Isles; whether you go to Green Island, Fitzroy Island or the islands off Cairns, where so many of us kids spent a lot of time growing up; whether you go down to Dunk or up to the beautiful corals of the outer reef; or whether you go to Cod Hole, there are so many beautiful places to go and so many opportunities. Head up there, support those tourism operators and make sure you do spend as much time as you can, because it's so important that people see that the reef is so worth saving.

It's another world. As I said, it's the largest living structure on earth and it's right in our backyard. We need to keep it clean, we need to keep it safe and we need to take serious action on climate change at home and abroad. It's a $56 billion asset and it supports 64,000 jobs. So Labor will continue to stand for the reef.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Gillespie): Is the amendment seconded?

Mr Brendan O'Connor: I second the amendment and reserve my right to speak.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The original question was that this bill be now read a second time. To this, the honourable member for Griffith has moved as an amendment that all the words after 'That' be omitted with a view to substituting other words. If it suits the House, I will state the question in the form that the words proposed to be omitted stand as part of the question.

Mr Christensen (Dawson) (12:59): As the member for Goldstein quipped to me during the last speech, that's the kind of speech you get when your seat has become reliant on Green votes and you've become reliant on Green votes to actually get across the line. It's very, very sad, because the bill before us is quite an important bill. This is all about providing a remedy for the plight of tourism operators in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. What we just heard is a return to arguments of the past and divisions of the past; and I'm referring not just to divisions in this place but also to divisions among local workers, local industry, local jobs, local farmers and local tourism operators. It is an argument of the past, an argument that we as a government are leaving behind because we are on the side of tourism workers and tourism businesses.

I am so disappointed that the main Labor speaker here, the member for Griffith, would come forward with this speech—and with motions and amendments—that is all about politics. She talks about not politicising the reef. I don't know what that amendment and that speech are if they aren't politicising the reef. Goodness me, to put in a do-nothing amendment like that to a bill that is about assisting tourism workers and tourism businesses really does beggar belief. I'm so passionate about this, because this change, this relief to tourism operators that goes on to help tourism workers, actually came from my electorate, from the Dawson electorate. It had a lot of support. I didn't see too many people on the other side of the chamber—I didn't see the member for Griffith—arguing the case for tourism operators at the time. The people who were advocating for that were me, the member for Leichhardt, the member for Herbert, the member for Flynn, the member for Capricornia and the member for Wide Bay—all of those up and down the coast of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park area. We know how many businesses rely on this great asset and how many workers rely on jobs from that great asset.

I went in to bat for tourism operators that were saying, as this pandemic rolled out, 'We need to waive the reef tax', otherwise known as the Great Barrier Reef Environmental Management Charge. That tax, sadly, has gone up and up and has become a massive impost on tourism operators. I think it needs to be looked at in the future to see whether it actually continues or not. But, for now, what we did initially was suspend that tax for the rest of the year. I was at a meeting where the Minister for the Environment actually announced this to Whitsunday tourism operators, and they were so enthralled at the decision that the room burst into applause. That was what this measure would do for the tourism operators. It was so good they burst into applause. Actually, as it turned out, a
week later the whole industry pretty much had been shut down because of the pandemic, so this measure probably wasn't saving them much at all because no-one was going out to the reef.

I went in and fought to have this decision backdated to 1 January. It took a while to get there because it had to be legislated, as we're doing right now. But, the day that it happened, I got this letter from the Whitsunday Charter Boat Industry Association, who were the crew that were advocating for this, so that I could advocate for it; they came to me with all the information that led to this decision here today. This shows how grassroots politics—businesses, workers and individuals actually getting involved—can actually facilitate major change like what's before us today. This group from Airlie Beach did it.

What they wrote to me, the Minister for the Environment, the Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment, the Deputy Prime Minister and the member for Leichhardt was this: 'I'm writing to you both personally and on behalf of the Whitsunday Charter Boat Industry Association to offer our sincere and heartfelt thanks for the support you have shown to our industry in what will be long remembered as one of its darkest of times. The announcement yesterday of a backdate in the environmental management charge (EMC) waiver to 1 January, and the $3 million in further relief for our industry that this will mean, could not have come at a more opportune moment. An increasing amount of economic studies are putting the Whitsundays and its marine tourism industry at the top of Australia's list of regions and business sectors that have been severely affected by COVID-19.

'Even prior to the pandemic we were still reeling from the impacts of Tropical Cyclone Debbie and a cluster of shark attacks. Notwithstanding this, our region and our industry has continued to account for over 40 per cent of the $6.3 billion, 64,000-job Great Barrier Reef tourism sector. Our contribution is estimated at over $2.8 billion. We carry one million passengers per year into the Whitsundays section of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. In short, we are worth saving, and yesterday's announcement demonstrates your clear understanding of that. As you know, operators will only begin to realise the benefit from the initial EMC waiver from 1 April to 31 December 2020 once business resumes. Without customers, there is no EMC paid, which under these waiver provisions operators will be able to use as much-needed cash flow.'

She goes on to thank the government for backdating it and listening to the industry on what was needed. And it really is needed, because, again, with what we just heard in the last contribution to this debate, there was hardly mention of the plight of tourism businesses; it was all politics. There were old arguments about funding to foundations and old arguments trying to separate one industry from another industry and so on. But what wasn't mentioned was the fact that in the Whitsundays right now 100 per cent of tourism businesses are directly impacted by this Wuhan coronavirus pandemic; 118 businesses have actually suspended operations within the Whitsundays. Over 3,000 jobs have been lost in the Whitsundays because of this event. Almost 30,000 room nights have been cancelled. Almost 24,000 tours and activities have been cancelled. The total estimated dollar value of cancellations caused directly by this event and the bushfires is around $150 million—to a single community. It is unbelievable.

They are staggering figures, and this is part of the reason we have built up this COVID-19 relief and recovery fund that has helped do things like provide this extra environmental management charge relief to tourism operators. It is something that has been very well received. And lest we think that this is just a little kick in the can for the industry, I can tell you that it's worth tens of thousands to businesses, who are suffering on a number of fronts. It is not just because they don't have customers walking in the door at the moment. If I can segue into one area that is impacting on the financial viability of tourism businesses right now, it's the fact that we've got all of these online booking agents that are withholding funds for tours that have been conducted for tourism operators right now. I'm not going to go too in-depth into this, because the industry is trying to sort it out and doesn't want the issue made bigger than it is, for them to sort out. But the fact is that they are hurting quite badly because we have booking agencies—a lot of them foreign owned—that are just not handing over the funds for tours that have actually been conducted. So, we've got tourism operators that are, again, tens of thousands of dollars out of pocket.

So this money that we are providing—handing back this environmental management charge for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority to the operators—is a godsend; it really is. It's going to mean the difference between businesses shutting up shop and staying open. It's going to mean the difference between people keeping jobs in the Whitsundays, in Cairns, down at Yeppoon and probably at Gladstone and in so many other places. It really is a godsend.

I want to state my position on a few other things that will assist the tourism industry beyond this. As I said at the start of this, I think there needs to be a severe review of this environmental management charge going into the future. The EMC started off as a buck, mind you—one buck, as I understand it—and that dollar that was charged for each night or each time that a tourist went out onto the reef went into a consolidated fund that basically spent money on infrastructure and projects that the industry wanted to see happen. It's really, really gone way away
from its original intent. It is now just basically a tax that goes to fill the coffers of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, and, as good a job as they do, it really has gone against the initial intent, which was about projects and infrastructure that the industry said were needed.

So we either need to get back to the original intent of the program and what its funding was for, or we need to get rid of it altogether—one of the two. Because the Great Barrier Reef, as so many people like to say, is a national asset. Why then should businesses that are in the Great Barrier Reef be the ones that are slugged with the bulk of the administration of the asset? It's a national asset. The nation should pay and it should come out of the normal consolidated revenue rather than as a direct tax for the industry.

It might be an ambit claim to have businesses that are getting the benefit of the reef to not pay anything, but I'm putting it anyway, and I dare say that the least that can happen is a severe reduction in this charge and a reorientation of the funds that come out of this charge to actual tourism infrastructure and tourism projects within the Great Barrier Reef area. That is what it was initially designed to do. I've got the paperwork—the letters from ministers, the press releases, the reports and all the rest of it—to prove that fact. But, like with so many other programs, they just go every which way but loose as time goes on.

I'm already on the record saying this publicly, so I'll say it again right now: we will need to keep supports in place for the tourism sector beyond September. That is quite clear to me. We're talking about a continuation of JobKeeper and a continuation of cashflow for businesses supports. We're probably talking about a replenishment of the COVID-19 Relief and Recovery Fund in order to continue to allow businesses and sectors to apply for relief for things like rates, insurance and all the other charges they go through. There will need to be a bit of leaning by the government on the banks to continue supporting businesses that are not back to normal as a result of this pandemic.

Certainly in the tourism sector they will not be back to normal. There are businesses in the tourism sector, particularly in the Whitsundays, that are completely and utterly geared towards the international market. The don't get much domestic clientele. It will be very difficult, if not impossible, for them to re-gear themselves to the domestic market. The domestic market is, despite all the best intentions, probably going to be lukewarm, because consumer confidence is low because of this pandemic. I wish it were higher, and I encourage people to holiday in the Great Barrier Reef communities and in the Whitsundays, but it's probably going to be lukewarm. If we just simply divert all businesses, including those that are now pretty much fixed on international, into the domestic market, we could oversaturate it, leading to a situation where nobody wins in the tourism sector.

Really, there needs to be that absolute continuation of support, if your income has dipped or turnover has dipped below 30 per cent. A lot of them will have dipped below 30 per cent and will continue to be below 30 per cent, not only as we open up the domestic borders—which should have happened a long time ago; that's one of the things hampering domestic tourism at the moment—but with the international borders closed and, beyond that, with commercial flights not getting back into full swing, and, beyond that even more, there is local consumer confidence in international travel. We really do need to wait for these things to be cleared before we let people get back to situation normal.

Thank you very much. I'm very pleased that this bill supports tourism workers and tourism businesses in the Whitsundays.

Mr JOSH WILSON (Fremantle) (13:14): I'm glad for the opportunity to speak on the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Amendment (Coronavirus Economic Response Package) Bill 2020, which seeks to support the tourism sector focused around the Great Barrier Reef. I'm particularly glad to support the second reading amendment move by the shadow minister for the environment, the member for Griffith. And I join her in encouraging people around Australia to support our tourism economies all over this country, including in Queensland, including the tourism sector focused on the Great Barrier Reef.

The measure contained in this bill is a worthy one but is relatively minor when you consider the scale of the impact we've seen on the sector. This measure allows operators to keep the environment management charge they collect from visitors. They collect it to then remit it to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority in support of its very important work in protecting this extensive, precious but also fragile and at-risk marine environment. I think any move to remove this charge and therefore defund the work the authority does would be bananas. This bill follows in the footsteps of an earlier bill that covered the period from 1 April to the end of 2020. This bill goes back and picks up the period from 1 January to the end of March, which I would think is the most relevant period in terms of the value which the EMC holds for tourism operators. There will be operators that took in that charge, which they've either held or remitted, and they will get it back, and it will be of some value to them. After 1 March there probably wasn't much tourism or much in the way of a charge being gathered.
I really want to take this opportunity to acknowledge all the businesses and workers who are involved one way or another with Great Barrier Reef tourism. I know it will have been a distressing and bewildering experience so far in 2020, and, unfortunately, that situation continues. GBR tourism is itself a significant part of the Australian economy and, of course, the Queensland economy. Its direct and indirect value is enormous: $6.4 billion annually and 64,000 jobs, and there are thousands of businesses that depend on and benefit from reef tourism to some degree. If you think of all those involved, there are tour operators, accommodation and transport providers, boat operators, recreational hire businesses, divers, fishers, people in aquaculture, food and beverage businesses, people in scientific research and conservation—the list goes on and on.

There's no question that the Great Barrier Reef is an incredible and unique feature of the world's marine environment. It's regarded as the largest living organism on earth, and we know that a quarter of the world's marine life depends on coral reef ecosystems. The reef is, understandably, a matter of enormous attraction, a place of wonder and curiosity and delight. It's true to say that people are motivated to come to Australia to experience the Great Barrier Reef alone. That's what gets them here, and other parts of Australia benefit as a result. We know the reef is an unparalleled drawcard for visitors who go on to explore other parts of Queensland and other parts of Australia. It's a gateway attraction, a visitor magnet, and there are few destinations that are more strongly and positively associated with Australia than the Great Barrier Reef.

It not only draws people to Australia, which then allows them to visit and experience other aspects of our natural environment, our towns and cities, our broader arts and culture and food and beverage industries; the reef actually stands for one of Australia's core values and characteristics. We are the beneficiaries of the oldest continuing culture on earth and as part of that we are the stewards of a place of extraordinary beauty and biodiversity.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park receives around 2.5 million visitors each year. When you look at the surveys that identify what brings people to Queensland and to Australia, there aren't many motivations that compete with the phrase, 'I want to see and experience the Great Barrier Reef.' So again, like the member for Griffith, I acknowledge all those involved in looking after and showing off this wonder of the world, this world heritage marvel, for which we in Australia are fortunate to be responsible. We do need to do more to live up to that responsibility. We cannot take the health of our marine environments around Australia for granted.

Almost everyone in Australia's tourism sector has had an unbelievably rough year in 2020. We know that the tourism and visitor economy was first hit and hardest hit by the coronavirus pandemic. In March alone I understand that visitor arrivals in Queensland fell 60 per cent. As I understand it, $200 million of bookings were cancelled in March, and by the end of April that impact was estimated to have reached $500 million. There is also an estimate that 16,000 workers would be laid off—that's a quarter of the 64,000 involved in GBR tourism: one in four. I know that Tropical North Tourism has said:

We will be one of the last destinations to recover and estimate that the region will lose at least $2.5bn in visitor expenditure which is 15% of our gross regional product in 2020.

Right now we're coming into the period in which Queensland tourism would usually welcome a large number of visitors, especially from overseas. Obviously, that's been heavily affected and, while everyone in this place looks forward to the resumption in due course of interstate travel and tourism—when it's safe for that to occur—international tourism is likely to be a fair way off. So it's appropriate—of course it's appropriate—that we take measures like the one delivered through this bill, but it's more important that we consider whether the government is doing enough. The value of allowing operators to keep their EMC or to have it remitted to them if they've already passed it through is likely to be around $2 million in the period covered by 1 January to the end of March. That's actually not a huge amount of support. The previous member talked about tens of thousands of dollars per business; I can't really see what that calculation is based on.

Because we know that the bill operates to ensure that the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority is not deprived of funding, the bill provides for $2.9 million to go from consolidated revenue to the GBRMPA in lieu of what it would ordinarily gain. So somewhere between $2 million and $3 million is what this measure is worth. It's not a huge number; it's not unhelpful, but it's not going to make a massive difference. We know that a proper wage subsidy would have made a much more significant difference. We led the way in calling for that reform, and the government ultimately relented on creating a wage subsidy after saying it wasn't necessary—as it did on telehealth and in a number of other areas. Initially, it thought those things didn't need to occur. But, as we've seen, the government's JobKeeper program has turned out to be a short and patchy blanket as we head into winter.

Even by the government's own calculations—if 'calculations' is the right term for whatever caused them to miss the mark by three million workers and $60 billion—there are many people and businesses missing out on support. But even before that gargantuan error—that Grand Canyon, that Great Barrier Reef, of an error—it emerged that it

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was already clear that JobKeeper was not designed as effectively as it could have been. The exclusion of up to a million casual workers is a case in point. The 12-month requirement that left casual workers in the cold has, just as importantly, left businesses in the cold, because it meant that workers were separated from the entities to which they contributed. In many cases, that means that the business itself is not viable.

So, as we confront and seek to come through this global health pandemic, we'd be fools to ignore the other forms of catastrophe that threaten our shared social, environmental and economic wellbeing. In 2020, we've already experienced the first national climate change disaster in the form of bushfire on a scale the world has never yet seen. We've also watched in dismay the third mass-bleaching event in the Great Barrier Reef within the last five years. Those events—those bleaching events—are a feature of climate change. They're a consequence of the fact that the ocean has absorbed 90 per cent of the additional energy caused by the emission of greenhouse gases. As our oceans get hotter and hotter they grow more acidic, and this affects marine life, including the algae that sustains reef ecosystems.

According to the ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reefs Studies, which undertakes world-based integrated research for sustainable use and management of coral reefs, the 2020 bleaching was more widespread than earlier events. As director, Terry Hughes, said:

We surveyed 1,036 reefs from the air during the last two weeks in March, to measure the extent and severity of coral bleaching throughout the Barrier Reef region. For the first time, severe bleaching has struck all three regions of the Great Barrier Reef – the northern, central and now large parts of the southern sectors.

This year, February had the highest monthly temperatures ever recorded on the Great Barrier Reef since the Bureau of Meteorology sea surface temperature records began in the year 1900. And yet the Minister for Emissions Reduction hasn't achieved what his title would suggest his job is to do, which is meaningful reduction, and has made it clear that the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison tick-tick-tick government will not be updating Australia's woeful emissions reduction target at this year's conference of the parties to the Paris Climate Agreement.

There are 105 countries that have indicated they intend to lift their ambition in respect of nationally determined contributions this year, but Australia is not one of them. The fact that GBR operators have a direct interest in the health of the reef and, in many cases, are active in reef conservation and restoration is both understandable and welcome. While climate change, and consequent ocean warming, is clearly the biggest threat to the future health of the reef, plastic pollution is also a serious issue.

We're facing a waste crisis in Australia. The most recent feature of the crisis is the export bans that mean we can't send our rubbish somewhere else. That's forcing us to acknowledge the fact that we've done poorly when it comes to recycling, especially in areas like plastic. We struggle to recycle barely 12 per cent of the 100 kilograms or so that each of us in Australia consumes every year. We know that, globally, something like eight million tonnes of plastic waste goes into the ocean each year, and the global production of plastic is forecast to double between 2019 and 2025. That simply can't continue. Plastic persists in the ocean forever—or near enough. Plastic is washing up on coasts in increasing quantities and microplastics are turning up in the stomachs of 50 per cent of some marine species, marine birds and some fish. It represents a serious risk to the Great Barrier Reef. According to the Australian Marine Debris Database, 80 per cent of all items recovered as waste in the GBR region are plastic. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's 2019 outlook report found that marine debris pose a high level of risk to the reef's ecosystem and heritage values.

I'm glad—I'm sure everyone's glad—that the government has decided waste should be a national priority, but the truth is that the work on that priority has been underwhelming so far. The areas of action are clear and they've been clear for sometime: we need investment in infrastructure and action on product stewardship and national leadership when it comes to single-use plastics and packaging. We need meaningful procurement commitments to build demand for recycled materials and products, but, as yet, we are still waiting to see that action.

In supporting the measure contained in the bill and, in particular, the second reading amendment, I urge the government to lift its eyes and broaden its horizon when it comes to a sustainable future for the Great Barrier Reef. The question of sustainability is and should be, first and foremost, an environmental issue. The Great Barrier Reef does not need to justify itself by reference to economic outcomes. We should be working to protect the vitality and biodiversity of the reef as a pressing matter of environmental stewardship and responsibility.

I saw a report last week about funding for some coral reseeding on the reef and it was heartening to know about that; but part of the report emphasised the fact that only five per cent of the reef is currently the focus of tourism activity. I think some people would have taken from that report the suggestion that our environmental conservation work should be limited to areas involving tourism. That should never, never be the approach we take. The health of the Great Barrier Reef, in its entirety, is paramount, as is the health and biodiversity of the oceans right around Australia and the Antarctic. Only by taking that comprehensive view of marine protection
will we ensure that the Great Barrier Reef remains a World Heritage treasure, and only by doing that will we support the future strength of the very significant tourist and visitor economy. It should be one of the central pillars of our social and economic wellbeing into the future.

Like the university sector and the arts and creative industries, our businesses and workers in the tourism and events sector are not seen for the true value of their contribution. The government's economic response to the pandemic, unfortunately, reflects that blind spot. When we focus only on road and construction projects, which are important, and housing measures, which are important, we forget the workers and businesses in all of those other sectors. When you talk about tourism, it's a sector with a significant number of female employees and a lot of those people have been left out as a result of the blind spot in the government's measures to date. That should change as part of our emergence into the recovery phase. There should be a more consistent focus in the future. There's no doubt that better marine protection and a proper focus on addressing the grave threat of climate change and the growing threat of marine plastic pollution has to be at the foundation of that work. I support the bill and, particularly, the second reading amendment.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 43. The debate may be resumed at a later hour.

STATMENTS BY MEMBERS

Liverpool City Council CEO

Ms STANLEY (Werriwa—Opposition Whip) (13:29): I rise to inform the House that Liverpool council's chief executive officer Kiersten Fishburn has resigned as CEO of council. Whilst I've spoken before in this place about the circumstances she recently faced, today I will focus on the positive influence her leadership has brought to Liverpool. It has been my pleasure to have worked closely with Kiersten over eight years. Her passion, dedication, energy and enthusiasm for everything and everyone in Liverpool and our community has always been evident. Her leadership has been exemplary and ended a tumultuous era where industrial relations issues plagued council, ICAC raids were common and the council had four CEOs in eight years and, unfortunately, a regular presence of police at council meetings.

She has implemented a positive program for change for council and the community. The Liverpool CBD is thriving with all sides of businesses working together, and is considered the place to be with three university campuses and corporate headquarters in the city.

While her leadership successes are too many to include here, plans for the Liverpool Innovation Precinct and Fifteenth Avenue transit are among them. Ms Fishburn has done extensive work in our area and she will be sorely missed. On a personal note, I will miss Kiersten's intelligence and enthusiasm. I know she will succeed in her new role and have Liverpool in her heart.

Gavi, The Vaccine Alliance

Mr SHARMA (Wentworth) (13:31): COVID-19 has been a reminder, if any were needed, that the health of every one of us is dependent on the overall health of the world's people. We often have heard that we are all in this together, well that is truly the case on a global basis. Viruses and infectious diseases don't need visas and do not respect national borders. They travel around the world whether we like it or not and, as COVID-19 has shown, can do so at very high speed, catching a ride on aircraft and cruise ships. This is why protecting our population and protecting the population of our neighbours from infectious diseases through the provision of vaccination is one of the most important tasks any government can do. And it's why Gavi, the global vaccine alliance, is such an important organisation, helping children living in the world's poorest countries to access vaccines.

I'm very pleased to see that the Australian government has pledged a further $300 million to support the work of Gavi, The Vaccine Alliance, over the next several years. Over two decades Gavi has helped 16 countries in the Indo-Pacific vaccinate over 318 million children against diseases such as polio, measles, mumps and rubella. As the measles outbreak in Samoa just a few months ago illustrated, we cannot afford complacency against these diseases.

I wish to thank here and acknowledge the work of Foreign Minister Payne; the minister for international development, Alex Hawke; and the entire Morrison government for getting behind Gavi, helping our neighbours and acting in accordance with Australian interests.

International Cleaners Day

Mr BRIAN MITCHELL (Lyons) (13:33): Too often cleaners are the forgotten people, but not today as it's International Cleaners Day. Cleaners perform a critical function in our communities, our homes, our workplaces and our schools. They arrive early and they leave before most of us start work, or many will start after we've all left for the day. My mum worked for years as a school and hospital cleaner. Every weekend my brother and I
would be awakened, still in our pyjamas, from the bunkbed and taken to our cousins’ before dawn where we would spend the weekend with our uncle while my mum and our aunt worked on the wards at the hospital. The work was hard and it was relentless.

We’ve all come to appreciate the work of cleaners this year as they work extra hard to keep us safe from COVID-19. My state, Tasmania, has no active cases, thanks in large part to the work of cleaners in scrubbing down the wards and the aged-care centres. Cleaners are overworked and underpaid. They are always at risk of outsourcing and weak job security. Too many have to put up with abuse and, frankly, too much racism. It is a tough gig. Eighty-seven per cent of cleaners say they are not paid what they are worth and 77 per cent are worried that they will lose their job.

I’m proud to support the United Workers Union cleaners’ solution campaign, which is pushing for better conditions and security for our cleaners. I thank the cleaners of Australia, including the cleaners of the Parliament House. Happy International Cleaners Day.

**COVID-19: Defence Personnel**

**Mr SIMMONDS** (Ryan) (13:34): I rise to wholeheartedly thank the men and women of the ADF for their role in assisting the community during the COVID pandemic, in particular the local personnel based at the Gallipoli Barracks in Enoggera in my electorate of Ryan. As part of Operation COVID-19 ASSIST, 2,200 ADF personnel have been supporting the government’s response to COVID, with 800 still on the ground right now. Around Easter, over 620 ADF personnel were supporting tasks requested by the Queensland government. They undertook vital work in planning support, contact tracing and quarantine assistance as well as supporting the Queensland Police Service in protecting our vulnerable Indigenous communities.

The majority of the support to Queensland was organised through 7th Brigade, located at the Gallipoli Army base in Enoggera in the electorate of Ryan. Also based at the Gallipoli Barracks was the 20th Regiment of the Royal Australian Artillery, usually the Army’s surveillance and target acquisition specialists, but in May the 20th Regiment used its 3D printing hardware to rapidly produce face shields for medical staff in Brisbane. The initiative boosted the supply of PPE gear in Queensland and also demonstrated the ingenuity of our ADF personnel.

Helping protect Queenslanders from COVID was a unique challenge, but once again the local men and women of the ADF have risen magnificently to the occasion. On behalf of our community, thank you so much again to these service personnel from Gallipoli Barracks at Enoggera for helping to save the lives and livelihoods of Queenslanders during COVID.

**Live Animal Exports**

**Ms COKER** (Corangamite) (13:36): Hundreds of voters from across Corangamite have contacted me deploring live sheep exports. Labor supports the phasing out of this trade. It is cruel and we would be far better processing and exporting the meat here in Australia. The department has granted an exemption for *Al Kuwait* to sail into the northern summer with 50,000 sheep. This is despite having regulations in place that ban summer sailing from 1 June. The RSPCA has condemned the decision, saying:

… the government has swung the risk pendulum back in favour of economic interests over animal welfare.

This is a government that runs a protection racket for an incompetent and cruel industry. Two years ago we all saw the video of conditions so hot that 2,400 sheep literally melted on board one of these death ships as it reached the gulf, exactly what the summer sailing ban was designed to address. Our agriculture spokesman Joel Fitzgibbon said at the time:

Labor sees a bright future for meat processing … a better future for farmers, but Labor sees no future for live sheep exports. In 2108 some Liberals bleated loudly about a private member’s bill to phase out the trade, but the government made sure it never saw the light of day. My constituents who are concerned about this cruel trade shouldn’t let the coalition pull the wool over their eyes. I will support you as we continue to advocate for both a total ban on live sheep exports and more processing here in Australia.

**Sturt Electorate: Queen’s Birthday Honours**

**Mr STEVENS** (Sturt) (13:37): I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge my constituents who were recognised in the recent Queen’s Birthday honours announcement of the Order of Australia, in particular: two Officers of the Order of Australia, Professor Isabella McMillen and Professor Graham Moseley; those appointed members of the Order of Australia, Mr Charles Morland Bailes, Dr Gabrielle Cehic, Dr Jackie Craig, Mrs Kathryn House, Dr Sara Jones, Ms Kris Lloyd, Ms Elizabeth Perry, Mrs Joan Stone; recipients of the Medal of the Order of Australia, Sister Kate Conley, Mrs Maria Donato, Mr Manfred Heide and Mr Graeme Litster; and also Sergeant Dale MacAskill, who was awarded the Conspicuous Service Medal. I am very proud, as we all are, to see our
constituents acknowledged for the excellent work that they do serving our communities in such a wide variety of ways.

It has been a great honour, since becoming a member of parliament, to be able to meet so many people in the community and to write to those who are acknowledged each time we are informed of the honours bestowed upon them, particularly through the Order of Australia. One of the great things about this country is the service that people provide selflessly. The volunteerism is such an inherent part of the culture of being an Australian. I'm so proud to represent a part of the country which, I might suggest, has a particularly high standard of service to our community. I congratulate again all those acknowledged at the recent Queen's Birthday honours.

**Live Animal Exports**

Ms CLAYDON (Newcastle) (13:39): I rise to discuss an issue that is causing great distress to many in my community. In the past week I've received more than 100 contacts from constituents who are gravely worried that the *Al Kuwait* live export ship has been given a last-minute exemption to set sail. This decision from the government means that 50,000 sheep will now make the dangerous journey from Western Australia to Kuwait this Wednesday. This is despite the fact that a summertime ban on live exports to the Middle East kicked in more than two weeks ago now. This backflip is unfathomable and completely unjustified. But, regrettably, it's just the latest in a long string of catastrophic failures by this federal government to regulate the live animal export industry. We know how this story ends. Indeed, we saw it play out in horrific scenes of animal brutality on board the *Awassi Express* and on countless other voyages. Let's be clear: this is animal cruelty, pure and simple. It was right to instigate the summertime moratorium, and it's right to maintain that moratorium now. To my constituents in Newcastle, I make this promise: I will hold this government to account and demand that it uphold the moratorium and put a stop to the endless second chances afforded to an industry rife with examples of gross animal cruelty.

**Queensland: Police Training**

Mr THOMPSON (Herbert) (13:40): We have fantastic police officers in Townsville, but we also have an extremely high rate of crime. Earlier this month, the Queensland Labor state government decided to fast-track the police training in Townsville, which means that trainees were not equipped to get the tick of approval to drive under lights and sirens. In a place where there's high crime—a place where our police do a fantastic job but are out all the time—that puts a real hindrance on the police force. Police have been contacting my office very upset and disappointed, and so I raised this issue with the three Labor MPs in Townsville, and their excuse was: ‘The only training that they can do is in the south-east corner.’ Well, that's simply not good enough. That's why we've backed projects like DriveIT which will create jobs but also allow police and emergency services personnel to get on the road by going there and doing their training—because we can do it all locally. But, once again, the Labor Queensland state government does not listen to the regions. It only cares about the south-east corner. I call on the Labor state government to back projects in the north and to fund the projects up in Townsville. That's exactly what we need, because this project will save lives.

**Oakfield Lodge**

Ms SHARKIE (Mayo) (13:39): I rise to fulfil a promise to the residents’ book club at the Southern Cross Care aged facility called Oakfield Lodge in Mount Barker. I've visited the facility many times, and a year ago I was invited along to a book signing. It wasn't just any book; *Total Curiosity in the Clover Cafe* was written by the residents themselves, with assistance from their lifestyle manager, Kerry Tudor. I can tell you, Deputy Speaker, this book is a ripping yarn. The gentlemen wanted to write a murder mystery and the ladies wanted to write a romance, but they ended up with an intriguing tale of an unsolved murder. Honestly, I thought that this was a true story of the early settlers from our Mount Barker community. The story begins with a ghost sighting in the appropriately named Clover Cafe, which is the gathering place at Oakfield Lodge, built on what was the farmland of a local family for many generations. It's like all good stories: it has a happy ending. I would like to thank authors Ray, Reg and Alvina; sadly, we have lost Myra, Blanche, Terri and Ken, who have passed away since they wrote the book. I mentioned the book in a speech that I gave last year, but I did promise Ray that I would do a speech that was just about *Total Curiosity in the Clover Cafe*. I look forward to visiting the residents at Oakfield Lodge again very soon.

**Nightlight Outreach**

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde—Chief Government Whip) (13:43): Nightlight Outreach is a wonderful volunteer organisation in my electorate of Forde which helps the homeless and the vulnerable in the Eagleby and Beenleigh areas. Importantly, they do this work without judgement, prejudice, fear or favour. For the past 17 years, the Nightlight team have poured their hearts and souls into our community to support those doing it tough. They have quite literally saved countless lives through their work, whether it's providing emergency food parcels, free community feeds or street swags to those sleeping rough, or offering counselling and men's support groups. More
recently they have set up a new initiative called Night Watch, in response to community concerns around homelessness and antisocial behaviour in the Beenleigh CBD. The Night Watch team has now been out nine times to assist the homeless and to clean up the back alleys and streets of Beenleigh. They have also spoken to three groups of individuals and provided them with hygiene packs and support to seek better accommodation.

I want to commend Nightlight and their team for spearheading this initiative—in particular, John and Michaela Porter, who head Nightlight. It's great to see such Australian spirit is truly alive and well in our community. To the many locals involved with Nightlight as part of the volunteering group and as part of the Night Watch team, thank you for your efforts, and I hope that they continue well into the future.

**Australia Post**

Ms WELLS (Lilley) (13:45): Just like childcare workers, aviation workers, retail workers and healthcare workers in Brisbane's northside, Australia Post workers like Chris from Stafford Heights have been on the front line during COVID-19 and are now being hung out to dry by this Morrison government. On behalf of the 6,000 constituents in my electorate of Lilley who have lost their jobs because of this pandemic and on behalf of the hundreds of locals who have written to me in the past week about the Morrison government pursuing a long-term industrial agenda to cut Australia Post jobs, I say that we should be using the projected online shopping boom as an opportunity to preserve and grow our postal jobs, not to cut them.

The Morrison government's new Australia Post regulations completely ignore the needs of local small business owners who rely on Australia Post to run their businesses. They disregard people like Wayne from Nundah, who recently sent his mother in Perth a gift for Mother's Day via express post five days out from Mother's Day, and she didn't receive it until the day after—a seven-day wait. They hurt people like Chris from Stafford Heights who has worked across many of the northside Australia Post depots in his time and told me that they are chronically understaffed and struggle to make delivery deadlines at the best of times. The Morrison government's changes to Australia Post regulations are a cheap shot at working Australians and a breach of faith with our community who rely on the excellent work of Australia Post every single day.

**Australian Bushfires**

**Queensland Koala Society**

Mr VASTA (Bonner) (13:46): Koalas are one of Australia's most iconic native animals, but, sadly, we have seen a dramatic decline in numbers. The devastating bushfires earlier this year have had a big impact on their population. The Morrison government have implemented our $50 million wildlife and habitat recovery package, and, to help koalas, we have provided $3 million to support Queensland koala hospitals and committed $3 million for koala habitat restoration in South-East Queensland and northern New South Wales. However, there's always more that we can do.

Bonner local, Angela, is one person who is making a difference. With a need for koala rescue and rehabilitation in the region, Angela has recently established the not-for-profit Queensland Koala Society in Chandler. I recently dropped into their new facility to meet with Angela and see the great work that she is doing in my electorate of Bonner. Angela set up the volunteer based organisation for the sole benefit of koala welfare, education and training. Their rescuers are trained and experienced and assist with the rescue, care and rehabilitation of injured, sick, displaced or orphaned koalas and wildlife across the south-east Brisbane region. She also works with wildlife hospitals, research groups and wildlife groups to provide support and training for potential rescuers and other groups. She has done a tremendous job setting up the local organisation with a need for assistance, including donations, food for wildlife—*(Time expired)*

**Western Australia: COVID-19**

Mr KEOGH (Burt) (13:48): The Prime Minister and his Attorney-General need to keep their noses out of WA state matters. Premier Mark McGowan in Western Australia has been doing a fantastic job managing the coronavirus crisis and keeping Western Australians safe by maintaining a hard border. The Prime Minister talks a big game about the unity of his national cabinet, but now who is he joining along with in the High Court action against the state of Western Australia? Clive Palmer.

In the greatest state in the Commonwealth, Western Australia, we want people to come and visit. We would really look forward to it when it is safe. Whilst we are seeing so much transmission in the community still occurring in other parts of the country, it's important that we maintain the strength of our border. That's allowed us to start on the road to economic recovery and ease restrictions in Western Australia much faster than we've seen in other parts of the country.

Meanwhile, during this whole time, the economy of Australia has been propped up through the power of the WA resources industry, an industry that we know well in Western Australia. But, through this, we have seen great
cooperation between the state government, industries and peak bodies in coming together, cooperating, finding a way through, maintaining strength in the border and maintaining safety for those workers. We don't want to see any of that put at risk in Western Australia. That is why it is so important that Scott Morrison and his government keep their noses out of WA matters, keep the people of Western Australia safe and stop walking around like big bullies.

Censorship

Mr WALLACE (Fisher) (13:49): A chill wind of censorship is blowing across this country. Statues of our nation's founders and leaders are vandalised, and much-loved products of our culture are banned. Even Greens Senator Steele-John, with a duty to uphold our laws, cheers on their destruction. Those who disagree or dissent with an extreme left-wing rewriting of our past—even those who have served our country or volunteered in the community—are bullied into silence with a tsunami of online hate speech. How will we build a better Australia when we cannot express our ideas without fear of reprisals? Where will it end? No-one could benefit more from learning some history than those who are seeking to expunge it. Humanity's darkest times have so often begun with burning books, smashing monuments and bullying dissenters. History never judges the vandals and extremists kindly. The men and women who shaped Australia were not perfect, but neither is any one of us today. It is childish arrogance for these petty criminals and bullies to claim that they alone know right from wrong for all time. As we judge those who came before us, we will be judged in our turn. Those who are trying to disown and destroy Australia's past would do well to remember that and actually work to build a better future—

(Time expired)

Gambling

Ms MURPHY (Dunkley) (13:51): The challenge that this recession presents us is not how to snap back to 2019 but how to take this opportunity to build back better, to build an Australia where no-one is left behind, where government supports and promotes healthy, socially connected, economically secure communities and citizens. The increasing link between sport and gambling is a threat to that future. Three-quarters of Australian children believe that betting is a normal part of sport, according to research. Research in 2019 in my state of Victoria suggests that one-third of secondary school students have gambled at some point in their lives. There have been suggestions that up to 90 per cent of children can recall having seen a sports betting ad. This is despite it being absolutely clear that parents do not want their children being subjected to sports betting ads—I hear this in my community all the time—because we know the harm it can cause. Research in 2019 found that, of all young men who bet on sports, 70 per cent were at risk of or already experiencing gambling harm; that's financial, mental or physical harm. Gambling advertising during live broadcasts was banned in September 2018, yet there are reports that the total volume of gambling ads since then has increased by 50 per cent. As highly regarded Frankston local Reverend Tim Costello noted in the Herald Sun today, if you watched commercial television during the pandemic, you couldn't escape ads for sports gambling, including during family friendly shows and when young people are watching. We are at risk that a young generation believe sport and gambling are linked. They are not, and we need to stop advertising that suggests that they are.

Moncrieff Electorate: Queen's Birthday Honours

Ms BELL (Moncrieff) (13:53): It gives me great pride to speak about eight outstanding individuals who have gone above and beyond in the Moncrieff community and been named in this year's Queen's Birthday honours. Patrick—known in Mermaid Beach as Terry—Jackman was made an Officer of the Order of Australia, for distinguished service to the community through support for educational and medical research organisations and to tourism and business. Perry Cross was made a Member of the Order of Australia for Perry's significant service to people living with a spinal cord injury and as a role model. Professor Phillip Morris was made a Member of the Order of Australia for his significant service to psychiatry, medical education and professional health organisations. John Coutis was made a Member of the Order of Australia for service to the community and to sport. Professor Julia Crilly was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia for services to emergency care and nursing. Rebecca Frizelle was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia for her service to the automotive sector and to rugby league. Ralph Hartland was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia for service to the community. Mark Peters was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia for service to sports administration and to baseball. Congratulations to all the recipients who have received this prestigious honour and thank you for your dedicated service to the betterment of our community. I once again state my pride for my community and what they have done to gain this very important recognition. I'm very, very proud of all of these constituents and the work they have done in the community on the central Gold Coast for the community of the central Gold Coast.
Domestic and Family Violence

Mr HUSIC (Chifley) (13:54): I have to read out these names to get them onto Hansard: Erlinda Songcuán, 69, of Woodcroft, who died on 2 May; Kamaljeet Sidhu, 27, of Quakers Hill, who died on 20 May; Ruth Mataafa, 22, of Bidwill, who died on 30 May; and Joytika Lata, 38, of Hebersham. On 5 May, Joytika's husband of 19 years tried to poison her and has been charged with domestic violence offences. The first three women were all killed in one month, in May, in our area as a result of domestic violence.

I had this brought to my attention by the WASH House in Mount Druitt. The WASH House does a fantastic job, but looking at the WASH House tells you everything about how we treat this problem. The WASH House is largely made up of women, but it's men who are causing this. Erlinda was married to her husband for 44 years, and she was killed; it was four years for Kamaljeet; and Ruth, who was 22, had just got married and there was a murder-suicide. Men have got to take control of this. Men are doing this. They need to take responsibility. Until they do, we are still going to be reading out these names. It's unacceptable.

Falloon, Ms Lesley, OAM

Mr TIM WILSON (Goldstein) (13:56): A century ago the First World War was a recent memory, radio began broadcasting and Goldstein resident Lesley Falloon OAM was born. She hasn't wasted a minute of her nearly 100 years. She was one of the first to attend Melbourne University's Women's College, where she majored in microbiology and biochemistry. She was later elected as a local councillor, serving for 13 years, including as Mayor of Sandringham.

She has always been a strong advocate for women and, in public office, championed access to women's sports facilities within our wonderful community. As an avid golfer, Lesley understands the crucial social and health benefits which sport provides to Australians of all ages and throughout all stages of life. Recently, we presented her with Engaging Women's Lifetime Achievement Award for her incredible service to the Goldstein community. So, for your 100 years, congratulations, Lesley! We admire your talent, kindness, humour and intellect, and we celebrate your achievements and your longevity. For this Saturday, happy 100th!

COVID-19: University Sector

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (13:57): The COVID economic crisis has hit many sectors hard, including our university sector. JobKeeper was set up to help save jobs, so why won't this government extend JobKeeper to the university sector? Upon hearing that they had been excluded from JobKeeper, La Trobe University wrote to its university sector. JobKeeper was set up to help save university sector? Upon hearing that they had been excluded from JobKeeper, La Trobe University wrote to its university sector. JobKeeper was set up to help save university sector. Why won't this Prime Minister save these jobs and back the call of people in my community?

If this Prime Minister and this government really want to help out struggling sectors that have been hit hard by COVID-19, then they would back the call of people in my community: La Trobe University in Bendigo. Hundreds of people have signed a petition that has been in our papers calling on this government to back in La Trobe University and to help save these jobs at the university's campuses in Bendigo, Bundoora, Wodonga, Mildura and Shepparton. Why won't this Prime Minister save these jobs and back the call, like so many people in my electorate have done? Why won't he save university jobs and help save a sector that is critical to recovery in this country? Do the right thing and back the people of Bendigo.

O'Connor Electorate: Infrastructure

Mr RICK WILSON (O'Connor) (13:59): Last week, round 4 of the successful Building Better Regions Fund was announced, delivering $200 million of investment in infrastructure for projects across drought affected communities around Australia. I was thrilled to hear that three communities in O'Connor will share in $7.9 million to boost fantastic local infrastructure projects.

The Shire of Ravensthorpe was the biggest recipient, receiving a huge $5.2 million for the construction of a new cultural precinct. I want to congratulate CEO Gavin Pollock and his team for all their hard work in putting together this $7 million project. It includes a central community hub, incorporating a CRC, visitor centre, library, senior citizens' centre, play group, youth group and new main foyer entrance. It also includes upgrades for the town park, including new parking bays and toilet facilities.

The shire of Jerramungup also received $2.1 million for a $4.2 million upgrade of the local swimming pool. The pool is located on the school grounds and will be accessed by the students as well as by the wider community. Finally, the Boxwood Hill combined sports club will receive $542,000 to refurbish its club facilities. The club president, Jarrod King, fought really hard to ensure this million dollar project was funded, and I commend his commitment to the project.
Regional communities are showing amazing spirit and strength as they support each other through these tough times, and I'm glad to see this latest round of BBRF will provide essential support at such a critical time.

The SPEAKER: In accordance with standing order 43, the time for members' statements has concluded.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Gillespie, Mr Karm

Mr MARLES (Corio—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:01): My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister update the House on the diplomatic efforts being made to support Australian Karm Gillespie in light of the death sentence imposed on him over the weekend?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:01): The government and I are very sad and concerned that an Australian citizen, Mr Karm Gillespie, has been sentenced to death in China. The foreign minister and Australian officials have raised Mr Gillespie's case with Chinese counterparts on a number of occasions. Australia's opposition to the death penalty is bipartisan, multipartisan, unanimous, principled, consistent and well known. We advocate consistently for the abolition of the death penalty worldwide by every diplomatic avenue available to us. We will continue to provide Mr Gillespie with consular assistance and engage China on his case. Our thoughts are with him, his family and his loved ones.

COVID-19: Employment

Mrs ARCHER (Bass) (14:02): My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister update the House on how the Morrison government's JobMaker plan will drive our economic recovery from the coronavirus pandemic to create jobs and guarantee the essential services Australians rely on?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:02): I thank the member for Bass, a keen supporter of the Bridgenorth Parrots. It was great to be joining them recently on the airwaves with their new radio program. If you're down around Bridgenorth way, I can highly commend the program to you.

Australia has done well, as we have acknowledged, in its response to the COVID crisis, both from a health point of view and from an economic point of view. But that is not to.in any way understare the terrible economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis. The economic impacts are real, they're damaging and, for Australians directly impacted, they are heartbreaking and causing great anxiety and great uncertainty. Thirty months of jobs growth was lost almost overnight. Budget revenues will be significantly impacted. It is anticipated it will take two years before we can even return the economy to the scale that it was at prior to COVID hitting us. It will be five years at least before we can regather ground on the growth that we had been looking forward to as we were ending last year.

This response that the government has put in place has two levels. There is the short-term support that is necessary, particularly at present, and then there are the longer term economic changes that are necessary. That's what our JobMaker plan is about. It's about restoring our economy and what was lost from that economy from the impact of COVID-19. This is a five-year plan. It's a plan that must be implemented, as it is being implemented, and it must be done in parallel with continuing to exercise disciplined budget management, because that's how you guarantee essential services. Our government remain absolutely committed to those essential services and the funding support we've provided for them in hospitals and schools, and we are very well aware of the increasing pressures in aged care and disability services and we will meet our commitments.

Infrastructure is a critical part of that JobMaker plan, together with the announcements we've already made on skills, industrial relations, energy and Federation reforms, and there'll be many more which we will speak to in the months ahead. Today, together with the states and territories, I've announced $1.5 billion in extra funding for ready-to-start projects. Some $9.3 billion has been brought forward in the past eight months to ensure we can get these projects on the ground and running as they are occurring, and we're also bringing forward the fast-tracking of 15 major projects with the states and territories worth some $72 billion, including the Marinus Link, which I know the member for Bass would be very interested in.

All up, there are some 66,000 jobs in these 15 major projects, and we'll be seeking to halve the approval times.

(Time expired)

Infrastructure

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (14:05): My question is to the Prime Minister. The Reserve Bank governor has called for infrastructure spending to be fast-tracked to support Australian jobs at least 11 times since the 2019 election. Why has it taken a pandemic for this seven-year-old government to wake up to the need to bring forward infrastructure investment?
Mr MORRISON (Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:05): This government has been running a $100 billion rolling 10-year program for infrastructure development. Since last November we have worked with state, territory and local governments to bring forward or inject additional investment, which now totals $9.3 billion: $4.2 billion for joint priority projects with the states and territory, which we announced at the end of last year in the midyear update; $1.3 billion brought forward from the Financial Assistance Grant program, which was announced by the Deputy Prime Minister in May; $500 million in new funding to establish a new program supporting all councils to undertake local road and community infrastructure upgrades in May; $1.75 billion in additional funding for the Sydney Metro-Western Sydney Airport; and $1.5 billion for shovel-ready projects and targeted road safety works, which I've announced.

Mr Albanese interjecting—

Mr MORRISON: I know the interjection from the Leader of the Opposition was about the airport, Mr Speaker. This is the Western Sydney airport that he said he believed in, and he didn't get a dozer on the site in six years. It took this government to make Western Sydney International (Nancy-Bird Walton) Airport a reality.

Mr Albanese interjecting—

Mr MORRISON: The Leader of the Opposition blames John Howard. The Leader of the Opposition is blaming everybody for his problems today. It's the New South Wales Labor branch's fault. It's the Victorian branch's fault. Apparently it's the New South Wales Liberal Party's fault! But I note that today we have 'Who's going to protect Albo' on the front page of The Age.

The SPEAKER: Prime Minister!

Mr MORRISON: I quote it, Mr Speaker. I'm simply quoting the title of the document.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister will resume his seat. The Prime Minister has the call.

Mr MORRISON: That issue raises many questions. Undoubtedly the Leader of the Opposition will attempt to answer them with, I hope, candour that at least matches that of the Victorian Premier. But the question is: who does he need to be protected from?

The SPEAKER: No. The Prime Minister will resume his seat.

Mr MORRISON: I've completed my answer, Mr Speaker.

The SPEAKER: I'm still going to point out to the Prime Minister that the question didn't ask about alternative policies.

COVID-19: Infrastructure

Mr CONAGHAN (Cowper) (14:08): My question is to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development. Will the Deputy Prime Minister inform the House how the Morrison-McConnell government's JobMaker plan is continuing to fast-track the rollout of infrastructure, both nationally and locally, to support and create jobs as part of the recovery from COVID-19?

Mr McCormack (Riverina—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development and Leader of the Nationals) (14:08): JobMaker and infrastructure—there's a member who gets it. Unlike those opposite, he understands the importance of creating jobs to build back better. He understands the importance of creating jobs to help us through COVID-19. He understands the importance of jobs, particularly regional jobs, in the Cowper electorate, and he's been fighting hard for them. Since long before he even got to this place he has been fighting hard and absolutely delivering. On Saturday, Port Macquarie Airport received $3½ million and Kempsey Airport received $327,000 as part of the 60 regional airports that received money under the Regional Airports Program.

It's been very clear from COVID-19 that we need a recovery plan, and we have it, and it's all about jobs. It's all about creating opportunity, and we are doing the investing, part of our $100 billion pipeline of investment that sustains and supports 85,000 jobs—85,000 people who need that work to help them have the prospect of a better future. And everything the member for Cowper does is building towards a better future in his North Coast electorate. Around half of the Commonwealth government's $100 billion decade-long transport infrastructure pipeline will be spent over the next four years. It includes the recent steps to accelerate spending, which totals more than $9.3 billion, as the Prime Minister has just said, in the past eight months, including a $4.2 billion infrastructure boost at MYEFO. I know those opposite don't care about that; I know they didn't listen to that. But, certainly, we're getting on with putting in the infrastructure that's creating jobs across the economy.

This is in addition to $16.3 million brought forward through the Financial Assistance Grants, which we did recently. Cowper councils Bellingen, Coffs Harbour, Kempsey, Nambucca Valley and Port Macquarie-Hastings.
will all benefit from those FAGs. They are included in the 537 councils across Australia that are getting a doubling of their Roads to Recovery funding under the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program. I know how belligerent the member has been about the Pacific Highway. He has fought hard for that. He has made sure that as part of his campaign, as part of his advocacy, we are building a better, safer Pacific Highway. That involves a 2½-hour reduction in travel time. It's all well and good to talk about how many millions of dollars we're spending, but it really gets granular and people really understand it when you talk about a 2½-hour reduction in travel time from Hexham to the Queensland border.

That is just part of the advantages, the benefits, that people will receive from our rollout of the infrastructure in today's announcement, where we're cutting through the red tape and we're getting rid of those hurdles towards building better infrastructure, particularly for regional Australia. (Time expired)

Road Infrastructure

Ms CATHERINE KING (Ballarat) (14:12): My question is to the Prime Minister. Why has the Prime Minister left the people of Murrumbateman and Yass behind by failing to announce an investment in the full duplication of the Barton Highway today?

Mr McCORMACK (Riverina—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development and Leader of the Nationals) (14:12): We're spending $100 million on the Barton Highway. Those opposite had six long years, and they didn't invest in the Barton Highway. But I'll tell you what they are backing—

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Members on my left!

Mr McCORMACK: We are making sure that when it comes to the Barton Highway, when it comes to the people of Eden-Monaro, we are investing in their infrastructure. On Saturday, at Merimbula, they were no doubt cheering the fact that they're getting $4½ million for their airport, and that's going to be important. It's a gateway to tourism for that wonderful South Coast town. I was at Tumut airport, where the mayor, James Hayes, was very pleased to be receiving $152,000 towards the Tumut airport, which is going to be so valuable, particularly after the bushfire season that we had. That money is going to be invested in strengthening and lengthening the apron and the taxiways of that airport.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition on a point of order?

Mr Albanese: Yes, planes are important, but they can't land on roads, and this question was very clear. It was about the Barton Highway—nothing else but the Barton Highway.

The SPEAKER: Some planes can land on roads, but your point's right, nonetheless. I'd just say to the Deputy Prime Minister that it was a specific question, and, whilst he has compared and contrasted some of the infrastructure projects, he can't do that for the rest of his answer.

Mr McCORMACK: The Barton Highway is important; it absolutely is. I travel it, probably more than most. When I come over here from Wagga Wagga to attend parliament I travel on the Barton Highway and, yes, it does need duplication—no question about it. But as part of our $100 billion infrastructure we have also prioritised the Barton Highway, as you'd expect us to, and we are investing heavily. And every time I go on the Barton Highway there are road signs, slowing people down, because of the activity that's going forward. There's a lot of work being done on the Barton Highway. As I drive through Murrumbateman I see that on this side of Murrumbateman there is a lot of work being done. The other night I was wandering past the opposition leader's office and I felt this strange whiff of—

The SPEAKER: No, Deputy Prime Minister—nope! No—the Barton Highway does not run past his office!

Mr Perrett interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Moreton!

Mr Perrett: I'm just trying to help!
The SPEAKER: You never help—you might be trying, but you never help! I just don't want the call to get out of order, so it's the Independent's question. I knew I couldn't avoid it!

Migration

Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (14:16): KAP—not Independent! The morning has been a turkish delight, I've got to say! Prime Minister, COVID is here to stay, warranting surely a return to 2006 visa entrant levels of 360,000—now 640,000, and from countries with no democracy and/or no rule of law and/or no egalitarian traditions and/or no industrial awards and/or no Judeo-Christian 'love everyone, make a better world'. Isn't visa-shot universities' claim of $23 billion in exports actually income from cabdrivers and after-hours cafe workers? Surely we should be enriched by annual inflows of diversity but not, as 60 Minutes highlighted, drowning in a tidal wave of foreign values?

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Well, the Prime Minister's got three minutes to address that series of questions.

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:17): I thank the member for Kennedy for raising the important issue of migration in this country. The member for Kennedy is in fact a long-term product of that program. We've all come from somewhere else at some point in time in our background, unless we're Indigenous Australians. The member for Kennedy comes from a very proud line himself. We are the most successful migration country in the world. There is no doubt about that, and we're the most successful multicultural country in the world. Migrants have overwhelmingly added to our nation, and do so every single day.

Points are raised around the issue of the employment of migrants in Australia. ABS data of working-age migrants released just last week shows that 68 per cent were employed, up from 65 per cent in the last Characteristics of Recent Migrants Survey. This compares to 65 per cent for those born in Australia. Recent migrants are also getting more skilled, with 69 per cent arriving with tertiary qualifications, up from 65 per cent in the previous survey. One in three small businesses in Australia are managed or owned by migrants and employ hundreds of thousands of people right across Australia.

The great success of Australia's migration story is that it is a story of people who have come to make a contribution to this country, not to take one. That is the success of our migration policy. And our migration policy will continue to be not just an economic pillar of this country but it will continue to be one of the most important social pillars of this country.

No system is perfect, and integrity in migration is important. That's why I commend the Minister for Home Affairs on the outstanding work that he has done to ensure that Australians can have confidence in our migration program, regardless of what stream that migration comes from. And we will remain ever vigilant, I will commit to the member for Kennedy, to ensure that we maintain the integrity of that program—both the integrity of the program and—

Mr Katter interjecting—

The SPEAKER: I haven't called you, Member for Kennedy. Everyone watching can't hear you; I haven't called you. I haven't called the member for Kennedy because, with the number of questions he asked—and this is somewhat unique—it was impossible for the Prime Minister not to be relevant to the range of subjects that were raised.

Mr MORRISON: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am equally fond of the member for Kennedy. He raises the important point of temporary migration, and one of the important issues that has occurred in our program over the last decade is that temporary migration has become, under the skills program, a pathway to permanent migration that ensures that we can have a greater confidence of those who move into the permanent program that they have established the skills, the employment and the security in the community to be successful permanent migrants. There is a connection between the two, and it's been a positive connection. Our government will always be supportive of positive migration, and also we will ensure its integrity, whether it's protecting the integrity of our borders or protecting the integrity of the scheme on which so many Australians depend.

COVID-19: Economy

Mr SIMMONDS (Ryan) (14:20): My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer outline to the House how the Morrison government's strong economic management and fiscal discipline is helping to make the Australian economy more resilient during the pandemic crisis while also continuing to provide the essential services that Australians rely on.

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—Treasurer) (14:21): I thank the member for Ryan for his question and acknowledge his extensive experience in local government with the biggest local government of them all,
Brisbane City Council, before coming to this place. We understand that Australians are doing it tough—doing it tough because we are going through a once-in-a-century pandemic that has seen business and consumer confidence reach record lows. We saw in the month of April 600,000 fewer people in the workforce than in the month prior.

But we are on the road back. Australia is on the road to economic recovery. Consumer confidence has picked up 90 per cent from its lows. After the announcement of JobKeeper, we had a record run of nine consecutive weeks where consumer confidence increased. Business confidence has picked up 70 per cent of its lows. We saw a record 25 point jump in business confidence recently, and in the March national accounts we saw a particularly strong result for mining investment, up 10.3 per cent through the year.

We have been singled out by international agencies for our strong economic performance. We talked recently about the OECD, who said that Australia's economic growth will contract by five per cent in this calendar year, but will grow by four per cent next calendar year. That is in comparison to New Zealand, who are going to see their economy contract, according to the OECD, by 8.9 per cent. For the United States it is by 7.3 per cent and for the United Kingdom by 11½ cent. The reason why we've been able to deliver a strong economic performance is because of the $260 billion of economic support that we've provided, like the cashflow boost, like the extended instant asset write-off and like the JobKeeper Program. The JobKeeper Program is supporting Lisa Stephens in her gym business in Indooroopilly, an F45 gym that she said she has been able to keep open because of the JobKeeper Program, supporting five staff in Indooroopilly with this gym. Hundreds of thousands of businesses right across the country are also benefitting millions of workers as a result of our JobKeeper Program.

This was only possible because of the strong economic position Australia had as we entered into this crisis, including balancing the budget for the first time in 11 years. That fiscal discipline gave us the financial firepower to respond. Now, there's no money tree.

Dr Chalmers interjecting—

Mr FRYDENBERG: The member for Rankin would have you spend more and spend for longer, but there's no money tree. Government is there not as a limitless spender but as an enabler for small business throughout the country.

Dams

Ms BUTLER (Griffith) (14:24): My question is to the Prime Minister. The government came to office promising 100 dams, and for seven years now the last dams built were Labor projects. What support is the government giving the Brogo Dam and the Eurobodalla water storage supply projects?

Mr McCormack (Riverina—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development and Leader of the Nationals) (14:24): We're getting on with the job of building dams. I've never once had the shadow minister for water come to my office and say, 'I'd love to see these dam projects put on the list.' But, rest assured, Anthony Lynham from the Queensland government has. I've had good discussions with him about building dams. I haven't had any with the shadow minister, and, if she were really serious about building dams, she would have raised it a lot sooner than that. In New South Wales, Melinda Pavey has had good discussions about building dams. We talked last week in the parliament about Dungowan Dam. We talked about the $480 million that we're putting—I see the member for New England nodding. We're raising the dam wall at Wyangala: a $650 million project. We are getting on with the job of business cases and actually putting shovels in the ground to build more dams, and we will continue to do that—$3½ billion we've got. I know Deb Frecklington in Queensland has a project scheme where she wants to link up dams, where she wants to build dams, and we acknowledge and are certainly going to invest in that. I know the member for Kennedy wants dams built in his electorate. We've had good discussions. So I invite you to do what the member for Kennedy has done: come down to my office, let's have a discussion, whether it's a New South Wales dam, whether it's a Queensland dam—wherever the case might be.

We have put in place the national water grid, established on 1 October last year. That is going to cut through some of the bureaucratic red tape that has impeded the building of dams. Rest assured: we cannot build dams without the say-so, without the help, without the assistance of the states. That's how our federated model works. I know that might be a bit of a confusing thing for the member who asked the question, but we're getting on with the job of making sure that, through the national water grid, we have the plan and we have the purpose, and we will build water infrastructure. You only have to look at what we're doing as far as agriculture is concerned—we want to raise it from a $60 billion enterprise to $100 billion by 2030. Fiona Simson and everybody else involved in the augest National Farmers Federation understands that you can't grow or continue to grow even further the best food and fibre in the world through our farmers—the world's best farmers, the world's best environmentalists—without water. And that's why we are investing heavily in helping to drought-proof our nation.
We will continue to do that. We will continue to do it through better water infrastructure, and I welcome the member coming to my office—sit down, have a cup of tea with me and talk about it.

**COVID-19: Environment**

**Mr RAMSEY** (Grey—Government Whip) (14:27): My question is to the Minister for the Environment. Will the minister please outline to the House what the Morrison government is doing to make environmental assessments more efficient, and how is this helping create jobs and investment to support our economic recovery as we come out of the other side of the coronavirus pandemic?

**Ms LEY** (Farrer—Minister for the Environment) (14:28): Can I thank the member for Grey for his question. I, like him, welcome the Prime Minister's announcement today that we will be fast-tracking assessments for 15 priority infrastructure projects. This includes the Marinus Link between Tasmania and Victoria; emergency town water supplies in New South Wales; and the Olympic Dam mine extension in South Australia, a $3 billion project that will deliver 1,800 jobs to South Australia in its construction and 600 operating jobs going forward. These 15 projects are worth more than $72 billion in public and private investment and will support more than 66,000 direct and indirect jobs. Having stronger and faster environmental approvals is a key component to our economic recovery, and today's announcement builds on the good work our government has already been doing.

