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SITTING DAYS—2010

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FORTY-THIRD PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—FIRST PERIOD

Governor-General
Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce, Companion of the Order of Australia

House of Representatives Officeholders

Speaker—Mr Harry Alfred Jenkins MP
Deputy Speaker—Hon. Peter Neil Slipper MP
Second Deputy Speaker—Hon. Bruce Craig Scott MP

Members of the Speaker’s Panel—Hon. Dick Godfrey Harry Adams MP, Ms Sharon Leah Bird MP, Mr Steven Georganas MP, Mr Peter Sid Sidebottom MP

Leader of the House—Hon. Anthony Norman Albanese MP
Deputy Leader of the House—Hon. Stephen Francis Smith MP
Manager of Opposition Business—Hon. Christopher Maurice Pyne MP
Deputy Manager of Opposition Business—Mr Luke Hartsuyker MP

Party Leaders and Whips

Australian Labor Party
Leader—Hon. Julia Eileen Gillard MP
Deputy Leader—Hon. Wayne Maxwell Swan MP
Chief Government Whip—Hon. Joel Andrew Fitzgibbon MP
Government Whips—Ms Jill Griffiths Hall MP and Mr Christopher Patrick Hayes MP

Liberal Party of Australia
Leader—Hon. Anthony John Abbott MP
Deputy Leader—Hon. Julie Isabel Bishop MP
Chief Opposition Whip—Hon. Warren George Entsch MP
Opposition Whips—Mr Patrick Damien Secker MP and Ms Nola Bethwyn Marino MP

The Nationals
Leader—Hon. Warren Errol Truss MP
Chief Whip—Mr Mark Maclean Coulton MP
Whip—Mr Paul Christopher Neville MP

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### Members of the House of Representatives

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PARTY ABBREVIATIONS
ALP—Australian Labor Party; LP—Liberal Party of Australia; LNP—Liberal National Party; CLP—Country Liberal Party; Nats—The Nationals; Ind—Independent; AG—Australian Greens

Heads of Parliamentary Departments
Clerk of the Senate—R Laing
Clerk of the House of Representatives—B Wright
Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—A Thompson
GILLARD MINISTRY

Prime Minister                          Hon. Julia Gillard MP
Deputy Prime Minister, Treasurer       Hon. Wayne Swan MP
Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government Hon. Simon Crean MP
Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Jobs and Workplace Relations and Leader of the Government in the Senate Senator Hon. Chris Evans
Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth Hon. Peter Garrett AM, MP
Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate Senator Hon. Stephen Conroy
Minister for Foreign Affairs Hon. Kevin Rudd MP
Minister for Trade Hon. Dr Craig Emerson MP
Minister for Defence and Deputy Leader of the House Hon. Stephen Smith MP
Minister for Immigration and Citizenship Hon. Chris Bowen MP
Minister for Infrastructure and Transport and Leader of the House Hon. Anthony Albanese MP
Minister for Health and Ageing Hon. Nicola Roxon MP
Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs Hon. Jenny Macklin MP
Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities Hon. Tony Burke MP
Minister for Finance and Deregulation Senator Hon. Penny Wong
Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research Senator Hon. Kim Carr
Attorney-General and Vice President of the Executive Council Hon. Robert McClelland MP
Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Manager of Government Business in the Senate Senator Hon. Joe Ludwig
Minister for Resources and Energy and Minister for Tourism Hon. Martin Ferguson AM, MP
Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency Hon. Greg Combet AM, MP

[The above ministers constitute the cabinet]
GILLARD MINISTRY—continued

Minister for the Arts
Minister for Social Inclusion
Minister for Privacy and Freedom of Information
Minister for Sport
Special Minister of State for the Public Service and Integrity
Assistant Minister to the Treasurer and Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation
Minister for Employment Participation and Childcare
Minister for Indigenous Employment and Economic Development
Minister for Veterans’ Affairs and Minister for Defence Science and Personnel
Minister for Defence Materiel
Minister for Indigenous Health
Minister for Mental Health and Ageing
Minister for the Status of Women
Minister for Social Housing and Homelessness
Special Minister of State
Minister for Small Business
Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Justice
Minister for Human Services
Cabinet Secretary
Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister
Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer
Parliamentary Secretary for School Education and Workplace Relations
Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Digital Productivity
Parliamentary Secretary for Trade
Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs
Parliamentary Secretary for Defence
Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration and Citizenship
Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Transport and
Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing
Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Carers
Parliamentary Secretary for Community Services
Parliamentary Secretary for Sustainability and Urban Water
Minister Assisting on Deregulation
Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Minister Assisting the Minister for Tourism
Parliamentary Secretary for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency

Hon. Simon Crean MP
Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP
Hon. Brendan O’Connor MP
Senator Hon. Mark Arbib
Hon. Gary Gray AO, MP
Hon. Bill Shorten MP
Hon. Kate Ellis MP
Senator Hon. Mark Arbib
Hon. Warren Snowdon MP
Hon. Jason Clare MP
Hon. Warren Snowdon MP
Hon. Mark Butler MP
Hon. Kate Ellis MP
Senator Hon. Mark Arbib
Hon. Gary Gray AO, MP
Senator Hon. Nick Sherry
Hon. Brendan O’Connor MP
Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP
Senator Hon. Nick Sherry
Hon. Mark Dreyfus QC, MP
Senator Hon. Stephen Conroy
Hon. Justine Elliot MP
Hon. Richard Marles MP
Senator Hon. David Feeney
Senator Hon. Kate Lundy
Hon. Catherine King MP
Senator Hon. Jan McLucas
Hon. Julie Collins MP
Senator Hon. Don Farrell
Hon. Dr Mike Kelly AM, MP
Senator Hon. Nick Sherry
Hon. Mark Dreyfus QC, MP
SHADOW MINISTRY

Leader of the Opposition
Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and Shadow Minister for Trade
Leader of the Nationals and Shadow Minister for Infrastructure and Transport
Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and Shadow Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations
Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and Shadow Attorney-General and Shadow Minister for the Arts
Shadow Treasurer
Shadow Minister for Education, Apprenticeships and Training and Manager of Opposition Business in the House
Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Deputy Leader of the Nationals
Shadow Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Water and Leader of the Nationals in the Senate
Shadow Minister for Finance, Deregulation and Debt Reduction and Chairman, Coalition Policy Development Committee
Shadow Minister for Energy and Resources
Shadow Minister for Defence
Shadow Minister for Communications and Broadband
Shadow Minister for Health and Ageing
Shadow Minister for Families, Housing and Human Services
Shadow Minister for Climate Action, Environment and Heritage
Shadow Minister for Productivity and Population and Shadow Minister for Immigration and Citizenship
Shadow Minister for Innovation, Industry and Science
Shadow Minister for Agriculture and Food Security
Shadow Minister for Small Business, Competition Policy and Consumer Affairs

[The above constitute the shadow cabinet]
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<td>Hon. Sussan Ley MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Justice, Customs and Border Protection</td>
<td>Mr Michael Keenan MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Treasurer and Shadow Minister for Financial Services</td>
<td>Senator Mathias Cormann</td>
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<tr>
<td>and Superannuation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Childcare and Early Childhood Learning</td>
<td>Hon. Sussan Ley MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Universities and Research</td>
<td>Senator Hon. Brett Mason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Youth and Sport and Deputy Manager of Opposition</td>
<td>Mr Luke Hartsuyker MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Business in the House</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Indigenous Development and Employment</td>
<td>Senator Marise Payne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Regional Development</td>
<td>Hon. Bob Baldwin MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Special Minister of State</td>
<td>Hon. Bronwyn Bishop MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for COAG</td>
<td>Senator Marise Payne</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Tourism</td>
<td>Hon. Bob Baldwin MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Defence Science, Technology and Personnel</td>
<td>Mr Stuart Robert MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Veterans’ Affairs</td>
<td>Senator Hon. Michael Ronaldson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Regional Communications</td>
<td>Mr Luke Hartsuyker MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Ageing and Shadow Minister for Mental Health</td>
<td>Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Seniors</td>
<td>Hon. Bronwyn Bishop MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Disabilities, Carers and the Voluntary Sector</td>
<td>Senator Mitch Fifield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Housing</td>
<td>Senator Marise Payne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairman, Scrutiny of Government Waste Committee</td>
<td>Mr Jamie Briggs MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Cabinet Secretary</td>
<td>Hon. Philip Ruddock MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Senator Cory Bernardi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance</td>
<td>Hon. Teresa Gambaro MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Roads and Regional Transport</td>
<td>Mr Darren Chester MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Shadow Attorney-General</td>
<td>Senator Gary Humphries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Tax Reform and Deputy Chairman</td>
<td>Hon. Tony Smith MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Education</td>
<td>Senator Fiona Nash</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Northern and Remote Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Local Government</td>
<td>Mr Don Randall MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Murray-Darling Basin</td>
<td>Senator Simon Birmingham</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Defence Force and Defence Support</td>
<td>Senator Hon. Ian Macdonald</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Primary Healthcare</td>
<td>Dr Andrew Southcott MP</td>
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<td>Mr Andrew Laming MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Supporting Families</td>
<td>Senator Cory Bernardi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Status of Women</td>
<td>Senator Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Environment</td>
<td>Senator Simon Birmingham</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Citizenship and Settlement</td>
<td>Hon. Teresa Gambaro MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration</td>
<td>Senator Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Innovation, Industry, and Science</td>
<td>Senator Hon. Richard Colbeck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Fisheries and Forestry</td>
<td>Senator Hon. Richard Colbeck</td>
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We are changing the way that health services are delivered, through better access to services designed around patients' needs, a greater focus on preventative health and the provision of care outside hospitals.

We are also investing in our health system and our health workforce, to deliver better care and better access to services for patients now and into the future.

The bill that I am reintroducing today is a key component of this overall health reform agenda. Before turning to the detail of this bill I will outline this agenda in some key areas: the capacity of our health system, better connecting care, access to services, preventative health, sustainability and quality.

Capacity

To ease the pressures on our health system, we need to increase its capacity and the services that are available. This means more doctors, more nurses and more hospital beds.

The Gillard Labor government is investing $1.2 billion as part of the National Health and Hospitals Network in doctors, nurses and allied health professionals. This will deliver 5,500 new or training GPs and 680 additional medical specialists over the coming decade. It will improve support for more than 4,600 full-time equivalent nurses working in general practice and will help train and retain our valuable aged-care nurses. And we will support 800 allied health professionals working and training in rural areas over the next four years.

We are investing more than $1.6 billion for more than 1,300 new subacute beds, to reduce bottlenecks and capacity constraints in our system. These beds will be delivered in areas like rehabilitation, palliative care and, importantly, mental health services so that people can get the right care for their needs.
Better connecting care

As part of the National Health and Hospitals Network, the government will ensure that services are better connected and coordinated, reducing fragmentation and the blame game.

Local Hospital Networks will be established. They will be more responsive to local communities, and new funding arrangements, such as the introduction of activity based funding, will provide strong incentives for better performance and reduced waste.

The Commonwealth will also take funding responsibility for 100 per cent of primary care, ending duplication and divided responsibilities between the states and territories. I see the member for Hasluck is still in the House. This is an area where, particularly in the servicing of our Indigenous communities, there is huge potential for us to do things differently. The government will establish Medicare Locals, which will work with local GPs, allied health and community health providers to drive local integration and coordination of services and improve access to care.

And, to bring the health system properly into the 21st century, the government will invest $466 million to establish personally controlled electronic health records, reducing mistakes and duplication, and ensuring that, with patients' consent, doctors have the information they need, when they need it.

Better access to services

The National Health and Hospitals Network will also deliver better, more timely access to health services in local communities across Australia.

As I have mentioned, the government will establish a national after-hours GP and primary care service. This will enable anybody calling their GP out of hours to be referred to a nurse or a GP on the phone and, if necessary, then referred to a local after-hours GP service that is open, coordinated by their Medicare Local.

The government will also invest $355 million in more GP superclinics and expanded GP clinics in about 450 locations across Australia. These will bring together in a single location services such as GPs, allied health and practice nurses so that patients can more easily get the full range of care they need in one place.

The National Health and Hospitals Network will also provide strong guarantees and targets to improve access to public hospital services—reversing the neglect from the Howard government, which ripped $1 billion out of our hospitals.

The Gillard Labor government will invest $750 million so that emergency department patients will have a guarantee that they will be treated, admitted or referred within four hours, where clinically appropriate.

An investment of $800 million for elective surgery will help back a target of 95 per cent of elective surgeries being delivered within the clinically recommended time and a guarantee that patients facing excessive waits should have their elective surgery fast-tracked.

Preventive health

Keeping people well and out of hospital is a critical component of our government's health reform agenda. While we are improving our hospitals, we also need to reduce pressure on them and keep people out of hospital in the first place.

To achieve this, the government will take world-leading action, for example to combat tobacco, which contributes to the deaths of 15,000 Australians a year. The government will introduce plain packaging for all tobacco products—a world first—in addition to raising the tobacco excise, which is ex-
pected to result in 87,000 fewer smokers across the country.

The government will also invest $449 million to improve care for people with diabetes, which is fast on the way to becoming one of the major burdens of disease.

**Sustainability**

The Labor government’s record on strong economic management has enabled us to make these major investments in our health system. But if our health system is to be sustainable into the future, we do have to provide a secure funding base for the future.

To ensure this the Commonwealth for the first time will take funding responsibility for all GP and primary care services and for all aged-care services. The Commonwealth will also become the dominant funder of Australia’s public hospitals, paying 60 per cent of hospital activity and capital costs, as well as for the first time paying 60 per cent of training and research costs in our public hospitals.

These changes will mean that one level of government will have dominant funding responsibility for all parts of the health system, ending the blame game and the perverse incentives for buck passing and cost shifting.

These changes are the most significant reforms to Commonwealth-state financial arrangements in decades, and my colleague the Treasurer will reintroduce a bill in the coming months to enable the associated changes to federal financial relations.

The government is acutely aware of its responsibility to not only outline a reform agenda but deliver those reforms and make them a reality. We are delivering reforms in six key areas: hospital projects, including expanding hospital capacity as part of the National Health and Hospitals Network, landmark health and hospital fund projects and regional cancer centres; investing in our workforce, with new GP training places online this year and including more next year, with nursing and allied-health scholarships and locum places; primary care infrastructure, through more GP super clinics—announced recently—and the funding rounds to upgrade general practices, which are currently underway; e-health and telehealth, with the Medicare rebates for telehealth available from mid-2011 and electronic health records from 2012; systems reform, with the local hospitals network and our first Medicare Locals being established from the middle of the year; and prevention, with investment for children and in workplaces to prevent disease—these programs begin rolling out next year.

**Quality**

If we are to have a truly National Health and Hospitals Network spanning Australia, it is essential to have strong safety and quality standards so that all Australians can be confident they will receive consistently high-quality care, wherever they live.

This bill provides for framework legislation to establish the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care.

It is imperative that the government’s health reforms ensure that the Australian public receives safe, high-quality health care. The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care will be established as a permanent body with an expanded remit to drive safe, high-quality care and to ensure the appropriateness of services delivered in particular healthcare settings, including primary care and mental health.

The commission will help reduce the harm caused by preventable errors, reduce healthcare costs resulting from unnecessary or ineffective treatment and have a positive impact on community trust.

The commission will formulate safety and quality standards, guidelines and indicators
and will work with clinicians, professional bodies and consumers to lead the drive toward practical health system improvements for the Australian public.

The commission will provide advice to Commonwealth, state and territory health ministers about which of the standards are suitable for implementation by local hospital networks as national clinical standards addressing safety and quality matters. Local hospital networks will then be responsible for implementing relevant national clinical standards addressing safety and quality matters once they are agreed between the Commonwealth, states and territories.

These national clinical standards for safety and quality will clearly state the high expectations all Australians have of their health and hospital services.

The National Health and Hospitals Bill 2010 provides a framework for the establishment of the commission, including the expanded role for the commission in setting those national clinical standards and strengthening clinical governance. It is intended that arrangements under this expanded role will be further developed in consultation with the states and territories and will be subject to finalising further financial commitments.

The commission will work collaboratively with the Commonwealth, the states and the territories in the performance of its functions. More detailed administrative arrangements for the commission will be underpinned through an agreement with the states and territories, and all governments will agree to the funding and work plan for the commission.

The permanent commission will be able to be established—with the support of the House and the Senate—from 1 July 2011, with existing arrangements for the non-permanent commission to continue as part of the Department of Health and Ageing until 30 June 2011.

The existing, temporary commission has undertaken good work to lead and coordinate the improvement of safety and quality standards in health care in areas such as clinical handover and communication, infection prevention in healthcare and medication safety. I want to thank it for the important role it has been playing in our health system.

The expanded role of the permanent commission will complement these activities with work on national safety and quality standards, guidelines and indicators.

At this stage, the Western Australian government has not yet signed the National Health and Hospitals Network Agreement. While Western Australia has indicated that it supports a permanent safety and quality commission, it is disappointing that Western Australia is choosing to opt out of other important health reforms that will improve health and hospital services for all Western Australians.

Conclusion

The National Health and Hospitals Bill 2010 marks an important step forward in delivering the Gillard Labor government’s commitment to reforming Australia’s health system for the future.

Establishing a permanent, independent safety and quality body formalises the government’s commitment to drive improvements in quality and safeguard high standards of care for all Australians.

It will help ensure that there is a more nationally consistent approach to the quality and safety of health care across Australia as part of the National Health and Hospitals Network and it will help deliver better health and better hospital services for all Australians. I commend the bill to the House.
Debate (on motion by Mr Andrews) adjourned.

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL PREVENTIVE HEALTH AGENCY BILL 2010

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Ms Roxon.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Ms ROXON (Gellibrand—Minister for Health and Ageing) (9.14 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Australian National Preventive Health Agency Bill 2010 seeks to focus and revitalise Australia’s preventive health capacity.

It was over a year ago that I first introduced this bill to the House.

The government’s intention was for the first Australian National Preventive Health Agency to have been established in January this year, but Senate handling has not to date enabled that.

The bill now provides a start date as proclaimed by the Governor-General once it receives royal assent.

The bill also now proposes:

- that the Australian National Preventive Health Agency’s strategic plans cover a five-year rather than a three-year period, and
- explicitly mentions alcohol, tobacco and other substance abuse, and obesity programs as being included in the scope of social marketing campaigns to be undertaken by the agency.

These amendments were moved by the Greens and Senator Xenophon when the bill was previously debated in the Senate and the government has agreed to support them.

This is an important measure that was recommended by both the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission and the National Preventative Health Taskforce.

In fact, the creation of a national preventive health agency was also proposed at the 2020 summit in 2008, so it is a well-supported idea.

In 2008 the government reached agreement with the states and territories at COAG, amongst other things making historic investments in Indigenous health but also in prevention, and part of the agreement in prevention was to create the agency and commit funding to it, with an investment of over $130 million for its establishment, preventative health research and social marketing campaigns.

The government has listened and we are now acting because we know, as many people in this House do, that preventative health measures work.

We understand that the rising incidence of chronic illness, combined with an ageing population, means that sitting on our hands is not an option in terms of both the cost to our health and hospital system and more importantly in terms of the human cost of illness and lost productivity.

This bill establishes national infrastructure to help drive major change in the way we behave and how we look after (or don’t look after) our own health.

It is widely appreciated that population growth and an ageing population is one of the major challenges to our health and hospital system.

But there are also major pressures arising from our changing lifestyles and consumption patterns.

The government knows that prevention is better than cure and that is why we have al-
ready taken strong action across a range of areas.

We know, for example, that between 1950—if you go back to the middle of last century—and 2008, more than 900,000 Australians died because they smoked, despite the fact that there was already evidence from that time on the dangers of smoking.

That’s why successive governments have taken action—including increasing the excise applying to tobacco products, conducting hard-hitting social marketing campaigns, banning tobacco advertising and including graphic warning labels.

Thanks to these and other preventive health measures we now have one of the lowest smoking levels in the world.

However there are still nearly three million Australians who continue to smoke.

Tobacco remains the single biggest preventable cause of death and disease in Australia.

That’s why the government has committed to world-leading reforms to stop smoking, including:

• increasing the tobacco excise by 25 per cent from April this year,
• investing an additional $5 million in Quitline services,
• investing $85 million in antitobacco campaigns and
• being the first country in the world to introduce plain packaging of tobacco products—ending the last avenue for cigarette companies to advertise.

A key job of the new Australian National Preventive Health Agency established by the bill will be to build upon these reforms and ensure that we continue to reduce this burden.

Similarly, with alcohol, Australians all around the country know the severe impact of alcohol abuse in our community.

In contrast to tobacco, our overall per capita consumption of alcohol is high by world standards.

One in four Australians drink at a level that puts them at risk of short-term harm at least once a month.

Around 10 per cent of Australians drink at levels that put them at risk of long-term harm.

The government has already taken action, including by:

• launching our $103 million National Binge Drinking Campaign; and
• ending the tax loophole on alcopops that target young people. This measure has seen the consumption of alcopops drop by 30 per cent.

But there is much more work to be done, and the Preventive Health Agency will be the government’s leading advisers on these issues.

And, on top of that, I am sorry to report to the House that we are now one of the most obese nations in the world.

The National Preventative Health Taskforce stated that if obesity trends are left unchecked the life expectancy for Australian children alive today will fall by two years by the time they are just 20.

We’ve understood this through our investments in the National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health which will invest $872 million for prevention, in particular with a large emphasis on tackling obesity—through workplaces, local governments and programs targeted at children.

These examples illustrate why the government has made prevention a key focus of our reform agenda.
We must ensure that Australia does not go backwards in health status.

And we have to make our health and hospital system sustainable in the long term.

We need to reduce the burden of preventable health problems because they are already placing a huge range of pressures on an ageing workforce, and of course we need to ensure Australia’s productive capacity is maintained by keeping people well and in the workforce longer.

In the past the prevention effort has been neglected. We know that arrangements have been fragmented and lacked cohesion and focus.

Success in changing lifestyles takes a long time, a systematic approach informed by the latest evidence and ongoing evaluation of results.

It needs engagement, action and responsibility to be taken by individuals, families, communities, industries and businesses.

But we believe government can play a leadership role by gathering and analysing and disseminating the best available evidence and implementing programs and policies based on that evidence.

We need to bring together the best experience in the country, and we need to engage employers, businesses and the wider community in this preventative health debate.

A new approach is needed, and the new Australian National Preventive Health Agency will play a key role in achieving this ambition through the deployment of a skilled and dedicated team which can work flexibly and responsively.

The agency will also be an important part of our overall health reform efforts and will work with Medicare Locals to reinvigorate preventative health measures at the local level.

There is also opportunity for the agency to strategically assess the social determinants of health as shown earlier this week by a report commissioned by Catholic Health Australia, *Health lies in wealth*.

The report shows that 65 per cent of those in the lowest income groups report a long-term health problem compared with just 15 per cent of the most wealthy.

The establishment of the Australian National Preventive Health Agency will embed preventive health thinking and action, permanently, into the future as an enduring institution.

The staff will include population health and other experts. It will have responsibility for providing evidence based policy advice to health and other ministers and will administer social marketing programs and other national preventive health programs which it may be tasked with by Australian health ministers.

It will also form partnerships with industry, as well as the community and non-government sectors.

$17.6 million has been allocated for the establishment and operation of the agency, together with funding for social marketing targeting obesity and tobacco totalling $102 million and to support preventive health research, especially the translation of research into practice, for which $13.1 million has been set aside.

This bill establishes the agency as a statutory authority under the Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997, or FMA Act, and specifies its functions, governance and structure.

Health ministers have agreed to the agency being established under the FMA Act and were consulted about the broad provisions in the bill.
A chief executive officer will manage the Australian National Preventive Health Agency and will be directly accountable to the federal health minister for the financial management of the agency and to the Australian Health Ministers Conference, via the Minister for Health and Ageing, for the agency’s performance.

There will be an advisory council which will consist of experts in the field of preventive health.

So I think it is clear from this that preventive health is a policy area which the government has given the highest priority.

That is why I have introduced the bill this sitting to allow the agency to commence its important work as soon as possible.

Once established, it will mean that for the first time Australia will have a dedicated organisation to help us combat the complex challenges of preventable chronic disease.

It will benefit all Australians, now and into the future, and will play a significant role in putting Australia on the path to becoming an even healthier country.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate (on motion by Mr Andrews) adjourned.

NATIONAL HEALTH AMENDMENT (PHARMACEUTICAL BENEFITS SCHEME) BILL 2010

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Ms Roxon.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Ms ROXON (Gellibrand—Minister for Health and Ageing) (9.25 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The National Health Amendment (Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme) Bill 2010 will amend the National Health Act 1953 to achieve a more efficient and sustainable Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, or PBS, as it is well known, better value for money for Australian taxpayers, and policy stability for the pharmaceutical sector.

The bill underpins the Gillard government’s commitment to reform Australia’s health system, by ensuring that every precious health dollar is used as effectively as possible.

The bill also embodies an historic level of cooperation and collaboration between the government and the pharmaceutical industry, represented by Medicines Australia. Through jointly negotiating these reforms, the government and the industry will help ensure the sustainability of the PBS in years to come.

The bill sets out new PBS pricing arrangements aimed at reducing growth in PBS expenditure, ensuring access to quality medicines at a lower cost to the taxpayer, and providing certainty to the pharmaceutical industry in relation to PBS pricing policy.

The PBS plays a vital role in Australia’s health system, particularly for the prevention and management of chronic disease, and for the treatment of life-threatening conditions. The PBS provides reliable and timely access to a wide range of medicines at a cost individuals and the community can afford.

In the coming years, medicines will continue to be a significant and growing component of health expenditure. Since the previous major pricing reforms in 2007, the growth rate for PBS expenditure has increased from 4.3 per cent in 2006-07 to an estimated 10.5 per cent for the 2009-10 financial year.

The report to parliament on the 2007 PBS reforms warned that the cost of the PBS is projected to grow significantly over the next few years. While those earlier reforms will provide more savings than originally esti-
mated, these will be more than outweighed by higher growth in PBS costs. The PBS reform report estimates that PBS costs will reach $13 billion in 2018, compared to $9 billion in 2010.

For the PBS to continue to provide access to medicines, increases in costs need to be managed. The viability of the medicines industry in Australia also needs to be maintained.

To this end, the government has entered into a four-year memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Medicines Australia. Medicines Australia represents over 50 companies, which together account for 86 per cent of total annual PBS expenditure and nearly 60 per cent of sales of off-patent medicines.

The MOU sets out the negotiated pricing reforms which are the subject of the bill, and the policy innovations that will be introduced to improve the pathway for subsidy of medicines under the PBS.

Under the MOU, the government will provide the industry with pricing certainty over the next four years. In return for implementing new pricing arrangements that are the subject of this bill, the government will undertake not to introduce further new policy to generate price related savings from the PBS over the life of the MOU. This will provide stability to the industry, helping to foster investment and availability of new and innovative drugs in Australia, such as the $50 million biotech investment in Queensland announced by Eli Lilly in June this year.

Further process and policy changes for the listing of PBS medicines under the MOU will reduce red tape and further foster the availability of new medicines in Australia.

Under the memorandum of understanding, the PBS will continue to support access to subsidies for new and innovative products. Price reductions are achieved as a result of competition between brands in the market, within a framework of policy certainty. These are good outcomes for all sectors of the medicines industry and for the Australian community in general.

The amendments in this bill propose a significant broadening of current pricing arrangements, which were originally introduced as part of the 2007 PBS reforms.

The proposed changes to pricing policy recognise that competitive pricing already exists in the market for many PBS-subsidised medicines. The changes acknowledge that Australian taxpayers should be benefiting from that competition and the lower prices that result from it.

The principles which underpin existing price setting and maintenance mechanisms for PBS medicines will continue. In particular, the general separation of medicines between the pricing formularies for single-brand drugs, known as F1, and drugs where there is competition, known as F2, will be maintained.

The application of price disclosure will be accelerated and expanded to include all drugs in the F2 formulary.

Price disclosure allows market forces to play a part in PBS pricing. Competition between pharmaceutical companies to gain market share for their products can result in significant discounting to pharmacies. The actual price of a brand of medicine may be much less than the government’s PBS subsidy price.

Under price disclosure arrangements, pharmaceutical suppliers are required to advise the government of the price at which PBS medicines are sold into pharmacies. The information is used as the basis for possibly adjusting the price for all brands of a medicine to the weighted average price. Price disclosure ensures that, over time, government
prices reflect more closely actual market prices. This is a fairer deal for taxpayers.

Since it was first introduced in 2007, price disclosure has only been applied to medicines after a new brand lists.

Under these further pricing reforms, price disclosure will become mandatory from 1 December 2010 for all drugs on the F2 formulary. This will increase the number of brands subject to price disclosure from 162 to over 1,600 brands.

The bill also provides that, for the cycle commencing on 1 December 2010, an average price reduction of at least 23 per cent is to be achieved across all the brands in that cycle. These price reductions will occur on 1 April 2012 and represent a very large saving in PBS costs. In the event that the price reductions delivered under the normal operation of price disclosure do not yield an average of a 23 per cent price reduction across the formulary, prices for medicines in this cycle will be reduced a little further to achieve the required 23 per cent reduction overall. However, this provision will only apply to the price disclosure cycle commencing on 1 December 2010, and no medicine will be reduced to less than the lowest disclosed price for a brand of that medicine.

Expanding price disclosure is a fair and equitable way of achieving value for money for PBS medicines. It allows competition to play a real part in pricing for the PBS and allows taxpayers to benefit from discounting practices in the market. Companies can continue to compete for market share for their products as prices are generally reduced to the weighted average price, and not the lowest price.

In addition, under the further pricing reforms being introduced today, all medicines on F2 will experience a price reduction of two or five per cent on 1 February 2011. The level of price reduction for each medicine reflects the level of discounting the medicine has been experiencing in the market.

In a further reform, the price reduction that occurs when the first new brand of a PBS medicine is listed will increase from the current 12.5 per cent, to 16 per cent as of 1 February 2011. Medicines that have already taken a 12.5 per cent price reduction will not be required to take the balance of the 16 per cent price reduction.

It is also important to note that the reforms embodied in this bill preserve features of the PBS that make it such a valued part of Australia’s health system.

Under the new pricing arrangements, medical practitioners will continue to be able to prescribe PBS medicines that are clinically appropriate. The robust process for listing new medicines on the PBS will continue. Only medicines recommended by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) will be considered for listing by the government.

There will be no extra costs for patients. Some non-concessional patients may pay less, for example, where price reductions cause the price of a medicine to fall below the general copayment amount. My report to parliament on the 2007 PBS reforms estimated that consumers will benefit from those reforms via direct reductions in prices for some prescriptions by $600 to $800 million over the 10 years to 2018. The additional direct saving to consumers from these new measures is independently estimated to double this previous estimate, to save general patients on average almost $3 per prescription.

To support awareness of brand choice under the PBS, the government will invest $10 million, through the National Prescribing Service, to provide factual information to inform consumers that generic medicines are an equal choice in terms of quality and effec-
tiveness, and that some brands of a medicine may cost less than others.

The bill does not prevent the generic medicines industry from competing for a growing share of PBS scripts. In 2008-09, member companies of the Generic Medicines Industry Association had a share of 33.8 per cent of PBS scripts, up from 27 per cent in 2005-06. Generic manufacturers will also benefit from some $2.3 billion worth of medicines coming off patent over the next 12 years.

The proposed amendments to the act will also streamline the way drugs are listed for supply under section 100 arrangements. Section 100 of the National Health Act applies to certain specialised medicines with specific supply arrangements, such as chemotherapy or HIV-AIDS medicines. The amendments will make clear how general PBS provisions apply to drugs supplied under those arrangements. The power to make special arrangements under section 100 will be clarified and broadened.

The wider scope of section 100 will mean arrangements such as the revised Intravenous Chemotherapy Supply Program announced in the 2010-11 budget can be made. Under the new chemotherapy arrangements, the method for supply and pricing of combinations of vials required for single infusions will reduce unnecessary wastage of these expensive chemotherapy drugs. As a result, savings of around $75.4 million are expected over the next four years.

In addition, the bill contains provisions that address gaps in the current PBS prescription data captured by Medicare Australia. Currently, community and hospital pharmacies supplying PBS medicines only provide data for PBS prescriptions for which the Commonwealth pays a subsidy. The changes being introduced will result in data also being provided for prescriptions when a subsidy is not paid—that is, under copayment data. For these ‘under copayment’ prescriptions, the cost to patients is below the copayment amount, currently $33.30 for general patients. The collection of this information, in common with all other PBS prescription data, will give the PBAC and others a more complete picture of PBS medicine prescribing, dispensing and usage. Provision for this change is also included under the Fifth Community Pharmacy Agreement announced in the 2010-11 budget.

This bill also makes explicit price reductions related to the 25 per cent staged reductions that were put in place at the time of the 2007 PBS reform. Price reductions required on listing of a new brand of a drug affected by staged reductions are currently occurring administratively and through serial amendments to regulations. Including these reductions in the act will make the provisions clearer for industry and easier to administer.

In conclusion, the reforms in this bill provide a firm basis for achieving a more efficient and sustainable PBS while, at the same time, providing a period of certainty to industry in relation to medicines pricing policy.

The reforms have been collaboratively and closely negotiated with the pharmaceutical industry to provide benefits for taxpayers and stability for the sector. I would like to acknowledge the important role of Medicines Australia in developing this package of reforms for the benefit of all Australians.

Consumers will pay no more for their medicines, and some may pay less. Choice of medicines and brands will still be available. Medical practitioners will be able to prescribe medicines that are clinically appropriate.

Australians will benefit as consumers and taxpayers from a more sustainable PBS through lower prices for medicines and access to new medicines sooner.
TERRITORIES LAW REFORM BILL 2010

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Crean.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr CREAN (Hotham—Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government and Minister for the Arts) (9.38 am)—Mr Speaker, this is the first opportunity I have had to congratulate you on your appointment. I look forward to working with you and I know that you will do a fantastic job in the chamber. I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Introduction

The Territories Law Reform Bill 2010 will implement reforms to strengthen Norfolk Island’s governance arrangements.

The bill will improve transparency and accountability in Norfolk Island’s governance and financial management, and will facilitate access to administrative law processes on Norfolk Island.

This is important for the future sustainability of Norfolk Island.

It is part of our commitment to improving the lives of Australians living in regional and remote locations.

It is important to note that the administrative arrangements of Norfolk Island have been subject to numerous parliamentary inquiries, including the most recent Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories.

All of these reports have overwhelmingly recommended the need for reforms to Norfolk Island’s administration, law, governance, and electoral and financial structures.

We are now taking the leadership to ensure the people of Norfolk Island can start an effective program of economic and financial reform.

The bill was passed by the House of Representatives in June 2010 but lapsed when the election was called.

I am aware that the Norfolk Island government has concerns with this bill, and I will address these concerns today.

It is important to note that this bill does not remove responsibilities for the Norfolk Island government but provides increased community confidence in Norfolk Island’s governance and enables the community to better scrutinise the actions of the Norfolk Island government.

Extended legislative authority is intended to be used as a last resort if the Norfolk Island government does not undertake action.

The bill will strengthen the accountability and transparency in these key areas.

The bill will amend the Norfolk Island Act to:

• reform the voting system for the Norfolk Island Legislative Assembly and provide more certainty about when elections are held,
• introduce a range of reforms to ensure higher levels of accountability and transparency in the procedures and practices of the Norfolk Island Legislative Assembly, and
• allow the Governor-General and the Commonwealth minister responsible for territories to take a more active role in the introduction and passage of Norfolk Island legislation.

The bill will also amend the Norfolk Island Act to implement a contemporary finan-
cial management framework that will assist
that government to meet the expectations of
its community and to plan for the future.

The bill will also improve the accountabil-
ity and transparency of the Norfolk Island
government and administration by imple-
menting an administrative law regime
equivalent to that available to residents on
the mainland.

The Commonwealth has made a commit-
tment to continue to work with the Norfolk
Island government and administration to im-
plement these reforms on Norfolk Island.

In addition to the Norfolk Island reforms,
the Territories Law Reform Bill amends the
Christmas Island Act and the Cocos (Keel-
ing) Islands Act. These amendments provide
a vesting mechanism for powers and func-
tions under Western Australian laws applied
in the territories.

Powers and functions are automatically
vested in Western Australian officers and
authorities where an agreement with the Aus-
tralian government exists for those officers
and authorities to act in the territories.

**Background to the Norfolk Island reforms**

The bill will implement the reforms an-
ounced by the Australian government in
May 2009. The Australian parliament and the
Norfolk Island government have long been
aware of the need for the reforms contained
in this bill.

The reforms implement a number of rec-
ommendations from the Joint Standing
Committee on the National Capital and Ex-
ternal Territories 2003 report: *Quis custodiet
ipsos custodes?: inquiry into governance on
Norfolk Island*.

The report identified key features of good
governance which have been adopted
through the development of formal mecha-
nisms by the Australian government and
other Western democracies.

These include ensuring public account-
ability through finance and performance au-
dits, access to an Ombudsman, protecting the
disclosure of personal information to public
agencies and the availability of merits review
of decisions which affect rights and entitle-
ments.

The Norfolk Island government and ad-
ministration have implemented some infor-
mal mechanisms to facilitate good govern-
ance. However, the report concluded that
‘the absence of formal and effective mecha-
nisms of accountability and transparency,
seriously undermine the quality of govern-
ance on the Island’.

The report recommended a wide range of
reforms, many of which have been adapted
and incorporated into the reforms package
implemented by this bill.

**Machinery of government and electoral
reforms**

Parts 1 and 2 of schedule 1 of the Territo-
ries Law Reform Bill make general govern-
ance and electoral amendments to the Nor-
folk Island Act.

The bill proposes key governance reforms
including:

- prescribing a process for selecting and
dismissing a Chief Minister and minis-
ters, as well as determining their roles
and responsibilities;
- establishing a no confidence motion
process for the Chief Minister; and
- allowing the Governor-General and the
minister responsible for territories to
take a more active role in the introduc-
tion and passage of Norfolk Island legis-
lation.

The bill also establishes the framework for
the reform of the voting system for the Nor-
folk Island Legislative Assembly. These
amendments will allow the Norfolk Island
Chief Minister to enter into an arrangement

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with the Australian Electoral Commission in relation to general elections of members of the Legislative Assembly and the filling of a casual vacancy in the office of a member of the Legislative Assembly.

The amendments will also provide Norfolk Island residents with greater transparency in electoral processes and certainty about when elections are held. This is critical if we are to empower the residents of Norfolk Island and ensure their voices are heard.

The bill establishes the foundations for such a process, which will be supplemented by regulations to be developed in consultation with Norfolk Island.

The amendments will extend the Australian government’s oversight of Norfolk Island legislation to include schedule 2 matters, as well as enable the Commonwealth minister and Governor-General to introduce legislation into the Norfolk Island Legislative Assembly.

The proposed amendments do not restrict the Norfolk Island Legislative Assembly’s almost unlimited power to ‘make laws for the peace, order and good government of the territory’.

The right of the Australian government to intervene in Norfolk Island legislation is an existing part of the island’s governance system.

The need for this amendment can be linked to the number of additional matters transferred to the Norfolk Island government’s authority under schedule 2 since 1979.

In the absence of this legislation, none of these reforms will be possible as the current legislation is inadequate.

The bill will enable the Australian government to carry out the checks and balances necessary to ensure that Norfolk Island legislation complies with Australian government policy objectives and Australia’s national obligations under international law.

Amendments allowing the minister to appoint the Deputy Administrator of Norfolk Island are consistent with the power already provided to me as the responsible Commonwealth minister to appoint the Deputy Administrator of Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands.

The amendments allow for flexible and timely appointments to be made in the event that the Administrator is unable to perform one or all of the functions of the office. The position of Deputy Administrator is not intended to be a position involving remuneration.

Amendments in the bill that provide for the Administrator to exercise certain powers in the event of the dissolution of the Legislative Assembly provide a practical and effective arrangement to ensure the continuity of business of government including the provision of services to the Norfolk Island community. The Administrator would be required to exercise these powers in accordance with any direction given by the Governor-General.

Financial frameworks

Part 3 of schedule 1 makes further amendments to the Norfolk Island Act to enable the implementation of a contemporary financial management framework.

The bill establishes a customised and proportionate financial framework which provides for the responsible management of public money and public property, preparation of budgets, financial reporting, annual reports and procurement. The framework provided by the bill will be supplemented by subordinate legislation which will ensure that the financial scheme is adapted to the unique requirements of Norfolk Island and can be effectively implemented.
The Commonwealth government is committed to assisting Norfolk Island in implementing this framework effectively and to this end the amendments also provide for the appointment by the Commonwealth of a Commonwealth Financial Officer for Norfolk Island should this be required.

The Commonwealth Financial Officer does not have any specific powers under the amendments proposed in the bill. The Commonwealth Financial Officer’s functions are required to be flexible and adaptable, to enable the best possible assistance to be provided to the Norfolk Island government and administration in implementing the bill.

Additionally, the bill amends the Norfolk Island Act to provide for the appointment of the Commonwealth Auditor-General to conduct audits of the Norfolk Island administration’s financial statements.

The Australian government has agreed to fund the Commonwealth Auditor-General to provide financial statement audits for three years. Any further funding after this period will be subject to budget considerations. I note that other territories including the ACT and the Northern Territory have established their own Auditor-General and do not receive funding for these positions.

Administrative law reforms

The last key part of the Norfolk Island reform package implemented by the bill is the application of Commonwealth administrative law accountability and oversight mechanisms to Norfolk Island.

Part 4 of the bill proposes amendments to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal Act which will confer on the Administrative Appeals Tribunal merits review jurisdiction for specified decisions under Norfolk Island legislation. In essence the reforms will mean that, where specified under regulations, administrative decisions which are made under Norfolk Island laws can be reviewed by the Administrative Appeals Tribunal on request by an affected party.

The amendments in the reform bill will be supplemented by regulations. The regulations will specify which Norfolk Island laws may be subject to Administrative Appeals Tribunal merits review. This will enable a staged implementation of the reforms to be undertaken in consultation with the Administrative Appeals Tribunal and Norfolk Island.

Part 5 of the bill proposes amendments to the Freedom of Information Act to apply that act to Norfolk Island. The scope of the application of the act to Norfolk Island will be consistent with its application to Commonwealth government agencies. The amendments will give individuals on Norfolk Island the right to:

- seek access to documents held by the public sector and to official documents of Norfolk Island government ministers, and
- ask for their personal information in such documents to be changed if it is incomplete, incorrect, out of date or misleading.

Part 6 of the bill proposes minor amendments to the Norfolk Island Act and the Ombudsman Act. The amendments will enable the Commonwealth Ombudsman to assume the function of the Norfolk Island Ombudsman under Norfolk Island legislation.

Part 7 of the bill proposes amendments to the Privacy Act to apply that act to the Norfolk Island public sector. The bill will provide that the Norfolk Island public sector will be required to adhere to the information privacy principles in the same manner as Australian government public sector agencies.

It is expected that the relevant Australian government agencies will play a significant and ongoing educative role about the rights
and obligations to be established by the administrative law amendments in relation to the community of Norfolk Island and its public sector.

Much has been made of the different approach which has been taken in relation to the ombudsman reforms. I agree that these reforms are a positive example of what can be achieved through cooperation between the Commonwealth and Norfolk Island.

However, the approach taken in the ombudsman reforms should be distinguished from the remaining administrative reforms for a number of key reasons. Firstly, there was existing precedent for this approach as the Commonwealth Ombudsman already undertakes the role of ACT Ombudsman under ACT legislation and, secondly, the Norfolk Island government introduced ombudsman legislation into the legislative assembly in 2009.

The need for administrative law reform on Norfolk Island has been the subject of numerous reports and recommendations since 1991. However, to date, the Norfolk Island government has failed to initiate Norfolk Island legislation in the area of freedom of information or privacy.

The approach taken in the bill is specifically designed to take into account the ongoing concerns raised by the Norfolk Island government about resourcing and capacity constraints on island.

The existing Commonwealth legislation is adaptable to Norfolk Island, and is currently applied across Commonwealth agencies of varying sizes, including those equivalent in size to the Norfolk Island administration.

The extension of Commonwealth administrative law mechanisms will enable the Norfolk Island government and community to access the Commonwealth’s expert knowledge, experience and resources. Funding has already been allocated to Commonwealth agencies to assist in the implementation of these reforms on Norfolk Island.

The bill will ensure that the standards of administrative law enjoyed by Australians on the mainland are extended to Norfolk Islanders.

**Christmas and Cocos (Keeling) Islands reforms**

In addition to the Norfolk Island reforms, the Territories Law Reform Bill amends the Christmas Island Act and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands Act. These amendments provide a vesting mechanism for powers and functions under Western Australian laws applied in the territories. Powers and functions are automatically vested in Western Australian officers and authorities where an agreement with the Australian government exists for those officers and authorities to act in the territories.

The automatic vesting mechanism will reduce administrative burden and improve efficiency under the service delivery agreements by enabling Western Australian officers to have faster access to newly created powers.

**Conclusion**

The Norfolk Island reforms included in this bill are a first step towards improving transparency and accountability in Norfolk Island governance and financial frameworks, and in administrative decision making.

These reforms will increase community confidence and allow the community to better scrutinise the actions of the Norfolk Island government and its administration. They will better empower the local community of Norfolk Island and give them a say in how their community is being governed.

It will extend to the people of Norfolk Island access to the Ombudsman, and the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. These are not special privileges but basic protections that
provide citizens with greater transparency of government decisions.

This bill will provide Norfolk Island with the tools necessary to ensure ongoing stability and to sustain strong and effective self-government under the Norfolk Island Act.

I have advocated for a better regional development framework which empowers local communities and gives them a greater say on how their local challenges can be met.

I also say that this is a two-way street and local communities must also find ways to develop their strategic local plans.

We have to work in partnership to ensure that we get the governance right and support the most effective solutions.

The Norfolk Island reforms, together with those related to the Indian Ocean Territories, are positive changes which reflect the Australian government’s responsibility to ensure an equitable and sustainable future for Australia’s regional communities, including our external territories.

I commend the bill.

Debate (on motion by Ms Gambaro) adjourned.

DEFENCE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (SECURITY OF DEFENCE PREMISES) BILL 2010

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Stephen Smith.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr STEPHEN SMITH (Perth—Minister for Defence) (9.59 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Defence Legislation Amendment (Security of Defence Premises) Bill 2010 (the bill) will insert a new part (part VIA) into the Defence Act 1903 (the act). This gives effect to Australian government initiatives to enhance the security of defence bases, facilities, assets and personnel within Australia, in response to the changing nature of security threats.

In August 2009 a number of individuals were arrested for allegedly planning an armed attack against Holsworthy Army Base. Defence facilities and personnel are potentially attractive targets for terrorist groups.

Defence maintains a framework of protective security measures to safeguard defence personnel and facilities. But in view of the changing security environment, including the increased risk of terrorism, in August 2009 the government asked Defence to conduct a comprehensive review of base security.

The review of defence protective security arrangements subsequently recommended a number of policy and physical security initiatives to complement and strengthen existing security at defence bases.

One of the recommendations of the review was to bring forward a number of legislative amendments. These are contained within this bill. The measures reflect the importance the government places on the security and safety of Australian Defence Force (ADF) members, defence employees and the Australian public.

First, the bill strengthens the legal regime for Australian Defence Force members who may be required to use reasonable and necessary force in the event of a terrorist attack on a defence base.

Various Commonwealth, state and territory legislative provisions recognise the right to defend yourself and others who are threatened. These currently provide a legal basis for members of the ADF to use reasonable and necessary force to defend themselves, or others, in the event of an attack on a base that is likely to cause death or injury.
The bill provides a scope of conduct that will apply uniformly for designated ADF members for the security of defence premises.

Appropriately trained and authorised members of the ADF may use up to and including lethal force where this is considered reasonable and necessary to protect life or prevent serious injury to themselves or others in the event of an actual or imminent attack on defence premises or people on those premises.

It is modelled on the existing section 51T of the act which applies to the use of force by ADF members in assisting civilian authorities with domestic security incidents and violence under Part IIIAAA of the act.

The bill does not alter the primacy of civil law enforcement authorities in responding to security incidents at defence premises. A full response to a terrorist incident clearly remains the responsibility of civil law enforcement authorities, and would be managed under the National Counter-Terrorism Plan.

Second, the bill establishes a statutory regime of search and seizure powers to reduce the risk of unauthorised items entering defence facilities, or restricted items being improperly removed.

The Della-Vedova case, involving the theft, possession and sale of defence owned rocket launchers by a defence employee, illustrates the risk of improper removal of dangerous, restricted or classified items from defence bases.

The bill establishes a statutory regime of search and seizure powers to be exercised by three identified classes of defence security officials, who will perform security functions at defence facilities.

These officials, identified in division 2 of the bill, are:

- defence contracted security guards;
- security authorised members of the Defence Force; and
- defence security screening Australian Public Service employees.

All three classes of officials will be empowered under division 3 of the new part to:

- request evidence of a person’s identification and authority to be on defence premises;
- conduct a consensual search of a person, vehicle, vessel, aircraft or item on entry to or exit from a defence facility; and
- in defined circumstances, refuse a person entry to or free exit from the facility, and potentially restrain and detain the person for the purposes of placing them in the custody of the police.

The circumstances where these latter powers might be invoked include when the security official reasonably believes that the individual is a trespasser, has or may commit a criminal offence on the premises, or constitutes a threat to the safety of people on the facility.

Security authorised ADF members or, where such members are not available, defence security screening Australian Public Service employees will be further empowered under divisions 4 and 5 of the part, to:

- require evidence of a person’s identification and authority to be on the premises;
- conduct a non-consensual search of a person, vehicle, vessel, aircraft or item on entry to or exit from a defence facility;
- seize items that constitute a threat to safety or relate to the commission of a criminal offence on the premises; and
- in defined circumstances, remove people from defence premises.
The powers of security authorised ADF members will extend to include, where reasonable and necessary, the authority to take any action required to make a seized item safe, or to prevent its use.

The statutory regime incorporates a range of safeguards relating to the exercise of powers under the new part. These safeguards require that officials exercising these powers must:

- have been authorised by the Minister for Defence;
- have completed a minimum level of appropriate training as determined by the Minister for Defence or his delegate;
- carry an identity card in a form approved by the Secretary of Defence;
- surrender their identity card within seven days of ceasing to be a security official;
- wherever practicable produce their identity card for inspection by a person, prior to exercising powers under this new part;
- not stop or restrict any protest, dissent, assembly or industrial action;
- not subject a person to greater indignity than is reasonable and necessary;
- only use such force against a person or thing that is reasonable and necessary;
- only restrain and detain for the purposes of handing a person over to the police; and
- in respect of seized items, provide the person with a receipt if it is practicable to do so and, if there is a reasonable belief that the item relates to a criminal offence, give the item to the police.

Moreover, for the purposes of the consensual search regime contained in division 3, the amendments will create offences for a defence security official who conducts a search of a person, vehicle, vessel, aircraft or thing without consent.

In practice, the exercise of these powers and the proposed use of the various classes of defence security official will be dependent on the nature of the site and the assessed level of the security threat, typically determined on the basis of intelligence.

For example, in practice, the consensual identification and search powers contained in division 3 will generally be exercised by contracted security guards on a random basis on entry to and exit from defence premises at low to medium threat levels.

The non-consensual identification, search and seizure powers contained in divisions 4 and 5 will be exercised by security authorised members of the Defence Force or, where such members are not reasonably available, by defence security screening APS employees during higher threat levels on all defence premises and at all times at defence’s more sensitive sites. Under these circumstances, the powers would be exercised on a more frequent basis to provide an increased level of security in line with the assessed risk.

Third, the bill updates the existing trespass offence and associated arrest power in the act to clarify that Defence has adequate powers to deal with unauthorised entry to all defence premises.

Currently, the Defence Act 1903 imposes a monetary penalty of $40 for the offence of trespass. This is not an effective deterrent to potential trespassers nor does it reflect potential threats to national security. Consequently, in line with current Commonwealth criminal law policy, the amendments impose a new maximum penalty of $5,500 for the offence of trespassing on defence premises or accommodation.

Defence is the largest Commonwealth landowner and one of the largest landowners in Australia. The department manages an
estate comprised of in excess of three million hectares of land, around 88 major bases or facilities and approximately 370 owned properties, and a further 350 under lease. This poses a major challenge to detecting trespassers, particularly if detection was to rely exclusively on the use of manned patrols.

Consequently, to support the enforcement of the new trespass offence, Defence intends to increase the use of optical surveillance on defence premises, including vessels and aircraft, to improve the department’s capacity to detect and apprehend potential trespassers. This may include video surveillance, including closed circuit television, or CCTV.

Further, as the purpose of surveillance activity undertaken by Defence would be to identify and deal with potential security threats, the Commonwealth needs to rely on any images captured to assist intelligence agencies, and as evidence to support any action by law enforcement agencies and Commonwealth, state and territory public prosecution authorities.

Consequently, the amendments will insert new provisions that:

• authorise Defence to use optical surveillance devices for the purposes of monitoring the security of defence premises and the safety of people on those premises; and

• authorise Defence to disclose information, including personal information, captured by those devices to intelligence agencies, law enforcement agencies and Commonwealth, state and territory public prosecution authorities for the purposes of carrying out their statutory functions.

In conclusion, this bill confers a range of powers on designated defence security officials to allow the ADF and the Department of Defence to deter, detect and respond to incidents that threaten the security of defence bases, facilities, assets and personnel within Australia.

The bill reflects the Australian government’s commitment to protect the men and women who safeguard our nation.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate (on motion by Ms Gambaro) adjourned.

OZONE PROTECTION AND SYNTHETIC GREENHOUSE GAS MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2010

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Burke.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr Burke (Watson—Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities) (10.11 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Ozone Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse Gas Management Act 1989 (the ozone act) gives effect to Australia’s international obligations under the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to phase out the use of ozone depleting substances and to minimise the emissions of synthetic greenhouse gases.

The bill will improve the effectiveness of the act by introducing a civil penalty and infringement notice scheme and will address a number of issues that have arisen from the practical application of the act and its subordinate legislation.

The most significant amendment made to the act is in relation to the compliance and enforcement framework. The act currently contains several criminal offences for breaches of the legislation. For example, the
act and regulations prescribe a number of conditions that must be met by holders of the various permits and licences. Currently, the only penalty available for breach is the suspension or cancellation of a permit. This would mean a permit holder could no longer run their business, irrespective of the severity or nature of the breach.

The bill will introduce a civil penalties regime so that there will be for each offence an equivalent civil penalty provision. Other enforcement measures include the ability to issue infringement notices for some offences under the act. These measures will ensure that appropriate action can be taken in respect of breaches of the act.

The bill includes measures to improve the enforcement of the act. As it stands, the act is difficult to enforce and after 20 years of operation is out of date. The bill improves the qualification and conduct requirements for inspectors and clarifies the role of the minister in compliance under the act.

The bill will clarify the powers of inspectors to allow for them to assess on site if a breach has occurred. In limited circumstances an inspector may be assisted. This acknowledges the expertise required to undertake an effective search under the act.

There are also new provisions in the act setting out the rights of private individuals—for example, the procedural aspects relating to the collection, handling and return of evidence and warrants and notices for seized and forfeitable material. The bill also fully articulates the way material seized or collected under the act is to be treated—be it returned, used as evidence in a civil or criminal proceeding or forfeited to the Commonwealth. Although these provisions are new within the act, they are consistent with other Commonwealth legislation.

When stored in bulk, ozone depleting substances and synthetic greenhouse gases are stored in pressurised containers. Where an inspector finds an unsafe container, they can make an application to the secretary of the department to have the container dealt with appropriately, including its destruction.

The bill also amends provisions relating to the forfeiture of goods, removing the nexus between conviction and forfeiture. The amendment is necessitated by the inclusion of civil penalties as, without this amendment, forfeiture cannot flow from a civil penalty order. As a result, the forfeiture provisions in the act will be amended and expanded, to ensure the system works and has appropriate checks and balances to protect private individuals and companies. As with other amendments covered in this bill, although these provisions are new they are consistent with other Commonwealth legislation.

There are new offences in the bill that arise from amendments to the compliance and enforcement framework. The offences relate to moving, altering or interfering with evidence that has been secured, but not yet seized, in the course of a search to monitor compliance with the act. These provisions have been introduced to ensure that seizure is done only under warrant—as is appropriate. Criminal provisions have also been introduced to protect the process of obtaining a warrant. While this is a new offence under this act, it is a procedural offence common to other Commonwealth legislation.

The bill also amends existing penalties to align penalties in the act with comparable provisions in Commonwealth legislation and to ensure they reflect the seriousness of the offence and provide an adequate disincentive.

The bill will make several minor amendments to ensure the act is administratively effective and simple for the covered industries.
The bill will ban the import and manufacture of hydrochlorofluorocarbon refrigeration and air-conditioning equipment in order to support Australia’s phase-out of HCFCs, mirroring the successful approach taken to phase out chlorofluorocarbons in the mid-1990s. This policy was widely consulted with industry and is appropriate considering the status of the technology in this industry. A ban is currently imposed for air-conditioning equipment containing HCFCs as a licence condition. The bill, however, also provides that exemptions to the ban can be made through regulations to address cases where a ban could be impractical.

Several minor amendments will be made to the way licences are administered. In light of the introduction of the civil penalty regime, civil penalties can be taken into account when deciding to grant, cancel or suspend a licence under the act. The time limits for reporting under the act will also be amended to allow for flexible and robust reporting.

Licence periods for the import of pre-charged equipment, for example a domestic refrigeration unit, will also be altered to reduce cost for the licence holder. The matters to which the minister may have regard are also being amended in light of the new civil penalty regime.

In closing, this bill will strengthen Australia’s implementation of our international commitments to phase out the use of ozone-depleting substances and to minimise the emissions of synthetic greenhouse gases, through industry-supported and sensible regulation.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate (on motion by Ms Gambaro) adjourned.

TRADEX SCHEME AMENDMENT BILL 2010

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Garrett.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr GARRETT (Kingsford Smith—Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth) (10.19 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill will clarify the eligibility of partnerships for the Tradex Scheme and remove redundant provisions.

The Tradex Scheme was introduced as a streamlined program for providing relief to businesses paying customs duty and GST on imported products that are to be exported or incorporated into other goods that are to be exported.

Currently the Tradex Scheme Act 1999 requires an applicant for the Tradex Scheme to be a ‘legal’ person who proposes to import goods. The Acts Interpretation Act 1901 provides that a person generally includes a body politic or corporate as well as an individual. While partnerships are recognised by the law, they are not an incorporated body. Coverage of partnerships under the Tradex Scheme is therefore unclear.

While partnerships were not explicitly referenced in the legislation, they were not, and are not, intended to be excluded in the Tradex Scheme. This bill seeks to clarify this position in law.

The bill also contains a minor amendment aimed at removing redundant parts of the act consistent with the government’s objective of reducing the regulatory burden. The Tradex Scheme will continue to provide real benefits to Australian industry and improve our international competitiveness as a trading nation.
I commend the bill to the House.

Debate (on motion by Ms Gambaro) adjourned.

**HIGHER EDUCATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (STUDENT SERVICES AND AMENITIES) BILL 2010**

**First Reading**

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Garrett.

Bill read a first time.

**Second Reading**

Mr Garrett (Kingsford Smith—Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth) (10.21 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill delivers on the government's commitment to rebuild essential university student services and to also ensure that students have access to representation and advocacy on campus.

The Higher Education Legislation Amendment (Student Services and Amenities) Bill 2010 outlines a robust and balanced solution that will not only help ensure the delivery of quality student services—it will also help, once and for all, to secure their future.

The government remains committed to ensuring that students have access to vital campus services and we make no apology for honouring this commitment here today by reintroducing this legislation. This commitment was recently reinforced as outlined in the Regional Australia Package announced in September 2010, and is particularly important for regional and outer metropolitan universities.

Consultations with the universities in 2008 found that $170 million had been stripped from funding for services and amenities, resulting in the decline and in some instances complete closure of health, counselling, employment, childcare and welfare support services.

The impact has been greatest on regional and smaller universities and campuses outside of the metropolitan centres. In regional areas with limited access to services, the university campus offers a focus, and services and amenities provided on regional campuses are accessed not only by university students but by the wider community.

These are fundamental services that help students to navigate university life, achieve success in their studies and enable them to participate in sport and the university community.

Students from regional areas are particularly affected by the loss of student services. Regional students studying at a metropolitan university leave behind the support of their family and local community. Campus services and amenities such as counselling, health services, study assistance and social activities are essential in supporting this group of students in making that transition.

It is students who are being forced to pay the price of the $170 million—both directly and indirectly.

Some universities indicated that they were forced to redirect funding out of research and teaching budgets to support services and amenities that would otherwise have been cut.

Others highlighted price hikes for parking, food and child care.

This demonstrated that students were paying the price for the removal of government support for services and amenities on campus.

Universities Australia, the peak body representing the university sector, painted the picture clearly in late 2008, stating:

Universities have struggled for years to prop up essential student services through cross-
subsidisation from other parts of already stretched university budgets, to redress the damage that resulted from the coalition government’s disastrous Voluntary Student Unionism (VSU) legislation.

In its submission to the review, the Australian Olympic Committee noted that there had also been a serious impact on sport:

… the introduction of the VSU legislation has had a direct negative impact on the number of students (particularly women) participating in sport and, for the longer term, the maintenance and upgrading of sporting infrastructure and facilities and the retention of world class coaches.

Since then, Universities Australia and other bodies that have the interests of the students at heart have repeatedly called on the parliament to pass this legislation.

The bill aims to support universities and students to help undo the damage.

The bill makes amendments to require higher education providers that receive Commonwealth Grant Scheme funding to comply with new Student Services, Amenities Representation and Advocacy Guidelines.

This means that for the first time universities will be required to implement national access to services benchmarks for all domestic Australian students—in line with the arrangements that already exist for our international students.

These important benchmarks will ensure that all Australian students are provided with information on how to access important health, welfare and financial services and are provided with access to advocacy services.

The bill also introduces for the first time national student representation protocols to ensure that students have an opportunity to participate in university governance structures.

Let me be clear—the bill is not a return to compulsory student unionism.

Section 19-37(1) of the Higher Education Support Act 2003, which prohibits a provider from requiring a student to be a member of a student organisation, is unchanged.

The new benchmarks will help ensure students have access to advocacy support services to support student appeals, and vital help for students who may need extra assistance on matters that can be overwhelming and unfamiliar.

They also ensure that universities provide opportunities for democratic student representation, so that student views are taken into account during the decision making process.

This is a value that is reflected in the democratic rights that underpin our nation and community.

Over and above these basic services, representation and advocacy rights, the bill will also provide universities with the option to implement a services fee capped at a maximum of $250 per year ($254 in 2011 due to indexation) to invest in quality services and amenities.

Universities that choose to levy a fee will be expected to consult with students on the nature of the services and amenities and enhanced advocacy that the fee would support.

To ensure that the fee is not a financial barrier, any university introducing the fee must also provide eligible students with the option of taking out a HECS-style loan under a new component of the Higher Education Loan Program—SA-HELP.

The bill specifically outlines what the fee can be used to fund. The content of these provisions has been developed in consultation with the higher education sector and other key stakeholders.

In addition the bill prohibits universities from allowing the expenditure of any funds raised from a compulsory student services and amenities fee to support political parties,
or support the election of a person to the Commonwealth, state or territory legislatures or to a local government body.

We believe that this is a balanced, practical solution that enables universities, students and the government to work in partnership to rebuild important student supports and services and ensure independent student representation and advocacy.

We believe that these support services are of particular importance to the vibrancy of regional campuses and provide essential support for students from regional areas.

The government will continue to work in partnership with higher education providers and students, and take responsible action to ensure quality and sustainable student services and representation into the future.

The bill will help to secure the future of universities and the critical role they have in Australia’s education future. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate (on motion by Ms Gambaro) adjourned.

OFFSHORE PETROLEUM AND GREENHOUSE GAS STORAGE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (MISCELLANEOUS MEASURES) BILL 2010

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Martin Ferguson.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr MARTIN FERGUSON (Batman—Minister for Resources and Energy and Minister for Tourism) (10.30 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill amends the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006 (the act). This is a relatively small bill making a number of minor policy and technical amendments.

It is nevertheless an important bill as it will augment the existing functions of the National Offshore Petroleum Safety Authority (NOPSA) to include non-occupational health and safety (non-OHS) aspects of structural integrity for facilities, wells and well-related equipment in Commonwealth waters.

Since its establishment on 1 January 2005, NOPSA has had structural integrity functions relevant to occupational health and safety for petroleum facilities, including for pipelines, and associated wells.

The amendments introduced in this bill clarify NOPSA’s role and strengthen their ability to fully carry out their functions in relation to all facilities, wells and well-related equipment—including during the drilling and construction of wells and whether or not wells are associated with a facility.

The augmentation of NOPSA’s functions to include non-OHS aspects of structural integrity is not to extend NOPSA’s responsibilities into environmental management or resource management regulation but to allow NOPSA to more effectively carry out its responsibilities as an occupational health and safety regulator.

This is particularly the case where a structure used in petroleum operations such as a well or a pipeline is on the sea floor and contact between people and the structure is only occasional.

To a large extent, the structural integrity of a pipeline or a well is an OHS matter, as it is central to the safety of operational or maintenance crews whenever they are required to do work on the structure. There will always be some aspects of structural integrity that fall outside this category, however, and it is these that the present amend-
The amendments seek to address. The amendments will enable NOPSA to take a comprehensive and integrated approach to the integrity of structures, without any question as to the scope of their functional responsibilities.

The government will work with industry and other stakeholders to determine in regulations which matters relating to the structural integrity of pipelines and wells are also resource security or resource management matters. These will continue to be the responsibility of the designated authorities under proposed regulations relating to resource management. There will therefore be an element of overlap between the responsibilities of NOPSA and those of the designated authorities, although they will be performing different functions.

The government is committed to augmenting NOPSA’s powers to ensure that it has sufficient capability to effectively regulate all aspects of occupational health and safety for the offshore petroleum industry and that its role is not limited in the event of any future failure of a well or pipeline.

The current amendments also go some way to addressing issues arising from the Montara incident in August 2009. However, I also remain committed to the establishment of a single national regulator for the offshore petroleum industry.

This initiative will be a key development in the ongoing improvement and streamlining of the national regime for the regulation of petroleum and greenhouse gas activities in Commonwealth waters and will help avoid regulatory duplication that may compromise the effectiveness of the safety regime.

Other minor policy amendments proposed in this bill seek to:

- provide a streamlined process for the submission of applications, nominations, requests or notices in relation to a title when that title is jointly owned by two or more titleholders (known as multiple titleholders);
- make clear that when the act imposes obligations on a titleholder and where a title is owned by multiple holders, while the obligation is imposed on each and every titleholder the obligation may be discharged by any one of the titleholders; and
- correct a technical problem with the authority of responsible state and Northern Territory ministers to participate in the performance of joint authority functions, and to perform designated authority functions, under the Commonwealth regulations.

On this last matter, existing state and Northern Territory legislation, which corresponds to the act, provides the designated authority (the relevant state or Northern Territory minister) with authority to perform functions and powers under the act, but this does not include the regulations in force under the act. This amendment therefore closes the gap, as many important functions and powers of designated authorities are conferred by the regulations. For consistency, corresponding amendments have also been made to joint authority provisions.

A further small but important amendment clarifies the duties of titleholders under the occupational health and safety provisions of this act. This amendment narrows the titleholder’s duties in the current clause 13A of schedule 3 of the act from facilities generally to wells and well-related equipment, specifically in new clauses 13A and 13B.

As it stands the clause can be read as imposing a duty of care on a titleholder in relation to the design of facilities, such as drilling rigs, which the titleholder could not reasonably be expected to have any control over.
Therefore this duty of care has been recast so that it applies to all aspects of wells from design through to operation and closing off. Consequential amendments have been made to allow OHS inspectors to monitor compliance and investigate possible contraventions.

Technical amendments in this bill include changes to offence provisions that relate to titleholders, where the offence consists only of a physical element. These amendments provide that offences under these provisions are made provisions of strict liability, which removes the need to prove intent.

Given the geographically remote nature of offshore petroleum and greenhouse gas activities it is not possible for regulatory staff to be constantly monitoring titleholder activities, so they are reliant on accurate reporting by titleholders to inform them that directions and requirements in the act have been complied with.

Where the offences relate to doing or not doing an act, proving the intent of a titleholder is very difficult. In these circumstances making the offences ones of strict liability is justified.

This application of strict liability is consistent with government policy on the application of strict liability and is to provide a regulatory regime that is effective and enforceable. This amendment does not increase any penalties on titleholders; in fact in some instances it removes imprisonment as a penalty and instead replaces it with penalty units.

Further technical amendments in the bill correct a referencing error and update the listed OHS laws set out in the act to take into account recent changes to safety regulations.

In summary, through a range of measures, including:
- strengthening the functions of NOPSA;
- increasing the effectiveness of compliance through the application of strict liability to appropriate offences;
- clarifying the application of titleholder provisions in the act in relation to multiple titleholders; and
- setting out that a titleholder’s duty of care under OHS provisions of the act relates specifically to wells;

this bill underscores the government’s commitment to the maintenance and continuing improvement of a strong, effective framework for the regulation of offshore petroleum and greenhouse gas storage activities. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate (on motion by Ms Gambaro) adjourned.

OFFSHORE PETROLEUM AND GREENHOUSE GAS STORAGE (SAFETY LEVIES) AMENDMENT BILL 2010
First Reading
Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Martin Ferguson.
Bill read a first time.

Second Reading
Mr MARTIN FERGUSON (Batman—Minister for Resources and Energy and Minister for Tourism) (10.39 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill amends the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage (Safety Levies) Act 2003 to provide transitional arrangements in relation to the phasing out of the pipeline safety management plan levy.

Amendments in 2009 to this act and regulations under the act (which commenced on 1 January 2010) removed provisions referencing pipeline safety management plans and pipeline safety management plan levies. The safety case levy was extended to cover pipelines.
While the amendment act provided transitional arrangements, it did so on the basis the states and Northern Territory had agreed to amend their regulations (which correspond to, or mirror, the Commonwealth regulations), in line with Commonwealth amendments, for designated coastal waters. These amendments have not yet occurred in all jurisdictions, which means that some safety case levy payments for facilities that are pipelines due to the National Offshore Petroleum Safety Authority may not be collectable by the safety authority.

To address this situation, the bill provides transitional arrangements to give the states and the Northern Territory until the end of 2012 to implement corresponding amendments under their legislation applying in designated coastal waters, and to ensure that the appropriate levies for activities in these jurisdictional coastal waters can continue to be collected by the safety authority in the intervening period to fund its regulatory activities.

The amendments in this bill ensure the complete coverage of the safety regime for pipelines in designated coastal waters. It provides that from 1 January 2010, when amendments to the act and related regulations came into force, until 31 December 2012 a pipeline safety management plan in force is treated, for the purposes of this act, as if a safety case for the pipeline is in force. These amendments ensure that some safety levies relating to pipelines in designated coastal waters can be collected.

The amendments also include transitional amendments to reflect minor changes relating to a safety case in force in relation to a facility in designated coastal waters, understood to be within the meaning of regulations of a state or the Northern Territory that have not yet been amended to reflect Commonwealth changes made on 1 January 2010. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate (on motion by Ms Gambaro) adjourned.

FAMILY ASSISTANCE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (CHILD CARE BUDGET MEASURES) BILL 2010

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Ms Kate Ellis.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Ms KATE ELLIS (Adelaide—Minister for Employment Participation and Childcare and Minister for the Status of Women) (10.42 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Today I am reintroducing a bill to the House that returns the childcare rebate annual cap to $7,500 per child per year and pauses indexation of the annual cap for four years until 30 June 2014. This is in order to generate $86.3 million that will be specifically redirected to support the government’s quest to increase the quality of child care and early education in Australia.

Although we know that many childcare centres across Australia are doing well, the National Childcare Accreditation Council’s latest report shows that, sadly, too many childcare centres are failing to meet basic safety, hygiene, educational and wellbeing standards.

For instance, of the 1,129 centres that received an accreditation decision between 1 January and 30 June, 30 per cent had failed to ensure that toileting and nappy-changing procedures were consistent with advice from recognised health authorities, and 32 per cent had failed to ensure that potentially dangerous products, plants and objects were inaccessible to children.
These figures demonstrate just how important it is to support our hardworking and dedicated early education and childcare workers to do the job that they do best and to lift the quality of child care and early education across Australia.

This amendment will produce $86.3 million over the next four years to be invested in delivering the government’s National Quality Framework in partnership with the states and territories.

Our $273.7 million investment in the National Quality Framework endorsed by COAG will improve educator to child ratios so that each child gets more individual time and individual attention.

It will introduce educator qualification requirements so that educators are better able to lead activities that inspire youngsters and help them to learn and develop.

And it will deliver a new ratings system so parents know the quality of care on offer and can make informed choices. It will also reduce regulation burden so that services only have to deal with one regulator.

Crucially this measure will also help fund our $59.4 million investment in improving the quality of the 142 budget based funded early childhood services which are located in rural and remote Australia and provide care to some of Australia’s most vulnerable children.

We are doing this because the government believes that the 800,000 Australian families who place their children in care each week deserve to know that they are safe and in a happy and stimulating learning environment.

We know that the Leader of the Opposition wants to put the National Quality Standard on hold indefinitely and also has said that he would scrap the rating system that will shine a light on child care in Australia.

While the opposition may be content to sit back while too many childcare centres across the country are failing to meet basic safety, hygiene, educational and wellbeing standards, this government believes that we can and must do better when it comes to the safety, wellbeing and early learning of our children.

When it comes to investing in early childhood education and care, our government’s record is clear. We are investing some $17.1 billion over the next four years—that is almost $10 billion more than that provided in the last four years of the former coalition government.

And our record on helping families meet the costs of child care stands head and shoulders above the former coalition government. Overall, we are providing $14.4 billion to help 800,000 Australian families annually with the cost of child care, through the childcare benefit and the childcare rebate. This includes $8.4 billion over four years to 2013-14 to reduce childcare fees under the childcare benefit and $6 billion to assist working families with out-of-pocket childcare expenses through the childcare rebate.

We have already delivered greater assistance to families by delivering on our 2007 election commitment to increase the childcare rebate from 30 to 50 per cent of out-of-pocket costs from a maximum of $4,354 to $7,500 per child per year. ABS statistics show that when federal Labor delivered on our commitment to increase the childcare rebate to 50 per cent, costs to parents fell by 20 per cent.

We increased the frequency of payments to families from yearly to quarterly, so that families would not have to wait until the end of each year to receive assistance with their childcare fees.
And from 1 July 2011 we will pay the childcare rebate fortnightly—so that families get the assistance that they need and when they need it. We will move to enable legislation to ensure that we are able to commence paying the rebate from this time. Work is already underway to implement this important change to the delivery of the rebate that will positively impact all families using approved child care.

An overwhelming 97 per cent of families using child care will not have their payment affected by these measures introduced today. And less than one per cent of families using child care who earn less than $100,000 a year will be impacted in 2010-11. In order to reach the cap most families would need to be placing their child in care for 10 to 12 hours a day for more than four days a week—at average fee levels. In reality, the average use of child care in Australia is much lower with most parents using child care around two and a half days a week. And by 2013-14, it is estimated that the average childcare rebate claim will be $2,300—well under the cap of $7,500.

These measures will not affect the vast majority of Australian families, but they will fund essential improvements to the quality of care in Australia—from which 800,000 families will benefit. They will also help bring the budget back into surplus three years early.

The Australian government is committed to improving the affordability, accessibility and quality of child care in Australia.

Our quality reform agenda is unapologetically ambitious. This is what parents expect from us. And through our quality reforms, this is exactly what we will deliver. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate (on motion by Ms Gambaro) adjourned.

**SUPERANNUATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2010**

**First Reading**

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Shorten.

Bill read a first time.

**Second Reading**

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation) (10.50 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill amends superannuation and taxation laws to implement a range of improvements to Australia’s superannuation and tax laws.

Schedule 1 to this bill amends the Superannuation (Unclaimed Money and Lost Members) Act 1999, and the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997 to allow state and territory authorities and public sector superannuation schemes to transfer unclaimed superannuation to the Commissioner of Taxation.

Currently, state and territory public sector funds typically report and pay unclaimed superannuation moneys to the relevant state or territory authority. In contrast, private sector superannuation funds are required to pay unclaimed superannuation to the ATO.

States and territories currently also hold a stock of private sector unclaimed superannuation which was paid to the states and territories prior to 1 July 2007. Since that date all private sector unclaimed superannuation has been payable to the ATO.

Individuals will still be able to claim back their money from the ATO at any time.

The legislation will operate so that it only applies to those Commonwealth, state and territory schemes that are prescribed in the regulations.

This schedule also contains amendments which will enable the ATO to subsequently pay out, and apply the correct taxation treat-
ment to, amounts transferred from Commonwealth, state and territory public sector schemes.

These amendments will facilitate more uniform treatment of unclaimed money across the public and the private sectors and assist in the central administration of unclaimed superannuation moneys.

These amendments will have an ongoing gain to revenue, estimated to be $29.6 million over the forward estimates.