Since last year, we've seen assessment time frames improve from 19 per cent of key decisions made on time to 100 per cent in May this year. We've more than halved the time taken by the Commonwealth at the final stage of these assessments down from 90 days to 40 days and we're clearing the backlog of outstanding decisions, and we're going to do even better by halving our overall time frames for major projects from 3.5 years to 21 months. We've already delivered quick and robust decisions on major projects ahead of time without any relaxation of environmental safeguards. Just last week I announced approval for the Chaffy Dam pipeline with the member for New England. This important project will extend Tamworth's town water supply by six months if it doesn't rain.

As the Prime Minister announced this morning, we're on track to decide Snowy Hydro 2.0 in well under two years, unlocking over 2,000 regional jobs. But it's not just about faster approvals, it's about better approvals with strong protection for the environment. After this year's bushfires, we are taking a careful approach aimed at protecting impacted species and their habitat, taking advice from my expert scientific panel.

We are also working with the states, updating our assessment bilateral agreements. We've completed the update with New South Wales and our update to WA's agreement is well underway. There's more improvement to come with the EPBC review. We look forward to Graeme Samuel handing down his interim report at the end of this month.

As the PM said today, ultimately our objective is the streamlining of Commonwealth and state process to a point of single touch approvals. National cabinet will come back to this issue shortly and discuss further measures to streamline Commonwealth and state processes, informed by the current EPBC review. The Morrison government is protecting the environment, jobs and Australia's economic future.

**COVID-19: Benefits and Payments**

**Dr CHALMERS** (Rankin) (14:31): My question is to the Prime Minister. Can the Prime Minister confirm that fewer Australians than expected are receiving the wage subsidy while more Australians than expected have signed up for jobseeker?

**Mr MORRISON** (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:31): Only the Labor Party would lament the fact that fewer people needed an economic support program than was estimated. Only the Labor Party would be disappointed that the need was actually less than what was estimated. That tells you a lot about how the Labor Party have been engaging with this issue of the COVID-19 response. I can tell you, Mr Speaker, I'm very pleased that fewer people have had to draw down on that program. I'm very pleased. I'm also very pleased that jobseeker has been there for those who need it, some 1.6 million Australians who have needed that program, because jobseeker has been put in place—

**Dr Chalmers interjecting—**

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Rankin!

**Mr MORRISON:** Look, he is young and enthusiastic, Mr Speaker, very enthusiastic, but what he might care to do is listen to the advice which says that when there are fewer people who need economic support that's a good thing. It is a tribute and it is a commendation of the work that businesses have been doing to bring us through the COVID-19 crisis. They have been holding onto staff wherever they can. They have been supported by JobKeeper wherever they can be. For those who are unable to be supported by JobKeeper then jobseeker has been there for them. That's what jobseeker has demonstrated.
Again, I am not going to demonise jobseeker. Those opposite seem to think that jobseeker is a second prize. That's not my view. Jobseeker is there to help people who have lost their employment. The Labor Party want to demonise jobseeker and say to those people that if they're on jobseeker they are on second-best, and that they should somehow be stigmatised because they are on jobseeker. That is what the Labor Party are saying right now. It is a shameful indictment on them that they would seek to do that to people who are on jobseeker.

We have done both of these programs to help Australians through one of the greatest times of need. The good news is that, as compared to countries all around the world, the economic response that this government has put in place means that we are doing better than almost any other developed economy around the world today. That is something I know Australians would be pleased about. The only ones who would be disappointed about that result sit on the opposition benches, because all they can see in these things is an opportunity for themselves politically. They say they support these measures, but from day 1 they have sought to undermine them, and for that they should be ashamed of themselves.

COVID-19: JobMaker

Mr YOUNG (Longman) (14:34): My question is to the Minister for Industry, Science and Technology. Will the minister please update the House on how the Morrison government's JobMaker plan to cut regulation and reduce compliance costs will support small and medium-sized businesses and create jobs?

Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson—Minister for Industry, Science and Technology) (14:34): I thank the member for his question. As a fellow small-business owner, I know that he understands and is very supportive of and passionate about small business. It was only just last week that we met and spoke about Australian manufacturing, particularly in his electorate of Longman. Cutting red tape has always been in the coalition's DNA because we understand the needs of businesses. As the Prime Minister outlined this morning, cutting red tape and deregulation are crucial to fast-tracking our economic recovery and getting more Australians back into work. That is exactly what JobMaker is all about.

During the height of the COVID-19 crisis, we saw what could be achieved when regulators rethought their processes. For example, we had some very great successes in cutting through red tape to help ramp up Australian businesses to produce and distribute hand sanitiser. The TGA, Australia Post, the tax office, Safe Work Australia and the National Transport Commission all stepped up and worked together to support small and medium enterprises, and some large enterprises, to set up hand sanitiser production and delivery right across Australia. As I said at the Press Club previously, the COVID pandemic has shown what is possible if we facilitate, rather than overregulate.

As the technology minister, I'm particularly pleased that digital technology has been identified as an enabler to simplify and to speed up government interaction with businesses and industry. It's very clear that our laws have not kept pace with digital technology and that is particularly the case with business communications. We actually need to make sure that we are embracing and adopting those new technologies, particularly blockchain.

We need to streamline how governments at all levels do business to bring us in line with what the community expects of us. Since well before this pandemic, the Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister, Ben Morton, has been working with all government members and senators to look at deregulation and how we can make it easier for businesses to do business. Our aim has always been to make sure that tradies and mum-and-dad businesses wanting to grow and create jobs have the opportunity to do it and to do it easily, because we know that, when industry succeeds, it means more jobs for the Australians who are so desperately looking for work at the moment.

Jobseeker Payment

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (14:37): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to his last answer and his repeated statements that he would not accept jobseeker being portrayed as some sort of second prize to JobKeeper. Isn't it the case that JobKeeper recipients maintain the work relationship between a worker and their employer, whereas jobseeker recipients do not? Isn't it true that a person is better off if they have a job?

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Members on my right! The member for Deakin.

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:38): As time goes on, the challenge of JobKeeper is that businesses will form views about those employees who they will be able to keep on longer term and those who they will not. And, where there are not jobs for people, it is important that they become engaged with employment service programs and other forms of income support. The purpose of that is to get them back into new jobs—to have them trained for new jobs. That is the challenge going forward. Now, the Leader of
the Opposition makes the point about the financial support provided to those on JobKeeper compared to those on jobseeker. Well, the actual level of benefits, when you take into account many others—

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition on a point of order?

Mr ALBANESE: My question didn't go to that at all. It went to the relationship between a worker and the employer that's there with JobKeeper and is not there with jobseeker, and whether people are better off if they have a job. It's that simple.

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister has the call. I'm listening closely.

Mr MORRISON: I was simply making the point that those who are on jobseeker receive an equivalence in fiscal support because of the other programs that they have the ability to access. Those who are on JobKeeper do maintain that connection to their employment; that is the case. But what we are now interested in as a government is those who will be able to have that connection in six months from now, in 12 months from now and in two years from now. The reason we put JobKeeper into place all those months ago is that we did not want businesses to make decisions about the future of their employees when the issues were so uncertain.

This is a fast-moving crisis, and it's important that we remain agile to the changes in what we are seeing before us. JobKeeper has been doing its job. For part-time and full-time employees, it has been providing the exact support that we had designed for it to have. For equivalent casuals of 12 months or more, it has been doing the same thing. Those who haven't been able to access that program have been supported by jobseeker. These programs are in accordance with the Australian way of how we do things, where we don't provide some sort of a gradated level of income support based on what people's salaries used to be. The JobKeeper program was in a class of its own internationally, and it has been recognised as such.

Those opposite have sought to undermine JobKeeper despite supporting it from the day. They say they support it, and then they undermine it every day. Each-way Leader of the Opposition—everything he supports, he also opposes. He's for something and he's against something all at the same time. That's why they don't trust this Leader of the Opposition.

Dr Chalmers interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Rankin is warned.

Mr MORRISON: This was a Leader of the Opposition who went to an economic conference this morning and couldn't even give a speech.

Mr Albanese interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition can't take a second point of order unless it's on something other than relevance.

Resources Industry

Mr THOMPSON (Herbert) (14:41): My question is to the Minister for Resources, Water and Northern Australia. Will the minister please outline to the House how the resources sector is leading Australia's economic recovery as we come out the other side of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Mr PIT (Hinkler—Minister for Resources, Water and Northern Australia) (14:42): I thank the honourable member for his question. We know the member for Herbert is a great supporter of the resources sector. In fact, he rolls his sleeves up and gets out there every single day in his electorate to support coal, and he knows why—because of the economic contribution the sector makes to this country.

In the face of the most significant public health and economic shock we've had in over 100 years, it is the resources sector that is delivering. It is delivering for our economy. In fact, the resources sector in the past year has continued to punch above its weight. It's contributed around nine per cent to Australia's GDP and 25 per cent of all growth in our economy. I'll say that again: 25 per cent of all growth in our economy is coming from the resources sector. That equates to some $294 billion worth of exports. In fact, we continue to expect the iron ore sector to go through $100 billion worth of exports in just one year—the first Australian commodity to ever do that.

In the March quarter, mining output was $1.6 billion higher than at the same time last year. Mining investment reached $13 billion—around one quarter of all private business investment. That is a very strong performance. The Morrison-McCormack government has an economic plan to turbocharge jobs in Australia and to turbocharge jobs in regional Australia, and the resources sector will be an enormous part of that work.

Over a million Australians work directly or indirectly in the resources sector. We want to see more Australians work in that sector. I want to see more youth, in particular, get an opportunity as apprentices, as trainees or as engineers to find their way in the resources sector—to get a good job and pay their own way. We know that
resource projects like Valeria's, Olive Downs's, New Hope's and Adani's will contribute around 3,000 jobs to Queensland alone.

In this country, we know we have to grow it, mine it and make it—that's got to be our plan moving forward. This is how we'll drive jobs. We know a couple of those opposite are concerned about the economy. We've got a couple that are supportive of the resources sector and the some $300 billion it might contribute—

The SPEAKER: I'll just say to the minister that he can't canvass members of the opposition, because the question didn't ask for alternative policies.

Mr Pitt: Of course, Mr Speaker. But we do know there are a number of people who do support the sector. We know a number of people will get together and support the resources sector. We know there are some of them who are very keen on the jobs the sector provides—up to a million directly and indirectly across this country. We know that there are some who have been named. They've had to go underground for their support! They've had to go underground, according to reports on the weekend.

But, once again, it is this side of the House that will continue to support jobs in this country. We will continue to be the job-making government, quite simply because we have done it before. And we will do it again. The people of Australia can trust us in what we say.

JobKeeper Payment

Mr Albanese (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (14:45): My question is addressed to the Prime Minister. I refer to his previous answer, when he said, 'The challenges of JobKeeper, as time goes on, are that businesses will form views about those employees who they will be able to keep on longer term and those who they will not.' Prime Minister, how many Australians do you expect to lose their jobs when JobKeeper is cut off in September?

Mr Morrison (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:45): As the Leader of the Opposition well knows, the government will make further decisions regarding ongoing fiscal supports in late July after considering the economic circumstances of the time and after having received the advice from Treasury.

But the Leader of the Opposition plays a dangerous game when seeking to raise expectations about Australians in this economy. It is true that JobKeeper has provided—together with jobseeker, the cashflow assistance and support and the many other assistances that the government has provided at unprecedented and record levels—the economic lifeline that Australians have needed. But we cannot say to Australians that governments or anyone else, ultimately, will be in a position to ensure that every job can be saved and that every business can be saved. That is unrealistic, and if the Leader of the Opposition wants to play politics with that then he would be negligent in his responsibilities and callous in his words to the Australian people.

We know we're in the middle of one of the worst recessions we've seen—certainly, the worst one we've seen since the Great Depression. And we know that in recessions there are terrible impacts had on livelihoods, on businesses and on people's jobs. We will seek to do all we can, as we have with the unprecedented support. But I'm not going to make false promises to the Australian people. We have cushioned the blow but we can't prevent the blow, and we will be doing everything we can to ensure that those who do lose employment gain employment again through the JobMaker program and the many reforms and changes we'll be introducing to see our economy grow again, see the businesses open again and see the jobs come back again—because that's where the jobs will come from.

This Leader of the Opposition thinks he can go around and guarantee everybody's job with someone else's money. You can't do that. He thinks government should be at the centre of the economy—

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister will resume his seat. The Leader of the Opposition on a point of order.

Mr Albanese: Yes, Mr Speaker, on relevance. It went to the Prime Minister's expectation, based upon his own quote, of how many would be expected to lose their jobs when JobKeeper is withdrawn in September. Surely the government has some modelling, some expectation? That was the question that was asked.

The SPEAKER: I will just say to the Prime Minister that the question was narrowly confined. It didn't go to the opposition's approach. I call the Prime Minister.

Mr Morrison: Mr Speaker, I made reference to the work that Treasury is doing currently and I made reference to the statement that will be delivered by the Treasurer in late July, when there will be further updates to what Treasury believes to be the economic situation on employment and many of the other key economic parameters. That's how budget processes work.

We are in June; July will tell a different story and, indeed, September will tell a different story. It has been our approach to take this step-by-step and cautiously, to get the best expert advice, to listen to the best health advice, to listen to the best economic advice and to make the judgements that Australia needs this government to make.
That is how, and that is why, our government has ensured that Australia, working together with the states and territories, is in the top tier of countries that have been able to respond to this crisis on both health and economic— *(Time expired)*

**COVID-19: Health Care**

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Cabinet) (14:49): I want to thank the member for Higgins not just for her question but for her work more generally within the health system, particularly, along with the member for North Sydney, the member for Macarthur and others, on the allergies inquiry, which will make a big difference to the capacity of the health system going forwards.

In what has been the most intense period, our health system has performed extraordinarily well. It has been, I think, by all assessments the envy of the world in the way it has dealt with the coronavirus challenge, the way that the primary healthcare system has stood up and our doctors and our nurses, supported by telehealth, have dealt with coronavirus and the way that that system through our aged-care network has stood up. I’m advised today that there are now no cases remaining active in any aged-care facilities in Australia. Equally, the tribute rests with our hospitals, where our hospital workers, doctors, nurses, carers, cleaners and administrators have done an extraordinary job. We have expanded our capacity to 7,500 ventilators. At the moment the latest advice I have is that there are two Australians with COVID-19 on ventilation. What an outstanding job!

But, throughout the course of this, we have also had to plan and prepare for the long term and to expand that capacity still further. We have been able to strike a new national hospital reform agreement, with the support of the Prime Minister and the Treasurer, to invest $131 billion in an agreement with every state and territory. We are going from what was a $100 billion agreement to $131 billion. But, much more importantly than that, we are investing specifically in new, high-cost therapies such as CAR T-cell therapy, lifesaving treatment for people with blood cancers who might not ever have that opportunity but for an agreement such as this.

At the same time, we are building the Hospital in the Home program to give people more flexibility to be with their loved ones during the course of treatment. This is an extraordinary national achievement, done in conjunction with states and territories. At the same time, we are delivering the new—seventh—community pharmacy agreement. This CPA expands by $1½ billion the amount of funding which is being delivered to our pharmacies for better medicines. There is a $1.2 million program for assisting with better medicines for our elderly, for Indigenous Australians and for those with chronic conditions. There’s an expansion as part of that of $100 million. But, perhaps most pleasingly, there will be 800 new pharmacies in rural and regional Australia to support rural Australians and to support Indigenous Australians with better access to medicines. It is about saving lives, protecting lives and supporting— *(Time expired)*

**COVID-19: Aged Care**

Mr HAYES (Fowler—Chief Opposition Whip) (14:53): My question is to the Prime Minister. Today is International Cleaners Day. Prime Minister, why has the government deliberately excluded cleaning staff at aged-care facilities from the retention payment which was given to other aged-care workers during the coronavirus?

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Cabinet) (14:53): I want to thank the member; however, there is a very important point which he seems to be missing. We’ve invested over $850 million right across the aged-care system to expand and support that capacity. He refers to one subprogram within that, a $230 million program which was designed specifically to protect and support those who were dealing face to face and providing additional care at a time when around the world we were seeing those carers facing both a specific risk and a risk of losing their support in terms of staying on the job. So we were able to provide that retention bonus of up to $800 for each of the two current quarters—the June quarter and the September quarter. All workers across the aged-care system are supported by the $850 million package. The specific program was always intended, from day one, to support our nurses and our aged-care carers.

So that was what it was set out to do and it is doing that. What it means is that we are supporting Australian workers. And what was the result of that? I just mentioned in the previous answer that we have now cleared coronavirus from every aged-care facility in Australia.

Ms Collins interjecting—
The industrial relations system in Australia for 25 years and that, when it works well, it can definitely be to the mutual benefit of employees in the form of higher-than-award wages; it works well for employers in terms of more productive, more efficient businesses; and, of course, the overall economy and everyone who wants a job can benefit as the economy gets stronger and there is more job growth. So we are focusing on this area as one of our working groups as part of our JobMaker program in the task before us to rebuild the Australian economy.

When you have a look at the mutual benefit that can arise from enterprise agreements, you see that 38 per cent of working Australians are at the moment covered by collective agreements, including enterprise agreements, and 21 per cent are covered by awards. The average weekly earnings under the awards, part time and full time, are $778.80, and under agreement that figure is $1,331.20. So the agreements lead to higher wages. This, of course, was Paul Keating's vision. In 1993 he described his vision for the system. He said:

For most employees and most businesses, wages and conditions of work would be determined by agreements worked out by the employer, the employees and their union. These agreements would predominantly be based on improving the productive performance of enterprises, because both employers and employees are coming to understand that only productivity improvements can guarantee sustainable real wage increases.

He went on to say:

It is a model under which compulsorily arbitrated awards and arbitrated wage increases would be there only as a safety net. … Over time the safety net would inevitably become simpler. We would have fewer awards, with fewer clauses.

The difficulty, of course, has been that the number of enterprise agreements has, sadly, declined. It reached a peak in December 2010, when 2.6 million employees were covered. That figure is now about 2.2 million. And why has that happened? The Fair Work Commission in a 2019 report cited things like increasingly technical requirements arising from commission decisions themselves; delayed processing; inadequate education, explanation and guidance; and substandard communications processes. In the example of the Wesley Mission in Queensland, there was an enterprise agreement exercise commenced in 2016. It resulted in a positive vote in September 2018. Then it was overturned due to a technical error. Then it was approved a year later, but then many years later, in March 2020, it was overturned due to a technical error. So those sorts of failures stand as a disincentive for others to get into that system.

The third working group that we've commissioned is going to focus squarely on enterprise agreements, because they've been proven to be a means that we can leverage to regrow our economy after the COVID-19 pandemic in a way that can put upward pressure on wage growth. When we look at the agreements approved in the December quarter of 2019, they delivered an annualised wage increase of 2.7 per cent, which was higher than the economy-
wide wage increases and higher than inflation. If we fix this system with cooperation and consultation, we can help grow the economy. *(Time expired)*

Sheean, Ordinary Seaman Edward (Teddy)

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (15:00): Will the Prime Minister reverse his decision to deny Teddy Sheean a Victoria Cross? Surely the Prime Minister regrets denying this honour to a man who strapped himself to the gun of a sinking ship to shoot down enemy aircraft and save his mates.

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (15:00): The bravery, service and contribution of Teddy Sheean is not under question. He was an incredible and brave Australian, like 40,000 others who lost their lives during the Second World War. Each and every day of those six years, acts of bravery, acts of selflessness and acts of sacrifice took place. At that time, over the course of that campaign, there were a small number of Victoria crosses that were handed out. And there were a very small number who were mentioned honourably in dispatches, particularly from the Navy, and Teddy Sheean was one of those.

When you look back into the history, 80 years ago, you've got to be very careful about putting yourself in the position of those who stood before you and made these decisions. All I'm seeking to do is assure myself, with the responsibilities that I have, that the policy test that was adopted by the previous government can be held by our government. There needs to be compelling new evidence that would justify the revisiting of that award. The valour inquiry found there wasn't. There has been a subsequent tribunal which was not reviewing the decision of the valour inquiry but was initiated by a separate process. Each of those inquiries have come to different conclusions, so I am simply seeking to honour the system. I have advice from the CDF on this matter and—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr MORRISON: The interjections come from those opposite. I sought advice from the CDF and I have accepted his advice, but I have also asked for this very specific issue to be addressed. I'm simply seeking to preserve the integrity of the honours and awards system, and I will receive that advice from the eminent Australians Dr Nelson, Dr Shergold, Brad Manera and David Bennett, the former Solicitor-General, who are eminently qualified to look at this specific issue. I want to thank the member for Bass and the member for Braddon; Guy Barnett, a former member of the other place; and the Premier of Tasmania for the constructive engagement I've had with them. They have been engaging with me on this issue for some time. I've respected and appreciated their meetings with me. We are working through this issue. We just have to make a decision that is consistent with government policy and respects the honours and awards system. But I want to make this very clear: Teddy Sheean was a great and brave Australian. There is no dispute about that.

Energy

Mr PEARCE (Braddon) (15:03): My question is to the Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction. Will the minister please update the House on how the Morrison government is investing in the energy infrastructure we need to create jobs as we recover from COVID-19?

Mr TAYLOR (Hume—Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction) (15:03): I thank the member for Braddon for his question. He knows, as we all do on this side of the House, that, coming out of COVID-19, a strong Australia means having access to affordable, reliable energy. As a farmer and small business owner, he also knows how important it is to streamline processes and get rid of red tape in order to encourage investment and jobs growth. That means that we can get on with investing in the energy infrastructure that is absolutely crucial for the future of this nation.

I note that the member for Braddon is a keen supporter of the Marinus Link project in Tasmania. He knows that projects such as that can encourage local jobs and investment in his electorate. Marinus Link will provide a second interconnector, alongside Basslink, between Tasmania and Victoria. In the process, it will bring down energy prices and will assure the reliability and security of our grid in southern Australia. But it will do much more, because in his region of north-western Tasmania it will create a jobs boom—3,800 jobs at peak for Marinus with up to $7 billion of investment.

We are getting on with the job of Marinus, just like we are getting on with the job for many infrastructure projects right across Australia. It's great to see, along these lines, that the New South Wales government has given its approval to the Snowy 2.0 project in the Snowy region. Not only will Snowy, like Marinus, drive down prices and keep the lights on, it will create a jobs boom in the Snowy region—up to 2,000 jobs at peak. Already, we see 500 jobs being created from the Snowy project, up to 850 by the end of the year. Indeed, 100 small businesses around the region are already benefiting from the Snowy project. Those are many small and family-owned businesses, like the Owerses' business—Phil and Yvette Owers—who run National Cranes and Engineering in the...
area. They're benefiting from the Snowy project. And there is James McMahon, the third generation to provide services to Snowy business.

On this side of the House we are getting on with the job, ensuring that we streamline the processes and get rid of the red tape so that we see the energy infrastructure we need in this country, in the Snowy region and in north-western Tasmania, because that will ensure a strong Australia as we come out of COVID-19.

**Dairy Industry**

**Mr FITZGIBBON** (Hunter) (15:06): My question is to the Prime Minister. The member for New England has called for a royal commission into the dairy sector because, he says, 'Those with market power have utilised it at the expense of our dairy producers.' But the agriculture minister has rejected the call by the member for New England. Prime Minister, who is right?

**Mr LITTLEPROUD** (Maranoa—Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management and Deputy Leader of the National Party) (15:07): I'm glad to see the member for Hunter actually had the time to put a question in today. He's obviously got his 20 guests for OTIS this week!

Let me say to him that I have not ruled anything out. No-one has ever ruled a royal commission out on any matter. It would be unwise to do so. But to create a royal commission you need to have the evidence that there has been malpractice. You do not simply call for a royal commission at the drop of a hat. But, if there are those who have evidence to suggest that there has been wrongdoing, be that by a supermarket or a processor, then there would be evidence that they could put forward for a determination to be made. That is a simple process that we undertake.

But that's what you do: you undertake it based on fact—not on fiction or politics. That's what the member for Hunter is trying to do here. It is only on this side that we've become concerned about the dairy industry and tried to undertake real reform. The ACCC report in 2018 clearly identified that there was a market imbalance. Their recommendation to us was to introduce a dairy code of conduct. That is what we did. That is what we are doing, along with complementary measures to make sure that there is equity in that market. But to come in here and to make rash statements is unwise. It's unhealthy, and it's reckless.

**COVID-19: Trade**

**Mr VASTA** (Bonner) (15:08): My question is to the Minister for Home Affairs. Will the minister outline to the House how the Morrison government's commitment to strong and efficient borders is working to protect Australian families and to manage the flow of critically important goods?

**Mr DUTTON** (Dickson—Minister for Home Affairs) (15:08): I thank the honourable member for his question. The member for Bonner is a very, very strong supporter of the Port of Brisbane, and he is a great advocate for industry in his local electorate. He must be, because we want to create jobs. We want to make sure that we can facilitate trade and that we can grow businesses so that they can help us in the post COVID-19 environment.

We were one of the first movers on travel restrictions in relation to the closing our borders, not just with China but with other countries, obviously. Those travel bans were scaled up and they resulted in contributing to the success that we've had in dealing with this pandemic. We've also had, though, a dramatic impact on the way in which we can reduce the burden on businesses which seek to trade, both importers and exporters—those that want to bring goods into our country and those farmers and other manufacturers that seek to export goods. We've established the Trusted Trader program to reduce the regulatory burden and help those people increase their bottom line so that they can employ more Australians. Through this program, we can help grow their businesses and get government off their backs so that they can help unemployed Australians get a job.

The other important aspect at our borders in recent times has been not only to work with supermarkets—we established a task force to work with the CEOs of the supermarkets in our country to reduce the burden and, again, to help them bring produce and products into our country in a more expeditious fashion—but also to provide support to importers and exporters by stamping out those people who seek to undermine that business model by sending PPE equipment, in particular overseas and by trying to import some of that equipment as well. The ABF, as at 12 June, has stopped some 779,000 items on export, including over 720,000 face masks as well as hand sanitiser, alcoholic wipes and other disinfectant products. The ABF has also seized an import of 46,000 items being predominantly counterfeit COVID-19 test kits and fake or unapproved medicines.

It is important to get the balance right to make sure that we keep our borders secure but reduce the costs for our importers and exporters so that they can help grow employment in our country. To get that balance right, we need a very effective Australian Border Force. The ABF is led by Michael Outram, the commissioner. He and his staff, right across the country, at both our seaports and airports, have done an exceptional job. I praise them for the work.
that they've done in helping to keep Australians safe. They work day and night in that cause, and they should be praised for their efforts.

**Australia Post**

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (15:11): My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister reverse his decision to slash postal deliveries to Australians?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (15:12): I will ask the minister for communications to add to the answer as he sees fit. The Leader of the Opposition is once again seeking to portray an issue in a way which does not accord with the facts of the situation. Australia Post is responding and managing their business to meet the needs of customers during the COVID-19 crisis. That is what they're doing. In adjusting how they deliver services, Australia Post are no different to any other business around the country that is having to do just that. What the head of Australia Post has said is that they are keeping all the jobs. They're protecting all the jobs, but, like in so many businesses across the country today, some employees are being asked to do different tasks as they deal with the different types of demand that that organisation is faced with.

I've never understood why the Leader of the Opposition seems to think there's one rule for some and a different rule for others. This is an organisation working to meet the needs of Australians during the COVID-19 crisis. That's what they're doing. The Leader of the Opposition seeks to make cheap political points in this place on a daily basis about the COVID-19 crisis. That's disappointing. What Australia Post are doing is delivering on their service charter, they're delivering to customers, they're keeping people in work, and they're adjusting their business model to deal with the increase in parcels, as opposed to letters. They're doing their job. I wish the Leader of the Opposition would do his, because those about him are certainly noticing that he's not up to that job, let alone any others.

**Regional Australia**

Dr GILLESPIE (Lyne) (15:14): My question is to the Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management. Will the minister outline to the House how the Morrison government is giving regions stricken by drought and bushfires the support they need to recover, rebuild and prepare for their future?

Mr LITTLEPROUD (Maranoa—Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management and Deputy Leader of the National Party) (15:14): I thank the member for Lyne for his question and also for his leadership not only during the fire event in the summer of this year but also during the drought. There has been the triple whammy in his electorate with COVID-19. Many electorates around the country have had that triple whammy. It's important to acknowledge that the programs the government has put out in direct payments and infrastructure under COVID-19 goes to those communities as well, but we've been very mindful and understanding that our response to fires and drought is not just about money in the pockets straightaway; it's about building the infrastructure around those communities to build them back better. That's been an important principle. We, as a government, made sure that the investment we've undertaken does that and achieves that.

With the $2 billion Bushfire Recovery Fund, we will have a billion of that spent by 30 June. We only anticipated $500 million of that would be out by 30 June, but such has been the speed by which we have been able to get that money out of government's pocket into those that need it. It's been through infrastructure programs. We've given it to councils to be able to be put into infrastructure. Also $240 million, separate to that, has gone into immediate support. We've continued to make sure that those programs are targeted, so much so that we've announced a further $450 million where local economies will decide exactly how that money should be spent to build back better. We're empowering them to empower their future through their decisions.

I'm proud to say that in the last couple of weeks we announced, under a drought round of the Building Better Regions Fund, $207 million that will go to local economies to build infrastructure that diversifies their economic base. That's not just about preserving the jobs but about creating new jobs in those local towns to make them more resilient for drought. That's on top of the more than $335 million we put out through the Drought Communities Program. A million dollars went to some councils. Some councils have got $3.5 million to build infrastructure projects to keep the economy going with small-scale infrastructure projects. There was $100 million recently announced for upgrades of regional airports, keeping the connectivity between regional Australia and metropolitan Australia going—we're investing in the infrastructure to do that. And $3.5 billion has gone into the dams. I am proud to say the Deputy Prime Minister will be in my electorate at Emu Swamp Dam before the end of the year, because, finally, the Queensland government has chipped in a measly $6 million of the $47 million required and we're going to have an excavator moving before the end of the year. It's a fantastic outcome.

A government member: Farmers put in more.
Mr LITTLEPROUD: In fact, farmers put in more than the Queensland Labor government. They were brought kicking and screaming. Now the Future Drought Fund goes live with its first investment on 1 July. That's an investment in the future to put the infrastructure around regional and rural Australia to build them back better, because we know if we equip them with the tools of the future to face up to these disasters—if we invest in regional Australia—Australia is better for it.

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

BUSINESS

Rearrangement

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (15:17): I move:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Leader of the Opposition from moving the following motion immediately—That the House—

(1) notes the Prime Minister has slashed postal deliveries, including to isolated, vulnerable and older Australians and people living in regional areas; and

(2) therefore calls on as the next item of business after 3.45 pm today the private members' business notice relating to the disallowance of the Australian Postal Corporation (Performance Standards) Amendment (2020 Measures No. 1) Regulations 2020, standing in the name of the member for Grayndler with the motion given priority over all other business for final determination of the House.

The fact is that this is an issue that impacts on vulnerable Australians, particularly in our region.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. The Leader of the House.

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Leader of the House) (15:18):

Leave is not granted.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition didn't seek leave.

Mr PORTER: I move:

That the Member be no longer heard.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the Leader of the Opposition be no further heard.

The House divided. [15:23]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes .................56
Noes ..................53
Majority ...............3

AYES

Allen, K
Andrews, KL
Bell, AM
Chester, D
Connelly, V
Drum, DK (teller)
Entsch, WG
Fletcher, PW
Gee, AR
Hammond, CM
Hunt, GA
Kelly, C
Ley, SP
Liu, G
McCormack, MF
Morrison, SJ
Pasin, A
Pitt, KJ
Price, ML
Robert, SR
Simmonds, J
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Tudge, AE
Vasta, RX
Webster, AE
Wilson, RJ

Andrews, KJ
Archer, BK
Broadbent, RE
Conaghan, PJ
Coulton, M
Dutton, PC
Falinski, JG
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hawke, AG
Joyce, BT
Leeser, J
Littleproud, D
Martin, FB
McIntosh, MI
O'Brien, T
Pearce, GB
Porter, CC
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Sharma, DN
Stevens, J
Taylor, AJ
Thompson, P
van Manen, AJ
Wallace, AB
Wicks, LE
Wilson, TR

CHAMBER
Monday, 15 June 2020

AYES
Wyatt, KG
Young, T

NOES
Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP
Bowen, CE
Burney, LJ
Butler, MC
Chalmers, JE
Clare, JD
Coker, EA
Conroy, PM
Dreyfus, MA
Fitzgibbon, JA
Gosling, LJ
Hayes, CP
Husic, EN
Katter, RC
Keogh, MJ
Marles, RD
Mulino, D
O’Connor, BPJ
Phillips, FE
Rishworth, AL
Sharkie, RCC
Smith, DPB
Steggall, Z
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Watts, TG
Wilkie, AD

PAIRS
Alexander, JG
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR
Coleman, DB
Evans, TM
Flint, NJ
Goodenough, IR
Hastie, AW
Hogan, KJ
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Laming, A
Landry, ML
Marino, NB
McVeigh, JJ
Morton, B
O’Brien, LS
O’Dowd, KD
Wood, JP
Zimmerman, T

Byrne, AM
Champion, ND
Freelander, MR
Georganas, S
Giles, AJ
Khalil, P
King, MMH
Leigh, AK
McBride, EM
Mitchell, RG
Neumann, SK
Payne, AE
Owens, JA
Rowland, MA
Snowdon, WE
Swanson, MJ
O’Neil, CE
Valvakinou, M
Wilson, JH
Zappia, A

Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER (15:27): Is the motion seconded?

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (15:27): I second the motion. They’re using the pandemic as an excuse to cut your mail delivery in half.

The SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat. The Leader of the House?

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Leader of the House) (15:27): I move:

That the member be no longer heard.
The SPEAKER: The Leader of the House has moved that the Manager of Opposition Business be no further heard.

The House divided. [15:29]
(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ......................56
Noes ......................53
Majority ................3

AYES
Allen, K   Andrews, KL
Bell, AM   Broadbent, RE
Chester, D Conaghan, PJ
Connelly, V Coulton, M
Drum, DK (teller) Dutton, PC
Entsch, WG Falinski, JG
Fletcher, PW Frydenberg, JA
Gee, AR    Gillespie, DA
Hammond, CM Hawke, AG
Hunt, GA    Joyce, BT
Kelly, C    Leeser, J
Ley, SP     Littleproud, D
Liu, G      Martin, FB
McCormack, MF McIntosh, MI
Morrison, SJ O’Brien, T
Pasin, A    Pearce, GB
Pitt, KJ    Porter, CC
Price, ML   Ramsey, RE (teller)
Robert, SR  Sharma, DN
Simmonds, J Stevens, J
Sukkar, MS  Taylor, AJ
Tehan, DT   Thompson, P
Tudge, AE   van Manen, AJ
Vasta, RX   Wallace, AB
Webster, AE Wicks, LE
Wilson, RJ  Wilson, TR
Wyatt, KG   Young, T

NOES
Albanese, AN   Aly, A
Bandt, AP      Bird, SL
Bowen, CE      Burke, AS
Burney, LJ     Burns, J
Butler, MC     Butler, TM
Chalmers, JE   Chesters, LM
Clare, JD      Claydon, SC
Coker, EA      Collins, JM
Conroy, PM     Dick, MD
Dreyfus, MA    Elliot, MJ
Fitzgibbon, JA Gorman, P
Gosling, LJ    Haines, H
Hayes, CP      Hill, JC
Husic, EN      Jones, SP
Katter, RC     Kearney, G
Keogh, MJ      King, CF
Marles, RD     Mitchell, BK
Mulino, D     Murphy, PJ
O’Connor, BPJ  Perrett, GD
Phillips, FE   Plibersek, TJ
Rishworth, AL  Ryan, JC (teller)
Sharkie, RCC   Shorten, WR
Smith, DPB     Stanley, AM (teller)
Steggall, Z    Templeman, SR
Thistlethwaite, MJ Thwaites, KL
Watts, TG      Wells, AS
Wilkie, AD
Question agreed to.

**The SPEAKER** (15:30): The question now is that the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition be agreed to. I call the member for Chifley.

**Mr HUSIC** (Chifley) (15:30): Instead of thanking posties, they're sacking them. It's a disgrace—

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Chifley will resume his seat. The Leader of the House.

**Mr PORTER** (Pearce—Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Leader of the House) (15:30):

I move:

That the question be put.

The House divided. [15:32]

The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith

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**AYES**

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Connelly, V
Drum, DK (teller)
Entsch, WG
Fletcher, PW
Gee, AR
Hammond, CM
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CHAMBER
Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER (15:33): The question now is that the motion for the suspension of standing orders moved by the Leader of the Opposition be disagreed to.

The House divided. [15:34]

The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith

Ayes .......................58
Noes ......................51
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Question agreed to.

**BILLS**

Migration Amendment (Regulation of Migration Agents) Bill 2019
Migration Agents Registration Application Charge Amendment (Rates of Charge) Bill 2019

Returned from Senate

**Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Amendment (Coronavirus Economic Response Package) Bill 2020**

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

to which the following amendment was moved:

That all words after "That" be omitted with a view to substituting the following words:

"whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading, the House notes that Coalition governments have mismanaged and politicised the Great Barrier Reef, which is a job-generating, economic and environmental powerhouse of global significance, that Australians need to preserve for future generations".

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Andrews) (15:37): The original question was that this bill be now read a second time. To this the honourable member for Griffith has moved as an amendment that all words after 'that' be omitted with a view to substituting other words. The question for the House now is that the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the question.

Mr O'DOWD (Flynn—Deputy Nationals Whip) (15:37): I rise today to support our government's proposed changes to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Amendment (Coronavirus Economic Response Package) Bill 2020. The Reef is not dying but tourism has died in the last four months. Our government wants an additional financial support measure for the Reef tourism industry impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. I personally have lived close to the Reef all my life, taking several trips out there fishing over the many, many years. I still have mates who have fished the Reef all their lives and they tell me that the Reef is as good as ever. Charter boat skipper Kevie Ben, who relates those messages to myself and to the government, comes to mind.

The members for Leichhardt, Herbert, Dawson, Capricornia, Flynn, Hinkler and Wide Bay are all LNP members who live, along with their electorates and the people in their electorates, on the Barrier Reef. All our constituents love the Reef and would do anything to protect it from any elements you would like to mention.

It is one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Tourism operators have to pay other charges as well as the marine park changes, including rates, payroll tax, stamp duty, GST, land tax and workers compensation. The bill waives the environmental management charge for the period of 1 January 2020 to 31 March 2020. The environmental management charge predominantly applies to the tourism activities. Waiving the environmental management charge allows tourism operators and other relevant permit holders to retain the amounts collected for the first quarter of 2020, during a period of time where much of the tourism industry has been stopped dead in its tracks from operating. The four biggest enemies of the reef are cyclones, crown-of-thorns starfish, fresh water from flooding rivers and plastic reaching our shores from ocean currents from all parts of the world. The government...
values the significant contribution of the tourism industry, which has welcomed so many visitors to our shores and, as other speakers have also related, brought in so many dollars. This has all, sadly, come to an end.

The change will provide much-needed relief for tourism industries, especially in my electorate of Flynn. The government already has measures in place to temporarily waive collection of the environmental management charge for the period from 1 April to 31 December. In effect, this additional charge will mean that there will be no charges made throughout the year 2020. The funds received from the environmental management charge are vitally important to the day-to-day management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and improving its long-term resilience. The government has ensured that the revenue from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority is maintained to ensure continued delivery of the world-leading management of the Great Barrier Reef.

I commend this bill to the House. It will save our tourism people from starvation and, hopefully, enable them to go back to business as normal once the pandemic ends and our borders are opened up. That's why we encourage the Queensland government to open up our borders as soon as possible. From Lady Musgrave Island to Heron Island off Gladstone, Great Keppel Island off Rockhampton, Magnetic Island off Townsville, and all those beautiful island resorts in the Whitsunday landscape and also right up to Cape York and Thursday Island and onto New Guinea, this is too valuable an asset to leave wasted, and people should be allowed to enjoy it as soon as possible. I urge the state government to open up its borders and get the people back onto the reef which, I know, they will thoroughly enjoy.

Ms WELLS (Lilley) (15:42): I can quickly answer the member for Flynn's question: the date that the Queensland borders open is 10 July. It is long-flagged, clearly sign-posted and available for all, but, for you especially, I can clarify that it is 10 July.

The Great Barrier Reef is not just great by name. It is one of the seven natural wonders of the world, a prized heritage area and the biggest living structure on the planet. By every measure, the Great Barrier Reef is seen as the natural asset contributing the most to Australia's global brand. It is a global tourist attraction, renowned for its turquiose waters, kaleidoscopic corals and abundance of wildlife. The Great Barrier Reef is a network of marine sanctuaries of unparalleled ecological importance: 3,000 individual reef systems, 760 fringe reefs, 600 tropical islands and 300 coral cays. The complex maze of habitats is home to incredible marine life, plants and animals, from sea turtles to reef fish, 134 species of sharks and rays and 400 different types of hard and soft corals. Ten per cent of the world's fish species live in the Great Barrier Reef. The reef sprawls over a mind-boggling 344,400 square kilometres—an area so large it can be seen from space. The continental slopes extend to depths of more than 2,000 metres. Few can dive or snorkel in its waters without being moved by the experience. It is a place where peace transcends chaos and where nature reigns supreme.

The Great Barrier Reef is an integral part of Queensland's identity, internationally and at home. Our First Nations people have a profound spiritual, sea country connection with the Reef that spans over 60,000 years. The natural features of the reef are deeply embedded in Indigenous culture, spirituality and wisdom.

In addition to its cultural value, the Great Barrier Reef adds substantial value to the Queensland economy. Over two million visitors come to the reef every year to witness its natural beauty. A Deloitte Access Economics report estimated the Great Barrier Reef to be worth $56 billion in economic, social and iconic asset value, directly generating approximately $6.4 billion each year for the economy through sustainably managed industries that operate in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. It also supports 64,000 Queensland jobs, mostly through the tourism activities generated by the reef and also through fishing, recreational and scientific activity.

Of course, the Great Barrier Reef's tourism industry has been hit hard by COVID-19. This bill seeks to mediate some of the economic damage done by COVID-19 by lightening the financial load of Great Barrier Reef Marine Park permit holders. This bill retrospectively waives the requirement to remit the environment management charge to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority for the period from 1 January 2020 to 31 March 2020. It supplements the Coronavirus Economic Response Package Omnibus Act 2020, which waives environment management charges payable between 1 April 2020 and 31 December 2020.

The environmental management charge is a tax imposed primarily on visitors to the Great Barrier Reef marine Park. The bulk of the revenue collected through environment management charges is through the standard tourist program charge which is generally paid by holiday-makers who take part in tourism programs, under a chargeable permission. The funds received from the charge are important to fund the day-to-day management of the marine park and improve its long-term resilience. Because of economic pressures faced by permit holders due to the COVID-19 pandemic, permit holders have been unable to remit the environmental charge for the period being waived by the bill. In lieu of the usual revenue remitted to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, which is estimated to be approximately $2.9 million, a total of $2.9 million will be appropriated to the authority as part of the economic and fiscal rescue package agreed to by the Prime Minister in April 2020.
Labor welcomes financial relief from the federal government to help tourism operators who are trying to get back on their feet in the post-COVID-19 world. I hope the measures implemented by this bill will encourage more Queenslanders to holiday near the Great Barrier Reef this year, perhaps on the Ekka show holiday that's been moved to Friday by our excellent Premier, and that the appropriated funds promised by the federal government will go some way to making sure that the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is maintained.

But we cannot pretend that this fee waiver is the lifeline that Queensland's tourism economy has been waiting for from this federal government. COVID-19 has brought the Queensland tourism industry to its knees. One in three jobs in accommodation and food services have been lost. Some decisions, like closing state and international borders and restricting particular businesses from operating, were painful but necessary to stop the spread of COVID-19 and keep Australians safe and healthy. I believe that with the right mix of support from the state and federal governments we can fix the temporary damage that these restrictions have caused. But, on the other hand, other decisions — like the decision by the Morrison government to not support Virgin Australia and to leave our aviation industry at risk of becoming a monopoly — have put Queensland's tourism industry at serious and further risk, particularly for regional areas like North Queensland, where the Great Barrier Reef is located and where flights are at risk of becoming incredibly expensive and out of the reach of ordinary families.

The tourism industry is the lifeblood of Queensland's economy, contributing 230,000 local jobs and $27 billion to our economy every year. The Great Barrier Reef is a job-generating economic and environmental powerhouse for Queenslanders, and we need to leverage our natural asset as a tool for economic growth in the future. But it's time we started treating the Great Barrier Reef and our environment more generally with the respect that it deserves. It is a natural treasure and an asset that needs to be protected and maintained. While it is a huge tourist attraction, we can't go on treating the Great Barrier Reef as though it's a theme park where we can just build another rollercoaster if the old one gets too rusty or decrepit.

It was for this reason that in 1975 the Labor government, under Gough Whitlam, established the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority to properly manage the reef and protect its biodiversity for future generations. Unfortunately, this priority seems to have fallen by the wayside over the last seven long years of having a Liberal-National government in control. The Great Barrier Reef outlook report 2019 downgraded the reef's condition from 'poor' to 'very poor'.

Who can forget this government's decision to bestow nearly half a billion dollars on the Great Barrier Reef Foundation, an organisation with annual revenue of approximately $10 million and only six full-time staff? It wouldn't be a Liberal-National government grant if it didn't raise red flags about following transparency and value-for-money rules at the Auditor-General's office and if it weren't awarded without a competitive tender process. We are witnessing asset devaluation, poor maintenance, vast sums of money being allocated without proper process and no plan to preserve its value. If the Liberal-National government were a private sector asset manager for a $56 billion asset and they managed it this poorly, they would be sacked in a heartbeat. They would sack themselves in a heartbeat.

I'm here today on behalf of the Great Barrier Reef shareholders, the people of Queensland, to tell the Morrison government it's time to take real action to protect and preserve our priceless national treasure. The measures in this bill will provide some relief to tourism operators. Still, the best way for the federal government to support tourism in Queensland would be to take a comprehensive look at the overall health of the Great Barrier Reef and commit to a serious plan to tackle climate change. The findings of the Great Barrier Reef outlook report and strategic assessment of the Great Barrier Reef region are very clear — impacts on the reef are compounding. Over the past three decades, the Great Barrier Reef lost half its coral cover and global warming has caused horrific coral bleaching. In the last five years, we've had three major bleaching events, draining the colour from our most precious, treasured wonder. If we continue on this trajectory, at 1.5 degrees of global warming reefs are expected to decline by 70 to 90 per cent, while at two degrees of global warming this loss becomes 99 per cent. It is a highly delicate ecosystem and its ability to recover from human disturbance and climate change is diminishing.

Of course, action to protect our environment needs to extend beyond the Great Barrier Reef. Down south in my electorate of Lilley, we have around 28 kilometres of coastline and we are surrounded by waterways, from Kedron Brook to Cabbage Tree Creek, Nundah and Brighton foreshore. We want these waterways to be cared for and we want these waterways to be protected. Our glorious Moreton Bay has more coral than the Caribbean and the most southern population of dugongs. Tangalooma is just off the coast of my electorate of Lilley and is the gateway to Moreton Island. Its stunning national park is a quiet and serene relic of what the world was like before humans inhabited the land. It is home to a wild world of native wildlife, including 36 types of reptiles, 14 species of mammals, 11 species of amphibians and 11 native terrestrial mammals. On 16 November last year, a devastating fire rapidly spread through the northern parts of Moreton Island. Parts of this ancient relic.
have now been lost forever. The fires affected many of the native animals, which had to flee their homes as trees around them burned.

Lilley constituents are aware of the threats to our beautiful corner of the world and they dedicate many, many hours of their time to preserving our local environment. I would like to acknowledge the Keep Sandgate Beautiful Association, the Nudgee Beach Environmental Education Centre, the Boondall Wetlands Environment Centre, the Northern Catchments Network and the Cabbage Tree Creek catchment coordinating network for their hours and hours of dedicated efforts to keeping our beautiful corner of the earth as clean and protected as they can.

The world is facing an extinction crisis, but the Morrison government is asleep at the wheel. The Liberal-National government has slashed environmental funding since coming to government in 2013, reports suggest by around 40 per cent. We are on a path to a million extinctions, and Australia remains the extinction capital of the world. It is imperative that Australia has a coordinated framework through which to protect its environment and the species within it, but instead we have a government that is fundamentally anti science, disregards departmental advice and is engulfed by scandal.

The Liberal-National government has been in power for seven years now and the policy-berft Morrison government has failed to offer real solutions that would protect our environment. I call on the Morrison government to meet Labor's commitment to net zero carbon emissions by 2050 and to work with us to take meaningful action now to work towards this goal. Acting on climate change and preserving our environment isn't just an economic imperative; it is a moral one. We cannot go on as we have before, and that is why I am here.

When I first came to parliament, I spoke about being a good ancestor and leaving the world a better place for our future generations. I spoke about how the North Pole will cease to be covered with ice, becoming a dark ocean absorbing heat instead of a vast sea of white ice reflecting it. It is irreconcilable that our grandchildren or even our children will only be able to learn about the beauty of the Great Barrier Reef through the records and not for themselves. The cost of not acting to protect our people, flora and fauna from our harshening climate is a cost that we should not and cannot bear any longer.

Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt) (15:55): I rise this afternoon in full support of the measures contained in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Amendment (Coronavirus Economic Response Package) Bill 2020. Tourism is the No. 1 economic driver in my electorate, which goes from the Papua New Guinea border right through to Cairns. Our region was one of the first to feel the crippling effects of the worldwide pandemic when our international borders with China were closed in February. Of all those speaking here, I'm probably one of the few who has spent any time on the reef and therefore has very much a currency on it, so I am very aware of the facts relating to the condition of the reef, unlike those who are reading from speaking notes and playing the politics of it.

Historically, February is the busiest time for Chinese visitors to my region, due to the large Chinese New Year celebrations. Our tourism sector took a massive hit and it wasn't long before the industry fell off a cliff; this happened overnight, when the true extent of the pandemic became evident. One measure contained in the bill that has my full support is the waiving of the environmental management charge for marine operators. Tourism operators came to me early and said, 'We really need some relief here, and this is something that will really make a difference for us because it is a significant amount,' even though at this point they were looking at not a lot of people going out—in fact, many of them were shutting down their businesses for a period of time. But they said it would be something that would give them immediate relief because it was money that had to be paid for visitors prior to the date of the closures and it would give them immediate relief. The benefactors for this initiative are not the sort of people or organisations that generally come running to government with their hands out. I knew that when the Morrison government had to act immediately and swiftly to ensure the survival of the industry.

This initiative was designed to provide immediate financial support measures for the reef tourism industry impacted by the very early stages of coronavirus. However, it was safe to say that no-one knew what the road ahead would be like at that early stage. To a lesser extent, we still don't know what the long-term effects will be. Waiving the EMC did have the desired immediate effect that it was designed to achieve. Extending the initiative to the end of the year, in my view, is simply a no-brainer, especially given the uncertainty that remains. Industry-wide, more than 7,000 businesses directly benefited from this initiative. For example, this initiative will save an operator such as Quiksilver up to $2.8 million in fees alone this year. More importantly, it will continue to provide much-needed financial relief to family owned operators like Alan Wallish from Passions of Paradise, Peppy Ivanella from Down Under Dive and John Harvell from the Reef Encounter, to name a few.

This initiative combined with others, such as JobKeeper, ensured the tourism business and operators have been able to retain staff until things are able to return to normal. This initiative will save jobs, and it will also give financial relief to people who've spent a lifetime establishing world-class tourism operations in our region and across the whole of the Great Barrier Reef. The one thing I've learnt is our region and its people will band
together, and we will recover. Far North Queenslanders are always out there for Far North Queenslanders; however, the road to recovery has certainly been hampered by mixed messages and poor decisions by the Queensland Labor government.

I want to thank the Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, for his leadership last week in giving Queensland tourism operators and small businesses some clarity in relation to when the state is going to reopen its borders. At this stage, the borders will reopen on 10 July. Quite frankly, it is the opening of these borders that is going to really give the tourism operators in my region their first opportunity to start to see a very tangible recovery. But, once again, very shadily, the Queensland Premier is providing extreme uncertainty by saying that they will only reopen pending a review by the end of the month. So there's no certainty there.

Every day the Queensland Premier fails to make a decision and provide clarity and certainty is another day that bookings are lost, business continues to suffer and more jobs are placed in jeopardy. Through these actions, businesses are missing out on what we're now seeing is a very lucrative southern tourism market and the annual migration over the winter period to Far North Queensland. The uncertainty is certainly affecting the bookings in the upcoming school holiday period, with many people simply choosing to go elsewhere. This is a major concern, because this is the time when we do expect to see a lot of these operators working to capacity. The fact that we're going to lose that is going to be a major impediment for them, and it's going to make it harder and take longer for them to recover. To put it into perspective, our region is losing around about $10 million a week because of these decisions. It's just simply not good enough. But the beauty about living in a democracy in Queensland is the opportunity to be able to judge these actions, which will happen on 31 October.

There's been a lot of criticism, and it's interesting to listen to those on the other side continue to want to talk down the reef. They're always wanting to talk it down. I didn't hear any acknowledgement whatsoever from the other side that the management of the Great Barrier Reef are recognised by the world as being the world's best managers. Anybody with any interest in reef management anywhere in the world will come to Australia to seek advice and to see how to manage reefs. We're not 'one' of the best managers; we are by far 'the' best manager in the world. That doesn't mean to say that we don't have challenges here. We've got serious challenges, and some of these challenges are certainly outside of our control. But they are important, and we do acknowledge them.

Climate change is certainly the biggest single challenge. The hot channels in the water that come in actually come across from South America and the Pacific. Where they hit has a serious impact in relation to bleaching. There's no question about that. But, of course, this is something that—while we can talk about it, we can argue about it and we can do things here—unless we see the major polluters like those in the US, in China, in India and in other places actually making serious efforts themselves, we are going to continue to be challenged by. We are doing a lot of work there to do the best we can to put resilience back into the reef to make sure that we are able to do everything we can to manage it, and, over time, hopefully see those changes happening on a more global scale.

There's no doubt about it: we've already seen a rise in ocean temperatures, which, with the right conditions, does cause some serious bleaching events. We have had, unfortunately, several of those events in recent years. We've got to do as much as we can to protect the reef and to help to support it by providing resilience so that it can cope with these events.

Now, anybody that had seen the first two events in 2016-17 was saying it was the end of the world, that the reef was dead. The reality is that there were some areas that were seriously impacted—there's no question about that—but there were a lot of other areas that weren't, and those areas that were seriously impacted certainly recovered to a greater extent and some of it has actually fully recovered. The more recent event was sporadic. It was across the reef in different areas. Some areas were impacted more; some areas were not impacted at all. That was more to do with the fact that we had consecutive high temperatures over an extended period of time. But even now, after that event, we started to get some rain and we got turbulence in the water, which is one of the great protectors because it doesn't allow the sunshine to penetrate as deep, and we're seeing amazing recovery in those areas. They are coming back very quickly. But there's a range of other challenges there.

I heard mention of the Great Barrier Reef Foundation. What they don't say is where that money is actually going. Recently there was again an allocation. One of the biggest biological challenges, of course, is crown-of-thorns starfish, but there's no acknowledgement of the fantastic work that's being done by reef operators or Sheridan Morris and the Reef and Rainforest Research Centre, who have actually spearheaded initiatives to deal with this particular challenge. And they are doing a fantastic job in that area there, working with the traditional owners, with the rangers there. They have done an amazing job in clearing this up.

There's work being done looking at other, biological solutions to this as well, because the work that they're doing by going in and actually injecting the crown-of-thorns starfish is very time consuming and fairly restrictive. They're looking at a number of different things, including a sea shell and a number of different predator fish
species. They're looking at putting them in so that they will eat these crown-of-thorns starfish because they have such huge numbers when they spawn. It's amazing to see that technology starting to be considered.

There's also some work that is being funded through the foundation in relation to temperature-tolerant corals. There's a lot of work going into that at the moment, which is quite amazing. There's also other technology that they're working on there, effectively looking at putting shade over areas where there is a likelihood of bleaching. Understand that the bleaching is not across the whole Barrier Reef; it comes in sections, and so this technology, this science is something that is being worked on at the moment. So I congratulate them for that. I congratulate all of those proponents that have been actively involved in this sort of work. It does make a difference. And so, while we're waiting, hoping and encouraging changes globally, we're not sitting here just saying all is lost. We're actually doing things. We're making things happen to make sure that the longevity of this beautiful icon is there for us and for future generations.

It would be useful for those who are prepared to stand up in this place and effectively say the reef is dead or almost dead to remember that there are literally thousands and thousands of jobs associated with this. There are thousands of people out on the reef on an almost daily basis, committing themselves to doing some fantastic work out there, and talking it down doesn't really achieve anything and certainly doesn't contribute anything positive to what is one of the most iconic works of nature that we're ever likely to see. And it will be there, I have every confidence, well into the future. And so I would encourage them, if they're going to be making negative comments, to take the time to come up, talk to some of the operators who are actually doing something there and put their head under the water rather than reading a political brief or something by some activist group that is more about spreading negativity. They could have a look for themselves and form their own opinion, because they may well be pleasantly surprised at what they're able to find in doing so. I tell you: from our perspective, I think that's the best way to do it. I mean AIMS, GBRMPA and all these other world-class organisations are working with our local people and doing a fantastic job and, rather than all the negativity, they should be acknowledged for it.

Finally, I want to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues Sussan Ley, Simon Birmingham and the Prime Minister for listening to me and my operators and acting and delivering for the thousands of tourism operators across Queensland who have benefited significantly from the EMC initiative. From all of those, I'd just like to say thank you.

Ms MURPHY (Dunkley) (16:10): There's no doubt that the Great Barrier Reef is an iconic symbol of Australia. It's an iconic symbol around the world of the extraordinary beauty of nature, and all of us in Australia, whether we've been to the Great Barrier Reef or not, are immensely proud that it is our iconic symbol, but we have to do more to protect it. I take the point by the speaker before me: there is a lot of work being done to protect the Great Barrier Reef. There's no doubt about it. And we have scientists who are leading in reef management around the world here in Australia. But we shouldn't just be looking at resilience and recovery from bleaching events for our Great Barrier Reef. We also need to be doing the work to stop bleaching events happening in the future. Our Great Barrier Reef has suffered its third major bleaching event in five years, and we can't afford another blow. It is an iconic environmental wonder of the world, but it is also a powerhouse of job creation and economic development. If we lose the Great Barrier Reef—just as if we were to lose a lot of our great environmental wonders in Australia—then we lose something that can't be replaced. In the short term, we lose jobs and we lose the opportunity to build our economy.

The government needs to do more for its management of the reef, and one of the things that it needs to do is take a proper response to climate change and the mitigation of climate change. Yes, there is a lot to do up at the reef, and, like all of my colleagues on this side of the chamber—and I think on the other side of the chamber—I encourage Australians to travel to the Great Barrier Reef when they can and to support that local industry. But, unfortunately, it's not going to be enough simply to support the tourism industry. We have to do more.

Just this morning the Prime Minister apparently said that one of the ways to recovery is a modernisation of how Australia approaches the economy. If it were just that phrase and not what he said after, I couldn't agree more. But, as I understand it, what the Prime Minister said today is that his idea of a modern approach for how Australia should approach the economy is deregulation. This is almost a once-in-a-lifetime chance, as we come out of the public health crisis and deal with the recession that we are now in, to actually ask ourselves what sort of country we want to be, what sort of community we want to be and what sort of economy we want to have in Australia. This is almost a once-in-a-lifetime chance, particularly for those of us who are in this chamber. Instead of looking at snapping back to 2019, instead of resorting to old ideologies about the evils of regulations, this is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to look forward to the future and, to use a phrase that the government likes to use in response to the bushfires—although I've seen little to no evidence of it actually coming true—to build a better future, to build back better. This is an opportunity, for example, to go back to quite an old economic approach and look at
something like triple bottom line accounting, to actually say to ourselves everything that a government does should have an economic, an environment and climate and a social benefit, to evaluate all policies and all actions based on whether they build an economy and an environmental and climate and social benefit.

Such an approach isn't just a way of getting through the short term; it's a way of building for the long term. All one has to do is look at the CSIRO Australian national outlook 2019 report. What's the best future that we can look at for the economy, for productivity and for our export markets? A decarbonised future. How can we scale up existing low-carbon activities? That's what this government should be looking at. This government should be spending on renewable energy and energy efficiency. A McKinsey research article entitled 'How a post-pandemic stimulus can both create jobs and help the climate' estimates that for every $10 million spent on renewable technology there will be 75 jobs created; on energy efficiency, 77 jobs; and on fossil fuels, 27 jobs—economically beneficial, environmentally beneficial and good for social capital. That's an agenda for a future economy—not simply talking about deregulation.

So this bill is welcome and supported, because it is appropriate to take short-term measures to support small businesses like tourism on the reef, but there will be no healthy reef for tourists to visit in the medium to long term without environmental laws that provide a framework for ecologically sustainable development and build an ecosystem which is healthy and resilient for all Australians. Do you know who's saying things like this? It is scientists and experts. It is the people the Morrison government turned to, rightly, to get through the health crisis of this pandemic: scientists and experts relying on data. That's what we need in order to build a future where our environment is protected and we deal with climate change. An article in today's Sydney Morning Herald refers to comments by Alana Grech:

Assistant director of the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies Alana Grech said climate change is the 'leading cause of decline' for the Great Barrier Reef and the legislation should be changed to mitigate its impacts.

The same article also states:

A CSIRO study, Quantifying extinction risk, estimated that climate change would increase the rate of losses about fivefold—in terms of our threatened species and ecosystems—

with 10 birds and seven mammals becoming extinct in the next 20 years 'without purposeful intervention'.

Our environmental laws are being reviewed. They currently fail to protect wildlife and ecosystems from climate change. This is an opportunity for this government, which I hope it would take, to look at drafting laws that do just that. Instead of referring to environmental laws as 'green tape' and saying that they get in the way of progress, we should see well-drafted and proper environmental protection laws as a blueprint for a better future.

There are a number of problems with the EPBC Act and a number of opportunities. There are opportunities to better address climate change and the way we do land clearing. There are opportunities to protect the long-term future of the Great Barrier Reef. The Prime Minister likes to talk about deregulation and getting rid of regulations because apparently they are blockers to projects going ahead. But, if we actually look at the delays in project approvals under the Morrison government, they've exploded. Cuts to the environment department have caused these delays in projects and jobs. Since their election in 2013, delays in project environmental approvals have absolutely blown out. Late project decisions increased by 40 per cent on the Liberal government's watch, up from about 15 per cent when the Labor government was in power—that's an increase from 15 per cent to 40 per cent—and the total number of decisions went backwards. At the same time, since 2013, environment department funding has been cut by almost 40 per cent. So devastating cuts and mismanagement in the environment department have delayed jobs and investment and have brought about major project delays. It is just disingenuous for the government to point to delays in the approval of projects and say that that's a reason to get rid of environmental laws. They actually have to look at the cause of the delays and cuts, and at the government that hasn't pushed the approvals through.

We’ve seen the devastating bushfires. We know that climate change is the leading cause of damage to our Great Barrier Reef. We know that too many endangered species are now facing not just endangerment but extinction. We know that in the past 20 years the number of threatened species in marine ecosystems has grown by more than one-third, and mammal losses continue at the same rate of between one and two species a decade. Since 1788, 100 species have become extinct in Australia. We can't be proud of that history. We have a moment in time now, perhaps like no other that we've had before, to actually do something about it.

The review of the EPBC Act should not be used as a fig leaf for a conservative agenda of reducing protections. It's not just politicians saying it; we're saying it because the experts have said it: 240 conservation scientists have published an open letter telling told Scott Morrison that Australia is amid an extinction crisis and calling on the government to fix our laws in order to protect and restore nature across Australia. I stand here today to add my voice to the voices of those scientists and to speak as the voice of the Dunkley constituents who have emailed me
over the last few months, worried about the deregulation agenda as it applies to environmental laws. They have asked me to stand up for the role of science—to put science at the heart of environmental protection and climate change policies, to protect critical habitats for threatened species, to have stricter controls on the wildlife trade, and to have more funding for the protection and recovery of our environment. I stand here as their voice and add my voice. Decisions should be made on science, not politics. There should be federal leadership, and I urge the government to take this opportunity to show it.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Andrews): The question is that the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the question. I call the honourable member for Warringah.

Ms STEGGALL (Warringah) (16:22): I rise in support of this bill. This is retrospective legislation. It will amend the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975 to waive the requirement that Great Barrier Reef Marine Park permit holders remit the environmental management charge to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority from 1 January 2020 to 31 March 2020. This is very much taking into account the situation that the tourism industry and businesses around the Great Barrier Reef have suffered during this period. The waiving of this charge will relieve pressure on the tourism industry at a very challenging time. It's essential that, when we reopen our borders, we have a vibrant tourism industry to greet international travellers. The industry is essential to the communities in proximity but, of course, is also a major drawcard for our national tourism. Last year there were over 2.1 million visitor days to the marine park, providing extensive economic benefits, to local economies and more broadly. According to Deloitte Access Economics, the Reef supports approximately 64,000 jobs and contributes $6.4 billion to the Australian economy annually.

The Great Barrier Reef is an extraordinary marvel of nature, unrivalled in its marine biodiversity and extensive geography. It extends over 14 degrees of latitude, or over 348,000 square kilometres, making it the largest living structure on earth. It is home to over 9,000 species of flora and fauna—between a quarter and one-third of all marine species rely on coral reefs at some point in their lives. Just last week we saw incredible drone footage of the 64,000 endangered green turtles swimming off Cape York Peninsula. It's no wonder that tourists come from all over the world to visit.

So whilst the pandemic is an immediate threat to the tourism industry in the GBRMP, especially around the Great Barrier Reef, as our borders are shut, the largest threat to tourism is not from this pandemic but from the longer term heating of the planet. In last year's Great Barrier Reef Marine Park outlook report, the authorities stated:

Gradual sea temperature increase and extremes, such as marine heat waves, are the most immediate threats to the Reef as a whole and pose the highest risk.

We have had successive marine heatwave bleachings in significant areas over the last several years and one only a few weeks ago. Terry Hughes, the director of the ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies at James Cook University, stated on the most recent bleaching: 'We saw record-breaking temperatures all along the length of the Great Barrier Reef. There wasn't a cool portion in the north, or a cool portion in the south this time around. The whole Barrier Reef was hot, so the bleaching we have seen this year is the most extensive so far.'

This was at just one degree of warming. At 1.5 degrees of warming the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change estimates that we will lose 80 per cent of our coral reefs, and that at two degrees we will lose 99 per cent. Deloitte Access Economics projected that this would be equivalent to losing at least $36 billion in environmental and heritage value. According to the marine park outlook, surveys indicate that people in the tourism industry are very concerned about the impacts of climate change on their businesses and livelihoods—and I would say that's rightly so.

The reef is the canary in the coalmine for the state of the oceans in general. Oceans cover 70 per cent of the surface of the earth and are essential in regulating the climate. Oceanographer Lisa Beal of the University of Miami's Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science states:
The ocean is the flywheel of the climate. It sets the timing of climate change. It can do things like store heat in one place and release it somewhere else 1,000 years later.
The effect of ocean warming won't just result in the loss of coral reefs; it will affect many systems across the planet. For example, scientists have found that the melting of the Greenland ice sheet is resulting in a slowing of the Atlantic meridional overturning circulation current by making water less saline, which makes it harder to sink and drive the journey of the current southward from Greenland. Now, you might ask, 'What does that do?' This will affect weather patterns in all countries bordering the Atlantic Ocean, and even change rainfall patterns at the equator. For example, this will mean colder winters and hotter summers, greater flooding and extreme weather in Europe.
In our own hemisphere, a study released in the *Journal of Climate* found that increasing ocean temperatures are influencing how impactful and frequent positive Indian Ocean Dipole events are. According to the Bureau of Meteorology, Indian Ocean Dipole events are one of the key drivers of Australia's climate. The dipole has three phases: neutral, positive and negative. Positive Indian Ocean Dipole phases are linked to less rainfall and higher-than-normal temperatures across Australia during winter and spring. Climate models suggest that the ocean-warming trend will lead to more frequent Indian Ocean Dipole events, and the associated dry conditions will be more intense compared to the present-day climate. The results of the increase can already be seen in the extreme weather events in south-eastern Australia, like the 'black summer' we've just experienced.

Whilst I support the measures of this bill, we must act collectively on climate change and balance our carbon budget. We cannot allow temperatures to just keep going up. Unfortunately, this government has still not made a commitment to carbon neutrality by 2050, despite the overwhelming consensus of the business sector and society in general. So I urge the government to do so before the next conference of the parties in Glasgow next year. There is undoubtedly an opportunity for a reset—to put stimulus, energy and the focus of the government towards a smart and clean future. If we don't get there—if we fail to flatten the curve on our emissions and we leave it until too late—we will lose much more than the reef and the tourism industry.

Dr HAINES (Indi) (16:29): The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Amendment (Coronavirus Economic Response Package) Bill 2020 waives the charges for tourism operators in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. For an industry that's taken a battering in recent months, this is a good and sensible move. It shows a willingness from the government to provide retrospective support to tourism businesses that have been impacted by the coronavirus shutdown. But to me it raises a question: why is it that the government has acted so quickly to provide specific support for tourism in Queensland, impacted by COVID-19, but has been so slow in providing support to tourism businesses affected by the bushfires several months before the pandemic hit?

It was back on 19 January that the government announced a $76 million package to support tourism in bushfire affected areas. That'll be six months ago next week, and so far, beyond that announcement, very little seems to have actually happened. On the National Bushfire Recovery Agency website right now it says that just seven per cent of this money has been spent. That's $5.3 million. When I spoke in parliament last week about this issue I noted that back then, just a couple of days ago, the NBRA website referred to a domestic tourism campaign called Live From Aus. This is a campaign totally unrelated to bushfires. The Live From Aus campaign features, for instance, ads about brekkie bowls from a chef on Bondi Beach, golf courses in the bayside Melbourne suburbs and underwater Great Barrier Reef tours. Now, as far as I know, neither Bondi Beach nor Melbourne's bayside suburbs were hit in the bushfires. And whilst we all know that the reef is boiling, I truly doubt that it was ever on fire.

These are all worthy causes, and obviously coronavirus has hit tourism in all these places, and we should be investing in tourism in all parts of Australia—undeniably. I checked again this morning, and it appears that the NBRA has now scrubbed all reference to the Live From Aus campaign. When I asked the NBRA, they assured me that none of the bushfire funding is going to Live From Aus. I have a really good working relationship with the NBRA and its commissioner, Andrew Colvin, who I believe is committed to a speedy and robust recovery. I really value working with Mr Colvin and his team, and I'm really pleased that the reference to Live From Aus has now been removed.

The NBRA has advised me that most of the $5.3 million already spent was for a domestic campaign that ran in early 2020 promoting domestic tourism for bushfire affected areas before COVID-19 restrictions and for the regional tourism grants program. But no details have been made publicly available, or privately available, about what that domestic campaign was or where these grants have actually gone. And now here we are, six months down the track from the bushfires—six months after the Prime Minister announced a tourism package—and not only has barely anything been done but there is no clarity on how the remaining 93 per cent of the money will be spent, and the NBRA website itself has been sending confusing messages about what the money is for.

It's all well and good that the government is writing bills to support tourism in Queensland, but for me it raises some really obvious questions. How about following through on the promise to bushfire affected tourism, too? Why was the NBRA connecting the $76 million allocated for bushfires with a domestic tourism campaign unrelated to bushfires? Of the $5.3 million that has been spent on a now redundant campaign and a small grants program, where exactly has this money gone? Most importantly, when will struggling tourism businesses actually receive the investment the government promised?

It might be helpful to put some facts around why we need to support the tourism sector in bushfire affected regions. Tourism North East just produced the results of some research they did into the impact of the double whammy of bushfires and COVID-19 on the tourism industry in north-east Victoria. Over the past six months we lost up to 1.6 million visitor nights. We lost up to $640 million in tourism expenditure. As a result, up to 6,400 jobs were disrupted or lost. Over 80 per cent of businesses have lost three quarters of their revenue. This is a
sector which provides 20 per cent of our regional GDP in the north-east and 21 per cent of our jobs. One fifth of our economy has been entirely smashed. Over half a billion dollars has been lost from small businesses just in our part of regional Victoria alone. The same will be true for Gippsland, the Sapphire Coast, the Central Coast, the Southern Highlands and Kangaroo Island, but throughout it all just $5.3 million of the $76 million promised to these regions has been spent.

The research from Tourism North East showed that overwhelmingly the thing that tourism operators want to get back on their feet is support to encourage people back. That means a marketing campaign focused squarely on bushfire affected areas. That means grants for individual businesses to develop their own online presence. It means funding for regional tourism bodies to develop the digital infrastructure to connect them to potential visitor markets. It means taking the $76 million that was promised and actually doing something with it—not announcements but actions. When he launched the Bushfire tourism conservation scheme, the Prime Minister said it would:

… tap into the Australian desire to contribute to the recovery effort by encouraging Aussies to holiday in Australia and provide support to affected communities and regions.

This is the Prime Minister who was the CEO of Tourism Australia. This is the man who invented the 'Where the bloody hell are you?' Well, I'm asking: where the bloody hell is the money? If there's one thing he should understand, it's tourism marketing.

The NBRA should be developing and promoting a domestic tourism campaign focused on bushfire affected communities—that is, places like Beechworth and Mansfield, not Bondi and Melbourne. With the 93 per cent of funding sitting there, we need a tourism campaign focused on Bega, Eden, Batemans Bay and Mallacoota and of course the many beautiful towns and regions in my electorate of Indi. Of this funding, part should be going to local tourism bodies to ensure that local ideas tourism gets a guernsey.

Tourism North East has developed a pitch for a $750,000 digital commerce platform that would build resilience of local tourism businesses across Indi by helping them connect with customers. This is exactly the kind of long-term investment we should be using this money for.

This weekend the major parties were tussling over Eden-Monaro. It shouldn't take a by-election to sharpen anybody's focus on the bushfires we experienced this summer and it should not take a by-election to focus the attention on bushfire recovery, but perhaps the by-election could sharpen the government's focus on this particular issue and prompt them to announce their plans for the spending of the $76 million for bushfire tourism. There should be specific marketing for specific bushfire regions. There should be—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Flint): The member for Indi will resume her seat. Minister, on a point of order?

Mr Coulton: I'm reluctant to speak up, but this is a speech on a topic; it's not a free ranging speech. I'm not exactly sure that I've heard the member speak about the topic at hand. I think in deference to—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The minister will resume his seat. I think the point's been made. I would ask the member for Indi to return to the substance of the legislation.

Dr HAINES: The point I'm making is that today we are discussing a bill that is restoring, retrospectively, tourism money to the Great Barrier Reef—and I support it—but if we are directing tourism money then we need to direct it right across the board and we must not forget our bushfire affected regions across this nation.

Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (16:39): We have heard the Barrier Reef bad-mouthed continuously for the last 15 years, and it's done its work. Our tourism, before COVID-19, was down 30 per cent. China, for example, advocates going to the Pacific Islands for the wonderful reefs that they have there. If people mentioned the Barrier Reef, they'd say: 'No. That's shot to pieces. You don't go there anymore.' I speak with authority, as our candidate in the last federal election up there was a reef operator—a charter boat operator—and the father of two of my staff is a charter boat operator.

My chief of staff used to swim out to the Barrier Reef—from Mission Beach out to Dunk Island, some seven kilometres out and seven kilometres back. He's a world champion distance swimmer. Being a North Queenslander, I've done a lot of scuba diving; that's just part of being a North Queenslander. Also, if you scratch a North Queenslander, you'll find his grand-daddy cut cane somewhere along the way. If the cane fields were ruining the Barrier Reef, it would be long since gone, because they've been growing cane in North Queensland for 140 years now—it would have been gone long ago.

We in the KAP, the political party I belong to, have never taken a cavalier attitude towards this. We have continually advocated that there be monitoring at the mouth of every river and stream that flows out to the Barrier Reef. I would have thought that's just an elementary thing to do. If there are possible problems that occur with
run-off, then we should be monitoring. If you find an anomaly, then you go up the river to the first tributary and you monitor there, and if there's no anomaly in that tributary you then go to another one, and, eventually, you'll track down where the anomaly, or the contamination, is coming from. The great advocate of this was Peter Ridd. And the irony of it all is that I was a developer, a 'go, go'—you know, I'm from a government, the Bjelke-Petersen government, where we'd mine telephone poles!—but, and it's a big 'but', I had many fights with Ridd. I was often the speaker on one side, and he was the speaker on the other side. He has long been an advocate of protecting the Reef. He has, in fact, fathered a device which is probably the best monitoring device in the world for monitoring what's called turbidity levels and for isolating off contaminants. And he made a very big name for himself internationally with his inventions, or initiatives—whatever you want to call them.

But all this bad-mouthing of the Reef has had its effect. How would you explain that our tourism is down by 30 per cent? That is uniform. We've got white-water rafting closing down completely, and we've got two crocodile farms closing down completely. Barnacle Bill's, the oldest restaurant in North Queensland, and the biggest and most prominent, has closed down. The owner said the custom had fallen to a point where he just couldn't keep it open. Have we wrecked the Barrier Reef? Well, here's the leading world authority, David Attenborough—everyone watches his programs, including me from time to time—and David Attenborough says it is 'the most magical place on earth'. So is it wrecked? Well, no—here's the greatest greenie on earth, David Attenborough, on the front of the Courier-Mail newspaper describing it as 'still the most magical place on earth'. So I would really appreciate it if you would stop bad-mouthing Queensland's Great Barrier Reef. On behalf of we people who live there, on there and in there: would you just stop? You don't know anything about it. You've never been in a scuba suit in your bloody life, you've never been out on a charter boat in your life, you've never been fishing in your life, and you've never swum on the Barrier Reef islands in your life. So don't come in here telling us what should and shouldn't be done with it.

I do not lie awake at night in terror because the world's coming to an end—when, over 100 years, world temperature has risen by 1.1 degrees Celsius. Today in Canberra, it will change by 14 degrees. So, I mean, where's the climate change? One degree in 100 years? Oh, mortal terror! The world is coming to an end. Am I a climate change denier? No, I've never been. In fact, I won, arguably, the leading science prize in Australia for putting the first standalone solar system, which is very suitable, in the Torres Strait islands. It is extremely ridiculous in a city. Only a moron would be advocating a system that has to be taken off the roof within 20 years. How much energy is expended in producing pure silicone? I'm a mining man and I can tell you how much energy is burnt up in producing. What are you going to do with 200 square kilometres of doped glass, so it can't be recycled, over the next 12 or 15 years? I'd be rather interested to find out. It would rather fascinate me. Are we doing something about it? Yes, we are. We've advocated for Hells Gates Dam morning, noon and night. Hells Gates Dam has produced all of North Queensland's electricity for forever. The Burdekin would run and spread the water out. The sugar cane will grow. We will burn the sugar cane fibre to make electricity.

This is the good part for people who are concerned, because a problem does arise in the oceans. Whilst I'm not into climate change, I don't conceivably think how you could make a case out when there is a temperature rise of one degree over 100 years. But there's a problem that arises in the ocean. Increasing carbon dioxide means increasing carbon dioxide in the ocean. It would increase it by 10 per cent up there; it would increase 10 per cent in the oceans.

I was very surprised to hear this, but most shellfish need a magnifying glass to be seen. Most shellfish are minute, which came as a surprise to me. They are the bottom of the food chain in the ocean. The shellfish shell is calcium carbonate, which is a base. The opposite is alkaline. It's the opposite of an acid. The more carbon dioxide you pump in the atmosphere the more acidic the ocean becomes and the more difficult it becomes for shellfish. Katharina Fabricius is arguably the leading reef scientist on earth. She's at the Institute of Marine Science. She's devoted her whole life to research. I said, 'Well, that's scientific knowledge. What about empirical knowledge?' She said, 'I was waiting for you to ask that.' She said there had been 23 studies done. In two cases there was an increase in shellfish and in the other 21 cases there was a complete collapse in shellfish.

But what are we doing about it? We're producing all of North Queensland's electricity. Carbon dioxide is not an emission. It's not a by-product. It is a product. We will attempt to produce as much carbon dioxide as is humanly possible to produce. We take it and we feed it to algae in ponds. You can't do this everywhere, but at Hells Gate, if it's done properly—and I have to savagely attack TEL. I'm just warming up on TEL. They gave the contract to an outfit called SMEC. SMEC has completely blown the Bradfield Scheme to pieces. It fascinates me to hear the LNP getting up and running around with the Bradfield scheme, because I'm going to ask them shortly: what rumours are diverted and where they're diverted to? I'll bet London to a brick on them none of them know. But they managed to bugger it up completely by giving it to SMEC, right?
Monday, 15 June 2020

This will stop nutrition excess from run-off on to the reef, because it's an area called the uplands desert where there's no run-off of water. I won't go into the full details of this. Mike Kelly from Eden-Monaro has just left us. Mike came back from Israel. He got me aside and said, 'Mate, you got to see what they're doing with CO2.' I said, 'They're feeding it to algae?' He said, 'Yes.' BHP, CSIRO and Ergon did the trials at James Cook University. They can absorb all of the CO2 and feed it to algae. The algae then become stock feed or biodiesel. If we're using it as stock feed it can be fed to chooks, pigs, fish farms, cattle—whatever. It's a very high-quality stock feed with very high protein content.

We can produce all of our electricity in North Queensland with zero emissions, and we can repeat this over and over again, as long as SMEC and TEL are not left in charge. If they're left in charge, this country gets 50,000 hectares of irrigation outside a huge city like Townsville, which will do absolutely nothing for the economy of Townsville. But, of course, if it's done properly, it will result in $3 million a year of production in ethanol and clean fuel, and it will clean up the CO2 problem. It will produce feed that can be used as cattle feed or stockfeed. It will produce 1½ per cent of Australia's entire electricity requirements and all of North Queensland's requirements, and it will be stage 1 of the Bradfield scheme. But, if the government stands aside and allows TEL to continue with their wreckage and allows SMEC to continue with the most extraordinary stupidity and irresponsibility, then you can forget about the Bradfield scheme. I'll ask any LNP members here to please tell their party that they are destroying the Bradfield scheme. It can never, ever happen if you continue down this pathway.

Let me return to the Barrier Reef. There is a warming of the oceans that is taking place in the south-western Pacific. We don't know why. It might be associated with climate change. We don't know. All we know is that there is an increase in temperature, and that creates a problem for coral. Leading scientists in the world at the Australian Institute of Marine Science tell us that we should have nurseries growing reef that is more heat tolerant. Not only should we grow reef that is more heat tolerant, but we can also enhance our reef with more exotic and beautiful corals. All of us have a backyard, and we grow flowers that have been imported at some stage in our history from overseas. Many of us have mostly Australian flowers, as we do at our place, but it's nice to have a little bit of colour from overseas. Apparently there are no problems with introducing coral under very stringent and tight conditions. So our party is very strongly advocating reef nurseries so that we can grow more exotic corals, enrich our Barrier Reef and make our Barrier Reef much more heat tolerant.

You don't stand still. Anyone who has worked on the land knows that. I'm a mining man. I've worked ore bodies on and off for half my life, and I've had cattle for all of my life. When you know the land and you work intimately with it, you get a feel for what needs to be done to make it better. The green movement in Australia has been disgraceful because not once in 47 years in parliament have I ever heard them propose something that enhances the beauty of Australia. In Charters Towers there was not a single tree left standing in 72 kilometres. I would estimate that Charters Towers has about 20 million trees now, and a good half of them would be Australian native trees. So you can enhance it; you can make it better. We can make our reef so much more exciting and so much better, but you have got to work on it. Whilst we spend our time with all the city geniuses from Victoria, New South Wales and Brisbane telling us about our Barrier Reef—people who have never seen the Barrier Reef and have never been underwater in their lives, except in a bathtub—we will continue to have the destruction that is taking place—(Time expired)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Wicks): Before I call the next speaker, I remind the member for Kennedy, even during very animated debate, to avoid using unparliamentary language.

Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for the Environment) (16:54): I'm delighted to sum up on this very important bill, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Amendment (Coronavirus Economic Response Package) Bill 2020. It's important for the Morrison government and important for tourism internationally and nationally. It's of vital significance to my colleagues the members who live along the reef catchment and it's a significant part of our history. There is an increase in temperature and have mosques with climate change. We don't know. All we know is that there is a warming of the oceans that is taking place in the south-western Pacific. We don't know why. It might be associated with climate change. We don't know. All we know is that there is an increase in temperature, and that creates a problem for coral. Leading scientists in the world at the Australian Institute of Marine Science tell us that we should have nurseries growing reef that is more heat tolerant. Not only should we grow reef that is more heat tolerant, but we can also enhance our reef with more exotic and beautiful corals. All of us have a backyard, and we grow flowers that have been imported at some stage in our history from overseas. Many of us have mostly Australian flowers, as we do at our place, but it's nice to have a little bit of colour from overseas. Apparently there are no problems with introducing coral under very stringent and tight conditions. So our party is very strongly advocating reef nurseries so that we can grow more exotic corals, enrich our Barrier Reef and make our Barrier Reef much more heat tolerant.

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Listening to the member for Dawson, it does seem a long time ago I was with him in the Whitsundays, hearing directly from tourism operators about the effect of no tourists visiting the reef and very dim prospects for the rest of the year and being able to let them know that the government was working on a package which would effectively waive the environmental management charge for tourists visiting the reef. This bill makes amendments that waive the environmental management charge for the period 1 January to 31 March this year. And with the appropriations bill that previously passed the parliament last month the rest of the year is waived. So effectively this gives tourism operators one year of relief from the environmental management charge on the reef. It's very important and, as I said, it's been welcomed.

I was surprised to see the member for Griffith saying she wants to end the 'politicising of the reef'. I'm not sure what she means. But, having said that she wanted to do that and having moved an amendment, she did then say—
Ms Burney interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The minister will resume her seat for a moment. The member for Barton made a reflection on the minister. I would ask the member for Barton to withdraw, please.

Ms Burney: I withdraw.

Ms LEY: The member for Griffith, having said she wanted to see an end to politicising the reef, proceeded to do just that—by cynically denigrating our world-leading management of the reef and our investment in it. So the member for Griffith criticises the government's funding of the Great Barrier Reef foundation—she made that very clear in her remarks—and other members of the opposition followed the same talking points. The Great Barrier Reef Foundation is a charity that has, for 20 years, worked tirelessly to deliver reef protection projects. It has made significant progress since 2018, despite constant criticism from the opposition. There are 60 different reef protection projects happening on the ground in regional Queensland today. The foundation has brought together the very best in our science and conservation community to respond to the key threats of this environmental icon and economic driver. Maybe that would explain why the member for Fremantle, who followed the member for Griffith, actually praised the efforts of reef scientists and their globally leading work to help reefs adapt to the effects of climate change. Guess what? That program, that work that was lauded by the member for Fremantle, is actually funded by none other than the Great Barrier Reef Foundation, which, again, Labor seeks to denigrate. I remember sitting on the front bench here and listening to this ongoing criticism of the $443 million investment in the Great Barrier Reef and not really understanding, but Labor, having had a bit of time to reflect, still seems to be of that view and it is completely senseless.

I want to challenge those who would support that view to visit any of our great reef-facing communities today—Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, the Whitsundays, Rockhampton and others—and ask the local community about the work on the ground right now that is making a difference courtesy of the foundation's work and the Morrison government's investment in the reef, thanks to the strong advocacy of members of this side of the House. I challenge them to visit one of the 72 Indigenous communities that hold aspirations for the reef, their sea country. They will tell you the reef trust partnership is working, that it is making a difference and that they're proud to be part of it.

In the last week alone, the foundation announced the establishment of a reef restoration hub in Cairns to help the tourism sector and the use of breakthrough science that links the positive impact of probiotics and coral health, and they demonstrated how technology can help protect endangered turtles—all things where I wouldn't have thought there would be any disagreement about their importance, significance and need for funding.

The member for Griffith then went on to claim that it was Labor that was solely responsible for the creation of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park in 1975. The full story would remind Australians that it was bipartisan support which resulted in the enactment of a Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act in 1975. And it was the Fraser Liberal government which in 1975 banned oil and gas operations on the Great Barrier Reef and deemed the reef to be of World Heritage standard. The first stage of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park was declared by the Fraser Liberal government in 1979. In 1981, it was under the stewardship of a Liberal government that the Great Barrier Reef won World Heritage status. You won't hear this from Labor, just like you won't hear that it was the Howard government that expanded protected no-take zones from five percent to 33 per cent of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. Instead, Labor seeks to carp and criticise, but they didn't create the world's largest representative network of protected marine parks. They tried, but they failed. It was the Liberal National Party that succeeded. Labour haven't committed $1.9 billion of world-leading investment in the reef. The coalition has. The Liberal Party and the National Party have a proud legacy of protecting and investing in not only the Great Barrier Reef but all of our marine ecosystems. This shines as a beacon of gold-standard management for our country and for the world.

Once again, can I thank my colleagues. Can I thank the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority for the work that they do now during this difficult time of COVID, for their support for tourism, for recreational commercial fishing and for the scientists and other visitors who come to our reef and always come away amazed and filled with wonder.

Again, this bill will provide financial relief to the Great Barrier Reef tourism industry and other relevant permission holders impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. The government will ensure that there's no reduction in the revenue that goes to the management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. Once again, I commend the bill to the House.

The SPEAKER: The original question was that this bill be now read a second time. To this, the honourable member for Griffith has moved as an amendment that all words after 'That' be omitted with a view to substituting other words. So the immediate question is that the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the question.
The House divided. [17:06]
(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ......................60
Noes ......................49
Majority ..................11

AYES

Allen, K
Andrews, KL
Bell, AM
Chester, D
Connelly, V
Drum, DK (teller)
Entsch, WG
Fletcher, PW
Gee, AR
Haines, H
Hawke, AG
Joyce, BT
Kelly, C
Ley, SP
Liu, G
McCormack, MF
Morrison, SJ
Pasin, A
Pitt, KJ
Price, ML
Robert, SR
Sharma, DN
Steggall, Z
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Tudge, AE
Vasta, RX
Webster, AE
Wilson, RJ
Wyatt, KG

NOES

Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP
Bowen, CE
Burney, LJ
Butler, MC
Chalmers, JE
Clare, JD
Coker, EA
Conroy, PM
Dreyfus, MA
Fitzgibbon, JA
Gosling, LJ
Hill, JC
Jones, SP
Keogh, MJ
Marles, RD
Mulino, D
O’Connor, BPJ
Phillips, FE
Rishworth, AL
Shorten, WR
Stanley, AM (teller)
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Watts, TG
Wilkie, AD

Alders, KJ
Archer, BK
Broadbent, RE
Conaghan, PJ
Coulton, M
Dutton, PC
Falinski, JG
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hammond, CM
Hunt, GA
Katter, RC
Leeser, J
Littleproud, D
Martin, FB
McIntosh, MI
O’Brien, T
Pearce, GB
Porter, CC
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Sharkie, RCC
Simmonds, J
Stevens, J
Taylor, AJ
Thompson, P
van Manen, AJ
Wallace, AB
Wicks, LE
Wilson, TR
Young, T

Aly, A
Bird, SL
Burke, AS
Burns, J
Butler, TM
Chesters, LM
Claydon, SC
Collins, JM
Dick, MD
Eliot, MJ
Gorman, P
Hayes, CP
Hassan, EN
Kearney, G
King, CF
Mitchell, BK
Murphy, PJ
Perrett, GD
Plibersek, TJ
Ryan, JC (teller)
Smith, DPB
Templeman, SR
Thwaites, KL
Wells, AS
Question agreed to.
Original question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.
Message from the Governor-General recommending appropriation announced.

Third Reading

Mr HAWKE (Mitchell—Minister for International Development and the Pacific and Assistant Defence Minister) (17:12): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Amendment (Governance and Other Matters) Bill 2020

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Ms KEARNEY (Cooper) (17:13): I rise to speak about the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Amendment (Governance and Other Matters) Bill 2020. Labor will not oppose this bill. It amends the governance structures of the Australian Skills Quality Authority, the national VET regulator, and enhances information-sharing arrangements between ASQA and the National Centre for Vocational Education Research.

Key amendments will revise ASQA’s governance structure, replacing the existing chief commissioner, chief executive officer and two commissioners with a single independent statutory office holder—a CEO—and will establish the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Advisory Council. The advisory council is intended to provide ASQA with access to expert advice regarding the functions of the regulator. The changes respond to initial findings from the rapid review of ASQA’s governance, culture and processes.

Labor supports a fair and considered approach to ASQA reforms. We will support changes that improve its capacity to ensure responsiveness to students, communities and employers, but we will reject changes that attempt to weaken ASQA’s regulatory framework. We need to ensure that reforms to ASQA audit processes don’t allow any drop in quality. In the past, we’ve seen this government be slow to act on quality issues, and it has done serious damage to the sector.

As I said earlier, Labor will not oppose this bill, but we will push to ensure TAFE and union representation on the advisory council. It’s crucial that the public provider has a seat at the table. Given the important role the advisory council will play in providing strategic advice, Labor believes it is imperative that the council represents a cross-section of the sector, while providing essential expertise. As the public provider, TAFE plays a critical role in the sector and it should be properly represented on the council. We do not want to see an advisory body that is unduly weighted to representing private providers. This could undermine ASQA’s stringent regulatory approach.
Equally, trade union representation is vital. Union members, the workers, are at the coalface of training, and they know too well the system and the system's problems. They have played a critical role in the development of standards, career advancement, safety and quality of courses. To remove the voice of those at the coalface would diminish any work the council did.

More broadly, this is just another tweak from a third-term government that simply refuses to deliver a genuine reform package to overhaul the vocational training sector. The bill does not come close to fixing the mess the Liberal government has made of Australia's TAFE and training system. The outbreak of the coronavirus highlighted that more than seven years of Liberal government has left Australia facing a crisis in skills and vocational training. The most recent figures show a 73 per cent drop in the number of apprenticeships advertised. I've spoken to small businesses who say they've been struggling to keep their apprentices on. The government did earlier offer a subsidy for apprentices, and that's one small step in the right direction, but this is a critical problem for us. We had skills shortages before the pandemic hit. Before COVID-19 we were simultaneously experiencing a crisis of youth unemployment and a crisis of skills shortages. One of these is bad enough, but to be faced with both at the same time is a disaster. And here we are, confronted with just that. There's a nearly 10 per cent increase in the number of occupations facing skills shortages.

While businesses are struggling to fill the skilled positions they have on offer, we have young people desperate for work who can't fill those positions because they haven't been given the chance to gain the skills that those roles require. Why isn't the Prime Minister training these people for jobs in industries where there's a shortage of workers? Well, because the government has spent seven years neglecting our TAFE and vocational education and training system. It has spent seven years neglecting it. It has spent seven years ignoring the vital role that TAFE, the public provider, plays in the growth and development of young people and the vital role it plays in the growth of our economy. It has spent seven years cutting funding, while also underspending the meagre amount it promised the sector. Rebuilding our skills and training sector will be crucial to getting the economy going again post the pandemic.

We absolutely need to be properly funding our TAFEs and our apprenticeship programs. Sadly, we've seen $3 billion of cuts in recent years to TAFE and training. The government must restore the funding they have cut. They must invest in developing our younger generation of tradespeople in these areas. They need to take responsibility for this. As we learned last year from the federal Department of Education's own data, the Liberals have failed to spend $919 million of their own TAFE and training budget over the past five years. The numbers involved are shocking. It is all sitting in the government's bank account, idling away, and that is in addition to the more than $3 billion already ripped out of the system.

We have TAFE campuses falling apart across the country, desperately in need of infrastructure upgrades. We have state governments closing campuses and ending courses, all while this pile of money remains unspent. Why? Because this government says there has been less demand than forecast. Every year since the Liberal Party came to office?

That just doesn't stack up. When underemployment is near record levels, employers are at the same time crying out for skilled workers, and young people cannot get jobs.

What is the result? Under the Liberals there are 150,000 fewer apprentices and trainees, and there is a shortage of workers in critical services, including plumbing, carpentry, hairdressing and motor mechanics. The number of Australians doing an apprenticeship or traineeship is lower today than it was a decade ago. The independent National Centre for Vocational Education Research recently found that over the past year 20 per cent fewer people were signing up to trade apprenticeships and traineeships. This was even more extreme in a number of essential trades. Australians starting an apprenticeship or traineeship in construction, including carpentry, bricklaying and plumbing, dropped an alarming 40 per cent. There are more people dropping out of vocational training than finishing it. This doesn't happen by accident. The Liberal government's billion dollar underspend included incentives for businesses to take on apprentices, support to help people finish their apprenticeships and a fund designed to train Australians in areas of need.

At a time when we as a nation are screaming out for skilled workers, it's a travesty that this government has neglected the VET sector and has neglected our youth—not only our youth but the many other workers needing reskilling to get a job after they have lost theirs or have been made redundant. Think of autoworkers. They were highly skilled workers in good, solid jobs with decent pay and conditions that were gone at the whim of a past Treasurer and his government. Thousands of skilled workers were employed directly by the car companies themselves or in supply chains or services companies that relied on the sector. Research shows that, when an industry collapses or is shut down, one-third of workers get a similar job, one-third end up in lower paid, casual, less skilled jobs and one-third never work again.
Planning for full employment, in particular in the face of sectoral change, is complicated but necessary, and it can be done. All the VET sector—TAFEs, RDOs, community colleges, group training organisations—has a role in ensuring that we have maximum employment through skilling, reskilling and lifelong learning. In a world where people no longer have a job for life, where workers are more likely to move through the workforce and where technology changes at a rate faster than we can keep up, we must have an agile, comprehensive and valued VET sector.

I come from the Labor Party. That means I, along with my party, have a vision for the vocational education and training sector. It is one where courses are reworked to reflect new and traditional skills, where teachers are offered secure jobs in the sector, with good pay, and where the best of the best can be attracted to teach. It is one where students are proud to have secured a place at a prestigious TAFE and where they are delivered qualifications that can set them up for life. It is one where students have state-of-the-art equipment and world-class amenities, where qualifications are valued equally with those of the university sector, where dual qualifications may even be possible, where businesses compete for collaboration and opportunity and open the doors of expertise for people to be trained, and where businesses do their bit to ensure a future with a productive, skilled workforce. It would be a world leader in education and professional standards and growth.

We need a framework and a government with the vision to set this up. We need a regulator that has a compliance role, for sure. But we also need it to have a role in education, enabling and transforming and evolving the training organisations. We have a vision for TAFEs and the VET sector—one where it is vital, robust and valued. This government does not. It gives lip-service but does nothing useful. Yes, we support this bill, but it's just tinkering in a sector that is crying out for reform. For almost seven years this government has shown a palpable lack of leadership. But, suddenly, the Prime Minister has apparently clicked and knows it's important to the Australian people and the economy. He made some hollow references without any hard detail and without any policy announcements. There were no funding commitments and there was no indication of what this means. We are seeing piecemeal reforms in response to a flurry of disconnected reviews. But there have been too many wasted years, and there is no clear vision.

The Productivity Commission says the VET system is a mess. The Business Council of Australia is calling for fundamental reform. The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry has called the government's commitment to VET lukewarm at best. The Chief Scientist doubts the system is equal to the challenges posed by a rapidly changing technological future. Business concerns in relation to skill shortages cannot be addressed with a piecemeal, half-hearted approach to skill acquisition, vocational education and our public provider.

I am a nurse, and I did a Bachelor of Education so I could play a role in the education of future nurses, enrolled nurses and carers. I've had experiences in both receiving and delivering quality vocational education, and it starts with a commitment to the end goal of skilled workers through real collaboration with industry, trainers and government. That connection between industry, training organisations and government is broken. In fact, in many ways the VET sector has divided—moved away from industry. It's no longer supplying the skills that industry demands nor is it providing the quality of training that is required. In fact, the VET sector is a perfect example of market failure, where the marketisation of the sector created the provision of cheap courses that served neither the workers' interests nor industries' interests—nor, for that matter, the economy's interest.

Everyone from the Business Council of Australia through to the Australian Council of Trade Unions is calling for intervention to restart the process. The government's response has been poor. It is not listening. It is merely tinkering. The Prime Minister has no plan to create more jobs or to lift wages for those who are actually employed. As always, the Prime Minister would rather hide from problems than do the hard work needed to solve them. He would rather spin and deflect, bringing in marketing teams and celebrity ambassadors to distract from the real issue. Fiddling at the edges of the current system will not address the profound problems that undermine vocational education and training and, consequently, the productive performance and international competitiveness of our economy.

Consequently, I move:

That all words after "That" be omitted with a view to substituting the following words:

"whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading, the House notes that:

(1) the Government has damaged Australia's world-class vocational training system by:
   (a) cutting funding for vocational education and TAFE by over $3 billion;
   (b) presiding over simultaneous crises of skills shortages and youth unemployment; and
   (c) failing to tackle falling completion rates, with more people dropping out of vocational training courses than finishing them; and
(2) this bill fails to deliver the reform needed to fix problems in the vocational training sector".
Mr Wallace (Fisher) (17:28): There's never been a more important time in Australian modern day history to continue this government's commitment to reforming the vocational education and training sector. I've spoken often in this place and at length about the importance of the VET sector. But, as we navigate these choppy COVID-19 waters, we must maintain our focus and our commitment to VET, and that is precisely what this bill will do. The Morrison government understands well the importance of the VET sector. The political leadership exhibited by both the senior responsible minister, Senator Cash, and the assistant minister, the member for Swan, who was himself once an electrician, or what is colloquially known as a sparky—the member for Swan completed his own apprenticeship all those many years ago when one wonders whether there was, in fact, electricity around!

But I digress. The member for Swan is committed to VET, as is Senator Cash and as are all members and senators who sit on the government benches. The member for Swan has walked the talk; he is the real deal when it comes to passion for the VET sector—just like the Minister for Water, Resources and Northern Australia. He too is an electrician, having completed an apprenticeship and then going on to complete a Bachelor of Electrical Engineering. So too the member for Nicholls and the Minister for Aged Care, Youth and Support, Senator Colbeck. They both completed carpentry apprenticeships, as did I.

The ranks of government members on both the front and backbenches are replete with ex-blue-collar workers, or what many refer to today as 'tradies'. But, once a tradie always tradie. I'm still a registered builder—a proud builder—who likes nothing more than pulling the nail bag on and doing a few jobs around the house, and even helping out on community projects when time permits. That's not an invitation to have me around to your place, Mr Deputy Speaker! My point is this: members and senators on the government benches understand the importance of the VET sector—not from an academic or an economic textbook, or from some ideological basis, but from a real-world lived experience; from getting dirt under one's fingernails, from working all day in the hot sun and the cold wind and rain, and then going home and doing the books to pay one's suppliers, employees and subbies.

Whilst I want to acknowledge that this bill will pass with the support of those opposite—and I thank them for that—it's that lived experience that those opposite will never understand because they haven't walked a mile in the shoes of someone who is VET-sector trained. For all the talk from those opposite of purporting to stand up for the workers, how many of those opposite have actually done an apprenticeship, a traineeship or worked as tradies? Silence. Gone are the days of old, when the ALP's ranks were replete with blue-collar workers! Now it seems that Labor will do almost anything to bury what was once its heartland, its support base. Inconceivably, in the lead-up to the last election—and still—Labor believed that its miners should not be working in those jobs anymore. It seeks to close down coalmines and to prevent new coalmines from opening. In fact, it seems to want to prevent any type of mine from opening up.

Australian workers know that the $380 billion worth of additional taxes Labor took to the last election, and which still remain Labor policy today, would have killed and will kill the Australian economy if ever they get a chance to form government again. Australian workers are not mugs; they understood Labor's position in the lead-up to last year's election. When I stood on pre-poll for three weeks and on election day, I saw the wearers of high-vis—tradies—time after time making a beeline to me as the LNP candidate because they knew that we had worker-friendly policies, unlike those opposite.

Those opposite seem incapable of understanding that it is a tried and proven political maxim that you never forget your base. Not only have Labor forgotten their base but they have totally and utterly abandoned it. When a political party like the ALP has been taken over by political apparatchiks and professional trade unionists who do not understand the values of those it purports to represent then that voter base will simply vote with its feet. And as we've seen, that is just what many blue-collar workers and what many tradies are doing. Why? Because the Labor Party has abandoned them in favour of the cultural inner-city elites.

And do you know the really sad thing, Mr Deputy Speaker McVeigh? It's that they just don't get it. Labor just don't get it. They don't understand; they blame everyone else but themselves and their anti-business, anti-individual, reckless, green-ideological-groupthink policies. One wonders why organisations like the CFMMEU continue to support the ALP. It can't be about values or political beliefs, unless of course the CFMMEU have themselves sold out their own members. Unions like the CFMMEU continue to donate millions of dollars to the
ALP each and every year. Perhaps that's why the ALP cannot break its umbilical cord with the CFMMEU: they both need each other. But it's not about workers, apprentices or trainees, it's about money, power and greed. The more money a union donates to the ALP, the more power it has over the ALP. Mr Deputy Speaker, do you recall when the Leader of the Opposition said that he would drive the secretary of the Victorian branch of the CFMMEU, John Setka, from his position? Guess what? Twelve months later John Setka is still the secretary of the Victorian branch of the CFMMEU.

I want to return to the significance of this bill to the VET sector. I want to speak to the apprentices and trainees out there who may be listening on their way home from building sites, or they may be in factories or workplaces around the country; perhaps they're still on building sites, although it's getting a bit late in the day. I want you apprentices and trainees to know that this Liberal-National government has your back. We have your back because we know and understand the importance of apprenticeships and traineeships, because many government members were once just like you. We've walked in your shoes. We've experienced what you are experiencing today. We understand that you may be nervous about your job. We understand that you may be concerned about what will happen to your future. How will you finish your apprenticeship or traineeship in these difficult times? I distinctly remember asking myself these questions during my own carpentry apprenticeship, when we endured Paul Keating's 'recession we had to have'. I recall sitting around at smoke on a building site, listening to my boss telling us that things were about to get very tough and that work would likely dry up for many. Thankfully, it didn't for us, and I was able to complete my apprenticeship. But I can hear my boss saying, like it was yesterday, that during a recession, 'cash would be king'. Peter Mahony, you were right then and you're still right now.

This Liberal-National government understands the importance of looking after apprentices and trainees. That's why the government, very early on in its COVID response, offered to pay 50 per cent of the wages of apprentices and trainees, an arrangement which has resulted in many employers keeping their apprentices and trainees. That was because we know that when this is over it's so important to the future of this country that that relationship is maintained. This 50 per cent wage subsidy runs up to 30 September. As at 30 April, claims for 15,562 apprentices and trainees have been finalised to assist 9,518 employers, resulting in a total of $72.7 million in payments. This program is part of the federal government's $1.3 billion Supporting Apprentices and Trainees initiative and it is saving jobs.

I do agree with the member for Cooper and some of those opposite, that there are simply not enough apprentices and trainees to meet the usual demand of Australian industry. Now, that demand may have been somewhat ameliorated during this health and financial crisis we are in, but when the economy fires again—and it will—we are going to need skilled tradespeople, and you can't have skilled tradespeople without apprentices and trainees. You can't have them if they are not formally trained in the VET sector. You can't just add water to a labourer and get a tradesperson. You need that formal education through the VET sector to get someone to that level.

Similarly, for these same reasons, the government introduced the JobKeeper program, which sees eligible employers receive $1,500 a fortnight for eligible employees to maintain that relationship during this crisis. That's at an estimated cost of $70 billion. It's the largest government response to an economic crisis in our history, and it is just part of the government's approach to maintaining our economy, at a cost of some $180 billion.

Today, we heard the Prime Minister announce the infrastructure program that will be rolled out. We will need more trainees and apprentices for the work that is about to be rolled out. Similarly, the government recently announced its HomeBuilder package. We've seen one housing estate on the Sunshine Coast, in my electorate, sell out in one day. The developers were attributing the fact that they sold out the entire estate in one day to the HomeBuilder program.

I want to say to mums and dads out there who may be talking to their kids about a future as a tradie: not every kid should go to university.

An honourable member interjecting—

Mr WALLACE: I hear that. In fact, the member for Cowan said exactly the same thing just last week. I agree with her on that. Not every kid should go to university. Mums and dads out there, your kids can get an absolutely fantastic career by taking a traineeship or apprenticeship, training through the VET sector and maybe starting their own business. The doors will open for your children if you encourage them to take on an apprenticeship or a traineeship. Great things will happen for them, as they did for me and apprentices and trainees across the country.

This bill includes a number of provisions to revise the governance structure of ASQA to align with best-practice regulation. It provides for the Governor-General to appoint a statutory office holder known as the Chief Executive Officer of ASQA as the national VET regulator on a full-time basis. This replaces the current arrangement of a chief commissioner and two other commissioners comprising the national VET regulator. It
provides that the CEO is the head of the statutory agency for the purposes of the Public Service Act and the accountable authority of the listed entity known as ASQA for the purposes of the finance law. It provides that a person who is, or has been at any time in the two years before an appointment is made, an executive officer of a registered training organisation is not eligible for appointment as the national VET regulator. It also provides for the engagement of staff and consultants to support the national VET regulator. It provides that the minister may give directions to the national VET regulator in relation to the performance of the regulator's functions or powers.

Its establishes an advisory council to provide advice to the national VET regulator in relation to the regulator's functions. The advice will be in relation to the registration of an individual registered trainee organisation or the accreditation of a particular course as a VET accredited course. It provides for the advisory council to consist of a chair and up to nine other members with expertise in regulation, communications, delivering training, operating or managing a training provider. It provides that the advisory council may provide advice to the national VET regulator on its own initiative or at the request of a minister or the regulator. The regulator must have regard to any advice provided by the advisory council. It establishes arrangements relating to the national VET regulator and advisory council members' appointment, including remuneration, allowances, leave, resignation and termination. It provides that the minister may give written directions to the advisory council about the performance of its functions and sets out transitional provisions to preserve decisions and actions taken by previous commissioners.

I want to wrap up by once again encouraging young people to go out and get an apprenticeship; to go onto building sites, go and see businesses and knock on every door. That next knock could be something that changes your life and sets you up for life.

Dr ALY (Cowan) (17:43): It is, indeed, always a privilege to stand here and speak about vocational education and training and higher education, a topic that I'm very passionate about. I begin by acknowledging the excellent contributions by the member for Cooper and the amendments that she's moving here, but also the excellent contribution of the first four minutes and 10 seconds of the member for Fisher—particularly the nice little jab at the member for Swan that he included in there—and there were about 30 seconds towards the end of the member for Fisher's contribution as well.

I've spoken about the need for governance in vocational education and training, and the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Amendment (Governance and Other Matters) Bill 2020 certainly goes towards ensuring that we have regulation and governance in that space, so I don't want to speak too much about that today. What this bill actually does has been covered by my colleagues who spoke previously. But the member for Cooper, the member for Fisher and other members who have contributed to discussions about VET and about higher education have spoken about the need for reform. That's where I want to focus my contribution this evening, because I really want to talk about what reform might look like and how we might move to actual reform.

I think other speakers have acknowledged that our vocational education and training system is in desperate need of something. It desperately needs to be revived to its once former glory. That's something that I've certainly spoken about before. But I want to talk about a different kind of reform that brings together a framework of higher education and that looks at the opportunities both in vocational education and training and in university. To do that, I think we need to start by understanding the fundamental difference between VET and university.

A VET degree focuses on skills and what's called 'competency based' training. So as an instructor in vocational education and training, for example, you don't give your students essays as exams; you give them a practical test in which they have to demonstrate a capability to carry out a certain number of tasks. These tasks are essential to tick off so that they can perform a task and therefore have that particular skill. So it's about demonstrating an ability to carry out a task by demonstrating an acquisition of skills. That's competency based training.

University degrees, on the other hand, focus on cognitive, academic skills—for example, the ability to think critically, the ability to analyse a piece of literature or the ability to approach a contemporary issue through different theoretical lenses. Each set of skills is suitable in different areas and has different applications. Competency based training is suitable for trades and those sorts of skills, whereas academic training is more suited towards skills that require creativity and critical thinking. But, in speaking about reform, I'm thinking of a framework where we integrate these two approaches to the acquisition of skills and knowledge and where we integrate training with university—work skills with academic skills; and competency, competency based training and the ability to demonstrate competency based training with the ability to demonstrate critical thinking about particular issues.

I'm thinking that TAFE could play a larger role, for example, in providing competency based training to industries to upskill their workforce or to reskill their workforces in areas of transition and to address knowledge
gaps and skills gaps. We could use the TAFE system for post-university competency based units—for university graduates entering the workforce. I'll give some examples of where we could have this integrated higher education system.

We all know that sometimes we get university graduates who can, like I say, analyse a piece of 19th century literature but can't write a briefing note. So what if, post university, a system within TAFE was set up to teach those competency based skills—to teach communication as a skill? Another example could be university lecturers undertaking workplace teaching and training units in order to be able to teach graduates to communicate—because that's essentially what university lecturers do; they teach through communication—all that knowledge that they've acquired through their university years.

I've spoken before about the potential for having people who work in law enforcement trained in cybersecurity. Where law enforcement has a difficulty in retaining graduates with cybersecurity qualifications, if we had people who were already in law enforcement who showed some aptitude for cybersecurity, we could get them trained through vocational education and training, for example.

When we think about skills and the workforce of the future, when we think about employment in the future and what work is going to look like in the future, with artificial intelligence and with increased automation it's very likely that regular physical activities or tasks associated with work are going to decrease as machines take over. What's going to increase, what's going to be more needed in the future, are tasks that are creative and service oriented—the kinds of things that you need humans for: creativity and the delivery of service. These skills in creativity and in service are both academic and vocational. An integrated approach to higher education, where you had academic and vocational skills working in tandem with each other, would prepare our future workforce and look at both the needs of industry as well as the needs of students and future workers.

In order to do this, we need investment. We need investment and we need a real commitment to reform and a real commitment to innovation in this space. A good example of what I'm speaking about is education hubs. Just north of my electorate of Cowan there is an education precinct in Joondalup, where Edith Cowan University, my alma mater, built their Joondalup Campus alongside one of the largest TAFEs in Western Australia. Included within that precinct is the Western Australian Police Academy. So you have the police academy, the TAFE and Edith Cowan University. When I was working at Edith Cowan University, lecturing in counterterrorism, security and intel, we often did a lot of work with the police academy as well as the TAFE, to the point where we started developing courses where you could start off doing a TAFE degree, acquire some of those competency based skills in security and then undertake a couple of units at the university in criminology, psychology or computer security, getting those cognitive academic skills up as well—research skills, writing skills and those sorts of things.

When I think about the future of a quality higher education system, this is what I would like to see. I'd like to see more of these education hubs around Australia where you have universities working in tandem with TAFEs and other training institutions as well, like, for example, law enforcement academies like the police academy. If we invest in this, this is how I think we can achieve real reform in our VET sector.

I also think that this is an opportunity for us to reclaim our ground in Australia and our reputation as being world class and world leading with a vocational education and training sector that responds to industry needs—particularly if, as I say, we think about not just the jobs of the future but the kinds of tasks and the kinds of skills that are going to be required in those jobs and if we ask ourselves, frankly and openly, the question: how do we equip a future workforce, not just with knowledge, which they can get through an academic university degree, but with the skills to apply that knowledge and demonstrate competency, which they can get through vocational education and training?

I see a future where vocational education and training isn't just about carpentry or electricians and isn't just for tradies, as the member for Fisher said, or chefs and the acquisition of those kinds of skills. I see a future where we have a vocational education and training system which is actually about competency and a range of skills across a range of industries and which works coherently with other higher education providers and other provisions for higher education.

That's my contribution this evening with regard to this bill, which I note is specifically on the governance of ASQA, the national VET regulator. As I said at the beginning, I think it is important that we have regulation, standards and governance in this space, but I reiterate what the member for Cooper said with regard to this reform not going far enough. I don't think it's good enough that we stand here and talk about reform without having a deeper conversation about what reform might look like and without having those big ideas about how we can have a higher education system that has, at its heart, both university and vocational education and training on an equal footing. For too long we've seen vocational education and training as second rate compared to a university.
education. It's not and it shouldn't be. In fact, there are some areas, as the member for Fisher acknowledged and as I have acknowledged before in this House, where a university degree just won't do and where you need to have competency based training and to demonstrate an acquisition of skills.

I started by pointing to what this bill does. We are not opposing this bill, but I do hope that we continue to talk in this place about vocational education and training. I hope that we continue to talk it up and that, as we move forward with this bill and with some of the other bills that have been presented in parliament over the last week and the last time we sat, we can work towards a national vocational education and training system that isn't just about better governance but is about quality of delivery and is a system that addresses the needs of industry, students and a future workforce.

Ms COKER (Corangamite) (17:57): I rise to speak on the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Amendment (Governance and Other Matters) Bill 2020, and I support the amendment moved by the member for Cooper. As indicated by the assistant shadow minister, Labor will not oppose this bill. The bill amends the governance structure of the Australian Skills Quality Authority, ASQA, the national VET regulator, and enhances information arrangements between ASQA and the National Centre for Vocational Education Research. The key amendments will revolve ASQA's governance structure, replacing the existing chief commissioner, chief executive officer and two commissioners with a single independent statutory officeholder—a CEO—and will establish the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Advisory Council.

It is intended that the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Advisory Council will provide ASQA with access to expert advice regarding the functions of the regulator. It would also provide strategic advice to help ASQA's continuous improvement. The advisory council would consist of nine members and a chair. The legislation does not indicate the likely make-up of the council, including whether or not there will be representation of private RTOs, public providers, experts, employer groups or unions. It is important that all stakeholders are represented. Labor will push to ensure TAFE and union representation on the advisory council. It's crucial that the public provider has seats at the table—not just private providers.

I note the member for Sydney has written to the minister, Senator Cash, outlining Labor's concerns, including about representation on the proposed advisory council. It would be a huge conflict for the regulator to have an advisory body comprising largely only one part of that sector. It's a bit like putting the fox in charge of the chicken pen. The member for Sydney has indicated that, if the government can't guarantee balanced representation, Labor will consider amendments in the Senate to correct this. I note that the minister has not given any guarantee of a balanced representation on the advisory council by including unions and TAFE teachers.

The second concern is that Labor isn't quite sure what defects the legislation is meant to remedy. As the member for Sydney outlined in her letter to the minister, the explanatory memorandum for the bill states the bill addresses a number of recommendations in the Joyce and Braithwaite reviews. However, neither review appears to make any recommendation concerning the proposed changes to governance structures. Yes, they do mention better connection to industry and providers but nothing specific as to governance arrangements. Labor has called on the minister to provide further background on the rationale for these amendments. However, I note that the ASQA rapid review by a consultant in April has confirmed the desirability of the governance changes and that there is general support for ASQA adopting an educative as well as regulatory role.

Labor support a fair and considered approach to ASQA reforms. We will support changes that improve ASQA's capacity to ensure responsiveness to students, communities and employers. But we will reject the attempts to weaken ASQA's regulatory framework. We need to ensure that reforms to ASQA's audit processes don't allow any drop in quality.

In the past, we've seen this government being slow to act on quality issues, and it has done serious damage to the sector. The relatively minor changes to governance proposed in this bill are just another attempt to distract the community from the lack of a real and genuine reform package in the vocational training sector. This bill does not come close to fixing the mess the Liberal government has made of Australia's TAFE and training system. More than six years of Liberal government has left Australia facing a crisis in skills and vocational training. It has spent six years ignoring the vital role TAFE plays in the growth of our young people and our economy. It has spent six years cutting funding whilst underspending the meagre amount it's promised the sector. The numbers are shocking.

As we learned last year from the federal education department's own data, the Liberals have failed to spend $919 million of their own TAFE and training budget over the past five years. That's a $214 million underspend in 2018-19, a $202 million underspend in 2017-18 and a $118 million underspend in 2016-17. That is all sitting in the government's bank account. All of this underspend is in addition to the more than $3 billion already ripped out of the VET system. We've got TAFE campuses across the country falling apart. We've got state governments...
closing campuses and ending courses. And all the while this huge pile of money remains unspent. Why? The excuse is that there has been less demand than forecast every year since the Liberal Party came into government. That just doesn't stack up when underemployment is at record levels.

In January this year, before COVID-19 struck in March, the youth unemployment rate rose to 12.1 per cent from 11.6 per cent in December. It is now more than double that figure. At that time, employers were crying out for skilled workers and, as we move into the recovery phase, they will again. Under the Liberals, there are 140,000 fewer apprentices and trainees and a shortage of workers in critical services, including plumbing, carpentry, hairdressing and motor mechanics. The number of Australians doing an apprenticeship or traineeship is lower today than it was a decade ago. The independent National Centre for Vocational Education Research recently found that, over the past year, 20 per cent fewer people have been signing up to trade apprenticeships and traineeships. In my seat of Corangamite, there are 113 or 7.7 per cent fewer trainees and apprentices today than there were in 2013. In the Minister for Education's own seat of Wannon, there are 1,044 or around 28 per cent fewer apprentices and trainees than there were in 2013.

I'm not saying that training carers for our young and older citizens in aged care or child care or workers for retail isn't important. However, to build our infrastructure and our manufacturing and resource sectors, we need plumbers and electricians, bricklayers and carpenters. We can't continue to let this slide in traditional trades continue. The impact for our nation is just too great, especially after devastating events like the recent bushfires and the COVID-19 crisis, which mean years of rebuilding work ahead. Let's be clear: private sector RTOs outside major companies don't normally invest in facilities for complex trade skills. The private sector usually wants to take the cream without having to produce the milk to start with. It has been the TAFEs that have done the heavy lifting where courses require workshops, sandpits and labs. The government's preference for private RTOs—indeed, its insistence on contestability as the basis of funding agreements with the states and territories—has driven a race to the bottom with the TAFE system. This has exacerbated the move away from commencements in critical trades. Once, TAFE received 70 to 80 per cent of funds, and there was a cap on the amount of funds that were contestable. But that disappeared years ago. At the same time, there has been no focus on trade and technical areas for the allocation of funds.

Neither the Joyce review nor the recent Productivity Commission review into the funding arrangements looked at this issue of contestability. It is the ideological bedrock of the VET system and it is untouchable. The problem is that until it is fixed we're going to have the continuing disaster we have now in trades and technical training, as thousands of very small training providers compete each other into the ground. The states are, certainly, also to blame for this shocking state of affairs. From the height of their contributions in 2012 they have dropped the ball in terms of funding to the tune of $1 billion a year collectively. The states have also agreed, even promoted, contestability as the basis of the funding system.

Worse than the poor commencement dates, the failure-to-complete rates are horrendous. Completion rates for apprentices and trainees who completed training in 2014—the last year for which figures are available—have decreased to 56.7 per cent, down from 59.9 per cent for those commencing in 2013. The completion rates for individuals who commenced in trade occupations in 2014 decreased to just 54.5 per cent, down 4.7 percentage points compared with those commencing in 2013, and it decreased to 57.7 per cent for non-trade occupations, down two per cent. This doesn't happen by accident. The Liberal government's $1 billion underspend included cuts to incentives for businesses to take on apprentices, cuts to support which helped people finish their apprenticeships and cuts to a fund designed to train Australians in areas of need.