Schedule 2 to this bill provides transitional relief for income tax deductibility of total and permanent disability insurance premiums, known as TPD insurance premiums, paid by superannuation funds. To this end, the bill amends the Income Tax (Transitional Provisions) Act 1997, and the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997.

The transitional relief will broaden the application of the current law regarding deductibility of TPD insurance premiums for the 2004-05 to 2010-11 income years. It will allow complying superannuation funds to fully deduct TPD insurance premiums, regardless of the definition of TPD contained in the policy.

The provision of the transitional arrangements will minimise the disruption to the superannuation industry and will allow superannuation funds enough lead time to make the necessary administrative changes to apply the current law from 1 July 2011.

This is achieved by allowing, in the transitional period, broader definitions of ‘death or disability benefits’ in the Income Tax Assessment Act 1936 and ‘disability superannuation benefit’ in the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997 to the extent they relate to the deductibility of TPD insurance premiums. For the transitional relief to apply to a TPD insurance policy premium, the insured permanent disability must be one that is described in regulations made for the purposes of these transitional provisions. The content of these regulations is being developed in consultation with industry.

By way of background, superannuation funds commonly take out death and disability insurance policies to insure their risk for a liability they may incur to their members. Disability insurance taken out by superannuation funds includes TPD insurance. The current law allows superannuation funds to claim an income tax deduction for TPD insurance premiums to the extent that the policies have the necessary connection to a liability of the fund to provide disability superannuation benefits.

The amendments do not limit the operation of the current law. The current provisions of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997 will apply throughout the transitional period. Funds who have claimed a narrower deduction pursuant to the current law will be able to choose whether to amend their assessments to claim a broader deduction.

This amendment will give certainty to the superannuation industry and allow lead time for arrangements to be put in place that will enable funds to comply with the current law upon the cessation of the transitional period. There is at least one insurance provider who has developed products to meet the requirements of the law from 1 July 2011.

In addition, as announced as part of the 2010-11 budget, the government intends to introduce a tax deduction in relation to the provision of terminal medical condition benefits. This will be a new deduction which is consistent with retirement income policy objectives.

Schedule 3 to this bill amends the Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Act 1993 to allow the trustee of a regulated superannuation fund to acquire an asset in-specie from a related party of the fund, following the relationship breakdown of a member of the fund.
This schedule also amends subdivision D of division 1 of part 8 of the Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Act 1993 to ensure equitable application of the transitional arrangements in relation to in-house assets where an asset transfer occurs as the result of the relationship breakdown of a member of the fund. Relationship covers those in respect of marriage, and opposite-sex and same-sex de facto relationships.

These amendments will ensure that section 66 is not an impediment to separating partners achieving a ‘clean break’ from each other in terms of their superannuation arrangements, and does not discriminate against opposite-sex and same-sex de facto relationships.

Schedule 4 to this bill makes a number of minor amendments which will:

- allow an individual to give a notice of intent to deduct a contribution to a successor superannuation fund where the contribution was made to the original superannuation fund;
- increase the time limit for deductible employer contributions in respect of a former employee;
- clarify that the due date of the shortfall interest charge for the purposes of excess contributions tax is 21 days after the Commissioner of Taxation provides notice of the amount payable;
- allow the Commissioner of Taxation to exercise discretion to disregard or allocate to another financial year all or part of a person’s contributions for the purposes of excess contributions tax before an assessment is issued;
- provide a regulation-making power to specify additional circumstances when a benefit from a public sector superannuation scheme will have an untaxed element; and
- streamline references to the immigration secretary and the immigration department in relation to disclosure of migration and citizenship information for legislative purposes.

These amendments will improve the operation of superannuation provisions of the income tax legislation.

Full details of the measures in this bill are contained in the explanatory memorandum.

Debate (on motion by Ms Gambaro) adjourned.

INTERNATIONAL TAX AGREEMENTS AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2) 2010

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Shorten.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation) (10.59 am)—by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Today I introduce the bill to give the force of law to the second protocol to the tax treaty with Singapore which will upgrade the exchange of information provisions in that treaty to the internationally agreed tax standard.

The government is a global leader in the implementation of the international standard of tax transparency. In line with this standard, the upgraded exchange-of-information provisions in the protocol between Australia and Singapore will allow the tax authorities of both countries to exchange a wider range of information on a wider range of taxes.

In particular, the new provisions will provide that neither tax administration can refuse to provide information solely because it does not require the information for its own
domestic purposes or because the information is held by a bank or similar institution.

The government has taken an important leadership position to promote international cooperation to combat cross-border tax evasion. The enhanced provisions in the second protocol to the tax treaty with Singapore are an important tool in Australia’s efforts in this regard, by increasing the probability of detection when taxpayers participate in abusive tax arrangements. The protocol will further facilitate the prevention of tax evasion by facilitating the exchange of information that predates the protocol.

The Joint Standing Committee on Treaties has considered this protocol and has recommended that binding treaty action be taken.

Full details of the amendments brought forward in the bill are contained in the explanatory memorandum.

Debate (on motion by Ms Gambaro) adjourned.

TAX LAWS AMENDMENT (CONFIDENTIALITY OF TAXPAYER INFORMATION) BILL 2010

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Shorten.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation) (11.01 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill, the confidentiality of taxpayer information bill, was introduced to parliament on 19 November 2009, but lapsed due to the prorogation of parliament.

The bill consolidates taxation secrecy and disclosure provisions currently scattered across 18 taxation acts into a single framework.

Not only are the existing provisions spread across the taxation law, they were also enacted over time in different drafting styles, leading to an inconsistent level of protection for taxpayer information and uncertainty for the tax office, other users of taxpayer information and for taxpayers themselves.

The inconsistencies and ambiguities associated with the existing law have the potential to undermine its primary purpose—that is, to provide clear protection for taxpayer information. The taxation law has long recognised that such protection is fundamental to ensuring that taxpayers maintain their confidence in the operation of the tax system.

The new framework draws on principles in the current law. It will continue to prohibit, through criminal offence provisions, the unauthorised disclosure of taxpayer information obtained or generated in the course of administering a taxation law.

It will also broadly retain the existing disclosure provisions, which recognise the need for taxation officers to use taxpayer information in the performance of their duties and the legitimate need of other government agencies to access the information to more effectively deliver services or enforce laws.

In bringing together the existing provisions, the new framework will also standardise key definitions to overcome existing ambiguities. It will also clarify the circumstances in which identifiable taxpayer information may be provided to a minister. However, it is not the intention of the bill to broaden the circumstances in which information can be so provided and taxpayers can be confident that their personal information will remain secure.

The bill will also introduce clear rules to govern the on-disclosure of information provided to non-taxation officers. Under the existing law and the new framework, tax-
payer information can be provided to non-
taxation officers for certain limited purposes.
The new framework will make it clear that a
recipient of taxpayer information is able to
use the information for the purpose for which
the information was provided or a related
purpose. Such an approach strikes the right
balance between the protection of taxpayer
privacy and facilitating the work of govern-
ment.

The bill also proposes to introduce a num-
ber of new disclosure provisions where the
public benefit in disclosure outweighs tax-
payer privacy. Of note, the bill will facilitate
greater disclosures of taxpayer information
to the Australian Securities and Investments
Commission (ASIC) to, amongst other
things, enable a greater level of cooperation
between ASIC and the tax office in addressing
fraudulent phoenix activity.

The bill has been developed following
thorough public consultation in early 2009
and the government would like to thank all
those who provided comments on the expo-
sure draft bill and explanatory memorandum.
Many of the comments received are reflected
in the bill before us today.

The bill has been considered by the Senate
Economics Committee which recommended
that it be passed by parliament. The Senate
Privileges Committee also considered the bill
and recommended that disclosures to parlia-
ment and its committees be governed by the
laws of parliamentary privilege and the prac-
tice and procedures that have been developed
in relation to parliamentary committee proc-
eses. These amendments have also been
adopted.

This bill will reduce the volume of the
taxation law and is a reflection of the gov-
ernment’s commitment to simplify the opera-
tion of the taxation law. It will also enhance
taxpayer privacy by providing greater trans-
parency in the circumstances in which tax-
payer information can be used.

Full details of this bill are contained in the
explanatory memorandum.

I commend this bill to the House.

Debate (on motion by Mr Keenan) ad-
journed.

TAX LAWS AMENDMENT (2010
MEASURES No. 4) BILL 2010

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum pre-

presented by Mr Shorten.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Assistant
Treasurer and Minister for Financial Services
and Superannuation) (11.06 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill amends various taxation laws to
implement a range of improvements to Aus-
tralia’s tax laws.

Schedule 1 amends the GST Act 1999 to
ensure that the appropriate GST outcome is
achieved in all situations involving third-
party payments.

The changes in Schedule 1 further refine
the GST law to ensure the correct GST out-
come is achieved when supplies for which
third-party payments are made change their
taxable status along the supply chain. This
amendment prevents the use of third-party
rebates to achieve an unfair GST advantage.
It also prevents too much GST being paid in
other situations.

This amendment arose from recent
changes to the GST Act which took effect on
1 July 2010. The effect of those changes was
to create GST adjustments to ensure the cor-
rect GST outcome where payments are made
to third parties in the supply chain.
The amendment will apply to third-party payments made on or after 1 July 2010.

Schedule 2 amends the income tax laws to provide a CGT rollover for taxpayers who replace an entitlement to water with one or more different water entitlements.

This rollover ensures that CGT is not a barrier to transformation. Transformation is the process by which an irrigator permanently changes their right to water against an operator into a statutory licence held by an entity other than the operator. Transformation facilitates water market trading and the efficient use of water resources.

This schedule also allows termination fees to be recognised when calculating a capital gain or a capital loss on an asset, by including these costs in the asset's cost base. This change applies to all assets and not just those relating to water.

Part 1 of Schedule 3 of the bill makes minor policy refinements and technical amendments to the taxation of financial arrangements (TOFA) stages 3 and 4 provisions.

The TOFA stages 3 and 4 provisions cover both the tax treatment of hedges and tax timing treatment in respect of financial arrangements other than hedges.

The TOFA stages 3 and 4 provisions include division 230 of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997 (ITAA 1997) and the consequential and transitional provisions inserted by the Tax Laws Amendment (Taxation of Financial Arrangements) Act 2009. These provisions modernise the financial taxation system by better reflecting the economic and commercial substance of financial arrangements.

The TOFA stages 3 and 4 provisions represent a major legislative reform that affects a wide range of financial arrangements, including those of a complex nature. The amendments, which improve tax certainty and reduce compliance costs, are the result of the ongoing monitoring and consultation undertaken by the government to ensure that the TOFA stages 3 and 4 provisions operate as intended. Consultation has benefited from the participation of industry representatives and professional bodies.

Part 2 of schedule 3 extends the transitional period for the application of the debt/equity provisions to 1 July 2010 for upper tier 2 capital instruments issued before 1 July 2001. The amendment will allow the issuers of certain upper tier 2 instruments to transition into the proposed upper tier 2 regulations.

Part 3 of this schedule makes minor technical amendments to the foreign currency gains and losses provisions. The amendments extend the scope of a number of compliance costs saving measures in the tax law as well as ensure that the provisions operate as intended.

Schedule 4 amends the income tax laws to make it easier for takeovers and mergers regulated by the Corporations Act to qualify for the CGT scrip for scrip rollover.

These amendments carve out takeover bids that do not contravene key provisions of the Corporations Act and approved schemes of arrangement from having to meet the rollover requirement that the target entity’s interest holders can participate in the arrangement on substantially the same terms.

These amendments have been made in part because the income tax legislation does not need to regulate participation where the Australian Securities and Investments Commission already takes into account equality issues—including in relation to consideration—in administering its role in relation to schemes of arrangement.

These amendments ensure that the scrip-for-scrip rollover operates more effectively.
Schedule 5 implements the government’s 2010-11 budget measure to increase the threshold above which a taxpayer may claim the net medical expenses tax offset. The claim threshold will increase from $1,500 to $2,000 with effect from 1 July 2010.

The amendments will also introduce annual indexation of the claim threshold to the consumer price index. The first indexation adjustment will take place on 1 July 2011. These changes will help reduce the long-term cost to the budget of a rapidly growing expenditure and ensure the ongoing sustainability of the net medical expenses tax offset.

The amendments apply to the 2010-11 year of income and later income years.

Schedule 6 amends the list of deductible gift recipients in the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997. Taxpayers can claim income tax deductions for certain gifts to organisations with DGR status. DGR status will assist the listed organisations to attract public support for their activities.

This schedule adds two new organisations to the act—namely, One Laptop per Child Australia Ltd and the Mary MacKillop Canonisation Gift Fund. One Laptop per Child Australia Ltd was established in 2008 and aims to improve the lives of Indigenous children living in disadvantaged communities in rural and remote Australia. It is working to achieve this goal by giving remote Indigenous school children laptops. The laptops are designed to be durable, energy efficient and appropriate for children. The Mary MacKillop Canonisation Gift Fund was established to raise funds in relation to the canonisation of Mary MacKillop in Rome on 17 October 2010 and related events in Australia. This is a unique event as she is our nation’s first recognised saint.

The schedule also extends the period for which the Xanana Vocational Educational Trust can receive deductible gifts until 30 December 2010. The trust was established to provide vocational and technical training to the peoples of Timor-Leste.

Schedule 7 extends access to tax deductible donations to all volunteer fire brigades. Volunteer fire brigades perform an important community service. Brigades aim to prevent, respond to and assist with recovery from a range of fire related emergencies, including preventing bushfires from reaching people in built-up communities.

Schedule 7 also adds three new general deductible gift recipient categories into the Income Tax Assessment Act. This widens the accessibility of tax deductible donations to all entities providing volunteer based emergency services, including volunteer fire brigades, and extends deductible gift recipient status to all state and territory government bodies that coordinate volunteer fire brigades and state emergency service units.

Full details of the measures in this bill are contained in the explanatory memorandum.

Debate (on motion by Mr Keenan) adjourned.

FISHERIES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2) 2010

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Dr Mike Kelly.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Dr MIKE KELLY (Eden-Monaro—Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry) (11.14 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.


The bill will enhance the ability of the Australian Fisheries Management Authority
known as AFMA to implement more effective, efficient and less costly fisheries management in four main ways. Firstly, the bill will facilitate the broadening of co-management arrangements in Commonwealth fisheries. Secondly, it will simplify the regulatory process applying to fishers, and which AFMA must administer and enforce. Thirdly, it will facilitate the restructure of AFMA’s management advisory committees to introduce a more effective dual advisory model. Lastly, the bill will enable AFMA to provide and charge for services provided to other agencies in areas where AFMA has technical expertise.

All of these amendments are expected to result in increased efficiency within AFMA and a reduction in the costs that are passed onto industry.

Co-management arrangements enable AFMA to create partnerships to achieve shared responsibility for the management of the resource within a rigorous framework of accountability and policy. Within a co-management arrangement, responsibilities and obligations for sustainable fisheries management are negotiated, shared and delegated between government, fishers (the primary stakeholders) and interest groups.

The proposed legislative amendments will enable the Chief Executive Officer of AFMA to delegate certain powers and functions to ‘primary stakeholders’ in the performance of co-management arrangements. The functions that the CEO may delegate include determining the total allowable catch and the power to close all or part of a fishery.

The full implementation of co-management will only be accorded to fisheries with strong governance, leadership and demonstrated commitment to sustainability.

Importantly, the ability of AFMA to delegate such powers will not detract from AFMA’s legislative responsibilities. Any exercise of power by a primary stakeholder will be within a framework of rules established by AFMA’s CEO in accordance with the Fisheries Administration Act 1991. The framework of rules will ensure that industry delegates comply with relevant policies and that they are fully accountable to AFMA.

The second set of amendments relates to the simplification of AFMA's regulatory processes. The complexity of the current regulatory regime has been identified as a significant area of inefficiency and cost for AFMA's administration of Commonwealth fisheries and for the industry.

This bill will enable AFMA to reduce the complexity of the rules that apply to fisheries, by prescribing standard conditions in the subordinate regulations rather than in individual management plans.

The third area of reform in the bill relates to the restructure of management advisory committees, or MACs as they are commonly known. MACs play a significant role in assisting AFMA in the management of fisheries. They generally include members from industry and other interest groups.

The amendment is required to simplify the process to reduce the number of MACs and enable the implementation of a dual advisory model; a model that enables a MAC to advise on more than one fishery. This model also separates the provision of advice to AFMA. MACs will continue to provide advice to AFMA on community interest issues but advice on fishing operations will be provided by peak industry bodies.

The restructure has the broad support of industry because rationalised arrangements will improve the effectiveness of advice delivered to AFMA and could ultimately re-
duce the administrative costs borne by industry.

The last group of amendments contained in this bill will allow AFMA to share its expertise and institutional knowledge with other agencies.

AFMA has some advanced systems and technologies, including satellite vessel monitoring systems and independent fisheries observer programs. There is growing interest from other domestic and overseas fisheries management agencies, looking for the most cost-effective way for governments to provide such services.

AFMA is restricted by the current legislation in its ability to provide these services despite the demand and its capacity to do so. Providing these services to other organisations would increase the economies of scale and lower the costs in developing such technologies.

The measures introduced by this bill are a further step in enabling AFMA to implement more efficient and effective sustainable fisheries management.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate (on motion by Mr Keenan) adjourned.

PRIMARY INDUSTRIES (EXCISE) LEVIES AMENDMENT BILL 2010

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Dr Mike Kelly.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Dr MIKE KELLY (Eden-Monaro—Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry) (11.19 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Primary Industries (Excise) Levies Amendment Bill 2010 amends the Primary Industries (Excise) Levies Act 1999 to increase the maximum allowable levy rate cap on the research and development component of the laying chickens levy from 10c to 30c per laying chicken.

Australian Egg Corporation Limited has requested on behalf of the egg industry that its operative research and development levy rate be increased from 10c to 13.5c per laying chicken. To meet this request, a change to legislation is required as there is currently a maximum allowable cap of 10c under the act.

The egg industry put forward this proposal to assist it in expanding the research and development objectives outlined in its 2008-12 strategic plan. The industry undertook an extensive period of debate and consultation in coming to its recommendation to increase its levy rate. The decision was ultimately put to a vote, conducted from December 2008 to January 2009, where egg producers representing almost 80 per cent of the industry’s production supported this change. The government has endorsed this recommendation from industry.

The government has decided to increase the cap from 10c to 30c at this time to cover potential future levy increases that the industry may seek to accommodate for its new strategic directions and the impacts of inflation. Any change to the operative rate within the cap will require the industry to demonstrate compliance with the levy principles and guidelines, particularly to demonstrate industry support for any change. It would then need to be approved by the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, with the necessary regulations then put to the Executive Council and tabled in parliament. Following the passage of this bill, the government intends to put forward amendments to the Primary Industries (Excise) Levies Regulations 1999 to give effect to the levy increase to 13.5c per laying chicken.
Australia’s primary industries have a strong tradition of being innovative and adaptive. The government’s investment in research, development and innovation for agriculture, fisheries, forestry and food is vital for ongoing growth and improvement in the productivity, profitability, competitiveness and sustainability of Australian primary industries. Levies provide an effective system to support this. The government remains committed to supporting jobs in rural industries through increasing productivity and vital research and development, including the egg industry. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate (on motion by Mr Keenan) adjourned.

CORPORATIONS AMENDMENT (SONS OF GWALIA) BILL 2010

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Bradbury.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr BRADBURY (Lindsay—Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer) (11.23 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Today I reintroduce a bill which will amend the Corporations Act to reform the treatment of shareholder claims against companies that become insolvent.

This bill gives effect to the government’s decision to reverse the outcome of the High Court’s decision in the Sons of Gwalia v Margaretic case. The bill also introduces reforms relating to notices to creditors and shareholder voting, and clarifies the position of shareholders bringing claims for damages against companies.

To the ultimate benefit of both shareholders and creditors, this bill will remove an area of uncertainty that currently results in higher finance costs for business. It will also reduce the costs and complexity associated with running insolvency administrations.

The bill contains three primary measures.

Firstly, the bill amends section 563A of the Corporations Act to provide that all claims in relation to the buying, selling, holding or otherwise dealing with shares are to be ranked equally—and after all other creditors’ claims.

Prior to Sons of Gwalia, the common understanding was that all shareholder claims against a company in external administration that related to a shareholding were made in the ‘capacity as a member of the company’ and were postponed by operation of section 563A of the Corporations Act.

Investors make a conscious decision to invest money in a company in the hope of sharing in the company’s profits. In doing so, they are entitled to expect proper disclosure from the company. But they must accept that they are taking a risk in making that investment.

In contrast, creditors are not hoping to increase their wealth by gambling on the future profitability of a company. They are often small businesses or trade creditors who are simply owed money for work they have already done, or for materials they have supplied.

Investors who have been misled into making that investment should rightly be able to
claim redress. However, they should not be able to do so to the detriment of creditors when a company is insolvent.

The provision, as currently interpreted, has the effect of undermining the traditional distinction between debt and equity.

The decision in Sons of Gwalia has had the effect of shifting the losses suffered by shareholders (due to a company’s misleading conduct or nondisclosure) to the company’s unsecured creditors.

By reducing the likely return to unsecured lenders in an insolvency, the Sons of Gwalia decision has had the effect of increasing the cost of unsecured debt and of reducing the availability of credit, particularly for less well-established companies.

Secondly, the bill streamlines the treatment of shareholder claimants in an external administration. Persons bringing claims regarding shareholdings will not vote as creditors in a voluntary administration or a winding up unless they receive permission from the court. They will also not receive reports to creditors unless they first make a request for such to the external administrator.

Thirdly, the bill eliminates certain residual common law restrictions on the capacity of a shareholder to recover damages against a company.

The 1880 House of Lords decision in Houldsworth v City of Glasgow Bank determined that a person who has subscribed for shares in a company may not, while they retain those shares, recover damages against the company on the ground that they were induced by the company to subscribe for those shares by fraud or misrepresentation.

Although case law in Australia has subsequently limited the reach of this decision, there are still situations where a shareholder may unfairly be prevented from suing for damages. The application of the old rule is limited, uncertain and difficult for stakeholders to comprehend. I note that in the United Kingdom, the rule was excluded in all cases by the Companies Act 2006 (UK).

The global financial crisis highlighted the importance of addressing any impediments to companies accessing reasonably priced credit.

These reforms restore the order of priority for distributions of assets in corporate insolvencies to the position that was understood to exist prior to the Sons of Gwalia judgment.

In doing so, they improve access by companies to credit, ensuring continued employment, entrepreneurialism and economic growth. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate (on motion by Mr Keenan) adjourned.
tained on company member registers, specifically banning improper uses of that information.

The second set of measures increase the penalties for market offences in the Corporations Act, such as insider trading, and enhance the investigative powers of the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) to catch those who would commit these offences. This set of measures also clarifies that certain off-market unsolicited share offers must remain open for at least one month from the date of the offer.

Access to registers

A company’s register of members is required to contain members’ names, postal addresses and shareholding details. Currently, any person can obtain access to a copy of a company’s register without providing any indication of the purpose for which they intend to use the information.

Today, the government has introduced legislation to prevent members’ details being used for improper purposes.

The improper purposes will be specified in regulations and the government has made it clear that this reform is intended to have the effect of prohibiting the practice of making unsolicited below-value share offers to shareholders.

The bill will do this by limiting the instances in which a copy of a register of members of a company or registered scheme may be obtained.

A person seeking a copy of the register will have to apply to the company and state the purpose for which they intend to use the information contained in the copy of the register. The company can refuse to provide a copy where the purpose is listed as an improper purpose, which will be provided in the corporations regulations.

Examples of these improper purposes are:

- making an unsolicited off-market offer to purchase shares in a listed company—other than as part of a genuine takeover offer;
- to enable the solicitation of donations from the listed members of a company;
- the solicitation of a member of a company by a broker; and
- gathering information about the personal wealth of a member of a company.

Going forward, this bill will also prevent persons from using information obtained from registers for improper purposes; even where the information had been obtained by them prior to the commencement of this bill.

This bill will ensure that vulnerable or less sophisticated shareholders are protected from individuals or businesses that seek to profit by purchasing their shares for less than their value.

Penalties for market offences

The second set of measures contained in this bill includes provisions that increase the criminal penalties associated with breaches of the insider trading and market misconduct provisions in part 7.10 of the Corporations Act.

Insider trading and market manipulation can distort Australia’s financial markets and cause serious harm to their fair and efficient functioning. These markets function best when information is widely dispersed and investors have confidence in their integrity.

It is essential that the penalties reflect the serious impact that breaches of these provisions have on financial markets.

The benefit that can be gained from engaging in insider trading or market manipulation often far outweighs the maximum penalty that can currently be imposed for a breach.
This bill will increase the maximum fine for individuals found to have breached the provisions to 4,500 penalty units (currently $495,000) or three times the benefit attributable to the breach. The maximum term of imprisonment will be increased to 10 years.

The maximum penalty for a corporation will be the higher of:

- 45,000 penalty units (currently $4.95 million);
- three times the benefit attributable to the breach; or
- 10 per cent of the corporation’s annual turnover during the applicable period.

The bill also clarifies how the fault elements of the offence of creating a false or misleading appearance of active trading operate, in accordance with the requirements of the Criminal Code.

**Improved offence detection powers**

The bill also proposes to include the insider trading and market misconduct provisions in part 7.10 of the Corporations Act in the list of serious offences in section 5D of the Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act 1979.

Insider trading and other market offences are difficult to investigate, as these offences by their very nature involve complex networks of people, technological sophistication and avoidance of paper and traceable communications. In addition, the transactions often occur in real time, meaning that telephone conversations are often the only evidence of the offence.

This bill enables interception agencies, such as the Australian Federal Police, to obtain direct evidence of these offences—such as the content of conversations—rather than simply relying on circumstantial evidence, such as the mere existence of suspicious telephone calls.

The bill also amends the search warrant power in the Australian Securities and Investments Commission Act to permit ASIC to apply for a search warrant without first having to issue a notice to produce for the material sought by the warrant. The current legal requirement to issue such a notice provides those under investigation with an opportunity to destroy incriminating material.

**Minco approval**

The Ministerial Council for Corporations has been consulted and has approved the amendments contained in this bill.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate (on motion by Mr Keenan) adjourned.

**CARER RECOGNITION BILL 2010**

**First Reading**

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Ms Collins, for Ms Macklin.

Bill read a first time.

**Second Reading**

Ms COLLINS (Franklin—Parliamentary Secretary for Community Services) (11.35 am)—I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill is the government’s commitment to enshrine in law the Australian government’s national recognition of the exceptional contribution made by hundreds of thousands of carers across the country.

Every day they sustain and support the people they care for.

And through their dedication and hard work they enrich community life and are an inspiration to us all.

I am certain that every member in this place, representing electorates from the bush to the city, understands only too well the challenges and the sacrifices that come with the job of caring.
It is a job where you cannot knock off at five o’clock—or six or seven. No public holidays.

No annual leave, no time off when you’re sick.

This bill recognises in legislation the contribution by the mums and dads, the grandparents, the sons and daughters, the brothers and sisters and partners who every day get on with the job of caring.

We are determined to give carers the acknowledgement of their role that they have asked for—and which they so clearly deserve.

Last year, carers told us they wanted greater acknowledgement and increased recognition.

This message came through loud and clear when the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth tabled its report, *Who cares? Report on the inquiry into better support for carers*.

Central to the government’s response to this inquiry was a commitment from the Commonwealth to lead the development of a National Carer Recognition Framework.

The National Carer Strategy will deliver on this commitment and will place the needs of carers at the centre of government policy so that they have the same opportunities as other Australians to live healthy, happy lives and reach their full potential.

This bill is the first element of the framework.

It formally acknowledges the vital contribution that carers make to Australian society and complements carer recognition legislation already in place in some states and territories.

There are several key elements to the bill.

Firstly, the bill establishes a broad and encompassing definition of carer. This definition captures the diversity of carers and care relationships.

Secondly, the bill sets out a statement for Australia’s carers.

The statement contains 10 key principles that set out how carers should be treated and considered in policy development and program and service delivery.

This includes the fundamental principle that all carers should have the same rights, choices and opportunities as other Australians.

All public service agencies will be required to take all practical measures to ensure their staff have an awareness and understanding of the principles in the statement.

This includes a direction that all public service agencies should have due regard to the statement for Australia’s carers when developing human resource policies that significantly affect an employee’s caring role.

Public service agencies with responsibility for policies, programs and services that affect carers and the people that they care for will have additional obligations under the legislation.

These agencies need to ensure that their staff take action to reflect the statement’s principles when developing, implementing, providing or evaluating policies, programs or services directed to carers or the people for whom they care.

These agencies will also be required to consult with carers and the bodies that represent them in the development and evaluation of relevant policies, programs and services.

And they will be required to report publicly in their annual reports on their compliance with their obligations under the legislation.
Critically, the legislation also extends to associated providers, people or bodies contracted or funded by Australian government public service agencies with responsibility for policies, programs and services that affect carers and the people that they care for, and their immediate subcontractors.

These associated providers will need to ensure staff and agents have awareness and understanding of the statement’s principles and take action to reflect the principles when they develop, implement, provide or evaluate policies, programs or services.

The bill supports the work the government is undertaking to reform the system of supports for carers and the people for whom they care.

It recognises that carers should have the opportunities and the capability to enjoy optimum health and wellbeing, and social and economic participation.

Implementation of the bill will drive increased awareness and understanding of the role and contribution of carers as well as a much-needed cultural and attitudinal shift so that carers’ interests are taken into account by public service agencies and service providers.

Raising the status and profile of the caring role builds on the government’s practical measures to improve the lives of carers.

Members will also be aware that government has commissioned a Productivity Commission inquiry to examine the feasibility, costs and benefits of a long-term disability care and support scheme that would provide an entitlement to services over a person’s lifetime with a focus on early intervention.

This is a complex area that has the potential to transform the lives of people with a disability and their carers—a transformation I am sure you all agree will be for the better.

The Productivity Commission has been asked to report their findings to the government in July 2011.

But we know there is still much more to be done to achieve our vision of a fairer Australia for carers.

Which is why, as part of the National Carer Recognition Framework, we are developing the National Carer Strategy to be delivered early next year.

Working with the states and territories, the National Carer Strategy will shape our long-term agenda for reform.

It will guide policy development and the delivery of services by government agencies and non-government organisations that work with carers.

The National Carer Strategy will include many of the issues raised by carers through the inquiry into better support for carers.

We have already identified that the strategy will consider, among other things, the training and skills development needs of carers and the adequacy of case management and care coordination for carers.

Addressing the needs of young carers and carers in rural and remote communities will also be key priorities of the strategy.

This bill is the first part of a fundamental reform process for carers through the National Carer Recognition Framework.

It recognises in law the valuable social and economic contribution as well as the many personal sacrifices that carers make.

Debate (on motion by Mr Keenan) adjourned.
100, 104, 108, 132, 133, 141, 143, 192, 192B, 215, 222, 229 and 232; the deletion of standing orders 41A and 192A; and the insertion of new standing order 222A, in the terms as circulated to honourable members in the chamber.

Leave granted.

Mr ALBANESE—I thank the Manager of Opposition Business and I move the motion as amended:

1. Maximum speaking times (amendments to existing subjects, as follows)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Time Allotted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjournment of the House or Main Committee—to end the sitting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole debate in House on Monday and Tuesday</td>
<td>1 hr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole debate in House on Wednesday and Thursday</td>
<td>30 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole debate in Main Committee</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended debate (if required by Minister to reply etc)</td>
<td>10 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each Member—no extension of time can be granted</td>
<td>5 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member who has already spoken to the motion may speak again for one period if no other Member rises to speak</td>
<td>5 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister in extension of debate (standing orders 31 (House) and 191 (Main Committee))</td>
<td>5 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bills—Main Appropriation—second reading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mover</td>
<td>no limit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader of Opposition or Member representing</td>
<td>no limit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bills—Other Government—second reading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mover</td>
<td>30 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader of Opposition or Member representing</td>
<td>30 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister at conclusion of debate</td>
<td>15 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bills—Private Members’ (All)—presentation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presenter (standing order 41)</td>
<td>10 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bills—Private Members’ (Government)—second reading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mover</td>
<td>30 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prime Minister or Member representing</td>
<td>30 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader of Opposition or Member representing</td>
<td>30 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bills—Private Members’ (Non-Government)—second reading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mover</td>
<td>30 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prime Minister or Member representing</td>
<td>30 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bills—All—second reading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other Member not specified above</td>
<td>15 mins or lesser time determined by the Selection Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(standing order 222)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee and delegation business on Mondays</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Announcements of inquiries</td>
<td>Committee chair or deputy chair as determined by the Selection Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports</td>
<td>Each Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(standing orders 39, 40, 41A, 192)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matter of public importance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole discussion</td>
<td>1 hr 30 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposer</td>
<td>15 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member next speaking</td>
<td>15 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Members</td>
<td>10 mins each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>(standing order 46)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Members’ statements**

90 second statements

Whole period on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays | 15 mins
Each Member (but not a Minister or Parliamentary Secretary) | 90 seconds
(standing order 43)

**3 minute constituency statements**

Whole period | 30 mins
Each Member | 3 mins
(standing order 193)

**Private Members’ business on Mondays**

Whole debate | As determined by the Selection Committee
(standing orders 41 and 41A)

**Question Time**

Each question | 45 secs
Each answer | 4 mins
(standing order 97)

2 Definitions

**Member** means any Member of the House of Representatives. **Private Member** means a Member other than the Speaker or a Minister. **Non-aligned Member** means a Member who is neither a government Member nor an opposition Member.

29 Set meeting and adjournment times

(a) The House shall meet each year in accordance with the program of sittings for that year agreed to by the House, unless otherwise ordered and subject to standing order 30.

(b) When the House is sitting it shall meet and adjourn at the following times, subject to standing orders 30, 31 and 32:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Meeting commences</th>
<th>Adjournment proposed</th>
<th>House adjourns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>10.00 am</td>
<td>9.30 pm</td>
<td>10.30 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>2.00 pm</td>
<td>9.30 pm</td>
<td>10.30 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>9.00 am</td>
<td>7.30 pm</td>
<td>8.00 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>9.00 am</td>
<td>4.30 pm</td>
<td>5.00 pm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

31 Automatic adjournment of the House

(a) At the time set for the adjournment to be proposed in standing order 29, column 3 (set meeting and adjournment times) the Speaker shall propose the question—

**That the House do now adjourn.**

This question shall be open to debate and no amendment may be moved.

(b) If this question is before the House at the time set for adjournment in standing order 29, column 4 (set meeting and adjournment times) the Speaker shall interrupt the debate and immediately adjourn the House until the time of its next meeting.

(c) The following qualifications apply:

**Division is completed**

(i) If there is a division at the time set for the adjournment to be proposed in standing order 31(a), that division, and any consequent division, shall be completed.

**Minister may require question to be put**

(ii) If a Minister requires the question to be put immediately it is proposed under paragraph (a), the Speaker must put the question immediately and without debate.

**Minister may extend debate**

(iii) When the Speaker interrupts the adjournment debate under paragraph (b), a Minister may ask for the debate to be extended by 10 minutes to enable Ministers to speak in reply to matters raised during the debate. After 10 minutes, or if debate concludes earlier, the Speaker shall immediately adjourn the House until the time set for its next meeting.
Question negatived
(iv) If the question is negatived, the House shall resume proceedings from the point of interruption.

Unfinished business
(v) If the business being debated is not disposed of when the adjournment of the House is proposed, the business shall be listed on the Notice Paper for the next sitting.

33 Limit on business after normal time of adjournment
The normal time of adjournment is the latest time specified in standing order 29, column 4 (set meeting and adjournment times). No new business may be taken after the normal time of adjournment unless by order of the House before that time.

34 Order of business
The order of business to be followed by the House is shown in figure 2.
### Figure 2. House order of business

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MONDAY</th>
<th>TUESDAY</th>
<th>WEDNESDAY</th>
<th>THURSDAY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.00 am</td>
<td>Acknowledgement of country</td>
<td>9.00 am</td>
<td>9.00 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prayers</td>
<td>Government Business</td>
<td>Government Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 noon</td>
<td>Government Business</td>
<td>1.45 pm</td>
<td>1.45 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.45 pm</td>
<td>90 sec statements</td>
<td>90 sec statements</td>
<td>90 sec statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00 pm</td>
<td>Question Time</td>
<td>2.00 pm</td>
<td>2.00 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.30 pm</td>
<td>Documents, Ministerial statements</td>
<td>3.30 pm</td>
<td>3.30 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.00 pm</td>
<td>Government Business</td>
<td>5.00 pm</td>
<td>4.30 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.30 pm</td>
<td>Divisions and quorums deferred 6.30–7.30pm</td>
<td>6.30 pm</td>
<td>5.00 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.30 pm</td>
<td>Committee &amp; delegation reports and private Members' business</td>
<td>7.30 pm</td>
<td>Adjournment Debate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.00 pm</td>
<td>Adjournment Debate</td>
<td>8.00 pm</td>
<td>Adjournment Debate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.30 pm</td>
<td>Adjournment Debate</td>
<td>9.30 pm</td>
<td>Adjournment Debate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.30 pm</td>
<td>Adjournment Debate</td>
<td>10.30 pm</td>
<td>Adjournment Debate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Acknowledgement of country and prayers

On taking the Chair at the beginning of each sitting, the Speaker shall make an acknowledgement of country in the following terms:

*I acknowledge the Ngunnawal and Ngambri peoples who are the traditional custodians of the Canberra area and pay respect to the elders, past and present, of all Australia’s Indigenous peoples.*

The Speaker shall then read the following prayers:

*Almighty God, we humbly beseech Thee to vouchsafe Thy blessing upon this Parliament. Direct and prosper our deliberations to the advancement*
Our Father, which art in Heaven: Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil: For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

39 Announcements concerning inquiries and presentation of reports

(a) The Chair or Deputy Chair of a committee may make a statement to inform the House of matters relating to an inquiry during the periods for committee and delegation reports on Mondays (standing order 34). The Selection Committee shall recommend time limits for such statements.

(b) Members may present reports of committees or delegations:

(i) as determined by the Selection Committee, during the periods for committee and delegation business on Mondays (standing order 34); or

(ii) at any time when other business is not before the House.

(c) Members may make statements in relation to these reports:

(i) during the periods for committee and delegation business on Mondays in the House and Main Committee (standing orders 34 and 192); the Selection Committee shall determine time limits for statements, of not more than 10 minutes for each Member; or

(ii) at any other time, by leave of the House.

(d) The Member presenting a report may move without notice, a specific motion in relation to the report. Debate on the question shall be adjourned to a future day.