While the Australian Industry Group says 75 per cent of businesses surveyed are struggling to find the qualified workers they need, there are several million Australians who are unemployed or underemployed. We are simultaneously experiencing a crisis of youth unemployment and a crisis of skill shortages. One of these is bad enough, but to be faced with both at the same time is hard to comprehend. While businesses are struggling to fill the skilled positions they have on offer, we have young people desperate for work who can't fill those positions because they haven't been given the chance to gain the skills that the roles require. That is not only bizarre, it is a huge drag on our productivity. With states like Victoria in the middle of an infrastructure boom, this is a disaster. Many civil and engineering construction projects are being pushed back because the necessary skilled workforce isn't available. So it's not surprising that after the summer bushfires the government's silver bullet to rebuild economies was to amend the rules around working holiday visas to enable backpackers to take up work in affected areas. Now, with an even more urgent need to rebuild post-COVID-19, we need a considered and strategic investment in skills and TAFE, and real workforce training including skills acquisition. However, the government's response isn't to pump money into training for young people in the building trades. Pre COVID, the answer was to try to fill the labour shortages through short-term overseas visitors. That option is off the table for the foreseeable future.
Why isn't this coalition government training local people for jobs in industries where there is a shortage of workers? It's because the Liberals have cut funding to TAFE and training; that's why. Young people have been clear about what they need: they need a skills training sector which is properly funded and properly resourced, and which has educators who are properly trained and able to skill these kids up for a pathway to meaningful employment. They need training in skills that are actually linked to their local economy and the potential growth in that local economy.

This government hasn't delivered on a single element of those requests. As always, the Prime Minister would rather hide from problems than do the hard work needed to solve them. As with his JobMaker launch last May, he would rather blame the states and territories than look at this government's performance over the last seven years. He would rather spin and deflect, or bring in marketing teams, to distract from the real issue. Remember Scott Cam, the celebrity appointed as National Careers Ambassador late last year? Mr Cam was being paid $345,000 of taxpayers' money for 15 months work. Have we heard of him since? No, and we won't, as he has, thankfully, relinquished the remainder of his salary because of COVID-19 and, I expect, any motivation to promote the trades. Up until that point in April, he had done one event and a few social media videos.

Fiddling at the edges of the current system will not address the significant problems that undermine our woeful vocational education and training performance. By implication, it also adversely affects the productivity and international competitiveness of our economy. Unlike Labor, the government does not understand the critical role of TAFE as the public provider, the value in skills and apprenticeships or the value of hardworking and passionate TAFE teachers. We know that nine out of 10 jobs created in the future will need a post-secondary-school education, either at TAFE or university. We urgently need to increase participation in both our universities and our vocational education sector to make sure that our young people are prepared for the world of work, which is evolving very quickly.

If we do not value the role of an appropriately funded VET sector for the training skills and apprenticeships they provide, or its vital role in driving the economy and enhancing industry, then we are in for a very rocky road indeed. This third-term government simply refuses to deliver a genuine reform package that overhauls the sector and properly funds both vocational training providers and universities to deliver the services that their students need. It's about time they did.

Ms HAMMOND (Curtin) (18:12): I rise to support the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Amendment (Governance and Other Matters) Bill 2020. The VET sector in Australia is large and diverse, and this was noted in the Braithwaite report of 2016, the later Joyce review and the most recent rapid review undertaken in late 2019. There are approximately 4,000 RTOs in Australia, and the Australian Skills Quality Authority regulates approximately 3,700 of them. There are close to 1,500 qualifications being delivered across Australia, and over four million students are enrolled in nationally recognised VET. Private RTOs deliver VET to approximately 58.7 per cent of students; TAFEs to 17.6 per cent and community education providers deliver to nine per cent. The providers vary in size and in scope. VET is also delivered by universities, schools, enterprise providers and a combination of the above. Modes of delivery include part-time, full-time, online, distance, apprenticeships and traineeships. The Productivity Commission review which came out in May advised that $1.6 billion is spent annually by governments in Australia on VET. That is $1.6 billion across sectors of government.

When I first considered this bill, it was pre COVID-19. The reflection I had at that time has been absolutely reinforced by what has transpired over the last three months, which was that Australia needs to have a VET sector delivering high-quality and relevant training qualifications which are reliable, accessible and affordable. We need a VET sector that can be quickly responsive to changing needs and demands. And VET is equally as important for individual Australians as it is for Australia as a nation. Individually, people deserve to have access to opportunities to learn skills and develop expertise so that they can utilise them in an ever-changing work environment. Skills and expertise empower people. They give them a higher degree of independence and autonomy and greater opportunities to participate in the workforce, to exercise initiative and to achieve. As we face an unemployment rate potentially as high as 10 per cent because of the impact of COVID-19, as we take steps to recover, reboot and rebuild, making sure that people have the ability to acquire new skills and new expertise to be able to move into different areas of employment is absolutely and vitally critical.

At a national level, the capacity for our national economy to grow, compete and thrive in a global economy is dependent on us having a workforce that is highly skilled, adaptable and resilient. At the same time, as we've seen over the past couple of months, uncertainty in international supply lines means that we as a country need to have internal expertise to step up and innovate when required. We have seen this over the past couple of months: distilleries making hand sanitiser and factories urgently repurposing to make essential PPE. This has been able to be done because we have a skilled workforce.
As good as our VET sector is, it can be better. An improvement that was identified in the Braithwaite review, the Joyce review and the rapid review and commented on by the Productivity Commission is the need for the regulatory environment to be fit for purpose and robust. Let us remember that we are spending $1.6 billion on this sector annually. Let us also remember that there are four million Australians enrolled or studying in this sector. It is absolutely vital that our VET sector is excellent. All three of the reports I just mentioned noted the many comments made by VET providers about the regulator, ASQA. They noted their experience with inexperienced auditors, their fear of not being treated reasonably and the lack of information and guidance given to them ahead of an audit, and they all noted that change is needed.

This bill picks up on those recommendations from the Joyce, Braithwaite and rapid reviews in relation to the VET regulator. Its purpose is to support a consistent, transparent, balanced and effective regulator and regulatory environment. These changes will support improvements to the national VET regulator's governance arrangements, regulatory practice and other critical areas of business, such as strategy, communication and sector engagement. The revised governance model contained in this bill draws on best practice for Commonwealth regulators. There are four key elements. The first element is the replacement of the existing three-commissioner structure with a single agency head, to be known as the chief executive officer of ASQA.

The rapid review noted that the current lack of clarity in the roles and responsibilities of the three commissioners led to inefficiencies and a lack of direction in ASQA itself. The rapid review also noted that, as at September 2019, of the 101 non-corporate Commonwealth entities—that is, entities such as ASQA—only three did not have an individual as the accountable authority. I've heard questions asked as to why it is necessary to change the governance arrangement, but good, proper governance and good, proper regulators have a clearly set out management structure. That is important internally, within the organisation, as well as externally, for those who have to deal with the organisation. Combining the three commissioners into one and having one clear CEO helps to address that.

The second element in this bill is the establishment of a statutory expert advisory council to advise the CEO of ASQA. The advisory council will provide ASQA with expert strategic advice to help it continuously improve as a regulator while maintaining its independent regulatory decision-maker. The council will not represent particular stakeholders or jurisdictions. Rather, it will comprise of members with diverse expertise in areas such as communications, delivering training and experience operating a training provider. It should really be noted that the advisory council will not be a decision-making body but rather a valuable support to improve policy, funding and regulation.

The third element is the inclusion of the information-sharing arrangements that support the use of data collected by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research. Improved information sharing will support governments and regulators so that the diverse needs and requirements of all Australians, including groups with different needs, such as people with disability and those where English is not their first language, are considered in policy, funding and regulation.

The fourth element of the bill is to clarify the nature of directions the minister may issue to ASQA to improve its regulatory process. The bill provides for the minister to give a broad direction to the national VET regulator in relation to the performance of its functions or powers. This power isn't unlimited, and the statutory independence of it as a regulator is preserved by prohibiting the giving of directions by the minister in relation to a particular regulatory decision.

As I noted right at the beginning, for our VET sector to be strong and to thrive, for it to best suit the needs of the students, the providers, the employers and the country as a whole, we need to have a system that we trust. There is $1.6 billion, and there are four million people undertaking VET studies. There have been questions about why we're focusing on changing the regulator. Is it important? Should we just be throwing more money into VET at this particular time? Having a strong regulatory body, one that is trusted and performs its functions efficiently and expertly, is actually a precondition for pouring money in. This ensures that the money is spent wisely and effectively. In order to make sure that the VET system delivers what we need, we need to start at the top, with the VET regulator. That is why this particular legislation is essential. Trust in the VET system is dependent on there being an effective regulator, one that starts and ends with a focus on quality and excellence. An effective and excellent regulator is one which strikes the right balance between its different functions of approving, quality monitoring, educating, and compliance monitoring and enforcement. An effective regulator is one which is respected by those over whom it exercises its jurisdiction. It's neither a toothless tiger nor a pushover. Nor is it a body which focuses on form and forms—on box ticking rather than substance.

As a result of the rapid review, there are going to be further changes and a longer-term program of improvement to support ASQA's continued evolution as a modern and effective regulator. There are going to be changes to VET and higher education as well. However, the changes being implemented now, based as they are
on expert advice and following best-practice guidelines and arrangements of comparable bodies across Australia, will enhance ASQA's organisational capability and support best-practice regulation, continuous improvement and effective engagement with the VET sector. These changes will facilitate a shift towards the balanced regulatory approach that is essential for all those involved with VET in Australia and will support Australia in the longer term.

Mr HAYES (Fowler—Chief Opposition Whip) (18:24): I also rise to make a contribution to the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Amendment (Governance and Other Matters) Bill 2020. I must say from the outset that I agree with much of what the member for Curtin had to say, with respect, I think she may have gilded the lily a little, particularly in relation to ongoing investment in the VET sector, but I'll come to that. It is clear that we, on this side of the House, will not stand in the way of good legislation. I think what is proposed in this bill is of material benefit. Therefore, it will be supported by Labor.

I wish to also draw the attention of the House to the amendment moved by the member for Cooper. There are certainly improvements that need to be made in vocational education, which this bill goes nowhere near. In the case of the bill, we will support, in a considered way, the reforms that have been made with respect to the Australian Skills Quality Authority's capacity to ensure responsiveness and transparency to students, communities and employers, and I think that that is a good thing. Nevertheless, we can't let the opportunity go, in allowing people to think that the government is so committed to the vocational education sector and that they're just tweaking it to one step below perfection—it is far from that. To put these reforms into perspective, they are just another tweak from a third-term government that's refused to deliver on genuine reform to the vocational education sector.

The bill does not come close to fixing the mess the Liberal government has made in Australia's TAFE and training system. In essence, the bill does two things. First, it revises ASQA's governance structure, replacing the existing chief commissioner/chief executive officer and two commissioners with a single independent statutory office holder. This is intended to ensure that the statutory office holder will be able to perform the role more consistently with that of the head, including leading strategy, making managerial decisions and determining the objectives, resources and policies of ASQA. We agree that that's a good thing to do.

Second, the bill establishes a National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Advisory Council. It is envisaged this council will provide ASQA with the necessary expert advice regarding the functions of the regulator. This very much does follow with the recommendations of the Braithwaite and Joyce reviews. These reviews made it particularly clear that ASQA needs to better engage in the VET sector and to provide education and guidance to the administration of the VET sector and its key stakeholders. While the government doesn't include this aspect in the bill, I do think there's a case to be made that TAFE should be directly represented on the council, and so should teachers. Vocational education teachers should be there. Otherwise, we fear, the council could be skewed in favour of private providers, undermining ASQA's stringent regulatory approach. I simply offer that as a suggestion, on the basis that over the last seven years this government has made it very, very difficult for TAFE to function. It has given greater preference to private providers of vocational education, an area where we have seen many, many examples of mismanagement, and this does need to be rectified. I simply want to make the case that we've got to get the balance right. It is one thing to tweak at the edges to improve the management structure of ASQA's audit processes. They are decent things to be done, but not to actually address vocational education itself is an absolute missed opportunity by this government. It's not a near miss. The fact is that over the last seven years we've seen the poor management of this sector. It's left Australia facing a skills crisis, particularly in the areas of vocational training. This government has spent seven years neglecting TAFE and its training systems. It's spent seven years ignoring the vital role that TAFE plays in the development of young people and particularly in the matter of growing our economy. In the last seven years this is a government that has been cutting funding to TAFE and training by ripping $3 billion from the system whilst under-spending on other promises made to this sector. That's hardly the record of a government that values vocational education. The numbers are shocking, but they're clear.

When it comes to young people and the future skills necessary for building our economy, the government's inaction is overwhelming. The federal education department's own data, which they released last year, quite frankly, is the icing on the cake. It reveals that the Liberals failed to spend $919 million on TAFE training over the last five years alone. That's money that was allocated in the budget which they failed to deliver. There's only one reason why you would do that, because you're trying to defund TAFE at the expense of the skills necessary for expanding our economy but in support of private providers. These figures really do speak for themselves. It's something that those on the other side shouldn't take any pride in.
According to the government their claim is there's simply been less demand. Clearly, Mr Deputy Speaker, you wouldn't accept that and neither would any of us. That's just not the case. We are seeing near record levels of underemployment and employers crying out for skilled workers.

By the way, I do congratulate the government on what they've done with respect to payment for retaining skilled workers. I think that's something that is worthwhile. I think JobKeeper has worked well. I do encourage them to think seriously before they try to rip that out, because we do want our economies to grow. We want businesses to extend themselves and be competitive in their emerging economy.

Getting back to this bill, this situation highlights that vocational education is getting worse. While we work together to combat the economic impacts of this pandemic, it is clear that with almost one million Australians out of work since the outbreak, according to the ABS data, we've got to be doing everything we can to keep Australians upskilled, make sure that they are going to be there for the jobs of the future. Particularly as our economy starts to extend and improve we need to have those people there.

The lack of the government's commitment to vocational education, quite frankly, has seen nearly 150,000 apprenticeships and trainees disappear from our skill base system. There is a shortage of skills services, particularly in the areas of plumbing, carpentry, hairdressing and the mechanical trades—if you like, the basic trades. They are areas which are going to be so important for our economy as it re-engages and as we start to once again pit our competitiveness against that of countries in the international markets where we must operate. But the number of people in our vocational education and traineeships is now lower today than it was a decade ago, and no-one can seriously say that the need was just not there. What it does mean is that the government has been asleep for the last seven years and has allowed the system to unfold in that way.

An independent study by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research—not exactly a socialist body, I might add—claims that there has been a 20 per cent drop over the past year in the number of people who are signing up to do trade apprenticeships and traineeships. These are the people we've got to get into the system, and we've got to keep them. It's not just a matter of getting people there to do the first 12 months and then see them pull out. We need people who are going to be committed to entering the trades system. Therefore, we need to be able to support their vocational education and, effectively, support them into sustainable and well-paid jobs which are going to be critical for the future of this country.

I would have thought that investing in young people was in the interests of everybody in this place. We all have kids. Some of our kids will go to universities; some of our kids will aspire to be tradespeople. We all have kids and we are all concerned about their futures. If we simply stop investing in vocational education or if we limit the amount of investment we're putting into vocational education, what's that going to bring? It will be like what occurred under the former Liberal government of John Howard when, all of a sudden, they said: 'Shock, horror! We've got a mining boom on and we don't have the skills necessary. Where can we get them from? The Philippines, Korea, Vietnam—anywhere else we can bring people in from overseas.' Whilst short-term immigration is a good thing to plug holes we might have in our skill sets, it is not the future of this country. It's not the future that any of us as parents would want for our children, I would hope.

Whilst we support the passage of this bill, we're not going to let this government get away with thinking that they have done anything other than tweak at the edges of vocational education. As I said at the outset, I agree with the reforms to ASQA. I think they are good, and it's a good foundation. But the bill hasn't done anything about putting extra money into vocational education, and it hasn't done anything about replacing the money that this government has ripped out of vocational education. The government really does need to think about the future. It needs to think about the skills that we need. It needs to think about the society that we want to be in the future. It can't be that we're just going to import all those skills on a short-term basis to fill skills gaps. For the future prosperity of this nation, we must be investing in education. Every dollar we commit to education—whether it's school based education, tertiary education, universities or VET education—is an investment not only in those young people but in the future prosperity of our nation.

I call on this government to think seriously about delivering genuine reform to the vocational education system. We do need to make sure that we are in a strong position for the future, we do need to ensure that we are investing in our young people and we do need to ensure that, through this legislation, we allow Australia's economy to expand.

Mr PEARCE (Braddon) (18:39): It gives me great pleasure to rise and speak to the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Amendment (Governance and Other Matters) Bill 2020. I'm passionate about education, whether it's primary school, high school, university, TAFE or on-the-job training. Everyone should have access to the education they need, when they need it. It doesn't matter if you are eight or 80. It doesn't matter
whether you live in the city or in the bush. The vocational education sector serves as a vital part of our overall education system.

I'm proud to be a product of the VET system and a former apprentice. I'm on the record saying that not everybody needs an arts degree to get a job. In fact, the most successful and the wealthiest people I know are self-made entrepreneurs. They are people that have come through the VET sector, and have worked hard towards their future. Like me, the Morrison government is committed to ensuring that Australians get the right skills for the workforce of today and tomorrow. This is particularly important in my electorate of Braddon in Tasmania.

During this critical period of unprecedented disruption to the labour market, it is important we prioritise quality improvements for VET, including building confidence in the Australian Skills Quality Authority's role to ensure that the regulation of the sector is reasonable, transparent and effective. To this end, the Morrison government announced a rapid review of ASQA, the bill reflecting initial findings from the rapid review of ASQA's regulatory practices, governance and culture. The findings of the rapid review have been released, and the changes build on recommendations from two independent reviews which called for ASQA to adopt a greater educative approach and reform elements of its regulatory practice. ASQA has already taken steps to ease some of the pressure on the sector that have come about due to the COVID-19 crisis by reducing the regulatory burden on VET providers, ensuring that more flexible approaches to training can be delivered and that students can continue to receive high-quality education and training in an appropriate way.

The government's recent announcement of waiving the ASQA fees and charges and the delay to ASQA's move to full cost recovery will help to maintain cashflow for VET providers and to support students to train. The government believes this improved organisational structure will enable better regulatory decisions, will better facilitate internal review matters and will ultimately allow ASQA to be a fit-for-purpose regulator for VET.

The bill contains a number of provisions to revise the governance structure of ASQA in order to align with best practice regulation, including the provision for the Governor-General to appoint a statutory officeholder, known as the Chief Executive Officer of ASQA, the national vocational education training regulator, on a full-time basis, replacing the current arrangement of a chief commissioner and two other commissioners, which was clunky and ineffective. It also provides that the CEO is the head of the statutory agency for the purposes of the Public Service Act of 1999, and the accountable authority of the listed entity known as ASQA for the purposes of financial law.

A person who is, or has been at any time two years before the appointment is made, an executive officer of a registered training organisation is not eligible for appointment as the National VET Regulator. It provides for the engagement of staff and consultants to support the National VET Regulator. It also provides that the minister may give directions to the National VET Regulator in relation to the performance of the regulator's functions or powers. The direction will be in relation to an individual training provider or VET accredited course. It also establishes an advisory council to provide advice to the National VET Regulator in relation to their function. The advice will be in relation to the regulation of an individual's registered training organisation or the accreditation of a particular course or VET accredited course. This advice will not only be in relation to registration of a particular provider under the Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000.

It provides that the advisory council is to consist of a chair and up to nine other members with expertise in regulation, communications, delivering training and operating or managing a training provider. It provides that the national advisory council may also advise the national VET regulator on its own initiative or at the request of a minister regulator and that the regulator must have regard to any advice provided by the advisory council. So you can see that this augmentation of ASQA's ability in the CEO gives it greater powers when it comes to governance. The National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Amendment (Governance and Other Matters) Bill 2020 amends the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act of 2011 to reform the governance structure of ASQA. The main function of the bill is to replace the current governance structure of a chief commissioner and deputy commissioners with a CEO.

Prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, Tasmania was, indeed, bucking the trend when it comes to the VET sector. Our state had 5,525 apprentices and trainees commencing work in the preceding 12 months ending 30 June 2019. This was up 9.7 per cent from the same period in the year prior. Importantly, we've also seen an increase in females taking up a trade or apprenticeship, which is great to see, with a 10.4 per cent increase from the year before. Not only are we producing more apprentices; we're producing quality apprentices, teachers, training providers, schools and businesses. This includes four national award winners in the Australian Training Awards held recently. The Australian Training Awards are the highest recognition for excellence in VET training in the country, and this was Tasmania's best result in a decade. In my electorate of Braddon, Debra Guntrip of Devonport was recognised for her commitment through 26TEN and TasTAFE to improving the adult literacy and numeracy skills of employees in Tasmania and to ensuring workforces are equipped to support employees with low literacy. Circular Head Christian School was also recognised with a national School Pathways to VET Award
for its commitment to providing quality learning opportunities in years 10 to 12 that are specifically pathway focused for each student.

As we emerge from COVID-19, I know that these positive outcomes will again be the norm. I know that the opportunities will again be ahead of us in the north-west coast, the west coast and King Island, and the great success stories that I've outlined in the last couple of minutes demonstrate why it's so important to ensure that we have continuous improvements to Australia's skills and training sector, including the governance of these bodies. It's a vital part of ensuring that the regulator for VET in Australia is strong, responsive and transparent, particularly in Tasmania, and that is enshrined in this bill. I commend it to the House.

Mr BRIAN MITCHELL (Lyons) (18:48): I rise to speak on the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Amendment (Governance and Other Matters) Bill 2020 and the shadow assistant minister's amendment. There is a desperate need for reform in our training sector. After seven years of incompetent Liberal government, including cuts of more than $3 billion to the industry, Australia's TAFE network is a shambles. It can't meet training demands, courses are not contemporary and they don't align with industry needs.

We have 140,000 fewer trainees and apprentices, and there are critical shortages for key industries, like carpentry and plumbing, which are central to our construction sector—a sector which is absolutely essential to our crawling out of the recession that we are now in. In fact, there has been a nearly 10 per cent increase in the number of occupations facing skills shortages under the government. Between January and April this year, there was a 73 per cent drop in advertisements for apprentices, and COVID only really hit the shores of this country in March. It's hardly a record to be proud of after seven years in government. There have been $3 billion in cuts and 140,000 fewer apprentices and trainees, and we hear reports from the Master Builders Association that, if nothing changes, there will be another 100,000 fewer apprentices and trainees by the end of the year.

The Morrison government has created a training environment where more people drop out of apprenticeships than complete them. Meanwhile, our unemployment rate, particularly amongst youth, is high. Last year's Brotherhood of St Laurence report into youth unemployment showed that, in Tasmania, the south-east region had a youth unemployment rate of 17.8 per cent, making it the sixth worst in the country. The Greater Hobart region was No. 9, with 16.9 per cent youth unemployment, and the north and north-west were No. 16, with 15 per cent youth unemployment—hardly records to be proud of. How can Australia, a country with 30 years of uninterrupted economic growth until this year, be experiencing a youth unemployment crisis at the same time as a serious skills shortage? The answer is serious endemic neglect that the nation's training sector has experienced under seven years of an incompetent Liberal government.

TAFE has a critical role in Australia. It is the public provider of skills and training, and its graduates are invaluable to our productivity and growth as a country. Yet the government, after years of watching the sector stumble—indeed, it's put its own foot out at times—is failing to properly resource it. It's refusing to do the hard work necessary to restore the reputation of our TAFE system, and the country is seeing poorly regulated, expensive and, in too many cases, downright dodgy RTOs fill the vacuum. We've all read the stories: students finish without graduating, certificates are not recognised by industry, there are enormous fees, there are poor skills and students graduate unable to do the jobs that they've been trained in.

We've seen RTOs time and again fined or closed, yet the government has been too slow and flat-footed to address the issue. It's been a total abrogation of responsibility. Firstly, it means a generation of Australians cannot access the pathway they need to fulfil their potential and participate in the career they want to pursue. Secondly, it puts at risk our nation's long-term prosperity and growth.

We should not rely on skilled workers coming in on temporary visas when there are people across Australia, including in my own electorate, who are unemployed or underemployed. There is absolutely a place for skilled migration, particularly long-term permanent migration. There's a place for short-term visa migration as well, through backpackers, for some skills that can't be filled locally in a short amount of time. But, frankly, under this government we've seen a massive increase in the number of short-term visas. When we've got a huge pool of underemployed or unemployed youth that require these jobs, that's where the first focus should be.

Thirdly, we compromise our ability to compete internationally and use the skills, knowledge and innovation of our own people. Australia has always punched above its weight when it comes to skills and training and what that means for our contribution overseas. But this reputation is rapidly diminishing as our TAFE system becomes less effective and less relevant.

The legislation before us is the first tranche of a set of reforms that responds to the recommendations of recent reviews in the VET sector—the 2019 expert review of Australia's VET system, the Joyce review; and the 2018 review of the National VET Regulator Act 2011, the Braithwaite review. This bill seeks to reform the operation of
the Australian Skills Quality Authority—ASQA—the national VET regulator, to strengthen its powers, enhance protections for students and improve transparency to assist RTO compliance.

The amendments in the bill largely implement recommendations of independent reviews that have been supported by the sector. Stakeholders in the sector supported the intention of the bill but noted their frustration with a lack of consultation on the legislation. There remains some uncertainty as to how many of the changes will work in practice. Labor will not oppose this bill, but we are particularly concerned that the result of ASQA moving to a full minister-directed cost-recovery model may mean that some providers may pass the cost of ASQA services onto students. This is contradictory to the recommendations of the Joyce review specifically, which stated:

It is important that ASQA be adequately resourced to perform the guidance and educative role and to perform its role more generally. In many jurisdictions there is an understood difference between parts of the regulator’s activity that should be directly funded by the regulated through cost recovery arrangements versus what are broader activities for the ‘public good, and should therefore be government funded.

So we do have concerns that this is an attempt by the government to cost-shift, to gouge out of students the costs that the regulator and government would normally bear. In light of this, it is important that we monitor the ongoing adequacy of funding to ASQA to ensure that it can continue to perform regulatory and educative tasks.

Labor support a fair and considered approach to ASQA reforms. We will support changes that improve ASQA’s capacity to ensure responsiveness to students, communities and employers, but we will reject changes that attempt to weaken ASQA’s regulatory framework. Labor have always backed and will continue to back a strong, comprehensive regulatory, compliance and education framework for ASQA. Following the widespread rorting of the VET FEE-HELP program, ASQA’s work is crucial in attempting to rid the sector of low-quality and unscrupulous providers. We will continue to monitor the implementation of these and other forthcoming amendments to the regulatory arrangements to ensure they do not in any way compromise regulatory standards.

Broadly speaking, this bill is really a mild administrative tweak from a third-term government that simply refuse to deliver a genuine reform package to overhaul the vocational training sector. Real reform and real funding is needed, but what we are getting now is essentially new stationery and a slap of paint. The Liberals have slashed funding to TAFE and training—$3 billion. They’ve let apprentice numbers fall off a cliff and they’ve presided over a national shortage of tradies, apprenticeships and trainees at the same time as there is massive unemployment for young people.

As well as the $3 billion that they've ripped out of the system, they've underspent $900 million of money they budgeted towards TAFE. They had actually put it in the budget. They intended to spend $900 million but didn't. They will pat themselves on the back for that, saying, 'Aren't we good economic managers, saving a bit of money that we didn't need to spend?' I liken it to a car. When you run a car, you maintain your car. You spend money on the maintenance. You're not a good manager of your car if you're not spending money on the service and you end up with bald tyres and a dirty oil filter. It's the same with the TAFE and training senator. It's not like we have this brand-new, shiny-looking TAFE and training sector that's humming and working really well and is world's best practice. It's falling apart at the seams. It's not doing the job it's meant to, and there's $900 million that has been budgeted to spend on it just sitting in the bank gathering dust. That $900 million could be making a real difference to the quality of TAFE and training in Australia.

Let me give you an example of just how little those opposite value vocational education for our young people in Tasmania. In November last year, my office passed on correspondence from Sorell Council to the Minister for Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business. The council was seeking federal funding towards the expansion of the Sorell campus of the South East Trade Training Centre. The trade training centres were an invention of John Howard. I think they were called something else at the time and, when Labor came in, we renamed them. But essentially these were a Howard construction. They're good. They were a good thing. When the Abbott government came in they dropped them like a hot potato. The Sorell campus was one of the last ones ever built under the Labor government. The new Liberal MP who came in in 2013 opened it, even though Labor built it.

And it's working a treat! It is absolutely humming along. The Sorell trade training centre, under the leadership of Rick Birch, is a great success. He's doing all sorts of courses there. He has mature aged and young people. He has it humming like a top, but it's running out of space. As good as it is, it needs space. The lack of facilities at the Sorell trade training centre are limiting its day-to-day operations, with some courses having to be delivered off-site. So I asked the minister's office if I could meet with the relevant adviser to discuss the council's funding request. The response? I'm still waiting—nothing. Silence. It's a legitimate request from a regional training provider that is being completely disregarded by the minister and by the government.

According to new modelling released this month by the National Australian Apprenticeships Association, Australia is set to lose a further 100,000 apprentices and trainees this year. It's a massive 35 per cent drop.
Tasmania is set to lose 2,107 apprentices and trainees this year. It's no wonder that our nation has a shortage of bricklayers, plumbers, hairdressers, panelbeaters and other critical tradespeople. The number of people taking up construction trades last year plunged by nearly 12 per cent—further proof that the Liberals' cuts to TAFE had created a tradie shortage, even before the coronavirus.

This Prime Minister loves to put his arm around a tradie—somebody in a high-vis vest—and to make out that he's the best friend of tradies. Well, I think that, as the former Prime Minister Mr Turnbull can attest, if this Prime Minister has his arm around your shoulder then watch out. He's not your best friend. Watch out! If Scott Morrison has his arm around your shoulder, be very, very careful. This Prime Minister likes to put his arm around the shoulder of a tradie and make out that he is their best friend, but he doesn't tell them: 'Hey, by the way, I've cut $3 billion out of TAFE, I've underspent $900 million that was already budgeted, and there are 140,000 fewer apprenticeships and traineeships under my government.' He doesn't tell tradies that when he goes out to the pubs and the building sites. So a little bit of truth-telling is required there. The Australian Industry Group says that youth unemployment will skyrocket if there isn't a substantial increase in federal government support. So it's all very well to talk about construction projects and renovations, but you need tradies to build them and this Prime Minister has no plan for that.

I'll just come briefly to the 'HomeBlunder' scheme, which is related to the terms of reference for the amendments in this bill, in the failure for trades. The irony here is that, despite the inattention paid to vocational education by this government over the past seven years, it's now expecting those same industries that are suffering from a tradie crisis to pull this economy out of this recession—the first recession in 30 years. The HomeBuilder scheme—the 'HomeBlunder' scheme—is far too little, too late. Housing construction work is about to fall off a cliff, and the Morrison government has produced an ill-conceived and inadequate scheme, with no detail on how to access it. Let me be clear: the 25 grand for new home builds gets two thumbs up. They won't get an argument from me about that. I think that's a good thing and, largely, what Labor would have done. Twenty-five grand for new home builds—no worries. But renovations? A minimum of $150,000 for a renovation before you can get 25 grand? That's ridiculous. It locks out so many people—nearly everybody in Tasmania—from accessing that money. That renovation side of it will do nothing to assist the trades in Tasmania.

Tradies deserve better. Homebuyers deserve better. Home renovators certainly deserve better. We would have got a much bigger bang for our buck if they had allowed smaller renovation projects to be done. They would still employ tradies and still have carpenters out there fixing up kitchens. There has been an absolute failure by this government, and 'HomeBlunder' is emblematic of the total failure of this government in the trades. (Time expired)

Dr WEBSTER (Mallee) (19:04): I rise to support the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Amendment (Governance and Other Matters) Bill 2020, which will make amendments to the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011. These amendments build on those introduced last year by the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Amendment Bill 2019. The amendments contained in this bill, as well as those contained in previous amendments to the act, aim to strengthen the role of the Australian Skills Quality Authority as the national VET regulator. These changes will support improvements to the national VET regulator's governance arrangements, regulatory practice and other critical areas of business, such as strategy, communication and sector engagement.

With these and other changes made to the act, this government aims to elevate the status of vocational education and training. We say to the Australian public that vocational education and training is not the second option; it is not the second best that many have considered it to be. We say that there are extraordinary training opportunities out there for young people and not so young people, and that we are committed to developing these opportunities for the prosperity of our nation. These changes are about delivering excellence in training. They are about promoting quality in the VET sector and they are about improving access to high-quality training opportunities for Australians.

Regional areas, such as my electorate of Mallee, stand to gain the most from improvements to the VET sector and from great access to high-quality training opportunities as our local economy begins to recover and refocus. Skilled local jobs create new opportunities for Mallee residents to find rewarding careers, with flow-on benefits across the region's economy and our community. As we continue to focus on new and emerging technologies and industries such as renewable energy, artificial intelligence and robotics, the demand for skilled local jobs will increase significantly. Access to high-quality training opportunities is critical to meeting this demand.

It's also essential to align skills and training provision with industry-specific demand. We have to know which skills we need, where we need them and how we can get them. In 2017, work was completed by the Victorian Skills Commissioner to answer these questions for the northern half of my electorate. The Mallee Regional Skills Demand Profile showed that future skills demand was highest in health care and horticulture. Linda Beilharz from RDA Loddon Mallee told me recently that work has commenced to refresh the skills profile for 2020 to gain an
updated understanding of the region's workforce and skilling requirements. I've talked with her about the need for us to be future focused with a long-term, 10-to-20-year scope. Understanding regional and industry-specific demand in this way is so important in assisting training providers to respond to these needs effectively. I've been working closely with training providers and industry stakeholders to explore opportunities to expand the region's offering of VET qualifications.

In December last year I convened a think-tank discussion between training providers, industry groups, local government authorities and department representatives. The main issues raised at the forum were the complexity and bureaucracy of the VET industry, the need to provide further education and career advice for parents and students at an earlier stage, the quality of training programs provided to students in certain industries, and the need to reduce costs associated with taking on regional apprenticeships and trainees. The think tank was held in Charlton in Buloke Shire, which has been described as a black spot for vocational education and training. A report by the consulting firm, Nous, argued that the shire is at risk of becoming completely disconnected from the tertiary education system at a time when there are significant skills shortages in the region. TAFEs that were previously active in the shire have exited and many workers and trainees must travel many kilometres to other towns to undertake training, which incurs additional costs for individuals and businesses and discourages participation. Participants in the think tank were concerned that the region is squandering its potential local training opportunities, leading to skills shortages despite high demand from local industry.

Charlton is home to the North Central Trade Training Centre and has fabulous modern facilities that have the potential to provide extensive training opportunities. I'm eager to explore how local training providers can collaborate with industry to increase access to high-quality training opportunities for students in Charlton and Buloke Shire. In particular, I've been working closely with Geoff Dea and his team at the Sunraysia Institute of TAFE. In 2019 SuniTAFE was named the best large training provider in Australia, which is not difficult to understand given the outstanding leadership team, the professional staff and the dedication to the local community.

I'm very excited about SuniTAFE's SMART Farm, which aims to increase access to future technologies including robotics and automation for students in agriculture and horticulture. This project will provide students with unbridled access to the new technologies on which these evolving industries are becoming increasingly reliant. The project will allow our region to meet identified skill shortages in horticulture and agriculture and will help raise the profile of these industries as desirable career paths for our region's bright young minds. It will foster industry collaboration and lead to extensive research and development opportunities, and it will help the horticulture sector in the region shoulder the burden of economic recovery on the other side of the coronavirus. This project will mean greater access to high-quality training opportunities in key industries for students across the Mallee. This is why I was happy to support SuniTAFE's application to the Revitalising TAFE Campuses Across Australia Initiative for funds that will help see this project through to completion.

I've also been working closely with the Local Learning and Employment Network branches based in my electorate. Ron Broadhead from the northern Mallee LLEN has spoken to me about some of the fantastic work his organisation has been conducting. Ron is concerned about the proportion of students going into local apprenticeships compared to those who are leaving town to attend universities in Melbourne or Adelaide. The message Ron wants to send is that it's possible to have a fulfilling career and be successful without a university degree. His solution is also to start career education in schools a lot earlier than what we're doing right now. Kids need to know what opportunities are out there, and this needs to start as early as year 7 and 8, with involvement from parents, which is critical for success in the uptake.

Although the Local Learning and Employment Network is a Victorian state government initiative, the Morrison-McCormack government is eager to spread this message as well and has been active in promoting effective careers advice through the National Careers Institute, established last year. I would recommend that the National Careers Institute collaborate with our experts in the Local Learning and Employment Network.

This year I was pleased to coordinate a consultation via teleconference for the National Agricultural Workforce Strategy. This strategy is being developed by the National Agricultural Labour Advisory Committee, chaired by John Azarias. The strategy will recommend potential actions to address the future workforce needs of the agriculture, fisheries, forestry and related industries through actions that would target school education, vocational education and training, and higher education. It was great to hear from Professor Salah Sukkarieh, a member of the advisory committee and CEO of Agerris. For the past 15 years Professor Sukkarieh has been closely working with farmers and the agricultural community to build on farm robotics and AI tools. He works and advises the SuniTAFE SMART Farm project already, and he sees huge potential for the future of robotics in my electorate. We also heard from Dr Angeline Achariya, another member of the advisory committee and the executive director
of innovation and growth at Simplot Australia. Dr Achariya is an expert in value-adding and commercialising innovation in agriculture. Her goal is to promote value-driven innovation rather than volume-driven innovation.

We all know that Australia produces enough food to feed 75 million people. The question now becomes how we best drive new value innovation. I'm eager to promote value-adding manufacturing in the Mallee electorate. Australia has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to refocus our economy towards vertically integrated production, and a highly skilled local workforce is a key component to achieving this.

The story is very similar with other emerging industries. Take, for example, the renewable energy industry, which, over recent years, has developed extensively in my electorate of Mallee. There has been extensive investment in solar farms in northern Mallee, with more to come as we see improvements to Australia's grid infrastructure and increasing reliance on renewables in our nation's energy mix. I'm also very excited about possibilities related to hydrogen energy to supplement our solar and wind resources in the Mallee.

Recently I met with Rebecca Wells and Leonie Burrows from the Mallee Regional Innovation Centre to talk about energy, especially hydrogen energy. Hydrogen technologies can play a valuable role in capturing and storing excess energy that's generated by renewables to use when the sun isn't shining and the wind isn't blowing. I see enormous potential for these technologies to link in with Mallee's solar resources, and I look forward to further developments in the government's National Hydrogen Strategy and the $300 million Advancing Hydrogen Fund.

Again, with the emergence of these new technologies and industries, I come back to one crucial ingredient: a highly skilled workforce, which will enable growth in these industries. There is no reason that Mallee cannot be a hub for 21st century manufacturing and energy. However, if we are to meet this potential we need to foster local job creation that is supported and developed by effective skills training. For this reason, improving access to high-quality education for locals is crucial.

Everyone I meet with and speak to, including SuniTAFE, registered training providers, the local learning network, industry stakeholders, schools, parents and students, wants to see improved access to and uptake of high-quality training opportunities. Strengthening the role of the Australian Skills Quality Authority as the national VET regulator will work towards this goal. That's why I'm supportive of the changes contained in this bill as well as those contained in previous amendments to the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011. They respond to the needs of regional areas that have been raised by members of my electorate. They will raise the status of vocational education and training and will improve access to high-quality training opportunities for all Australians.

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (19:16): I rise to speak on the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Amendment (Governance and Other Matters) Bill 2020, and I say upfront that Labor supports this bill. Despite the attempts by the Prime Minister in question time today to say that Labor plays political games, I would point out that most of the time Labor will support good pieces of legislation, and this one is a good, commonsense incremental improvement in what we can do. It's interesting that the Prime Minister, with a background in advertising, seems to be able to put a spin on everything without actually addressing the reality of how Labor has addressed legislation in this parliament.

This bill makes some changes to the governance structure of the Australian Skills Quality Authority, or ASQA, and enhances information-sharing arrangements between ASQA and the National Centre for Vocational Education Research. The measures to be implemented by this bill are in response to findings from a rapid review of ASQA's governance, culture and processes that was conducted by external consultants. The proposed changes to the governance structure include replacing the chief commissioner and two commissioners with a single independent statutory office holder—a CEO—and establishing a national vocational education and training regulator advisory council. It is intended that the advisory council will provide ASQA with expert advice regarding the functions of the regulator.

It is important that such an advisory council is balanced. Concerns have been raised by TAFE and union representatives that if the advisory body is unduly weighted to representation of private providers it would undermine the regulatory framework. At the moment in Australia we have a balance between TAFE, which is trusted and true, I would suggest, and a section of training that actually spends a lot of time investing in capital for the bits of training that require more than a room with a whiteboard. This legislation does not indicate who would be represented on the advisory body. However, Labor would expect that TAFE Directors Australia, the Australian Education Union and the Australian Council of Trade Unions should be represented on the council.

It is crucial that our public provider of VET is heard. Labor will seek to move amendments in the Senate to ensure that TAFE has a seat at this table. I do take some heart from the speeches provided by both sides of the
chamber, but particularly by government members, talking about the great work that their TAFEs do in their electorates. Hopefully those words would be a guide for the composition of the council.

As I’ve said already, Labor does not oppose this bill. What we actually need from this third-term government in its seventh year is genuine reform to this sector. Skills and vocational training has been neglected by the coalition for seven years. Australia had a serious skills shortage way before we ever heard of COVID-19. The number of apprenticeships advertised has dropped not by five per cent and not by 10 per cent but by 73 per cent. The coalition has cut $3 billion out of TAFE and training. Think of the opportunities being denied young Australians because of the $3 billion worth of cuts that have been rolled out. We’ve heard individual government members talk about their TAFEs and the great work they do; imagine what work could be done if they hadn't cut $3 billion from this TAFE and training sector. I know how important TAFE is, I know how important training and apprenticeships are, and I certainly know how hard it is to find a tradesperson to fix a leaky pipe or a dodgy light switch. We have a skills shortage in this country and cutting $3 billion out of TAFE is not the way to fix it. It is short-sighted.

To make matters worse, the government has failed to spend $919 million of their own TAFE and training budget over the past five years. $919 million is sitting in a bank account, when the VET sector is in crisis and when Australians are experiencing a skills shortage. Employers are crying out for skilled workers, but, under the Liberals, there are 150,000 fewer apprentices and trainees and a shortage of workers in critical services, including plumbing, carpentry, hairdressing and motor mechanics. It is hard to believe, but, in the midst of a skills shortage, the number of Australians doing an apprenticeship or traineeship is lower today than it was a decade ago. In Queensland, the number of people undertaking training is down 4.7 per cent. More people are dropping out of vocational training courses than finishing them.

The Liberal government must shoulder the blame for the appalling state of the vocational education and training sector. Not only have they stripped $3 billion out of that sector but there is a $1 billion underrspend in the funding that they promised. This seems to be very, very common behaviour for this government: promising big and then underdelivering. That's $1 billion that hasn't been spent, which was targeted for services such as incentives for businesses to take on apprentices, support to help people finish their apprenticeships and a fund designed to train Australians in areas of need.

Such measures, if actually implemented, would at least go some way to addressing the current skills crisis, because Australia is facing a crisis like we haven't experienced before. The coronavirus is obviously a serious health crisis but it is also a serious economic crisis, and Australians are already feeling the pain. Sadly, we've seen queues at Centrelink that stretch down entire streets. The unemployment rate has increased to 6.2 per cent and we all know it's going higher. What does education do? It helps create jobs. Education means higher wages and better quality of life for all Australians. This government does not understand the critical role of TAFE as a public provider, the value in skills and apprenticeships or the value in hardworking and passionate public TAFE teachers.

We already know that nine out of 10 jobs created in the future will need a post-secondary school education, either TAFE or university, so we need to increase participation in both universities and our vocational education sector to make sure our young people are prepared for the world of work, which is changing so very quickly. An appropriately funded VET sector will be vital in driving the economy and enhancing industry. Training skills and apprenticeships don't just magically happen; they are the result of a well-supported sector. They are the result of a leadership that values education and skills and actually uses its mouth to articulate that support.

It's not just the VET sector that this government is neglecting. The coalition government is sitting by and watching as universities shed jobs, close campuses—particularly in regional areas; where are the Nationals?—and cut back on courses and degrees. This coalition government has gone out of its way to exclude universities from COVID support by repeatedly changing its policy to stop university staff from accessing wage subsidies, and it's putting thousands of jobs at risk. We already know of job losses at Deakin University, at Central Queensland University based in Rockhampton—and some of their other campuses—and at La Trobe University. We already know that Central Queensland University are closing three of their campuses. This is a sectorwide crisis and the impact on regional communities will be particular devastating. Universities support 14,000 jobs in country Australia, not just academics but tutors, admin staff, library staff, catering staff, ground staff, cleaners, security and many others—many with families—all with bills to pay and commitments to meet. Across the board we're looking at tens of thousands of livelihoods being destroyed.

The coalition government is in its third term. It's time for them to take responsibility for their decisions, not just blame a Labor government from a couple of parliaments ago. They've failed to deliver a genuine reform package that overhauls the higher educational sector and that properly funds both vocational training providers and universities to deliver the services that their students need. In the middle of this coronavirus crisis, they have
abandoned them. Young Australians who are in their last years of school will have less of an opportunity to go to university, if that's what they want, and less of an opportunity to get a trade, if that's what they want.

Even before the coronavirus crisis businesses were crying out for skilled workers. They couldn't grow their businesses because they couldn't find the skilled staff they needed. Australia's economy will get back on its feet but when it does so it will need a skilled workforce. It's so short-sighted to neglect this sector now.

Labor understands the importance of education. In government we continued that great Labor tradition by ensuring that a university education never remained out of reach for our brightest Australians. We invested in education. We opened up a system with demand driven funding in 2012, which saw an additional 190,000 Australians able to get a place at university before the government ended demand driven funding. In his 'Jobs and the future of work' speech, delivered on 29 October last year, the Labor leader announced our intention in government to establish jobs and skills Australia. 'Jobs and skills Australia' would be an independent statutory authority providing a genuine partnership with business leaders both large and small; state and territory governments; unions; education providers; and those who understand particular regions and cohorts.

The COVID pandemic has changed the way we think about ourselves, the way we work and our interaction with the world around us. We are now experiencing one of greatest economic transformations of our lifetimes. Reskilling and upskilling will be a big part of the post-COVID economy. We need quality providers such as TAFE and some of the top quality private providers. We are faced with choices about how to go forward. If we continue down the road being laid out by the Liberal government, with its track record of cuts and neglect of vocational education, TAFEs and apprenticeships, the effects will be devastating. Labor has a vision for a future with good jobs that are done using quality skills, setting working people up for satisfying and prosperous careers and lives. Sadly, on the other side of the chamber we see a government that lacks action and has no ambition for working people. They're happy to use them in advertisements, happy to put their arm around a tradie and happy to stand alongside a high-vis jacket and a hard hat. They're great at advertising, but hopeless at delivering. They put out the budget cup, but don't actually deliver the jobs that are needed or the funding that is needed. Unlike the Liberals and Nationals, the Labor Party believes that funding education is an investment in our nation's future prosperity, not a short-term cost burden. A government without a plan for education and training has no vision and no plan for Australia's future.

The reforms in this bill are welcome. The reforms in this bill are simply a tweak to a system that is in dire need of genuine reform. As usual, it is too late. I take you back to the fact that a $3 billion cut to our TAFE system under this government means that the Prime Minister can put out advertisements with tradies, that the Prime Minister can stand next to tradies, put his arm around them and pretend to the world that he supports trades, but we have a skills crisis brought on by the fact that this government hasn't been investing in apprenticeships and hasn't been investing in tradies. The Prime Minister is happy to talk about the Canberra bubble, but he needs to take his head out of that bubble and actually look at what he has done to the training sector, because it is a disgrace. He needs to stop embracing tradies and start investing in Australia's great educational system, in TAFE.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr GOODENOUGH (Moore) (19:30): Order! It being 7.30 pm, I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

COVID-19

Ms SWANSON (Paterson) (19:30): The last few months have been some of the toughest we as a nation have ever faced. I want to take a moment to thank each and every Australian but particularly those in my community who have gone about their lives in a way that has cared for us, assisted us, toiled for us, stayed away for us and turned up for us. I want to assure them: I am here for you and so is my team. Since early March, we have sent out 72,000 information flyers on COVID-19 to the electorate. We've written to 5,839 households that have a person aged 80 or over to tell them about the pandemic and offer a hand. We have made 23,080 phone calls in my electorate to let people know my office is available to help. My office has had one-on-one interactions with more than 1,362 individuals since March.

When constituents get in touch with my office, it's often to ask how we can help deal with a government department. Public servants do their best, but the chronic underfunding by this current government of the Public Service has meant that sometimes it's inevitable that there are gaps in this service. My office attempts to bridge those gaps. They talk to Centrelink on behalf of constituents to help get their payments sorted. My office is right beside Centrelink, so we get lots and lots of traffic. We have wept about the queues as they've snaked down the road and around the corner. When the elderly have issues with their pension and can't leave the house, get through on the phone or—woe betide!—get some internet, it is my office that helps them. My office talks to the ATO to get specific answers on behalf of constituents and businesses for their circumstances. My office talks to Home
Affairs on behalf of people who are stuck overseas or here in Australia but unsure how they can lawfully remain. My office has talked to hundreds of people who were confused about how to access jobseeker and/or JobKeeper and the few now hoping to get HomeBuilder. For some, my office provides them information about their rights at work and how they can engage with the Fair Work Commission.

We are currently organising a virtual town hall meeting for the entire electorate to talk about jobs and infrastructure with shadow ministers. The town hall is on next Wednesday at 10.30 am on Zoom. You are more than welcome to join. You can phone in. You just have to register with my office. We're planning two more town halls in July, one for seniors and one for our young people, because they've both been critically impacted by COVID.

Creating a business survey for business in my electorate to let me know what they think of the government's COVID response has been really important and has helped businesses. We've created a map of ones that are open so we can encourage people to shop locally. We've hosted a Zoom meeting with childcare providers in my electorate and shadow minister Amanda Rishworth. It was concerning to hear how they were impacted by this government's foray into free child education and what a folly it was for so many.

My team also helps to shape and improve the laws that are made in this place. We bring the issues that my community faces to parliament, to this place, and we let people know what needs to be fixed—like PFAS contamination. When the government wants to introduce new laws, we look at those closely, too. Then there's the work that my office does to help and serve my community in these strange times, like speaking to the local supermarkets to find out about their supplies of toilet paper and other essentials, so that we can help people get these products; organising home delivery of groceries for an elderly woman who didn't know how she was going to get them; or giving advice to the lovely lady who phoned and said she was a bit on the elderly side and she had a thermos and she just really wanted to go for a drive with her husband so they could get out of the house. I said, sadly, if they weren't going to the doctor or the pharmacy or to get groceries, they could not.

Why am I talking about this? It’s because we know that we are all made lesser when politicians are seen in a dim light. I am here and I am working for you. *(Time expired)*

**Herbert Electorate: COVID-19**

Mr THOMPSON (Herbert) (19:35): Just under a year ago, I had the privilege of standing in this place and delivering my first speech. That was just after a once-in-500-year flood event in Townsville. We had been tested, we had been tried but we were optimistic about the future. When coronavirus hit, the impact on our economy and our livelihoods was something we couldn't comprehend. We saw businesses close and we saw people feeling very uncertain about their future. Once again, we were tested. We can't be anything but grateful that no lives were lost in Townsville, but I want to take this moment to acknowledge, and pay my deepest sympathies and respects to, everyone around the country who lost a loved one—a family member or a friend—during this pandemic. I also, acknowledge the member for Cooper in this place, Ged Kearney, whose father-in-law passed. This isn't something we should kick around like a political football, nor should we be debating with knives; this is a time when we should put the Australian people and our economy first.

I need to acknowledge that the Herbert community, like so many others, is doing it incredibly tough. For nearly three months, businesses have been sitting empty. Pubs, clubs, restaurants, shops and tourist attractions have been closed or have limits on the number of people allowed to go there. We know that these restrictions had to happen. We know that people and their health had to come first. In Townsville, we were so optimistic. I remember throwing a bit of chat towards the Speaker in this place because we had just opened our state-of-the-art football stadium. I still owe the Speaker a Cowboys tie; I will bring that down for you, Mr Speaker. Within days of our first game, it was over. We played one game with the stadium at full capacity; now the stadium is empty. The closures were important for saving lives, and things could have been much worse if we hadn't taken the necessary steps to protect ourselves, especially our most vulnerable. But it became very clear very quickly that we would have to do a lot of work on our economy to keep it going and to continue to keep it going into the future. Let's not forget the rotten run we've endured for the last five years: the closure of QNI, the flood, the drought, out-of-control crime and now the coronavirus.

As many in this place would have experienced, once the extent of the restrictions became clear, what followed was an avalanche of phone calls, emails and messages from individuals and businesses crying out for information and assistance. We've worked quickly and effectively to reinforce the safety nets we already had in place in our community to enable us to stand up to the weight of demand that we were about to face. First there was the job seeker payment and then JobKeeper. It was important to have an answer to give people and to be able to talk to people about what was available. We know that it wasn't all smooth sailing, particularly with regard to JobKeeper. Only through working constructively with many business owners in the community were we able to make a
number of improvements to the program to ensure that businesses in my community, in the north, were properly looked after. You had to look back 12 months and demonstrate a downturn for the purposes of JobKeeper, but 12 months previously, we had had a flood. Business was not thriving. So, with the community's support and their advocacy, and me talking to the ministers down here, we were then a year past that, and so in 2018 we had a 30 per cent downturn. That's what we got to achieve because of the strong support within the community.

I want to let the people of Townsville know: I will not stop advocating for you. I'll never give up putting your needs before political convenience. There's never been a more important time for us to work together. I'm your voice in Canberra.

National Reconciliation Week

Mr GOSLING (Solomon) (19:40): I'd like to reflect on reconciliation tonight. It's a topic of immense significance to all Australians. Earlier this month, we celebrated Reconciliation Week. This week is always a time to reflect, a time to act, and a time to heal. It's a time to reflect on the long road travelled along this land of sweeping plains and hidden pains. It's a time to reflect on the time and the journey ahead. It's a time to make reconciliation happen and a time to heal through such actions. That's the long path we must follow, across the vale of tears that life can be, if we are to become a more perfect union. It is a long path but we must walk it. We must reflect.

I did a lot of that, walking and reflecting, on the Long Walk—in fact, for hundreds of kilometres—with AFL legend Michael Long, as we walked from Melbourne towards Canberra. The charity of the same name says of our walk's legacy:

Seeing Aboriginal and other Australians rallying together, Michael's Long Walk became a mission of hope.

As Longie said at the time: 'This isn't about Indigenous Australia and white Australia, this is about all Australia'. I still carry with me the memory of truth-telling on that walk. I remember one day walking up the old Hume Highway, naively asking about an Anglo-Saxon name that seemed to adorn many of the highways, streets and parks in country Victoria. My new mate, an elder, said, 'Yeah, a real hero, that bloke—he killed thousands of us blackfellas.' You won't find that in Wikipedia.

'The truth will set you free' was first uttered by a carpenter who, in his day, overturned tables and conventional truths, motivated by divine anger at injustices. Action, that's what we need. We need the righteous anger of that carpenter, and we need the hunger for justice in our bellies. But, if these are not mobilised towards righting wrongs, building bridges and establishing peace, then we can't in good conscience call ourselves leaders.

'Wreckers' might be more apt. The struggle for reconciliation continues, and it's a long road.

My heart was broken this week by reports out of Katherine that a five-month-old Aboriginal girl passed away in tragic circumstances. While in custody, the mother was separated from her child. There is an ongoing coronial investigation in the Northern Territory, so it would be inappropriate to comment more at this time, but I will quote a Barunga woman, Helen Lee: 'I don't want to blame no-one. It's just the system that needs to get better.' Yes, it does.

As well as changing processes and policies and closing material gaps, it's the psychological gaps we need to close. And that's where healing comes in. Healing is much harder than dividing people. It's a long road to walk, but it's the only one that leads to a strong, united and egalitarian Australia we can be proud to leave to our children. How it treats its children is a measure of what a society values. In the Christian tradition, human divinity appeared as an infant. Famous Russian novelist Dostoyevsky write that the tears of a single suffering child condemn the whole world if the child's tears are not atoned for. Reconciliation is this kind of atonement; it's turning the pages of painful chapters—a telling of history with a trail of tears that allows for the opening of a new, inclusive chapter which we will write together. That's why we need a voice to parliament, that's why we need a referendum and that's why we need truth-telling.

This has nothing to do with politics or culture wars. It has everything to do with the universal aspiration for human dignity, without which our nation will never be complete. Thank you.

Australian Defence Force Parliamentary Program

Mr STEVENS (Sturt) (19:45): It's great to have this opportunity, particularly with my good friend the Minister for Defence Industry here in the chamber, to again address and thank her and the Defence department for the opportunity to participate in the Australian Defence Force Parliamentary Program, which I think is one of the great opportunities we are given as members of parliament. A little over a year ago, when I was first elected, I was briefed on the opportunity that that provided. Being from South Australia, I was particularly interested in taking the opportunity to learn more about the frigate capability that we have in our Navy because, of course, apart from the Attack class submarine program, which is going ahead in my home city of Adelaide, we're also, just as
importantly, undertaking the Hunter class program to replace the Anzac class frigates in the Royal Australian Navy. British Aerospace will be building nine new frigates for our Navy at the Osborne shipyard.

Last year, I had the opportunity to spend a week on HMAS Stuart, an Anzac class frigate, running drills for their certification before they were deployed into the northern Asian region in the latter part of last year. But in March I was just as lucky to have the opportunity to travel to the Middle East with Senator Holly Hughes and Senator David Van, two colleagues from the other place. This was a sensational opportunity, and of course it was one that I was surprised to have the chance to participate in. I was very lucky, in hindsight, because it was just at the point where issues to do with the coronavirus were starting to become quite serious and significant well beyond Wuhan in Hubei province.

But, nonetheless, the trip went ahead and I thank very much Major General Coyle and Air Vice Marshal Hegarty, the commanding officers of our joint task force at the Al Minhad base in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. As hosts, they were absolutely sensational and the entire deployment there were so welcoming. They gave us such a great opportunity to understand more about the work that they do in defending our nation and representing our nation's interests.

Nothing ever goes to plan, of course. Initially, there was an intention for us to spend a few days deployed forward into Afghanistan, but due to the coronavirus and some other significant security issues at the time in Afghanistan with negotiations between the United States and the Taliban we were not able to deploy into Afghanistan. But there is always a plan B, and we were very well looked after. We had the opportunity to spend a day up in a KC-30, refuelling F35 joint strike fighters for the United States Air Force over Iraq. That was an unbelievable experience, to see how that works, the role that we play in the overall operations there and the respect that Australia is held in by the United States and all the coalition forces there.

The things happening in Iraq and Afghanistan are obviously very high profile, but I don't think that enough people know just what the extent of our operations and activities are in that region, not just in Iraq and Afghanistan but throughout the Middle East and throughout Africa, where our service personnel are providing such a strong support role for a number of humanitarian and security operations. You're filled with such pride when you go and see the hard work of Australians and what they're doing for our reputation, and the sort of impact that they're making in the countries which they're serving in.

Of course when we returned it was just at the time that the Australian border was changing and I had 14 lovely days to reflect on that trip in isolation at home in my electorate. In fact, it gave me an opportunity to take some notes and reflect on the experience and the opportunity that it is. It's something that is an excellent bipartisan program. I know members of all parties seize on the opportunity to learn more about what our Defence Force personnel are doing. Regrettably, at this stage, we won't have the opportunity to reciprocate as I had last year when there was an in-bound element of the program where Defence Force personnel came and spent a week in parliament. But I'm sure that will be reflected on and reviewed when, from a safety point of view, it might be possible to undertake and be appropriate. Thank you once again to all the personnel that hosted us. It was a great opportunity that I'm very grateful for.

**Indigenous Australians**

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (19:50): These are the words of Luke Carroll, Australian actor and First Nations leader in the community that I represent: 'We are not asking people to feel sorry for us. We are asking people to understand our history and our culture.' The Australian government is not listening to and understanding our First Australians.

Last week, the Prime Minister stated 'there was no slavery in Australia'. This statement is patently wrong. It's not the truth. It denies the facts about the historical treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in their own country—in their home. This statement also explains the anger and resentment that our First Australians have for the lack of understanding from much of the Australian population regarding the historic discrimination, abuse and mistreatment that has been perpetrated on Aboriginal Australians and that continues to this day. First Nations Australians deserve better. If the Prime Minister of Australia can make such an error about Australian history then what hope is there for First Nations Australians that this mistaken view of history will be corrected, that the prejudices that have dogged their past will change and that injustice will end?

The Prime Minister has subsequently apologised for his comments, and I don't believe that he was acting out of malice or trying to be patronising. He made those comments out of ignorance. It was ignorance that used to be entrenched in our nation's education system; ignorance and a lack of understanding about the truth of Australian history and the treatment of First Nations people—an ignorance that is unfortunately reflected in many Australians through a lack of knowledge about the true history of our nation. It was an unwillingness to sit down with and communicate with First Nations people, to listen their stories, to study their culture and history and to
hear their point of view. It was ignorance reflected in an unwillingness to listen to First Nations leaders about their views on fixing the problems of government interaction with First Nations people. He was reflecting an entrenched lack of understanding about the truth of Australian history.

The Australian government is not listening to our First Nations people. The evidence of this is in the continued lack of action by this government on the Uluru Statement from the Heart and constitutional recognition for First Australians people. Unfortunately, Australia has a shameful record of improving the living standards of our First Australians. Our First Nations Australians have a life expectancy of almost 10 years below that of non-Indigenous Australians. Rates of infant mortality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are much worse than for the rest of the population. In many health indicators, such as rates of diabetes, heart disease and preventable blindness, our First Australians suffer at rates above the general population. Aboriginal men remain the most incarcerated people in the world. Couple all of this with the shockingly high rates of youth suicide in Indigenous communities, the lack of employment, high rates of children living in out-of-home care and the continued discrimination faced by Aboriginal people, and you see why our First Australians are fed up with the lack of understanding and action from the government to fix the disadvantage.

In an act of hope, leaders of First Nations people came together in 2017 to say that enough is enough. They came together to demand respect and request that government listen to their plight, work with them, act and ensure that their voice is heard in decision-making affecting them. For the first time in decades, they came together at Uluru to speak as one voice. We owe it to them to listen. Their ask—constitutional reforms to empower First Nations people to take their rightful place in their country—is achievable. They call for the establishment of a First Nations voice to parliament that is enshrined in the Constitution. They seek truth telling so that all Australians understand our nation's history, a makarrata commission to supervise the process of agreement making between government and First Nations, and truth telling of our history.

These requests are not unreasonable and they are not unachievable. They represent the pleas of First Nations people for the Australian government to listen to them and to work with them to achieve lasting reconciliation and partnership to work to fix many of the social problems and disadvantage that Aboriginal Australians face every day. We owe it to them to listen. We owe it to them to take action. I call on the government to work with the Labor Party on delivering the Uluru Statement from the Heart. As Barbara Simms-Keeley said, 'Aboriginal lives matter. They mattered from day one.'

**Grey Electorate: Queen's Birthday Honours**

Mr RAMSEY (Grey—Government Whip) (19:55): We had 10 wonderful recipients of Queen's Birthday Honours recently. Firstly, Alan Ferguson, a great friend and mentor, was made a Member of the Order of Australia for service to the parliament. He was our state Liberal Party president from 1990 to 1992 and was appointed to the Senate on a casual vacancy in that year. He contested another three elections successfully and served as President of the Senate from 2007 till 2008 and, following that, as deputy president until his retirement in 2011. Alan still has many friends in this place and in the other. He made friends here, not enemies, right across the parliament.

Lyn Breuer was awarded an OAM. She was the member for Giles for 16 years from 1997 and served as the first female Speaker of the South Australian House of Assembly from 2010 to 2013. She may have been a member of parliament but she was always the member for Whyalla first, and, shortly after her retirement, when long-serving mayor Jim Pollock died, she put her hand up and won the mayor's position because she came to the fore. It was a particularly testing time for Whyalla during the collapse of Arrium. Well done, Lyn.

Nyurpaya Kaika Burton was awarded an OAM for her service to Indigenous visual arts. She was born at Pukatja in 1949 and lives on the APY Lands about 100 kilometres down the road at Amata, where there is the very highly rated Tjala Arts centre. Her works incorporate painting, weaving and installation basket making techniques, and she's also skilled in wood carving. Her work is held in a number of public collections, including at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, and the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia.

Jeff Morgan was awarded an OAM for service to visual arts and to the community. Jeff is one of the world's great panorama painters. His gallery at Hawker has to be seen to be believed. There are two stunning panoramas, the first of Wilpena Pound and, more recently, a larger one of Arkaroola. They are not just panoramas but huge canvasses, taking visitors on an exploration of the Flinders Ranges when they go to Jeff's gallery. He was a house painter until he sustained an injury and turned his hand to another form of painting. I'm sorry he had an accident, but we are all fortunate he changed trade. He's a wonderful, committed citizen of Hawker.

Peter Mungkuri, who was awarded an OAM, was born near Mimili in South Australia. He is another Indigenous artist. He was a stockman across the lands and, drawing from his memories, he paints important landscapes reflecting his knowledge of land and country. He has exhibited extensively in Australia and was
recently included in Tarnanthi, the inaugural festival of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art held in Adelaide in 2015.

Robert Shaw was awarded an OAM for service to the community of Whyalla. Bob has served his community of Whyalla in the aged-care sector and in the Whyalla branch of the Royal Association of Justices of South Australia, a group which caters for the needs of justices of the peace in and around Whyalla to help them get together, access training and work on their craft.

The late Mumu Mike Williams was awarded an OAM for services to Indigenous visual arts in Mimili. He was born near Kenmore Park and was a strong campaigner for the return of the lands under the Pitjantjatjara Land Rights Bill in 1981. In his art he communicated a message about Anungu people having a connection to and standing strong in country.

Sergeant Trevor Milne was awarded the Australian Police Medal. Trevor had worked in both Peterborough and Whyalla in my electorate since the 1970s and made an outstanding contribution to crime scene investigation, forensic services and systems, and police working conditions. Trevor worked as a crime scene supervisor, was leader of the SAPOL fingerprint bureau and was officer in charge of the training and development section at the forensic services branch.

John Shute was awarded the Ambulance Service Medal. His award recognises more than 26 years of volunteer work with the SA Ambulance Service. The ambulance service saves lives through the efforts of dedicated volunteers like John. His commitment to this vital organisation over more than two decades is a credit to his community spirit. He has demonstrated great leadership within the organisation and has earned the respect of his community and his peers.

Last but not least—I have been clipping along at a fair rate, Mr Speaker—Squadron Leader Dave Bywater was awarded the Conspicuous Service Cross in recognition of his outstanding achievement in aeronautical life support equipment regulatory reform, rapid acquisition and organisational development of the Australian Defence Force. I met Dave at the Anzac Day service in 2019 at Wasleys. There is a population of about 110 people, I reckon, at Wasleys. He's a very fine young member of the Australian Defence Force. He's only 36. He's a first-class person, just like so many in our defence forces, and just like the rest of the people on this list.

**House adjourned at 20:00**

**NOTICES**

The following notice was given:

**Mr Fletcher** to move:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Member for Grayndler's private Members' business notice relating to the disallowance of the Australian Postal Corporation (Performance Standards) Amendment (2020 Measures No. 1) Regulations 2020, and presented to the House on 10 June 2020, being called on immediately.

**Mr J. H. Wilson** to move:

That this House:

(1) notes:

(a) 6 and 9 August 2020 will mark, respectively, the 75th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki;

(b) by the end of 1945, it is estimated that 213,000 people had died in those communities, and the legacy of chronic and terminal illness, stillbirths, birth defects, survivor discrimination, and acute environmental harm and contamination continues to the present day;

(c) 2020 also marks the 50th anniversary of the coming into force of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty;

(d) the ongoing work of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, an initiative founded in Australia that received the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize for advancing a Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons; and

(e) since 2017, 81 countries have signed and 38 have ratified the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which will enter into force after the 50th ratification;

(2) further notes with concern:

(a) a number of recent developments that weaken the international system of weapons monitoring, impair progress towards nuclear disarmament, and undermine agreements to prevent nuclear proliferation and explosive testing;

(b) the fact that the hands of the Doomsday Clock have been moved to within 100 seconds of midnight, representing the greatest yet marked risk of nuclear conflict; and

(c) a 2019 report by the United Kingdom Parliamentary Committee on International Relations that warns the risk of nuclear weapons is now as great as it was during the height of the Cold War; and

(3) calls on the Government to:
(a) voice its concern about the deterioration in the multilateral framework for achieving nuclear disarmament and for minimising the risk of nuclear conflict;
(b) voice its concern at indications the United States:
   (i) intends to withdraw from the Treaty on Open Skies;
   (ii) may allow the START agreement to expire in February 2021; and
   (iii) has abandoned the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty; and
(c) increase our diplomatic focus and the resources needed to play a greater role in global efforts to reduce conflict, build regional and international cooperation, resist the further proliferation of nuclear weapons, and progress their, ultimate elimination.

Dr Haines to move:
That this House:
(1) recognises that:
   (a) in the 19th century it was regional Australia that led the transition from gas to electricity and that in the 21st century it is again regional Australia that is leading Australia's transition to renewable energy; and
   (b) according to the Australian Energy Market Operator's Integrated System Plan, around 15 gigawatts of coal-fired power will retire over the next 20 years;
(2) recalls the analysis from the leaked report of the National COVID-19 Coordination Commission Manufacturing Taskforce indicated that renewables plus storage are the lowest cost form of new electricity generation, and therefore a lowest-cost energy transition will be based on significant investment in renewables;
(3) welcomes the recent comments from the International Energy Agency that 'governments have the opportunity to accelerate renewables deployment by making investment in renewables a key part of stimulus packages designed to reinvigorate their economies. This offers the prospect of harnessing the structural benefits that increasingly affordable renewables can bring, including opportunities for creating jobs and economic development, while reducing emissions and fostering innovation';
(4) notes analysis by the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation that projects that up to $1,000 billion will be spent on Australia's electricity system until 2050 and that local communities should benefit from this investment boom;
(5) acknowledges that 'community energy', which is where a renewable energy project is developed by, owned by or delivers benefit to local communities, offers a compelling model for capturing the immense benefits of renewable energy, including jobs and investment, for local communities in regional Australia;
(6) welcomes the findings of Sustainability Victoria into the Victorian Community Power Hub pilot program which found that Government investment into community energy of $1 million created 15 projects delivering economic benefits worth $25 million; and
(7) calls on the Government to support the development of community-owned renewable energy projects across regional Australia through:
   (a) direct financial support for regional communities in the form of grants and concessional loans;
   (b) technical support for local communities to develop renewable energy projects based on the Community Power Hub model successfully deployed in Victoria; and
   (c) a dedicated national community energy agency to enable capacity-building across the regional community energy network and to administer financial and technical support over the medium-term.
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr R Mitchell) took the chair at 10:30.

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Watson Electorate: COVID-19

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (10:30): I want to acknowledge the extraordinary work that has been done by a series of community organisations in my electorate during the period of lockdown. There have been a big range of people needing assistance. Obviously, like every electorate, people who are elderly, who were asked to stay at home, have been the subject of food parcels. But it's also the case that in an electorate in a part of Sydney, like mine, there are a large number of people on temporary visas, including students, who were in a situation where they couldn't return home and were ineligible for any form of assistance. The charity work done by local community organisations was, largely, the only way for them to be fed.

Probably the most high profile of the organisations in my electorate would be the Exodus Foundation. Also, like in all electorates, there is the work of Meals on Wheels and the Salvation Army. But a series of other groups did significant work here, including Charity for Life; Branding Bangladesh; Muslim Women Australia; the Lebanese Muslim Association, which was a very big donor during the bushfires; the Australian Chinese Services Society; the Greek Orthodox community; Lakemba Uniting Church; Maronites on a Mission; Melkite Catholic Welfare; the 4CS, which is the Canterbury City Community Centre; the Punchbowl and Riverwood community centres; and the Greenacre Area Community Centre. All of them are doing extraordinary work, as are local businesses like the Culinary School—and some of you would have seen Bash Krayem from the Culinary School on television. They own the franchise for the local Rashays and became the first restaurant in Australia to have all the staff trained in Auslan. He expanded to having the Culinary School and purchasing the downstairs cafe the moment that all the lockdowns occurred. At what must have been an extraordinarily difficult time financially, they used the opportunity to provide charitable work from those kitchens, feeding people throughout the whole period.

On a daily basis, a variety of local community groups prepared food packs to help people struggling during the time, and that work is all ongoing. Groups like Lighthouse Community Support, Human Appeal Australia and the Lebanese Muslim Association led those efforts to ensure that vulnerable members of the community were supported. At various times I was there with a number of those groups helping to pack food parcels and helping with their work. This is the work of countless volunteers throughout the area, making sure that that most basic of needs that people have, food, was something that was available to them during this most difficult period.

Petrie Electorate: Environmental Groups

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie—Assistant Minister for Community Housing, Homelessness and Community Services) (10:33): Growing up in the northern suburbs of Brisbane was a great experience for me, and I love our local environment. One of the things I used to do was knock around with my mates down in Cabbage Tree Creek, looking at our local fauna and flora. That is why In my maiden speech I spoke about the work I did with many of our environment groups in our area—in particular, Redcliffe Environmental Forum and the great work that they've done there over many, many years; and, at North Lakes, the Mango Hill & North Lakes Environment Group. There really are some wonderful groups in our electorate, including the Bald Hills Bushies in the southern part.

The federal government has recently funded a whole lot of environmental projects all around Australia in members' electorates. The Communities Environment Program goes a long way to make sure that environment groups continue to do great work to ensure that our environment in Australia remains pristine. So far, more than 900 local environment projects have already been funded, through the Communities Environment Program, some $22.65 million, including in my own electorate of Petrie.

I was really happy, with my community, to be able to secure a number of projects for my electorate, one of those being a native fish program with Native Fish Australia. That project helps schools and child-care centres understand the important role that native fish have within freshwater ecosystems like Cabbage Tree Creek. Native Fish Australia have reintroduced the pygmy perch into the wild, into local waterways, to help establish the native population through their breeding program of Fish in Schools. If you are in a school or work at a school in my electorate of Petrie or perhaps in a child-care centre and you'd like to take advantage of Native Fish Australia's Fish in Schools project, please let my office know.

Also, down at St Paul's in Bald Hills we've established a new environmental education and recreation area to establish a koala corridor and enhance the local environment zone there, which is really important. This is also happening at Mueller College at Rothwell and up in Burpengary East, through the Moreton Bay Regional Council as well. Planting more eucalypts and more native plants actually helps the fauna—the native animals, reptiles, insects and so forth.
Probably the best project that's really captured the imagination of local people are the three Seabins that have been put in at Newport Marina that are capturing and collecting rubbish every day. I want to thank the marina managers for emptying those bins daily. They are helping our native waterways.

COVID-19: Mental Health

Ms BIRD (Cunningham) (10:36): One of the great challenges that we've all faced during the pandemic has been providing mental health and wellbeing services for people in our communities. Many of us are conscious of the direct health issues that people were challenged by—and I have spoken before about thanking our doctors, nurses and healthcare professionals for the work they did. Obviously, during such a time, for people who suffer from, for example, anxiety and depression, these issues would have been exacerbated by the circumstances that we were in and the social isolation. People who would normally be out and about and accessing their support networks—I'm thinking of the frail, the elderly and people with a disability—weren't able to do so, and the pressure that puts on people can significantly affect their mental health and wellbeing.

I want to thank two local organisations, headspace's Wollongong service, under Grand Pacific Health; and our local Lifeline services. They did a Facebook hook-up with me and the member for Whitlam during the peak period of the pandemic to talk about the issues they were facing, and our community was facing, and the significant work they were doing. We asked them to give us some feedback on lessons we've learnt from that time that might be useful to take forward, and I want to share that with the chamber.

Ron de Jongh from Grand Pacific Health, which manages our headspace Wollongong team, said that the expansion of the MBS to cover telehealth was a significant improvement. Their clinical staff reported they were able to provide support to clients in real time in their own homes, and there were benefits that they saw from that. Families who were experiencing conflict were able to dial in from separate locations or even rooms in their home. Others, who might not have done so otherwise, engaged with the service as a result of anxiety and other concerns. The barriers young people face in attending a centre in person are not always just geographical, and being able to do these telehealth connections was a real boost to service people. Similarly, they said, the benefits of electronic prescriptions to allow seamless remote delivery were a positive out of that experience.

Another item they raised was the individual placement service model. It is currently available on a trial basis at limited headspace centres. The model allows a vocational expert to work alongside a young person who is engaged with the service and wants to find work. Given that we are all especially concerned about youth employment, they saw that as an important initiative and something that could be kept going. I thank them and our Lifeline services.

Wide Bay Electorate: Government Funding

Mr LLEW O'BRIEN (Wide Bay—Deputy Speaker) (10:39): As Wide Bay weathered the downturn caused by COVID-19, our communities have shown amazing spirit and strength through the tough times. People have helped those who have needed it and followed the restrictions and kept others safe. They proved why Wide Bay is such a resilient and vibrant place to live. As we all well know, the struggle is not yet over, and we face the longer term economic fallout from the coronavirus. That is why the latest Building Better Regions Fund and veterans grants couldn't have come at a better time for Wide Bay. Each and every project funded through Wide Bay's $1.8 million share of the BBRF program is important to support each of its communities. The $60,000 for the NOOSA alive! 2021 program will help bring back tourists to our beautiful region; $42,000 will help the Noosa disability service Sunshine Butterflies build a new training room; $20,000 will build new amenities at the Cooroy Badminton Club hall; and $140,000 will build a new education and activities centre at Hope Reins in Gympie, which is a wonderful organisation that helps horses and people together. There is also $1.6 million for the Creative Country Association to construct a purpose-built cultural centre in Murgon. This will comprise an art gallery, fossil museum, artwork shop, gift shop and central prehistoric garden. It is a massive step forward in the town's revitalisation. The projects will drive economic growth and create local jobs at a time when they are needed most through new construction, creating opportunities to boost domestic tourism.

The remarkable strength and resilience of Wide Bay communities is not a new development. It has been demonstrated time and time again through the generations, including those who have served in the defence of our country. The courage and bravery of those who have served is acknowledged with pride. I was pleased recently to be able to announce grants under the Veteran and Community Grants program to help ensure that the memories of their sacrifice are sustained for future generations. To this end, Gundiah Memorial Hall will receive $5,778 to install 50 framed photos including the stories of those who have served from the Gundiah area, ensuring that the soldiers' names and faces and will not be forgotten. The Cooroy-Pomona RSL branch will receive $10,000 to upgrade its memorial park to provide a place where the service of Navy, Army, and Air Force personnel can be acknowledged and remembered. I congratulate all the volunteers and groups that received funding.
Leggatt, Mrs Del OAM

West Gate Tunnel

Ms CATHERINE KING (Ballarat) (10:42): On 4 May the Labor Party lost one of its true believers with the passing of Del Leggatt OAM. Del was a member of the Bacchus Marsh branch and was always an energetic contributor to debates during meetings. She was passionate about her community and about the party. She joined the party in 1967 and was made a life member of the Labor Party in 2007. Throughout her life Del was a dedicated servant of Bacchus Marsh. She served as a councillor for the Shire of Bacchus Marsh from 1986 to 1994, becoming the first female mayor of Moorabool Shire. She was also as long-term member of Djerriwarrh Health Services. In 2018 Del's outstanding contribution to her community was acknowledged when she received Moorabool's Citizen of the Year. She also received an Order of Australia in 2004. Del will be truly missed. She was a friend and I miss her. She loved her community and she fought incredibly hard for it.

In that spirit today, I also want to speak about something that I feel very passionately about and that I want to fight for. I want to speak about the proposals to store contaminated soil from the West Gate Tunnel project in Bacchus Marsh in my electorate. I am firmly opposed to this proposal. It is true that when the Victorian government's West Gate Tunnel project opens it will offer huge benefits to communities across Melbourne's west and western Victoria, none more so than the marsh. But that does not mean that the support of these communities can be taken for granted. Over recent weeks and months we have had community groups, schools, local residents and even the local RSL speaking out against this proposal. Locals are rightly worried about the long-term safety of the project, and they are worried about what trucks will mean for their beautiful town, and particularly the Avenue of Honour. The community has not been adequately informed about the project. The local council, Moorabool shire, have not been given all of the information they need in order to determine the safety of this project not only from a health point of view but also from a traffic management point of view. There has been enormous secrecy around how this project is being handled, and the community is rightly angry and up in arms about it. I cannot see, when you look at the way in which traffic is managed currently in Bacchus Marsh, how you could possibly have this proposal go forward. I am very proud to stand with the Bacchus Marsh community on this issue and will continue to advocate for this PFAS contaminated soil to be contained properly and elsewhere.

Reid Electorate: Volunteer Grants

Dr MARTIN (Reid) (10:45): Volunteers around Australia make up an enormous contribution to communities, and I'd like to acknowledge some of the volunteers in Reid who have received support from the Morrison government so that they may continue to do the good work in our community. In total, 16 local community groups in Reid have received a share of the $9 million of federal funding through the Morrison government's Volunteer Grants.

This funding is supporting vital work for our community across a range of sectors. Volunteers across our local Scout groups have received a boost. The 1st Yaralla Sea Scout Group in Rhodes have received $1,200 for an IT upgrade, while the 1st Cabarita Mortlake Scout Group will be able to purchase a new fridge with their $1,500 grant. These small amounts of funding will make a big difference to the big picture of the work that Scout groups do, which provides opportunities for outdoor skill development and youth leadership programs.

Volunteers of various faith based groups in Reid in our area have received assistance, with a focus on community based support, intervention and assistance. St Bakhita Centre in Homebush West received a grant of $2,500 to cover the training costs and fuel costs for the volunteers of the Homebush West organisation. They support over 500 students within Sydney's Sudanese Australian community to access study, apprenticeships, traineeships and employment opportunities post graduation. Volunteers especially focus on the education of Sudanese women who often have not had the opportunity to attend school, teaching them English and computer literacy, among other classes, so that women have the opportunity to learn.

The Maronite Diocese of Australia, located in Strathfield, received $5,000 of federal funding to run training courses for volunteers across various parishes. Similarly, St Vincent de Paul Society in New South Wales has received $2,400 in federal funding to supply training to their volunteer counsellors so that they can assist those presenting with mental health conditions. The Vinnie's volunteers often reach out to those most vulnerable in our community through the Burwood community centre and the Vinnie's shops. The training will allow their incredible volunteers to identify concerns for safety for both themselves and their clients. Particularly during this period of coronavirus, our faith based organisations have stepped up their pastoral care and outreach programs to check on those who are most vulnerable in our community.
Barton Electorate: Ltyentye Apurte Community

Ms BURNEY (Barton) (10:48): In 2019 students and teachers at St Ursula's College, Kingsgrove, in the electorate of Barton that I represent, attended a school emersion trip to the Northern Territory and to the Ltyentye Apurte Community, also known Santa Teresa. The Ltyentye Apurte Community is an Arrernte Indigenous community and is located about 80 kilometres south-east of Alice Springs. The community is governed by the Community Government Council, which runs the health services and some other facilities. Also, in 2019, Ltyentye Apurte Community won the Australia Tidy Towns competition and was named Australia's most sustainable community, which is an amazing outcome. Nevertheless, while visiting in this community, the students and teachers were made aware that this community also suffers, like many First Nations people, from appalling housing. These students and teachers decided to act, and over 600 caring individuals from the local school community have now written petitioning the government to act. The petition notes that conditions of Indigenous housing in this community are directly influenced by the actions of the government and its housing maintenance programs, and this program is failing. Families are often left without basic repairs for months on end, while some other families do not have running water.

The petition also raises the issue of overcrowding. This community does not have enough homes to meet the needs of the residents. The combined effects of poor-quality housing and overcrowding is seriously impacting on the health and wellbeing of this community, so specifically this petition asks the government to review the process of multi-tiered providers responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of the public dwellings in the community.

We can't have equality and reconciliation without also delivering basic service rights for the needs of First Nations peoples. In this case, failing to deliver these basic services in an effective and timely fashion is leaving vulnerable members of the community disadvantaged and living in Third World conditions. The young people at St Ursula's College and their teachers have taken this issue on very, very seriously and, without a doubt, Barton is an electorate where the people care for each other, our country and the future and wellbeing of First Nations people. I agree with the school community of St Ursula's College: the government needs to do something. I commend this petition to the House.

Groom Electorate: Exports

Dr McVEIGH (Groom) (10:51): Yesterday was another magnificent milestone for Toowoomba's own Wellcamp airport. We saw the departure of a second Cathay Pacific international flight from Wellcamp to Hong Kong—that is, second on top of the flight that has been running for some time—significantly increasing the capacity for local exporters to send freight directly into Hong Kong. This coming Friday we will see Singapore Airlines commence their service direct to Singapore for the same purpose—to take freight directly into those Asian markets. This is due to assistance from the federal government through the $110 million International Freight Assistance Mechanism. It has, in effect, secured a magnificent export deal for our part of regional Queensland.

The Cathay Pacific B777 carries about 35 tonnes of produce—local beef, pork, eggs, fruit and vegetables, for example—and each flight's cargo is valued at around a million dollars, so this is a major lifeline for Darling Downs producers and exporters, who have been battling to get their products overseas due to some of the COVID impacts on other flight availability. The Singapore Airlines flight, commencing this Friday, will be the first time that Singapore Airlines leaves Wellcamp airport, so that too is a very significant milestone for our local area.

The more product we can get out the door, particularly into these export markets, means more jobs in our region, not just on farm but right through the supply chain. Whether it's chilled meat or fresh produce, it's significant that we can get direct access to markets that have access to well over half the world's population. And to do that within, say, 72 hours means that direct access is as good, and in some cases better, than what we have to the southern markets of Australia, so these are significant opportunities for locals in particular.

I'm proud of the federal government's support for these direct linkages for our exporters. I thank sincerely the Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment, Senator Simon Birmingham, for leading the charge and putting this support in place. Yes, it's about post-COVID-19 recovery, but it's also built on the free trade deals that the coalition government has been able to secure around the world, in this case in Asia, in recent years. I congratulate Cathay Pacific; I congratulate Singapore Airlines; and, in particular, I congratulate the Wagners on another innovation for our region.

Franklin Electorate: COVID-19

Ms COLLINS (Franklin) (10:54): Obviously, we've all seen the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak and then the restrictions on our local communities. Just a few weeks ago I decided I would survey my constituents in relation to the post-COVID recovery. Interestingly, around 30 per cent of the 1,600 or more people who responded to the survey said they knew somebody who had fallen through the cracks of state or federal

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government support. This is particularly concerning for those families whose incomes have been substantially reduced due to COVID-19 but who are not eligible for any government support at all. The most common problem, people will not be surprised to hear, is JobKeeper eligibility. Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to read you some of the quotes from my constituents. One constituent told me, 'I was five days short of the required one year as a casual at the same employer.' Another said, 'My son-in-law spent 35 years in his job only for the company to fold just a few months before COVID, so he'd only spent nine months in his new job as a casual and was therefore not eligible for JobKeeper.' These are the types of things that I am getting told by my constituents. I've also heard from a young woman in my electorate who is expecting a child. That is great news for her and her family but, unfortunately, due to COVID-19 she has been put off and won't be able to meet the work test for paid parental leave. Obviously, when she and her family were planning for that child they were expecting to get the government's paid parental leave, and they're now no longer eligible because she no longer has the work that would have made her eligible for that payment.

We're getting people saying that they're seeing visa holders queuing up at food banks and food relief places. Charities are providing hot lunches for people, and for some people it is the only hot meal they're getting all week. I know of neighbourhood houses who are supporting entire families of visa holders down in Tasmania. It is terrible that so many people have been excluded from support by this government. We heard again today from the Prime Minister that he expects these payments will stop in September and that we'll all just snap back. That will not be happening. Frankly, there are so many people who are already missing out on government support that government need to really consider the tail of this response. If the government actually withdraw support all at once, like they say they are going to, we'll see a further contraction in the economy. We will see the recession bite deeper and we will see more people unemployed if the government make the wrong decisions. They can't afford to make the wrong decisions.

Lindsay Electorate: Infrastructure

Mrs McINTOSH (Lindsay) (10:57): Western Sydney is about creating jobs, particularly infrastructure jobs. Recently, I joined the Prime Minister and the Minister for Population, Cities and Urban Infrastructure to announce $11 billion in funding for Sydney Metro Greater West. This will deliver thousands of jobs and provide a long-term economic boost to Western Sydney, particularly in the electorate of Lindsay.

This addition is part of a $3.5 billion investment in our area. It will revitalise St Marys. It will bring a new town centre. It will also bring opportunities in small business to Orchard Hills, where a second railway station will be built. And, excitingly, Luddenham will become an innovation precinct, which will bring education and health jobs to my community of Lindsay. I'm really excited that our community will have an opportunity to work closer to home and that our local small businesses will be linked to global opportunities. I was one of the 300,000 people who commute from Western Sydney daily for a job. This project means that each of these people and our kids in the future will have more opportunities to work where they live and to spend more time with their families.

The construction of the rail link will provide 14,000 jobs, and the metro link will support 200,000 new jobs in the Western Parkland City. Importantly, these jobs will go to people who live in Western Sydney. Already we have over 50 per cent of a local workforce when it comes to construction of the Western Sydney International Airport. This is part of my plan for Lindsay: creating local jobs by backing small businesses, busting congestion on our roads and creating better transport options so that people can live, work and stay in our community. Early construction work will begin in December this year, so the rail link will be up and running as the airport opens and welcomes Western Sydney to the world.

The Western Sydney International (Nancy-Bird Walton) Airport is a $5.3 billion investment and one of the biggest infrastructure investments in a generation. It will bring jobs to the construction industry but also to science and technology, engineering and maths. This is what I'm really excited about for the future: ensuring our local kids are being educated in STEM so they can take all the opportunities that are coming with the development of Western Sydney airport. I look forward to seeing the construction of the north-south rail link begin so we can see the opportunities that arise from it.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Rob Mitchell): In accordance with standing order 193, the time for constituency statements has concluded.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Chinese Australians

Mr GILES (Scullin) (11:01): I move:

That this House:

(1) recognises:

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I want to bear witness to some of the reports of right-wing extremists seeking to exploit anxiety and racism against Chinese Australians. We also need to clearly distinguish between warranted criticisms of the Chinese government on the one hand and mistreatment of Chinese Australians on the other. Of course, Australia is a safe and welcoming place for international students. The cynical and exploitive posturing of that government, or elements of it, in recent days must be seen for what it is. We mustn't answer it with our words in this place but our actions. We must demonstrate, as more than 80,000 people have called for, unity over fear in our response to this. We must demonstrate our ability to listen when we talk about social cohesion, understand the impact of racism on people's lives and give voice to their experiences as we come together to build a stronger society.

I want to thank all members who are participating in this motion. I want to thank particularly the government members, because this does need to be a bipartisan concern. In tackling racism and adopting a zero tolerance to it, we commit to a shared objective. We will work together and sometimes have disagreements about how we get there, but today the parliament stands united in standing up for Chinese Australians and rejecting racism.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Rob Mitchell):** I thank the member for Scullin. Is the motion seconded?
Dr MARTIN (Reid) (11:06): I second the motion put forward by the member for Scullin. Australia’s record of successful migration and multiculturalism is something to be celebrated. It has underwritten our economic success and our cultural achievements. At a time when we need to come together to face the challenges the coronavirus pandemic poses, we have instead seen some people use this crisis to incite vile acts of racism against Chinese Australians. Racism occurs on a spectrum. Its earliest symptoms are ignorance or avoidance. It can quickly escalate into verbal abuse or physical violence. Sadly, the coronavirus pandemic has seen the full spectrum of racism rear its ugly head here in Australia. From as early as January, fake reports targeted Sydney suburbs such as Burwood, Rhodes and Eastwood because of their large Chinese-Australian communities, discouraging people to visit these suburbs or Chinese-Australian owned businesses. Since then, many Australians have seen images and footage of Chinese Australians or international students being verbally or physically assaulted. I will put it as bluntly as I can: racism has no place in our society—not now, not ever. There is never an excuse for racism. Thankfully, these acts have been isolated incidents which have been widely condemned by the Australian people and also by our Prime Minister.

Most Australians are horrified by such appalling displays. We are a nation with a proud migrant history. We hold the reputation of being the most successful multicultural country in the world. In my electorate of Reid, over 18 per cent of my constituents have Chinese ancestry. They form a community that demonstrates strong family values, a high work ethic and a desire to contribute to society more broadly. Many others are international students who have chosen to better their lives by seeking a world-class education. The majority of Australians, over 85 per cent, believe multiculturalism has been good for Australia. In the last budget, we committed $71 million to a social cohesion package aimed at bringing Australians together. This package invests in programs that embrace Australia’s multicultural diversity and is aimed at enhancing the everyday experiences of Australians: how we communicate, how we live and how we engage with each other. The most recent department of education survey of $80,000 international students found that 95 per cent of students listed personal safety and security as one of the top reasons they chose to study in Australia. The satisfaction levels of living in Australia were above that of other similar countries, at 90.4 per cent. As the Prime Minister has said, it was our Chinese-Australian community that acted as our first line of defence against the spread of the coronavirus.

The coronavirus outbreak coincided with Chinese New Year celebrations at the start of the year, when many Chinese-Australians were returning from holidays in China. Our returning citizens and permanent residents voluntarily took up self-isolation. As a result of their actions, our whole community was sheltered from the earliest wave of the pandemic. It brought us valuable time to prepare our health system, close our borders and implement plans to mitigate the spread of the virus. People are entitled to have their grievances with the World Health Organization or to express their frustrations towards the Chinese government’s response. One of the strengths of our democracy is that we can have such debates in a respectful and productive way. What is never acceptable is when members of our community take out their grievances on their fellow Australian citizens of Asian descent.

I would certainly be remiss if I did not also acknowledge the recent refocus on the rights of our First Nations people, who continue to face disadvantage and discrimination as a result of Australia’s colonial history. As I said earlier this year in response to our Closing the Gap statement, we need to have an honest reflection on the significant work yet to be done. We will only be able to close the gap if we draw on the insights, knowledge and lived experiences of our Indigenous Australians. I know that we need to do better by our First Nations people in a goal shared by those on the other side. Australians overwhelmingly recognise that our multicultural communities have added to our nation, and our government is committed to supporting all communities to ensure that they succeed both economically and socially.

Mr HAYES (Fowler—Chief Opposition Whip) (11:11): I will start with a quote:

My dream would be a multicultural society, one that is diverse and where every man, woman and child are treated equally. I dream of a world where all people of all races work together in harmony.

Those are the words of the late Nelson Mandela, a global human rights activist, but his words put in perspective the struggle for equality faced by many minority groups around the world. Furthermore, I reaffirm the importance of taking action to protect the social harmony of our diverse communities and, in doing so, reflect on the success of our democracy, which is so important to that. I have the honour of representing one of the most multicultural communities in the whole of this country, one that is made up of a very diverse range of people from diverse cultures and religious backgrounds. I’ve witnessed firsthand the benefits that come from multicultural communities.

All Australians should be able to go about their lives free from discrimination, vilification and hate motivated violence. We must support zero tolerance when it comes to any approach dealing with racism in this country. I’m certainly concerned about the incidents that have been reported more recently concerning racial abuse directed to
our Australian-Chinese community as we grapple with the health and economic crisis brought about by the coronavirus. I fully support the position of the Australian government for a full and independent inquiry into this pandemic. Despite the sabre-rattling of the Chinese Communist Party, we must stand in full support of our successful diverse society. Perhaps China might care to reflect on its own treatment of the Uyghur minority before casting aspersions elsewhere. However, this discussion must also extend to many other minority groups, both here and abroad, who are subject to disadvantage and inequity. At the forefront, I would certainly suggest, must be our own First Nations people.

Whilst it may be politically beneficial for the American President to refer to COVID-19 as the ‘Chinese disease’, clearly it has absolutely nothing to do with the Australian-Chinese community. I take this opportunity to draw on the significant contribution of our vibrant Chinese community within my electorate, drawing on examples from some notable individuals, namely Harry Hunt, James Chan and Dr William Trinh. All are of Asian heritage and they have all proven themselves to be great Australians and have been recognised as such by the awarding of the Order of Australia for their outstanding contribution to our society. Harry Hunt is synonymous with the success of Liverpool, both in economic and charitable terms. He's a successful businessman, including a hotel owner. He's President of the South West Sydney Tourism Taskforce, a former president of the Liverpool chamber of commerce, Chair of the Salvation Army Red Cross Shield Appeal and a regional ambassador for the Red Cross. Harry continues to make a such difference to our local community and to the lives of many that live there. Most recently, he offered his hotel, free of charge, to any person that was impacted by the horrendous bushfire season earlier this year.

James Chan is a leader of the Chinese community in my electorate. James is a very successful business owner and operates a very popular Chinese restaurant. James is also a foundation member of the Australian Chinese Buddhist Society and currently serves as its chairman. Under his leadership, the society has held many fundraising events for the Red Cross, the Queensland flood appeal and the 2004 tsunami. Most recently, it raised over $80,000 for bushfire affected communities. I'm very proud to call James my Chinese brother.

William Trinh, who is a very successful optometrist, with his practice in Cabramatta, is also the chairman of Australian Health Humanitarian Aid. He serves as a university lecturer and is certainly committed to the training of the next generation of optometrists. As the chairman of AHHA, he regularly travels overseas with over 300 health professionals to provide cataract surgery, dental procedures and medical health assistance to those less fortunate, particularly in countries such as the Philippines, Nepal, Vietnam and Cambodia.

It is people like these that exemplify what it is to be a great Australian and who demonstrate the significance of our multicultural community. We must stand united against all forms of discrimination in our community, including any misguided judgement directed against our Australian Chinese community. Any such discrimination stands in stark contrast to our values.

**Mr TIM WILSON** (Goldstein) (11:16): I want to begin by thanking the member for Scullin for bringing this motion to the Federation Chamber and the parliament and the member for Reid for seconding the motion—

**Government members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr TIM WILSON:** I would hope that opposition members would 'Hear, hear!' that statement as well, because this is a motion that is designed to be bipartisan, to bring together the parliament and to set the standard and tone for the type of country we want to be. Make no mistake: it's not just that racism has no place in Australia, and that's true; as members of parliament we have a responsibility as leaders of our community and our country to call out the vile scourge for what it is—a learned bigotry towards others simply through a lack of understanding or respect. It is a vile scourge, with all forms of bigotry against other human beings dividing us against our common humanity. Racism has no place in our country. It doesn't matter who you are or what your circumstances are. We should not be afraid to call it out, particularly when there is any increase in it against a subsection of the community such as the discrimination or harassment against people of Chinese origin because of a health crisis that could have started anywhere in the world. We should stand up and be proud. To call out racism is one of most foundational reasons I'm such a strong supporter of free speech. We need to know who the people are who have hatred in their hearts and hold them accountable. There is no place for racial harassment in our country. When it comes down to it, we have so many people who are prepared to call it out. I congratulate the Prime Minister and other parliamentarians who have stepped up at this important time.

The Goldstein electorate does not have a particularly large Chinese community, but that does not negate the need for us to show solidarity with others. We have a very high percentage of people with Jewish heritage, and they know firsthand in Goldstein the consequences of racial and ethnic bigotry—how it can corrode that sense of social solidarity, compassion and respect around our common humanity. It all comes from the same basic origins: ignorance and a lack of respect and understanding, and seeing points of division, rather than our common
We do this now against the backdrop of the challenges of the COVID-19 virus. We're in an environment where people have been impassioned in their criticisms of China and, particularly, the Chinese Communist Party, but that is not a licence to justify the condemnation of, or racism towards, the people of China or Chinese Australians. They are not responsible. The people of China have never had a vote on the Chinese Communist Party and whether they're the legitimate government of their nation.

There's a reason why the Chinese Communist Party are using racism and pointing their finger at us and other countries. It's because they want to shut down debate. They want to deny speech and respect to free people everywhere and use it as a form of weapon. So, we must call that out as well. I know they've made a series of allegations about our country to dissuade students and tourists from coming to Australia, alleging that there is a scourge against Chinese people and racism against Chinese people. But that is not who we are as a country. That is not who we are as a people. It is not the type of community or country we want to be.

One of the most beautiful things about our country is that it's open, tolerant and respectful towards others. We are, of course, a country on a journey towards a greater sense of perfection, but at least we are open, inclusive and respectful towards each other's common humanity. Maybe one day the Chinese Communist Party might be able to say the same, but not now.

Ms O'NEIL (Hotham) (11:21): I think perhaps more than at any other point in my life I'm so incredibly grateful to be living here in Australia. We have a lot of issues in our country—I don't pretend anything otherwise—but our democracy is largely peaceful. Our government works; we have actually seen that very evidently in the last couple of months. Our elections are fair and democratic. Most importantly, I think our country is capable of being proud of what we have and what we are, but also capable of talking about the areas where we need to make improvements. That is the quality of the very best democracies and the very best countries around the world.

The motion today is about racism, and I want to be really direct. We are most peaceful and successful multicultural country in the world, and I couldn't be more proud of that. I'm so lucky to represent a community and an electorate which is more representative of that than most in the country, and it is absolutely thrilling. It is a huge part of the richness of life in Hotham that this is a community of people which have come together from 150 or so countries around the world, and we all benefit from that. The multiculturalism that we celebrate in this parliament and that we celebrate in my community is not about tropes, it's not about being able to go to a different restaurant each night and it's not about talking about dancing and traditional dress. It is the great richness and the great beauty of living in a community where everyone is different. We learn from each other and we grow from that. We grow from that exposure to people having different points of view about things. I'm lucky also in my electorate to represent the largest university in the country, Monash University, and that's a community that is highly engaged with students from every country around the world. We have a vast number of international students living in my electorate, so I want to say something about the experience that they're having too.

Australia is a welcoming and safe place. I truly believe that. But I also truly believe that there has been a clear connection to rises in racism against Asian Australians during the COVID-19 period. It's absolutely clear when you look at the evidence and the reporting on this subject. If we want to be honest and true about how proud we are, of course, a country on a journey towards a greater sense of perfection, but at least we are open, inclusive and respectful towards each other's common humanity. Maybe one day the Chinese Communist Party might be able to say the same, but not now.

I get to engage a lot with leaders in the Chinese-Australian community, and I had a really good roundtable with them over Zoom, as we've all shifted our activities in recent months. I just want to share with the parliament a couple of the things that came out of that discussion. The first thing is that the primary concern of the Chinese-Australian leaders on that call was what they can do to contribute to what's going on in our country at the moment. Anything that they can do, they are striving to do, not because they feel guilty or embarrassed but because they're Australian and they want to make a contribution to their country. The second thing was the enormous hurt that many of them are facing when they're exposed to this type of conduct. I say that because some of the people on this phone call, some of whom have been subject to racist abuse themselves, have been living in Australia for 30 or 40 years. They've made their entire career here and raised their family here. Then to have an incident like this happen that makes them feel on the outer—it's incredible how much of a betrayal that is to them. It's important
that we speak for them. We've heard of young people who've been badly affected. We see, particularly in the Chinese-Australian community, young people being teased at school and the like about these sorts of incidents.

How can we help? I think by acknowledging the reality. Racism does exist, and it's not in concert with the Australian values that we like to celebrate in this parliament. We need to be clear that we condemn it and we need to speak out against it when we see it. We want the government to tackle this head-on and to address it in a systematic way. Part of that is actually measuring and tracking how much this is happening, because one of the things this has shown is that we actually don't have a handle on that. Racism's not okay. It's never okay. I stand with my Chinese-Australian residents so say we're here for you and we want to defend you.

Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt) (11:26): I also would like to commend the member for Scullin for the motion. I'm going to talk specifically on my own electorate. We start by saying no to racism. I have to say that in my electorate of Leichhardt we have a very significant Chinese population that basically has been there since the first population. When the British arrived up in our region, so did our Chinese, looking for the goldmines, et cetera.

An honourable member: And the bananas.

Mr ENTSCH: And bananas and market gardens, et cetera. And they have been absolutely loved and embraced, and they are absolutely 100 per cent part of our community.

Moving forward into recent times, as we've developed as a tourism destination, first of all, a large visiting population came from Japan. Whilst many in our region sort of looked with a level of curiosity at these new visitors, they certainly very quickly embraced them, and we've now had a very large Japanese resident population living in Cairns for many years. As you go down and see the shops, you see a lot of Japanese shops, sign-writing in Japanese language, et cetera. They're now part of our community. In fact, we have one of the few regional consuls, a Japanese consul that's based in Cairns. The Australia Japan Society is well and truly embraced.

When you look at migration more broadly in our area, first came the Europeans. Very closely, almost at the same time, the Chinese came in. Postwar migration was from Eastern Europe, the Italians and the Greeks and large numbers of populations from that area, who were broadly embraced and are very much part of our society and our community. In more recent times, we've had a whole group of people coming in here. We've had the Hmong community from Cambodia, who are now well and truly established. We've had the Bhutanese more recently. We now have quite a significant population of Congolese. Again, all of these populations are being embraced. I have to say, you just don't see the racism that we're talking about—possibly in metropolitan areas. Certainly in our regional areas we are fighting very hard to keep these populations there.

Now we move onto the Chinese. After the Japanese visitors, we then started to come into the Chinese. And I've got to say that, without the Chinese, our economy would not have grown to the extent that it has. As they formed a larger portion of our community, of our visiting community, suddenly all of these shopfronts changed from Japanese to Chinese. They were welcomed, they were embraced, and through the whole process we have continued to welcome them. As a community, as an electorate, I see very little evidence of racism against a particular group—and that's the way it should be.

When we talk about our First Australians, let me tell you that I am very proud to boast, with all the controversy that's happening with Captain Cook and the statues at the moment, that, from our perspective, our Indigenous people in Cooktown acknowledge Captain Cook as the first European to embrace reconciliation. In fact, the first act of reconciliation happened in Cooktown with Captain Cook and the local Indigenous population. That should be celebrated; it shouldn't be whitewashed. And to suggest that we should be removing that because of history suggests that we should be flattening the pyramids; Angkor Wat in Cambodia should be destroyed; so should the Mayan temples. Goodness me, what about the arena in Rome where all those slaves lost their lives? It's just an absolute nonsense. I would say to you that I am absolutely committed to fighting against racism, and in my electorate we have been very, very proud of the multinational content of our community. We love, irrespective of what culture you come from. It enriches our society, and I think that we must continue to make sure that we send that message out there. We say the same to our Chinese friends. Let me tell you, our tourism economy was the first to fall over the cliff when the Chinese flights stopped. We are really looking forward to those flights recommencing in the near future. (Time expired.)

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (11:31): I'm pleased to speak in support of the motion moved by the member for Scullin, and I thank him for the great work that he's doing in this area. I also thank the member for Scullin for appearing in a recent Zoom visit in Queensland to speak on much the same matters that were raised in this motion.

I've stood here many times to talk about racism, as have members on both sides of the chamber. It is something that the Parliament of Australia has been very strong on more recently. Each time I talk about racism, it gets me thinking: what will it take, what will it actually take? Unfortunately, fear is a great driver of our emotions and our
actions. Why are we afraid, and what are we actually afraid of? The reality is that each and every one of us is exactly the same: when we bleed, our blood is red.

In the first weeks of the COVID-19 crisis, all across our nation, we saw behavioural change. We saw fear spread and manifest itself in some very unexpected ways—the hoarding of large packs of toilet paper was certainly a surprise; hoarding tins of tomatoes and all the pasta in the world—and for weeks we were all stuck at home with growing anxiety and, in some cases, for some people, anger and bewilderment. We were looking for some sort of answer to blame the unpredictable and frightening circumstances that come with a global pandemic. This is not a good mix, because it means there is a large audience out there who are vulnerable to misinformation as they spend their time online looking for answers that will give them certainty. Unfortunately, the mulga wire has become a vulgar liar.

Only last week ASIO issued a warning that the far Right is using COVID-19 as a cover to push its dangerous ideas and recruit new members. This means that right-wing rhetoric is now reaching the unprecedented audience of those stuck at home, increasingly socially isolated and spending time online because of the pandemic.

According to Deakin University's Matteo Vergani, an expert in countering militant extremism and hate crime, 'COVID-19 has created fertile ground for extremists to spread their rhetoric'. And ASIO's assessment, as reported by ABC's Background Briefing is:

> We assess the COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced an extreme right-wing belief in the inevitability of societal collapse and a 'race war'.

ASIO's report suggests:

Messages have been posted on burgeoning COVID-19 conspiracy forums, providing links to white supremacist forums which promote violent extremism and often blame China and Chinese people for the virus.

Unfortunately, this calculating and destructive behaviour is a threat to our social cohesion and national unity. We should all be alarmed about recent reports that in Brisbane earlier this month neo-Nazis flew swastika flags from my Story Bridge, from Brisbane's Story Bridge. These groups are online and are actively recruiting locally, and we need to stand up to them.

The Australian Chinese community in Moreton recognised the potential danger of the coronavirus immediately. They were fearful and they were cautious. On returning from overseas, they were isolating well before the time when there was any suggestion of overseas arrivals doing this. They supported each other online, in isolation, and they closed down their new year celebrations. It was the right thing to do, and my waistline thanks them I guess. Their instincts were to protect Australia. In other words, they were thinking about the safety of this nation before others started to act on this.

Since the start of the pandemic, Asian Australians have been verbally and physically assaulted, refused service, received death threats and their property has been damaged. Are we going to accept this as the experience of others in our community? Are we going to accept that there are some in our community who think it is okay to behave towards others in this way? No, because Australians are so much better than that, as the member for Scullin has called out so often. The majority of Australians know that Asian Australians did not cause this pandemic. The majority of Australians know that we are all in this together.

Let me go back to where I started this conversation, talking about fear, because we are all vulnerable to extremist groups spreading conspiracy theories to scapegoat certain groups like the Chinese people. These groups try very hard to prey on and exploit the fears of some for the sole purpose of increasing their power and recruiting new people to their sorry, spiteful, very cruel and, as ASIO has said, very dangerous cause. These are the people who hate on others. We will not let them divide our Australia, and we cannot let their voices be the only voices. We must stand together and eradicate racism from our country. We call on the Morrison government to attack racism head-on and introduce a new national antiracism campaign. And to the Australian Chinese community of Moreton, let us stand against racism together or 'rang women gongtong fandui zhongzuzhuyi'. I apologise for my pronunciation.

Ms LIU (Chisholm) (11:37): I have been deeply saddened by reports of Asian Australians being the target of racist attacks and abuse, and I condemn this behaviour in the strongest possible terms. The actions of a few cowardly idiots do not reflect the overwhelming views of Australians, nor this government. Australia is the most successful multicultural nation on Earth, where every person has the right to feel safe regardless of their ethnicity or country of origin. Racism simply has no place in Australia. As Australians, we are proud to welcome people from all backgrounds, and we give everyone a fair go regardless of where they come from.

When those who choose to make Australia their home, they usually find that they've made the right decision. The 2019 Scanlon report *Mapping social cohesion* found that 90 per cent of respondents expressed a sense of belonging, and 85 per cent of respondents agreed that multiculturalism has been good for Australia. As a migrant
myself, I agree with these respondents. I came to this country as an international student 35 years ago, and I'm glad to know that many international students that come to Australia usually find that they have made the right decision too. The Department of Education conducted a survey of 80,000 international students. Ninety-five per cent of students listed personal safety and security as one of the top reasons they choose to study in Australia, with over 90 per cent of them being satisfied.

As the member for Chisholm, I represent quite a diverse electorate, and regularly I meet constituents who share encouraging stories of how they came to Australia and how they have embraced the Australian way of life. Chisholm is also home to Deakin University and their international students. It is the coalition government that is backing these students and welcoming them to Australia. The coalition government is committed to keeping it this way. In last year's budget, we committed $71 million to a social cohesion package aimed at bringing Australians together. The government's investment in social cohesion is one of the four key pillars of the future population plan. Australia's future social cohesion is not only the responsibility of the government; it is the responsibility of all of us. Whether you are a new arrival eating your first Tim Tam or a longstanding citizen, we are all responsible for the cohesion we enjoy. The social cohesion package builds interfaith and intercultural understanding through sport, in classrooms, in cultural institutions and through community driven programs and outreach. This government will continue to encourage a diversity of perspectives in the public debate and promote resilience against harmful and divisive messages—particularly those that promote violence.

I'm very proud of Australia's migrant community and their social, cultural and economic contributions to Australia. Personally, I know my fellow Australians of Chinese descent are proud Australians who love this country and its values. Many parliamentarians have been vocal in their opposition to the racism that has occurred, especially during COVID-19. This is an issue that crosses party lines, and I thank those in parliament who have stood in solidarity on this issue. As the Prime Minister said in May, we have to call these sorts of things out. It's not on. Now is the time for our nation to unite and defeat this challenge which is facing all Australians. The coronavirus does not discriminate, and neither should we. By coming together, based on mutual respect and tolerance, we can move forward as a nation to overcome this difficult time.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bird): The time allotted for the debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Diabetes

Mr RAMSEY (Grey—Government Whip) (11:42): I move:

(1) notes that there are:

(a) 1.3 million Australians with diabetes registered on the National Diabetes Services Scheme, with over 280 new people diagnosed and registered each day and an estimated 500,000 Australians with type 2 diabetes which remain undiagnosed; and
(b) an estimated 2 million Australians with pre-diabetes and at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes in the next 5-10 years;

(2) acknowledges:

(a) diabetes is a complex metabolic disorder, which if not diagnosed early and treated well may lead to serious health complications such as blindness, limb amputation, heart disease and stroke, and kidney disease; and
(b) the Government's long standing commitment to improving the treatment and care of people with diabetes through establishing the Australian National Diabetes Strategy, the roll out of continuous glucose monitors and flash monitors to children, young adults, health care card holders and women with type 1 diabetes who are pregnant, while noting the need for all type 1 diabetics to have affordable access to this important technology, as well as the recently launched Diabetes in Schools program, the KeepSight program, and programs to prevent diabetes related amputations;

(3) congratulates Australian of the Year 2020, Dr James Muecke AM for his work as an ophthalmologist working in many poor and developing nations, and for raising public awareness of the need to prevent type 2 diabetes through encouraging healthier lifestyles and healthier environments; and

(4) calls on all state and federal governments to re-commit to a refreshed Australian National Diabetes Strategy and to fund and develop a national diabetes prevention program.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bird): Is the motion seconded?

Mr Falinski: I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

Mr RAMSEY: I am, as most people in this place would probably know, the co-chair of the 'parliamentary enemies of diabetes', along with the member for Moreton, who is across the chamber. It's a job we take very seriously and work very hard at. We call ourselves the enemies of diabetes because this place is full of friendship groups, and I don't want to be a friend of diabetes; I wish to be an enemy of diabetes. It is the leading cause of coronary heart disease. It is the leading cause of amputation. It is the leading cause of blindness in Australia. I will come back to the issue of eyesight in a moment or two. 1.3 million Australians have diabetes, and another two
million are estimated to have pre-diabetes. It has gone from the stage of being endemic to being epidemic, and it's a serious health risk for Australia.

I have been planning for this motion for some time because part of it is recognising the Australian of the Year, Dr James Muecke, who is an ophthalmologist from Adelaide and who has spent a substantial part of his life working in developing nations, helping people keep their eyesight. In fact Dr Muecke has helped thousands of people. We had hoped that he would be in parliament when we did this motion, but the enemies of diabetes will be joining him online soon for a discussion.

The government continues to find ways of funding new treatments, and we are continuing to work towards a cure for diabetes. There have been some really good programs in the last few years. I guess continuous glucose monitors are top of the list, but we have invested in eyesight screening programs as well. I thank Greg Hunt, who is a very attentive minister in this area.

I'd also like to give a little bit of a shout-out to the people who work on the National Diabetes Strategy implementation reference group, especially the former member for Pearce, the Hon. Judi Moylan, who continues maybe not a lifetime's work in this area but half a lifetime's work in this area—she has been a wonderful ambassador and campaigner for diabetes—and Professor Paul Zimmet, who has spent a lifetime studying and working in this area. They are wonderful examples of people who are willing to keep giving and giving and giving for a very good cause.

I'd also like to give a bit of a shout-out to Dr Michael Stanford AM, who is the newly appointed President of Diabetes Australia. He brings a great deal of expertise and prestige to this area. I also want to recognise the outgoing president, Barry O'Farrell, who, in the member for Moreton's eyes and my eyes was probably not there long enough. Barry O'Farrell has gone off to become the High Commissioner to India. It's another job, but he's still serving his nation. We thank him for that and for the almost two years he served as the president of Diabetes Australia.

I often say that this is a way for people who have had a high-profile in public affairs to come back. They can pick an organisation like Diabetes Australia and really give something back. I congratulate Julia Gillard, for instance, on the way that she has become involved in and become the public face of Beyond Blue. It is a really good thing for people from high office to do. So, we on the friends of diabetes group will continue to work with Diabetes Australia.

One of the things I'm sad to say—unless the statistics have changed quite recently—is that the electorate of Grey, which covers 92.4 per cent of South Australia, has the highest diabetes rate in Australia. We are not absolutely sure why. We've got a high Indigenous population, and type II diabetes is an incredible affliction for these people, but that can't be the only reason. They are only about seven per cent of the population. There are a whole lot of other things in there that we need to understand. People have little choice with type I diabetes, but, although not 100 per cent foolproof, there are many things you can do about your lifestyle that will limit your chances of getting type II diabetes. That is a message we are still not getting through to the public on a regular enough basis.

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (11:47): I'm very pleased to speak in support of the motion moved by the member of Grey, my co-chair of the 'parliamentary enemies of diabetes' group. Whilst people outside often see the argybargy of politics, on matters like this it is good to see that we work closely together. The member for Grey is a hard man to have a problem with. I don't want to do him a disservice in his electorate, but he has been very strong on diabetes, and, because he has an electorate that has those challenges, he brings great analysis to the subject. As stated by the member for Grey, there are now almost 1.2 million Australians who have been diagnosed and are living with type II diabetes, but there are others in our community—likely to be around 500,000—with undiagnosed type II diabetes and still another two million Australians with pre-diabetes who are at high risk of developing type II diabetes. Type II diabetes is a very serious and progressive metabolic condition, with many serious complications including eye damage and blindness, foot problems and amputations, kidney damage and dialysis, heart attacks, heart failure and strokes. People with diabetes are three to four times more likely to have a heart attack or stroke, so it is a good disease to fight and a good disease to be an enemy of. Diabetes has a wider impact than just on those experiencing the disease. Their family members, friends, teachers and employers all need to be aware of the support needed by sufferers. The economic cost, which has been a big motivation for me, is estimated to be nearly $15 billion annually.

As well as being co-chair of the parliamentary diabetes group, I came to this because my mother had type II diabetes. It's funny: my mum has been dead for quite a while, for a few years now, but I always associate with her with Canberra. I would often phone her when I was here, away from my family. Mum liked a bit of a chat. In fact,
I've only ever stayed in Canberra on a weekend twice in my life: once with my mum and then the weekend just gone. So, I've been thinking of mum, so it's great to have this motion, and I thank the member for Grey for that.

While we do not know exactly what causes type II diabetes, the good news is that there is strong evidence that it's preventable. Obviously, it's a progressive condition. It develops over a long period of time, where the body becomes resistant to the normal effects of insulin. It causes the pancreas to produce greater and greater amounts of insulin, and eventually the pancreas loses the ability to produce enough to manage the blood glucose levels in the body. Then the cells in the pancreas are gradually destroyed. Type II diabetes represents 85 to 90 per cent of all cases of diabetes in Australia. There are some markers that determine that someone is more likely to develop type II diabetes: if they're over 45, if they have a family history of diabetes, if they are from some particular ethnic backgrounds, if they suffer from high blood pressure, or if they are overweight or obese.

Many people who have developed type II diabetes had no symptoms at all. For some, the first sign might be a complication such as a heart attack, vision problems, or a foot ulcer. There is no cure for type II diabetes, and that is why prevention is crucial. There is strong evidence that we could prevent it in up to 60 per cent of cases, which is something we are not achieving in Australia as yet. We do need a national type II diabetes prevention program to help prevent people developing type II diabetes. This would include risk assessment; evidence based lifestyle and behaviour change programs for those who are at higher risk; a whole-of-community change to promoting healthy eating, healthy physical activities and healthy weight, perhaps springboarding off our response to the pandemic; and public education campaigns and public policy initiatives, including reducing the marketing and promotion of unhealthy food to children, reducing sugary drink consumption, reducing added fat, salt and sugar in the food supply, and reducing the cost of healthy food options for the poor and disadvantaged. A prevention workforce of health professionals trained and certified in diabetes risk assessment and prevention should be developed in each state and territory. A range of suitable health officials from fields including nursing, dietetics, physiotherapy, exercise physiology, pharmacy, psychology, and Aboriginal health workers should be included.

The goal of any program would be to slow the growth of the obesity epidemic, the main driver of type 2 diabetes, and prevent low-risk individuals from moving into the higher-risk category. If you develop type 2 diabetes, eating well and exercise are very important management tools. It's important to keep the blood glucose levels in the target range to prevent short-term and long-term complications. Diabetes is an epidemic not only in this country but across the world. We need to tackle diabetes head on, for all our sakes. I look forward to working with the member for Grey to do so.

Dr ALLEN (Higgins) (11:52): I rise to support the member for Grey's motion about diabetes. This is such an important area. It affects so many millions of Australians. I want to start my remarks by commenting on the fact that the Australian of the Year this year is Dr James Muecke AM. James has decided to make prevention of diabetes one of his main topics because it is such an important area with regard to his background. He is an ophthalmologist by training, and he cares deeply about saving vision. We know that diabetes is the one of the leading causes of blindness, so it is wonderful to hear that the Australian of the Year this year, Dr James Muecke, is championing the issue of how we can prevent diabetes and save people's sight. I worked with James many years ago. I worked with him in Kenya 30 years ago, in Tumutumu. It is great to see him being elevated to this position of Australian of the Year. He is a very dedicated and passionate medical researcher and clinician, and he has really brought a great deal of passion to this area. Unfortunately for James, in the period of the pandemic it has been more difficult for him to amplify his message, so I'm delighted to stand here with the other members in this chamber to amplify what is a very, very important issue. That is the issue of diabetes.

The public can sometimes conflate the issues of diabetes into one. But effectively diabetes is three conditions in one. The first is type 1 diabetes; the second is type 2 diabetes; and the third is gestational diabetes. Type 1 diabetes is in my field of paediatrics. It occurs in young children. We don't know why type 1 diabetes occurs. Basically, something attacks the pancreas and the pancreas can no longer produce insulin. Type 1 diabetes is a very frightening condition. It has a sudden onset, where children will start to drink masses of water and urinate very, very frequently. We're talking about three or four litres of water in a day, and going to the loo in enormous amounts. They can become quite distressed and lose their sense about themselves. It becomes an emergency. They can become so sick that they are rushed to hospital.

So type 1 diabetes can be a terrible emergency, resulting in ketosis and quite significant risk to the child. In fact, one of my staff members has a child with type 1 diabetes, and we see every day in our office how she has to live with juggling being a professional woman and having a family at home including a child with type 1 diabetes. To normalise his life he has to take insulin every day. There are periods where he becomes sick and his insulin requirements change, and that has a great impact on her ability to juggle the work-life balance. Sue Leidler is a wonderful supporter of mine, and I would like to name and honour her because she is someone living the life of having a child with diabetes. It is a difficult life for her, but she does it lovingly and supportingly for her son so
that he can have a life that is not the life of a child who has diabetes, but a child who has a wonderful, fulfilled life.