(e) If, on Mondays, the Speaker presents a report referred to in this standing order, the following steps are deemed to have occurred in respect of the report — a motion to take note of the report, debate on the motion to be adjourned to a later hour and the order of the day to be referred to the Main Committee for further consideration within any parameters determined by the Selection Committee.

(f) Unless otherwise ordered, a report presented in accordance with this standing order shall be made a Parliamentary Paper.

40 Resumption of debate on reports

(a) After presentation of reports on Mondays proceedings may be resumed on motions in relation to committee and delegation reports moved on an earlier day.

(b) For debate in accordance with paragraph (a) the Selection Committee shall determine:

(i) the order in which motions are to be considered;

(ii) time limits for the whole debate; and

(iii) time limits for each Member speaking, of not more than 10 minutes.

(c) During the period provided by standing order 192 proceedings may be resumed in the Main Committee on motions in relation to committee and delegation reports referred that day or on an earlier day.

41 Private Members’ business

(a) In the periods set for committee and delegation reports and private Members’ business under standing orders 34 and 192, private Members’ notices and orders of the day shall be considered in the order shown on the Notice Paper. When the time set by standing orders 34 or 192 or determined by the Selection Committee ends, the Speaker shall interrupt proceedings and the matter shall be listed on the Notice Paper for the next sitting.

Private Members’ bills—priority

(b) The Selection Committee, in making determinations:

(i) shall give priority to private Members’ notices of intention to present bills over other notices and orders of the day; and

(ii) shall set the order in which the bills are to be presented.

First reading

(c) When each notice is called on by the Clerk, the Member in whose name the notice stands may present the bill, together with an ex-
planatory memorandum (if available), and may speak to the bill for no longer than 10 minutes. The bill shall be then read a first time and the motion for the second reading shall be set down on the Notice Paper for the next sitting.

(d) If, on Mondays, the Speaker presents a bill for which notice has been given by a private Member, the first reading of the bill is deemed to stand referred to the Main Committee. When the bill is called on in the Main Committee by the Clerk, the Member sponsoring the bill may present an explanatory memorandum (if available), and may speak to the bill for no longer than 10 minutes. The bill shall be then read a first time and the motion for the second reading shall be set down on the Notice Paper for the next sitting.

**Second reading**

(e) The Selection Committee may determine times for debate of the second reading. If the motion for the second reading is agreed to by the House, further consideration of the bill shall be accorded priority over other private Members’ business and the Selection Committee may determine times for consideration of the remaining stages.

**Alternation of notices**

(f) Subject to paragraph (b)(i), the Selection Committee shall provide for the consideration of private Members’ notices to alternate between those of government and non-government Members.

**Private Members’ motions**

(g) If, on Mondays, the Speaker presents a copy of the terms of a motion for which notice has been given by a private Member, the following steps are deemed to have occurred — the motion is deemed to have been moved and debate on the motion adjourned to a later hour and the order of the day referred to the Main Committee for further consideration in accordance with any parameters determined by the Selection Committee.

**Participation of Speaker and Deputy Speaker**

(h) The Speaker and Deputy Speaker may participate in Private Members’ business.

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**41A TO BE DELETED**

43 **Members’ statements**

At 1.45 pm on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, the Speaker shall interrupt business and call on statements by Members. The Speaker may call a Member, but not a Minister (or Parliamentary Secretary*), to make a statement for no longer than 90 seconds. The period allowed for these statements shall extend until 2 pm.

* Including Assistant Ministers who are Parliamentary Secretaries

54 **Bells at start of meeting of the House**

At each sitting the bells shall be rung for five minutes before the appointed meeting time, calling Members to the meeting. The Speaker shall take the Chair and, if a quorum of 30 Members is present, commence the meeting as provided by standing order 38 (acknowledgement of country and prayers). If a quorum is not present standing order 57 (count out) shall apply.

55 **Lack of quorum**

(a) When the attention of the Speaker is drawn to the state of the House and the Speaker observes that a quorum is not present, the Speaker shall count the Members present in accordance with standing order 56.

(b) On Mondays, if any Member draws the attention of the Speaker to the state of the House between 10 am and 12 noon, the Speaker shall announce that he or she will count the House at 12 noon, if the Member then so desires.

(c) On Mondays, if any Member draws the attention of the Speaker to the state of the House between the hours of 6.30 pm and 7.30 pm, the Speaker shall announce that he or she will count the House at 7.30 pm, if the Member then so desires.

(d) On Tuesdays, if any Member draws the attention of the Speaker to the state of the House between the hours of 6.30 pm and 8 pm, the Speaker shall announce that he or she will count the House at 8 pm, if the Member then so desires.

(e) If a quorum is in fact present when a Member draws attention to the state of the House, the Speaker may name the Member in accor-
dance with standing order 94(b) (sanctions against disorderly conduct).

86 Point of order

(a) Subject to standing order 104, a Member may raise a point of order with the Speaker at any time. After the question of order has been stated to the Speaker by the Member rising to the question of order, consideration and decision of every other question shall be suspended until the matter is disposed of by the Speaker giving a ruling thereon.

(b) A Member interrupted by a point of order must resume his or her seat.

(c) During a division, Members may speak while seated to a point of order arising out of or during the division.

100 Rules for questions

The following general rules apply to all questions:

(a) Questions must not be debated.

(b) A question fully answered must not be asked again.

(c) For questions regarding persons:

(i) questions must not reflect on or be critical of the character or conduct of a Member, a Senator, the Queen, the Governor-General, a State Governor, or a member of the judiciary; their conduct may only be challenged on a substantive motion; and

(ii) questions critical of the character or conduct of other persons must be in writing.

(d) Questions must not contain:

(i) statements of facts or names of persons, unless they can be authenticated and are strictly necessary to make the question intelligible;

(ii) arguments;

(iii) inferences;

(iv) imputations;

(v) insults;

(vi) ironical expressions; or

(vii) hypothetical matter.

(e) Questions must not refer to debates in the current session, or to proceedings of a committee not reported to the House.

(f) The duration of each question is limited to 45 seconds.

104 Answers

(a) An answer must be directly relevant to the question.

(b) A point of order regarding relevance may be taken only once in respect of each answer.

(c) The duration of each answer is limited to 4 minutes.

108 Order of notices

The Clerk shall enter notices on the Notice Paper in the order in which they are received, and before orders of the day. Standing orders 41 (private Members’ business), 42 (removal of business), 45 (order of government business), 113 (motion not moved) and 222 (Selection Committee) also apply to the order of notices. A notice of motion becomes effective only when it appears on the Notice Paper.

132 New division in case of confusion, error or misadventure

(a) If confusion, or error concerning the numbers reported by the tellers, occurs and cannot be corrected, the House shall divide again.

(b) If a division has miscarried through misadventure caused by a Member being accidentally absent or some similar incident, any Member may move on the same sitting day, without notice and without the need for a seconder—

That the House divide again.

If this motion is agreed to the question shall be put again and the result of the subsequent division shall be the decision of the House.

133 Deferred divisions on Mondays and Tuesdays

(a) On Mondays, any division called for between the hours of 10 am and 12 noon shall be deferred until 12 noon.

(b) On Mondays, any division called for between the hours of 6.30 pm and 7.30 pm shall be deferred until 7.30 pm.
(c) On Tuesdays, any division called for between the hours of 6.30 pm and 8 pm shall be deferred until 8 pm.

(d) The Speaker shall put all questions on which a division has been deferred, successively and without amendment or further debate.

(e) This standing order does not apply to a division called on a motion moved by a Minister on Mondays and Tuesdays, during the periods specified in this standing order.

141 First reading and explanatory memorandum

(a) Subject to standing order 41(d), when a bill is presented to the House, or a Senate bill is first received, the bill shall be read a first time without a question being put. A Member presenting a bill during private Members’ business may speak to the bill, before it is read a first time, for no longer than 10 minutes.

(b) For any bill presented by a Minister, except an Appropriation or Supply Bill, the Minister must present a signed explanatory memorandum. The explanatory memorandum must include an explanation of the reasons for the bill.

143 Bill referred to committee

After the first reading but before the resumption of debate on the motion for the second reading:

(a) a motion may be moved without notice to refer a bill to the Main Committee for further consideration as provided by standing order 183; or

(b) a determination may be made by the Selection Committee as provided by standing order 222 to refer a bill to a committee for an advisory report. The determination may specify a date by which the committee is to report to the House. After an advisory report has been presented to the House, the bill may then be referred to the Main Committee under paragraph (a).

192 Main Committee’s order of business

The normal order of business of the Main Committee is set out in figure 4.
The meeting times of the Main Committee are fixed by the Deputy Speaker and are subject to change. Adjournment debates can occur on days other than Thursdays by agreement between the Whips.

### 192A TO BE DELETED
### 192B Grievance debate

(a) The order of the day for the grievance debate stands referred to the Main Committee and shall be taken as the final item of business each Monday.

(b) After the Deputy Speaker proposes the question—

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**Figure 4. Main Committee order of business**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MONDAY</th>
<th>TUESDAY</th>
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That grievances be noted—

any Member may address the Main Committee or move any amendment to the question. When debate is interrupted after one hour or if it concludes earlier, the Deputy Speaker shall adjourn the debate on the motion, and the resumption of the debate shall be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

215 General purpose standing committees

(a) The following general purpose standing committees shall be appointed:

(i) Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs;
(ii) Standing Committee on Agriculture, Resources, Fisheries and Forestry;
(iii) Standing Committee on Climate Change, Environment and the Arts;
(iv) Standing Committee on Economics;
(v) Standing Committee on Education and Employment;
(vi) Standing Committee on Health and Ageing;
(vii) Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications;
(viii) Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs; and
(ix) Standing Committee on Regional Australia.

(b) A committee appointed under paragraph (a) may inquire into and report on any matter referred to it by either the House or a Minister, including any pre-legislation proposal, bill, motion, petition, vote or expenditure, other financial matter, report or document.

(c) A committee may make any inquiry it wishes to make into annual reports of government departments and authorities and reports of the Auditor-General presented to the House. The following qualifications shall apply to these inquiries:

(i) Reports shall stand referred to committees under a schedule presented by the Speaker to record the areas of responsibility of each committee.
(ii) The Speaker shall determine any question about responsibility for a report or part of a report.
(iii) The period during which an inquiry into an annual report may be started by a committee shall end on the day the next annual report of the department or authority is presented to the House.
(iv) If a committee intends to inquire into all or part of a report of the Auditor-General, the committee must notify the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit of its intention, in writing.

(d) Each committee appointed under paragraph (a) shall consist of seven members: four government Members and three non-government Members, provided that if a non-aligned Member is appointed to a committee, such committee shall consist of eight members: four government Members, three non-government Members, and one non-aligned Member. Each committee may supplement its membership by up to four members for a particular inquiry, with a maximum of two extra government and two extra opposition or non-aligned Members. Supplementary members shall have the same participatory rights as other members, but may not vote.

(e) As an exception to standing order 232 the Chair of the Standing Committee on Regional Australia need not be a government member.

222 Selection Committee

(a) A Selection Committee shall be appointed to:

(i) arrange the timetable and order of committee and delegation business and private Members’ business for each sitting Monday in accordance with standing orders 39 to 41;
(ii) recommend items of private Members business to be voted on;
(iii) select bills that the committee regards as controversial or as requiring further consultation or debate for referral to the relevant standing or joint committee in accordance with standing order 143.
One member of the committee is sufficient to select a bill for referral; and

(iv) subject to standing order 1, set speaking times for second reading debates.

(b) The committee shall consist of eleven members: the Speaker, or in the absence of the Speaker the Deputy Speaker, the Chief Government Whip or his or her nominee, the Chief Opposition Whip or his or her nominee, the Third Party Whip or his or her nominee, three government Members, two opposition Members and two non-aligned Members. The Speaker shall be the Chair of the committee. A quorum shall be three members of the committee.

(c) For committee and delegation business and private Members’ business, the committee may determine the order of consideration of the matters, and the times allotted for debate on each item and for each Member speaking.

(d) In relation to committee and delegation business and private Members’ business the committee must report its determinations to the House in time for its decisions to be published on the Notice Paper of the sitting Thursday before the Monday being considered. In relation to bills the committee must report its determinations as soon as practical in respect of each bill or each group of bills.

(e) Reports of the committee under paragraph (d) shall be treated as having been adopted when they are presented. Reports shall be published in Hansard.

222A House Appropriations and Administration Committee

(a) A House Appropriations and Administration Committee shall be appointed to:

(i) consider estimates of the funding required for the operation of the Department of the House of Representatives each year;

(ii) provide to the Speaker for presentation to the House and transmission to the Minister for Finance and Deregulation, the committee’s estimates of amounts for inclusion in appropriation and supply bills for the Department of the House of Representatives;

(iii) consider proposals for changes to the administration of the Department of the House of Representatives or variations to services provided by the Department;

(iv) consider and report to the Speaker on any other matters of finance or services as may be referred to it by the Speaker;

(v) consider and report to the House on any other matters of finance or services as may be referred to it by the House;

(vi) make an annual report to the House on its operations;

(vii) consider the administration and funding of security measures affecting the House and advise the Speaker and the House as appropriate; and

(viii) consider any proposals for works in the parliamentary precincts that are subject to parliamentary approval and report to the House on them as appropriate.

(b) When conferring with the Senate Standing Committee on Appropriations and Staffing, the House Appropriations and Administration Committee may:

(i) consider estimates of the funding required for the operation of the Department of Parliamentary Services each year; and

(ii) provide to the Speaker for presentation to the House and transmission to the Minister for Finance and Deregulation, estimates of amounts for inclusion in appropriation and supply bills for the Department of Parliamentary Services.

(c) The committee shall consist of nine members: the Speaker as Chair, four government Members and four non-government/non-aligned Members. A quorum shall be three members of the committee.

(d) The committee shall be assisted by the Clerk, Serjeant-at-Arms and officers of the Department of the House of Representatives appropriate to any matters under consideration.
229 Appointment of committee members
(a) Members shall be appointed to or discharged from a committee by motion moved on notice.
(b) Special arrangements are required for a change in membership when the House is not sitting and is not expected to meet for at least two weeks. The relevant whip must nominate any appointment or discharge of a member of a committee in writing to the Speaker. The change in membership shall take effect from the time the Speaker receives the written nomination. At the next sitting, the Speaker shall report the change to the House and the House shall resolve the membership of the committee.
(c) If a committee is considering a bill referred under standing order 143, one or more members of the committee may be replaced by other Members by motion moved on notice. This does not affect the power of a general purpose standing committee to supplement its membership under standing order 215(d).

232 Election of committee Chair and deputy Chair
(a) Before the start of business a committee shall elect a member as its Chair. Except as otherwise provided, the Chair shall be a government member. The Chair shall have a casting vote only.
(b) A committee shall also elect a deputy Chair who shall act as Chair of the committee whenever the Chair is not present at a meeting. If neither the Chair nor deputy Chair is present at a meeting, the members present shall elect another member to act as Chair at the meeting.

This is a great day for parliamentary reform in this chamber. On this day we have very broad agreement, with a possible couple of exceptions, to begin down the road of parliamentary reform. These changes reflect the Agreement for a Better Parliament: Parliamentary Reform, as agreed by the Leader of the House on behalf of the Labor Party, the Manager of Opposition Business on behalf of the coalition and the member for Lyne on behalf of the non-aligned members, and signed on 6 September 2010.

Components of the changes also go to agreements reached between the government and the member for Denison and the government and the Australian Greens. Drafts of these amendments were provided to the opposition and non-aligned members on Saturday, and since then we have been engaged in discussion to ensure that there is as broad as possible agreement for these changes.

The government is committed to reform of the parliament and has a record of defending the rights of independent members to participate fully in parliamentary processes. This package of amendments seeks to make the parliament more accessible to all 150 members of the House of Representatives. It represents a transfer of power and influence in this place from a concentration in the executive, to bring a focus on the contribution that the 150 members of the House of Representatives can make. As an opposition member I moved a private member’s bill to ratify the Kyoto protocol—now done; I moved a private member’s bill to enact superannuation rights for same-sex couples—now done; I moved a private member’s bill to restrict the number of flights into or out of Sydney airport to 80 an hour—now done; and I moved a private member’s bill to allow for an Aviation Noise Ombudsman—now done. I know firsthand the contribution that individual members of parliament can make and I encourage members to take up these opportunities.

Importantly, however, for these changes to work, for the parliament to continue to operate effectively, there also must be cooperation from all 150 members. I said on the day of the group hug that without goodwill it is just a bit of paper. We need to continue to work in a cooperative way and build consensus wherever we can. By all means have dif-
fences, but recognise what our responsibilities to the nation are. Goodwill from all members will ensure that this package of reforms makes parliament a better place.

From the outset I would like to thank the member for Lyne for his perseverance and constructive attitude in these matters. He will continue to play a key role in shaping these reforms in practice, giving them the best shot of success and of course also reviewing their effectiveness. As the agreement stipulates, all of these reforms will be reviewed over the course of this five-week sitting period. All House related initiatives are to be subject to informal monitoring by the Procedure Committee, with the committee to hold round table meetings to discuss progress and any necessary refinements to the detail. The committee will present a formal report on the first year of operation of the new arrangements, but in between there should be discussion between the government, the opposition and the crossbenchers about how it works in practice and whether any refinements are needed prior to parliament returning next year. I also note that the trial of questions and answers at the end of speeches is implemented by sessional order only.

The government also acknowledges that there will inevitably be resource implications in developing and sustaining this new framework. Overall, these changes provide for almost quadruple the time allocated to and increased prominence of private members’ business, a more efficient question time with time limits on questions and answers, and better resourcing for and a restructuring of the committee system.

I will go through these changes in detail; however, firstly I want to make clear that not all the reforms contained in the Agreement for a Better Parliament require or indeed are suitable for implementation through the standing orders. These reforms will require development through cooperation and practice. Indeed, one of the contentious issues, the issue of pairing—whether it be pairing of the Speaker or pairing between members—has always been a matter of practice and is not reflected in standing orders. We believe that it is unfortunate that the opposition walked away from the commitment they signed up to, which was that the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker be paired in this House. That would have avoided some of the contentious issues regarding the election of the Speaker’s panel that had developed over recent weeks and was designed to ensure there was no political advantage, whoever held onto those positions. And it was quite clear that the Solicitor-General’s advice indicated that there was no constitutional impediment to that occurring, just a political impediment once the opposition realised that they were not going to be in a position to form the government.

I would like briefly to run through some of the aspects of practice to put on the record the government’s commitment, including a commitment to undertake all necessary consultations and processes to ensure these changes are implemented. The government is committed to the implementation, through agreement and practice, of: pairing arrangements—items 2 and 17 of the agreement; the proportionate allocation for non-aligned members of opportunities to speak or ask questions—items 4.6 and 5.3; the imposition of 10-minute time limits on ordinary ministerial statements—item 9.1; the use of extensive notes by members—item 4.9; and the allocation of additional time for consideration in detail—item 11.2.

In relation to committee restructuring, the government is also committed to the development of the role of the Liaison Committee of Chairs and Deputy Chairs—items 10.3 and 16.3. An external review of staffing in the House of Representatives committee of-
Office will be commissioned by the Department of the House of Representatives—item 16.2. Similarly, it is appropriate that members of the Standing Committee of Privileges and Members’ Interests work with their counterparts in the other place on the development of a draft code of conduct—item 19. The government is also committed to thereafter appointing an integrity commissioner—item 18.

Other matters will be given effect to by actions within government, in consultation as necessary, such as additional sitting weeks—item 15; electoral funding and truth in political advertising—item 22; and the establishment of a register of lobbyists. I note, though, that the additional sitting week issue has been brought through in spirit by the fact that this parliament has been resumed so quickly after the government being formed and that we will have five full sitting weeks in the latter part of 2010.

An external review of staffing levels in the Parliamentary Library, item 16.2, will be a matter for the President of the Senate, as well as for the Speaker. A review will be undertaken in conjunction with implementation of the government’s commitment to establish a parliamentary budget office, item 16.1. I reiterate the government’s commitment to the agreement with the Australian Greens that there be a dedicated time for debating and voting on private members’ bills and that the House of Representatives will debate private senators’ bills within six sitting days and then bring them to conclusion.

The government is also committed to facilitating votes on motions from Independents and minor-party members and ensuring that Independent and minor-party members receive a fixed and fair allocation of questions in each question time. I have spoken with the member for Melbourne and with Senator Bob Brown and I confirm our commitment to this. The government signed up to these reforms through the agreement. The government stands by that commitment.

I now turn to those items of the agreement which require standing order amendments. The first main area of reform is around the order of business of the House and the Main Committee, primarily to increase the time allocated to and prominence of private members’ business. Private members’ business, including committee and delegation reports, will be given priority on a Monday from 10 am to noon, commencing with the Petitions Committee report and statements for 10 minutes. A further period of committee and delegation business and private members’ business will be given priority in the chamber on a Monday from 7.30 pm to 9.30 pm. The selection committee will give priority to members from regional and rural electorates to deal with their motions and private members’ bills in the chamber during this period.

The Main Committee will regularly meet on Mondays from 10.30 am to 1.30 pm, commencing with a 30-minute period of three-minute constituency statements, as provided by standing order 193, followed by committee and delegation reports and private members’ business being given priority.

These amendments mean that an additional 6½ hours will be dedicated to private members’ business, bringing the total time allocated to nine hours. Four of these nine hours will occur in the main chamber. This is almost a quadrupling of time allocated to private members’ business and, in addition, votes on private members’ bills and motions will be held during government time. Further, members will be allocated 10 minutes—up from five minutes—when first presenting their bill to the House during private members’ business. A selection committee, chaired by the Speaker, will be established to determine the priorities and times for items
of private members’ business and the times for individual speakers. This is one of the issues which have been dealt with by the draft standing orders being provided to the opposition and the crossbenchers. As a result of that, we have changed the provisions so that there will be an additional non-government member from the opposition, an additional government member and an additional member of the cross benches, so that two representatives from the cross benches will participate formally in the selection committee.

The Selection of Bills Committee, historically operated in the last parliament by the Chief Government Whip, Roger Price, and Chief Opposition Whip, Alex Somlyay, worked by consensus. I am sure that the new selection committee will operate in just the same way. The committee will also recommend which items will be voted on. In consultation with the Leader of the House, these items may then be allocated government business time for the remaining stages and the votes.

There are also a number of other amendments that again increase opportunities for members to raise in the House issues of concern to their electorate. Ninety-second statements will now take place prior to question time from 1.45 pm on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. If members do not take up the opportunities, the extent of that availability might be a matter for review for next year—that is something which I and the Manager of Opposition Business agree might occur. Given that it is in the agreement, we have agreed to move forward in that way. This will provide 30 members with an opportunity to make a 90-second statement in the House each week. It will triple the number of statements by providing members with 20 additional statements per week, all of which will now occur in the House main chamber rather than in the Main Committee.

The adjournment debate will also be extended to an hour on Mondays and Tuesdays. This extension of time will provide an additional 12 members with five-minute speaking opportunities each week, bringing the total number of speaking opportunities on the adjournment debate to 36.

The matters of public importance debate will be extended to one hour and 30 minutes, although that time does not all have to be filled. The government and the opposition have agreed that we will provide three speakers each on MPI debates. This change allows for members of the cross benches, should they wish to participate in MPI debates, to participate without restriction because the change in the standing orders provides 1½ hours. To ensure the MPI debate has greater prominence, it will now immediately follow question time.

Overall, these changes provide an additional four hours and 45 minutes in the House and three hours and 25 minutes in Main Committee dedicated solely to providing private members with speaking opportunities outside of government business time.

The second main area of reform is around question time. Question time is the public face of the parliament and is often the Australian community’s only perception of the workings of parliament. The adversarial nature of question time has thereby contributed to a perception that parliament is purely combative. The government is committed to ensuring that question time portrays a more balanced view of the workings of the parliament. These reforms will limit questions to 45 seconds, standing order 100(f), and answers to four minutes, standing order 104(c). A digital clock will be paused during points of order. Also standing order 104(b) will be amended so that a point of order on relevance can be taken only once with respect to each answer. Part (c) will also be amended to
reflect the agreement that an answer must be directly relevant to the question. I also note that the government is committed to question time concluding no later than 3.30 pm. In the normal course of events, there will be around 20 questions each day over time.

The third main area of reform is around the committee system. The government is committed to ensuring the committee system is more effective, efficient and better resourced. The number of general purpose House standing committees will be reduced to nine. Membership will be reduced to seven in most cases and be reflective of the make-up of the House. The maximum number of supplementary members for each general purpose standing committee inquiry will be increased to four, with supplementary members having full participatory rights other than voting rights.

I mentioned earlier that there will be an external review of staffing levels within the Department of the House of Representatives committee office. The need for such a review was also recently recommended by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Procedure and will determine the nature and level of secretariat support necessary for the ongoing inquiry work of committees to ensure that the system is supported by an adequate number of qualified staff.

These amendments also allow the chairpersons of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Public Accounts and Audit and the Standing Committee on Regional Australia to be a non-government or non-aligned member. Standing order 39 will be amended to provide committee chairs with the opportunity to make short statements during private members’ business time informing the House of inquiries being undertaken by the committee.

The government is also committed to improving response times to committee reports. A resolution of continuing effect is a part of this package of reforms to ensure that within six months of a House or joint committee report being presented in the House a government response will be tabled. If no such response has been received within six months, a statement signed by the relevant minister must be tabled stating the reasons why the response could not be prepared in time. The minister, or minister representing the minister, must also make themselves available to appear before the relevant committee at the next reasonable opportunity to answer questions on that statement.

Finally, I highlight one of the reforms in this package that is not about the technical workings of the House but about ensuring the parliament is more respectful to the traditional owners of the land on which it meets. The election of the government in November 2007 and the subsequent opening of the 42nd Parliament in February 2008 for the first time in the history of the Commonwealth saw a traditional ‘Welcome to Country’ and smoking ceremony performed by Indigenous elders for the opening of the federal parliament.

The government apologised to the stolen generations. On 23 June 2010 the government introduced a historic reform with amendments to the standing orders to ensure the formalisation of the role and place of a traditional ‘Welcome to Country’ in the opening of a new parliament. We did that yesterday in the parliamentary forecourt.

If this package of reforms passes the House, tomorrow will bring another historic event. The day’s proceedings will commence with the Speaker making an acknowledgement of country. Standing order 38 will be amended to include that acknowledgement, which will occur prior to prayers.

I commend the motion to the House, I support these important reforms and thank
the members who have participated in the process, particularly once again the member for Lyne for showing leadership on these issues.

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Manager of Opposition Business) (12.02 pm)—Mr Deputy Speaker Slipper, may I congratulate you formally in your first iteration in this House and my first opportunity at the dispatch box to congratulate you on your appointment as Deputy Speaker yesterday.

The coalition obviously supports reform to the standing orders. We initiated attempts to try to reform the standing orders in the last parliament. I will deal with all these reforms, but I will try to keep it brief because I know that there are members who will be giving their first speeches before question time and I am certain that there are members from the crossbenches who would like to speak and also potentially members from the coalition and the government.

We initiated reform in the last parliament. The Leader of the Opposition and I have been longstanding advocates for reform of the parliament. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition proposed a Westminster style independent Speaker as early as the early part of this decade, in early 2001. During the last parliament, I wrote to the Leader of the House, the member for Grayndler, proposing a number of reforms that would have improved question time and the parliament—things like time limits on questions and answers; things like a more New Zealand style question time; and direct relevance from the ministers in answering questions. The Leader of the House rejected out of hand that offer of bipartisan support for parliamentary reform.

The coalition took to the election a proposal for parliamentary reform as one of its election policies. It was announced during the election campaign and the Prime Minister rejected it out of hand, saying the public was not interested in parliamentary reform. After the election, the Leader of the Opposition wrote again to the Prime Minister proposing that a commission be established to examine parliamentary reform, including on it people of such eminence as Ian Harris, the former Clerk of the House of Representatives, and again the Prime Minister rejected such a suggestion out of hand.

The Labor Party has been dragged kicking and screaming to parliamentary reform only because we sit in a parliament where we have a minority government. If it took that to achieve parliamentary reform, at least one good thing would have come from the election. The opposition approaches these draft standing orders from a position of having had a longstanding commitment to support for reform of the standing orders and, putting the politics to one side, we are glad that the emergence of crossbenchers has caused the parliament to have to be reformed in the 43rd Parliament.

We did reach agreement after many, many days of negotiations between the member for Grayndler and me and the member for Lyne, representing the crossbenches, and I think we came up with an excellent set of changes. Everyone had to give way. In some areas the opposition wanted to go further; in other areas the government wanted to give less. The member for Lyne, in some areas, wanted to do more—for example, the opportunity for a backbenchers’ question time was not proceeded with, as much as there seemed to be general support for that. Hopefully, we can revisit that in reviewing the standing orders over the next 12 months.

There were areas where everybody had to compromise, and compromise we did. There are around 20 reforms contained in these draft standing orders which will pass the parliament today. One of those parts, which was
to pair the Speaker, we traversed yesterday in this House. It was the coalition’s view and it remains the coalition’s view that pairing the Speaker, who does not have a deliberative vote, was potentially constitutionally unsound. While I will not dwell on it at length today, we did not want to be party to a contrivance which in our view circumvented the spirit and the letter of the Constitution and in doing so potentially placed at risk every piece of legislation, motion or instrument passed by this House and would have created the opportunity for a legal minefield to be taken advantage of by my former profession in the High Court, who would have tried to rule out as invalid legislation passed by this place where the contrivance of pairing the Speaker formed a part. So we did not proceed with that part of the agreement.

But I note today that the government is not proceeding with another part of the agreement, which was the requirement that a recommittal of votes only occur following a successful suspension of standing orders. So if there is blame to be apportioned—which I do not believe there is on the coalition side, as our view is based on constitutionally sound advice—it is really to be shared equally as the government has reneged on that part of the agreement to do with the recommittal of votes, which I will deal with.

The Leader of the House went through in great detail in probably his last 20-minute speech in this House, if we are lucky, all the aspects of the draft standing orders that we have agreed to. I will not touch on them all. There are some that will not be in these draft standing orders, and I would like to put on the record what they are so that the government can be held to the agreement that has been made, if you like, off balance sheet. For example, I would note that the agreement that the Chair of the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit be a non-government member is not contained in these standing orders because it is dealt with by a separate act of parliament, but we have agreed that that should be the case. I would note that question time finishing at half past three will be a convention of the parliament rather than a part of the standing orders. The Parliamentary Budget Office, which formed a part of the coalition’s policy at the last election, is not contained in the standing orders. There is an agreement between the opposition, the government and the crossbenchers that a Parliamentary Budget Office will be established. It will be linked to the Parliamentary Library. It will provide frank and fearless assessment, analysis and advice to do with budgetary and other matters. The priority for that advice will be given to non-government members. Although it will be open to government members, the priority will be to non-government members because the government obviously has at its disposal the Treasury, the Department of Finance and Deregulation and all the other departments that form the government.

I would note that some matters will be in sessional orders rather than in the standing orders. For example, the trial of questions to members at the end of their speeches, which the member for Lyne was extremely keen on, where five minutes would be allocated after members’ 15 minutes in which they could take questions from members of the House and respond to those, will be contained in sessional orders rather than in standing orders. There will also be matters that are not in these draft standing orders because they are already in the standing orders and simply require reinterpretation by the Speaker—things like supplementary questions. The agreement contains a proposal, which we have obviously all agreed to, that the Leader of the Opposition or his delegate be able to ask a supplementary question once during question time. There is already a provision for supplementary questions in the standing
orders and therefore I note that that is part of the agreement that is not part of this draft.

Voting on private members’ bills and motions is already contained in the standing orders but has not been enforced or acted upon in a way that is envisaged by this agreement. That will now be given proper prominence. Private members’ bills and motions from government, opposition and the crossbench will all form part of our 43rd Parliament. I think that is a very welcome change. The opportunity for committee chairs to make statements during private members’ business on committee work is already in the standing orders but is envisaged in this agreement to be actually allowed to happen. A proportionate share of questions and MPIs has been the practice in the past and I note that, while not contained in these draft standing orders, we will continue to provide a fair, proportionate share to the crossbench out of the opposition’s allocation of questions and MPIs. In fact, we—the Leader of the House, the member for Lyne and I—have already agreed today that there will technically be more than a proportionate share of questions and MPIs given to the crossbenchers. Time limits on ordinary ministerial statements are already in the standing orders but will now be enforced.

The use of notes was another aspect of the standing orders that the member for Lyne was very keen to discuss. The overuse of notes in answers to questions has been particularly problematic, where a minister simply stands at the dispatch box and reads an answer prepared by his or her department to fill up question time. That will not be tolerated. While it is not in the standing orders, the Speaker has been given clear instructions in writing that he will be able to say to the minister that the intent of the agreement is that notes be used at a minimum and to call a minister to order and encourage the minister not to use an overabundance of notes. There will be additional time for consideration in detail.

In terms of our disagreement with the proposal as put by the government today, we are unhappy that the agreement has not been kept in terms of the requirement to successfully suspend standing orders before a recommittal of a vote. I foreshadow that I will be moving at the end of this contribution an amendment to the draft standing orders.

The agreement very clearly states at section 12:

The Standing Orders be amended so that there may be a recommittal of a vote on the same sitting day when a Member is inadvertently absent following a successful suspension of standing orders after debate.

This caused some discussion during negotiations, and the agreement was reached that, if a member inadvertently missed a vote for whatever reason, there would be a requirement for a recommittal of that vote, which is correct, but that that would follow a successful suspension of standing orders. In other words, the parliament would have the opportunity to debate the recommittal of the vote to ensure that there was a proper discipline on the government to ensure that their members are present and voting. We do not want a situation where a government can sloppily manage the House and assume that on any matter and at any time, if they miss a few votes or lose a few votes at a hung parliament, they can simply recommitt them.

The opposition wants the opportunity to debate the misadventure and to debate the reason for having a recommittal of the vote. We are moving this amendment to ensure that, regardless of the good word of the Leader of House or of anybody else who says that there will be a debate, we should put it in the standing orders so that everybody knows exactly where they stand.
What this amendment means is that, if a member misses the vote through misadventure, they will indicate to the government that there was a misadventure, the government will come into the House, move a suspension of standing orders and there will then be a 25-minute debate at the end of which there may or may not be a vote. Members of the House should not assume that the opposition would oppose such a suspension of standing orders. If there had been a genuine misadventure, why would we oppose a suspension of standing orders? If a member missed a vote for whatever reason and it was a good reason, the opposition would be very unlikely to divide and vote against a suspension of standing orders. That suspension of standing orders would occur, the standing orders would be suspended, the vote would be held again and the vote would then, obviously, include the member who had missed because of misadventure. It is important that the House get the opportunity to put that discipline on a government, whether it is a coalition government or the member for Grayndler’s government. It is important that there be the discipline on the government to keep its act together.

This government sought a commission to form a government. They were successful in doing so and enough of the crossbenchers decided to support them. That is the decision that they have made, and now the government have to make it work. The parliament has a right to debate whether a vote should be recommitted and then have that recommittal. If the government have a good reason to recommit, they will not have any reason to assume that the opposition would always vote against them. In fact more than likely we would not. But by putting into the standing orders that a suspension of standing orders is required it does put that discipline on the government. I move:

(1) Proposed standing order 132, “New division in case of confusion, error or misadventure”. Omit paragraph (b), substitute:

(b) If a division has miscarried through misadventure caused by a Member being accidentally absent or some similar incident, any Member may move without notice and without the need for a seconder—

That standing orders be suspended to enable the House to divide again.

If this matter is agreed to the question shall be put again and the result of the subsequent division shall be the decision of the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. Peter Slipper)—I thank the honourable member for Sturt. Is the amendment seconded?

Mr HARTSUYKER (Cowper) (12.17 pm)—I second the amendment, and put on record my concurrence with the general thrust of the changes to the standing orders that are being proposed and the fact that they will result in a better parliament. But I do have a concern in relation to the issue of the recommittal of a vote and I think it is something that we should not be doing lightly. I think it is appropriate that standing orders be suspended before a decision is made on the recommittal of a vote.

It is incumbent on all of us in this House to do our very best and to attend all votes wherever possible. The failure to have a provision where standing orders would need to be suspended certainly does lower that obligation. It gives a perception that there should, perhaps, be some lower standard on members of this House. We should be striving to put the maximum possible pressure on all members of this House to fulfil their obligations to represent their electorates in a vote. When there is a recommittal it should only be after a proper debate on the suspension of standing orders.
With regard to the general thrust, as I have said, I certainly support it. The ability of this House to more properly get information from the government in question time is something that certainly will be welcomed by not only the members of this House but also the wider community. For too long we have seen the processes of question time frustrated by long, unwieldy and irrelevant answers to questions that are quite properly asked by the members of the opposition. These changes will certainly result in a better question time and a question time that betters services the people of this country as well as the House. I am pleased to be able to second this amendment.

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (12.20 pm)—In the spirit of the new paradigm it is my understanding that my participation in this debate will not affect my first speech, which is to be given tomorrow. I participate on that basis. Much has been made of the agreement reached with other members of the cross-bench, but there was in fact a prior agreement reached between me and other members of the Australian Greens and the Labor Party that contained a number of matters relevant to the current debate, including this question of the recommittal of any vote.

As reflected in that agreement, which says, ‘Amending the standing orders of both houses so that there can be a recommittal of any vote within one sitting day where a member was absent from that vote due to inadvertence’, it was our intention in entering into that agreement that it be reflected in the standing orders the spirit that the true will of this House is represented at any given time. As happens in the Senate, the recommittal of a vote as a result of misadventure is more or less automatic. Especially in a House as finely balanced as this one, there ought to be the minimum procedural impediments in place to allow the recommittal of a vote as a result of misadventure.

The true purpose, as it appears to me, of the amendment put by the opposition is to simply have a higher bar and to increase the number of procedural impediments in place for testing the true will of the House. So the Australian Greens do support, in general, the amendments to the standing orders but cannot support the amendment to the standing order with respect to inadvertence.

Mr OAKESHOTT (Lyne) (12.22 pm)—Mr Deputy Speaker Slipper, I also take the opportunity to welcome you to the chair in your new role in what will be a challenging parliament. There is in this parliament a starting point for three years of good work, such as we have never had before. Before we even get into parliamentary reform, when all members of parliament consider the PEFO documents, the pre-election financials, and the costings which the three Independents in their negotiations over the last 30-odd days were able to access with some changes to the caretaker conventions and which are now in the public domain—as well as both the red book and the blue book now being available in the public domain—we have a starting point for Australian public policy such as we have never had before. I think this is a reflection of a parliament that is strong and that can deliver if it wants to deliver.

In the negotiations that have taken place over the past month there has been a spirit of goodwill and some good work done by all with regard to the Agreement for a better parliament, and that is now reflected in some proposed changes to the standing orders today. I thank all of those people who have been involved in that process. I think it does matter for the future of this parliament and the future of this country. At times it does feel like a theoretical and dry debate, and for many it might even be a boring debate, but I want to use my time to emphasise that this does matter alongside the PEFO, alongside the costings and alongside the red and the
blue books. It will allow us to deliver a more productive Australia through the work we do in this parliament.

It matters, firstly, with regard to empowering local members to engage with their communities in a way where issues at the community level can be brought to this parliament and where the desire of one individual member, along with 75 others in whatever form they may take, can affect policy outcomes. That is a big step in the traditions of Australian public policy that we should welcome strongly. The foundation block of Australian public policy is that 150 of us have been legitimately elected by our communities. We should not then come down here and lose our voices to an executive. We should all be empowered, regardless of political persuasion, to have skin in the game and affect policy outcomes and, if we can, to compromise and negotiate with our colleagues in this parliament. We saw that yesterday. The floor of the House should matter, and on day one it did matter; I would hope that over the next three years it will matter. That will see us engaging the community and, therefore, engaging in a public policy debate in a way we have not seen before but a way in which I would hope there will be agreement and will make us stronger.

Therefore, the private members’ bills are an important part of the reform document picked up by both sides. That is one I think we all need to watch. The selection committee has a very important role in this reform process and that cannot be an exercise in blocking private members’ rights. It needs to be an exercise in empowering private members’ rights. That is a space in this reform process that I hope all members, regardless of their politics, regardless of whether they are in government or in opposition, watch closely. If this reform is to work there will be a need for government to deal with the uncomfortable at times. Regardless of what private members may bring in in a legitimate way, based on their reading of their community, the executive and the selection committee cannot be a blocking exercise to that process.

We have agreements with government, and I appreciate that, but the spirit and intent of private members’ bills is that they will be voted on, regardless of their content. I flag that as the one to watch. For example, if later today wild rivers legislation comes in on behalf of the coalition or an individual brings in “strangle all cats’ legislation, this parliament should have the strength of character to deal with the uncomfortable and to have a mechanism in place, regardless of how crazy a particular bill is that an individual wants to bring in on their reading of what is important to their community, what is important to their country. We should have the strength of character to allow that bill to be voted for on the floor of the parliament. I hope that the trust and spirit of what has been negotiated does stick, and I would hope that everyone who cares about private members’ rights also keeps an eye on that one.

The second reason it matters is that this is a significant moment in the relationship between the executive and the parliament. In this country we have a tradition that has over time, over its 100-odd year history, drifted towards public policy being about the Treasury benches. The way in which the parliament has been run in the traditional sense is that we are at times at the whim of the ministry to determine the agenda of the parliament, which issues are debated and which issues are important for this country.

Today matters in that we are now shifting the dynamic a bit, but a significant bit, in giving the parliament and the floor of the parliament a bit more authority in its relationship with the executive. The executive no longer has a clear mandate and authority in
that relationship. Whether that is a reflection of the moment or whether, over the next three years, the parliament and all its members will see the benefit of that shifting dynamic and that shifting of authority, I would hope that the upsides far outweigh the downsides and that this is a sustainable model for the future. In the UK parliament, standing order 14 debate is alive and well. Backbench members of parliament of all political persuasions have been muscling up to the executive to try to get the floor of the parliament to be the place of authority in the way that public policy is delivered in their country. Hopefully, some of that is now being seen in our country.

Today matters for a third reason, and that is talk versus action. I accept that plenty of the issues that are in this reform document have come from the major parties, but I also hope everyone accepts that it has been difficult for the major parties to bring in and enact many of these reforms because of that simple dynamic of government versus opposition and the fact that whoever has the authority of the moment does not want to change things too much. Plenty of the things that are in this document have come from the benches of the major parties, and I thank them for their involvement. But I also hope there is a reflection of the last 30 days, of a moment where we have been able to achieve what has not been able to be achieved over the last 30 years. The acknowledgement of country at the start of every sitting day, for example, is done, I think, in every other state parliament and in most local councils. We were probably the last chamber in this country to take that on as an issue. I know the ‘Grandfather of the House’ or the ‘Father of the House’—he probably is a grandfather—Philip Ruddock, has been a champion of that issue for most, if not all, of his parliamentary career, which is 30 or 35 years, yet there has been an inability, because of the way the numbers work on the floor and the way the standing orders are written, to achieve a simple outcome. In 30 days all of us have been able to achieve in this reform document more than what has been achieved in 30 years, and that is why this dry debate actually matters at this moment.

I will go back, because I need to correct some of the comments that were made by the member for Sturt about my keenness on particular issues. I would hate for there to be a reinterpretation of some of the negotiations. There was a sense that I was keen on backbench question times, questions at the end of speeches and minimal notes. I am keen on the whole reform package, but I was no more or less keen than anyone else. I would hate for this to be an exercise of putting the controversial issues in the crossbenchers’ corner. Everyone signed up to a document. I would hope that due diligence was undertaken by all in that process and that therefore everyone, it is to be assumed, is keen on certain aspects that are in that document, compared to what was removed in any compromises that had to be reached.

Because backbench question time was raised, we now have—which should be of interest to all backbench members—a broader consideration in detail in the Main Committee. That is essentially a backbench question time, and I encourage everyone to embrace that process. It is a time when you can put ministers on the spot and really hit them with all your local or national issues and have good-quality engagement without notice. That was where that issue ended up.

I also hope that everyone tries to push both their ministry and their shadow ministry on the concept of minimal notes for question time. I think it deadens public policy debate at that time in the day, when it is the public face of the parliament. I would hope that we all have the skills to do better than just stand-
ing up and reading a question and then just standing up and reading an answer. This is not about effecting market-sensitive outcomes. Where necessary, obviously, notes are important but where they are not necessary I would hope this is a time of challenging both the questioner and the responder with regard to their professional skills as wordsmiths. That should be the time when that challenge takes place.

I want to mention the late Peter Andren. There has been plenty of debate about parliamentary reform for years. An inquiry was undertaken before the 2007 election and submissions were received from a whole range of people. One submission was from the late Peter Andren. He was looking for 30-second questions and two-minute answers. If I was keen on anything that I had to compromise on, it was that. Out of respect to him, as well as out of respect to the logic of the argument, if I am going to get pinned for being keen about anything it should be about that submission from the late Peter Andren on questions and answers having time limits. I and others have compromised on the timing. We have got up to 45 seconds for questions and four minutes for the answers. But that has very much come, and should be acknowledged as having come, from the work that was done by the late Peter Andren.

This reform matters for a fourth reason, because the committee system is now back in the game like it has not been before. If you look at any valedictory speeches from former members you will see that most mention that the best part of their time in this place was their committee work, that consensus work—it is almost a dirty word now—where public policy was dealt with not on political lines as much as possible but on apolitical lines as much as possible. That is now a re-energised process.

The final reason—the obvious reason—that today matters is for the moment. This parliament is obviously tight on the numbers. Yes, this process embraces what has been talked about for 30 years; yes, it tries to set it up for the next 30 years and beyond; but there are parts of this agreement that reflect today and how tight the numbers are. So this issue of the recommittal of votes matters. The issue of the pairing of the Speaker and the spirit behind that actually matter, and it is disappointing that we have lost that. If anyone is wondering if there was any conspiracy behind any of that, there was not. It was a reflection of our trying to make a working parliament for at least the next three years.

This is good work. I thank Chris and Albo. I thank everyone involved, including Simon Banks, Bruce Hawker, Grahame Morris and Arthur Sinodinos. Hopefully everyone will now work on this in the spirit and with the goodwill that they should. (Time expired)

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House) (12.38 pm)—I thank the member for Lyne and note his particular passion for restricting time limits, as reflected in the change in standing orders which all of us ministers are going to be bound by, come two o’clock!

I want to comment on the difference between the opposition amendment being carried and the opposition amendment being defeated. The opposition’s amendment is the same in spirit as the original motion. We had discussions which went along the lines of: ‘How do we ensure that there is not an automatic recommittal of votes, as there is in the Senate?’ In the Senate, if a senator misses a vote they stand up and say, ‘I missed a vote; it was for this reason,’ and there is an automatic recommittal. There was a discussion about ensuring that there would be an explanation given and a demonstration that the House accepted that explanation. The dem-
A demonstration would have to be accepted by a majority vote of this House, which is why we put the provisions as we did.

If the standing orders as drafted are carried by this House unamended, there will still have to be two votes: the first vote on whether there should be a recommittal and the second vote on the substantive item that was before the House. If the amendment moved by the opposition is carried, it will not make a difference in effect; it will ensure that there is a longer procedural wrangle about ensuring that the majority will of the House is reflected.

Normally the votes in this House will not go something like 74 to 75; they will go something like 70 to 69—or who knows how—because people will have leave. Eventually, the opposition will get over the fact that they lost the election and will get serious about granting pairs, so that the sort of discussion and debate that there has been about whether the member for Sydney will have a pair after she gives birth will not happen. In reality, common sense will prevail and a pair will be granted. I recognise the fact that that will occur, just as today a pair has been granted for when the member for Hotham addresses the National Press Club. That is just common sense. But, if an absolute majority rather than a simple majority is required, people will simply put on the Notice Paper a recommittal of votes and then it will be allowed to occur without an absolute majority.

There are procedural ways of ensuring that the majority view of this House will be implemented. There are ways of making that difficult—which take longer—but there are not ways of subverting the will of this House. Our amendment ensures that the will of this House will be carried. I commend the amendments of the standing orders to the House. I regret the fact that the opposition have walked away from the pairing of the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker, but I commit the government to working through these changes in the spirit of cooperation which we saw in the lead-up to the re-formation of the Gillard government in the aftermath of the 21 August election.

The SPEAKER—The original question was that the motion be agreed to. To this, the honourable member for Sturt has moved as an amendment that proposed standing order 132(b) be omitted with a view to substituting alternative words. The question now is that the amendment be agreed to.

Question put.
The House divided. [12.47 pm]
(The Speaker—Mr Harry Jenkins)

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Ayes</th>
<th>73</th>
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**AYES**

Abbott, A.J.  
Andrews, K.J.  
Baldwin, R.C.  
Bishop, B.K.  
Briggs, J.E.  
Buchholz, S.  
Christensen, G.  
Cobb, J.K.  
Crook, T.  
Entsch, W.  
Forrest, J.A.  
Gambaro, T.  
Griggs, N.  
Hartsuyker, L.  
Hockey, J.B.  
Irons, S.J.  
Jones, E.  
Kelly, C.  
Ley, S.P.  
Marino, N.B.  
Matheson, R.  
Mirabella, S.  
Moylan, J.E.  
O’Dowd, K.  
Oakeshott, R.J.M.  
Alexander, J.  
Andrews, K.L.  
Billson, B.F.  
Bishop, J.I.  
Broadbent, R.  
Chester, D.  
Ciobo, S.M.  
Coulton, M. *  
Dutton, P.C.  
Fletcher, P.  
Frydenberg, J.  
Gash, J.  
Haase, B.W.  
Hawke, A.  
Hunt, G.A.  
Jensen, D.  
Keenan, M.  
Laming, A.  
Macfarlane, I.E.  
Markus, L.E.  
McCormack, M.  
Morrison, S.J.  
Neville, P.C.  
O’Dwyer, K  
Prentice, J.  

THE SPEAKER—The motion carry as amended.
In division—

The SPEAKER (12.48 pm)—Order! While I have the attention of the House during this division, I would like to make the following statement. Members may appreciate that at this stage of the parliament the only members who can occupy the chair are the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker and the Second Deputy Speaker. I have not yet appointed a Speaker’s panel, and the normal roster has not been able to be prepared. Standing order 16 provides for the appointment of a Deputy Speaker and a Second Deputy Speaker to ‘take the chair of the House whenever asked to do so by the Speaker’. Accordingly, when either the Deputy Speaker or the Second Deputy Speaker is rostered to be in the chair, it could be assumed that this was at the request of me as Speaker. In the case of members of the Speaker’s panel, the Speaker or the Deputy Speaker may call on them to take the chair of the House, and so the same assumption about their appearance on a roster for chair duty can be made about members of the panel. I should make it clear to the House that the arrangements for rostering in the chair, including rostering at times when divisions may be expected, are purely a matter for the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker and the Second Deputy Speaker in consultation with members of the panel. Members may wish to refer to the terms of standing orders 16 and 17 in particular and to the House of Representatives Practice pages 199 to 203.

The result of the division having been announced—

The SPEAKER—The question now is that the motion, as amended, be agreed to.

Question agreed to.

STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House) (1.01 pm)—I move:
That sessional order 142A be adopted for the remainder of the session, as follows:

142a Questions during second reading debate
(a) At the end of each Member’s speech during the second reading debate of a government bill, the Member may be questioned by other Members in relation to his or her speech.
(b) The Member is not obliged to take questions, and may indicate this during his or her speech.
(c) After each speech, questions and answers may continue for up to five minutes. Each question may take up to 30 seconds and each reply may take up to 2 minutes.
(d) This standing order shall not apply to the Minister’s second reading speech and a Minister’s speech closing the debate or to the speech of the main opposition speaker.

Question agreed to.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSES TO COMMITTEE REPORTS

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House) (1.02 pm)—I move:
That the House adopt the following resolution:
That:

(1) Within a period of six months from the presentation in the House of a report by a House or Joint Committee, the Government shall present its response to the recommendations contained in the report to the House.

(2) If a period of six months has elapsed from a report being presented and a response has not been presented, the relevant Minister (or Minister representing the Minister) shall:
(a) present to the House at the next available opportunity a signed statement stating the reasons for the delay in presentation of the response, and
(b) make himself or herself available to appear at the next reasonably available opportunity following a request by the relevant committee to answer its questions on that statement.

(3) If a response has not been presented in the required time and an explanatory statement has not been presented and questions on the statement not answered to the satisfaction of the committee, the committee may bring the matter to the attention, if appropriate, of the Auditor-General for assistance in resolving matters referred to in the report or to the Speaker for assistance in resolving the response process.

Question agreed to.

COMMITTEES

Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity Committee
Appointment

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House) (1.03 pm)—I move:

(1) That, in accordance with sections 213 and 214 of the Law Enforcement Integrity Commissioner Act 2006, matters relating to the powers and proceedings of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on the Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity shall be as follows:

(a) That the committee consist of 10 members, 3 Members of the House of Representatives to be nominated by the Government Whip or Whips, 2 Members of the House of Representatives to be nominated by the Opposition Whip or Whips or by any non-aligned Member, 2 Senators to be nominated by the Leader of the Government in the Senate, 2 Senators to be nominated by the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and 1 Senator to be nominated by any minority group or groups or independent Senator or independent Senators.

(b) That every nomination of a member of the committee be notified in writing to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

(c) That the committee elect a Government member as its chair.

(d) That the committee elect a non-Government member as its deputy chair who shall act as chair of the committee at any time when the chair is not present.
at a meeting of the committee, and at any time when the chair and deputy chair are not present at a meeting of the committee the members present shall elect another member to act as chair at that meeting.

(e) That, in the event of an equally divided vote, the chair, or the deputy chair when acting as chair, have a casting vote.

(f) That 3 members of the committee constitute a quorum of the committee, provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include 1 Government member of either House and 1 non-Government member of either House.

(g) That the committee have power to appoint subcommittees consisting of 3 or more of its members and to refer to any subcommittee any matter which the committee is empowered to examine.

(h) That the committee appoint the chair of each subcommittee who shall have a casting vote only and at any time when the chair of a subcommittee is not present at a meeting of the subcommittee the members of the subcommittee present shall elect another member of that subcommittee to act as chair at that meeting.

(i) That 2 members of a subcommittee constitute a quorum of that subcommittee, provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include 1 Government member of either House and 1 non-Government member of either House.

(j) That members of the committee who are not members of a subcommittee may participate in the proceedings of that subcommittee but shall not vote, move any motion or be counted for the purpose of a quorum.

(k) That the committee or any subcommittee have power to call for witnesses to attend and for documents to be produced.

(l) That the committee or any subcommittee may conduct proceedings at any place it sees fit.

(m) That a subcommittee have power to adjourn from time to time and to sit during any adjournment of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

(n) That the committee may report from time to time.

(o) That the committee or any subcommittee have power to consider and make use of the evidence and records of the Joint Committees on the Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity appointed during previous Parliaments.

(p) That, in carrying out its duties, the committee or any subcommittee ensure that the operational methods and results of investigations of law enforcement agencies, as far as possible, be protected from disclosure where that would be against the public interest.

(q) That the provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with the standing orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the standing orders.

(2) That a message be sent to the Senate acquainting it of this resolution and requesting that it concur and take action accordingly.

Question agreed to.

**Australian Crime Commission Committee Appointment**

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House) (1.03 pm)—I move:

(1) That, in accordance with section 54 of the *Australian Crime Commission Act 2002*, matters relating to the powers and proceedings of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on the Australian Crime Commission shall be as follows:

(a) That the committee consist of 10 members, 3 Members of the House of Representatives to be nominated by the Government Whip or Whips, 2 Members of the House of Representatives to be nominated by the Opposition Whip or Whips or by any independent Member, 2 Senators to be nominated by the
Leader of the Government in the Senate, 2 Senators to be nominated by the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and 1 Senator to be nominated by any minority group or groups or independent Senator or independent Senators.

(b) That every nomination of a member of the committee be notified in writing to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

(c) That the committee elect a Government member as its chair.

(d) That the committee elect a non-Government member as its deputy chair who shall act as chair of the committee at any time when the chair is not present at a meeting of the committee, and at any time when the chair and deputy chair are not present at a meeting of the committee the members present shall elect another member to act as chair at that meeting.

(e) That, in the event of an equally divided vote, the chair, or the deputy chair when acting as chair, have a casting vote.

(f) That 3 members of the committee constitute a quorum of the committee, provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include 1 Government member of either House and 1 non-Government member of either House.

(g) That the committee have power to appoint subcommittees consisting of 3 or more of its members and to refer to any subcommittee any matter which the committee is empowered to examine.

(h) That the committee appoint the chair of each subcommittee who shall have a casting vote only and at any time when the chair of a subcommittee is not present at a meeting of the subcommittee the members of the subcommittee present shall elect another member of that subcommittee to act as chair at that meeting.

(i) That 2 members of a subcommittee include a quorum of that subcommittee, provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include 1 Government member of either House and 1 non-Government member of either House.

(j) That members of the committee who are not members of a subcommittee may participate in the proceedings of that subcommittee but shall not vote, move any motion or be counted for the purpose of a quorum.

(k) That the committee or any subcommittee have power to call for witnesses to attend and for documents to be produced.

(l) That the committee or any subcommittee may conduct proceedings in any place it sees fit.

(m) That a subcommittee have power to adjourn from time to time and to sit during any adjournment of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

(n) That the committee may report from time to time.

(o) That the committee or any subcommittee have power to consider and make use of the evidence and records of the Joint Committees on the National Crime Authority and the Australian Crime Commission appointed during previous Parliaments.

(p) That, in carrying out its duties, the committee or any subcommittee, ensure that the operational methods and results of investigations of law enforcement agencies, as far as possible, be protected from disclosure where that would be against the public interest.

(q) That the provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with the standing orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the standing orders.

(2) That a message be sent to the Senate acquainting it of this resolution and requesting that it concur and take action accordingly.

Question agreed to.
Corporations and Financial Services Committee
Appointment

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House) (1.04 pm)—I move:

(1) That, in accordance with section 242 of the Australian Securities and Investments Commission Act 2001, matters relating to the powers and proceedings of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services shall be as follows:

(a) That the committee consist of 10 members, 3 Members of the House of Representatives to be nominated by the Government Whip or Whips, 2 Members of the House of Representatives to be nominated by the Opposition Whip or Whips or by any non-aligned Member, 2 Senators to be nominated by the Leader of the Government in the Senate, 2 Senators to be nominated by the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and 1 Senator to be nominated by any minority group or groups or independent Senator or independent Senators.

(b) That every nomination of a member of the committee be notified in writing to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

(c) That the committee elect a Government member as its chair.

(d) That the committee elect a non-Government member as its deputy chair who shall act as chair of the committee at any time when the chair is not present at a meeting of the committee, and at any time when the chair and deputy chair are not present at a meeting of the committee the members present shall elect another member to act as chair at that meeting.

(e) That, in the event of an equally divided vote, the chair, or the deputy chair when acting as chair, have a casting vote.

(f) That 3 members of the committee constitute a quorum of the committee, provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include 1 Government member of either House and 1 non-Government member of either House.

(g) That the committee have power to appoint subcommittees consisting of 3 or more of its members and to refer to any subcommittee any matter which the committee is empowered to examine.

(h) That the committee appoint the chair of each subcommittee who shall have a casting vote only, and at any time when the chair of a subcommittee is not present at a meeting of the subcommittee the members of the subcommittee present shall elect another member of that subcommittee to act as chair at that meeting.

(i) That 2 members of a subcommittee constitute a quorum of that subcommittee, provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include 1 Government member of either House and 1 non-Government member of either House.

(j) That members of the committee who are not members of a subcommittee may participate in the proceedings of that subcommittee but shall not vote, move any motion or be counted for the purpose of a quorum.

(k) That the committee or any subcommittee have power to call for witnesses to attend and for documents to be produced.

(l) That the committee or any subcommittee may conduct proceedings at any place it sees fit.

(m) That a subcommittee have power to adjourn from time to time and to sit during any adjournment of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

(n) That the committee may report from time to time.

(o) That the committee or any subcommittee have power to consider and make use of the evidence and records of the Joint Committees on Corporations and Financial Services.
Financial Services and Corporations and Securities appointed during previous Parliaments.

(p) That the provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with the standing orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the standing orders.

(2) That a message be sent to the Senate acquainting it of this resolution and requesting that it concur and take action accordingly.

Question agreed to.

Cyber Safety Committee
Appointment

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House) (1.04 pm)—I move:

(1) (a) That a Joint Select Committee on Cyber Safety be appointed to inquire into and report on:

(i) the online environment in which Australian children currently engage, including key physical points of access (schools, libraries, internet cafes, homes, mobiles) and stakeholders controlling or able to influence that engagement (governments, parents, teachers, traders, internet service providers, content service providers);

(ii) the nature, prevalence, implications of and level of risk associated with cyber-safety threats, such as:

- abuse of children online (cyber-bullying, cyber-stalking and sexual grooming);
- exposure to illegal and inappropriate content;
- inappropriate social and health behaviours in an online environment (e.g. technology addiction, online promotion of anorexia, drug usage, underage drinking and smoking);
- identity theft; and
- breaches of privacy;

(iii) Australian and international responses to current cyber-safety threats (education, filtering, regulation, enforcement) their effectiveness and costs to stakeholders, including business;

(iv) opportunities for cooperation across Australian stakeholders and with international stakeholders in dealing with cyber-safety issues;

(v) examining the need to ensure that the opportunities presented by, and economic benefits of, new technologies are maximised;

(vi) ways to support schools to change their culture to reduce the incidence and harmful effects of cyber-bullying including by:

- increasing awareness of cyber-safety good practice;
- encouraging schools to work with the broader school community, especially parents, to develop consistent, whole school approaches; and
- analysing best practice approaches to training and professional development programs and resources that are available to enable school staff to effectively respond to cyber-bullying.

(vii) analysing information on achieving and continuing world’s best practice safeguards; and

(viii) the merit of establishing an Online Ombudsman to investigate, advocate and act on cyber-safety issues.

(b) Such other matters relating to cyber-safety referred by the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy or either House.

(2) That the committee consist of 12 members, 4 Members of the House of Representatives to be nominated by the Government Whip or
Whips, 2 Members of the House of Representatives to be nominated by the Opposition Whip or Whips and 1 by any non-aligned Member, 2 Senators to be nominated by the Leader of the Government in the Senate, and 2 Senators to be nominated by the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and 1 Senator to be nominated by any minority group or groups or independent Senator or independent Senators.

(3) That every nomination of a member of the committee be notified in writing to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

(4) That the members of the committee hold office as a joint select committee until the House of Representatives is dissolved or expires by effluxion of time.

(5) That the committee elect a Government member as its chair.

(6) That the committee elect a non-Government member as its deputy chair who shall act as chair of the committee at any time when the chair is not present at a meeting of the committee, and at any time when the chair and deputy chair are not present at a meeting of the committee the members present shall elect another member to act as chair at that meeting.

(7) That, in the event of an equally divided vote, the chair, or the deputy chair when acting as chair, have a casting vote.

(8) That 3 members of the committee constitute a quorum of the committee provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include 1 Government member of either House and 1 non-Government member of either House.

(9) That the committee have power to appoint subcommittees consisting of 3 or more of its members and to refer to any subcommittee any matter which the committee is empowered to examine.

(10) That the committee appoint the chair of each subcommittee who shall have a casting vote only and at any time when the chair of a subcommittee is not present at a meeting of the subcommittee the members of the subcommittee present shall elect another member of that subcommittee to act as chair at that meeting.

(11) That 2 members of a subcommittee constitute the quorum of that subcommittee, provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include 1 Government member of either House and 1 non-Government member of either House.

(12) That members of the committee who are not members of a subcommittee may participate in the proceedings of that subcommittee but shall not vote, move any motion or be counted for the purpose of a quorum.

(13) That the committee or any subcommittee have power to call for witnesses to attend and for documents to be produced.

(14) That the committee or any subcommittee have the power to consider and make use of the evidence and records of the former Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety appointed during the previous parliament.

(15) That the committee or any subcommittee may conduct proceedings at any place it sees fit.

(16) That the committee or any subcommittee have power to adjourn from time to time and to sit during any adjournment of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

(17) That the committee may report from time to time but that it present its final report no later than 30 April 2012.

(18) That the provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with the standing orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the standing orders.

(19) That a message be sent to the Senate acquainting it of this resolution and requesting that it concur and take action accordingly.

Question agreed to.

Electoral Matters Committee
Appointment

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House) (1.05 pm)—I move:

(1) That a Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters be appointed to inquire into and
report on such matters relating to electoral laws and practices and their administration as
may be referred to it by either House of the Parliament or a Minister.

(2) That annual reports of government departments and authorities tabled in the House
shall stand referred to the committee for any inquiry the committee may wish to make.
Reports shall stand referred to the committee in accordance with a schedule tabled by the
Speaker to record the areas of responsibility of each committee, provided that:

(a) any question concerning responsibility for a report or a part of a report shall be
determined by the Speaker; and

(b) the period during which an inquiry concerning an annual report may be com-

menced by a committee shall end on the day on which the next annual report of
that Department or authority is pre-
sented to the House.

(3) That the committee consist of 10 members, 3
Members of the House of Representatives to
be nominated by the Government Whip or
Whips, 2 Members of the House of Repre-
sentatives to be nominated by the Opposition
Whip or Whips or by any non-aligned Mem-
er, 2 Senators to be nominated by the
Leader of the Government in the Senate, 2
Senators to be nominated by the Leader of
the Opposition in the Senate and 1 Senator to
be nominated by any minority group or
groups or independent Senator or independ-
ent Senators.

(4) That every nomination of a member of the
committee be notified in writing to the Presi-
dent of the Senate and the Speaker of the
House of Representatives.

(5) That the members of the committee hold
office as a joint standing committee until the
House of Representatives is dissolved or ex-
pires by effluxion of time.

(6) That the committee elect a Government
member as its chair.

(7) That the committee elect a non-Government
member as its deputy chair who shall act as
chair of the committee at any time when the
chair is not present at a meeting of the com-
mittee, and at any time when the chair and
deputy chair are not present at a meeting of
the committee the members present shall
elect another member to act as chair at that
meeting.

(8) That, in the event of an equally divided vote,
the chair, or the deputy chair when acting as
chair, have a casting vote.

(9) That 3 members of the committee constitute
a quorum of the committee, provided that in
a deliberative meeting the quorum shall in-
clude 1 Government member of either House
and 1 non-Government member of either
House.

(10) That the committee have power to appoint
subcommittees consisting of 3 or more of its
members and to refer to any subcommittee
any matter which the committee is empow-
ered to examine.

(11) That the committee appoint the chair of each
subcommittee who shall have a casting vote
only and at any time when the chair of a sub-
committee is not present at a meeting of the
subcommittee the members of the subcom-
mittee present shall elect another member of
that subcommittee to act as chair at that
meeting.

(12) That 2 members of a subcommittee consti-
tute a quorum of that subcommittee, pro-
vided that in a deliberative meeting the quo-
rum shall include 1 Government member of
either House and 1 non-Government member
of either House.

(13) That members of the committee who are not
members of a subcommittee may participate
in the proceedings of that subcommittee but
shall not vote, move any motion or be
counted for the purpose of a quorum.

(14) That the committee or any subcommittee
have power to call for witnesses to attend
and for documents to be produced.

(15) That the committee or any subcommittee
may conduct proceedings at any place it sees
fit.

(16) That a subcommittee have power to adjourn
from time to time and to sit during any ad-
(17) That the committee may report from time to time.

(18) That the committee or any subcommittee have power to consider and make use of:

(a) submissions lodged with the Clerk of the Senate in response to public advertisements placed in accordance with the resolution of the Senate of 26 November 1981 relating to a proposed Joint Select Committee on the Electoral System; and

(b) the evidence and records of the Joint Committees on Electoral Reform and Electoral Matters appointed during previous Parliaments.

(19) That the provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with the standing orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the standing orders.

(20) That a message be sent to the Senate acquainting it of this resolution and requesting that it concur and take action accordingly.

Question agreed to.

Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee
Appointment

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House) (1.05 pm)—I move:

(1) (a) That a Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade be appointed to inquire into and report on such matters relating to foreign affairs, defence and trade as may be referred to it by:

(i) either House of the Parliament;
(ii) the Minister for Foreign Affairs;
(iii) the Minister for Defence; or
(iv) the Minister for Trade.

(b) That annual reports of government departments and authorities tabled in the House shall stand referred to the committee for any inquiry the committee may wish to make. Reports shall stand referred to the committee in accordance with a schedule tabled by the Speaker to record the areas of responsibility of each committee, provided that:

(i) any question concerning responsibility for a report or a part of a report shall be determined by the Speaker; and

(ii) the period during which an inquiry concerning an annual report may be commenced by a committee shall end on the day on which the next annual report of that Department or authority is presented to the House.

(2) That the committee consist of 34 members, 13 Members of the House of Representatives to be nominated by the Government Whip or Whips, 9 Members of the House of Representatives to be nominated by the Opposition Whip or Whips or by any non-aligned Member, 5 Senators to be nominated by the Leader of the Government in the Senate, 5 Senators to be nominated by the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and 2 Senators to be nominated by any minority group or groups or independent Senator or independent Senators.

(3) That every nomination of a member of the committee be notified in writing to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

(4) That the members of the committee hold office as a joint standing committee until the House of Representatives is dissolved or expires by effluxion of time.

(5) That the committee elect a Government member as its chair.

(6) That the committee elect a non-Government member as its deputy chair who shall act as chair of the committee at any time when the chair is not present at a meeting of the committee and at any time when the chair and deputy chair are not present at a meeting of the committee the members present shall elect another member to act as chair at that meeting.

(7) That in the event of an equally divided vote, the chair, or the deputy chair when acting as chair, have a casting vote.
(8) That 6 members of the committee constitute a quorum of the committee, provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include 1 Government member of either House and 1 non-Government member of either House.

(9) That the committee have power to appoint subcommittees consisting of 3 or more of its members and to refer to any subcommittee any matter which the committee is empowered to examine.

(10) That, in addition to the members appointed pursuant to paragraph (9), the chair and deputy chair of the committee be ex officio members of each subcommittee appointed.

(11) That the committee appoint the chair of each subcommittee who shall have a casting vote only, and at any time when the chair of a subcommittee is not present at a meeting of the subcommittee the members of the subcommittee present shall elect another member of that subcommittee to act as chair at that meeting.

(12) That 2 members of a subcommittee constitute the quorum of that subcommittee, provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include 1 Government member of either House and 1 non-Government member of either House.

(13) That members of the committee who are not members of a subcommittee may participate in the proceedings of that subcommittee but shall not vote, move any motion or be counted for the purpose of a quorum.

(14) That the committee or any subcommittee have power to call for witnesses to attend and for documents to be produced.

(15) That the committee or any subcommittee may conduct proceedings at any place it sees fit.

(16) That a subcommittee have power to adjourn from time to time and to sit during any adjournment of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

(17) That the committee may report from time to time.

(18) That the committee or any subcommittee have power to consider and make use of the evidence and records of the Joint Committees on Foreign Affairs and Defence and Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade appointed during previous Parliaments.

(19) That the provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with the standing orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the standing orders.

(20) That a message be sent to the Senate acquainting it of this resolution and requesting that it concur and take action accordingly.

Question agreed to.

Gambling Reform Committee Appointment

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House) (1.06 pm)—I move:

(1) That a Joint Select Committee on Gambling Reform be appointed to:

(a) Inquire into and report on:

(i) The Productivity Commission report on gambling, released in June 2010, including a national response to the full set of its recommendations;

(ii) The design and implementation of a best practice full pre-commitment scheme – that is uniform across all States and Territories and machines consistent with the recommendations and findings of the Productivity Commission;

(iii) Legal advice commissioned and received by the Commonwealth by 1 February 2011 regarding the Commonwealth’s constitutional competence and prospects for successfully legislating in this area, including the reasoning supporting the legal advice and financial and other consequences flowing from it;

(iv) Any gambling-related legislation that has been tabled in either House, either as a first reading or exposure draft;
(v) Appropriate terms of reference, to be set by no later than 30 June 2013, of a further Productivity Commission Inquiry to examine the impact of pre-commitment schemes on problem gambling and to determine what further harm minimisation measures may be necessary;

(vi) Monitoring the impact of reforms to address problem gambling; and

(vii) Such other matters relating to gambling referred by either House.

(b) Make recommendations to the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and the Assistant Treasurer, to inform any position that the Commonwealth will take to the COAG Select Council on Gambling Reform.

(2) That the committee consist of 10 members, 3 Members of the House of Representatives to be nominated by the Government Whip or Whips, 2 Members of the House of Representatives to be nominated by the Opposition Whip or Whips, and one non-aligned Member, 2 Senators to be nominated by the Leader of the Government in the Senate, one Senator to be nominated by the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, and one Senator to be nominated by any minority group or groups or independent Senator or independent Senators.

(3) That participating members may be appointed to the committee. Participating members may participate in hearings of evidence and deliberations of the committee, and have all the rights of a member of the committee, but may not vote on any questions before the committee.

(4) That every nomination of a member of the committee be notified in writing to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

(5) That the members of the committee hold office as a joint select committee until the House of Representatives is dissolved or expires by effluxion of time.

(6) That the committee elect a non-aligned member as its chair.

(7) That the committee elect a member as its deputy chair who shall act as chair of the committee at any time when the chair is not present at a meeting of the committee, and at any time when the chair and deputy chair are not present at a meeting of the committee the members present shall elect another member to act as chair at that meeting.

(8) That, in the event of an equally divided vote, the chair, or the deputy chair when acting as chair, have a casting vote.

(9) That 3 members of the committee constitute a quorum of the committee provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include 1 Government member of either House and 1 non-Government member of either House.

(10) That the committee have power to appoint subcommittees consisting of 3 or more of its members and to refer to any subcommittee any matter which the committee is empowered to examine.

(11) That the committee appoint the chair of each subcommittee who shall have a casting vote only and at any time when the chair of a subcommittee is not present at a meeting of the subcommittee the members of the subcommittee present shall elect another member of that subcommittee to act as chair at that meeting.

(12) That 2 members of a subcommittee constitute the quorum of that subcommittee, provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include 1 Government member of either House and 1 non-Government member of either House.

(13) That members of the committee who are not members of a subcommittee may participate in the proceedings of that subcommittee but shall not vote, move any motion or be counted for the purpose of a quorum.

(14) That the committee or any subcommittee have power to call for witnesses to attend and for documents to be produced.
(15) That the committee or any subcommittee may conduct proceedings at any place it sees fit.

(16) That the committee or any subcommittee have power to adjourn from time to time and to sit during any adjournment of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

(17) That the committee may report from time to time but that it present its final report no later than 30 June 2013.

(18) That the provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with the standing orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the standing orders.

(19) That a message be sent to the Senate acquainting it of this resolution and requesting that it concur and take action accordingly.

Question agreed to.

Migration Committee Appointment

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House) (1.06 pm)—I move:

(1) (a) That a Joint Standing Committee on Migration be appointed to inquire into and report on:

(i) regulations made or proposed to be made under the Migration Act 1958;

(ii) proposed changes to the Migration Act 1958 and any related acts; and

(iii) such other matters relating to migration as may be referred to it by the Minister responsible for the administration of the Migration Act 1958.

(b) That annual reports of government departments and authorities tabled in the House shall stand referred to the committee for any inquiry the committee may wish to make. Reports shall stand referred to the committee in accordance with a schedule tabled by the Speaker to record the areas of responsibility of each committee, provided that:

(i) any question concerning responsibility for a report or a part of a report shall be determined by the Speaker; and

(ii) the period during which an inquiry concerning an annual report may be commenced by a committee shall end on the day on which the next annual report of that Department or authority is presented to the House.

(2) That the committee consist of 10 members, 3 Members of the House of Representatives to be nominated by the Government Whip or Whips, 3 Members of the House of Representatives to be nominated by the Opposition Whip or Whips or by any non-aligned Member, 2 Senators to be nominated by the Leader of the Government in the Senate, 1 Senator to be nominated by the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and 1 Senator to be nominated by any minority group or groups or independent Senator or independent Senators.

(3) That every nomination of a member of the committee be notified in writing to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

(4) That the members of the committee hold office as a joint standing committee until the House of Representatives is dissolved or expires by effluxion of time.

(5) That the committee elect a Government member as its chair.

(6) That the committee elect a non-Government member as its deputy chair who shall act as chair of the committee at any time when the chair is not present at a meeting of the committee, and at any time when the chair and deputy chair are not present at a meeting of the committee the members present shall elect another member to act as chair at that meeting.

(7) That, in the event of an equally divided vote, the chair, or the deputy chair when acting as chair, have a casting vote.

(8) That 3 members of the committee constitute a quorum of the committee, provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include 1 Government member of either House.
and 1 non-Government member of either House.

(9) That the committee have power to appoint subcommittees consisting of 3 or more of its members and to refer to any subcommittee any matter which the committee is empowered to examine.

(10) That the committee appoint the chair of each subcommittee who shall have a casting vote only and at any time when the chair of a subcommittee is not present at a meeting of the subcommittee the members of the subcommittee present shall elect another member of that subcommittee to act as chair at that meeting.

(11) That 2 members of a subcommittee constitute the quorum of that subcommittee, provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include 1 Government member of either House and 1 non-Government member of either House.