Type 2 diabetes is a completely different kettle of fish. It is later in onset, where over a long period of time people become resistant to insulin because they develop antibodies. We know that there are lifestyle factors that contribute to the rise of type 2 diabetes. It is rising in prevalence because of problems such as obesity, high-sugar diets and poor exercise. Managing diabetes type 2 is something that we can all do to change our lives. Lower your sugar intake and make sure that you try to keep healthy and fit. Keeping your weight down is a great way to manage type 2 diabetes, and if you develop type 2 diabetes losing weight is one of the first steps to managing that.

At the political level it has been incredibly important to have the Australian National Diabetes Strategy, which was released in 2015 and is due for an update. I would encourage our government to make sure we include in this refresh the prevention strategy. I know that is in the works. Because of course prevention is better than cure. As a paediatrician I know that, but the taxpayer also knows that. If we prevent diabetes, we don't have to deal with the economic and health burden that diabetes creates in our community. It is very, very important that instead of having the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff, where patients fall down and the medical system is at the bottom of the cliff, we put it at the top of the cliff and prevent people going off in the cliff in the first instance. So I really commend the fact that the government is refreshing its diabetes strategy and that that is going to help our Indigenous population as well.

Dr FREELANDER (Macarthur) (11:57): I would like to thank the member for Grey for his motion. I would also like to thank the member for Moreton and the member from Higgins for their contributions, and also the other speakers on this motion. Like the member for Higgins, I have had a long career caring for children with type 1 diabetes and, unfortunately in this day and age, also children with type 2 diabetes. We don't know why this is occurring, but the incidence of type 2 diabetes is increasing, and the incidence of type 2 diabetes is increasing exponentially, particularly in children and adolescents. The reasons for this are not really 100 per cent clear. We know that lifestyle has a big part to play, but there are other contributing factors. When I started in paediatric practice 40 years ago it was very rare to see a child with type 2 diabetes, but now, unfortunately, it is very, very common. I think there are many contributing factors. We've spoken about lifestyle, but also some of the foods that we have available now, some of the processed foods, contain compounds that are artificial that were never available years ago. Very interestingly, I recently had the opportunity to view some family moving pictures that were taken in the 1950s and 1960s by my father. It was very obvious that there was no obesity then. Everyone was thin. We had access to a very good diet. We certainly could afford as much food as we wanted, but, in those pictures, everyone was thin. If you took the same picture of my family today, you would be shocked by the difference. The reasons for that are not completely clear. There are, as I said, contributing factors with processed food, our lack of exercise et cetera, but there are other things at play as well.

In adults, one of my particular concerns has been the very common prescription of antidepressants, all of which can cause increased appetite and obesity, and I think this is a major concern that has not been explored. We certainly need to be looking further at why we are seeing the increased incidence of type 2 diabetes but also as to why we are seeing the increasing incidence of type 1 diabetes. It was quite rare when I started in practice in Campbelltown in 1983 to see a young child with diabetes, but, increasingly, it is common to see a child presenting, as the member for Higgins has explained, in extremists with type 1 diabetic ketoacidosis, which can be a life-threatening condition. It's now increasingly common. We don't know why. It's very important that we do really have a national diabetes program for both type 1 and type 2 diabetes that looks at the causes—not just the treatments. And it's not just lifestyle; there are other factors at play that we do not understand, and it's vitally important for the Australian population that we do find out why, because, once we do that, we can look at how we can prevent it. It is a real national tragedy. Both type 1 and type 2 diabetes can lead to side effects, and we're seeing increasingly young children with obesity, insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes.

There are 1.3 million Australians, as has already been mentioned, who are registered with the National Diabetes Services Scheme, and more people are registering every day. The national diabetes service has been a great addition to our fight against diabetes. And the government has acted, but they've missed the mark. Their commitment falls well short of supporting all Australians with type 1 diabetes and many Australians with type 2 diabetes requiring significant doses of insulin. We should get the government to say they're going to have a comprehensive program that covers every person in Australia with type 1 diabetes. This will be not only lifesaving; it will be money-saving for our health system, because type 1 diabetes, particularly the complications of type 1 diabetes, put an incredible strain on our health service.

I would like to congratulate Dr James Muecke AM for his Order of Australia and the work that he does to prevent eye complications from diabetes, but this is very expensive. It's far better to prevent rather than treat. I
would like to say that diabetes is an incredibly serious condition. It's a blight on Australian society. We need to do much, much more.

Mr FALINSKI (Mackellar) (12:02): Firstly, can I congratulate the member for Grey and his cosponsor, the member for Moreton, for this motion, and the member for Higgins and Macarthur, who never ever fail to remind us that they are doctors and know much more than we do. But I want to dedicate this speech to my dad who was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes several years ago, so this motion does really speak to me.

For decades the national rate of diabetes has increased to levels that are putting a strain on the national health system. Not only do those suffering from diabetes have a reduced standard of living but it can drastically affect the lives of those around them. In Australia, there are 1.3 million Australians registered on the National Diabetes Services Scheme. That is more than one in every 25 people. Every day, over 280 people are diagnosed in Australia with diabetes, with nearly half-a-million Australians suffering from type 2 diabetes who have not been diagnosed. This is a growing crisis that needs to be addressed urgently. Within the next five years, it is estimated that a possible two million Australians with prediabetes may develop type 2 diabetes.

Australia is known around the world for its high standards of living and active lifestyle, but, with such high numbers of people in this country suffering from this, it's not the case for so many other Australians. It is not a political issue but a pragmatic one that demands a long-term solution. Diabetes is not a simple illness and is frequently the cause of many other health complications. It makes sufferers of diabetes vulnerable, less productive and more reliant on the public health system and those around them.

Australia is a caring country, a compassionate nation, which is why we can do better when it comes to assisting those with this illness. We cannot afford for entire generations to fall ill at a time when the technology and expertise exist to prevent many from developing this sickness and to support those with diabetes to live a healthy and productive life.

This government has always had vulnerable Australians at the forefront of reforms to ensure that they are given the help they need. That is why we are delivering on our long-term commitment to assist Australians suffering from diabetes with the Australian National Diabetes Strategy. This is a far-reaching program that engages children and young adults as well as health card holders and pregnant women with access to affordable help.

This program is being launched in conjunction with a number of complementary initiatives, including the Diabetes in Schools program, the KeepSight program as well as a number of prevent-diabetes-related-amputations initiatives. This is the holistic approach we are taking to combat one of the most significant and long-term health issues that this country has faced over the past decade. Raising public awareness on this issue remains critical to encourage healthy habits and lifestyles and to give Australians the tools to take control of their own health. Empowering individuals has always been the policy of this government because there is no substitute for the power of the individual. Rather than blanket policies which replace individual choice with the Canberra bureaucrat, we are building a nation that empowers Australians to help themselves. Nowhere is that more crucial than in regard to a person's health because no two people are alike.

The 2020 Australian of the Year, Dr James Muecke AM, has been critical in his work as an ophthalmologist pioneering preventive type 2 diabetes approaches in many poor and developing nations. James has been instrumental in encouraging healthier lifestyles and healthier environments. His work continues to affect the lives of many, and his message is relevant all over this country. Recognition of his work is rightly deserved.

We have a long way to go, but it is because of the work of our health workers throughout the country that we are making a difference. There are many in my electorate who rely on the selfless acts of kindness that those in our healthcare sector display day after day. It is frequently a thankless task but one that could not be more important, and we thank them.

Ms TEMPLEMAN (Macquarie) (12:08): I am very pleased to speak about an issue that I've learnt more and more about in the last 10 years or so, and I want to thank the co-convenors of Parliamentary Friends of Diabetes for bringing this motion to parliament. Diabetes is a complex disorder. We all know that if it isn't diagnosed early and treated effectively it can lead to very serious health complications, such as blindness, limb amputation, heart disease, stroke and kidney disease. As someone who spent a number of years working within the Department of Health and other agencies up in the Northern Territory, I've seen firsthand some of the consequences for Aboriginal communities in the Territory of a failure to treat these sorts of conditions. It certainly tells us there is a lot more we could be doing.

I think most of us here would agree that there's a need for a national diabetes program, working with the states, and always more research and more support. An estimated two million Australians with prediabetes are at risk of developing type 2 diabetes in the next five to 10 years. I know that, as the daughter of someone with diabetes, I certainly carry higher risk factors. I note the government's announcement this year about subsidising flash glucose
monitoring on the National Diabetes Services Scheme. I do think it was a shame that it came a year after it was actually promised. There had to be a massive community campaign by Australians with type 1 diabetes and by the opposition, and it included the tabling in parliament of a petition with 214,000 signatures. The minister had promised, as of 1 March 2019, that continuous glucose monitoring would be expanded and that flash glucose monitoring would be included in that expansion. We shouldn't be asking these groups of people, who struggle day to day to do the things they need to do to have a normal life, to be such fierce advocates in order to get very sensible changes to the health system to improve their quality of life. Because of the delay, because of that broken promise, thousands of Australians were forced to continue for a year a painful regime of finger-prick testing.

Why these flash monitors make such a difference was recently explained in comments by the chief of the division of endocrinology, diabetes and nutrition at L'Hôpital Bichat - Claude-Bernard, in Paris. He said: Use of flash glucose monitoring—with a sensor rather than with strips—is associated with a drop of the incidence of a major, potentially lethal, acute complication of diabetes in insulin-treated people …

He also said:

The magnitude of the protection potentially afforded by the device is huge.

That's the sort of thing we need to hear from places that have been using this for a lot longer than we have.

I've had a lot to do with children in my electorate with juvenile diabetes, from Kids in the House day, when we here are inundated with children who have type 1 diabetes—to make sure that we understand the impact it has on their lives and how we can help them with additional funding for research—through to local events in my own electorate. Last year, I was very proud to lead off, in both the Blue Mountains and the Hawkesbury, the JDRF One Walk. JDRF says it's the biggest type 1 fundraising event in the world, with walks right round the globe bringing together around a million people. I joined JDRF advocate families at the start of the walks, and each of those walks in the different parts of my electorate raised thousands of dollars for research into juvenile diabetes.

What's inspiring about these events is the determination of the children and their families to overcome this chronic, life-threatening disease. They can explain to you really patiently about pinpricks for blood-glucose testing and the difference continual glucose monitoring makes—how it changes their lives. It's also inspiring to see the adults who were diagnosed as children, who go along to these events to be role models and mentors to their younger selves.

I'm very pleased to see the announcement that a large population study, funded by JDRF Australia, will take place in Australia. JDRF describe it as 'a huge step forward for research' and say it will be the first in Australia—and one of only three in the world—to screen people from the general population without a family history of type 1 diabetes.

Labor, of course, has a strong track record in supporting juvenile diabetes research. We funded the establishment of the JDRF Type 1 Diabetes Clinical Research Network in 2010. We had planned to provide additional funding if we won the last election, and that funding would have allowed the clinical research network to enter a new phase, increasing the volume and impact of the type 1 diabetes clinical trials. (Time expired)

Mr PASIN (Barker) (12:13): I don't think anyone in this place underestimates the impact of diabetes, particularly type 1 diabetes. There are over 1.3 million Australians registered on the National Diabetes Services Scheme, 280 new people diagnosed each day and 500,000 Australians with type 2 diabetes who remain undiagnosed. We also acknowledge the very serious risks associated with the disease if (a) it isn't diagnosed correctly or (b) it's not managed, monitored and medicated correctly.

I want to make the observation that the co-chairs of the 'parliamentary enemies of diabetes' network—my good friend and colleague Rowan Ramsey, from South Australia, and Mr Perrett, from Queensland—are doing fantastic work in this place. The group is continuously raising—not only with the parliament and the executive but also with the broader community—the importance of our campaign against this disease. Obviously, we have many friendship groups in this parliament, but I think this is one of the few that takes the title 'enemy group'. That in itself speaks to this issue.

Why is it important? It's obviously important on an individual level because the impact of this disease on individual lifestyles can be pronounced, particularly, as I said, if it goes undiagnosed for any period of time or, equally, if it's not properly treated. There is also a macroeconomic concern. The cost to the federal and state health budgets for people who haven't been correctly diagnosed or haven't been correctly medicated or treated is, to be honest, phenomenal. In a previous life before coming to this place, I worked as a solicitor for insurers, in terms of complex litigation. There were often personal injury catastrophe claims. I'd often go to dinner parties and people would ask, 'Why did that person receive an award of damages that ran into the tens of millions of dollars?' People would often think that was a gratuitous payment on account of the pain and suffering—things that someone might have suffered. I'd have to slowly step dinner party guests through it. The payment that was so large was
effectively a payment for future care—that is, the costs associated with the necessary future care for someone who, for example, had both of their legs amputated or had lost their sight. In the context of diabetes, if the disease isn't properly diagnosed or diagnosed early enough or, indeed, isn't treated correctly, then ultimately the Commonwealth, or at least the Crown, if I can call it that, becomes the insurer and is required to meets the costs associated with that future care.

So, on the one hand, it's very important that we raise awareness and we continue to fund various programs, including the National Diabetes Strategy and, obviously, the review that is being undertaken. It's very important we do that work on a personal level because of the impact that this disease can have on individual livelihoods and the quality of someone's life when they are suffering from the disease. It is equally important, in terms of the public good, that we ensure these people receive proper diagnosis and treatment so their livelihood can be improved, and that we also ameliorate the future care costs if there's a failure.

In the time I have left, I concur with the comments made in this place about the FreeStyle Libre continuous monitoring device. It is an amazing invention. I have a constituent named Tyson Smith of Rendelsham. He is six foot tall, built like the proverbial and you would think nothing would stop the bloke, but, I can tell you, he got to the point where the continual monitoring of his glucose was a drain on him and his life. He's a typical knockabout farmer. How this device has changed his life and lifestyle is remarkable. On his behalf, I continue to advocate in this place and with the minister for an expansion of this program to other Australians.

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Sitting suspended from 12:18 to 12:30

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Rick Wilson): The time allocated for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Water

Ms SHARKIE (Mayo) (12:31): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) water is a scarce and highly valuable resource in Australia; and

(b) Australia is prone to droughts and many parts of our country have recently experienced their worst droughts in living memory;

(2) registers its concern that:

(a) foreign entities, some implicitly backed by foreign governments, are substantially increasing their holdings of Australian water rights;

(b) Australian agriculturalists are increasingly competing with these foreign entities to secure the water rights upon which their livelihoods depend; and

(c) the acquisition of water rights is not directly subject to the approval of the Foreign Investment Review Board;

(3) congratulates the Government on committing to reform the legislation governing the Foreign Investment Review Board; and

(4) calls upon the Government to, in those reforms:

(a) ensure that water rights are directly subject to Foreign Investment Review Board approval, independent to the acquisition of agricultural land to which those rights sometimes attach; and

(b) lower the threshold for Foreign Investment Review Board approval for agricultural and water rights to $5 million.

It is often said that Australia is a great trading nation. An Australia that is open to the world, to new ideas and to trade and foreign investment opportunities is an Australia with a bright future. However, when foreign interests seek to take significant ownership or control of an asset of national importance, we must always ensure that we fully scrutinise that purchase thoroughly and, most importantly, subject it to public interest.

The interest in Australian farming by foreign investors has grown considerably. The share of agriculture in total foreign investment has risen from 0.1 per cent in 2006-7 to 2.1 per cent by 2011-12. Stock Journal reported this year that 13.4 per cent of Australian farmland had some level of foreign ownership. Farming and land are very much attached to water. Unfortunately, foreign dollars have been all too blinding of our policymakers, and they're blinding them to the short- and long-term risks to our livelihoods and our national security. For these reasons, Centre Alliance and former senator Nick Xenophon have always advocated for more stringent security and scrutiny of foreign investment. We all know too well the Port of Darwin example, but today I wish to focus on the importance of making water right purchases subject to government approval.
Like many, I was utterly astounded to learn that foreigners can purchase any amount of Australian water rights without the need for review by the Foreign Investment Review Board. The Treasurer's announcement that the government is looking to legislation in this space for consultation in July is to be welcomed and commended, but the government's media release did not mention water rights, and it must. It is the perfect truism to observe that water is a limited and scarce resource in Australia. Australia is the driest continent on the planet. Coming from the driest state in the country, I feel like this is even more of an issue in South Australia. For us, water is liquid gold. The lifeblood of Australian farming livelihoods is water, and it always will be water. Current and future generations of Australian farmers need reliable access to water to safeguard their livelihoods.

It's easy to resort to nostalgia and sentiment to oppose foreign investment, but I want to be clear that government scrutiny on these decisions should be based on a clear-eyed view of the long-term benefits to Australia. I recognise that foreign investment has the potential to increase jobs and, potentially, tax income for the government; however, this potential has not always been realised. The average Australian farmer can be guaranteed to spend their money within the Australian economy, even if it is on foreign imports sold by local businesses. Thus when water or agricultural rights are sold to foreigners, the cost to future generations of Australians is substantial and looks set to be multigenerational. You can only sell the farm once. You can only sell the water rights once.

Of course, sometimes foreign investment is needed because domestic funds are not always available to develop farm businesses or assets. However, I have always advocated that there are other ways to resolve this quandary, such as joint investment models. We do not need to resign ourselves to thinking that every sale of any substantial farmer asset should be a foreign takeover. We should have greater flexibility across our local Australian superannuation and across other measures to make sure that we can retain as much as possible in Australian hands.

Another clear-eyed reason for subjecting sizable foreign purchases of water to scrutiny is to guard against the destructive speculation occurring within the Australian water markets. Water markets are not like the Australian stock market. Unlike the human creativity and entrepreneurship that we see in the stock market, water is a finite resource. It is limited, it is capped and it cannot reasonably be expected to grow. Speculative manipulation without productive gain can destroy, and is destroying, Australian livelihoods.

The lack of government scrutiny on foreign purchase of Australian water rights is a patient loophole that urgently needs to be closed. I call on the government to include water rights within their Foreign Investment Review Board reforms.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Rick Wilson): I call for a seconder for the motion.

Dr Haines: I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

Mr DRUM (Nicholls—Chief Nationals Whip) (12:36): I support the member for Mayo's motion in relation to including purchases of water to be subject to the Foreign Investment Review Board. This would obviously apply to permanent water and long-term leases, but obviously wouldn't apply to the purchases of temporary water right, which many farmers obviously need as a way of maintaining their traditional day-to-day farming businesses. The ability to purchase water in opportunistic times is just an everyday part of running a farm; it doesn't matter whether you are in South Australia, New South Wales or Victoria.

Right now the ACCC is investigating the water trading and the operations around water trading in the lower Murray and lower Darling reaches, and that's something that we are really looking forward to with anticipation. There has been serious speculation that water traders and water barons have been manipulating the water prices in dry times, which is incredibly heartless if it is true. We are really hoping that the ACCC and their inquiry will get to the bottom of this. We fully expect that the government will be able, through the consultation period, to include that permanent purchases of water will be subject to the Foreign Investment Review Board. So we are fully expecting that the member's motion will in fact be agreed to.

Foreign investment in water is quite important, but it is not as important as what happens to the water that we have available each and every year. It has been found through various inquiries and through, predominantly, the Keelty report, that over 370 gigalitres per annum of additional water is flowing down the river than what is modelled and what we are told is actually flowing. On average, an additional 375 gigalitres every year goes over the border into South Australia. That water isn't used for agriculture, it is not used for the environment, it is not put in as some sort of dilution flow and nor is it quantified as conveyance water. It is simply unaccounted for, unmodelled quantities of water.

We also understand that over 800 gigalitres a year evaporates from the lower reaches, from the Lower Lakes. This water is simply put down into the Lower Lakes to keep the Lower Lakes fresh and to keep the Murray mouth open. We know that the Murray mouth will never be kept open by using fresh water coming out of the Murray
River. The Murray mouth will be kept open by the tidal movements of the ocean and the tides coming in and out and it will be kept open by dredges. That has been the case for many, many years now. So to think that we still have the Murray mouth being kept open as an environmental objective is actually laughable. This water is desperately needed in our agricultural communities, and to have 800 gigalitres evaporating in the Lower Lakes is very difficult for the agricultural sector and the communities upstream to accept, especially when you think that 50 gigalitres was enough evaporation for us to close down Mokoan. We closed down the Mokoan irrigation system because there was 50 gigalitres of evaporation. Everybody accepted the pain, the hurt and the detriment that went with that decision to close down the Mokoan irrigation system, because 50 gigalitres of evaporation in that program was deemed to be too much; yet we can turn a blind eye to 800 gigalitres of water evaporating from the lower reaches and the Lower Lakes of the Murray at Lake Alexandria and Lake Albert.

So we need to be very, very conscious and careful when we make a big deal about foreign investment. It's an issue and we need to address it—and I believe the government will address it in relation to its recent announcements—but we have to understand that foreign investors can't actually buy the water and take it with them. The only way foreign investors can make money out of the water that they purchase is to sell it to a farmer in the Murray-Darling Basin. They have to sell it to a productive farmer who is going to use it to grow something.

We have issues with water barons being able to manipulate the market, and we have to stamp that out. We also have issues with retired farmers who have done everything right but their action in providing for their own retirement by sitting on parcels of water and selling them at the most opportune time is also detrimental to the agricultural sector. So there is a whole raft of issues. This is one of them, and we are addressing this issue.

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (12:41): The motion moved by the member for Mayo raises a matter that has been the subject of much public discussion over recent years. It is a topic about which there is very little accurate information available, partly because water ownership is not well documented and also because individual states maintain their own records, there are over 150 different types of water ownerships available and there is constant change in ownership. It is very much a muddled system, so much so that local Makin resident Bob O'Brien, who I have come to know well, was motivated to write a book on water ownership in Australia. His book, titled Water Barons: Money, politics and control of water in Australia is still in draft form. I've seen a copy of that draft. It provides the clearest explanation I've come across of water ownership in Australia. Information in the book has been thoroughly researched. Bob was a water investor for several years; so he understands the subject matter very well. According to the latest information we have, 10 per cent of Murray-Darling Basin water—that is, around 1.85 gigalitres—is foreign owned. How much impact that has on water prices is unclear; nor do we know how much water is held by Australian entities, individuals and farmers who also profit from buying and selling water allocations. I note that the Productivity Commission is doing some work on this and was meant to have provided the government with a report or interim report only recently. From the limited information that we have available, both the US and China, at 1.9 per cent each, were the two largest foreign water holders. The UK came next, at 1.1 per cent. I also note with interest that total Chinese investment in Australia dropped markedly from $8.2 billion in 2018 to $3.4 billion in 2019, with 43 per cent fewer deals struck. That was the lowest level since 2008.

The government's recent announcement that sensitive national security business will also be subject to FIRB approval, regardless of value, does not make clear whether water ownership will be affected. Why sensitive national security was never a consideration is beyond me. Notwithstanding, good public policy should always be evidence based.

For Murray-Darling Basin growers, access to water at affordable prices is key to their viability. The mismanagement and overall allocation of water by state authorities, the continued bickering between the states, the diversion of surface water before it enters the river system and the commitment by all jurisdictions to a sustainable plan without then being undermined by parties to that commitment, are also issues that must be addressed for basin farmers to operate with a reasonable level of certainty—and they need certainty in order to plan for their own future.

I have spoken to basin farmers who have paid around $10,000 a hectare for the water they need to produce their crops at times when it is critically needed. At those prices, they simply cannot operate, and it makes their operations unviable. I realise that this is a matter of incredible importance for them. However, we need to get more information and better information if we are ever going to be able to assist them with managing the water system in this country.

Water trading was introduced to enable growers to access water from other entitlement holders, sometimes from other parts of the basin, during times of water shortages and not for overseas speculators to profit off the back of struggling farmers. I note the comment of the previous speaker, the member for Nicholls, a moment ago in respect of the Lower Lakes of South Australia. There was a recent CSIRO report in respect of those lakes that said the lakes were always fresh water lakes, going back as far as our records show. So to constantly try and use the
Lower Lakes in South Australia as an excuse for the problems of the Murray-Darling Basin is totally misguided. I would like to think that we might once and for all look to the Basin Plan, after years of work done by members of this parliament, and also external authorities, as it shows the only way that we can manage the water properly for the growers and ensure that they have security, and security at affordable prices, is to have a Murray-Darling Basin Plan that is consistent with the rules that it was framed under. With regard to overseas water ownership, it is only one of the many matters that needs to be addressed.

Mr FALINSKI (Mackellar) (12:46): Thank you to the member for Mayo; thank you for your contributions, Member for Nicholls and Member for Makin. I'm going to strike a partisan note and say that I think I'm the only speaker on this motion who is opposed to it. The reason I'm opposed to it is because the government is already doing all the things that this motion speaks to. But also, I am opposed to it because we play a very dangerous game when we start pointing fingers at foreign investors for problems that we have with schemes that we have established. It is, in manner and form, exactly why we end up with some of the things we end up with in a democracy, where it is more convenient to blame those who are not here, who cannot answer back, who do not have a voice in this debate, for problems that we have largely created ourselves.

The member for Mayo rightly speaks to Australia being one of the driest continents in the world and how we have experienced one of the worst droughts in our history. The government has responded to that. It provided $8 billion in assistance and concessional loans to primary producers. No-one in this country bemoans the fact that we did this at a very important time for primary producers. The nature of that assistance was the Farm Household Allowance and the Rural Financial Counselling Service, which cost Australian taxpayers $65½ million. That was done through the Drought Community Support Initiative. We provided $3,000 payments to farmers, to farm workers, to suppliers, to contractors who were facing hardship due to the drought. We provided $29.9 million for mental health and wellbeing support, two-year interest-free drought loans for farmers, tax relief, the provision of 100 gigalitres of water for fodder production. We released $300 million for the Drought Communities Program extension, redirecting $200 million from round 4 of the Building Better Regions Fund to drought affected communities and, in addition to that, $138.9 million from the Roads to Recovery Program for drought affected communities. In addition, we piloted $7 million for small business support programs, providing two-year interest-free loans for agriculture dependent small businesses. We provided $15 million support for schools and early childcare centres and we funded $15 million for Tackling Tough Times Together grants.

It was right and appropriate that we do this, but how many other businesses in Australia get that sort of support? How many times have Australian taxpayers stood up for people like that? The people in my electorate, in my part of Sydney, when the dollar drops by 50 cents and their cost of production goes up 100 per cent, don't get that sort of support. When they find they can't get raw materials because some foreign government has decided to close their ports, the Australian taxpayer and the Australian government doesn't step in to assist them in the same way that this parliament time and time again steps in to help Australian farmers. We included a $5 billion Future Drought Fund so this doesn't have to go on again and again and again.

These water rights are incredibly important. They were started by the Howard government, they were supported by the then Labor government, but no-one in this debate has yet spoken about the waste and mismanagement of our water resources in Australia by local councils. No-one stands here in this parliament and holds them to account. How many times have we seen, in particular in regional and rural New South Wales, that the person who throws the chlorine tablets into the Olympic pool is also the same person in charge of managing the water resources for a local town? Australians, especially those in regional and rural areas, deserve better. We must demand better for them. We talk about waste of water, but no-one wants to talk about the environmental flows that have led to the Lower Lakes that have seen 800 gigalitres evaporate, as the member for Nicholls pointed out. That sort of waste and mismanage is okay, apparently, because we put 'environment' in the front of it. But, no, no, it is far easier to blame foreign investors.

Dr HAINES (Indi) (12:51): As the birthplace of the Murray River and the home of the Victorian Alps, Indi holds a special place in the story of the Murray-Darling Basin. The Murray, Mitta, Kiewa, Ovens, King, Broken and Goulburn catchments of Indi supply approximately 50 per cent of the surface water to the whole Murray-Darling Basin. As well as some smaller dams, Indi contains the Murray-Darling Basin's largest water storages of Dartmouth and Hume dams and Lake Eildon, which amount to 63 per cent of storage capacity in the southern basin and 45 per cent of total storage for the whole Murray-Darling Basin. Indi, therefore, has a significant interest in the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, which is a critical framework for balancing the needs of agriculture, communities and the environment.

According to the Basin Authority, water trading is a mechanism that is maximising the efficiency of water use and contributes to sustainable water management. When water is allocated to an entitlement holder, they themselves can determine whether they use or sell that allocation, creating an incentive for water to be moved to
higher-value uses. Moreover, for the farmers who want to leave the land, their water entitlement is an asset like any other that they can sell. However, we've heard this morning that water trading is far from perfect. Well, most people have said that, with the exception of the member for Mackellar, who speaks to drought support. This motion seeks to remedy one of the very many and complex problems that leads to farmers needing drought support. First, water trading inflates the price of water, driving up costs for farmers. Water is not like shares in a company, where you make a bet, take a risk and get rewarded with a dividend. Whether it's in Sydney, Singapore or Seattle, a company buying water from one farmer to then sell to another farmer for a higher price, in my opinion, is sucking money out of farming communities. When traders add value to the market by making it cheaper or easier for farmers to access water allocations, or by overcoming information or other barriers, fine, but there should be no space for the rent-seekers and ticket-clippers profiteering off drought.

Right now, anyone can buy and sell water in Australia, and 14 per cent of trades are from people who don't own land. We need to make sure this market is delivering for farmers, not corporate investors. The system is extremely complex. Anyone who tries to simplify water is 'simple'. In Victoria alone, there are 17 water-trading zones, with the ability to trade water within and across them, specific to each combination of zones. That means there are 272 different zone-to-zone water trading arrangements in Victoria alone. Unregulated water zones are different again. Meanwhile, moving water across the country requires incredibly sophisticated metering, monitoring and accounting to incorporate loss factors. The recent Keelty review demonstrated some fundamental and unacceptable flaws in the system, including: a failure to consider climate change, which latest projections show could cause a 25 per cent reduction in rainfall in the Ovens-Murray region, which feeds the Murray River; lack of metering in the Northern Basin; and lack of transparency around water ownership. The government clearly recognises this is a serious issue, because last year they announced an ACCC inquiry into water trading, which is set to release its interim report on 30 June.

I support the member for Mayo's motion and, when the government releases its exposure draft of the new foreign investment scheme, I would like to see three things. First, they should subject water purchases to the Foreign Investment Review Board. Water is as essential as land or electricity. It is fundamental to our national interests and it should be treated as such. Second, the government should create a register of ownership for water rights. If there are non-landholders purchasing water in the Basin, that information should be collected so the government can monitor its impact on water availability and prices, and this registry should exist for foreign and domestic water owners alike. Third, the government should hold off on preparing this legislation until the interim report of the ACCC is published. That inquiry received over 100 submissions from stakeholders all over the Basin, and good governance requires that those views be incorporated into any legislative reform into the water trading scheme. I support the member for Mayo's motion and am happy to do so today.

Dr WEBSTER (Mallee) (12:56): I rise to support this motion and welcome the strengthened role of the Foreign Investment Review Board and the changes to the regulatory framework aimed to address what FIRB has described as 'increasing risks to the national interest'. Of the nearly $4 trillion of foreign investment in our country, more than 20 per cent comes from the United States, more than 10 per cent from each of the United Kingdom and Japan, and a little over five per cent from China. This might surprise some. Foreign investment drives economic growth, creates skilled jobs, improves access to overseas markets and enhances productivity. While acknowledging the value and contribution of foreign investment to our national prosperity, it is important to strike a balance between maintaining an attractive and welcoming environment for foreign capital on the one hand while maintaining community confidence in the foreign investment regime on the other.

The Treasurer has introduced reform to the FIRB, giving the Australian community confidence that there are rules in place that protect the national interests and our nation's critical assets. By extension, it follows that the government should work to ensure that Australian farming communities have confidence that rules are in place to protect our nation's most critical asset: water. In principle, the sale of water rights should be subject to approval by the Foreign Investment Review Board.

Since beginning my term in government, I have been listening to local voices, industry and organisations about the challenges posed by the operation of Australia's water trading markets. There is a widely held view that these markets are exploited by local and foreign speculators, who have played a role in artificial price increases in temporary water prices. I have also heard numerous calls from concerned communities requesting that access to these markets be restricted only to those who have productive use of water. Players without a productive use for water add yet another straw to a diminishing cup, driving up scarcity in the market.

While I support water trade associated with productivity, I am sensitive to the fact that annual croppers trade water in dry years as part of their business model when they cannot sow. There are also retired farmers who rely on water trade as their self-funded retirement system. These complexities need to be acknowledged and managed. The government is listening to community concerns about the water markets and water trading and is working
through these complexities. This is why the ACCC was directed to conduct an inquiry into markets for tradeable water rights in the Murray-Darling Basin. To inform their inquiry and recommendations, the ACCC held public hearings in regional towns and communities to hear the views of those engaged in and affected by water markets. One public hearing in Mildura was held in the recent drought at its worst and when the price of temporary water was up to around $900 a megalitre. I know that this was a charged meeting, with many expressing their anger and distress at the operation of the markets. Again, the role played by market speculators and foreign investment in the market were key issues at the hearing. The attendees also lamented the view that their voices were not being heard.

I've been working hard to ensure that irrigators, farmers and concerned community members have the chance to raise their views and experience with me. Recently, I convened a teleconference roundtable discussion with the Minister for Resources, Water and Northern Australia, Keith Pitt, along with stakeholders in the water space, including growers, industry peak bodies and water management authorities. We discussed the issue of water trading, and many of these concerns were expanded on. I was pleased that the minister was able to hear Mallee voices.

I, like many others, eagerly await the findings of the ACCC inquiry into water markets. The ACCC will recommend options to enhance markets for tradeable water rights, including options to enhance their operations, transparency, regulation, competitiveness and efficiency. I understand that it will be prudent for the minister to await the commission's findings before taking action with regard to water markets.

Based on the work I have done with members of the Mallee community, expert water management bodies and Minister Pitt, I'm of the opinion that the sale of water rights should be subject to approval by the Foreign Investment Review Board. This will ensure that Australian farming communities have confidence that rules are in place to protect their livelihoods. We owe it to our farmers, irrigators and drought affected communities to restore confidence in the complex system that governs the management of Australia's water resources. (Time expired)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Rick Wilson): There being no further speakers the debate is adjourned, and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Pacific: COVID-19

Mr YOUNG (Longman) (13:01): I move:

That this House:

(1) commends the Government's Pacific Step-up and its focus on building prosperity across the regions, including by encouraging close links between Australian business and investors with the Pacific;

(2) recognises that the Pacific is part of Australia's family and that we have a special relationship with our Pacific neighbours; and

(3) notes that the significant Australian investment in key infrastructure projects, such as the Coral Sea Cable, is providing positive economic and social opportunities to communities in the Pacific.

The government's Pacific step-up is working closely with our region to ensure the security and prosperity of the Pacific. There has never been a time more vital than now for Australia to stand with our Pacific family in the face of the global COVID-19 pandemic. The Pacific has been impacted profoundly. While the measures that governments have put in place with our support have helped to stop the pandemic's spread, the impact on economies and livelihoods has been severe. For example, countries reliant on tourism and remittance flows are facing significant economic downturns. In my own electorate of Longman in Queensland, we have a strong Pacific islander community. I've heard some of their stories about how COVID-19 has impacted them and their families back home in the Pacific. They were pleased to hear about some of the changes this government has made to support them during this pandemic and that our commitment to our Pacific family through the Pacific step-up has not wavered and has, in fact, been deepened. As someone with South Sea island roots myself, I am proud of the efforts this government is taking to support Pacific islander communities in Australia and our Pacific family in the region.

Australia's ability to respond to COVID-19 in our region is stronger as a result of our Pacific step-up. Our step-up has added considerable new depth to our partnerships across the Pacific to help grow economies, build resilience and enhance regional stability. It has put Australia in an even stronger position to work with Pacific island countries in times of crisis, building on many years of cooperation in areas such as education, health, security and humanitarian and disaster response. Australia has been determined since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic to adapt our work in the Pacific wherever possible to support our region's health, security and long-term stability and prosperity. The government has moved quickly to reconfigure our Pacific step-up initiatives and our broader development efforts to provide immediate relief to Pacific island countries and Timor Leste, and to respond to our partners' most acute needs. Since January we have been working with our Pacific partners to help
them prepare for and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. We're prioritising funding for critical health services and helping to mitigate the financial and economic impacts, particularly for those countries that rely on revenue from tourism and commodity exports.

A number of our Pacific step-up initiatives adapted to this new environment are now an important part of our work to support our region's response to COVID-19. The Pacific Fusion Centre is delivering targeted and timely information on COVID-19 to decision-makers across our region. Our Pacific women's program is expanding support for crisis centres to provide frontline service support, including counselling for survivors of domestic violence. New visa arrangements announced in early April mean that workers in Australia under our Pacific labour initiatives, who are unable to return home due to travel restrictions, will now be able to stay and work in Australia for up to 12 months. We're working to redeploy workers whose contracts have expired or who have been stood down and providing expanded support for worker welfare, including additional services and resources in Pacific languages. These measures are enabling Pacific workers to continue to support themselves and send remittances to their families back home, and continuing to support the agriculture sector across rural and regional Australia.

The $2 billion Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific, or AIFFP, will be an important part of our longer-term work to promote economic recovery in our region. We are working with partner governments to review the AIFFP project pipeline in favour of infrastructure projects that will deliver more jobs and higher growth. This will include critical health infrastructure where this is a priority for our Pacific partners. While COVID-19 will impact the delivery of some of our initiatives in the short term, the Pacific step-up success will be measured over the long term, in line with our enduring commitment to support long-term economic development, deeper security cooperation and closer personal connections across our region.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Rick Wilson): Is there a seconder for the motion?

Mr Pearce: I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

Ms STEGGALL (Warringah) (13:06): I thank the member for Longman for this motion. This motion recognises the efforts made by the government in its Pacific Step-up program, which will assist in developing relationships between Australian businesses and investors in the Pacific. It emphasises that Australia and the Pacific have a special relationship and highlights the role Australia continues to play in supporting infrastructure projects in the region which have a flow-on social and economic benefit.

The Pacific Step-up is one of Australia's highest foreign policy priorities according to the Department of Foreign Affairs Trade. Last year, announcing an escalation to the step-up, the Prime Minister stated that our Pacific Island family must be a focus of international support and there has never been a more important time for Australia's Pacific Step-up as we all face these massive challenges. I strongly agree. Central to the step-up is $1.4 billion in development assistance and a $2 billion Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility. Recently some of these funds were reallocated to the health response to the COVID-19 in these countries.

I would particularly like to acknowledge the work of Australian Doctors International, based in Seaforth in Warringah, who are working with businesses and governments in Papua New Guinea to prepare their health system and communities for the pandemic as well as their usual work. As of June 2020, ADI reached an estimated 40,000 beneficiaries in remote and rural areas in Papua New Guinea. These are important programs.

In looking at developing our relationship with the Pacific we must put two issues at the centre. These are issues that they are very much focused on and their challenges. They are women's issues and climate change. The Pacific women's leaders met virtually on 29 May 2020 to discuss the gender implications of COVID-19 within the Pacific region. I support the joint statement of the co-conveners of that meeting, which noted that women health care workers are at the front of the pandemic, that violence against women and girls in the region remains unacceptably high, and that the current pandemic is exacerbating the problems. According to United Nations Women, up to 68 per cent of women in the Pacific have experienced violence at the hands of their intimate partners, and women are overrepresented in sectors and jobs that have been impacted significantly by the economic downturn, especially in tourism, which has been devastated. Of course travel restrictions have meant that tens of thousands of jobs in tourism have been lost. The tourism sector in Fiji, for example, contributes nearly 40 per cent to Fiji's gross domestic product and directly or indirectly employs over 150,000 people in various industries. I urge government to consider including the Pacific in its travel bubble with New Zealand. This will assist both the airlines and Pacific nations to recover. In 2016, Australians and New Zealanders made up more than 500,000 visitors to Fiji, over 60 per cent of the tourism to the country.

Of course, to develop our relationship with the Pacific, taking meaningful climate action must be at the forefront of our strategy. Although financial and medical support is welcome, it is essential to Pacific leaders more than anything else that we also take strong action on climate change and reducing emissions. On 12 June last
year I met with a group of young Kiribatian and Tuvaluan men and women from the Pacific calling for partnership. They spoke very emotionally about the plight their islands are facing. They showed me images of inundation of their communities from current sea level rise and extreme weather, and their worry over their future was palpable. Their ask was simple: that Australia commit to concrete climate action, to carbon neutrality, as soon as possible. Australia's failure to tackle the climate change risks and emissions reduction risks is undermining any benefits the step-up will bring to our Pacific neighbours.

So whilst I commend the government for this action, I urge it to do more. A COVID-safe and inclusive economic recovery that builds back better must also advance gender equality and climate change mitigation. In so doing, we can hope to foster a deeper relationship with our Pacific neighbours.

Mr PEARCE (Braddon) (13:11): My relationship with the Pacific Island nations is somewhat different. I deployed when INTERFET deployed in 1999 to East Timor. I went to a country that was ravaged by pro-Indonesian militia and insurgents, who were devastating the good villages and good folk of East Timor. I have seen it firsthand. I was deployed to the border between Indonesia and East Timor, and as the chopper came in you could see the plumes of smoke from all of these small villages. What was left was a decimated people: people that fled, children that had already seen their parents beheaded and killed. We were incredibly cognisant of the fact that here we were standing with a rifle in our hands, and we didn't want to scare them any further. We soon built relationships with those that were left in East Timor. Once they saw the rising sun and the Australian national flag on our arm, they soon knew that that meant they had a friend. The look in those kids' eyes really embellished this. That's a look that I'll never forget. I'm proud of the efforts of INTERFET, as I am proud of the Australian government's support for the good folk in the Pacific.

The government's Pacific Step-up is incredibly important. It is mutually beneficial for both Australia and the region. There is no doubt that government-to-government relations with our Pacific neighbours are fundamentally important. However, that bond extends far more than our Pacific neighbours would recognise at this time. There is a much deeper relationship between governments. We have deep-rooted personal, historical and cultural relationships and connections throughout the Pacific. We have built these through Timor Leste, the Solomons, Bougainville, Tonga, New Guinea. We were there during the Bali bombings. We are a respected friend to all these regions and their people.

The critical aspect of the relationship is to ensure that Australians seeking to do business in the Pacific are well supported. The Pacific Step-up is instrumental to that assistance, and the Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility is the way that this will occur. This $2 billion investment makes available a mix of grant and loan funding to support the development of transformative infrastructure in telecommunications, energy, transport and water. The facility manages $1.5 billion in loans and $500 million in grant funding. As a neighbour and friend, Australia has a long track record of supporting this critical infrastructure in the Pacific region, most recently the construction of the Coral Sea cable system, which brings a new high-speed Internet connectivity to Papua New Guinea and our friends in the Solomons. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade manages an AIFFP with support for lending from Export Finance Australia. Australia is continuing to engage very closely with governments across the Pacific to ensure that AIFFP supports their development priorities and continues to work with bilateral and multilateral partners in the private sector as well. The facility funds high-priority infrastructure across the Pacific, including telecommunications and, as I said, energy, transport and water.

We continue to work with our Pacific partners to identify projects that will make their countries better. I am sure that the AIFFP will welcome bids from Australian and international businesses with capabilities in at least one of the following sectors: water, energy, telecommunications, transport, buildings and developments as they manage these projects and their construction through delivery of capital infrastructure. It gives me great pride to support the bill and support the relationship between Australia and our Pacific friends.

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (13:15): COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on many of our Pacific neighbours. Not only has it put enormous pressure on what are already struggling health systems in the Pacific but it's also damaged the Pacific's largest industry, and that of course is tourism. A number have also had a major blow associated with Tropical Cyclone Harold, which devastated their communities. It's clear now that the Pacific needs our help more than ever. We must return the favour. During the summer bushfire crisis, many Pacific nations, including Fiji and Vanuatu, sent donations, and members of their defence forces came to Australia to assist in our time of need. This is what good neighbours do.

I must say that the Prime Minister's comments last week—that Australia had no slavery—haven't gone down well in our Pacific neighbourhood. Dan McGarry from the Vanuatu Daily Post tweeted in the wake of the Prime Minister's comments, 'That whole "no slavery in Australia" line is not playing well here in Vanuatu.' Many people from those nations have been saying that the Prime Minister's comments were disrespectful—particularly the
ancestors of many that were involved in blackbirding, which many parliaments of Australia have apologised for because it was wrong.

While the government likes to talk about a step-up in the Pacific, the fact is that the coalition's been out of step with Australia's track record of being a true leader in this region. This region is critically important to Australia—to our physical security and to our economic security as well. The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the vulnerabilities of our Pacific partners' healthcare systems. This comes after several years in which the coalition government's official development assistance cuts have fallen more heavily on health care than on aid programs in physical infrastructure, trade facilitation and international competitiveness. Healthcare systems in most Pacific countries suffer from a lack of resources, health professionals, basic equipment and infrastructure. As a former Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs, I can vouch for the fact that the healthcare systems in many of our Pacific neighbours' countries are simply not up to scratch. That's why many of these nations fail the Millennium Development Goals that are associated with health care in their countries. In many countries, poor logistics, transport infrastructure and geographic isolation add to the challenges in providing health services in remote regions. Inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure and limited fresh water supplies in remote communities also reduce the effectiveness of basic containment measures. Development assistance needs to build greater capacity in health care to support economic and social resilience. In health care, there's a need to improve resources, skills and capabilities in responding to health emergencies to tackle the region's ongoing challenges in non-communicable diseases and preventative health interventions.

The other area where the Pacific needs Australia to show leadership and needs our support is in stronger action on climate change. Whenever I used to meet with Pacific leaders in the role of parliamentary secretary, I'd ask them how Australia can help. Always the No. 1 answer, the No. 1 concern of Pacific nations is the damage that climate change is doing to their communities and their economy. Sea levels are rising, inundating infrastructure. Wells are becoming salinised and no longer able to be used as a source of water for communities. Stable crops that they have relied on to feed their populations for years are becoming salinised and damaged in irreparable ways. That is why we've seen some Pacific nations actually start to buy land in other countries—because they know the prospect of climate change ruining their countries and making them uninhabitable is just around the corner. They're actually talking about moving populations to other countries so they can survive.

The one area where the Pacific needs Australia's support and help is in stronger action on climate change. That's the one thing that this government is not showing leadership on when it comes to supporting our Pacific neighbours: stronger action on climate change, making sure that Australia is a leader, and ensuring that we're doing our bit to support our Pacific neighbours around climate change.

Mr WALLACE (Fisher) (13:20): In November last year I travelled to Papua New Guinea as part of my work as chair of the defence subcommittee of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee. I had the opportunity to see the impact of Australia's Pacific Step-up for myself. Touring the village of Buna, I visited the new double classroom built at the local primary school with Australia's help, which has allowed the school to grow rapidly to teach more than 100 students. I visited the Buna Health Centre, which has been totally refurbished with new inpatient and outpatient and maternity facilities, as well as training for the centre staff, provided in partnership with the Kokoda Initiative. I saw the village's simple solar light project, funded by the Australian government through the Kokoda Track Foundation. This installs a small solar panel on locals' roofs to power three lights. These lights change lives, allowing families to cook in the evening and, very importantly, allowing kids to study at night—something that they just hadn't been able to do.

Nations in the Pacific, like Papua New Guinea and Indonesia, are the largest recipients of Australian aid because they are some of our most important partners. The Asia-Pacific is our region, and with a struggling world economy and increasing tension between the United States and China, our region is facing uncertain times. We must work together and promote prosperity for all. A prosperous Asia-Pacific will be a stable Asia-Pacific. A stable region will help secure our borders, defend our national interests and provide large new markets for Australian products and services.

Right now, the Defence subcommittee which I chair is undertaking an inquiry into our defence relationship with Pacific island nations. Submissions close today. Mr Deputy Chair Rick Wilson, I know you will eagerly join with me in putting in some submissions for that. I'll have a great deal more to say about that aspect of our Pacific Step-up in weeks to come. However, towards the end of the last parliament, I had the privilege of attending the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in the Cook Islands to address parliamentarians from all over the region on another aspect of the Pacific Step-up which is so often frequently overlooked. Critical to our work in helping build prosperity across the Pacific is Australia's focus on anticorruption and good governance. Prosperity in the region cannot grow where corporate or governmental corruption or poor governance exists. That is why Australia's largest aid investment this financial year, of some $793 million, was allocated to building effective
governance. In combatting corruption, we have, for example, provided $7½ million to support a UN Office on Drugs and Crime project, the global regime against corruption in South-East Asia and South Asia, which is coming to an end later this year. We also provided $6.6 million to support the UN development's program Anti-Corruption for Peaceful and Inclusive Societies in the Asia-Pacific, and another $5.7 million to the Pacific Regional Anti-Corruption Project. We allocated $6.9 million for a four-year grant to Transparency International's Asia-Pacific program and made contributions to the UN Pacific Regional Anti-Corruption Project's work in Tonga, Nauru, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Palau.

To fight corporate corruption, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade publishes the Fraud Control Toolkit for use by the region's governments and organisations, with practical advice on how to manage fraud and corruption risks and how to deal with incidents that occur. We also provide more hands-on support, like delivering relevant training to 934 police and justice officials in the Solomon Islands. Our support builds capacity as well as helping stamp out corruption. We support the Pacific Leadership and Governance Precinct in Papua New Guinea, a partnership which furthers the development of ethical and capable public sector leaders in PNG through sharing firsthand experiences at all levels. We support initiatives like the Development Leadership Program, funded by Australian aid, which brings together international research leaders to explore how to create legitimate and robust government institutions. Overall, working closely with our partners in the region, together we have a great deal of success in helping to build good governance. Results like this, achieved together, will lay foundations for economic prosperity, security and success across our region.

Mr CONNELLY (Stirling) (13:25): It's a real pleasure today to rise to speak about Australia's Pacific Step-up program, which is focused on building prosperity right across our region. It recognises that Australia is part of the Pacific family. I have some personal experience in this space as well, having deployed to Solomon Islands as the second in command of a company group which was the first infantry deployment as part of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands. You can imagine my excitement as a young newly promoted captain, having previously deployed as a platoon commander to East Timor, to be getting ready to go overseas and work in support of our region and its interests again.

We were pouring over maps and satellite imagery and looking at the different threat forces, but we were also looking at some of the region's history, some of the language and some of the culture. One of the things that we learned as we looked into both language and culture was the concept of wantok. 'Wantok' in Tok Pisin literally means 'one language', but it has a cultural meaning much more significant than that. It talks about the Melanesian cultural practice of relying on one wantoks—those who speak the language; those who can share in the good times and the bad. Ultimately, this was what Australia was doing at that point in time with RAMSI. We were being a good neighbour, being a good wantok. The name of that operation was Helpem Fren, which translates to 'helping friend'. That's certainly what we were there to do. This Pacific peacemaking and nation-building operation saw the deployment of about 300 police personnel, 1,700 military people and also a range of other personnel from nine countries, including Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, PNG, Tonga, Samoa, Vanuatu, Kiribati and Cook Islands. As well as military and police, there were also judges, lawyers and bureaucrats because this was truly a holistic government effort to seek to provide security but also, once we did manage to arrest the criminals who were the cause of the unrest, be able to reliably prosecute and incarcerate them as well.

I was also pleased to lead the first outpost to the Weather Coast, which is a very remote area on the southern side of the island of Guadalcanal. I figured out why they call it the 'Weather Coast'; it rained for about the first 10 days and we struggled to keep ourselves out of water as we slept. It was an amazing opportunity to go and engage with local village chiefs and talk about why we were there, doing that hand in hand with the police and medical personnel as well. The outcomes were fantastic. We had a great deal of cooperation. In fact, we had people coming to hand in weapons. Overall, we collected more than 3,700 weapons, including about 700 high-powered military style weapons, and destroyed them. We did that quite publicly to send a message that no longer would violence be tolerated in these local communities.

Australia has always been a very close friend, a wantok, to our regional neighbours, but there's never been a more vital time for Australia to stand with our Pacific family than right now in the heat of the global pandemic of COVID-19. We've seen heavy impacts on the economies and the livelihoods of our Pacific neighbours. There are impacts on these communities, which are so reliant on tourism and on remittance flows. This has seen significant economic downturn. Australia's ability to respond has been increased because of Step-up, but we are also remaining agile and are adapting programs to suit. For example, we have seen the reconfiguration of our programs such as the Pacific Fusion Centre, which is now collating information about COVID-19 now and arming our regional decision-makers with that information, and our Pacific Women program, which is expanding support for crisis centres to provide frontline services, such as counselling for survivors of domestic violence. Also, there are new visa arrangements to support the workers who are unable to travel back home to ensure they can remain here
in Australia for up to 12 months. Of course, we also have our $2 billion Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific. This is part of our very long-term objective to promote economic growth in our region. The Pacific Step-up has seen support for our enduring commitment to see economic development, security and prosperity with our wantoks.

Debate adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 13:30 to 16:00

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Australian Labor Party Victorian Branch

Dr HAINES (Indi) (15:59): Today I planned to deliver a speech about an important renewable energy initiative in my electorate where everyday people are getting involved with designing public policy—great participatory democracy. But when I woke up this morning to the appalling revelations of disgraceful corruption in the Victorian ALP, I felt duty-bound to say something. And that's precisely the issue, isn't it? That this festering rot of corruption doesn't just corrode our democracy, it means we spend more time lamenting the depravity of politics than actually solving problems for everyday Australians.

I find the revelations from Victoria disgusting, but I also find it hard to accept the sanctimonious lectures from the coalition. This is a government that has had its fair share of corruption scandals and yet has never disciplined a minister for it. This is a party who, just four days ago, gagged me when I tried to bring on a bill to legislate a federal integrity commission in the House. Today is not a day for anyone in this place to be gloating; it's a bad day for democracy. It's just the latest of the periodic bursts of outrage and disappointment that will continue until politicians grow up and stop behaving like the rules don't apply to them. At least Victoria has an IBAC. We need a federal integrity commission. Attorney-General, it is time to release your bill in this place.

Moore Electorate: Road Safety

Mr GOODENOUGH (Moore) (16:01): A traffic and construction management plan is required to facilitate the safe transportation of approximately 800,000 tonnes of limestone boulders required as construction material for the new breakwater walls to be built at Ocean Reef Marina. The limestone will be sourced locally from the DevelopmentWA quarry at Neerabup.

A quick calculation will reveal that an estimated 20,000 truck movements with prime movers and trailers will be required in order to move that tonnage from the quarry, through our suburbs and to the coast. This activity will place enormous strain on our local roads, including Hodges Drive, Ocean Reef Road, the Mitchell Freeway, Neerabup Road, Marmion Avenue, Wanneroo Road and Burns Beach Road, depending on the route taken. Many of these roads contain school pedestrian crossings. The presence of heavily laden trucks on busy suburban roads will pose a risk to residents unless effective traffic and construction management plans are implemented to mitigate the noise, dust and road safety issues for our local community. The construction project is expected to create between 200 and 300 local construction jobs. The start of the construction of the Ocean Reef Marina has long been anticipated. However, our community deserves for construction to be carried out safely, and that is why I'm calling for a traffic management plan.

Wills Electorate: Queen's Birthday Honours

Mr KHALIL (Wills) (16:02): I acknowledge and congratulate members of our community in Wills recognised on the Queen's Birthday Honours List this year. Dr Peter Tregear OAM was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for service to music education and to professional organisations. Peter has an impressive record as a scholar, performer, teacher and academic leader. Marcus Westbury OAM was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for service to the contemporary arts. Marcus is the CEO of Contemporary Arts Precincts, and he has been a writer, media maker, festival director and founder of many arts events and community projects across Australia.

Professor Marcia Langton AO was awarded the Office of the Order of Australia for distinguished service to tertiary education and as an advocate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Marcia is one of our nation's leading Indigenous voices. Her research, writing and advocacy over many decades drives us always towards justice for Indigenous Australians.

Mimi Tamburrino OAM was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for service to the community of Moreland and to the Australian Labor Party. I know Mimi very well. Over the last 40 years she has been a remarkable servant to the public and a stalwart of the Labor Party. She has worked for John Walton; the Hon. Gareth Evans; three members of Wills: myself, my predecessors the Hon. Kelvin Thomson and, most notably, a former great, Prime Minister the Hon. Bob Hawke. When the rigours of leading the nation pulled Bob away from the local electorate, he said that Mimi was the de facto member for Wills and no-one knows the electorate quite FEDERATION CHAMBER
like her. It is a diverse and wonderful electorate, and I thank and congratulate and give great gratitude for the people who have served our community and Australia.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Claydon): You have Marcus Westbury on loan from Newcastle, so I associate myself with your comments.

Chromy, Mr Josef

Mrs ARCHER (Bass) (16:04): There wouldn't be many in Northern Tasmania or across my state who wouldn't know the name Josef Chromy. Joseph has been instrumental in the development of the Tasmanian food and wine industry having owned and developed some of Tasmania's leading hospitality businesses. At the age of 76, when most would already be retired, he founded the award winning Josef Chromy Wines. Joe came to Tasmania as a young man of 20 with nothing except an inspiring story of bravery—yesterday marked 70 years since escaping what was then Czechoslovakia. Joe had witnessed his homeland occupied by Nazis, before its fall to communism in 1948. With two friends and a dream of a better life, Joe began a six-hour journey through farmland and bush to cross the Czech border into Russian occupied Austria. Joe recounts: 'I was escaping with two other friends. One was shot in the foot and captured, and the other one I never heard from again.' Finding his way into an American occupied zone, Joe was classed as a political refugee and chose to relocate to Australia, where he eventually made his way to Tasmania. At 5 am yesterday, Joe got up and poured himself 'a big glass'—his words—of Lark whisky to celebrate the exact moment he crossed into Linz and gained his freedom. Congratulations Joe. How lucky we Tasmanians are that you chose our state to build your life and dreams.

Western Sydney Airport

Ms TEMPLEMAN (Macquarie) (16:05): We've had lots of announcements about Western Sydney airport. We've seen the announcements about the terminal and rail line. We've seen politicians with hard hats and high-vis, and bulldozers at the ready. But do you notice the one thing that's missing? The flight paths. The Morrison government seems to be ignoring the obvious, that the planes might start on the ground but they don't go far without becoming airborne. For residents of the Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury and Western Sydney, it's long overdue to find out where the flights will go. Perhaps the government's reluctance is that when they did release a sneak peek in 2015 all hell broke loose in the Blue Mountains as people realised the impact, because these will not be planes that sleep when we try to. These are 24/7, all day, all night. These are not planes that have any of the restrictions that the North Shore and eastern suburbs enjoy, with limits on numbers each hour or curfews. These are not planes that are going to improve the quality of our lives, even if the trip to the airport might be a bit shorter. We get it. We get that you're building an airport in our part of the world on the edge of World Heritage wilderness, in an area already beset by high air pollution, and whether we love it or hate the idea—and I'm in the second category—either way it is time to fess up and tell us where these flight paths will be. We're the ones who have to live underneath them, and we deserve to know.

Moncrieff Electorate: COVID-19

Ms BELL (Moncrieff) (16:07): I rise to speak about a survey which has been released by Regional Development Australia on the Gold Coast, which reveals how deeply affected local businesses are by the COVID-19 pandemic. It found that 92 per cent of Gold Coast businesses have been impacted by the pandemic, including those who are not being paid on time for completed work, reduced demand for services and the closure of other businesses. Businesses cite higher staffing costs to split workforces and create social distance, less efficiency, fewer customers, uncertain economic future affecting staff morale, and difficulties travelling to remote client sites. It also showed the significant impact of the federal government's stimulus package, including the JobKeeper program, which has allowed businesses to keep staff paid through the crisis. This is why I established the Moncrieff City Heart task force: to ensure that city leaders across the key sectors of small business, tourism, education, retail, the night economy, construction and marine are all working together to develop a cohesive framework to hasten our recovery, create job opportunities and rebuild our city's heart. It has been disappointing to see the ongoing uncertainty, can I say, continuing from the Queensland Premier around the border reopening on 10 July. Reopening the interstate border is the first step towards restarting the economy. Tourism Research Australia figures show that in 2019 interstate tourists spent a remarkable $2.49 billion on the Gold Coast. Businesses need certainty so they can prepare and invest. Every day the borders are closed it costs our economy jobs and livelihoods. It is too late for the Gold Coast to benefit.

Korean Society of Queensland

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (16:08): It is no secret that COVID-19 has devastated people and businesses in Moreton. My electorate has a large population of international students and people on working holiday visas. Once COVID-19 restrictions were in place, the travel bans made it impossible for these people to return home, yet they were left to fend for themselves by this coalition government. Thankfully, the Korean Society of Queensland
stepped up and took action. Over the course of six weeks, The Korean Society received 1,235 applications for help, and they have delivered a staggering 1,101 food hampers right across Brisbane and as far away as the Sunshine Coast and Gold Coast. When I dropped into the Korean Society of Queensland I saw a highly organised, compassionate and energetic community who were putting together hampers and meals for international students. It was an impressive operation, to say the least. I wasn’t surprised by the amazing effort. I have enjoyed many events with the Korean community over the years and I have found them to be incredibly warm, welcoming and professional. The effort was named the hamper project. It was made possible due to donations from community leaders, businesses, restaurants, clubs and religious groups. The volunteers from the Korean Society of Queensland are an incredibly generous and community minded group of people. Their effort during COVID-19 is nothing short of incredible and they deserve acknowledgement from the Australian parliament. So a big thank you to the Korean Society of Queensland or, as they say, gamsahabnida.

COVID-19

Mr BROADBENT (Monash) (16:10): This nation has faced unprecedented trauma. It's touched every family, every person, everybody across this great amazing nation. We have three levels of government. We have another level as well below that, and that's the community: the community leadership. In a number of my shires they have been able to bring together all the leadership to confront the effects of the virus on their communities. I commend those, especially local councillors, state members and federal members in the area, who are working together today for the best outcome they can possibly pull out of this terrible pandemic. They are working together for the first time. They're not in competition. It's not federal, state and local: it's everybody in the boat together, working together for the best outcome we can possibly get. In any community, if we're going to get through this together and face the traumas that are still to come—there will be traumas still to come. There are still outbreaks across this nation, small as they may be, but the important thing is that this is really serious. We can't let this get out of the bag again and have our whole community then faced with that same trauma. Congrats to everybody at every level of government for the way they have gone about protecting the wellbeing of their communities right across the nation.