(12) That members of the committee who are not members of a subcommittee may participate in the proceedings of that subcommittee but shall not vote, move any motion or be counted for the purpose of a quorum.

(13) That the committee or any subcommittee have power to call for witnesses to attend and for documents to be produced.

(14) That the committee or any subcommittee may conduct proceedings at any place it sees fit.

(15) That a subcommittee have power to adjourn from time to time and to sit during any adjournment of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

(16) That the committee may report from time to time.

(17) That the committee or any subcommittee have power to consider and make use of the evidence and records of the Joint Committees on Migration Regulations and the Joint Standing Committees on Migration appointed during previous Parliaments.

(18) That the provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with the standing orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the standing orders.

(19) That a message be sent to the Senate acquainting it of this resolution and requesting that it concur and take action accordingly.

Question agreed to.

National Capital and External Territories Committee Appointment

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House) (1.06 pm)—I move:

(1) That a Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories be appointed to inquire into and report on:

(a) matters coming within the terms of section 5 of the *Parliament Act 1974* as may be referred to it by:
   (i) either House of the Parliament; or
   (ii) the Minister responsible for administering the *Parliament Act 1974*; or
   (iii) the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives;

(b) such other matters relating to the parliamentary zone as may be referred to it by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives;

(c) such amendments to the National Capital Plan as are referred to it by a Minister responsible for administering the *Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988*;

(d) such other matters relating to the National Capital as may be referred to it by:
   (i) either House of the Parliament; or
   (ii) the Minister responsible for administering the *Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act 1988*; and

(e) such matters relating to Australia’s territories as may be referred to it by:
   (i) either House of the Parliament; or
(ii) the Minister responsible for the administration of the Territory of Cocos (Keeling) Islands; the Territory of Christmas Island; the Coral Sea Islands Territory; the Territory of Ashmore and Cartier Islands; the Australian Antarctic Territory, and the Territory of Heard Island and McDonald Islands, and of Commonwealth responsibilities on Norfolk Island.

(2) That annual reports of government departments and authorities tabled in the House shall stand referred to the committee for any inquiry the committee may wish to make. Reports shall stand referred to the committee in accordance with a schedule tabled by the Speaker to record the areas of responsibility of each committee, provided that:

(a) any question concerning responsibility for a report or a part of a report shall be determined by the Speaker; and

(b) the period during which an inquiry concerning an annual report may be commenced by a committee shall end on the day on which the next annual report of that Department or authority is presented to the House.

(3) That the committee consist of 12 members, the Deputy Speaker, 3 Members of the House of Representatives to be nominated by the Government Whip or Whips, 2 Members of the House of Representatives to be nominated by the Opposition Whip or Whips or by any non-aligned Member, the Deputy President and Chairman of Committees, 2 Senators to be nominated by the Leader of the Government in the Senate, 2 Senators to be nominated by the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and 1 Senator to be nominated by any minority group or groups or independent Senator or independent Senators.

(4) That every nomination of a member of the committee be notified in writing to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

(5) That the members of the committee hold office as a joint standing committee until the House of Representatives is dissolved or expires by effluxion of time.

(6) That the committee elect a Government member as its chair.

(7) That the committee elect a non-Government member as its deputy chair who shall act as chair of the committee at any time when the chair is not present at a meeting of the committee, and at any time when the chair and deputy chair are not present at a meeting of the committee the members present shall elect another member to act as chair at that meeting.

(8) That, in the event of an equally divided vote, the chair or the deputy chair when acting as chair, have a casting vote.

(9) That 3 members of the committee (of whom one is the Deputy President or the Deputy Speaker when matters affecting the parliamentary zone are under consideration) constitute a quorum of the committee, provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include 1 Government member of either House and 1 non-Government member of either House.

(10) That the committee have power to appoint subcommittees consisting of 3 or more of its members and to refer to any subcommittee any matter which the committee is empowered to examine.

(11) That the committee appoint the chair of each subcommittee who shall have a casting vote only and at any time when the chair of a subcommittee is not present at a meeting of the subcommittee the members of the subcommittee present shall elect another member of that subcommittee to act as chair at that meeting.

(12) That 2 members of a subcommittee constitute the quorum of that subcommittee, provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include 1 Government member of either House and 1 non-Government member of either House.

(13) That members of the committee who are not members of a subcommittee may participate in the proceedings of that subcommittee but
shall not vote, move any motion or be counted for the purpose of a quorum.

(14) That the committee or any subcommittee have power to call for witnesses to attend and for documents to be produced.

(15) That the committee or any subcommittee may conduct proceedings at any place it sees fit.

(16) That a subcommittee have power to adjourn from time to time and to sit during any adjournment of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

(17) That the committee may report from time to time.

(18) That the committee or any subcommittee have power to consider and make use of the evidence and records of the Joint Standing Committees on the National Capital and External Territories, the Joint Committees on the Australian Capital Territory, the Joint Standing Committees on the New Parliament House, the Joint Standing Committee on the Parliamentary Zone and the Joint Committee on the National Capital appointed during previous Parliaments and of the House of Representatives and Senate Standing Committees on Transport, Communications and Infrastructure when sitting as a joint committee on matters relating to the Australian Capital Territory.

(19) That the provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with the standing orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the standing orders.

(20) That a message be sent to the Senate acquainting it of this resolution and requesting that it concur and take action accordingly.

Question agreed to.

Parliamentary Library Committee

Appointment

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House) (1.07 pm)—I move:

(1) That a Joint Standing Committee on the Parliamentary Library be appointed to:

(a) consider and report to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives on any matters relating to the Parliamentary Library referred to it by the President or the Speaker;

(b) provide advice to the President and the Speaker on matters relating to the Parliamentary Library;

(c) provide advice to the President and the Speaker on an annual resource agreement between the Parliamentary Librarian and the Secretary of the Department of Parliamentary Services; and

(d) receive advice and reports, including an annual report, directly from the Parliamentary Librarian on matters relating to the Parliamentary Library.

(2) That the Committee consist of 13 members, 4 Members of the House of Representatives nominated by the Government whip or whips, 3 Members of the House of Representatives nominated by the Opposition whip or whips or by any non-aligned Member, 3 Senators nominated by the Leader of the Government in the Senate, 2 Senators nominated by the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and 1 Senator nominated by minority groups or independent Senators.

(3) That every nomination of a member of the committee be notified in writing to the President and the Speaker.

(4) That the nomination by the minority groups and independent Senators shall be determined by agreement between them, and, in the absence of agreement duly notified to the President, any question of the representation on the committee shall be determined by the Senate.

(5) That the members of the committee hold office as a joint standing committee until the House of Representatives is dissolved or expires by effluxion of time.

(6) That the committee shall elect 2 of its members to be joint chairs, 1 being a Senator or Member, on an alternating basis each Parliament, who is a member of the government parties and 1 being a Senator or Member, on an alternating basis each Parliament, who is a member of the non-government parties, provided that the joint chairs may not be mem-
bers of the same House. The joint chair nominated by the government parties shall chair meetings of the committee, and the joint chair nominated by the non-government parties shall take the chair whenever the other joint chair is not present.

(7) That each of the joint chairs shall have a deliberative vote only, regardless of who is chairing the meeting.

(8) That when votes on a question before the committee are equally divided, the question shall be resolved in the negative.

(9) That three members of the committee shall constitute a quorum of the committee, but in a deliberative meeting a quorum shall include 1 member of each House of the government parties and 1 member of either House of the non-government parties.

(10) That the committee may appoint subcommittees, consisting of 3 or more of its members, and refer to any such subcommittee any of the matters which the committee is empowered to consider.

(11) That the quorum of a subcommittee shall be 2 members.

(12) That the committee shall appoint the chair of each subcommittee, who shall have a deliberative vote only, and at any time when the chair of a subcommittee is not present at a meeting of the subcommittee the members of the subcommittee present shall elect another member of that subcommittee to act as chair at that meeting.

(13) That members of the committee who are not members of a subcommittee may participate in the proceedings of that subcommittee, but shall not vote, move any motion or be counted for the purpose of a quorum.

(14) That the committee and any subcommittee shall have power to meet in private or public session and to report from time to time.

(15) That the President and the Speaker may attend any meeting of the committee or a subcommittee as they see fit, but shall not be members of the committee or subcommittee and may not vote, move any motion or be counted for the purpose of a quorum.

(16) That the committee or any subcommittee have power to consider and make use of the evidence and records of the Joint Committee on the Parliamentary Library appointed during previous Parliaments.

(17) That the provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with the standing orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the standing orders.

(18) That a message be sent to the Senate acquainting it of this resolution and requesting that it concur and take action accordingly.

Question agreed to.

Treaties Committee
Appointment

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House) (1.07 pm)—I move:

(1) That a Joint Standing Committee on Treaties be appointed to inquire into and report on:

(a) matters arising from treaties and related National Interest Analyses and proposed treaty actions and related Explanatory Statements presented or deemed to be presented to the Parliament;

(b) any question relating to a treaty or other international instrument, whether or not negotiated to completion, referred to the committee by:

(i) either House of the Parliament, or

(ii) a Minister; and

(c) such other matters as may be referred to the committee by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and on such conditions as the Minister may prescribe.

(2) That the committee consist of 16 members, 6 Members of the House of Representatives to be appointed by the Government Whip or Whips, 3 Members of the House of Representatives to be appointed by the Opposition Whip or Whips or by any non-aligned Member, 3 Senators to be appointed by the Leader of the Government in the Senate, 3 Senators to be appointed by the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and 1 Senator to be nominated by any minority group or
groups or independent Senator or independent Senators.

(3) That every nomination of a member of the committee be notified in writing to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

(4) That the members of the committee hold office as a joint standing committee until the House of Representatives is dissolved or expires by effluxion of time.

(5) That the committee elect a Government member as its chair.

(6) That the committee elect a non-Government member as its deputy chair to act as chair of the committee at any time when the chair is not present at a meeting of the committee and at any time when the chair and deputy chair are not present at a meeting of the committee the members present shall elect another member to act as chair at that meeting.

(7) That in the event of an equally divided vote, the chair, or the deputy chair when acting as chair, have a casting vote.

(8) That 3 members of the committee constitute a quorum of the committee, provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include 1 Government member of either House and 1 non-Government member of either House.

(9) That the committee have power to appoint not more than 3 subcommittees each consisting of 3 or more of its members, and to refer to any subcommittee any matter which the committee is empowered to examine.

(10) That, in addition to the members appointed pursuant to paragraph (9), the chair and deputy chair of the committee be ex officio members of each subcommittee appointed.

(11) That the committee appoint the chair of each subcommittee who shall have a casting vote only, and at any time when the chair of a subcommittee is not present at a meeting of the subcommittee the members of the subcommittee present shall elect another member of that subcommittee to act as chair at that meeting.

(12) That 2 members of a subcommittee constitute the quorum of that subcommittee, provided that in a deliberative meeting the quorum shall include 1 Government member of either House and 1 non-Government member of either House.

(13) That members of the committee who are not members of a subcommittee may participate in the proceedings of that subcommittee but shall not vote, move any motion or be counted for the purpose of a quorum.

(14) That the committee or any subcommittee have power to call for witnesses to attend and for documents to be produced.

(15) That the committee or any subcommittee may conduct proceedings at any place it sees fit.

(16) That a subcommittee have power to adjourn from time to time and to sit during any adjournment of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

(17) That the committee may report from time to time.

(18) That the committee or any subcommittee have power to consider and make use of the evidence and records of the Joint Standing Committees on Treaties appointed during previous Parliaments.

(19) That the provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with the standing orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the standing orders.

(20) That a message be sent to the Senate acquainting it of this resolution and requesting that it concur and take action accordingly.

Question agreed to.

GOVERNOR-GENERAL’S SPEECH

Address-in-Reply

Ms O’Neill, for the committee elected to prepare an address-in-reply to the speech of Her Excellency the Governor-General, presented the proposed address, which was read by the Clerk. The proposed address read as follows:
May it please Your Excellency:

We, the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Australia, in Parliament assembled, express our loyalty to the Sovereign, and thank Your Excellency for the speech you have been pleased to address to Parliament.

The Speaker—Order! Before I call Ms O’Neill, I remind honourable members that this is her first speech. I therefore ask that the usual courtesies be extended to her.

Ms O’NEILL (Robertson) (1.07 pm)—I move:

That the Address be agreed to.

Mr Speaker, first and foremost, let me acknowledge the traditional owners of this land, the Ngunawal people. I pay my respects to their elders past and present. In honouring the traditional owners today, I also reflect back to the beginning of the previous parliament in 2008, which saw the historic national apology to the stolen generations. May the hope and spirit of that day live on through this and future parliaments so that the promise of a better life for all Indigenous Australians is fulfilled.

Mr Speaker, I join those who have extended their congratulations to you over the last day on your re-election to your high office. I stand here today humble, but with a sense of awe and anticipation—a self-confessed chronic optimist. And there are many reasons to be optimistic.

I am proud that we live in a country in which a woman who grew up in the western suburbs of Sydney—that’s me—can be asked by her parliamentary leader—a woman who represents the western suburbs of Melbourne—to reply to an address by another woman, our female Governor-General. I salute all the women and men who have worked towards enabling this possibility. As Her Excellency observed, this should not only be an inspiration to the women and girls of our nation but a confirmation to all Australians that we are a nation of freedom and opportunity, where you can aim high and see your hopes fulfilled regardless of your gender or where you were brought up.

As a person who has dedicated her life to the teaching profession, I am also delighted to be able to work for a leader and a party that understands the transformative power of education. So thank you, Prime Minister, for today’s opportunity, and for the hope you embody for the people of my electorate on the New South Wales Central Coast.

The seat of Robertson, which I represent, covers the southern part of the Central Coast. Just an hour and a half north of Sydney, our beautiful beaches, bushland and waterways make us one of Australia’s most visited regions. It is a place of stunning natural beauty—and a testament to the local Darkinjung and Guringai peoples and their ancestors.

Robertson stretches from the northern shore of the Hawkesbury River along the coastline to Wamberal Lagoon, before zigzagging north-west through Narara and Niagara Park up past Kulnura. The electoral boundary then snakes back south, until it rejoins the mighty Hawkesbury. These 978 square kilometres are a slice of regional Australia that is closest to our biggest city. There is rich agricultural land on the plateau at Peats Ridge, Mangrove Mountain and beyond—an area endearingly described in Peter FitzSimons’s recent memoir, A Simpler Time. Along the coast, our famous beaches from Terrigal to Umina Beach are major tourist drawcards, as is the boating playground of the Brisbane Water, home to more than a million plump oysters.

The people of Robertson are generous of spirit and generous in sharing this part of the world with each other and with visitors. Many locals selflessly volunteer their time at surf clubs and our emergency services, such
as the Rural Fire Service, and other community associations. The attractions of the Central Coast have proved a great drawcard to the growing population of Sydney, and the expansion of our population in the last 30 years has been enormous. This has led to ever-growing challenges to our infrastructure. Most evident is the pressure on our roads, our rail, our schools and our health services. Our daily commuter population is estimated at around 40,000 people.

We have a large percentage of retired people in Robertson, a large percentage of young people and a growing number of young families making their way in the world. Meeting the needs of this particular demographic combination will continue to be a challenge. But I stand here today as the Labor member for Robertson because both young and old, families, small business owners, workers and retirees understood something very important on 21 August this year. The people of Robertson kept faith with Labor. They voted for a Gillard government, because it is a government committed to social inclusion, a government focused on delivering access to better health and education services, a government committed to a better infrastructure, and a government with a clear and steady focus on a strong economy. These are the core issues for the future of Robertson and indeed the whole of regional Australia.

In my work here in the parliament and at home, I bring the values instilled from a loving family life and significant role models who have influenced me. Those who know me well know I am a person who treasures my family, my Irish heritage and my Catholic faith. I am the eldest daughter of six children born to Jim and Mary O’Neill. Jim was a wild hurling Irish Corkman who we lost to cancer back in 1989. He brought his Irish eyes, his Irish accent and his blushing Killkenny bride to Australia, determined to live as big a life as possible. Mary, my mum, was lured here by film-reel vision of Aussie washing drying in the sunshine on a Hill’s hoist, and the sight of a backyard populated by happy, healthy children with access to a quality education and the chance to live out their dreams.

My parents started life like so many young immigrants—with hope in their hearts, a capacity for hard work and a love for the best parts of the culture they left behind. Our family are all proud Australians, who celebrate our Irish heritage through dancing, music, song and story—ways that connect us to our ancestors. My mother, Mary, is in the gallery today, along with my husband, Paul, and our three children, Caitlin, Brianna and Noah. I am glad to share this day with my brother, Sean, his wife, Jacqui, my Uncle Mike and my cousin Christine.

As well as my sense of family, I bring with me a love of place and country. I travelled north—some might say emigrated—from Sydney to the Central Coast 25 years ago. I had just married Paul, a surfer who loved the left hand surf break at the beach that the local custodians call Tudabaring Headland. It means ‘Where the waves pound like heartbeats’. More recent residents know it as Copa Point. Paul and I lived and raised our children just up the road from that magical surfing break. Bouddi National Park lies just to the south. In the local Aboriginal language, Bouddi means ‘heart’. This area is literally our family’s heartland. There is a lot to love.

Beyond family and place, my enduring love, my passion, is education. I love its power to transform the lives of those who embrace it. Education enriches and fulfils those who share it and those who receive it. It is a great source of inspiration to me that it is an educator, Mother Mary MacKillop, who will become Australia’s first saint later this
I fell under the thrall of education at the age of four. Listening to the Kindergarten of the Air, I can still recall the black-and-white lino tiles on the floor, the formica table, the radio on the kitchen bench and my mum smiling at me as she turned on that radio and opened to me the wonderful world of learning. Mum did her best to keep me entertained with stories and promises of being allowed to attend school when I was big enough. From the age of about 3½ I stood at the white painted fence of my parents’ first home in Curran Street, Blacktown and pointed out to my mother every single school uniformed passer-by who was smaller than I. I was hoping each day to persuade her to allow me out the gate and up the road to school, where I knew something wonderful was happening. Finally, at 4½ when the first day of school arrived, mum and I and my sister and brother headed up to St. Andrews, Marayong. I disappeared into a classroom and found a desk. I started school by myself. There was no teacher in the room and I am told that my disappearance caused some concern.

I tell this story today because it illustrates something I now know as an adult, who has given 25 years of her professional life in the service of education. We all know how vital the early childhood years are in developing a disposition for learning and a disposition towards schooling. This is an ongoing challenge for all Australian parents, carers, teachers, elders and community leaders: to link kids with learning.

The School of the Air may have been overtaken by TV, video and the iPad, but it is now clearer than ever that technology plays a vital part in making quality educational experiences accessible to those who want to learn but are confined by age, by disability or simply by the tyranny of distance from people and the options to select for learning that excites them. That is why, as an educator, the possibilities of stable, high-quality, high speed internet access where we live, through the National Broadband Network, is a policy of which I am very proud. In my own story, learning happens both inside and outside classrooms. It is my belief that learning happens both inside and outside programs and formal curricula.

Learning is a natural phenomenon—it is part of our everyday life—and, when formal education meets a learner at the point where their interest lies, learning is a joyful experience of growth that benefits the individual, the community and our national productive capacity. I acknowledge my professional colleagues, my fellow teachers and the work all teachers do in schools. But I am mindful that not all students find school such a positive or enabling experience. That is why we need to continue to adapt and change how we offer education. We need initiatives such as trade training centres and a full range of learning content and learning sites to ensure all students, whatever their age, are able to discover and develop their talents.

I personally thank Miss Walker of St Anthony’s, Girraween, my first class teacher, who opened up new worlds to me by teaching me how to read. It has been a real source of joy to read each night of my life by dim light and discover other times, other worlds and other people’s stories. I bring all of that reading with me and deeply understand the importance of basic literacy for all. I also must thank my high school teachers, the Good Samaritans at St Patrick’s College in Campbelltown. Mrs Writer introduced me to Shakespeare through Julius Caesar, while Mrs Yule revealed the beauty of poetry to me in a single lesson on Donne. Miss Milne gave me words to understand literature and language. Mrs Sneddon and Mrs Malone, who arranged theatre and concerts, opened
my ears to orchestral music and my eyes to new ideas that have nurtured in me a deep love of music and the arts. I also want to thank Sister Magdalena for being a powerful model of compassion.

Making these kinds of interactions available to all students is so important, for teaching is much more than books and exams, results and certificates. Teachers prepare us for life in the community. I see schools as critical sites in which our citizens practise our democratic capacity—our capacity to get along with one another. We need to practise ways of being a good citizen in our time, our country, our region and our world. We need to think and learn about our beliefs and our values as citizens in a democracy. This is such an important field that I think deserves much greater emphasis.

Values education is in fact the field of my doctoral studies, and one in which Australia has some world leaders. One of them is Professor Terry Lovat, my mentor from the University of Newcastle, where I work on the Central Coast campus. I have recently spent my time there as a lecturer in the School of Education. I thank you, Professor Lovat, for being here today. I thank my lecturers and tutors at Sydney university, the University of New England, the Australian Catholic University and Deakin University and my colleagues and students at the University of Newcastle for their inspiration and humanity. I mention Professor Keith Crawford, as a wonderful writing and teaching partner.

Our educational infrastructure is such an important part of our future. The renewal of our school buildings in Robertson is a sign of good economic management. Indeed investment in infrastructure, in every sense, is so important for our region. Our infrastructure deficit on the Central Coast is a major structural impediment to economic growth that impacts on the quality of life of our residents and visitors every day. That is why, as I was campaigning at the doors of our local residents, I was proud to say that it was the Labor Party who, in our first term in government in this new century, installed our first federal minister for infrastructure.

Our $20 million investment in advancing fast rail, and the increased role for Infrastructure Australia that will drive that development, testifies to Labor’s commitment to the regions outside major cities. I acknowledge the work of all those who plan and all those who build our roads. It is the task to which my Irish-born father gave his working life and the tradition which continues in the work of my four brothers. I fondly recall the awe in my father’s voice as we drove north on a holiday not long after the completion of the first section of the F3. For the people of Robertson, that infrastructure build was the beginning of opening up the Central Coast and the regions north of us. In the immediate future, the engineering possibilities that are now known to us offer the potential for a critical link between the F3 and the M2 that would decrease travel times to Sydney for workers, for tourists and for businesspeople who travel that route.

Time on the road is time away from family and friends. In my time as the member for Robertson, I understand that a key part of my role as a connector of all levels of government is to ensure that local infrastructure deficits on our Central Coast are redressed and that future planning for our region ensures that we build with an eye to the future. In this regard, I make no apology for articulating today my determination to seek the earliest possible rollout of the National Broadband Network for our region.

We live in a global village with business, health and learning opportunities that have the capacity to radically improve our lives through stable, high-quality digital connec-
tion with others outside our region. In Robertson, as in other regional areas across our great nation, we have a population that is in love with where we live. But we need high-quality jobs to ensure that our children can plan for future lives where we live. Currently, so many of our young people, our young parents and our experienced workers can only find work or seek out professional challenge by leaving the coast. Some coasties leave permanently; others commute daily. Such a loss of capacity in our region has too great a cost both socially and economically. It is my view that the NBN and the opportunities that it offers to large businesses and service providers to relocate physical capital to the regions is the opportunity of our lifetime to re-envision the possibility for lives in regional Australia.

I would like to take the time remaining to me to acknowledge my family, friends, students, professional colleagues and my fellow Labor Party members, a number of whom have made their way here today. I have long held the belief that we can achieve far better and far greater things when we work alongside one another in a spirit of hope and possibility for the future, shielded from the loud voices of cynics who would have us abandon our dreams. I stand here today only because friends and supporters have at various times of my life encouraged, enlightened, challenged, debated with me or guided me in good faith. The fact that our hard-won victory in Robertson brought one of the seats that tipped the balance in Labor’s favour is a source of great pride for all involved in our campaign.

I had a great team working with me. There are many people to thank, from those who were there at the beginning to everybody who pitched in and handed out on election day. Let us keep working for the future of the place we love. My special thanks go to Jamie Clements, George Houssos, Matt Pulford and Alison Rahill, Trish Moran, Paul Lister, Richard Mehrtens, Michael Buckland, John Gifford, Chris Hepple, Megan Hopper, Bill Stewart and many others inside and outside the office who gave such great support in so many ways. Thank you to Ron and Gabrielle too. There would have been no victory without the sterling support rendered by the New South Wales ALP party office. I thank Matt Thistlethwaite, Sam Dastyari, Chris Minns, Kaila Murnain, Brendan Cavanagh and Luke McDermott. My deep gratitude goes as well to the hardworking ministers and senators who visited the Central Coast. And of course there was the irrepressible and eternal Bob Hawke and Blanche d’Alpuget. There were many campaign anecdotes that could easily have sprung from the pen of Robertson’s longest serving member, Barry Cohen. Barry kindly shared with me his time, advice and endorsement.

As the 13th member for the seat of Robertson, I acknowledge the hard work of all former members and thank them for their service. There were some Central Coast true believers who would have loved to be here today. Were they still with us, Royce Cummins, Brendan Hannelly, Ken Cowles and Shen Myers would have relished being here to see the new Labor government and our Prime Minister in full flight. They are here in spirit, with many others, close family members and friends who I wish were here this day.

I would also like to acknowledge the great Australian trade union movement. As a Labor person my values are reflected in the values of the union movement—a commitment to fairness, to respect, to the common good and to equity for all Australians. My sincere thanks go to the Secretary of Unions New South Wales, Mark Lennon, and the President of the ACTU, Ged Kearney, for the work that they do and their commitment to the Central Coast. My thanks go to the SDA
for their long-running support—particularly Gerard Dwyer, Barbara Nebart and former official, now New South Wales MLC, Greg Donnelly, and David Bliss. Thank you, too, to Graeme Kelly of the USU, Mick Doleman of the MUA, Bernie Riordan of the ETU, Wayne Forno and Tony Sheldon of the TWU, Brett Holmes of the New South Wales Nurses, and the many other unions who look after the interests of working people on the Central Coast. They do this by campaigning to keep council workers directly employed and by keeping so many other important things in our workplaces. I know the value of the work that unions do, and I do not take union support for granted. I also acknowledge, the support and guidance of my fellow Central Coast Labor parliamentarians Craig Thomson, Marie Andrews, the member for Gosford, Grant McBride, the member for the Entrance, David Hams, the member for Wyong, as well as Gosford councillors Jim McFadyen and Vicki Scott. My heartfelt thanks goes out to all of you—people and organisations—for your support and your faith in the Labor Party.

I promise the people of Robertson that I will serve my community and my country with every ounce of energy that I have to give. Our fellow citizens have sent us here to govern wisely, with dignity, with grace, with integrity. The structure of this parliament is not an aberration; it is the will of the people. There will be learning to do, new skills as legislators to be acquired, new ways of being parliamentary citizens to be enacted and new ways of advancing our nation that will be sought of us. But this is our time and I embrace it with full consciousness of the honour bestowed on each of us who take our seats in this, the 43rd Parliament of Australia.

The Speaker—Is the motion seconded?

Mr Lyons—I have pleasure in seconding the motion and reserve my right to speak.

The Speaker—Order! Before I call the honourable member for Ryan, I remind honourable members that this is her first speech. I therefore ask that the usual courtesies be extended to her.

Mrs Prentice (Ryan) (1.31 pm)—I start by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet—the elders past and present. In this context, Mr Speaker, may I say how delighted I am to be joined on this side of the chamber by the new member for Hasluck.

I am proud to come to this parliament as the representative for the seat of Ryan, located in the heart of Brisbane and the great state of Queensland. It is a state that has sent to this place people of the calibre of the late Senator Neville Bonner and the late Jim Killen—old and dear friends. They both brought a natural sense of propriety and fair play, a sense of humour, and both made this parliament a better place for their presence and contribution. I also take inspiration from the constituents of Ryan—people like Dimity Dornan, Professor Ian Frazer and Kieren Perkins—all real achievers who lead by example. They teach us that within our own communities there are people who will change our lives and give us hope and inspiration for the future. With this inspiration I stand today in awe of the remarkable institution that is this, the Australian parliament—a place where, in Melbourne, over a 100 years ago, my great grandfather, Sir George Pearce, who was sworn in as a senator of the first parliament of Australia and who later served as minister for defence and as the first senator to be Acting Prime Minister. He also established the Royal Australian Air Force. Sir George remains the longest-serving member of the Australian Senate. In this cur-
rent House, only my good friend the member for Berowra comes close.

I am humbled by the trust that almost 100,000 electors of Ryan have placed in me. The responsibility to represent the electors of Ryan is an honour and a challenge. I take it on enthusiastically, knowing that only by working closely with my electorate can I properly represent them. I am also humbled by the fact that I am the 1,085th member of this House since Federation—indeed, less than the number of students enrolled at Ferny Grove High School in Ryan. To be one of such a small number over that lengthy period is an honour—an honour that I can only repay by honest representation and hard work. To the people of Ryan I give that pledge. I will do my very best to represent their interests in this parliament. That does not mean that I must abandon my own judgment or become a slave to the latest poll. It does mean that I must exercise my judgment to best serve the people of Ryan and Australia.

I come to this parliament at a time of enormous challenge. I come to a parliament that confronts that rare occurrence of a House finely divided—a government without a clear mandate. I approach this challenge with a determination to act in the best interests of my constituents and our country. I approach it with a confidence in my Liberal heritage and the strength of the Liberal-National Party brand. I would not be here without the support of Bruce McIver and the LNP organisation, as well as so many friends and supporters—too numerous to name now.

Like so many Australians, my education has been framed by meeting the challenges that confront us all in life. Indeed, there is nothing like raising a family, as I have done in Ryan, to build community links—strong links that endure until this very day; strong links that have been built upon and strengthened through my role as a Brisbane city councillor. I have built my own business, which was based in Ryan. Out of all this, I have developed firm views as to decision making and representative politics. Whilst those views have been developed at the coal-face of business, in the warmth, delight and challenge of raising a family and in city administration, they are the stronger for it. I have also had the benefit of working with two special leaders, whom I mention today—Sir John Carrick and Lord Mayor Campbell Newman. I recall Senator Carrick as a great mentor and a man of immeasurable compassion. He is still passionate about the importance of education. He said that, when considering new legislation, we must always be mindful of our responsibility to assist those in need. Campbell Newman campaigned with a vision, embracing actions not words. He constantly reminded our team that we must be prepared to take decisions for the long-term benefit, across election cycles, and not be limited by the term of government. His objective has always been to make a plan and get things done.

I am a passionate advocate of the view that it is the individual who stands front and centre as my ideological cornerstone and that it is by empowering the individual that we will unlock the real potential of our society. One only has to look at the contribution of Ryan volunteers of the calibre of Jutta Godwin, Sally Johannsen, Gwen Braga, Joan Redgrave, Richard Speechly, Helen Jones and Jocelyn Slater—all people who have enriched the community in Ryan through their dedication and hard work.

I strongly believe that government must provide the environment to give individuals the opportunities to create and succeed, but not to unreasonably interfere or to restrict the freedoms and rights of individuals. I believe in a hand up, not a handout. In this place we must stand up for what we believe. That is what people want and so they should. I do
not say that in a confrontational way but rather to say that I know that my constituents, like all Australians, want to know where their representative stands. I welcome the opportunity to set out my views and concerns about our nation today.

I stand for the future of our cities. Growth in our cities is inevitable. Time itself teaches that lesson. Failure to properly plan for that growth is an abrogation of responsibility. That failure is what concerns people, not growth in itself. In council, as part of Campbell Newman’s leadership team, we faced a city neglected by Labor over many years. We faced a hostile Labor council more interested in politics than outcomes. For four years we had to negotiate the challenges of delivering good government without a majority on the floor of council, but we had a clear vision and a plan to deal with population growth, and we got on with the job.

In Brisbane, a city of almost two million people, we are now achieving great outcomes. Brisbane provides a balanced approach to resolving traffic congestion, not just through TransApex—a four-tunnel, one-bridge solution, and the largest road construction program in Australia—but also through record investment in public transport. This has resulted in record bus passenger growth from 48 million in 2004 to more than 77 million in 2009-10. In Brisbane we have also set new standards in environmental initiatives, not by imposing a great big new on-off and now on again tax but with practical action, not rhetoric—action by the whole community, house by house, street by street, suburb by suburb. The results speak for themselves and the council led by example. Brisbane is now the largest purchaser of offsets and green power of any level of government in Australia.

Cities need the capacity to plan their future over the long term. That means more than a three-year funding cycle. Labor state governments have failed our cities. National government has a responsibility and an opportunity to work with the councils in our major cities, the engine rooms of our states and territories, to provide a city driven infrastructure plan for the long term. Successive governments can claim a proud record of regional development, but governments must work to deliver good government services for all Australians, regardless of where they live. That means that, in the rush to look after our regional areas, we do not ignore the needs of our population centres, our cities. Because of their sheer size and infrastructure needs, cities require special attention and planning. As much as we need a minister for regional Australia we need a minister for cities.

Before I entered politics I ran an event management business. I know the challenges and pressures of small business. From running a range of major events I saw an opportunity for my company to specialise in the emerging technology sector. I worked closely with the telecommunications industry. I sat on the Queensland board of ATUG. I learned on the job and I took that passion and understanding to the Brisbane City Council, where I campaigned for an optic fibre ultra-high-speed broadband network to every premises in Brisbane to really entrench Brisbane as Australia’s new world city. The goal was to provide open access to all potential users on equal and equitable terms. We assessed the technical, financial and revenue risks as well as alternatives for implementation. The council came up with a robust case and financial model, followed by a successful trial. The plan was feasible, affordable and it did not cost government—and, indeed, taxpayers—tens of billions of dollars. It brought together the best in the business and provided clear demonstrations of what government and business can do together.
NBNCo did not want to know about it. Indeed, they threatened to build over what Brisbane planned. They were more interested in entrenching the monopoly of themselves and Telstra. Perhaps the best analogy is in the provision of road infrastructure by government for all road users, not just for one brand of motor vehicle. Just as roads connected communities and economies in the 20th century so will broadband connect them in this century. I support the rollout of a high-speed broadband for everyone but not the untested, uncosted charade that is NBNCo.

A significant challenge of our modern connected world is that, whilst the internet has opened the information highway, the social networking aspect of the web raises real questions about social isolation. A teenage girl may have hundreds of Facebook or Twitter ‘friends’ but how many of those can she play sport with, go out with for a cup of coffee, go to the beach with or share a hug with? This may be a new paradigm showing us the future of social interaction, but there is a real worry that social networking will lead to a generation whose only significant social life will be on the internet.

Social isolation is not a problem that relates just to the elderly but our ageing population also requires special consideration. At the Red Cross annual general meeting in Brisbane last week, Professor Laurie Buys spoke about social connectedness and active ageing. Just to put the potential impact into perspective, it is worth noting her statistics: by 2050, one in two voters will be aged over 50 and, by 2055, 78,000 Australians will be aged over 100. We need to acknowledge not only the cost but also the potential benefits of age. Australians aged 55 and over contribute an estimated $74.5 billion per annum through voluntary, unpaid and caring work. We must not dismiss their enormous contribution and potential. That is our challenge.

We enjoy a successful multicultural Australia. I have grown up as part of it. I have great friends who are committed to building a better multicultural nation. In particular, I want to pay tribute to those who actively work to make Australia a more inclusive society: Eddie Liu and Michael Chan of the Brisbane Chinese community; Nick Xynias and Serge Voloshenko of the Ethnic Communities Council; Fraser Power, Kerrin Benson and the dedicated team at the Multicultural Development Association; and people like Adele Rice at Milpera and President Jolly Karumathy of the Kerala Indian community, as well as Tom Polume, a former Consul General for Papua New Guinea and now a proud Australian. Without these great Australians, and so many others, our lives would not be enriched by the real contribution that other cultures bring to our society.

Australia is the result of our immigration over generations. We are richer for it. It is a natural move from the importance of our multicultural Australia to the importance of our neighbours. In our region we have a particular responsibility to assist our developing friends, not in a patronising way but with a genuine hand of friendship and support. The developed world has not found a successful form of providing aid to our neighbours in much the same way as we have much to learn in helping our own Indigenous Australians. In both cases we must persist, because if we fail we let our neighbours down and indeed our first Australians.

Papua New Guinea, our closest land neighbour, faces real challenges but is a vigorous democracy and a good friend. At the same time, I look with encouragement at the progress from war to peace in Bougainville. In Bougainville we have had a remarkably successful peace process, but we need to do much more to assist them in building capacity. Failing to build that capacity to govern
will cast a real shadow over the forthcoming referendum on independence.

We must also help the Solomon Islands move on from the ethnic tension. RAMSI is doing a great job in supporting the government, but they cannot remain there forever. Indeed Solomon Islands appears to be the reverse of Bougainville—there has been substantial work on state building yet real work still needs to be done on peace building and conflict resolution. Australia has played a major role in both post-conflict situations. In both places we must provide the continuing support required to reach a successful conclusion. East Timor and Fiji need our assistance to allow them to work through the challenges of past conflicts. As always, open and frank discussion is critical.

Gallipoli Barracks at Enoggera is in Ryan. It is the home of a number of units, including 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, which is just returning from operations in Afghanistan, having lost a number of soldiers on operations. I attended the memorial service and funerals for privates Tomas Dale and Grant Kirby, and Lance Corporal Jared MacKinney in the last few weeks. Let us never forget these brave Australians and all of our troops and veterans who have answered the call whenever their country has asked. Equally we must never forget that these courageous men and women have volunteered knowing that they put their lives at risk to ensure our safety. It is timely to remind the House of the coalition’s commitment to ensure that their entitlements reflect the contributions and sacrifices they have made through the indexation of the DFRDB and the DFRB.

Also, let me say this: if this nation fails to cloak our soldiers with the full protection of the law when they go into battle, we fail them all. The rules of engagement must be crystal clear and our support strong. If we put Australian troops into the heat of battle and expect them to take enormous risks on our behalf, we cannot expect them to be split-second lawyers as well. I must make it very clear that I am not commenting about any current matter because I do not have all the facts at my disposal. However, we must recognise that our troops go to war on the instructions of our government. They must be able to do their job in accordance with the rules of engagement without having to worry about whether those rules might be interpreted differently at a later time. I say this as an Australian but also as a mother of a serving member of the Defence Force.

While there are and always will be many issues and projects which divide us in this place, there are also those that have bipartisan support at all levels of government because we all recognise their long-term strategic benefit. One of those projects is the Square Kilometre Array radio telescope project—known by its acronym, SKA—which is planned to be one of the great science projects of the 21st century. Australia is in the last stages of an international site selection process. The SKA offers what is likely to be a unique opportunity for Australia and New Zealand to host a research facility of global scale and significance. It will be a global facility with, amongst other things, computing capacity so big and powerful that it will drive global research not just in the radio field but more generally in ICT. It will facilitate science of the highest quality for decades. This project can put Australia at the forefront of that research in astronomy and in a range of other fields. It will have a significant economic and social impact. It is worthy of support from all of us.