Calwell Electorate: COVID-19

Ms VAMVAKINOU (Calwell) (16:11): Today I want to highlight a story of resilience in response to the disruption brought about by the COVID pandemic. As we know, the JobKeeper program was not available to local government employees. During the restrictions, many local government services, including libraries, gyms and swimming pools, were closed. As a result, many casual workers found themselves without jobs. The City of Hume in my electorate runs a number of leisure centres in Broadmeadows, Craigieburn and Sunbury. Many of the staff who were stood down were women. The 'ladies of leisure', as they have dubbed themselves, are made up of life guards, swim teachers, gym instructors and customer service personnel. They got together and volunteered to be redeployed to council outdoor jobs. To the council's credit they accepted the proposal, and very soon the women were wearing high-vis vests, pushing wheel barrows and swinging shovels. They maintained their connection with each other and with their employer and provided a valuable service to the municipality. In one week the ladies of leisure planted more than 1,000 trees at the John Ilhan Reserve, and they mulched and planted trees and shrubs around the town hall of Broadmeadows. As the restrictions in Victoria are set to ease next week, the workers will, I hope, be able to return to their previous roles, but in the meantime I want to acknowledge this wonderful crew, including Kristen Cullen, Melanie Taylor, Patricia Petrakis, Jan Ellis, Kathy Portelli and Rubina Grasso. I also acknowledge the CEO of the City of Hume, Dominic Isola, and his team for thinking outside the box and finding a creative and compassionate approach to the workforce and the community.

Dawson Electorate: Infrastructure

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson) (16:13): The people of Mackay, Proserpine, the Whitsundays, Bowen, the Burdekin and Townsville have been through a torrid few months, but now we're totally focused on the road to recovery. One of the keys is to support local jobs and local businesses. It's never been more important to do so than now. While there is plenty of work still to be done, particularly for those in the tourism sector, I stand by my record of delivery for the Dawson electorate and the huge volume of funding from the Morrison-McCormack Liberal-National government pouring into the roads, community facilities, schools and other not-for-profit groups across the region. There is $1.5 billion in major road upgrades between Mackay and Townsville right now supporting over 1,300 local jobs, with more jobs to come as other projects kick off next year. Our local councils have also had another $17 million to pour into their roads and community projects of their choice through this government's Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program, together with the improved financial assistance grants. There is also $33.7 million in funding for community facilities in every corner of that electorate, including the Mackay northern beaches community hub, the Proserpine showgrounds, the Proserpine...
Entertainment Centre, on the Burdekin with boating facilities, and a veterans wellbeing centre in Townsville. All of these projects are supporting local jobs and local business.

Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Mr DAVID SMITH (Bean) (16:15): Today I'd like to acknowledge the ABC for its leadership in the Australian media and for being a much-trusted, balanced and independent news source. I'd also like to thank the network for the critical work they have done in response to the recent crises our country has faced. Throughout the bushfires, the ABC stepped up and ensured vital coverage across our region, which kept Australians informed and saved lives. During the current coronavirus crisis, the ABC has provided reliable and up-to-date information about the pandemic and supported families by broadcasting educational programs to children who could not go to school. The outstanding work of the ABC is all the more important given the sad decline of more and more local media in regional Australia—more local stories that will struggle to be told unless those regional cuts are reversed. In recognition of its work, the member for Canberra and I visited ABC Canberra a couple of weeks ago to thank the staff for their dedication and persistence in the face of ongoing cuts. How has the government responded to the important work of the ABC? With another funding cut that will reportedly leave 250 Australians without a job. The cuts will result in the scaling back of services and programs, which will leave Australians less informed and left behind. We will continue to fight for the network throughout these cuts. As the advertisement goes, 'It is your ABC,' and 'We love our ABC.'

Pensions and Benefits

Mr CONAGHAN (Cowper) (16:16): I rise today to speak about the JobKeeper and jobseeker programs. I would like to congratulate the coalition government on their implementation, but I would also like to urge the coalition government, the national cabinet and the leadership team to give greater consideration to the future of both the JobKeeper and jobseeker programs. In my electorate, many people relied on the JobKeeper payment. Those who fell through the cracks of the JobKeeper program went onto the jobseeker payment. In the words of the Prime Minister, 'It wasn't perfect, but it was a net to catch those who fell through the cracks.' With the lifting of the restrictions, the lifting of the veil, businesses will not be back in full swing on day one. That is why the government needs to consider the ongoing nature of the JobKeeper program. It needs to be addressed on an industry basis—tourism, hospitality. We need to look after our regional and rural employees who will not get straight back on their feet. In addition, in terms of the jobseeker payment, in my electorate, 25 per cent of children under the age of 15 are under the poverty line. I urge the national cabinet and this government to give greater consideration to continuing the jobseeker program too.

Paterson Electorate: Small Business

Ms SWANSON (Paterson) (16:18): Many small mum-and-dad businesses in my electorate are really suffering and need support at the moment. The issues that they're facing are not difficult issues, but they're ones that they wish this present government could have helped them with. This is what they've told me from my small-business survey. A disability support provider who works with people with autism told me that they did not have the cash flow to pay casual employees for the six to eight weeks they had to wait to be reimbursed by the ATO. Their profit margins are already incredibly slim as they are dictated by the NDIS, and this poorly executed government policy made it really difficult for them. As a partnership business, a discount variety store in my electorate had no help. They had to hand the keys to their business back after all the hours working in that little business. They wished that the government would support small business with no employees, not only the medium and large companies. A husband-and-wife delivery business—another business with no employees—said they felt that businesses like theirs were being disregarded. I also heard from a travel tour company in what is a very stressed tourism industry at the moment. Their business was caught between the stages of transiting from a partnership to a company. They said that they had missed out on many government grants but still had to pay the overheads similar to those paid by other companies. I implore this government to listen to these small-business owners from my electorate and take action, because they are the key to business in Australia.

Stirling Electorate: Queen's Birthday Honours

Mr CONNELLY (Stirling) (16:20): 2020 has been a year of facing challenges together and coming out strongly on the other side. We've seen fire, flood and virus, but we've also seen innovative ways of delivering health services and a strong economic response—and even a new way of managing our federation. But we must remember that we all live our lives at the local level, so we continue to recognise the tremendous efforts of those Australians as they go about their roles in our local communities.

In Stirling, six locals were recognised in the Queen's Birthday honours list. Mr Abe Schneider received an AM for his service to the BMX sporting community. Mr Mike Wood received an AM for services to tourism and environmental conservation. Ms Fay Alford received an OAM for her significant contribution to the safety and
health of children, having fostered over 90 children across 35 years. Mr Neville Clark received an OAM for his significant contribution to veterans and their families, an issue that is very close to my own heart. Inspector Shane Sadler of the WA police won the Australian Police Medal. Mr James Armanasco won the Australian Fire Service Medal. Together with the Liberal candidate for Kalamunda, Liam Staltari, I congratulate him on 35 years service to the VFRS. Such worthy efforts across community, tourism, conservation, children, veterans, police and fire services are wonderful, and I congratulate all the winners once again.

Morrison Government

Dr LEIGH (Fenner) (16:21): Another day and another promise that the Prime Minister will likely fail to deliver on. The coalition promised a draft bill to establish a national integrity commission by last Christmas, but for those who want a federal ICAC there was nothing under the Christmas tree. This government promised immediate support for bushfire victims. Months later, only four per cent have received help. They said six million people were receiving the JobKeeper payment and then admitted that the truth was about half as many. They have left the arts sector behind, and the university sector has been deliberately excluded. There might be a pandemic going on, but they're not too busy to fight the culture wars. Among charities, just one in 13 can access the JobKeeper program, and some face the real prospect of going bust.

The Morrison government promised to support hundreds of thousands of jobs in the HomeBuilder program, and then admitted they're actually only going to support around 7,000 projects. The Prime Minister promised to ‘burn for you every single day’. Instead we got Watergate, sports rorts and Jam Land. We got robodebt, doctored internet documents and outlandish internet bills. You'd think the one might solve the other, but they couldn't even manage that. And then, today, they promised $1½ billion for infrastructure, but when you read the fine print it turns out most of the construction work is in constructing feasibility studies. They're all headline and no policy, all hat and no cattle, all foam and no beer, all mouth and no trousers.

Victoria: Rail

Mr DRUM (Nicholls—Chief Nationals Whip) (16:23): I call on the Victorian government to build a designated tunnel from the Southern Cross railway station to West Footscray as an integral part of the Melbourne Airport Rail Link project. To proceed with this project without a designated tunnel out of and into Melbourne's CBD would be a disaster for all Victorians. It will mean putting the six to eight services per hour to the airport in a newly completed Melbourne Metro 1 tunnel in 2026 that is already running at capacity. Every trip to the airport will come at the expense of someone else's trip to Werribee, Melton, Sunbury or somewhere else in the western suburbs. Also, if they build a designated tunnel it will provide for the communities right out to the west and allow for the north of the state to have a genuine service into Melbourne.

Currently, the north-east line is the worst performing line in Victoria. Shepparton is not far behind. Shepparton has five services to Melbourne per day. Bendigo has 23 services, with a similar population service centre. Ballarat has 24 services a day. It's time that Shepparton and the north-east line were given the opportunity to have a similar number of services into Melbourne. All V/Line trips and all Metro trips are heavily subsidised by the taxpayer. About 20 per cent of the running costs of V/Line and Metro are paid at the ticket box; everything else is paid for by the taxpayer.

Jones, Mr Myles

Ms McBRIIDE (Dobell) (16:24): This Saturday it will be my privilege to present the Australian National Medal to Myles Jones for service to Marine Rescue. Myles belongs to Marine Rescue Norah Head, a volunteer service made up of more than 50 active members who monitor the radio waves from morning to night, keeping us all safe. If a boat is in trouble, its crew will radio Marine Rescue and Myles will dispatch a team to help out. Myles is 83 years old. He started as a volunteer almost eight years ago, and now mentors young trainees. Before joining Marine Rescue, Myles was unit commander of Queensland Flotilla 1, Australian volunteer coastguard, for eight years.

It's no surprise that this isn't the first recognition Myles has received in his stellar career. He already has to his credit the British Empire Medal for gallantry, the international police medal for meritorious service, the New Zealand Defence Service Medal, the New Zealand Antarctic Medal and two commendations for his service to New Zealand in Antarctica. Myles' service record included five years with the Royal New Zealand Air Force, five years with the New Zealand Police, two years as part of Operation Deep Freeze in the Royal New Zealand Navy and three years with the Lake Munmorah Rural Fire Service.

In other good news for Marine Rescue Norah Head, congratulations to Unit Commander Bill Hignett on securing a Saluting Their Service commemorative grant of almost $10,000. This grant will go towards a memorial to air-sea rescues of the Second World War. I'm looking forward to celebrating with you all this Saturday.
Leichhardt Electorate: Queen's Birthday Honours

Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt) (16:26): It's a great pleasure to acknowledge six outstanding members of the Cairns and Far North Queensland community recently awarded Order of Australia medals in the Queen's Birthday Honours List. All six recipients are outstanding people, and their dedication and passion for their respective communities is without question.

The recipients include Cairns Hospital senior psychologist Denise Craig for services to people living with dementia and their support networks; former Mareeba shire mayor Tom Gilmore for his services to local government and to his community; Ireland's of Cairns dealership principal Richard Ireland for his service to the Cairns community across a range of organisational roles; Tableland fruit and vegetable supplier and grocer Fariborz Rameshfar for his services to remote Far North Queensland communities; Mer Island elder and Torres Strait Regional Authority member Alo Tapim for his passionate service to the Torres Strait Islander community; and former Queensland MP, minister and Mulgrave shire councillor, and current Anglicare North Queensland director, Naomi Wilson for her service to the people and the parliament of Queensland.

I've had the privilege to see the outstanding work these six people have done over many years, and I can honestly say they are all very worthy recipients of this award. On behalf of the people of Cairns and Far North Queensland, I say thank you and congratulations to all of those recipients.

Shortland Electorate: R&R Murphy

Mr CONROY (Shortland) (16:27): I rise to pay tribute to two giants of manufacturing in my home Hunter region, Rose and Rod Murphy. Sadly, Rod passed away earlier this year, but the magnificent business he developed with his beloved wife continues to grow and expand. The Hunter has a proud history of manufacturing, and R&R Murphy—Rose's and Rod's company—is a shining example of innovative advanced manufacturing. I've had the opportunity to visit the firm a few times. It's at Gateshead in my electorate. I am so proud there is such a thriving forward-looking business in Shortland.

R&R Murphy is a quality provider in metal fabrication that specialises in areas as diverse as transport, defence, mining and architecture. They literally run the gamut, from advanced manufacturing in the mines to solar powered coffee carts. They can do everything. The Hunter region is synonymous with BHP and manufacturing. Sadly, BHP closed down 20 years ago, so our region depends on high-skilled jobs that advanced manufacturing provides, and R&R Murphy is leading the way.

I want to acknowledge and thank HunterNet, a network of manufacturing and engineering specialists, who recently renamed their Chairman's Award for Innovation as the Rod Murphy Innovation Award—a very fitting tribute. R&R Murphy are the future of the Hunter. They can manufacture anything. They provide great specialist services. And I want to pass on my condolences and the condolences of every member of my community to Rose on the sad passing of Rod.

Hampton Community Centre

Mr TIM WILSON (Goldstein) (16:29): Social restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic have protected our health system and saved thousands of lives. The JobKeeper wage subsidy has protected vulnerable businesses and saved thousands of jobs. But no single Commonwealth program can resolve every local problem. Spontaneous community solutions have been critical in filling the gaps, softening some of the worst effects and rounding sharp edges where people might have fallen through the cracks. I recently had the pleasure of joining Melanie Tighe and the team at the Hampton Community Centre to deliver vegetables and bread to senior residents in the Goldstein community. Many older Australians have been separated from the usual support of their family and friends during this difficult time as a result of social distancing, so we were thrilled by the interaction, and they were of course grateful for the groceries that we provided. Working with Food for Change, the Hampton Community Centre has harnessed Goldstein's great industrious spirit to help build resilience in our community. It's proof of how resourcefulness and collaboration in every community will help pave the way out of this health and economic crisis and ensure we do not leave people behind. We were proud to be part of this, because it's the foundation of a very successful community.

Australia Post

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (16:30): For some time we've heard governments and people talking about the idea of cutting the number of postal deliveries in the community. It's disappointing that the Morrison government have now used the COVID-19 pandemic as an excuse to cut the services of Australia Post and, in its wake, cut jobs. It's disappointing that in April the government relaxed service standards, reducing letter delivery to every second day rather than daily, halving the delivery and leading to significant delays. It's disappointing that even in the face of criticism the government continues to pursue this.
I've been speaking to posties right around my own electorate—as many of us have been at home, we've been having a chat to them—and one postie told me of the fear they have about losing their jobs. She said: 'We will be expected to fit two days worth of letters and a full day's worth of parcels onto our motorcycles, on top of what's known as "households". I can't see how we're going to manage it all. We simply won't have time to get it done.' This rips an important essential service away from so many who rely on it—those who are isolated, those in rural and regional areas, older Australians. It is disappointing that the government have used the cover of COVID, and we demand that they put the service back.

**Lyne Electorate: Water**

**Dr GILLESPIE (Lyne)** (16:32): Recently in my electorate of Lyne I was delighted to announce $1.47 million of federal funding for the $6 million upgrade of the Nabiac aquifer water supply system, under the latest round of the Building Better Regions Fund. With this second stage, the aquifer will be able to deliver another 6.3 megalitres of water per day to the people in the MidCoast Council area—that is, 95,000 people.

As you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, we've been through the worst drought in 110 years. MidCoast Water were down to their last 15 days of water. They'd already started trucking water into some of the communities. So this important improvement in water security is really timely. We had already committed, two or three years ago, to a $34 million upgrade of the same aquifer water supply. This will allow them to complete it and bring it up to its full capacity.

Like fuel in a car, if you don't have water then all life stops. People, farms, industry—everything is water dependent. This water infrastructure upgrade will allow the population to grow and allow industry to grow, and the thousands of tourists who will come back to the mid-coast region after the COVID crisis will have water to use.

**International Cleaners Day**

**Mrs PHILLIPS (Gilmore)** (16:34): Today is International Cleaners Day, and I want to take the opportunity to say thank you to all the cleaners across the New South Wales South Coast. This year, more than ever, it has become clear how important the work you do is and how all too often it is not given the recognition it deserves.

Cleaners play a vital role in our healthcare system, hospitality industry, schools and more. They are working every day to make sure this virus is not spreading in our essential workplaces. Cleaners stop outbreaks of infectious diseases in our hospitals, keep operating theatres clean, prepare beds for new patients and make sure all hospital surfaces are germ-free. Without cleaners, our community would not be able to enjoy relaxed restrictions, our restaurants, cafes and shops could not reopen, our supermarkets could not provide food and toilet paper, our aged-care homes would not be safe for our loved ones, our public transport could not operate—the list goes on.

So today I want to say thank you to our cleaners and all our essential workers. Where would we be without you? I stand with all our cleaners to make sure they are getting the support and recognition they deserve. Thank you to all our cleaners, on the New South Wales South Coast and around Australia, for everything you do to protect and support our community today and every day.

**Menzies Electorate: Roads**

**Mr ANDREWS (Menzies)** (16:35): Residents of the north-east suburbs of Melbourne will know that for the 40 kilometres between Heidelberg and Yarra Glen there are just two crossings of the Yarra River, and that creates major choke points so far as traffic is concerned. That's why I've been campaigning for some years now to improve the traffic flows between suburbs like Eltham and North Warrandyte to the north of the river and Templestowe, Doncaster and Warrandyte to the south of the river. I was pleased, therefore, that the relevant minister, Mr Tudge, recently announced the provision of $5 million of funding to Nillumbik Shire Council to improve the traffic flow between Main Road in Eltham and Fitzsimons Lane, which crosses the river from Eltham over to Templestowe. I'm also pleased to note that another $5 million will go to Manningham Council, south of the river, to improve the traffic flow between Fitzsimons Lane, Porter Street and Williamsons Road. Fitzsimons Lane itself, which crosses the river, is not the problem; it's a four-lane road. But that four-lane road then narrows into much smaller roads both north of the river and south of the river. So this is a very good announcement for the constituents of Menzies, who are affected every day—every morning and every afternoon—by the traffic choke point that exists at the present time.

**Philippines: Human Rights**

**Mr HILL (Bruce)** (16:37): A fortnight ago, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights issued an alarming report regarding the deteriorating human rights situation in the Philippines, stating that it was 'marked by an overarching focus on public order and national security' which has led to serious human rights violations. President Duterte has been taking advantage of COVID-19, ordering the police and military to shoot protesters. In
his campaign against illegal drugs, conservatively over 8,600 people have been illegally killed, and it may well be triple that. People not convicted of a crime are shot dead by authorities with impunity. The national security laws now give ‘wide discretion to charge individuals on the grounds of national security without human rights safeguards’. There are proposals now to restore the death penalty and there are continued reports of vilification, threats, arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances, and verified killings of over 208 human rights defenders, journalists and trade unionists over four years. One of the lucky ones is the Dandenong Uniting Church Reverend Berlin Guerrero in my electorate, a social activist who was granted political asylum in Australia. In light of this serious deterioration, many in the Australian Filipino community are concerned about Australia's aid to and work with the Philippines' military, so I call on the government to review Australia's military support to the Philippines to ensure that we are not complicit in any of these shocking human rights violations.

**Curtin Electorate: Ocean Heroes**

Ms HAMMOND (Curtin) (16:38): I recently met with Luke Hallam, one of the founders of the Ocean Heroes, a fantastic volunteer based organisation that provides children with autism the opportunity to take part in that great sport of surfing. Children growing up with autism face unique challenges that can make it very difficult for them to develop self-confidence and socialise. Luke, together with his friends Sam Moyle and Tom Johnston, saw a much-needed gap in the community and started Ocean Heroes to provide children with the unique opportunity to experience the thrill of catching a wave in a supportive environment. Luke shared with me stories of children who had never been to the beach before and the joy that they had in being able to participate in an activity that they might normally feel excluded from. He also told me the stories of the joy that it brought to their parents, seeing their child connecting with others, having fun and developing confidence. I'm delighted that Ocean Heroes was successful in securing a federal government volunteer grant which will help them purchase new surfboards and enable more volunteers to be involved. Thanks to the generosity of supporting organisations, individuals and grants, Ocean Heroes is able to host public events with one-on-one lessons to children with autism. I'm looking forward to seeing the surfers in action once large public events are safe to go ahead again.

**Dunkley Electorate: All Abilities Football**

Ms MURPHY (Dunkley) (16:40): COVID-19 has reminded all of us of the importance of social connectedness and that it often comes from our involvement in sport, so the announcement that Frankston Pines Football Club will participate for the first time this year in Football Victoria's All Abilities program is absolutely fantastic. The program was established in 2017 to promote an inclusive approach to football, regardless of age, gender or ability. Pines FC are running a come-and-try day on Saturday 27 June, at 10 am, and everyone in my local community who's interested in the program should get down to Monterey Reserve and give it a go. It's a great opportunity to participate with this terrific grassroots local club in a fun, supportive and inclusive environment. The sessions will be organised by FFA- and WWC-accredited coaches and, of course, it's going to be run in accordance with the current COVID-19 guidelines. I would like to congratulate President Lee Davies; head senior coach, Kevin Taylor; and the whole Frankston Pines Football Club on getting involved in a great program. They are for and of their community, and they do these things to build social connectedness. We all need to be part of that with them, so I'm going to be there cheering everyone on from the sidelines. If there are enough people there, I might even be persuaded to try to kick the ball around with you all.

**Canning Electorate: Queen's Birthday Honours**

Mr HASTIE (Canning) (16:41): Earlier this month, the Governor-General announced the Queen's Birthday Honours list for 2020, where 933 Australians were recognised for their contribution to their communities. I’m pleased to report that seven constituents in my electorate were listed. I extend my congratulations to the five recipients of the Medal of the Order of Australia: Ms Robyn Devenish of Mandurah was recognised for her longstanding role as secretary of the Donkey Society of Western Australia; and, finally, Mr Noel Nancarrow was recognised for his long-time service to the Shire of Murray in various local government roles. Two of my constituents were also listed for meritorious awards: Mr Peter Sutton of Byford received the Australian Fire Service Medal for his exemplary commitments to the WA Department of Fire and Emergency Services and to the community of Western Australia throughout his 25-year career; and Mr Danny Goodlad of Mandurah received the Emergency Services Medal in recognition of his service in Marine Rescue WA for nearly two decades. Mr Goodlad's commitment to marine safety in WA is highly valued. I'm honoured to represent these recipients and encourage them and the wider community to continue in this good work.
Gellibrand Electorate: COVID-19

Mr WATTS (Gellibrand) (16:43): Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, we’ve seen people from all backgrounds in our community chipping in to help our community get through this challenge together. Over the past two months, the pub that shares a wall with my electorate office, the Plough Hotel in Footscray, has been leading a fantastic ‘meals for healthcare heroes’ program, led by chef Scott Thomas and manager Ben Foster. They ran an initiative encouraging locals to donate meals to healthcare workers at Footscray Hospital and Sunshine Hospitals. I was pleased to be able to have a few steak-and-ale pies and few growlers of beer, strictly for a good cause, and was very proud that the team managed to donate 800 meals to healthcare workers in eight weeks. It was an awesome effort.

Last month, the Hansen Reserves, West Footscray's fifth-best cover band, held a Funkin 4 Foodbank fundraiser, a live stream of music from Kindred Studios in Yarraville on the In Other Good News Facebook page. It was an awesome set list that spoke directly to my nineties' youth, but, even better, they were able to raise $6,051 in one night. Well, done Grant Philpots, Andy Fithall, Reuben Phillips, John Forde, and Dani and Dan from The Block for a fantastic night raising funds for one of the best causes going. They were so good that I'm calling it now and I'm bumping them up to West Footscray's fourth-best cover band. Next year, if they can raise another five grand for Foodbank—I'm putting the challenge down now—I will get them into the top three and onto the podium. So, come on guys: next year, five grand, and I'll recognise you here.

Inland Rail

Mr JOYCE (New England) (16:44): I rise today to talk about the Inland Rail and how excited I am that it's now going to take its next iteration in a more speedy form. There are things that punctuate your political career, and I believe, I would have to say on an egotistical level, the Inland Rail would have to be one of my highlights. I remember the negotiations for it—negotiating with then Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull as part of the coalition agreement.

In brief form, it was something that had been spoken about for years and years and years, but just never happened. Everybody always had great plans for it and desire for it. I remember when I first arrived here, the then transport minister—you might have heard of him—the member for Grayndler, by the name of Mr Albanese, noted that he had no real interest in it and that it might happen in the next two decades. Unfortunately it didn't even happen then.

What we have to do is make sure that this piece of critical infrastructure for the development of our nation is made to happen and in as quick a form as we can possibly do it. It will be a corridor of commerce. It will bring the development of inland cities. It will have the capacity to bring real wealth to the Narrabris, to the Parkes, to the Toowoombas and, dare I say, to the Morees. This is a piece of infrastructure that I'm so proud to have played my part in, with others, in bringing it about. Now I'm absolutely thrilled to see that it is going to be put at the front of the queue to make it happen quicker.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Claydon): In accordance with standing order 43, the time for members' statements has concluded.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Aged Care

Ms COLLINS (Franklin) (16:46): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes:

(a) the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on older Australians, their families, their carers and the aged care workforce;

(b) the valuable contributions made by the more than 360,000 aged care workers who have continued to deliver care and support to older Australians during the COVID-19 pandemic;

(c) all aged care workers play a valuable role to deliver care and support to older Australians in residential and home care;

(d) many aged care workers are low paid and around 87 per cent of them are women;

(e) the Government's decision to exclude a large proportion of aged care workers from receiving the retention bonus;

(f) excluded aged care workers who will not receive the retention bonus include those delivering services under the Commonwealth Home Support Program as well as in-direct care workers in residential aged care facilities including lifestyle and leisure therapists, cleaners, hospitality workers and gardeners;

(g) the exclusion of any aged care worker from receiving the retention bonus is unwarranted and unfair;
(h) on 20 March 2020 the Minister for Aged Care and Senior Australians issued a media release that stated the retention bonus payment would be ‘after tax’; and
(i) on 5 June 2020 the Department of Health's retention bonus guidelines stated the payment would be 'subject to income tax';
(2) conveys its disappointment that the Government made:
(a) a decision to exclude about 40 per cent of aged care workers from receiving the retention bonus; and
(b) a late decision to switch the retention bonus from being after tax to being before tax that will see aged care workers lose hundreds of dollars they were previously promised;
(3) calls on the Government, as a matter of urgency, to reconsider its decision and pay the retention bonus to all aged care workers irrespective of their role or where they work and to explain why it changed the rules around the payment being after tax to the payment now being subject to income tax; and
(4) acknowledges the work all aged care workers undertake each and every day and thanks them for their continued dedication to care and support older Australians in residential and home care.

What we've heard from this government around the retention bonus for aged-care workers is what a great job the government is doing, but it's really about what a great job the aged-care workers have done during this global pandemic. When you look at what has happened here in Australia compared to what has happened overseas in care homes, we have done a tremendous job, and that job has primarily been done by some of the lowest paid, most hardworking workers in the country. Everybody knows that there aren't enough aged-care workers and that we don't pay them enough in Australia. It's something that we need to fix.

There is no doubt that the 360,000 aged-care workers in Australia today deserve the retention bonus that they were due to be paid in June and in September. But what we've since learnt from this government is: (1) the first payment is going to be late—apparently it can't be made until July now, instead of in June; and, importantly, (2) over 125,000 workers will be excluded from this retention bonus. These are workers that work in residential aged-care facilities—81,000-odd of them. Then the rest of them, 40,000-odd, work in home care and are not eligible for this payment. These are workers who have been working every day on the front line. When there was a question asked in the parliament today, we had the health minister stand up and say, 'Oh, yes, but they weren't on the front line.' Those cleaners in those residential aged-care facilities that the minister was asked about today are absolutely on the front line. They are part of the infection control measures in these facilities. They are working incredibly hard. They are not paid very well.

The retention bonus was intended to ensure that we had enough aged-care workers turn up to work every day during the pandemic, because they were frightened. They were frightened for themselves and frightened for their families and loved ones, because they didn't want to bring COVID-19 home. Frankly, they were not really paid well enough for the type of work that they were having to do during this COVID pandemic. When you talk to some of the workers that were in some of those facilities about what it actually entailed when there was an outbreak, nobody in this place could possibly want to deny these workers this payment. What is supposed to have been a unifying recognition payment for aged-care workers throughout Australia has become divisive to the point where some aged-care providers are actually considering paying the payment themselves—when they can't afford it, when they've got viability issues—to try to equal out the workforce, because they know how divisive this government payment has become.

Not only that, but to make it worse, when it was announced by the minister we had this wonderful media release where he says the payments are going to be up to $800 after tax per quarter—paid for two quarters' and then 'Two payments of up to $600 after tax per quarter—for two quarters'. The first payment was for residential aged-care workers, and the second payment of $600 was for home-care workers. Of course, on the Friday before the long weekend, what did we see? Just a couple of weeks ago, the minister leaks out and puts on the webpage quietly how this retention bonus is going to actually work. What do we find out? We find out the truth of the payment: that it's actually not after tax; it's before tax. For some of those workers who are currently trying to extend their qualifications, who may have a HECS or VET FEE-HELP debt and are having to pay their tax, this could actually mean a significant loss of this retention bonus fund. Some of these workers who thought they were getting $800 are now getting just over $600, and some of them are getting zero.

Where is the equity in recognising all of the aged-care workers from this government? Why not acknowledge what a tremendous job they've done? Why not give them all access to this retention bonus, as was intended to be the case in the first place? Why not even stick to your word in black and white in your own media release where it says 'after tax'? Why has it suddenly become 'before tax'? Where is the explanation from the government about how something that was supposed to be a bonus to keep workers turning up during the pandemic turned into such a divisive payment that some of the workers are now saying, 'It isn't even worth it'?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Claydon): I need a seconder for the motion.
Ms Kearney: I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

Ms BELL (Moncrieff) (16:51): We on this side, in the Morrison government, won't be lectured by those on the other side about aged care. As senior Australians know, Labor can't be trusted when it comes to aged care. Despite their plan at the last election for $387 billion in new taxes, including their retirees tax, Labor provided no additional funding in their costings for home-care places or any additional funding for aged-care quality, the workforce or mainstream residential care. This shows Labor's hypocrisy on aged care. All Labor can say on aged care is that they will reveal their policies closer to the election. Clearly, Labor are waiting for somebody else to do their work for them. Labor's deceit shows that they don't understand the aged-care sector. They are more interested in cheap politics than genuine solutions for these important issues for Australians. But I am pleased to have the opportunity, on this private member's business today, to highlight how the Morrison government is positively supporting our aged-care sector through the COVID-19 pandemic. The government is committed to supporting and building a strong and dedicated aged-care workforce that delivers high-quality aged care to all senior Australians. Several workforce measures to support a strong and dedicated aged-care workforce have been put in place during the COVID-19 pandemic. These measures have ensured that aged-care recipients continue to receive care during these difficult times. They include emergency support where a residential aged-care facility doesn't have the capacity or the capability to continue service delivery due to COVID-19; remote locums to support aged-care providers in remote Australia if they are unable to source staff—Aspen Medical has been engaged to provide this support; and access to surge workforce capacity, through the online platform Mable, to help providers if they are unable to fill critical skills because of staff having to self-isolate due to infection. The COVID-19 Aged Care Support Program is also reimbursing approved aged-care providers for eligible expenditure incurred through managing the direct impacts of COVID-19. Aged-care providers have been able to temporarily offer more hours to international students to ensure the care of senior and vulnerable Australians as part of the campaign to combat the impact of coronavirus.

There is also the $234.9 million retention bonus for direct care workers working in aged care. The government is providing $234.9 million to eligible workers in residential aged care and home care during COVID-19 to help retain them in the workforce at this critical time. This payment is specifically to encourage direct care workers providing clinical care and personal care to continue to work on the front line during the COVID-19 pandemic. Full-time direct care workers in residential care facilities, including personal care workers, registered nurses, enrolled nurses and allied health will receive a retention bonus of up to $800 per quarter, paid for two quarters pro rata, if they work over the applicable time periods.

Eligible home-care workers include workers providing clinical care, personal care, cleaning, in-the-home support activities, such as meal preparation, social support and services such as shopping, community access and transport. They will receive a total of $600 per quarter, paid for two quarters pro rata, if they work over the applicable time periods. Employers—that is, aged-care providers and agencies who provide aged-care staff—will need to apply for a grant to receive the payment on behalf of their workers. The grant rounds open today.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been several heroes, from our healthcare workers to those essential workers in supermarkets. I would like to acknowledge those very many in Moncrieff who have been looking after our senior and much-loved Australians. It has been so heartwarming to see our community lend a helping hand to our senior citizens who have needed to self-isolate for their own safety. Whether that be picking up groceries or medication for your neighbour or making a phone call just to check in, thank you to all of those who have gone above and beyond to check in on our senior citizens. We've faced an extraordinary health challenge, and the hard work and sacrifice of our frontline health aged-care workers have protected some of those we love the most. Working in aged care is never an easy task, but it has been particularly challenging during this time. You've all done a spectacular job of guarding our precious citizens. Through your hard work, you have saved lives every hour of every single day, and I thank you for your dedication to the aged, senior citizens in Moncrieff, on the Central Gold Coast. You have kept those in residential aged care protected and safe.

I would like to comment on how the government has provided more than $850 million worth of measures to support senior Australians in aged care and the sector more broadly.

Ms KEARNEY (Cooper) (16:57): I rise to wholeheartedly support the motion and echo the comments made by the member for Franklin. These past few months have been unlike any other we've seen in our lifetime. We are in a global health pandemic and a significant economic crisis. People's health, jobs, businesses, lives and livelihoods have all been plunged into uncertainty. But the pandemic has highlighted who it is that keeps the economy and society chugging along—and, surprise, surprise, it's not the bankers, it's not the lawyers, it's not even the real estate agents; it's nurses, aged-care workers and other healthcare workers, our teachers, supermarket staff, truckies, posties and, of course, cleaners. Healthcare workers have shown up to work day in and day out in incredibly risky circumstances and they've put their lives on the line. While we haven't seen any deaths of
healthcare workers in Australia, thankfully, we know that around the world about 250 nurses have lost their lives to COVID-19. Aged care has been a particularly hard-fought battle in the war against coronavirus, because, as we know, the elderly have been the most vulnerable. Aged-care workers, some of our most underpaid and undervalued workers, continue to deliver care and support to older Australians during the pandemic. The government, quite rightly, thought that aged-care workers should be compensated for this and they agreed to pay them a retention bonus. 'Great,' we thought, 'this government is actually thinking about workers.' But—and somehow I feel a little sorry for those on the other side today that they have to defend this—the government have, of course, completely reverted to form. They just can't help themselves from overpromising and underdelivering.

When the government announced the retention bonus, the Minister for Aged Care made it clear that the payment that the workers would receive was after tax. But, when the guidelines for the retention bonus were released, the payment amounts were suddenly switched to being before tax—and, as the member for Franklin said, with no explanation. This will mean that aged-care workers will receive around 30 per cent less than the $800 and $600 they were originally promised. To quote the secretary of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, Annie Butler:

This bonus was intended to recognise the dedication and commitment aged care workers have continued to show in treating and protecting older Australians during the crisis, potentially putting their own safety and their families' safety at risk. But just as we’ve gained control over the pandemic, aged care workers have weathered that storm and we're on the path to recovery, the Government has backflipped on its promise, which was in writing to every aged care worker, and now said 'we don't actually think you're worth the full amount'.

This is even more disappointing when you consider how little our incredible aged-care workers are already paid for the work they do. The government is clawing back hundreds of thousands of dollars from the lowest paid, hardest working people in our society. For a government that has an extra $60 billion sitting in the bank because of its bungles, this seems like an incredibly sneaky and stingy thing to do.

In an even crueller move, the Morrison government has excluded about 40 per cent of aged-care workers from even being eligible for the retention payment. Today is International Cleaners Day. Cleaners have been absolutely crucial in the fight against COVID-19, and cleaners who work in aged care will not get the retention bonus. Those who sit opposite have excluded around 125,000 aged-care workers, from those who deliver home-care packages to cleaners, laundry and catering staff. Seeing as the government does not seem to value them

Government members interjecting—

Ms KEARNEY: and I see members on the other side are laughing at this tragedy—I want to say to all cleaners out there: thank you—

Government members interjecting—

Ms KEARNEY: They won't even be quiet to let me say to you: 'Thank you. We value you. Thank you for the work that you do. You deserve the retention bonus. Your work throughout this crisis has been nothing short of heroic. The payment isn't about retention. It's about recognition—and you deserve it.' A big thank you should also go to the unions, the United Workers Union and the HSU, who represent the cleaners and fight for them every day. There's one more point. The majority of aged-care workers are women, and the bungling of this is just another example of how disproportionately adversely affected women have been throughout the COVID-19 crisis and the fact this government does not care. More women have lost their jobs. More women have lost work hours. At the same time, it is women who have picked up extra domestic labour. The male-dominated construction sector receives targeted taxpayer stimulus but not the childcare sector, which is 97 per cent female, and certainly not the aged-care sector. Women deserve better. Aged-care workers deserve better.

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Sitting suspended from 17:02 to 17:15

Mr SIMMONDS (Ryan) (17:15): Before I get into the substance of the motion, I would like to start by paying tribute and thanking all the aged-care workers across the country and in particular in my electorate of Ryan. We rely on aged-care workers so much in our society, and we appreciate the work that they do to care for our loved ones. But they have never been more vital than in the last few months during COVID, when they have been a vital resource protecting some of those who are most at risk. I would really like to thank them and congratulate them for rising to the challenge. I know it's been an anxious time for everybody, but they have truly gone above and beyond to make sure that our vulnerable residents were protected.

It would also be remiss, on International Cleaners Day, not to thank all the cleaners involved in aged-care facilities as well. Again, they've played such an important role in the last couple of months during COVID to keep our vulnerable residents safe.
During the pandemic, I’ve taken the time to speak with many of the facilities in the Ryan electorate, with many of the staff and many of the residents, to thank them for rising to this challenge so remarkably and so swiftly. In particular, I have spoken to the residents at the Cairns Aged Care Centre at Chapel Hill. They even took the time—keeping in mind again that it's an anxious time for them—to compose a letter to the Prime Minister. With a little bit of indulgence from the House, I will read a small excerpt. This is from the residents at the aged-care centre:

We feel safe in your care, knowing you have our best interests at heart. The guidelines you have set out have helped reassure us that we are protected when temperature checks are done religiously to all staff, visitors and for us. Our lifestyles have been somewhat curtailed; however this pandemic has invented new and interesting ways of dealing with social distancing laws and restrictions. The wonderful use of technology has enabled us to have face time with relatives, friends and grandchildren. The direction has been a great help and clarity to help us plan our lives, enabling us to put what is necessary into practice effectively and was a great assistance in reducing the risk and promoting excellence in care.

That is from some of the residents in the aged-care facility in Chapel Hill in the electorate of Ryan. It's because the Morrison government has moved so swiftly during the COVID pandemic to protect both the sector and some of our most vulnerable residents, particularly looking after the lives and livelihoods of frontline staff.

We have provided more than $850 million in measures that support both our senior Australians in aged care and the aged-care sector more broadly. These measures include an additional $205 million COVID specific support package for residential aged care providers, to ensure that our providers can continue to provide the additional safety measures that were in place and required during COVID. We know that protecting our most vulnerable from COVID means a significant extra burden on the sector. We've acted decisively to make available targeted measures to ease this pressure and ensure they retain their staff.

We are providing $234.9 million to eligible workers in residential aged care and home care during COVID to help keep them employed, to help retain our aged-care workforce during this most difficult and important time. The Morrison government's retention bonus means that eligible full-time direct care workers will receive a bonus of up to $800 per quarter if they work over the applicable time periods. Eligible home-care workers, including those providing much needed services, such as meal preparation, social support or helping with the shopping or transport to the shops, will receive up to $600 per quarter over the applicable time periods. This is in place to encourage our direct care workers to keep doing the important work that they are doing on the front line. It's disappointing that Labor have taken this opportunity, when so much good work has been done by this sector, to politicise it for cheap political points. We're disappointed, but we're not surprised.

The Morrison government has moved swiftly to ensure that frontline workers in the aged-care sector are supported and that they, in turn, are supporting the residents within their care. Again I'd like to thank them very much for all the work they are doing and assure them that, despite the lines being peddled by the Labor Party, the Morrison government will continue to ensure that they are well supported into the future as they continue to deal with the COVID crisis and look after some of our most vulnerable residents.

Ms CLAYDON (Newcastle) (17:20): I'd like to thank the shadow minister for ageing and seniors, the member for Franklin, for this motion and for her fearless efforts in holding the government to account in this critical area. Make no mistake: aged-care workers are amongst the great unsung heroes and heroines of this pandemic, and they deserve to be recognised and rewarded. That's why the aged-care retention payment is good policy. It recognises the profound contribution of aged-care workers at this time, rewards them for the sacrifices they've made every day and encourages continuity of care and employment in the sector. But the government's decision to exclude certain workers and then change the rate at which they will be paid is utterly unforgiveable.

It is imperative that all aged-care workers receive the aged-care retention bonus, regardless of their job title. It needs to be delivered as an after-tax payment, as was in fact promised in writing. These are not Labor's words; these were the minister's words in writing. There was nothing ambiguous at all about the statements and there was never an assumption that before tax would be the option, which is what the government is now proposing.

Today I'd like to share with you some of the words of Mr Alan Brewer, the CEO of Mayfield Aged Care in my electorate of Newcastle. He wrote to me to let me know his grave concerns about this very issue. As Mr Brewer put it: 'Older Australians are the most vulnerable to the potentially deadly coronavirus, and that means that our proud and passionate aged care workers have been and remain on the front line in the battle to protect our treasured elders'. Mr Brewer is absolutely right. Aged-care facilities are higher risk environments when it comes to the COVID-19 infection. Indeed, in the United States around one in three coronavirus deaths have been residential aged-care residents or staff. Just let that sink in for a moment. This is staggering, but it hasn't happened in Australia, and a lot of credit for that must go to the deeply committed and caring staff who have been absolutely vigilant and central to managing this risk of infections. They have put themselves in harm's way every single day.
They have made sacrifices in their personal lives and they have taken on extra responsibilities to keep residents engaged as restrictions really reduced the quality of life that many people were able to lead.

Despite this, 40 per cent of the workforce have been excluded from getting the aged-care retention bonus. Thousands of workers, indeed around 125,000, including cleaning staff, laundry staff, catering staff and activity staff, have all been left out of this payment retention bonus. Thousands of workers are cut out of this program by the stroke of a pen. Today being International Cleaners Day, I want to give a particular shout out to the cleaners, who have worked tirelessly to keep aged-care facilities clean and safe for residents, visitors and their families. Again I point to Mr Brewer, who wrote to me and argued, 'All staff are responsible and essential to the delivery of safe and effective care in the context of COVID-19.' I couldn't agree more. He says, 'Providing the retention bonus to some staff and not others devalues their dedicated work and has been a source of significant anger and distress amongst employees.' We know the member for Franklin brought this to our attention earlier on in this debate.

But it gets worse. The government didn't just exclude vital workers; it also went back on its written promise to workers about how much they would be getting. The initial announcement could not have been clearer, stating that for residential care staff, they would get 'a payment of up to $800 after tax per quarter' and that would be paid for two quarters. It's in black and white. But when the guidelines were released people were shocked to find that this had suddenly changed, and the payments would now be made before tax. With no warning, justification or apology the rules were changed, workers now losing up to $200 each. All aged-care workers should receive this bonus, and it should be delivered as an after-tax amount as the minister promised in writing. Thank you to everyone working in our aged-care sector.

Mrs ARCHER (Bass) (17:26): We're all aware of the devastating impact COVID-19 has had on aged-care facilities. For residents unable to see their loved ones, family members suffering heightened anxiety worrying about the health of elderly relatives, and for employees of an aged care facility it has been a stressful time working to ensure the safety of elderly residents whilst also worrying about their own health. In northern Tasmania, the restrictions put in place both federally and by the state government did an effective job of keeping residents, workers and their families safe, with no coronavirus cases reported in aged care to date in my electorate of Bass. I know it was so difficult for family members not to visit their loved ones and it has been an isolating time for residents, and I would like to say thank you for doing the right thing. Your efforts did make a difference. Thank you to all the workers in aged care for the wonderful care you have delivered under incredibly stressful circumstances. I'd also like to take this opportunity to commend my Tasmanian colleague the Minister for Aged Care and Senior Australians, Senator Richard Colbeck, for his consistent and strong leadership throughout the COVID-19 crisis. We've heard a lot of words from Labor today, but they have been very quiet about their own record on aged care. We know that Labor can't be trusted when it comes to aged care, and senior Australians know it too. Despite their high-taxing agenda at the last election, Labor provided zero additional funding in their costings for home-care places and zero funding additional funding for aged-care quality workforce or mainstream residential aged care. In contrast, the Morrison government is committed to supporting a strong and dedicated aged-care workforce that delivers high-quality aged care to senior Australians. We've put together a number of workforce measures during the COVID-19 pandemic, and these measures have ensured that aged-care participants continue to get quality care during these difficult times. These measures include emergency support where a residential aged-care facility does not have the capacity or capability to continue service delivery due to COVID; remote locums to support aged-care providers in remote Australia if they can't source staff; and access to surge workforce capability through the online platform Mable, to help providers if they are unable to fill critical skills because of infection or if staff have to self-isolate.

The COVID-19 Aged Care Support Program is reimbursing approved aged-care providers for eligible expenditure occurred during managing the direct impacts of COVID-19, and aged-care providers have been able to temporarily offer more hours to international students to ensure the care of senior and vulnerable Australians as part of the campaign to combat the impact of coronavirus.

It's important to note the $234.9 million dollar retention bonus for direct care workers working in aged care. The bonus is available to eligible workers in residential care and home care during COVID-19 to help retain them in the workforce at this critical time. The payment is specifically to encourage direct care workers providing clinical care and personal care to continue to work on the front line during the COVID-19 pandemic. Full-time direct care workers in residential care facilities, including personal care workers, registered nurses, enrolled nurses and allied health workers, will receive a retention bonus of up to $800 per quarter, paid for two quarters if they work over the applicable time periods.

Additionally, eligible home-care workers, including workers providing clinical care, personal care, in-home support activities such as meal preparation, social support, and services such as shopping, community access and transport, will receive up to $600 per quarter paid for two quarters if they work over the applicable time periods.
Employers can apply for a grant to receive the payment on behalf of their workers. The grant round opens today and will provide a huge benefit to the many northern Tasmanians employed in the aged-care field.

We've provided more than $850 million in measures to support senior Australians in aged care and in the sector more broadly—real action, real investment, that makes a tangible difference to the lives of senior Australians. But all Labor have to say on aged care is that they will reveal their policies closer to the election. Labor are waiting for someone else to do their work and their deceit shows that they don't understand the aged-care sector and are more interested in cheap politics than in genuine solutions to an important issue for senior Australians.

Ms McBRIDE (Dobell) (17:30): As COVID-19 continues to unfold, it is a particularly difficult time for older Australians and their loved ones, with the very real fear of contracting COVID-19, coupled with isolation and distress as delays for home care grow and support slips away. The Central Coast of New South Wales, my electorate, is a popular place for older Australians to live. Almost one in five locals are aged over 65, higher than both the state and national average. Aged care is also a large employer on the coast, with 24 residential aged-care providers in addition to in-home care, respite care, day centres and nursing services. As we face COVID-19, aged-care workers on the coast and across Australia have been working hard to protect older Australians and to keep them safe—and they themselves should be safe in their own workplaces. COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of personal protective equipment and the acute shortages. On 1 April, news outlets reported 80 aged-care providers with confirmed cases of COVID-19 or facing severe risk were forced to ask for access to the government's emergency stockpile of PPE that, unless there was a confirmed case of COVID-19, aged-care providers would expect delays. This is not good enough for aged-care workers or the residents they are trying to keep safe.

The lack of support for aged-care workers didn't stop at PPE. On 20 March, the Minister for Aged Care told workers he was going to support them during COVID-19 and that they would receive some financial assistance, some compensation and recognition for their work. He said that they would receive a payment of up to $800 after tax per quarter, paid for two quarters, for direct care workers' and 'two payments of up to $600 after tax per quarter, for two quarters, for those who provide care in the home'. But, when the guidelines for this support, the so-called retention bonus, were released on 5 June, the payment amounts were switched to before tax. This was after excluding 40 per cent of aged-care workers from the bonus payment altogether. Cleaning, laundry and catering staff were all ruled out of this financial support.

The confusion of the retention bonus—who is eligible and how much for—added to the strain of some of Australia's lowest paid workers on the front line of this pandemic. Aged-care workers deserve better—workers like Cherie, from Tuggarawong, who willingly complied with a requirement to stop work until returning a negative COVID-19 test after reporting cold-like symptoms to her employer. The problem was that the results took three weeks while Sheree was without pay. Aged-care workers like Cherie, protecting older Australians, shouldn't be penalized for just doing the right thing.

During COVID-19, older Australians need more support, not less, to stay in their own homes and to avoid hospital stays or early entry into residential aged care—people like Joan Witney. Joan is a widow whose son died three years ago and her closest relatives are two nieces in their sixties who live an hour away. Joan is currently struggling to get by on a level 3 package. She is going backwards financially paying for extra care and has been told it is likely to be a 12-month wait for a level 4 package. Joan is hearing and vision impaired and largely immobile after a recent hospital stay. I wrote to the Minister for Aged Care over two months ago, on 6 April, about Joan's plight and the risk older Australians face due to delays, and I am still waiting for a response.

I'd like to turn now to the isolation and loneliness many older Australians have felt during this crisis. Measures put in place have helped stop the spread but have also left families disconnected—families like Rebecca's. Rebecca contacted me because her six-year-old is desperate to see his GG, who is 97 years old. He has had his flu shot and can't understand why he can't see his great-grandmother, who he visits every fortnight. When the family asked the aged-care home, they were given a flat no. It's a relief that other family members can visit from behind perspex, but GG can't see her great-grandson, and his mum, Rebecca, tells me that 40 minutes on the phone just isn't the same. Why is this happening, when aged-care homes have been given $205 million, or the equivalent of $1,350 for each resident in regional areas, to help cover COVID-19 costs, such as staff and visitor screening?

I would like to finish by acknowledging all the aged-care workers for their efforts during this global pandemic. It has been a comfort to residents and has given families peace of mind to know that they are receiving the best of care. On International Cleaners Day, I would like to close by giving a special shout-out to cleaners working in aged care. You deserve the retention bonus, too. Every worker in aged care plays a critical role in keeping older Australians protected and safe and giving families peace of mind, to know that they are okay, as we continue to fight this global pandemic—and you should be properly supported to do your job. Sadly, applause and gratitude do not put food on the table or keep a roof over their heads.
Dr HAINES (Indi) (17:35): Our aged-care workforce has done exceptional work at the front line of the coronavirus pandemic. Their job is among the hardest of all frontline workers. In March, coronavirus was predicted to take the lives of thousands of aged-care residents. Aged-care providers put in place tough visitation rules to protect lives, and this has caused immeasurable sadness for both residents and workers—sadness but a necessary precaution. In the end, though, it is an aged-care worker who is telling a husband, a daughter, a grandson—a great-grandson in that case—that they can't visit the ones they love. That is a very difficult job.

Our aged-care workers have been patient, compassionate and professional during this difficult time. Residents reported high levels of stress and confusion, aware of how vulnerable they were. News stories about outbreaks in aged-care facilities stoked fears. Rigorous social distancing and hygiene requirements made everything slower and so much more difficult. There are easier and safer ways to make a living than working in aged care. Our workforce could have quit, but this would have been disastrous in a sector already suffering entrenched chronic understaffing, not to mention losing continuity of care—so important to wellbeing.

It has been spoken about already, but I will add my voice to it too. The retention bonus announced in March was intended to keep workers in their roles through the worst of the crisis. We know our aged-care workforce isn't doing it just to make a buck, but the payments of up to $800 for residential aged-care workers and $600 for home-care workers for two quarters was a welcome acknowledgement of their hard work in really tough circumstances. In March, the Minister for Aged Care and Senior Australians said that this payment would be after tax—he actually emailed me to tell me this—but last week we discovered that it will be before tax. This backflip isn't just a minor accounting error. According to the peak body LASA, a typical aged-care worker will lose at least 30 per cent of the retention bonus due to this change.

This is a really appalling reversal of an initiative that won widespread support from the sector when it was announced. The reasons for the reversal aren't clear. With women making up 87 per cent of residential care services and 89 per cent of in-home care services, it's women who, yet again, are bearing the brunt of this change. We have a perverse situation where the JobKeeper payment has made some 17- to 18-year-olds, who before the pandemic only did a couple of shifts a week, rather rich indeed, while a small bonus—just a small one—is being clawed back from one of the most underpaid and casualised workforces in Australia, from people, mainly women, who have actually earned it. It's not too late to fix this. The retention bonus opens today, and I call on the minister to honour his original commitment.

The pandemic has also thrown into sharp relief the understaffing of aged-care facilities. From my time on the board of St Catherine's Hostel in Wangaratta, I know that our workforce does incredible work with dedication, compassion and care. But across the sector there are simply not enough adequately skilled staff. According to research published in *The Medical Journal of Australia*, 60 per cent of residents are living in aged-care homes with unacceptable staffing levels. This is neglect with deadly consequences. Indeed, the interim report from the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety told a shocking tale of neglect and an underpaid, undervalued workforce, and it is for these people that this retention bonus is so important. On only my fourth day in this place, I supported the member for Mayo's bill calling for mandatory disclosure of staffing ratios. This will help families and older Australians make more informed choices about the facilities they consider. The member for Mayo's 2018 bill was supported by the Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport.

In the wake of the 'black summer' bushfires, I've seen that it is older people who are leading our recovery. They're the backbone of our local community organisations. They volunteer with the Red Cross, BlazeAid, the CWA and emergency food services, and sometimes it's simply their moral strength and wisdom gained over many years which bring so much comfort to our communities. In return, we owe older Australians, and those charged with their care, respect and dignity and our appreciation.

Mrs PHILLIPS (Gilmore) (17:41): I thank the member for Franklin for bringing forward this important motion. It is nothing new that our aged-care workers are absolute champions. In my electorate of Gilmore, we have one of the highest numbers of age pensioners in Australia, so it is no surprise that our aged-care workers are hugely important to us. Aged-care workers work tirelessly to help care for our loved ones—our mothers and grandmothers, fathers and grandfathers, aunts and uncles. The work is hard and far too often undervalued by this government. We know that our aged-care workers are some of the lowest paid in our community, but they do it because they genuinely care. It isn't just those who are providing the direct care that are making a difference. It isn't just those workers that are invaluable and essential. It takes a village, as they say. Cleaners, cooks, hospitality staff and laundry staff, therapy assistants and lifestyle workers, gardeners and more are all essential and all valuable workers who deserve support and recognition. Especially today, on International Cleaners Day, thank you for everything you do to care for our families. COVID-19 has created its own special challenges for the aged-care sector. Our elderly community members have been the most susceptible to the virus, and special care and consideration had to be made to protect them in aged-care homes. But this wasn't easy. So, it is hard to imagine
why the government would then turn around and deny around 40 per cent of aged-care workers the aged-care retention bonus. Aged-care workers that will miss out on the bonus include aged-care workers delivering care and support under the Commonwealth Home Support Program, therapy assistants, leisure and lifestyle workers, hospitality workers, cleaners and gardeners. They will all miss out. Why? All of these workers deserve better. They have been left out in the cold by a government that simply doesn't know or doesn't care about what they do. It's simply appalling. These workers are doing amazing things. I want to give just one example that shows the value of this work.

The Illawarra Retirement Trust Booraja Home Care program is one I have spoken about before. It is an Indigenous targeted program based in the Batemans Bay and Moruya areas that provides culturally appropriate home care to local elders. Booraja had been seeking further funding support under the Commonwealth Home Support Program, and I have been proud to help them secure enough funding for them to keep their doors open— for now at least. A couple of weeks ago I went to their office in Moruya to visit Bunja and his team. Not only does Booraja provide wonderful services to local Aboriginal elders; it also provides employment to young Aboriginal people, helping them to create connection with their community and culture.

Word of mouth has been spreading about the help Booraja can provide, from mowing lawns to helping with shopping, cleaning and more. The program pairs elders with younger carers to help create connection to country and kin and a sense of belonging for both sides. Bunja and the team were full of excitement and hope at growing their client base. They told me how their services can often extend to broader support for the family, particularly when an elder sadly passes way. It is a community affair. Their care and support go so far beyond the tasks they do. Carers are bonding with elders, discovering family and community ties that they never knew, sharing stories and memories.

Targeted programs like this are exactly where we should be investing. Creating jobs for Indigenous youth is a challenge across the country, but in my electorate, where we have the highest youth unemployment rate in New South Wales, it is absolutely critical. But the minister has been slow in committing to the necessary funding. Now they, along with 43,000 workers under the Commonwealth Home Support Program, will miss out on this retention bonus. That is simply not good enough. The Prime Minister needs to step up and reverse this decision now. Our aged-care workers deserve better.

I want to thank each and every one of our amazing aged-care workers. Your work protecting our loved ones from COVID-19 has not gone unnoticed. We are so grateful to you for all you have done. I will keep supporting all our aged-care workers until the government does the right thing and gives all aged-care workers equal and fair treatment. They deserve no less.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Gillespie): The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Veterans: Suicide

Mr THOMPSON (Herbert) (17:46): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes:

(a) the work the Government is doing to address the issue of veteran suicide with the announcement of an independent National Commissioner for Defence and Veteran Suicide;

(b) that a new independent National Commissioner will be appointed to identify and investigate suicide amongst Australian Defence Force and veteran population; and

(c) that a new Veteran Family Advocate will be appointed to lead engagement, liaison and advocacy amongst families and will be at the heart of policy and decision making with the Department of Veterans' Affairs; and

(2) recognises mental health and suicide are complex issues, but issues that are everyone's business—families, friends, employers, community organisations, governments and the ex-service community.

Jesse Bird, Brad Carr, Paul McKay, Ben Brown, Peter Atkins, Dylan Clark, Tristan Hardie, Daniel Halpin, Steven Fazel, Shaun Jenkins, Geoffrey Price and Lewis Shelley are just some of the names of the mates that we've lost to suicide. There are many, many more. There are many families that are grieving, many families that will carry the loss of a loved one through suicide for the rest of their days. My heart, my love and my prayers are with them always.

Veterans' suicide is something that has been close to my heart ever since I joined the Defence Force, and more so in this place because of the names I just read. They're the reason, when I get up in the morning, that I enjoy coming to this place, because we can make a difference here, we can all work together here. There is nothing
more important than life, and there is nothing more important than putting the knives away when it comes to such important issues.

Only last year, on Anzac Day, the Prime Minister was in Townsville. As we were heading up to a press pack, I received a call. Brad Carr had taken his own life. It was a very emotional, sobering feeling. I didn't really know what to do. The PM put his arm around me and said: 'You don't have to go into the press pack. You don't have to do this.' But I said, 'No, I will,' because, as we were going through the election campaign, I knew that standing up always for the people who don't have a voice anymore—including my friends, including people I've lived with—was something I just had to do.

I've been very fortunate to work with the Prime Minister and the Minister for Veterans' Affairs on this, because it is important. We know that a national commissioner to look into veterans' suicide and Defence suicide is something that our Defence Force has been screaming out for. I believe that this is a fantastic thing. The national commissioner will have the same powers as a royal commissioner, and it will be ongoing, a rolling commission. They will have the power to compel—the power to make people testify, the power to get evidence—and the power to work with the coroners in different states and territories.

There are family members—mothers, spouses, fathers and kids—who are for this, and rightly so. There are people who are against it. I'm not here today to tell them that they are wrong, because they are not. We all want the same thing: we all want veterans' suicides and Defence suicides not just to be low but to be stamped out. We should keep that dialogue open. It is everyone's responsibility, throughout the communities in Defence and in this place, to question what we're doing, to ask what the next steps are, because that's the only way that we'll be able to work together. I don't know how Brad Carr's mum and Jesse Bird's mum—whom I've spoken to; they're lovely, lovely people—get up every day. I don't want this to be something that's a burden on them—to have to fight for a commissioner or for the right thing. It's something that I want to take on on their behalf; that I want the government to take on on their behalf and the crossbench to take on on their behalf. This motion was co-signed by Mike Kelly, a member of the Labor Party—a fantastic man, a great member and a great veteran. He signed it not for any political pointscoring but because he knows that we must work together. If we do not work together, we will not achieve. We just have to be on the same page.

We have a family advocate who will link in with the families and work closely with Veterans' Affairs to put together policies. We've got to look at what happened before suicide, what happened at the suicide and what happens after. We need to look at where we've come from, because that's the only way that we'll know where we'll go. We need to look at trends so we can put in policies to stop veterans' suicide. I believe we are on the same page.

We are never above, never below; we're always by your side.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Gillespie): I thank the member. Do we have a seconder for the motion?

Mr Pearce: I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

Ms STEGGALL (Warringah) (17:51): This is an important motion, and I thank the member for moving it. I agree that mental health and suicide are indeed complex issues.

Warringah has a strong community of veterans, with over 1,300 veterans and over 2,500 clients of the Department of Veterans' Affairs. Some of our most iconic sites in the electorate are dedicated to diggers: Mosman War Memorial; Poppy Park in Forestville; North Head Memorial; Manly Warringah War Memorial State Park, known, of course, as Manly Dam; and Freshwater Anzac Precinct, incorporating Soldiers Avenue and Jacka Park. They are all important monuments to our veteran community.