It is important that I say something about my family. From Sir George Pearce to Len Righetti, the Mayor of Malvern on three occasions; to my parents, Alan and Janet Righetti, who are here today; to my sister,
Katie, and to Peter, Caroline and Robert; and of course to my husband, Ian, and our children, George and Caitlin: none of this would be possible without you. In so many ways your family makes you, strengthens you and at times challenges you. That is how it always is. Family life is so important to our social fabric and our communities.

I do not come to this place with a closed mind. I look forward to the input of my electors. For those of you who are cynical about our political system I say: get involved, join a political party and above all have your say. Successful political communication is not a one-way process. It works best when there is active and informed input from constituents to members and senators. I am honoured to be given this opportunity by the people of Ryan. I am passionate about my community and I am passionate about my country. I am determined to make a real contribution to Ryan and Australia.

The SPEAKER—Order! It being well and truly past 1.45 pm, the debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 43. The debate may be resumed at a later hour.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The SPEAKER—Before asking whether there are any statements by members, I want to indicate the underlying philosophy behind these statements since 1998. The calling of quorums, the raising of spurious points of order, procedural motions and other disruptive tactics are not in accordance with the spirit underlying the period for statements by members and will not be tolerated.

Federal Election

Mr DANBY (Melbourne Ports) (1.52 pm)—At the last election, 166,000 Australians who applied for provisional votes were denied them by legislation passed at the end of 2006 by the previous conservative government. This is an absolute disgrace to democratic Australia. Only 19 per cent of Australians who applied for a provisional vote who had shifted their address in their electorate were able to obtain a valid vote. By contrast, at every election between the early 1980s and 2007 more than 50 per cent of people who applied for provisional votes were able to obtain a valid vote. In a compulsory voting system, our ethics should be to include every real person possible who can substantiate their address and identity. It is important to maintain the integrity of the electoral roll. But the fact that 166,000 of our fellow Australians were denied a vote at a previous election is a disgrace.

It is directly due to the legislation introduced by the Liberal Party and the National Party in 2006-07. That should be worn around their neck. The legislation that the then coalition majority passed was completely unnecessary, because all of those provisional votes had at previous elections helped elect previous conservative governments. No-one had argued in 2004, 2001, 1998 or 1996 that these provisional voters should not be entitled to a vote. The fact that they were denied a vote at the last election is something that this parliament must fix up as part of the democratic ethic of Australia.

Emergency Alert System

Mr CHESTER (Gippsland) (1.54 pm)—I raise my concerns in relation to the details of an announcement made on 14 September this year that the Australian government will fund the upgrade of the emergency warning system called ‘Emergency Alert’. At the time of the announcement, both the Prime Minister and the Victorian Premier gave the impression that the proposed new system of sending emergency warnings via mobile phones based on the geographic location of the phone would deliver 100 per cent coverage to Australians. In fact, the Premier is quoted as saying, ‘This system would enable our agencies to send warning messages..."
to mobile phones no matter where they are in the state.' That is simply not the case. We do not want residents or visitors in regional or remote parts of Victoria or the rest of Australia believing that they will receive a warning of impending disaster.

I must stress that I am not opposed to improving the systems of warning based on a mobile phone’s location and the current system of warnings based on the billing address was only ever intended as a stop-gap measure. But it does not make much sense to spend millions of dollars without a concurrent program to fix the mobile phone black spots which exist right throughout regional Australia. I agree with the Premier and the Prime Minister that this technology has the potential to save lives in the future. But it will be virtually useless in many parts of Gippsland, where the mobile phone reception is patchy or non-existent. The most patchy areas tend to be the most bushfire prone parts of the electorate.

I challenge the Prime Minister to introduce an extensive mobile phone black spots program to overcome the lack of service in several parts of Gippsland and other parts of regional Australia which will not receive emergency warning under the proposed emergency alert system.

Mr Malcolm Douglas

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (1.55 pm)—Today, I wish to pay tribute to a man who lived life on the edge, and who gave his all to protect and nurture Australian wildlife.

Last Thursday, 23 September, the man known as the Barefoot Bushman, Malcolm Douglas, died in a terrible accident at his wildlife park, 16 kilometres from Broome. Since then, words of praise, admiration and grief have flooded in from around the country to honour a man who is credited with being one of the finest wildlife conservationists in Australia and a pioneer of the Australian adventure documentary.

Mr Douglas first came to prominence with his nature documentaries in the 1960s that covered his adventures in the Australian outback. He brought the Australian public a new view on the environment and the Indigenous way of life that people in the cities knew very little about. In the later decades of his life, Mr Douglas was committed to preserving native species, such as the critically endangered greater bilby. He was also an outspoken opponent of industrialisation of the Kimberley and had joined the Save the Kimberley campaign to have the region granted World Heritage status.

In a tribute to his father, Mr Douglas’s son Lachlan wrote:

A giant died 36 hours ago and a piece of Australia and the bush died with him. If I had to describe my father in a single word it would be ‘authentic’. What you saw is what you got. He was the toughest and bravest man you’d ever meet. He was one of the last true adventurers. He did not seek celebrity status and wanted to use his profile to further the causes he believed in. If his spirit was whispering to me now he would be saying ‘tell them to donate to the save the Bilby foundation’.

Poker Machine Reform

Mr COULTON (Parkes) (1.56 pm)—I would like to bring to the attention of the House the proposed poker machine reform and the effect that that would have on the registered clubs and hotels within the electorate of Parkes. While I am certainly no fan of poker machines, every town and community in my electorate relies on their local club—be it an RSL, a bowling club, a golf club or a services club. Quite often, it is the only venue in town. School presentations are held there, because it is the largest venue in town. They support junior sport and promote community activity. Any proposed changes to the revenue that they receive from poker
machines would severely hamper the viability of these clubs. In many cases, it would make them unviable and they would close down.

The other thing that is of concern is the proposed withdrawal limits on ATMs. In many of my smaller villages, the only bank in town is the ATM at the local hotel. If that hotel has poker machines, people would not be able to withdraw their wages through the ATM as they do now. Many of the older folk in my electorate go into the club to withdraw money because it is safer to take money out of an ATM in a club than one in the street. As this House looks like it is going to be discussing poker machine reform, I hope that members take into account the effect that it will have on the clubs in the small communities in the Parkes electorate.

Speaker’s Panel

Ms BURKE (Chisholm) (1.58 pm)—I rise today to put on the record my congratulations and thanks to the new Speaker’s panel. I want to say thank you for the kind words that you, Mr Deputy Speaker, spoke on my behalf yesterday. I particularly want to thank the Speaker, Harry Jenkins, for the remarks that he made on my behalf yesterday. It was a pleasure working as Deputy Speaker and I would be dishonest if I said that I was not a little disappointed that I am not continuing in the role. I also want to particularly thank my staff member Lindy Franklyn, who did a phenomenal job in this place—so well that most of you probably had no idea of the work that she was doing. I want to record my thanks and gratitude for Lindy’s dedication to the job, as it was often quite difficult at times to manage people’s diaries and times. I thank Lindy for that.

I want to make it quite clear that I accept wholeheartedly the decision of the Labor Party to honour both the spirit and the letter of the agreement that we and the opposition signed with the Independents going into this parliament to create a better parliament for the future. Those of us who have had the privilege of sitting in the Speaker’s chair understand the value of parliament and parliamentary reform better than most. So I am more than happy to endorse both the spirit and the letter of the agreement that was signed on behalf of the government and the opposition. I call on all members of the House to honour that agreement and make this chamber a better place for all to work in.

The SPEAKER—Order! It being 2 pm, in accordance with standing order 43, the time for members’ statements has concluded.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Climate Change

Mr ABBOTT (2.00 pm)—My question is addressed to the Prime Minister. Can the Prime Minister advise the House of the cost of living impact on Australian families of a $40 a tonne carbon price?

Ms GILLARD—I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. If the Leader of the Opposition is genuinely interested in these matters, then I ask him to respond positively to my invitation to members of the opposition who accept that climate change is real and who accept that pricing carbon is necessary for us to achieve our emissions reduction objectives to join the climate change committee.

The government have seized the opportunities that we believe this new parliament presents to work in a methodical way when considering all of the options for pricing carbon. It is not going to be easy, but I believe you can achieve things when people work together in a spirit of good faith. I understand that the opposition is going to invite me to engage in a series of rule-in, rule-out games about what will be considered during this process and I am not going to do it. There is not a company board or an executive com-
mittee of a local tennis or cricket club in this country that takes options off the table before they go and sit down to work through issues. We are going to go through a proper process with the multiparty committee. Of course, the government will then make the final decisions about what the government’s position will be, but we will go through this process step by step in good faith. I have written to the Leader of the Opposition about it and I ask him to embrace this positive opportunity, rather than seek to be a wrecker on this question which is so important to Australians.

Mr ABBOTT—Mr Speaker, I ask a supplementary question under the standing orders. I refer to the Prime Minister’s answer where she said that she did not want to play rule-in, rule-out games. I also refer her to her statement just a day before the election where she said, ‘I rule out a carbon tax.’ I ask the Prime Minister why she has broken her election promise.

Ms GILLARD—I thank the opposition for pursuing this matter—I genuinely do. The Leader of the Opposition may have noticed that following the election on 21 August the Australian people voted for this chamber. This means that there needs to be consensus and collaboration—

Dr Jensen interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The member for Tangney is warned.

Ms GILLARD—and that we will need to work together and, particularly in relation to very complex propositions, that the executive government cannot come into this chamber with a piece of legislation and expect it to be automatically passed. I have accepted that new reality. I have heard the message from the Australian people. I understand that this is the parliament that Australians voted for. And, given that this is the parliament that Australians voted for, I think we are honour-bound to explore the potential that this parliament—

Mrs Bronwyn Bishop interjecting—

The SPEAKER—The Prime Minister will resume her seat. The member for Mackellar will withdraw.

Mrs Bronwyn Bishop—I withdraw, Mr Speaker.

Ms GILLARD—Having listened to the voice of the Australian people when they created this parliament and understanding what this parliament means, we will work through the processes of the multiparty committee in good faith. I reiterate to the Leader of the Opposition that he has a pivotal decision about whether or not he wants to be involved in a productive process of dialogue and discussion. Yes, he would need to acknowledge climate change is real. Yes, he would need to acknowledge that putting a price on carbon is necessary to reduce emissions in the way this nation has said it wants to by 2020. At various times the Leader of the Opposition has said things like that. So I ask the Leader of the Opposition to seize this opportunity. He could, for example, appoint the member for Wentworth to serve in good faith on behalf of the opposition in this multiparty committee. I reiterate again: please consider the possibility of being a builder, not a wrecker, in this parliament. I say to the Leader of the Opposition that I do not believe that Australians elected any one of us in this place to be a wrecker of the potential for change.

Delhi Commonwealth Games

Ms OWENS (2.05 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister advise the House of the advice being provided by the government to Australians travelling to India?

Ms GILLARD—I thank the member for Parramatta for her question. Obviously, Aus-
Australian athletes and supporters are very much focused on the Commonwealth Games in India. Of course, we would want the focus to be on what will happen at the Games and the potential for our athletes to win medals, but obviously the focus has also been on security questions. I take this opportunity to advise the House that the Australian government has been working closely with the Indian authorities on Games security since early 2009. A task force has been set up to provide travellers with the best available information, which is contained in the India travel advice and a Commonwealth Games bulletin on the DFAT website.

This information is reviewed regularly, and my purpose in raising this matter today is to draw people’s attention to the fact that this advice has been updated today. I encourage all Australians in India or people intending to travel to India to read the updated advice carefully. That advice states that Australians should exercise a high degree of caution in India. Australian authorities continue to receive reports of possible terrorist attacks in New Delhi, Mumbai and other major cities, and the risk of a terrorist attack is high. The updated advice also notes that some public places should be avoided.

The Australian government continues to seek assurances about the safety of Commonwealth Games venues. Ultimately, of course, the Australian government is not in a position to independently verify the safety of games venues or security in India more broadly. Instead, we urge every Australian in India to read the travel advice carefully and make an informed decision.

I would like to say a word on reports in the media today that two extremist groups are planning to attack the Commonwealth Games. I have seen those reports and I am advised our initial assessment is that those specific reports lack credibility. Of course, we are following this up with the Indian authorities and we will provide any information should it come to light. As I have said, our best assessment of the security situation is contained in the India travel advice and every Australian in India should read that advice, think carefully and make an informed decision.

Can I conclude by saying a word about this advice and our relationship with India. This advice is not meant as a slight on the government and the people of India, who are our good friends and partners. Our travel advice is our best factual assessment of the situation on the ground in the country concerned. It is not a judgment or a criticism; it is simply a service provided to help travellers make an informed decision. I am sure I speak on behalf of all the members of this place when I say that we all want to see a peaceful and successful Commonwealth Games—nothing would please the Australian community more.

**Emissions Trading Scheme**

**Mr HOCKEY** (2.08 pm)—My question is to the Treasurer. I refer the Treasurer to his claim on *Meet the Press*, the week before the election, where he said that any carbon tax under a future Gillard government was just ‘an hysterical allegation’ which Labor ‘certainly rejects’. Treasurer, if you said this just one week before the election and you made this commitment on behalf of the government, how can any Australian trust you now that you have broken that commitment just a few weeks after the election?

**Mr SWAN**—I thank the honourable member for his question. It is the case that for a long time the government have had the ambition and also the goal of putting a price on carbon. That is not disputed and I reiterated that at great length during the last election campaign. But we know what happened in the last election campaign: those opposite
said that not only did they not believe in the science of climate change but also they proposed to do nothing about it. We said that we would seek community consensus on this critical question, that we would come to this question with an open mind. And we do come to this question with an open mind.

Those opposite once believed in a price on carbon and they believed in it in this parliament for two years plus. The member for Wentworth led that charge until it was voted down in this House by the now Leader of the Opposition, and voted down in the Senate three times. As we go forward, we must do the right thing by our society and our economy. Business certainty, job creation and our future prosperity demand that we deal with this very important question. We will deal with it by finding community consensus. What the member opposite wants to do in this debate is to reach a conclusion. The government will go through this multiparty process with other members of parliament with an open mind to find a solution in the national interest. Those opposite think it is in their political interest at the moment to make these points.

We will not be deterred from pursuing the national interest. The national interest and a prosperous economy demand that we deal with this. Business certainty demands that we deal with this. You have already seen an investment strike when it comes to investment in power stations. We must deal with this. You have seen the statements from the business community and you have seen the statements from Mr Kloppers. They all indicate that the future of our economic prosperity means that as a parliament and as a community we must deal with this very important question. This multiparty committee that has been put together is part of finding the common ground between us and the Independents and the minor parties—and, of course, the common ground that exists with some on the other side of the House who are not game to speak up at the moment. We will not be deterred by a scare campaign. We will put the national interest first. The national interest demands that as a nation and as a community we deal with this important question, not the short-term political interests of those opposite.

Mr Hockey—Mr Speaker, I seek leave to table the transcript from Meet the Press, a week before the election, where the Treasurer ruled out a carbon price.

The SPEAKER—Is leave granted? Leave is not granted.

Economy

Mr CRAIG THOMSON (2.13 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister update the House on the state of the economy and what that says about the importance of responsible economic management?

Ms GILLARD—I thank the member for Dobell for his question. Of course, it should be a source of great pride to Australians that the Australian nation is emerging from the biggest global economic downturn in 75 years stronger than any other advanced economy in the world. It should be a source of great pride to Australians that during the worst global recession in 75 years we kept our economy growing, we created more than half a million jobs in the first term of this government and we will see our budget return to surplus in 2012-13. If we do the quick comparisons with countries overseas it shows how much we have to be proud of at this time. Advanced economies contracted by a record 3.2 per cent in 2009 and now face an uncertain outlook. The US and the euro area are grappling with unemployment rates that are almost double our current rate of 5.1 per cent. The major advanced economies will be struggling to even halve their deficits by 2013, when we will be returning to surplus.
This shows the pivotal role played by timely government action and by the provision of economic stimulus—economic stimulus that prevented literally hundreds of thousands of Australians becoming unemployed; economic stimulus that prevented an economic circumstance where inevitably we would have faced bigger debts and bigger deficits. We should, as a nation, be proud of this, and I am proud that as a government we took the right steps to keep Australia working.

Now, of course, there is the task of seizing this moment as we emerge stronger than any other advanced economy from the global financial crisis and building on that strength. In order to do that we need to ensure that we do deliver on fiscal consolidation, and we are engaged in the fastest fiscal consolidation process since at least the late 1960s. As part of that process, this side of the House ensured that every single proposal we announced in the election campaign was properly costed and was offset by matching savings—in stark contrast to the $11 billion black hole the Leader of the Opposition hid each and every day of the election campaign because he simply did not want Australians to see it.

Now we need to build on this prospect of future prosperity with investments in infrastructure like the National Broadband Network—infrastructure that will ensure we have a competitive advantage rather than exporting jobs to Korea or to Singapore because we lack this vital infrastructure—and investments in infrastructure in the form of roads, rail and ports. Of course, we are making record investments in these areas; investments, too, into the potential of Australians, their skills and capacities, through the education revolution, recognising that when you boil it all down the greatest competitive strengths of this nation and its economy are the skills and capacities of the Australian people. We will be delivering this economic strategy step-by-step as a government during this parliament, working collaboratively and in a positive way for the benefit of all Australians, who want the prosperity and opportunities that future economic strength will provide.

**Mr Pyne**—Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I would ask the Prime Minister to table the notes from which she was reading.

**The SPEAKER**—Was the Prime Minister referring to notes?

**Ms Gillard**—Yes, Mr Speaker, I was.

**The SPEAKER**—Were they confidential?

**Ms Gillard**—Yes, they were.

**Opposition members interjecting**—

**The SPEAKER**—Order! It will take a while to bed down the great agreement, but there are items in the great agreement, about the use of notes and things like that, that I have taken note of. It then makes it a bit hard for me to go through the piece of theatre that I have been through, which was the precedence before, but I indicate to the House that we need some time but we will, in some manner, address this problem about referring to notes.

**Asylum Seekers**

**Mr ABBOTT** (2.18 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer the Prime Minister to her explicit denials just three days before the election of any plans to expand the Curtin detention centre, contrasted with the government’s explicit commitment to do just that immediately after it was confirmed in office, and I ask the Prime Minister: how can she defend and justify saying one thing before the election and doing exactly the opposite afterwards?

**Mr Perrett interjecting**—
The SPEAKER—Order! The member for Moreton was not asked the question and he is warned.

Ms GILLARD—I am happy to answer the Leader of the Opposition’s question. As the Leader of the Opposition probably knows, I was asked during the election campaign about rumours which were then in the media that the government had plans to expand the Curtin detention centre to 3,000—that is, that it would cater for 3,000 asylum seekers. As the minister for immigration has made clear in recent days, the government has no intention to expand and will not be expanding the Curtin detention centre to 3,000. What, of course, was occurring at the Curtin detention centre during the election campaign was a series of construction works—

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order! The Prime Minister will resume her seat.

Mrs Mirabella—To give her a bit more time to think about her answer.

The SPEAKER—You can indulge in any thought crime you want, Member for Indi. It was not for that purpose and, if it was for that purpose, there was sufficient brouhaha from your side to enable me to say that this is not a debate. Question time should be seen as one aspect of the way this House operates, and certainly—if I could be part of the commentariat—the questions that are being asked build up to at least the MPI if not some other aspect of House procedures. That is what question time should be about. The question was asked, The Prime Minister is responding. She should be listened to in silence.

Ms GILLARD—During the election campaign, works were occurring at the Curtin detention centre, and I refer to the detail of those works. They were stage 1 accommodation for the approximately 600 detainees then at the centre. The works for stage 1, which began in May 2010, included the letting of contracts for the supply and installation of demountable buildings, installation of fencing and security systems and critical infrastructure work required to support 600 people.

Of course the government is, through the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, working with the Department of Defence. Departments look at contingencies and at options. You would expect them to do that. That is the normal part of prudent planning. Those things have occurred and will continue to occur—the two departments looking at contingencies and options. The Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, in recent days, made some detailed statements about expanded capacity and those are available for members of the House and for members of the public.

Economy

Ms SAFFIN (2.22 pm)—My question is to the Treasurer. Deputy Prime Minister, what do recent economic outcomes say about Australia’s economic outlook and the importance of responsible economic management?

Mr SWAN—I thank the member for Page for her question. Recent economic figures show yet again that the Australian economy is one of the strongest economies in the developed world. We also have an extraordinary performance when it comes to job creation, a performance which I know all members of the House are proud of because it means that more Australians are taking home a pay packet. What that means for those families is greater security. Going to the core of this government’s objectives in economic policy and in social policy more broadly is that we create the jobs and provide the job security which all Australians pray for for themselves, for their families and for their community. Because employment growth
has been so strong, we are one of the strongest advanced economies.

In the last couple of weeks we saw the publication of the June quarter national accounts. In that quarter the Australian economy grew by 1.2 per cent—to grow by 3.3 per cent through the year. We have seen the creation of 53,000 full-time jobs in August alone and something like 349,000 jobs have been created in Australia in the past year. There is no figure we are more proud of than the fact that in our term of office something like 567,000 jobs have been created.

To put this into perspective, two years ago we were contemplating the collapse of Lehman Brothers which had just happened. We were contemplating the global financial crisis, which then turned into a global recession. We have dealt with that in this country better than just about any other advanced economy. These figures are so important because they show that we are transitioning from stimulus led growth to private sector demand. What that means to this economy is that we can be optimistic about our outlook. We are not necessarily immune from what is going on elsewhere in the world but we are in the strongest growing part of the global economy. Yes we see there are still downside risks when we look at what is going on in Europe and to some extent in the United States, but what we can see in these figures is something very special—not just jobs growth but the fact that consumption is returning and that investment is going to be strong as we go forward. Planned business investment for 2010-11 is going to be $123 billion, a very substantial increase on what was expected a year earlier—a substantial increase of 24 per cent. Of course, as we all know, investment is much stronger in the mining sector. These figures indicate that that growth and that planned investment is broader than just the mining sector, and that is important.

When you compare that with what is happening in Europe or in the United States, you see that this is a very good outlook for Australia. It does not necessarily mean that everything is going right for every business or that every family is necessarily doing well, but the fundamentals are falling into place. As we go forward, it will mean that we will not be dealing with the rubble of high unemployment and capital destruction which flows from a recession. We are moving forward from a position of strength, from very solid foundations. That is why the government is so determined to put in place our future agenda, which addresses long-term challenges, particularly the challenges which will flow from mining boom mark 2. That is why we take the recommendations of the Henry report seriously when it comes to company taxation.

Mr Hockey—Release it!

Mr SWAN—That is why we want to bring down the company tax rate. That is why we want to give small businesses in particular a very substantial tax cut, a very substantial incentive to invest in plant and equipment. That is why we are investing in fundamental infrastructure like the National Broadband Network. Nothing could be more important to future productivity and to all businesses in Australia than the productivity benefits that will flow from the NBN. These are the vital policies that need to be put in place by the 43rd Parliament to broaden, strengthen and protect our future prosperity.

The SPEAKER—Order! Before calling the member for Leichhardt—and I do this in the greatest of good spirit—the Treasurer should not be emboldened by the number of words he got into four minutes. He actually got five and a bit minutes because we have training wheels on our new digital clock. I want to give the first butterfly stamp to the member for North Sydney because he con-
tained himself for the four minutes and it was only that we got the clock wrong that he intervened—I accept that. We apologise and we are going to make sure that we do it properly.

Asylum Seekers

Mr ENTSCH (2.28 pm)—I refer to the government’s claim prior to and during the election that asylum seekers will not be housed at RAAF Base Scherger, nor would an immigration detention centre be built at RAAF Base Scherger. Now that the government has announced that RAAF Base Scherger will be used as a detention centre, how can anybody believe any promise made by this government?

Ms GILLARD—I thank the member for his question and obviously acknowledge that he would be concerned about this as a local member but I think we should be a little bit clear about the facts. What has been announced by the government is that the base he refers to will be used for short-term accommodation, while longer term options are investigated. The decision to make use of Scherger in that way was announced by the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship on 17 September. I am sure he would also acknowledge that works were not in progress and steps were not being taken during the election campaign—that is simply not correct. I understand that the member would be concerned about circumstances in his local electorate. I am sure that the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship will brief him, as a local member with such an interest, if he cares to get such a briefing.

Climate Change

Mr ZAPPIA (2.29 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency. Why is it important to build consensus around the need to take action on climate change?

Mr COMBET—I thank the member for Makin for his question. The starting point for consideration of policy in the area of climate change is the climate science. The scientists are telling us that carbon pollution is contributing to climate change. The government respects the science. To have a strong economy we need to have a sustainable environment. That means we need to start reducing our carbon pollution levels. In this area the government has three priorities: first, to continue our strong support for renewable energy investments; secondly, to promote energy efficiency; and, thirdly, to work towards the introduction of a carbon price.

The most efficient way to reduce carbon pollution levels, as the House has heard on many occasions before, is through a market mechanism and in particular the development of a carbon price. A carbon price is a key economic reform that is in this nation’s interests. It will provide an incentive to reduce pollution levels. It will unlock investment in renewable energy. It will unlock investment in low-emissions technologies. It will generate certainty for business investment. It will position this country well for our long-term economic competitiveness. The Treasury had this to say about this particular issue in the blue book that was released in recent days:

The introduction of a pricing regime will support strong long-term growth by steadily transforming the economy instead of imposing sharp, more costly adjustments in the future. This is a key economic reform in respect of which it is important that we build consensus for such a public policy position.

In that respect, as the Prime Minister reported in an earlier answer, the government has established the multiparty climate change committee to help achieve that consensus for this important change. The Greens and the Independents are taking a responsible position in relation to this committee and,
course, the coalition has been invited in good faith to participate in the multiparty climate change committee where all ranges of options will be properly considered. A carbon price is mainstream economic thinking. If the opposition need some guidance on that, I would refer them to the editorial in the Australian Financial Review today which addresses that. They do not get it right all the time, but they are certainly on the money today and I would recommend consideration of it. All that we see from the opposition on this issue is pure opportunism, wrecking this consensus. You should act in the national interest to contribute to this debate about the introduction of a carbon price. It is an important economic reform needed in our country. Play a constructive role.

The SPEAKER—Order! I remind the minister to address his remarks through the chair, and to members on my left who continue to interject: it would be best if they listen to the answers and then use other opportunities in the parliamentary processes to ventilate their grievances with what is being said.

Local Hospital Networks

Mr OAKESHOTT (2.33 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Health and Ageing. I ask for an update on reforms in regard to the local health networks, particularly in New South Wales, and also for an update on the $1.8 billion regional round of the Health and Hospitals Fund as negotiated by the Independent members of parliament over the last 25 days.

Ms ROXON—I thank the member for Lyne for his question. It is a timely one because the government has made an agreement with the Independents and, with the very strong support of regional members on both sides of the House, as well as on the crossbenches, a new application round for the Health and Hospitals Fund will commence by 1 October—very, very shortly. The final details of that application process will be made available. We have existing rules that apply for Health and Hospitals Fund applications, as was noted by, I think, the new member for Denison and others, but we have drafted additional guidelines which emphasise that this will be a particular round for rural and regional investments.

Members might be interested to know that, of the first $3.2 billion that was invested through that fund, 37 per cent of those investments were in rural and regional Australia. So this is not a new area for the government to be focusing on, but we are very pleased that we are able to make additional money available for these applications. It probably will not surprise anyone in the House that it is not just the member for Lyne but the member for New England, the new member for Riverina, the member for Eden-Monaro and many others who have already taken the opportunity to ask me about this hospital round. I think there will be a lot of interest in the community and we look forward to high quality applications being made available.

The member also asked for an update on the local hospital networks and particularly for New South Wales. I know this is an area that he has taken a strong interest in. Just as we were coming to question time today, the New South Wales government released, following a public consultation process, its final proposed local hospital network boundaries. It is proposing to go from what is an existing eight local area health services—which I know in your electorate but in many others people had a view were far too big—to 18 local hospital networks. The New South Wales government has proposed that further work be done on some cross-jurisdictional issues, for example, that affect Queanbeyan in the seat of Eden-Monaro, and also some boundary issues to the north in the seat of...
Richmond. I know that in your electorate of Lyne you will be particularly interested that there is a proposed mid-North Coast regional local hospital network.

Of course, the agreement through COAG means that proposals put by any state or territory government still need to be agreed between governments and signed off by them. We will look very closely at these proposals. We are pleased that New South Wales has gone through a public consultation process, which many members in this House have been actively engaged in. This local hospital network proposal will bring people closer to their service delivery, so that people will be able to have a say and have local clinicians on their local hospital network governing councils. We very much look forward to looking closely at those proposals to ensure that all of our reform objectives are met, but I think the member for Lyne will be very pleased when in the coming days we are able to make available the final details of the special rural and regional Health and Hospitals Fund application round.

Afghanistan

Mr NEUMANN (2.37 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Defence. Will the minister update the House on Australia’s efforts in Afghanistan?

Mr STEPHEN SMITH—I thank the member for his question. Our efforts in Afghanistan are of course centred upon the 1,550-troop commitment we have in Oruzgan province, as well as the substantial diplomatic, civilian and development assistance effort that we make both in Kabul and in Oruzgan province. I know—and this was reflected by the condolence motion we had yesterday, when the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Fadden spoke—that those individual, personal contributions and sacrifices are very much appreciated by the House. We will, we hope in the course of this year, provide the opportunity through a parliamentary debate for all members of the House to comment upon the strategic commitment that we are making to Afghanistan. I have been in discussions with the Leader of the House about the nature and timing of that debate. The Leader of the House will consult interested parties in due course. At this stage we want to hold the debate and provide that opportunity in the course of this year.

Last week I was in Kabul and Oruzgan province with the Chief of the Defence Force and the Secretary of the Department of Defence. In Kabul I met with two Afghan ministers—the Minister for Defence, Minister Wardak, and the Minister for the Interior, Minister Mohammadi. What struck me was their very strong commitment to the transition to Afghan authorities of security arrangements and their strong and deep commitment to the training process now in place. Our mission in Oruzgan province, of course, is to train the Afghan National Army and to assist in the training of Afghan police to enable the Afghan authorities to take care of security matters themselves.

In Kabul I also met with General Petraeus at International Security Assistance Force headquarters and discussed a number of points of interest to the House. Firstly, ISAF and General Petraeus, and our United States ally, very much appreciate the work we do in Afghanistan, not just those personnel in Oruzgan but also the embedded Australian defence personnel in ISAF headquarters. They are very much appreciated by ISAF, which is a United Nations mandated force. I also met with Ambassador Sedwill, NATO’s Senior Civilian Representative, and indicated to both General Petraeus and Ambassador Sedwill that we were looking favourably at the prospect of providing more police trainers and that we would ensure that within the allocation of 1,550 we would provide the 20
additional artillery trainers which have been requested by NATO.

In Tarin Kowt, in Oruzgan province, I met with our officers and our troops. They have been doing it tough, as the condolence motion yesterday reflected, but are making good progress on the training of the Afghan National Army. We started that task in December 2008 and it has only been very recently that we have been training all of the kandaks of the Afghan National Army 4th Brigade. This is making a substantial contribution to the effort.

I spoke with the CDF, the Secretary and with our officers and troops on the ground about force protection measures. Over the last 12 months the government has increased force protection measures by over $1.1 billion and these are in the course of being implemented in Afghanistan. The Secretary, the CDF and I came away from Afghanistan wanting to see whether it was possible for us to do more, so far as force protection is concerned, in the IED area, which has been very problematic as far as our troops are concerned. We are also very pleased that the transition to the Combined Team Oruzgan—now with the United States presence, following the withdrawal of the Dutch—has gone very well. We will have the opportunity to discuss all of these matters and more in the course of the parliamentary debate, and the government is very much looking forward to that.

**Asylum Seekers**

**Mr HAASE** (2.41 pm)—Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to ask the first question as the member for Durack. My question is addressed to the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship. I refer the minister to these plans I have here—the specific plans drawn for the Department of Immigration and Citizenship that the Prime Minister has said in question time today do not exist.

Can the Minister advise what the costs will be to the taxpayer for the broken promise to expand the Curtin detention centre?

**Mr Albanese**—Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I draw the House’s attention to the fact that we have changed rules not just on answers but also on questions, to make sure that that sort of argument and verballing cannot be allowed in question time.

**Mr Pyne**—Mr Speaker, on the point of order: the Leader of the House is misleading you and the parliament. We have not changed the standing orders in relation to questions, other than the timing of them at 45 seconds or less. We have said in the agreement that we would give you due licence to have regard for all the standing orders. There is no argument in the question and we are leaving it up to you to interpret in your wise way what is an appropriate question.

**The SPEAKER**—There is an expectation that because of the overall changes to question time there would be a greater application of the standing order about questions. I indicate to the Leader of the House, now that he has alerted me to the point and given me the opportunity to indicate that it is my intention to tighten the rulings on questions, that that would be the case. If I had come to a conclusion that I should have done anything in response to the member for Durack’s question, I would have invited him to rephrase the question with less argument in it. I will take it that at this point in time we acknowledge that there is to be less argument and that the points in the standing order in relation to questions will be much more tightly adhered to than in the past. That was part of the levelling of the playing field of question time. In this case, I will allow the question, but I indicate to the House that the Leader of the House has given an important reminder to us.
Mr BOWEN—I thank the member for Durack for his maiden question as the member for Durack. I am pleased that this is the first question that I will have answered as the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship and the first time as the member for McMahon.

The proposition put by the opposition is that there was a secret plan to extend detention centres on the mainland of Australia. There is one little problem with that equation as it was in the budget and in the additional estimates to the budget. You can imagine the conversation around the cabinet table, ‘We have a secret plan to extend detention centres. Where will we hide it? I know. We will put it in the additional estimates to the budget—the Liberals will never look there.’ But the shadow minister for immigration was right on to it! You have to get up pretty early in the afternoon to get one past him!

He issued a press release on 15 July pointing out that the government had made provision to extend detention centres in Australia. On 17 September I announced plans to deal with the short-term pressures on our detention centres. I also said I would be making further statements about the long-term pressures on detention centres in Australia, and that budget allocation remains available for that expenditure when I make that announcement and when I have completed the review. It is good to see the shadow minister for immigration is right on the case yet again.

Mr Morrison—I raise a point of order on relevance, Mr Speaker.

The SPEAKER—Order! The member for Cook will resume his seat. I suppose, having allowed a little bit of the old paradigm and the fact that the playing field was not level, I have, perhaps, encouraged the minister to be responding under the old paradigm. He might try to conclude his answer under the new paradigm.

Mr BOWEN—The member for Durack suggested that there is a plan for 3,000 places at the detention centre at Curtin. As I said on 17 September, ‘That will not happen.’ The Prime Minister has again said today that it will not happen. The department of immigration always enters into contingency planning for operations. I say again in the House: there will not be any extension to the Curtin detention centre anywhere near approaching 3,000 detainees.

Mr Haase—Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I have an expectation that the question would be answered.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order! The member for Durack will resume his seat. He has other avenues that have been granted to members under the new standing orders to address any reservations he has about the way in which his question has been responded to. We are not reverting to this argy-bargy under false points of order.

Mr Haase—Mr Speaker, I would like to ask a supplementary question.

The SPEAKER—The one supplementary has been asked. Even if the one supplementary had not been asked, and if the Leader of the Opposition had delegated his supplementary to the member for Durack, I think he had stretched it a bit far to get the supplementary. The member for Fremantle has the call.

Pakistan: Floods

Ms PARKE (2.48 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Will the minister outline to the House the current progress on the flood recovery in Pakistan and what Australia is doing to assist relief efforts?
Mr RUDD—I thank the member for Fremantle for her question. Australia considers Pakistan to be a friend of our nation. Therefore, when you have a friend in need, Australia’s response is always to assist.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order! The foreign minister will resume his seat. I think the people of Australia have an expectation that, when a question has been asked on a matter as serious as this, members would listen to the response.

Mr RUDD—Some 21 million people have been affected by the floods in Pakistan—a number greater than the combined impact of the tsunami in 2004, the Pakistan earthquake of 2005 and the recent earthquake in Haiti. The floods have left some 10 million people dependent on emergency food deliveries, about eight million people without shelter and, on top of that, some two million children in need of fundamental enduring humanitarian assistance.

Australia, as a friend of Pakistan, a fellow democracy and a fellow member of the Commonwealth, believes that our responsibility was to act and act quickly in support of that country in a time of great need. As a result, Australia was one of the first nations to contribute to the Pakistan global flood appeal. Australia now contributes some $75 million to that appeal. Globally we rank as the No. 5 donor to Pakistan at its time of great and dire humanitarian need.

On 16 September I visited the Australian aid facility—a field hospital at Multan in the southern Punjab. I think all members of this House would be proud of the Australians in the field doing their job. We have a contingent from the Australian Defence Force, a contingent from AusAID and various other medical professionals numbering almost 200. They were in the field very soon after the crisis hit and to date have provided emergency medical treatment to more than 5,000 people. There are 200 or 300 people presenting a day and as the doctors said to me, ‘Saving children’s lives every day against the ravages of diseases such as cerebral malaria, cholera, Nile River disease and others.’

It might also be of interest to the House to know that our aid effort there is being led by a gentleman by the name of Tang Lee. Tang Lee came to this country on a boat as a Vietnamese refugee in the 1970s and now leads Australia’s aid effort in Pakistan. He represents Australia well and does our nation an enormous degree of pride. Pakistan is not out of the woods yet by any stretch of the imagination. According to the World Food Program, we will have some eight million people dependent on emergency food assistance through until July of next year.

Australia’s aid so far is being delivered through international agencies of the United Nations such as the World Food Program, the World Health Organisation and UNICEF, which are all doing fine work, through international agencies, such as the Red Cross and the Red Crescent, and through Australian NGOs, led by World Vision, Caritas, Save the Children and others. They are doing fine work on Australia’s behalf. We must monitor the situation very closely, because there are eight officials who are deeply concerned about a possible outbreak of waterborne diseases. I will be representing Australia at a meeting of the Friends of Democratic Pakistan in Brussels in the middle of October. We will consider again the needs of that country in the period ahead. I reiterate to the House: Pakistan is a country of 175 million people, a country which is central to Australia’s security and strategic interests in terms of the international campaign against terrorism and a fellow member of the Commonwealth. Australia is proud to assist.
Asylum Seekers

Ms JULIE BISHOP (2.53 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Prior to the election, the Prime Minister promised there would be a regional processing centre in Timor-Leste. Will it be established within 12 months, within 24 months or never?