Recognition of veterans' service brings us together on important days such as every year on Anzac Day. Service in the Australian Defence Force is more than a job. It is part of a veteran's identity, their community, their extended family and often their home. Initiatives such as the Invictus Games provide a mechanism to connect with a new community and give a sense of purpose for veterans, central to combatting mental health problems. We need to do more to build community and networks in our local areas.

The statistics are frightening. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report last year found that there were 419 suicides in serving, reserve and ex-serving personnel between 2001 and 2017. The rate of suicide for ex-serving men was 18 per cent higher than for other Australian men, and the data shows that veterans are more likely to commit suicide once retired than whilst serving, demonstrating that it is the transition that is clearly a pain point. It's not only suicide that plagues our veterans. Our veterans are also twice as likely to be imprisoned than those who haven't served. Veterans are 2½ times more likely to experience homelessness than the general population. So it's clear we need to improve the support provided to veterans to ease the transition and help them redefine themselves outside the military.
I welcome the appointment of the National Commissioner for Defence and Veteran Suicide Prevention. This role will be important in drawing attention to and working through the key issues faced by veterans in their transition and throughout their lives post-service. I also welcome the appointment of the Veteran Family Advocate. Families are the first to experience the mental health struggles of our veterans. We need to support them, integrate them in the support structure and assist veterans with their transition. These two new roles will reinforce the work already underway through the Veteran Centric Reform program. I encourage the government to continue with the full implementation of this program to realise its benefits.

I'm proud to report on the efforts of the Veterans Centre Sydney Northern Beaches, which continues to support many current and former Australian Defence Force personnel and their families. The handover between Australian Defence Force and Department of Veterans' Affairs rehabilitation teams can be a long administrative process. The veterans centre offers to bridge this gap and ensure that the transitioning member is not left unsupported whilst they navigate their way out of the service environment and into civilian life. They currently serve 137 regular clients. Twenty are on the waitlist and we have seen a 25 per cent increase in the number of inquiries during lockdown. The centre has not been immune to the economic impact of COVID-19 and the restrictions. Funds are limited and they will be seeking additional funding from both fundraising and public funds to continue their services. I encourage the Minister for Veterans' Affairs to consider advancing projects that will assist—for example, the 10 Terminal facility at Middle Head, which has the support of the local community.

I support this motion and the attention devoted to this important issue of veterans' suicide. It's essential that we continue to support the men and women who have served in the Australian Defence Force and their families. The strength of the community in the ADF is one that we would do well to strive towards in our local communities. Doing this and bringing our veterans with us may well assist in transforming the issue. On this, I believe we are all united to make change.

Mr PEARCE (Braddon) (17:56): I'm honoured and humbled today to speak in support of this motion. My good mate the member for Herbert also acknowledged the member for Solomon and his service. On the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month each year, Australia pauses. We bow our heads and we reflect on the sacrifice that our veterans make and our defence personnel make in laying down their life for their country—one day a year. But for veterans and those who have served, those memories go a little further, and it's every day that we remember. Today, I simply want to share with you what I remember on Remembrance Day. In the months preceding my discharge from the Australian Regular Army, I was called to a civilian police station. They put me in the back of the car and took me to the hospital, down to the basement and to the morgue, where I was required, as a sergeant major of that unit, to identify one of my soldiers, who had taken his life in the early hours of the morning. It was a hard thing to do, but duty calls and you do your duty. I then returned to the unit, and the commanding officer and I called the rest of the unit together, and we broke that tragic news to those brothers and sisters that he had in the unit. I remember the look in their eyes and I remember how devastated they were. I then took six or eight of his closest mates down to his room in the lines and we packed his gear up—his personal effects, letters, iPod—and the Military Police made an inventory. I remember trying to work with those young blokes through that process. We packed his gear up and I told them to keep one uniform out, his special uniform, and later on I would take that back to the funeral director where I helped the funeral director dress him in his polyester uniform. I remember standing there and telling him that I was sorry that I didn't see this, that I didn't recognise it, and 15 years later I'm still sorry.

I remember the funeral where those eight mates carried their friend to his final resting place, in a coffin draped in the Australian national flag, with his slouch hat, his bayonet and accoutrements, and I remember the look in their eyes. I remember the sound of The Last Post, and, every time I've heard it since, I remember all the funerals that I have attended. I remember, at the conclusion of the funeral, folding the Australian national flag, and I accompanied the commanding officer and we presented it to the next of kin, and I remember the look in that mother's eyes as she took that flag and she clenched it. She knew that that flag was the only thing that she had of her own flesh and blood, her precious son. I guarantee you it's more often than Remembrance Day that she remembers. It's every day and every night. That is why this rolling commissioner and their role to be there every day, day in day out, is so important. Yes, we could have a royal commission, a one-off thing. But this will go on every day, and we need to be there to protect them.

The other point I make is about the effects on a family; not only the military family but the personal family. I think back to that mother, and I applaud and support the national family advocate which was co-announced with the national commission, because families are important. I thank my brothers that are here today. We'll always be brothers in the military. Lest we forget.

Mr GOSLING (Solomon) (18:01): Of course I'm pleased to support this motion. At the outset I want to say that of course we take this issue of veteran suicide very seriously, and I want to acknowledge all the previous
speakers, but in particular those with lived experience who are working to reduce suicide in Defence and the veterans community. I'm doing something about it, myself personally, both in my community and nationally, and I want the government of the day, whatever government it might be, the current government or a future government led by the Labor Party, to do everything they can about it. Let's be straight. The government's announcement in February of a new National Commissioner for Defence and Veteran Suicide Prevention and a Veteran Family Advocate came after widespread calls, from veterans primarily, including the gentleman opposite, media becoming very much involved, and calls from Labor that action needed to be taken on veteran suicide. It is a combined effort of a lot of stakeholders, because they, like we, were sick of the unbelievable rate of suicide in the Defence and veterans community.

As I reliably understand it, the Prime Minister said to the Department of Veterans' Affairs, 'Give me something, but anything but a royal commission.' If he wants to correct the record on that he can, but that's what I reliably understand. At the time when this was announced, Labor cautiously welcomed the national commissioner. I thought it was an important step forward. We didn't want to let the perfect—nothing's perfect, but a royal commission would have been as close to—we didn't want to let that become the enemy of the good. We're also broadly supportive of the new Veteran Family Advocate, because obviously families play a primary role in mental health and suicide prevention and they need to be supported.

But since then, I think it's fair to say—and I think a lot of veterans and some of the families that have lost love ones perhaps suspected this—that the national commissioner, unlike what the Prime Minister said, won't in fact be better than a royal commission, as has been claimed by the PM and others. I think the PM's got a lot of work to do to convince the veteran community that he is genuine in wanting to tackle this issue. A growing concern, shared by many veterans, is that this could be simply a bit of marketing spin which won't accomplish what a royal commission would. I think it's fair to say that this permanent commissioner could have been recommended by a royal commission, as well as a whole series of other recommendations; but unfortunately we've just gone straight to what the PM thought was going to be the solution. Or perhaps it was just the work-around. This permanent commissioner is important; however, only a full royal commission with a clear start and end date will achieve everything that needs to be achieved if we are to honour veterans. This national commissioner could end up being little more than a review of state coroner reports into deaths at the hands of young patriot Australians. That's the danger. As I said, this permanent commissioner could have been a recommendation of a full royal commission, but it looks like we won't be able to see that achieved in the short term. It won't be until we see the legislation for this national commissioner that we'll be able to scrutinise it and see if it will indeed have all the powers of a royal commission. But I welcome this motion and I congratulate the member for Herbert for it. It's a step in the right direction.

Mr WALLACE (Fisher) (18:06): I rise in support of the motion put by the member for Herbert. I want to acknowledge his service and I want to acknowledge the service of the member for Solomon and the member for Braddon, who are in this chamber tonight, and of course all the members and senators who have represented this country in uniform. I've never served in uniform, but I have a great respect and affinity for those that have. I recently held an event for veterans to make an announcement in my own electorate. A young veteran by the name of Peter Kennedy spoke at that event. I thought his words were very salient.

He said: 'Veterans: we have a few scratches. Some of us are a little bent out of shape. But, if you work with us and help us back into shape, you're going to get a great product for a long time. Veterans value, and in fact embody, the values of respect, loyalty, teamwork and integrity—everything we would want in an upstanding citizen and a great employee.'

Sadly, the statistics are very, very sobering when it comes to men's suicide, because it's in the very large part men who have served in the ADF who have taken their own life. What is very telling are the stats. When men serve in the ADF—and it might sound like I'm being sexist, but it's only because what the stats reveal about the men who have taken their lives—they actually have a 48 per cent lower chance than civilians their own age of taking their lives. When they are in the services there's a 48 per cent less chance. But when they discharge, that 48 per cent less jumps to an increase of 18 per cent over and above what the rates are for civilian men who they take their own lives. So something is going very wrong here.

When men and women serve in the ADF—and I want to acknowledge my friend who's just entered the chamber for his service as well, the member for Stirling—they have that sense of purpose and a great sense of mission and a sense of tribe that is probably beyond anything else that we see in the civilian world. Perhaps the closest we might see to it is in the police force. They belong to that tribe, and the tribe is everything to them. Then, maybe it's because of their own doing or maybe because they've been discharged for medical reasons or whatever it might be, they lose that sense of tribe. They lose that sense of purpose. One minute the Australian government was entrusting them to fly, drive or sail multimillion-dollar, perhaps even multibillion-dollar,
equipment, and there's a great degree of self-respect that comes with that. But when they discharge and they lose that sense of identity, sadly—and this is not all—some have trouble getting a job the very next day. Why is that? How do we work with this? The best way, in my view, to deal with suicide is to ensure that we provide meaningful jobs and that we as a government, we as a nation, respect the skills that they have learnt.

I want to address very quickly the commission that has been set up. It is better than a royal commission because it has the powers of a standing royal commission. Royal commissions have start dates and end dates. A standing royal commission just does that—it will go on and will address each and every suicide that arises out of the ADF or veterans, and I really want to support this motion.

Ms TEMPLEMAN (Macquarie) (18:11): I also acknowledge those on the opposite side and on our side who've served. It is an amazing thing that you have done, and your service isn't forgotten. I have Richmond and Glenbrook RAAF bases in my electorate, and there's hardly a visit there where the issue of veteran suicide doesn't come up. Cautiously, people have shared with me their insights into the mental health challenges of mates during and after service. I've also got many former defence personnel living in the electorate, or their parents or partners. They're from Army, Navy and Air Force, and they talk to me about what they see their child or their partner, or their husband or wife, go through. They sometimes try to describe for me their own experience of making the transition from the Defence Force to the civilian world.

I'll never forget one young man who brought me the paperwork for his DVA claim. His so far unsuccessful DVA claim was three folders deep. This was a man struggling with mental illness and battling to be able to establish a new post-defence life, and yet he was expected to work through stacks of paperwork. Given what I know about mental illness and what I've seen, I was just horrified at what people were being asked to do. That has to change.

Where I've had the greatest insight though into the challenges that Defence Force personnel face when they leave the military is from my two attachments as part of the Australian Defence Force Parliamentary Program—one to the RAAF Base Amberley and the other, last year, to Iraq and the Middle East operations. I was only part of Camp Taji in the Middle East base for a week or so, but I got a glimpse into the way defence wraps itself around you; you train together, you laugh at work health and safety PowerPoints together while still heeding the message of what to do or not to do if you're injured, you eat together, you exercise together and the little free time you have is spent together. The people you are with become like your family for that time. Your own family feels a really long way away, and even I felt a disconnect as I got wrapped up in the single focus that the operation has, learning new things and working to be part of a team, albeit, in my case, a very temporary one. I can see that when this is for real, when this is the life you've chosen for years, there's no time to daydream; peoples' lives really are at stake. There's a place for everyone in defence, and everyone knows their role and works as a team.

What my time with defence did for me was crystallise the understanding of why it's so hard to transition from defence to civilian life for some people. Between 2001 and 2017, 419 serving and ex-serving ADF personnel died by suicide. But while the suicide rate for men still serving was 48 per cent lower than the general population, the rate is 18 per cent higher for those who had left the military. For women, it's similar. There's no question that we must do better than this.

Researchers have found that while the camaraderie, discipline and respect can make the military life-changing for someone, the sudden end to it can be lethal. I was moved by a quote from the research of Kellie Toole of Adelaide University and Elaine Waddell of Flinders University. They were told by one veteran, I actually went back and asked if I could mow the lawns for free, just so I could be around them still. They wouldn't allow it. As the researchers wrote in their article in The Conversation:

If ex-service men could maintain contact with the Australian Defence Force through peer support and informal networks, their identity and sense of purpose could be maintained …

I hope we see innovative approaches to supporting ex-service men and women.

The new independent National Commissioner for Defence and Veteran Suicide Prevention is a start, but of course we would have liked to have seen a full royal commission, with the full powers of a royal commission, as was called for by the family of Jesse Bird. The inquest into his tragic death was scathing and found significant systemic failures in the Department of Veterans' Affairs' treatment of Jesse before he took his own life. The report found that DVA had acted contrary to its own policy and legislation and that it handled Jesse's permanent impairment claim without compassion or empathy. That is an indictment, a sad reality, that cannot be repeated.

The jury's out on whether the steps the government's taken will be enough, but the new Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy hopefully will go some way and prove some effectiveness. We do need to be creative. We need to look at how we support family and friends, how we help people understand the transportability of the skills that defence personnel have. There's so much we can do, and we want to do it with the government.
Mr CONNELLY (Stirling) (18:17): I would like to begin by acknowledging the service of those in the parliament, including the member for Herbert, who've served in the military, and also by acknowledging the passion, as expressed by my colleagues on both sides of the chamber, of those who haven't served but who equally have a passion for the defence of Australia and its values and all of those service men and women, past and present.

I know I speak for all current and former serving members when I say that pulling on the uniform is a great and enduring privilege. To have that sense of respecting and supporting and defending the values of our country and its people is a wonderful reward. There are also other rewards which flow from service. In my own case, like many, I've received personal benefits. I've received a tertiary education. I've had the privilege of leading Australian men and women on overseas operations. Of course, I've had the ability to practice different skills, like teamwork, like self-discipline and like leadership in small groups. Many others also come out with technical skills that they can bring. I know we all acknowledge the value that service men and women bring when they transition. About 5½ thousand people leave defence each year, and when they do transition into civilian life, they bring a wonderful range of skills to businesses, to volunteer organisations and to their local communities.

But of course there are those, given the unique nature of military service, for whom there are scars that remain, and not all of them are visible. Since 2001, there have been over 400 deaths by suicide in the defence and veteran community. This government will continue to make every investment we can to prevent suicides. Providing timely and comprehensive assistance to defence personnel and veterans is absolutely essential. A number of veterans that I know, including my own wife, have accessed mental health services. I think one of the most important and beneficial changes that's been made recently is, of course, the provision of free mental health services, based on serving at least a single day in full-time service. This support absolutely saves lives. It's based on needs, it's uncapped and it's available 24/7.

This government is committed to turning a new page on this chapter in supporting veterans and their families. Despite the challenges of dealing with the summer bushfires, with the twin crises—both economic and health—presented by coronavirus, the government—and I know they're supported by the opposition and all those in this House—remain steadfast in our support to veterans and families. On 5 February, we saw the Prime Minister announce the establishment of a new National Commissioner for Defence and Veteran Suicide Prevention to inquire into deaths by suicide of serving and former ADF personnel. A dedicated government task force is now working to establish the office of the national commissioner, and this will have powers like a royal commission to undertake full inquiries into suicides and be absolutely committed to putting veterans and their families first. But, unlike a royal commission, this will also be permanent and ongoing.

In this year's budget the government provided more than $11½ billion to support over 280,000 veterans and their families across Australia. This includes $230 million in veteran mental health treatment. There's also immediate income support available for veterans and extra support for those with extra needs. Families, I must mention, are an absolutely core component of the mental health and wellbeing of all of us, including for veterans. That's why it's wonderful to see that families feature so centrally in this family advocate initiative. In my own home state of Western Australia, work continues on building and restoring the veterans transition centre, or VTC, in Jarrahdale. It's a wonderful spot on 42 acres, with a bunch of log cabins, and it's an environment where military veterans and their families can attend, receive services and spend time together, as my own family have done.

The Morrison government has continued to keep the welfare of veterans and their families steadfastly at the top of our agenda, and we always will.

Ms WELLS (Lilley) (18:22): I'm pleased to support this motion by my friend the member for Herbert. In 2019, as many people have referenced in this debate, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare revealed that the suicide rates amongst male veterans who had left the armed services were almost one-fifth higher than Australian men in the general population. Since that report was released last year, I made the point of reaching out to veterans families and advocates in my community to find out why they think the suicide rates are so rife amongst returned servicemen and what they want their representative in this parliament to do about it. That being said, I welcome the new national commissioner as a step forward and, if it proceeds, we're committed to working constructively with the government to ensure that the office is resourced properly and able to do its job to the best of its abilities.

Going forward, there is still much more we can do to address veterans' mental health and suicide more broadly. Mental health and suicide are issues where families, friends, employers, community and ex-service organisations and governments all have a role to play. For some time we have been calling on the government to do more to support veterans and the organisations that support them, particularly during the current coronavirus crisis. We welcome the fact that the government took on board our suggestion to expand telehealth coverage to mental...
health, which has been available to veterans during the pandemic. But more needs to be done to ensure that there are adequate mental health services to meet the very high levels of demand we have seen during this emergency.

With the cancellation of Anzac Day services this year, veteran organisations have really struggled to generate income to fund vital welfare and advocacy services for local veterans who rely on this support at a community level. I'm concerned by the fact that, so far, the stimulus packages have not included more substantial support for charities and nonprofit organisations, as this health emergency has had such a huge impact on many smaller ex-service organisations and their members, such as those in my electorate. We have been warned that more resources will be needed for frontline mental health and welfare services to support older and vulnerable veterans who may be in self-isolation and at greater risk of mental illness, of suicide and of domestic and family violence.

Ex-service organisations have also told us that we, as a federal parliament, need to urgently increase the DVA fee schedules for health services, including psychologists and psychiatrists, to reduce the excessive long wait times for veterans seeing mental health professionals at present. Veteran suicide campaigner Julie-Ann Finney's son David took his own life after being told that he would have to wait more than six months to see a DVA funded psychiatrist. So fixing this is critical if we are going to stop these needless deaths. Michael Frawley, the president of the Banyo RSL sub-branch in my electorate of Lilley, has suggested that service men and women returning from overseas service should automatically receive a gold card, to make sure veterans they can access quality mental and dental care and avoid the stress of applying and waiting for the card.

I would like to send a special thank you to the Banyo RSL sub-branch and their welfare and pensions officer Maureen Sargent and to Geebung RSL Sub-Branch's welfare officers Merv Ward OAM and Evelyn Radford for continuing their excellent support for veterans during this pandemic. Special thoughts are with Mr Gordon Wallace, a highly commended World War II veteran and one of our few precious remaining Rats of Tobruk, who is going through a poor health patch at present, and my thoughts and prayers are extended to both Gordon and to his wife, Trish. I would also like to highlight the work of Graeme Park and the Military Brotherhood, a motorcycle club who check in on the welfare of northside veterans and provide street feeds to locals. That might be of particular interest to you, Deputy Speaker Wallace.

I would like to finish by speaking directly to the members of the Kedron-Wavell, the Nundah-Northgate, the Geebung-Zillmere and the Banyo RSL sub-branches, in my electorate of Lilley. This year has been a really difficult year, especially because we couldn't meet in person to commemorate Anzac Day, and that has had huge consequences for you locally in your planning. I look forward to seeing you all again soon, now that the public restrictions are in the process of lifting. Labor will continue work with the government and the Australian veterans to identify where there are gaps or where more needs to be done, so that we do get the best possible care and support for veterans and for their families and do all we can to support veterans' mental health and prevent suicide. To that end, I want to recognise the work that has been done, the recent announcements in this space and, in particular, the member for Herbert, for bringing attention to these important issues through this motion. I thank the member for his service as well as the member for Stirling and the member for Solomon for all of their advocacy on veteran mental health and prevention of suicide. I commend the motion to the chamber.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Public Service Contractors

Ms CLAYDON (Newcastle) (18:27): I move:

That this House:

(1) acknowledges that:

(a) an effective public service relies on skilled public servants who have fair and equitable conditions of employment and job security;

(b) the Government's arbitrary average staffing level (ASL) policy is:

(i) driving privatisation as it forces agencies to outsource their core functions;

(ii) causing a blowout in spending on contractors, consultants and labour hire; and

(iii) leading to a hollowing out of the public service; and

(c) evidence to the Australian Public Service (APS) Review indicates that contractors cost 40 per cent more than permanent APS employees;

(2) notes that:

(a) the Australian National Audit Office Information Report No. 19 of 2017-18, Australian Government Procurement Contract Reporting, indicates that in 2016-17:

(i) Government spending on consultants was close to $700 million, up from around $380 million in 2013; and
(ii) "the big four" had 1,617 consultancy contracts worth $502.1 million since 2012-13;
(b) more than $400 million has been spent on privatising Department of Human Services call centres, including a $135 million contract for Stellar Asia Pacific, $132 million to Concentrix Services, $120 million to Datacom Connect and $36 million to Serco Citizen Services;
(c) the National Disability Insurance Agency:
(i) recorded a 600 per cent increase in consultants and contractors over two years—from $70 million in 2016 to $430 million in 2018; and
(ii) has previously stated its staffing levels would be 10,595 staff in 2018-2019—this is now capped at 3,230 in the 2019-20 budget with core functions such as local area coordinators outsourced; and
(d) the Government's billion dollar plan to privatise Australia's visa system will lead to increased visa costs, data and national security risks and job losses; and

(3) calls on the Government to:
(a) abolish the arbitrary and damaging ASL policy;
(b) ensure that workers doing the same job get the same pay to stop the use of labour hire from undermining the pay and conditions of existing workers; and
(c) end the secrecy on government spending on contractors, consultants and labour hire firms.

I am very pleased to be able to raise in the parliament this evening this important issue about the Australian Public Service, particularly at a time when we are starting to put our minds towards what sort of country it is that we want to build for the future in our nation in this post-COVID-19 world. COVID-19 has demonstrated that, when the will is there, big changes can in fact be made, and that this can happen very quickly. It's also demonstrated the importance of a strong, responsive public service.

Let's be clear, the Australian Public Service, or the APS, is a world-class body, staffed by professional men and women that have delivered unparalleled quality, expertise and value for money to Australians for decades. But, rather than recognising the value of this accumulated expertise and experience, this government has set about tearing it down, piece by piece, through a sneaky campaign of privatisation by stealth. A plan to shrink the size and capacity of the Public Service and to transfer work to the private sector has been underway for some time. Just think about the ill-fated attempt to privatise the visa system, which saw Liberal Party donor Scott Briggs lead a bid to run a $1 billion system. If this had proceeded, it would have imposed an immense risk to our national security and undermine sovereignty around our borders.

But there are other less obvious things that this government does every day to undermine and fundamentally weaken the APS. They are things like driving down pay and conditions, slashing permanent contracts and replacing them with casual ones, and forcing public servants to go without pay rises for years. All of this demonstrates the grave lack of respect the government holds for APS workers. It makes people think twice about taking up or indeed staying in APS jobs.

Another severely damaging practice has been staffing caps—unrealistic and arbitrary limits that the government has placed on how many public servants can be hired, regardless of actual need. Of course, this hasn't reduced spending, because the work still needs to be done. Now agencies are just being forced to outsource their core functions to the private sector instead of building in-house experience. This has seen government spending on consultants climb at a breathtaking rate. For example, the NDIS alone registered a 600 per cent increase in consultants and contractors in only two years. This is staggering. With spending on the big four consultancy firms nearly tripling under the Liberals, it is no wonder that the Australian Financial Review ran a story in May last year titled, 'Consultants breathe a sigh of relief over coalition victory.'

We've seen a similarly damaging explosion in the number of labour hire workers employed, as agencies have had to go to the private sector for staff to fulfil their basic responsibilities to the Australian people. Indeed, the Auditor-General has revealed that the Liberals have spent over $2 billion on outside contractors since they came to power. Just let that sink in for a moment: $2 billion on outside contractors. Again, far from saving money, this puts a heavy impost on the budget, with evidence to the APS review indicating that contractors actually cost 40 per cent more than permanent employees, despite being paid less. The difference, of course, goes directly to the bottom lines of private labour hire companies. We have also seen great swathes of the public service carved off and handed over to private companies to run, companies like the multinational Serco, which is best known as an operator of prisons and detention centres. What is less known is that they are the official employer of more than 10,000 APS workers.

If there is anything we've learned after the years of failed neo-liberalism experiment, it's that privatisation almost never works. All it delivers to the APS is buckling, conflicted services, ballooning deficits, a rapidly
shrinking base of in-house knowledge and experience, and a country that is increasingly beholden to private companies.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wallace): Is the motion seconded?

Mr Hill: I second the motion.

Mr TIM WILSON (Goldstein) (18:33): It won't shock you to find that I oppose this motion. It is a great privilege to be able to stand up and give a speech on this motion, because it seemed for a while that the opposition wasn't going to support their own motion. But truthfully, I'm glad that the member for Bruce has done so, because it gives us an opportunity to address some of the fundamental problems coming from the member for Newcastle. The member for Newcastle ended her speech by saying that the neo-liberalism bogey man experience has come to get everybody, and that there is no benefit to actually making sure that institutions can actually be run by the private sector. I was asked recently, rhetorically I might add, in an article whether there has ever been a bigger capitulation, in terms of public policy in Australia. Somebody was using a particular example. I highlighted to them that yes, there was, against ideology, and it was that the Labor Party, the party which is committed to the socialist objective, was the one that privatised Qantas and the Commonwealth Bank. Don't get me wrong: I think they got it right. But according to the member for Newcastle, they got that wrong. This is why they can no longer claim the mantle of the Hawke-Keating legacy, because they are even abandoning the idea that they think that a private bank is a good idea. Maybe they are digging former Prime Minister Chifley from the grave and trying to resurrect the idea that everything should be nationalised and banks should be taken into public hands.

An honourable member: Food production!

Mr TIM WILSON: Exactly! My knowledgeable colleague makes the point that there are services that are so critical that they cannot possibly be run by the private sector. Food and agriculture is a classic example. But actually we know that when food is put into hands of the socialist means of production, it doesn't lead to bounty; it leads to bread lines.

An honourable member: Come on, Venezuela!

Mr TIM WILSON: Yes, Venezuela. Their great success story in oil is one of many ways to bankrupt a country. This motion is a farce from beginning to end. In fact the motion itself almost makes me want to look up parliamentary practice and House practice to understand what the formal definition of 'misleading the parliament' is.

Here is the reality: the Commonwealth supports a number of public servants to do a job to enable the government to do its job and to assist the people of Australia. It is an entirely reasonable thing to do. Of course, you don't need to constantly increase the number of public servants in perpetuity. There are entirely reasonable, logical reasons that you would outsource activities, because skills or knowledge might sit outside the public service. Believe it or not, an all-knowing, perfect government does not exist. We might have division of labour. We might realise that there are advantages, because some skills may only be needed for a short time, or you might be able to purchase certain types of contracts. The logic of the opposition is that the government should essentially do all because in the end those skills must rest within the public sector.

Instead, this government looks at taxpayers' money, makes rational, reasoned decisions about what is best value and what will enable the public service to do its job properly and deliver for the people of Australia. So we don't believe in the unending increase in the public service. We agree in it doing its job well and resourcing it well to enable the public service. Be logical reasons that you would outsource activities, because skills or knowledge might sit outside the public service. The logic of the opposition is that the government should essentially do all because in the end those skills must rest within the public sector.

Let's face it, today's modern Australian Labor Party simply does not represent working people. Today it is the party of public sector workers and organised capital, and that is the basis of everything they fight for in this chamber. You can talk about tradies these days and, frankly, the Labor Party won't say a word. Independent contractors? They're not interested. But start criticising or saying there should be some sort of constraint on the Public Service and watch the outrage. If you really want to see them angry, just ask them about industry superannuation. They will lose their nut, because, in the end, they only represent their own interests. They're only representing the people who pay for the memberships, and in Victoria today we've seen just how extensive that patronage network and their voter motivation is. (Time expired.)

Mr HILL (Bruce) (18:38): I'll say at the outset that the government's ongoing cuts to and privatisation of the Australian Public Service is undermining the quality of services to Australians: to people who can't get a consistent NDIS plan in any kind of sensible time, because they are all labour hire contractors; to people waiting for their age pension claim month after month after month because Centrelink doesn't have any staff; to people who are wondering how the once competent Public Service could make a $60 billion stuff-up. It's because there are not enough sensible human beings left checking the work. My personal favourite under this government is the
visa and citizenship processing. You tried to privatisate the $1 billion system to your Liberal Party mates, but you abandoned the tender and wasted $92 million of taxpayer money! Ninety-two million dollars cash: gone on a failed tender trying to get rid of public servants. Australians are sick of privatisation and they're not buying it anymore! I want to put some facts into this debate and actually set out how the government is doing this. It's all being driven, fundamentally, by arbitrary caps on the Public Service, which forces privatisation by stealth—even where it's proven to be cheaper to do the work in-house or build capability in-house. It's no accident; it's a deliberate agenda to cap staff numbers and force the privatisation.

We heard from the previous speaker, the member for Goldstein, that it's 'reasonable and logical'—he used his 'reasonable' voice—that, since coming to office, the Liberals have cut the number of public servants by 18,000. That's a 10 per cent cut in raw numbers, which is bad enough, but in real terms Australia's population has grown. So with a growing and ageing population and a growing demand for public services, instead of meeting this demand, the Liberals cut and privatise. Why? There is no reason. The only reason the government has ever given for this number is that it was the number when John Howard left office. That's it. That is the reason for the number, a magical golden era. Thirteen years on, since 2007, Australia's population has grown by five million people, or 23 per cent. But if we look at the number of public servants per person in Australia, a per capita proxy measure, it's a cut of 22.1 per cent in real terms under the Liberals formula. It's deliberate.

There are two ways this is happening, this privatisation. The first way is that the staffing caps force outsourcing to temporary casual labour hire firms. The Auditor-General recently revealed more than $2 billion blown on casual workers because of the staffing caps. The explosion in the spending on labour hire firms raises serious value-for-money and probity questions. We proved this through the Public Accounts and Audit Committee last year. We had departments in here saying it costs us 40 per cent more to hire the IT contractors for years in the ABS, and they're only wasting those millions of dollars of money because this bloody government's ideology—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wallace): Order!

Mr HILL: I withdraw. The government's ideology of privatisation is driving this waste. They pretend it's a competitive process, but the data is very revealing. There are these magical, opaque little panels where you get on the government's mates list, through the process, and then departments can buy from you. One lucky company got almost half of the $1.1 billion spending spree on recruitment firms. One! And 11 lucky firms scored more than 80 per cent of $1.1 billion spending, although there were 61 companies on the magic list. More than $4.2 billion was awarded through 10,000 individual contracts, which were awarded past the panel's end date, breaching all the procurement rules.

The second way that the government's rorting this and privatising the Public Service is through outsourcing non-consulting work to the big four expensive firms. There has been an explosion of contracting, worth billions of dollars, to the big four consulting firms over the last few years. The graph is almost exponential. But, interestingly, a decreasing percentage of this work is actually flagged as consultancies on the government's tender system, so that means one of two things: either they're covering it up and departments are not flagging this work as consultancies, because they don't like all the articles showing the blowout in consultancies; or, I think more likely, the staffing caps are forcing departments to contract out low-value work, which should be done more cheaply in departments. We've proven this. It should be done more cheaply. The government says: 'We're the small-government people. We hate waste.' No, you hate public servants. You want to privatisate all this work, at greater cost, to the big four and these labour hire firms. Why? There is no reason except mad ideology.

COVID-19 has triggered a deep nationwide reflection on big issues: rebuilding our national capability and the overcasualisation of work. The UK and the US are further down this privatisation road, and their responses have been disasters. The case for rebuilding the public sector is overwhelming.

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (18:43): It's very interesting to follow the member for Bruce on a day like today, but I'm sure if I was a Labor member in Victoria I would be screaming at the top of my lungs—anything I could do to divert the attention from the Trotskyists versus the Leninists fight that we are now seeing down there in Victoria. So even though the member for Bruce may have been very loud and may have been very agitated and may have been very excited, there is a reason.

Let's just get to the facts of this debate. Let's look at the facts that completely debunk the entire premise that the Labor Party are coming in here with today. The 2019-20 Budget Paper No. 4 shows that the overall cost of government administration, which includes public sector staffing, consultants and contractors, as a proportion of overall government expenditure has decreased from 8.5 per cent of the first year of the Labor government in 2007-08 to seven per cent. So we're getting more resources for less cost. The suggestion that consulting is somehow at record levels is simply not borne out by the facts or the evidence.
The recent ANAO Australian Government Procurement Contract Reporting Update provided a broad analysis of AusTender data over a 10-year period, from 2009-10 to 2018-19. Page 43 of that report said:

The nominal contract value under the consultancy code reported in AusTender in 2018-19 is broadly the same level as it was in 2009-10.

In real terms, the 2018-19 value of a consultancy contract is $91.6 million lower than the 2009-10 value. Furthermore, the annual value of the consultancies on AusTender as a proportion of the total value of contracts has remained relatively stable at approximately one per cent since 2011-12, having fallen from 1.6 per cent in 2009-10. These facts simply dispel the myths behind this entire motion. What we have seen here today is an attack on the private sector.

There are some very interesting numbers. The latest Australian Bureau of Statistics catalogue No. 6302 on average weekly earnings looks at the difference between public sector wages and private sector wages. You would have thought that those in the private sector would be paid more because they have more risk, but, no, in November 2019, the date of the last ABS report, full-time adult average weekly ordinary earnings were $1,812 in the public sector compared to $1,617 in the private sector. So, if you are working in the public sector as compared to the private sector, you are being paid 12 per cent more than the private sector. Yet, the Labor Party come in here and want to attack private sector workers that pay for our public sector. That is without looking at the greater risk that private sector workers have, which we have seen during this coronavirus pandemic—the restrictions and the lockdowns.

The ABS numbers also show that in April alone 220,500 full-time jobs were lost because of the coronavirus. You could fill the MCG twice with the full-time jobs lost because of the coronavirus. How many of those were in the public sector? I would say virtually zero. It is the private sector that has worn the full hit on this. Additionally, there are another 373,800 part-time jobs that were lost in the economy in April alone. Again, the vast, vast majority of those were in the private sector. So, it is disgraceful to hear the Labor Party coming in at this stage of our economic history and making these attacks upon the private sector during a private member’s motion that has no factual basis whatsoever.

Ms Murphy (Dunkley) (18:48): I rise to support this very important motion. Recently, the Treasurer suggested that the next election will be fought on the role of the government. Well, if this government has its way, there will be a public service so denuded that there’s not much left to deliver any policy agenda, let alone for there to be a proper role for government. Much of this is because of the arbitrary ASL cap, an increase in outsourcing, with $2 billion spent on casual workers, and a commitment to using consultants instead of building up the capacity of our public service. Under this Liberal-National government, nearly 18,000 jobs have been cut from the public service since June 2013. Some 2,270 people lost their jobs from Services Australia in the last financial year alone. Nearly 4,000 full-time staff in roles at the ATO have gone since the coalition came to power. Cuts to Australia's Border Force patrols have occurred to save on fuel. There have been nearly $150 million in cuts to research funding for the CSIRO and other scientific agencies. The Bureau of Meteorology's local forecasting services have been cut and its budget reduced by $46 million over the next three years. Over 250 government bodies have been abolished, including pretty important bodies like the National Preventive Health Agency and the National Water Commission. The coalition has also tried and failed to abolish important agencies like the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner and the Australian Renewable Energy Agency. Of course, we also had the coalition's attempts to privatise visa processing.

Under this government there has been a blowout in waiting times for the National Disability Insurance Scheme. There has been a blowout in waiting times for aged-care home packages. Core wait times for child support agencies have increased, and 48 million calls to Centrelink went unanswered in 2017-18. Of course, in my part of the world, the government tried to close the Mornington Centrelink and Medicare office and then had to extend it for six months when they saw the queues down the road as a result of the pandemic.

Of course, we know that there has been $200 million in cuts to the ABC and SBS, and over a thousand ABC staff members have had their jobs cut. This matters. The ABC matters in Australia. It is a public institution and a public service. Don't just take it from me; take it from Grant Coward, who lives in Seaford. This is from an email that he sent me and is more than happy for me to read out in the parliament: ‘The following comments, if I may, are directed to the Liberal-National government in relation to the ABC. Stop emaciating the ABC and elect a board in which the country can have confidence. The $1.1 billion spent by Australian taxpayers is money well spent. Out of the $400 billion 2018 tax revenue received by the Commonwealth, spending of $1.1 billion on the ABC—’

Mr Pasin interjecting—
Ms MURPHY: I'm sorry, a member of the government is currently heckling Grant Coward, a constituent who is having his views put to the parliament. That's the view they have.

Mr Pasin: Point of order!

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wallace): Order!

Mr Pasin: On relevance. The motion speaks to the Public Service. The member opposite is talking about the ABC. Members of staff at the ABC are not members of the Public Service.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I thank the member for Barker. The member for Dunkley is being relevant and can continue.

Ms MURPHY: Thank you. As Mr Coward says:

… spending of $1.1 billion on the ABC represents a comparatively minuscule amount of just over one-quarter of one per cent of Commonwealth revenues, and it's worth it. Who in the commercial world, with all free-to-air stations complaining of declining revenues, is going to produce quality programs like Four Corners, Foreign Correspondent, 7.30, Insiders, Australian Story, Q&A, Gruen, Catalyst, The Drum, The Business, You Can't Ask Thai, Landline, Back Roads, Home Delivery, Matter of Fact and many other quality programs, including the regular news? Are commercial stations going to welcome another entrant into the commercial scene, further diluting the revenue to each station?

Mr Coward thinks not. Further reducing the ABC's budget, or even a partial sell-off—do it at your electoral peril. That's the message to the government from my electorate.

The public institutions matter, and the Public Service matters. It's about the quality that is delivered to Australian citizens, and we are not going to stop fighting for them.

Ms PAYNE (Canberra) (18:53): I rise today to speak about the average staffing level offset rule, or staffing cap, and the impact it is having on our Australian Public Service and our nation. Constituents who work in the Public Service regularly tell me they feel undervalued by this conservative government. And why wouldn't they? Since the coalition was elected, they have cut 18,000 jobs, including 8,722 jobs in Canberra. The government goes on about the need to relocate government departments and public servants to the regions, but in actual fact they have cut over 1,600 jobs in the regions they claim these jobs need to go to.

I want to thank the member for Newcastle for bringing forward this motion. This isn't just a Canberra issue; this is a Morrison government policy that affects every Australian, from Newcastle to Canberra, Perth to Hobart. It affects every Australian because it is one of the key handbrakes on the effectiveness of the Public Service, and a handbrake on the effectiveness of the Public Service means a handbrake on the effectiveness of the government services that all Australians rely on.

As the member for Newcastle identifies in the motion, the staffing cap means that instead of 10,500 staff working to deliver disability services to Australians accessing the National Disability Insurance Scheme, only 3,200 staff are doing this work. Key work of the scheme, such as interviews to establish what participants need to live lives of choice and control, are outsourced. Key strategy work is outsourced. NDIS participants keep appearing before the Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS, a committee on which I serve, to tell us that their plans don't reflect what they have requested in their interviews, and that the NDIA processes and systems demonstrate a lack of firsthand experience in the disability services sector. NDIS participants are experiencing firsthand the lack of institutional knowledge, training and experience that outsourced workforces typically deliver. Every member in this place must be hearing that about the NDIS from their own constituents.

As a former public servant myself, I can tell you there is no other place in Australia where you get to do the broad spectrum of work you will do in the Australian Public Service. This is rewarding work in the service of our nation, and I have never worked with a group of people more hardworking, professional or dedicated to the good of our nation. But when the government decides to pay double for this work by outsourcing to consultants, it creates a serious brain drain in government departments. Not only that; it creates incentives for public sector leaders to source complex and innovative work to consultants, because it also outsources the risk and isn't subject to the APS values and integrity standards. It raises the question of a massive Morrison government bungle such as the illegal robodebt scheme happening because of the brain drain in our Public Service.

As recession creeps in and unemployment increases, there has never been a better time for the Commonwealth government to ditch the damaging APS staffing cap, hire more people and let public servants do the type of work that they are spending big bucks getting consultants to do. The government certainly can't argue they don't have the budget to do this. Since the coalition came to power, the eight biggest consulting firms are now getting $1.1 billion a year in contract—double what they were getting when the cap came into place. $1.1 billion. It is probably more than a billion dollars. Labor has had to piece together, through the estimates process, through questions on notice, through the Audit Office and other government reviews, the number of consultants and contractors currently employed in the APS. Despite a huge amount of reporting by the Australian Public Service Commission,
there is no authoritative single stat on the number and expenditure by this government on consultants. However, even publicly available documents, such as the David Thodey APS review released in December point out:

Labour contractors and consultants are increasingly being used to perform work that has previously been core in-house capability, such as program management.

There is no rationale for this. We should be building up our Public Service capability; not eroding it and wasting money. Because the number of consultants working for the APS is not counted and expenditure on consultants is inconsistently collected, it says:

This makes it difficult to assess the value of external providers relative to in-house employees or to infer the effect on APS capability.

This is from a private sector leader.

The government needs to lift the damaging APS staffing cap. It is damaging the Public Service, adversely impacting the services Australians rely on, and the costs are out of control.

Mr DAVID SMITH (Bean) (18:58): I also rise to speak in favour of this motion, and I thank the member for Newcastle for bringing this issue to the attention of this chamber. Sadly, I note the lack of government speakers on this motion on the importance of an effective Public Service. This may be because since coming to power the coalition has slashed nearly 9,000 jobs from the capital region alone. This may be because the Morrison government's arbitrary cap on the number of public servants has forced government agencies to use labour hire to meet their key resourcing requirements, even if it would be cheaper and more effective to do the work in-house. Maybe members of the government are not here tonight in numbers to defend their record on the Public Service because, as we know, they are sick of experts. It's the simple premise that departments should not be forced to spend billions of dollars of taxpayer money on expensive external labour hire firms when they could be doing this work themselves.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown the Australian Public Service to be a valuable but under-resourced source of expertise and essential services, yet the COVID Commission is a simple example where the government could have utilised senior leaders from across the public sector rather than appoint a group, with the exception of one, compromised by their approach to conflicts of interests. I concur with former departmental secretary Renee Leon, who highlighted this government's devaluing of expert advice and over-reliance on consultants, neglecting Public Service expertise in favour of external views that were more a testament to the wonders of the marketing of consultants than the greatness of the product they produce. Her contribution should be a wake-up call for anyone who is interested in evidence based decision-making and good governance. The member for Newcastle's motion highlights just how far we are down this road. Government spending on consultants increased from $380 million in 2013 to almost $700 million in 2016-17. Privatising Department of Human Services call centres cost over $400 million. In just two years, the NDIA had a 600 per cent increase in consultants and contractors, with the 2019-20 budget capping staff again.

The devaluing of expertise and the outsourcing of public sector advice is not news to me. For more than a decade, while I worked for Professionals Australia, the science and engineering union, I appeared before Senate inquiries and met with government agencies to put on the record concerns about the consequences of the erosion of science and engineering expertise across governments at all levels. Australia's Public Service has undergone a dramatic shift in technical, engineering and scientific capacity. Governments employed about 100,000 engineering professionals across all levels of government three decades ago, yet now there are fewer than 20,000. Within Defence, a failure to address recurring recommendations to rebuild in-house skills has led to significant costs blowouts and loss of significant material capability. Without technical capacity, governments can neither manage nor assess what the private sector sells them. They have effectively become cashed up, uninformed buyers. Given this, concerns around the Future Submarine program should not be at all surprising.

Last year, The Canberra Times reported that the big four consultancies alone nearly tripled their income from the federal government, to over $2 billion since 2013. There is a reason why they colloquially call the government 'the dairy'. At the same time as this surge in the use of consultancies, there has been a significant increase in the use of labour hire and contracting arrangements to perform business-as-usual roles that are indistinguishable from the role of ongoing public servants. The use of these arrangements for business-as-usual roles undermines the capacity of the Australian government to build policy and program expertise on an ongoing basis. The government appears to give little or no consideration to the sensitivity of the work, the fact that such workers are not bound by Public Service codes of conduct and that having such a workforce opens the possibility of multiple conflicts of interest into every public sector workforce. The practice runs against the intent of the Public Service Act 1999. It's true that using contractors and consultants can be useful to provide a just-in-time workforce to respond to peaks in workload, but they are not the foundations for a healthy government workforce. Strong
government needs to be driven by a skilled workforce motivated at all times by the public good rather than commercial interest.

Debate adjourned.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS
Australia and the United States of America

Consideration resumed of the motion:
That this House:
(1) acknowledges that this year marks the 80th anniversary of the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between the Commonwealth of Australia and the United States of America;
(2) recognises the diplomatic relationship is the foundation of the broader strategic, defence and economic partnerships between Australia and the United States;
(3) acknowledges the:
(a) significance of the recent state dinner between President Trump and Prime Minister Morrison on 20 September 2019; and
(b) appointment of United States Ambassador to Australia, Mr Arthur Culvahouse Jnr, on 19 February 2019;
(4) encourages that the anniversary be a reaffirmation of our shared commitment to promote and uphold democratic values, freedoms and the rule of law at home and abroad;
(5) further acknowledges that a strong, bilateral relationship is vital for our continued shared economic prosperity and national security, as Australia and the United States:
(a) face increasingly complex and frequent threats that aim to undermine the integrity of democratic institutions and national sovereignty; and
(b) share the benefits of a robust trade and investment relationship valued at US $1.1 trillion that creates and sustains jobs; and
(6) commemorates the bravery, service and sacrifice of United States firefighters Captain Ian H McBeth, First Officer Paul Clyde Hudson, and Flight Engineer Rick A DeMorgan Jr who tragically lost their lives while fighting bushfires in the Snowy Monaro area, New South Wales, on 23 January 2020.

Mr SHARMA (Wentworth) (19:04): I rise to speak in favour of this motion, which commemorates 80 years since the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between the United States and Australia. This relationship was established when the United States established a legation to Australia in 1940. It was Clarence Gouse who served as the very first minister, from 1940 to 1941, and it was subsequently upgraded to an embassy in 1946. We are now with the current ambassador, Arthur Culverhouse Jr, the 24th US ambassador. May I commend the ambassador on the excellent role he plays in supporting the US-Australia alliance to this very day. In the same year, in 1940, Australia also established a legation in Washington DC. Prior to that, we had an officer working out of the British embassy, who was meant to represent Australian interests. Notwithstanding the fact that countries such as South Africa, Canada and Ireland already had diplomatic representations in the United States at that time, Australia did not. It was a decision of the Menzies government to appoint our first representative, Richard Casey, one of Menzies' colleagues, who served as the very first minister. This legation was upgraded to an embassy in 1946, as the Australian Embassy in Washington DC, and Arthur Sinodinos, the current occupant of that role, is proving to do a very fine job in supporting our relationship. We now have our 21st ambassador to Washington.

For a young country such as Australia, this is one of our oldest diplomatic missions. The Department of External Affairs was only created in 1935, and it was only in 1939 that the decision was made to set up full diplomatic missions in, at the time, Tokyo, Changan and Washington DC. For us, 80 years is, in fact, our oldest diplomatic relationship. It's also, of course, one of our most important. Notwithstanding the fact that we have a long history of friendship going back to the visit of the Great White Fleet to Australia in 1908, the battle of Hamel in 1918, when US troops served under Australian command, under the command of Australian General Sir John Monash, on the Western Front, it was the war in the Pacific, when the alliance was formed in that theatre, that really cemented this relationship. Just a few ago, in 2017, we marked the 75th anniversary of some of these important battles: the battle of Midway, the Battle of the Coral Sea and the Battle of Guadalcanal, when the tide of Japanese aggression in the Pacific theatre first began to turn. Indeed, at our nearest northern neighbour, Papua New Guinea, where I have spent a lot of time, there are many battlefields which commemorate this US-Australia alliance in full flight. The ANZUS treaty, which concluded a number of years after that, in 1951, remains Australia's pre-eminent security alliance and our most important one.

Since that time, we've served alongside US troops in most major conflicts—in Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf War, Afghanistan, Iraq and the current fight against the Islamic State presence in Syria and Iraq. History's verdict on some of these conflicts has not always been kind, but they were always done for the right reasons. I think that's a
point worth noting. One of the notable features of US leadership has really been its benevolence and lack of self-interest in prosecuting a global leadership role. I'm reminded that anti-Americanism was very fashionable, including in this place, up to about a decade ago. But it's become much less fashionable, and I think that's because the alternatives to American leadership and the sort of self-interest that accompanies them has become more apparent.

This alliance between the United States and Australia often takes on a military hue because the cooperation we see on a military scale is at the pointy end, but in fact the alliance is so much more than that. It's a pattern of cooperation and support for one another that goes into all fields—economic, investment, trade, diplomatic, security, intelligence and a number of other facets. Most major Australian diplomatic and foreign achievements have relied upon close US cooperation, be they the postwar normalisation with Japan, the creation of APEC, our intervention in East Timor and Solomon Islands, the creation of a G20 meeting at leaders level, the expansion of the East Asia Summit to include the United States, or, mostly recently, Pacific Step-up. I would acknowledge here the bipartisan nature of the alliance, which has been an important strength of it. Under Labor and Liberal governments in Australia and under conservative and Republican governments in the United States, the alliance has always gone from strength to strength.

I'd like finally to commemorate the bravery, service and sacrifice of the US firefighters who tragically lost their lives illustrating the depth of our support for one another: Captain Ian McBeth, First Officer Paul Clyde Hudson and Flight Engineer Rick DeMorgan Jr, who lost their lives on 23 January 2020.

Mr Gosling (Solomon) (19:09): I rise to speak to this important motion because our bilateral relationship with the United States is incredibly important. It's important for more than historical reasons, though we should never forget that, barely a year into our diplomatic relationship, the United States supplanted the United Kingdom as the only great power able and willing to help defend Australia against the enemy after the shocking fall of Singapore left us totally isolated. This history is particularly alive for us in Darwin—the people of my electorate, Darwin and Palmerston—where American soldiers, airmen and sailors fought and died with their Australian comrades during the bombings of 1942 and subsequent operations in northern Australia.

It's important for more than strategic reasons, though we should never forget that it's our alliance with the United States that gives us the high-tech capability edge, and the comrades, without which ours would be a smallish boutique defence force defending a large continent. Australian defence industry has produced kit with the United States, and by ourselves, that surpasses what the United States is able to do alone, so it's two-way but certainly our relationship, our alliance, gives us an edge.

We in Darwin regularly witness our forces' interoperability in the regular deployments of Marine Rotational Force-Darwin, who have begun arriving for this year's 1,200-strong modified rotation. This rotation, started by Prime Minister Julia Gillard together with US President Barack Obama, has gone from strength to strength over the years. A sensible decision was made this year to postpone the deployment due to COVID; however, for equally sensible reasons, this year's deployment, a little belatedly, is now beginning. They're always welcome in the north.

Our relationship, our alliance, is important for more than these interoperability, economic and social reasons. Though these are significant, including bilateral trade and investment amounting to about $1.1 trillion, as this motion states, we shouldn't forget the strong trans-Pacific people-to-people linkages, friendships, intermarriages—including with some of our colleagues—professional connections and visa arrangements that make Australia the US ally with the best labour market access, to the envy of all others, with hospitality reciprocated on this end, here in our lucky country.

Each of these factors is weighty but does not exhaust the importance of the US-Australia relationship. It's also about the values that underpin our successful alliance, which only strengthened when others, like the Warsaw Pact, fell apart when there was no longer an enemy to fight. Our alliance is cemented by values that we fought together in the Great War to defend, namely liberty, the rights of small states to have a voice and not be crushed by larger ones, and the rule of law above the rule of might. These are the values we uphold today when, together, we advocate for the peaceful settlement of disputes, freedom of navigation in accordance with international law, universal human rights and other global public goods.

I want to thank the US Consul General in Melbourne, Michael Klein, who has done great service to the NT. I also want to echo Ambassador Culvahouse's apt description of ours as an unbreakable alliance.

Mr Alexander (Bennelong) (19:14): Australia and the United States have a long and storied history. From the dawn of federation through two world wars and across other conflicts, where we have stood as one to defend our values, principles, freedom and to protect the defenceless, to today's peaceful yet troubled times, we have been side by side without exception. Together, with these events, the United States is by far our largest
investment partner, with two-way investments standing at $1.7 trillion in 2018. This investment includes 11,000 Australian companies exporting goods to the United States, which, in turn, support around 270,000 Australian jobs. There are plenty of US-owned companies operating in Australia of course, and together they pay billions of dollars in taxes to Australian governments each year. Additionally, Australian-majority-owned businesses operating in the United States generated $71.8 billion in US sales in 2016, which is more than triple the value of Australia's exports to the United States. Clearly, our close relationship is an essential pillar of our respective economies.

The strongest bond, however, are the people-to-people links, deep and diverse. We estimate there are upwards of 265,000 Australians in the United States at any one time, and, for over a decade, I was one of them. I know Americans to be some of the friendliest, kindest, thoughtful, generous, hardworking, entrepreneurial and inventive people on the planet. And, as Hoges showed, they love our sense of humour.

We do not see eye to eye on all things. I've been vocal in the past in this chamber and in that country about my abhorrence at their firearms policy and the tragic loss of life each year. Another prominent shooting over the weekend demonstrates the point that guns, even when held by law enforcement officers, rarely prevent further violence and too often they exacerbate it. Nor are we just America's deputy sheriff, as we have been painted in the past, and again in recent times, by some countries. We stand on our own two feet with confidence and certainty in the global arena, and never more than under the leadership of Scott Morrison, who proudly asserts that this government acts in Australia's interest. This includes transparency in the international arena with decisions based on facts. This maturity and independence forges stronger bonds with our friends and will, in time, gain respect from those who oppose us—respect that will lead to better relations.

Again, we stand side by side in times of civil unrest. The Black Lives Matter campaign may have started in Minneapolis with the murder of one defenceless man but it has been echoed around the world as a symbol that time is up for racism and racists in our countries. We both share histories with times that we should never forget; the mistakes made in the past must be recognised, apologies made and lessons learned to guide us to a better future. The fact is that our inability to confront the injustices in our past has led to ongoing disadvantage for our black and Indigenous people. This must be addressed now. We stand with Black America today, just as Peter Norman stood with those great American athletes back in 1968.

I lived for better part of 20 years in the US, particularly in Georgia, where we have just seen the latest shocking violence against a black man, Rayshard Brooks. I arrived there in the middle of the civil rights era and well remember the sense of overdue progress at the time on the national scale but also the microcosm, including the pride we could see when Arthur Ashe became the first black man allowed and then welcomed into the Richmond country club where we were competing in a tennis tournament together.

Huge strides were taken then, and it's obvious that we have come a long way, but there is a long way further to go until we reach equality. These protests provoked by the shocking death of George Floyd have brought back stark memories of Martin Luther King's fight for equality. Can we now stand again together and fight with the same determination, courage and willingness to sacrifice for equality and fairness for all?

Mr GORMAN (Perth) (19:19): It is a deep friendship between Australia and the United States. The relationship between our two countries is shown throughout our Constitution, the House of Representatives, the Senate and the High Court. Indeed, it was the flag of the United States that flew through Pitt Street on 1 January when we celebrated Federation here in Australia. Many of the proposed designs submitted to Prime Minister Barton for the Australian flag were in fact designs that drew upon the United States flag for their inspiration. We have deep disagreements on human rights questions, including the death penalty. We have differing approaches to how we ensure open trade markets. We have disagreements on domestic gun policy, and WikiLeaks showed us that the United States has an active interest in Australian domestic politics. These things cause tension, but we work through them through discussion, through diplomacy and because a good relationship is not a relationship that is free from argument; a good
relationship is a relationship that can resolve those arguments in the interests of both countries, and that's exactly what Australia and the United States continue to do. We do that through programs such as the Australian Political Parties for Democracy Program; through extensive academic exchange; initiatives like the Australian American Leadership Dialogue, which was held in my electorate of Perth last year; ongoing defence exercises; and, as the member for Wentworth mentioned, in building the new international architecture that allows us to continue to discuss these issues in broader forums—the G20 and the East Asia Summit being just two examples.

Our countries share many common values, none more important than a common belief in democracy. I believe there is still a risk that the global coronavirus crisis becomes a democratic crisis as countries seek for quick solutions or other ways through the huge challenges that our democracies will continue to face. These challenges for Australia and the United States also extend to how our media continues to function in that democracy. I don't believe that the solution is to attack the media or to use the term 'fake news'. Indeed, when you attack fake news and use that as a term to disrespect journalists and disrespect our media, you're in fact attacking the very democratic system which I believe both our countries are founded upon and should seek to uphold.

The United States preserves their democracy in many ways. One is through the establishment, by law, of presidential libraries, something that Australia should seek to copy. I studied at Curtin University, which had the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library. I believe that every Prime Minister, good and bad, short term or long term, should have the same dignity afforded to them. I also reflect on the other work the United States does in telling their national story through the Smithsonian Institution. In the National Museum of African American History and Culture are more than 40,000 items: a dress made by Rosa Parks; boxing headgear worn by Mohammed Ali, and even pants worn by MC Hammer. One of the items that hangs in that museum is a banner from the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs: a purple banner with the words 'lifting as we climb' from 1924, almost a century ago. Part of the collection in the Smithsonian is curated to 'learn about the ways in which African Americans created possibilities in a world that denied them opportunities'. 'Lifting as we climb' is still their motto today, and it is described by the Women's Museum of California as one of the most significant women's clubs of all time. I will conclude my remarks there.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Heart Failure

Mr ALEXANDER (Bennelong) (19:07): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes that between 1 and 2 per cent of the Australian population suffers from heart failure, with this proportion higher in Indigenous communities;

(2) acknowledges with concern the rising cost of care for the growing number of Australians with heart failure, including the duration and frequency of hospitalisation, medical management and health complications;

(3) further notes that research from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare states that over 60,000 heart failure hospital admissions, amounting to over 400,000 bed days and a cost to the healthcare system of $3.9 billion are potentially preventable;

(4) welcomes the arrival of proven technologies, including transcatheter mitral valve repair, which have demonstrated transformative improvements in addressing underlying causes of heart failure including functional and degenerative mitral regurgitation;

(5) commends the support given by clinicians, advocates, carers and families of Australians suffering from heart failure;

(6) welcomes with appreciation the announcement of the Government's commitment of $220 million over 10 years for the Cardiovascular Mission under the Medical Research Fund;

(7) acknowledges the Government's commitment to address all forms of heart disease under the National Action Plan for Heart and Stroke;

(8) notes the current consideration by the Medical Services Advisory Committee of transcatheter mitral valve repair; and

(9) calls on the Government to ensure all Australians have early access to proven procedures and technologies, such as transcatheter mitral valve repair, where indicated, to address the rising healthcare burden and premature mortality represented by heart failure.

I'm delighted to bring forward this motion on this critical topic. I'm very proud to be the co-chair of the parliamentary friends of heart health and to be joined here today by my co-chair and seconder, the member for Calwell. Heart health is an area that is getting more attention at the present. Much of it is overdue. Just last week we launched a Baker report into cardiovascular disease, which for the first time in a decade outlined new data highlighting the extent of the cholesterol problem amongst high-risk patients in Australia. It identified a critical and timely opportunity to invest in greater awareness and support for cholesterol management.
Today, however, we are looking at the treatment rather than the prevention. Heart failure occurs when the heart functions less effectively in its role of pumping blood around the body. Although it can occur suddenly, it usually develops over many years as the heart gradually becomes weaker and works less effectively. An estimated 104,900 people aged 18 and over had heart failure in 2017-18, although the number may be much higher. There were around 178,300 hospitalisations where heart failure and cardiomyopathy were recorded as the principal or additional diagnosis in 2016-17. This represents 1.6 per cent of all hospitalisations in Australia.

One of the causes of heart failure is mitral regurgitation, or MR. If untreated, MR initiates a cascade of events in patients' lives, progressing to heart failure then premature death. The prognosis for these Australians is likely untimely death after multiple hospitalisations, which could potentially be avoided through life-improving therapies. Tens of thousands of hospital admissions could be prevented, saving up to $3.9 billion annually to the Australian health-care system.

Transcatheter mitral valve repair is one treatment which has the ability to change peoples' lives by inserting a clip into the heart to seal any leakages. This treatment is clinically safe, effective and a well-recognised, minimally invasive treatment option for MR patients with high clinical need. It has been successfully performed in over 100,000 patients worldwide. Treatments like this could save our health budgets dramatically but, more importantly, they will give the opportunity of a long and healthy life for those who benefit from this treatment. Friend of the parliamentary friends, Tanya Hall from hearts4heart, has been advocating for this along with many other reforms and has provided me with a number of patient case studies. One in particular that stood out was a young man named George, who noticed he was struggling while playing soccer. It turned out he had a severely leaking mitral valve. The clip saved his life, making his heart stronger so he could face further treatment and sustaining him while he waited for open heart surgery for his broader issues. He is now back in the workforce and a fully engaged member of our society.

This should be the critical aim of our health care: to get people back to the lives they had before. I know that MSAC considered an application for transcatheter mitral valve repair at their recent April meeting, and we look forward to hearing their resolutions.

Meanwhile, the government has been making some incredible headway in the heart health space. The government has committed $220 million for the Medical Research Future Fund for the 10-year. Also in the MRFF is the $125 million Targeted Translation Research Accelerator, which will have an initial priority on cardiovascular disease and diabetes commencing this year, as well as the $6 million Australian Genomics Health Alliance Cardiovascular Genetic Disorders Flagship 2018 to 2020 investment to expand current activities and pilot a model for congenital heart disease with a project to deliver genomic testing to 600 families with CHD arrhythmia disorders and cardiomyopathies.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is the motion seconded?

Dr Gillespie: I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Federation Chamber adjourned at 19:30