Mr RUDD—I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for her question. The government has said consistently that a regional processing centre in the context of a regional arrangement and framework for dealing with asylum seekers would be evolved over time. Secondly, it was the subject of negotiations and discussions between me and the foreign ministers of Indonesia and Timor-Leste in New York. Thirdly, it was agreed that it would form the subject of discussions when the Bali Process meeting is held in the months ahead. That meeting will deal with the overall regional pressures of people smuggling and unauthorised regional and international people movements.

Mr Morrison interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order! The member for Cook is warned.

Mr RUDD—that is the process by which we are doing it. It is the right approach.

Regional Australia

Ms LIVERMORE (2.54 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government and Minister for the Arts. How is the government delivering better outcomes for regional Australia?

Mr CREAN—I thank the member for Capricornia. I congratulate her on her great victory in that seat and I know that she is a huge promoter of regional development, like many others in the House, including those on this side. I had the opportunity today to address the National Press Club. Finally I was granted a pair at 8.30 last night, and we were able to scramble that together. I think that highlights that the new cooperative process the opposition says it is engaged in is taking some time to settle down. Unfortunately there was not the opportunity for other members who wanted to attend that speech to do so—and I notice that the member for New England is nodding accordingly.

Of course this government is committed to the development of this country through its regions. We have always held that view. If you look at the Governor-General’s speech yesterday you will see the emphasis that is given to that. Of course a significant reason for that emphasis being given was the agreement that the government reached with the rural Independents in particular, which was important in this government forming its majority. I thank the member for New England and the member for Lyne in particular, but I have had the opportunity to speak with the member for Denison since and I hope that with the other Independents we can find the time to go through the basis upon which this strategy can operate to their advantage. I have also been approached by many members on the other side of the chamber, notably the member for Gilmore, who I saw at a restaurant last night. She and the whip who in the end granted that leave to me both invited me to their regions. I will be delighted to go.

Obviously the structure is important. The cabinet committee that has been established will give strategic advice and play a coordinating role to ensure not only that the views of the regions are considered but that the proper proportionality is achieved. The parliamentary committee is to be established. It will be chaired, as I understand it, by the member for New England, and of course we are also seeking greater cooperation from states and local government in this delivery mechanism.
We also want to work through Regional Development Australia. It is a vital organ for the dissemination of the views and the creative ideas of our regions. Regional Development Australia was formed under the government in its last term. We look to strengthening its role and using effectively its voice and local input, its local empowerment, to inform us about the way in which the nation’s resources are effectively and efficiently allocated. Those resources are significant, and I will have the opportunity on other occasions in this chamber to go through them. The key thing here is that we want to find the right balance between local input delivering on national objectives. That is the new approach to regionalism that this government will pursue. I look forward to the cooperation not only of those who have signed the agreement with us but of all other members who genuinely believe in the development of our regions and who want to play a constructive role. Get on board, because we are in the market for great ideas.

Economy

Mr CIOBO (2.59 pm)—My question is to the Treasurer. Does the Treasurer agree with his own Treasury, in their incoming government analysis, that after all of the government’s election commitments it must now further reduce its own spending to reduce upward pressure on interest rates? If so, when will these cuts be revealed, Treasurer?

Mr SWAN—I thank the member for Moncrieff for his question. Once again, we have got a misrepresentation of what is contained in the red book. The Treasury makes the point very strongly that the government’s medium-term fiscal strategy is very important and it also makes the point that it is being adhered to. It makes that point very strongly at the beginning of the red book—the importance of a medium-term fiscal strategy to operate in conjunction with the wind-down of the stimulus. The fact is that we have a fiscal strategy in place which will bring the budget back to surplus in three years—three years early. This is something that has been strongly supported by international credit rating agencies, the IMF and the RBA.

The government, when it chose to stimulate the economy during the global recession, outlined some strong fiscal rules to ensure that when growth returned to above trend we would engage in fiscal consolidation, and that is precisely what we have done. Fiscal stimulus is being withdrawn and, at the same time, we are applying our very strict fiscal rules. These are strongly supported by the Treasury in the red book, but they are also well understood in the wider business community. An economics research note out today from Macquarie Research Economics makes a couple of very important points. The very important point is, as the Prime Minister said before, that we have the biggest fiscal consolidation in place since the 1960s in this country—4½ per cent of GDP over three years. That was demonstrated for everybody to see in the May budget. This is what Macquarie economics said in their note today. They make this point:

A closer look at Treasury projections makes it harder to argue that the rate of fiscal consolidation is too slow. Indeed, if Treasury forecasts are achieved and the budget is returned to surplus by 2012-13 then this would be the most aggressive period of fiscal consolidation since records began in the 1970s.

And that is correct. They go on to say in their note:
The rise in receipts has been complemented by a relatively steep decline in government expenditures—
because of the application of our two per cent rule. They conclude by saying:
By any measure this is an aggressive consolidation. Just as the stimulus was aggressive so, too, was its removal.

And it is the change in stimulus that matters for growth. The premise of the question is wrong. The premise of everything said by those on this matter during the election campaign was false and deliberately deceptive, because we have done—

The SPEAKER—Order! The Treasurer (a) will not start debating his response and (b) will be very careful in the way in which he talks about members of this House.

Mr Pyne—Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order. On behalf of the coalition and those members to whom the Treasurer is referring, I would ask him to withdraw.

The SPEAKER—The Treasurer will withdraw.

Mr SWAN—I withdraw, Mr Speaker. Standard and Poor’s in a recent report have talked about how strong the government finances are, and they have certainly given our consolidation a very significant tick. You have also seen the Governor of the Reserve Bank completely repudiate the claim that is made by those opposite frequently, which is that government debt is pushing up interest rates. That is also false and deceptive. If I could just quote—

Mr Hockey—The red book says it.

Mr SWAN—The red book doesn’t say that. If I could just quote the Governor of the Reserve Bank:

… the Australian government borrows in a global market. There are free global capital flows here and the long rate in Australia is driven more strongly by what happens in global markets than by what happens here …

It is a strong fiscal consolidation for the good of the economy by a government committed to very strong economic management.

Gambling

Mr CHAMPION (3.03 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. What is the government doing to deliver on its commitment to address problem gambling?

Ms MACKLIN—I thank the member for Wakefield for his question. He does know the devastation that can affect individuals and families as a result of problem gambling. Like him, the government is committed to working to reduce problem gambling, particularly the harm that comes from poker machines. All members would be aware that we received a Productivity Commission report not long before the election. We made that report public. That Productivity Commission report highlighted the effectiveness of precommitment schemes. They set out the ways in which precommitment schemes do allow those who play poker machines to set their own limits and to be able to stick with them.

Members would be aware that the Prime Minister has entered into an agreement with the member for Denison to make sure that the Australian government, working with the states and territories, introduces a full precommitment scheme for poker machines by 2014. I would like to inform the House that today an evaluation is being released of a significant precommitment trial that has been undertaken in South Australia. This does demonstrate the benefits of precommitment. The evidence from the trial does show that precommitment encourages better money management and more informed spending decisions.

During the trial—just to give members a specific example—net turnover on poker machines by problem gamblers using the precommitment scheme decreased by 56 per cent, without impacting on the spending be-
haviours of those recreational gamblers. I do think this is a significant piece of evidence that will help us in our work. I also welcome the announcement today by the South Australian government that precommitment technology has now been rolled out to 74 gaming venues across that state. I think this does demonstrate the willingness of the states and territories to address problem gambling.

The Assistant Treasurer and I met with the member for Denison and Senator Xenophon last week, when we agreed to establish a ministerial committee, an expert committee, to advise us on these issues. That will include technical experts, representatives from the industry and those who are involved in counselling and supporting people who suffer from problem gambling. I look forward to that ministerial committee being established under the leadership of Professor Peter Shergold and I thank him for his willingness to undertake that task.

Today the House agreed with the government’s proposal and also, of course, agreed with the member for Denison that we establish a joint select committee on gambling. I look forward to members across the parliament participating in that very important committee as we work together to address the problems that do arise from those who have difficulties with gambling.

Building the Education Revolution Program

Mr PYNE (3.07 pm)—My question is to the Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth. I refer to the promise made by the Prime Minister before the election that ‘the government accepts all of Mr Orgill’s recommendations’ in relation to the school hall stimulus program and ‘if re-elected the government will work to implement each of these recommendations, including transparency’. Given that promise, when will the government publish all school hall costing data as recommended by the Orgill report?

Mr GARRETT—I thank the honourable member for his question. The honourable member should be aware that the Prime Minister has allocated the administration of Building the Education Revolution to the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Jobs and Workplace Relations, Senator Evans, and that in this chamber Senator Evans is represented by my colleague the Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government on matters relating to jobs, the BER—which is an economic stimulus measure—and workplace relations. So you have made a mistake by asking the wrong person the question.

Mr Pyne—Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Somebody from the government should inform the clerks of that because in fact, according to this record provided to me by the Clerk, the Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth, the Hon. Peter Garrett AM MP, represents Senator the Hon. Chris Evans in this House.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER—Order! We are going to have a bit of trouble about the new paradigm when an old paradigm—such as the Speaker being on his feet so you are supposed to be quiet—is not taken any notice of. But we will deal with that. Yesterday ‘Second Gillard ministry—14 September 2010’ was tabled and it has: ‘Minister for Tertiary Education,Skills, Jobs and Workplace Relations’ and under ‘Minister’ Senator the Hon. Chris Evans and under ‘Other Chamber’ the Hon. Simon Crean. It then says the Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth, the Hon. Peter Garrett, is represented in the other chamber by Senator the Hon. Chris Evans.
Mr Pyne—Mr Speaker, I hate to disagree with you but this table that I am reading says the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Jobs and Workplace Relations, Senator the Hon. Chris Evans is represented in the other chamber by the Hon. Simon Crean MP, under which it says: ‘The Hon. Peter Garrett AM MP’. I am happy to table that. You read the whole thing. Then it says the minister for school education, Peter Garrett, is represented by Chris Evans, Kate Ellis is represented by Chris Evans, Mark Arbib by Jenny Macklin. It says under Simon Crean ‘Peter Garrett’. If he does not represent schools, what does he represent?

The SPEAKER—I say to the member for Sturt that on Sunday he reminded another member of this place that it was not a certain state conference and that did not mean that he could talk over people. But it does not mean you can come into the chamber and think that you are above everybody else and just rabbit on. You got the call, you made your point, so then when you sit down be quiet.

Australian Federal Police

Mr HAYES (3.12 pm)—My question is to the Minister for Home Affairs, Minister for Justice and Minister for Privacy and Freedom of Information. Minister, how is the government supporting the Australian Federal Police making Australia safer?

Mr BRENDAN O’CONNOR—I thank the member for Fowler for his question and his genuine and longstanding interest in police matters and indeed in advancing the cause of our magnificent police forces in this country. Today is National Police Remembrance Day so it is an appropriate question. It is also appropriate to update the House on the commitment by this government to increase sworn officers in the Australian Federal Police. Three years ago we undertook to swell the ranks of the AFP by 500 sworn officers over a five-year period. We now have 335 extra officers of the Australian Federal Police, 200 ahead of schedule. That means we have officers dedicated not only to protecting our citizens but also to engaging with their counterparts within the region and around the world. As most people would know, the Australian Federal Police’s role has broadened over the 30 years since its creation. Therefore, this government continues to dedicate resources to ensure that it can do its job. We are also transitioning the police arrangements in our major international airports, ensuring that we move from a unified policing model to have the AFP be the primary police force for security at those airports.

As I said, it is National Police Remembrance Day and I would like, on behalf of the government, to take this opportunity to pay tribute to those officers who made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty and to pay my respects to those who have lost a family member or a loved one in such tragic circumstances. Only very recently we were reminded of this great sacrifice by the death of New South Wales Police officer Detective Constable William Crews. I am sure every member of the House shares great sympathy for Mr Crews’s family, friends and colleagues for their loss.

I am also relieved that the opposition has relented and reversed its original decision not to allow me to attend today’s National Police Remembrance Day ceremony by not allowing a pairing arrangement. I am happy to say that the opposition did change its original position, allowing not only the minister responsible for the Australian Federal Police but also the shadow minister to attend and lay a wreath for those fallen in the line of duty. This is an important day for the police around the country. It includes all law enforcement agencies in all jurisdictions. It is an important time for them and their families.
and I am looking forward to being accompanied by the shadow minister this afternoon to pay our respects.

Home Insulation Program

Mr TRUSS (3.15 pm)—Mr Speaker, my question is to the Prime Minister. I refer her to the case of my constituent Mr Rick Walker, whose house in Tiaro was burnt down just two hours after insulation was installed in his roof under the government’s home insulation scheme. Mr Walker did not have insurance and his partner and six children have lost everything. Will the government pay compensation to Mr Walker and will the government now establish a royal commission into its failed insulation scheme?

Ms GILLARD—Can I say to the member who has raised the question that I accept what he has said in the parliament in relation to an individual matter involving a constituent, but I would obviously want to talk to him about some further details, particularly information about the family involved and the circumstances of the fire. If he wants to give me additional information about that then I will be happy to look at it.

More generally, as the member opposite would be aware—I have said this publicly; I have said it in this parliament before; indeed I think I had occasion to say it in question time the first day that I was Prime Minister—I acknowledge and the government acknowledges that the Home Insulation Program was beset by problems. It became a mess. That is why we brought it to a conclusion. That is why we have the inspection program, which is rolling out, and that is why the relevant minister has been overseeing arrangements, including arrangements dealing with businesses that were entitled to compensation under the scheme that we set up. This has been well known for a long period of time now. As the member would be aware, these matters are being looked into by the Auditor-General, for example, so there is an appropriate inquiry looking at the program which is now closed. Can I reiterate that if the member wants to give me details of the individual constituent matter then I will be more than happy to look at that matter.

National Security

Mr RIPOLL (3.17 pm)—Mr Speaker, my question is to the Attorney-General. Will the Attorney-General outline what measures the government is taking to address cyber based threats to national security?

Mr McCLELLAND—I thank the honourable member for his question and his ongoing interest in this area. This morning I had the pleasure to launch Cyber Storm III, which is a major international cybersecurity exercise. It goes without saying that fortunately our geographic isolation over the years has proved to be a tremendous asset in terms of defence against conventional threats. Regrettably that geographic isolation has no relevance at all with respect to dealing with threats in the cyber environment. This point was made in the National Security Statement of the government and the need to maintain a secure and resilient network is vital to our social and economic prosperity, and indeed to the proper functioning of government. In terms of that concept of resilience, just as we are referring to a storm, the goal is to do what we can to prevent the damage from the assault, to respond to the assault, and to bounce back as quickly and as effectively as we can from the assault with the minimum of disruption. Those principles apply equally in respect of the Cyber Storm III exercise.

Members will also recall that, as part of the cybersecurity strategy that we announced in November 2009, we established the Computer Emergency Response Team in the At-
torney-General’s Department and also the Cyber Security Operations Centre. Just to give some context to the issue, in the eight months of the existence of the Cyber Security Operations Centre, it has received 1,000 requests for assistance. About a quarter of those requests were deemed of sufficient seriousness to warrant further action.

Cyber Storm III will operate over four days. It will test our preparedness and the relationships between government, business and the international community, because we know that the cyber environment knows no boundaries between agencies, governments and individuals, nor does it have any restrictions by national boundaries. The exercise simulates an assault on critical infrastructure and also on nationally important systems and services. It will evaluate individual capability—that is, the capability of individual organisations—but more significantly combined capability. In that context, could I acknowledge the tremendous work by the United States Department of Homeland Security and also the cooperation that we have received from Canada, Great Britain and New Zealand, who are also participating in this exercise.

I also thank and recognise the significant work of over 50 organisations involved in the communication, finance, transport, utilities and government sectors. This exercise will assist in raising awareness, but it is also a demonstration of the practical work that is occurring at a domestic and international level to make our society, our economy and the delivery of government services that much safer and that much more effective.

Ms Gillard—Under the new arrangements, we have got through 20 questions by 3.22. Good work.

Mr Albanese—Twenty-one actually.

Ms Gillard—Really? Twenty-one. Good work, member for Lyne. Many members would be very grateful to you. With that, Mr Speaker, I ask that further questions be placed on the Notice Paper.

MINISTERIAL ARRANGEMENTS

The SPEAKER (3.22 pm)—The list of ministerial arrangements was a matter of contention during question time. I indicate that the clerks rely on the underlying administrative arrangements that dictate which pieces of legislation are being looked after by ministers when they allocate who they would put a question in writing to. While that is not a parliamentary document but a government document, that gives guidance about who has responsibility for what in this place. So I would recommend that document to members who have some concern.

Mr Pyne—Mr Speaker, as you are responsible for the clerks and so forth—and this is no reflection on them—how is the opposition to know that the government has hidden this schools program in another minister’s portfolio and why wouldn’t they—

The SPEAKER—The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat. You have plenty of other opportunities to make a point like that. You are not going to use as a guise a question to me. You are warned.

COMMITTEES

Reports

The SPEAKER (3.23 pm)—I present the following reports from committees of the 42nd Parliament received after the last sitting of the House in June 2010 pursuant to standing order 247: from the Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth, Avoid the harm—stay calm: report on the inquiry into the impact of violence on young Australians, together with the minutes of proceedings; from the Standing Committee on Health and Ageing, Roundtable forum on burns prevention, together with the minutes of proceedings; from the Joint Standing

Ordered that the reports be made parliamentary papers.

PRIME MINISTER

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House) (3.25 pm)—I wish to make a short speech on indulgence. In the spirit of goodwill of the new paradigm that we find ourselves in, I want to particularly welcome members of the Gillard family, including the proud parents of the Prime Minister, who are here to see the Prime Minister at the first question time of this session, which happens to be her 49th birthday. On behalf of all members I wish the Prime Minister a happy birthday and welcome members of the Gillard family, particularly the proud parents.

Honourable members—Hear, hear!

Mr ALBANESE—I would like to see how Hansard records that I just kissed the Prime Minister!

The SPEAKER—It is the age of Aquarius.

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL AUDIT OFFICE

Annual Report

The SPEAKER (3.26 pm)—I present the annual report of the Australian National Audit Office for 2009-10.

Ordered that the report be made a parliamentary paper.

AUDITOR-GENERAL’S REPORTS

Report Nos 1 to 9 of 2010-11


Ordered that the reports be made parliamentary papers.

DOCUMENTS

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House) (3.26 pm)—Documents are presented as listed in the schedule circulated to honourable members. Details of the documents will be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings and I move:
That the House take note of the following documents:


Ministerial statement—Climate change—Green Loans Program—Senator Wong, Minister for Climate Change, Energy Efficiency and Water—8 July 2010.

Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency—Response to the Hawke report on the Home Insulation Program and the Faulkner inquiry into the Green Loans Program.


Regional Forest Agreements—Final report on progress with implementation of the Victorian Regional Forest Agreements—Report of the independent reviewer, May 2010.

Sydney Airport Demand Management Act—Quarterly report on movement cap for Sydney airport for the period 1 January to 31 March 2010.

Debate (on motion by Mr Hartsuyker) adjourned.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Gillard Government

The SPEAKER—I have received a letter from the honourable member for Warringah proposing that a definite matter of public importance be submitted to the House for discussion, namely:

The failure of the Government to keep its election commitments.

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

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

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Leader of the Opposition) (3.27 pm)—Today is in fact a very historic day in the life of the Australian parliament. It is not a historic day just because this is the first business day of the 43rd Parliament; it is not a historic day simply on account of it being the first day under the operation of the new reformed standing orders. It is in fact a historic day because this is the first day since 1941 when an Australian government has lost a vote on the floor of the House of Representatives. This is a historic day because it is the first day since 1941 when a government has been defeated on the floor of the House of Representatives.

What that means is that this is finally a real parliament. This parliament is finally no longer an echo chamber of the executive. This opposition entirely accepts the result of the election—but that result is that this government can no longer command a secure majority on the floor of this parliament. And I also let the Australian people know that this is a government that cannot be trusted to keep its commitments. This government lost a vote on the floor of this parliament because it proposed to put into the standing orders something which was a breach of a commitment. This government promised that there would be no recommittal of votes in this chamber without, first, a suspension of standing orders. That was the commitment this government made and that is the com-
mitment this government proposed to break with the standing order it put before the parliament earlier today and which vote it lost in a historic moment on the floor of the parliament.

I know that there have been some difficulties over the parliamentary reform agreement, and I am sorry that one aspect of the agreement could not be put into practice because it was constitutionally unsound and legally unenforceable, but there was no reason the government could not put its commitment into practice today. It chose not to put its commitment into practice simply to suit its own convenience and so was quite rightly defeated on the floor of the parliament in a mighty historic first. This means that for the first time since 1941 we have a real parliament that is no longer an echo chamber of the executive.

The promise that was sought to be broken today was certainly not the first broken promise from this government. I intend to go through some of the other broken promises of this government but, before I do, let me remind the House of a very important statement of principle:

I think when you go to an election and you give a promise to the Australian people, you should do everything in your power to honour that promise. We are determined to do that. We gave our word to the Australian people in the election and this is a Government that prides itself on delivering election promises. We want Australians to be able to say well, they’ve said this and they did this …

I am not quoting some arcane reference. I am not quoting Barlin. I am not quoting any ancient Clerk of the House. I am not quoting Burke or Bagehot. I am not quoting Chifley or Curtin. I am not quoting Nye Bevan. I am quoting the current Prime Minister, who has put it as clearly and as unambiguously on the record as possible: governments should keep their commitments.

Now, as we know from the parliament today, it has all changed. No commitment can be given so solemnly, no commitment can be given so seriously and no principle can be held so sacredly that it cannot be broken by this government simply because of the different circumstances which now exist on the floor of this parliament. Sure, a finely balanced parliament might make keeping commitments more difficult, but a finely balanced parliament does not lessen the obligation that a government has to honour its promises. A finely balanced parliament does not justify saying one thing before an election and doing something entirely different and absolutely opposite after an election. A hung parliament is no excuse for a weak government and what we have now is not only a weak government but also a deceitful government.

Let me remind the House of what the Prime Minister said just before the election. On 16 August, a mere week before the election, the Prime Minister said:

There will be no carbon tax under the government I lead.

The day before the election, on 20 August, the Prime Minister said:

I rule out a carbon tax.

That is what the Prime Minister said the day before the election. What does she say now? Just three weeks after the election, when asked about a carbon tax, she said:

… I just think the rule-in, rule-out games are a little bit silly.

If it is so silly why did she play precisely those games prior to the election? We have a Prime Minister in this parliament who says one thing to win votes and then does the complete opposite in order to cobble together a government. This is a Prime Minister who has misled the Australian people in order to save her own political skin. This is a thor-
oughly dishonourable and deceitful government and it deserves to be exposed as such.

In the parliament today the Prime Minister said that when it comes to the subject of a carbon tax you could not possibly expect her to keep her commitment because the numbers have changed—the government does not have a majority. I remind the Prime Minister that there were two main parties contesting the election. There was the coalition—the Liberal-National Party—and we definitely, comprehensively, unambiguously and with crystal clarity ruled out a carbon tax. Then we had members opposite not saying much on this subject for most of the election campaign, but when the heat was on in the last days of that campaign what did they do? They unambiguously, in words of very few syllables, ruled out a carbon tax. So there are two main parties in this parliament and both of them ruled out a carbon tax. What possible excuse does the Prime Minister have for now ruling it in? The numbers in this parliament should be against a carbon tax because every member opposite was elected on the promise that there would be no carbon tax.

I am not surprised that the Prime Minister has absented herself from the chamber on this subject. If she has any honour, if she has any shred of conscience on this subject, she must be ashamed of what she did before the election and what she is doing now after the election. She has sent the Deputy Prime Minister into this chamber to defend her. I am looking forward to the Deputy Prime Minister’s speech. But it is impossible to defend the indefensible and it is absolutely indefensible to say one thing before an election and do the exact opposite after an election. That demonstrates that this government is built on a lie. It perhaps has constitutional legitimacy, but it does not have ethical legitimacy given that its election was built on a lie. The Prime Minister was not the only person who was complicit in this deception.

Mr Robert—There are more?

Mr ABBOTT—Yes, there are more—none other than the Deputy Prime Minister. When asked this question about the carbon tax, what did he say? He said that this was just ‘an hysterical allegation’ and that it certainly was not true. I am sorry, Mr Deputy Prime Minister, it is absolutely true. This Deputy Prime Minister, like his leader, is guilty of misleading the Australian people—and I am inclined to say he knowingly misled the Australian people. He said one thing before the election and he is now doing quite the opposite after the election. It is simply dishonest and the Australian people ought to know that this government is based on a lie.

This is not just a mere academic question, because whether there is a carbon tax will have a direct bearing on the standard of living of the Australian people. We know that the Australian people are under cost of living pressures. We know that this government have not delivered the kind of prosperity the Australian people had come to expect from the previous coalition government. We know that and we want to protect the Australian people from any further unnecessary hits on their standard of living.

We know that since November 2007 the price of electricity has risen by 35 per cent. That is a 35 per cent hit on the cost of just about everything people do in their households. We know that a $40 a tonne carbon price would double the wholesale price of electricity. That would mean higher costs for pensioners, higher costs for small business and higher costs for families. That is precisely what this government are attempting to do. They deceived the Australian people before the election and they have comprehensively broken a pre-election commitment, and that will run a dagger through the stan-
standard of living of many Australian families. It is simply, absolutely and utterly unacceptable.

This government are busily trying to lower expectations. I understand that. I understand that this government are trying to say to the Australian people: ‘Don’t expect us to do anything. We don’t really have much of an agenda. We don’t think we can win votes in the parliament other than on a good day.’ The public will not fall for this. It does not matter what the situation in the parliament is, the Australian public expects the government to govern. The Australian public expects the government to keep to its commitments. If this government could not keep to its commitments, the Prime Minister should not have accepted the Governor-General’s commission. I say to the government on behalf of the Australian people: stop making excuses and start governing, and you can start by keeping your commitments.

Mr SWAN (Lilley—Treasurer) (3.42 pm)—Congratulations, Mr Deputy Speaker Slipper, on your new role. We have just heard from an opposition leader whose only vision is division. He is someone who lacks a positive agenda for Australia. He is someone who does not have any plans for the future. He is someone who is driven entirely by short-term political gain for the Liberal Party. He is someone who would rather see the country fail than see the government succeed. He does not have the national interest at heart at all. He is on about short-term political interests, not the long term national interest. He has the balance all wrong.

I believe that approach will be comprehensively rejected by the Austrian people, who a few months ago elected this government and expected us to come together and find common ground to pursue the national interest, not the selfish political interests of the Liberal and National parties. How absurd it is to be lectured by the Leader of the Opposition—a bloke whose word is not worth the paper that it is written on. Only a couple of weeks ago he signed the document committing himself to parliamentary reform and then repudiated it and went the other way. He is a spoiler, a wrecker. He is somebody who entered into an agreement with the Independents and minor parties, and when the decision did not go his way he went out and ripped it up. Well, his reputation is dead, buried and cremated by that one act because what the Australian people do expect from a Leader of the Opposition is that he is a man of his word. What he proved following that agreement between the major parties and the Independents is that he cannot keep his word. That is what he has proven.

The Leader of the Opposition is not up to the task of meeting the great challenges which face this country: dealing with the aftermath of the global financial crisis and the global recession and dealing with the great economic, social and environmental challenge of climate change. He is not up to dealing with the investment in infrastructure, such as in superfast broadband, that is required to meet the challenges of mining boom mark 2; not up to putting forward a positive plan to deal with the challenges of the mining boom and what it means for all of our communities but particularly our communities in rural and regional Australia.

It is the duty of this parliament to the people, to the country and of course to the national interest to address all of these issues and to address them in a way in which the people expect us to given the election result that has been achieved. Neither major party has a majority. We are even-steven in terms of the major parties. The Australian people want us to find common ground. But we know what the Leader of the Opposition wants; he wants nothing more than another election. That is why I say his vision is divi-
sion, because he is determined to tear everything down.

We on this side of the House want to build up our economy, to build up our society, and we have a positive plan to do that, but all we are seeing is a self-interested political response from those opposite. They are attempting to do everything they possibly can to send Australia back to the polls. Those are precisely the tactics that I believe the Australian people do not want, and the Leader of the Opposition is pursuing this goal at his own grave political risk. The Australian people expect us all to do the right thing. They are sick and tired of the type of politics that is being played by the Leader of the Opposition. They want us to get the job done—to strengthen and broaden our economy; to do good things for our society; to strengthen our prosperity for our children and our grandchildren. They want these national issues addressed by all parties in this House. But if you were to ask those opposite what their positive plan is for Australia to secure these objectives they would say they simply do not have one. They know how to oppose; they know how to wreck.

We heard in question time today the defence from the Manager of Opposition Business and the Leader of the Opposition as to why they tore up the agreement on parliamentary reform. They tried to create a fig leaf and they based it on a legal opinion from Lord Brandis of Brisbane. He commissioned his own opinion, he delivered it to himself and he expects this parliament to treat it in a credible way. Well, I am afraid the opinion of Lord Brandis of Brisbane is worthless, and indeed it was rejected by the Solicitor-General, who provided comprehensive legal advice. So there is no fig leaf for those opposite to hide behind when they claim they had no choice but to rip up this agreement that the Australian people expect all of us in this House to honour. They expect us to cooperate. They expect us to work together. They expect us to make the most of what they have delivered to us through the vote. But this Leader of the Opposition will stop at nothing to pull policies down, to pull the people down and to pull this parliament down.

Why should we be surprised by this excessively negative attitude? We really should not be too surprised because it has been a feature of his life’s work in politics and, sadly, increasingly a feature of the Liberal and National parties in this House. When this country was threatened by a global financial crisis and a global recession, what did they do? They opposed the measures that we took. They did that for political advantage. In fact, they rejected the second stimulus package in the Senate. Finally, we got it through because those in the minor parties in the Senate and the Independents put the national interest ahead of a political interest. Just imagine where Australia would be today if the opposition had succeeded in that sterile opposition to stimulus package No. 2. Would we have the national accounts figures that we received for June, as the strongest-growing advanced economy in the developed world? No. We would have seen unemployment going through the roof and business closures going through the roof. We would have seen higher deficits and higher debt as a consequence of their negative approach and their unwillingness to come together in this parliament to put in place policies in the national interest.

They opposed the bank guarantees. I remember this time two years ago, just after the collapse of Lehman Brothers, when the whole financial system across the globe was melting down and the opposition were in this House scoring cheap political points, trying to panic the Australian people. And when we put in place the bank guarantee, arguably one of the most important things done by a gov-
ernment in this country in our entire history, they opposed it. They came into this House and sniped at it and they scored cheap political points again and again. So there is a history of this negativism here.

Of course, during the election campaign what did they oppose? They opposed our very logical proposal for a very significant tax cut to small business, they opposed the investments in schools, they opposed trade training centres—they opposed all of these measures which were quite logical. Then we get to the ultimate in stupid, ignorant opposition. They oppose our minerals resource rent tax. They oppose a funding source, agreed to by the mining industry, that we can use as a nation to make all of our companies more competitive, that we can invest in our great mining regions. They oppose that. They think the mining companies are paying too much tax. Can you believe that? They came into this House and mounted the argument that mining companies were paying too much tax. And of course we have seen the investment figures continue. Investment in mining is still increasing dramatically, the profitability of the industry is increasing dramatically, the long-term plans for investment are increasing dramatically, the nation is crying out for a positive response to mining boom mark 2, but that is just opposed by the modern Liberal and National parties, who do not have any positive policies to deal with the challenges of the future.

Let us go to the ultimate absurdity, which is their opposition to the NBN, to superfast broadband. Our regions understand how important superfast broadband is. They understand how the Liberal and National parties over 12 years did nothing in this critical enabling technology that can join our regions to our cities and join our cities and our regions to the world in the Asian century. What could be more important to a small business in regional Australia than superfast broadband? But none of them understand that. They are entirely negative yet again.

You can go through the litany of things they oppose to see what they stand for. What do they support? During the campaign they supported an increase in the company tax rate of 1.5 per cent, making all of those small businesses more uncompetitive, and they opposed our tax cut for small business, the $5,000 instant asset write-off, which will be of enormous benefit to the millions of small businesses around this country, not all of which are doing well. Even in the booming mining states there are small businesses that are not doing it well and need a helping hand. Do the Liberal and National parties understand any of this? They understand none of it. That is why I say yet again that the only vision the Leader of the Opposition has is division. It is his natural approach, it is his natural style. He thinks he is crumbling another team on the football field. We cannot afford in this environment, given the result delivered to us by the Australian people, to have two teams at each other’s throats. They want us to work together in this parliament. That is the message from the people, but it is one that the Leader of the Opposition simply does not understand. He is not a builder; he is a wrecker—and that is what he has demonstrated in this House time and time again.

We on this side of the House understand this one important fact: that securing a prosperous economy and delivering opportunity to all of our people is our central role in this parliament. It is not just a question of economics; it is a very important question of how we relate to each other as a society. During the global financial crisis we all worked together. One of the reasons we came through so well was that we worked together—employers and employees. We came together. We did it well. Now we have to take that and, having come through so well, we have to use it. We have to work to-
gether, given the opportunities we have because we did not go into recession, to strengthen our economy so we can maximise all of the opportunities, social and economic, which will flow from the Asian century. There are fantastic possibilities for our country in the years ahead if we get the economic framework for the future right. That is what we are doing. That is the program we put to the people at the last election.

I can think of no greater pleasure than spending my time in here talking to all the Independents and the minor parties about our plans for the future. They will deliver what the Australian people expect. They know we need superfast broadband. They know we need investment in critical infrastructure to expand the capacity of our economy and to ease inflationary pressures. They know we have to lift productivity. They know all of those things and we have a program to do those things.

It would be a different thing if those on the other side had a program at all but they do not have anything. Can anyone name three or four policies they stand for? They just stand for themselves. They do not stand for the common good; they do not stand for the national interest; they stand for their own selfish interests. Until they learn to behave better, we will continue in this parliament to work with those of goodwill to put forward a program which will grow our economy and make our society a better place. We need less anger and more thoughtful reflection from the opposition; we need fewer slogans and more policies. All we have at the moment is a series of slogans and a lot of anger. It is not going to make our country a better place.

What will make our country a better place is a decent program which has at its core making our economy more competitive and cooperative, so that we can grow it and make a better society. We must put in place the policies we need in health and education, to fund them and build infrastructure, so that we do not get the sorts of inflationary pressures which can flow from the mining boom we are currently experiencing. That task lies before all of us.

For us on this side of the House, our central purpose is to protect the national interest. Those on that side of the House ought to think very seriously about their divisive approach. I know this: the Australian people will judge them very harshly. Their tactic of trying to create an election again, to go back to the people, to ignore the will of the people, is going to blow right up in their faces. If they keep going the way they have gone in the last 48 hours they are going to face very harsh judgments. (Time expired)

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Leader of the Nationals) (3.58 pm)—Breaking promises is simply the Labor way. They believe promises are made to be broken. The entire record of the previous government was a litany of broken promises and this government is obviously going to be no better. Some of you may remember the promises from the previous government. Remember former Prime Minister Rudd looking television cameras in the eye on paid Labor Party advertisements and saying, ‘I am an economic conservative. I am committed to balancing the budget.’ That was before the election before last. He did not deliver a single balanced budget. Indeed, he delivered record budget deficits every time—record deficits, never balanced the budget, a broken promise to be an economic conservative.

What about Labor’s broadband promises? We have heard something about it from the Deputy Prime Minister, who is leaving the chamber. Labor promised before the 2007 election to deliver fibre-to-the-node broadband at 100 megabits per second to 98 per cent of Australia’s population beginning
from Christmas 2008 at a cost of $4.7 billion. Now the cost is $43 billion. Hardly anybody has got it three Christmases later and, of course, two million Australians—mainly in regional Australia—have been left out of the promise altogether. Labor axed the OPEL contract, which would have been delivering high-speed broadband to most of Australia by now, and now it has got some fairy-land proposal without a business plan—another broken promise. If regional Australians ever get any of this broadband, some time about 2018, they are only going to get the same wireless that was committed under the OPEL contract—a broken Labor promise.

Remember Kevin Rudd’s famous statement: ‘Labor’s policy is that if people are intercepted on the high seas then the vessel should be turned around.’ That was Kevin Rudd’s commitment to the Australian people before he was elected as Prime Minister.

Mr TRUSS—I was referring actually to the Leader of the Opposition at the time. At that time he made it clear that the boats would be turned around, but not one boat was ever turned around. That is indeed Labor’s approach. If you go to my website, you can find 60 or more of these broken promises; promises made—expressed essentially, we are told, in good faith—but never delivered.

Who can forget GroceryWatch and Fuelwatch and the promise to restrict government advertising—it goes on and on and on. To add insult to injury, the former Prime Minister said that Labor would honour every promise that it made to the Australian people. He said that on 17 March 2008. Labor would honour all their promises—does this not sound rather familiar? Now we have a new Prime Minister and her promise was also that she will honour all of Labor’s promises. She says the government should keep its promises. But within days of election, in spite of the fact that everyone is talking about ‘new politics’, and we are even supposed to have a new Julia—she is a year older but she is certainly no wiser—the promises are falling like autumn leaves.

We are only a couple of days into the new parliament and Labor’s election agenda has largely been ditched. The election platform has been junked. She has got all sorts of novel excuses. Now it is the Independents’ fault or it is the Greens’ fault. If this were such a problem to her why did she go out to the Governor-General and say, ‘I can deliver strong and stable government for the people of Australia’? She promised the Governor-General that she could deliver on her election commitments but in fact she is now walking away from them. She seems to have no intention to deliver on her election commitments and the Independents and the Greens are going to be blamed for her failure to deliver.

It is important that governments should deliver on their election promises. It is especially important when the issue is as important as something like a carbon tax. That is going to have an enormously detrimental effect on the whole of Australia, and Prime Minister Gillard knew that before the election. That is why she said in clear and unmistakable terms, repeated by the Leader of the Opposition just a few moments ago, on 16 August, just days before the nation went to the polls, ‘There will be no carbon tax under the government I lead.’ One day before the election: ‘I rule out a carbon tax. I rule them out.’ There is no mincing of the words. You cannot mince and dice them and make them come up to mean anything else—‘There will be no carbon tax under a Gillard govern-
ment.’ Here we are just a couple of days into the parliament and somehow or other that promise does not hold true any more. It is not as though it was her only promise on climate change during the election campaign. Remember that Labor told us in the last parliament that we had to have a CPRS or civilisation would end. Anyone who did not believe in a CPRS was somehow or other a climate change denier. Direct action plans were unacceptable. You had to have an obscure trading scheme if you were going to save the planet. She ditched that before the election.

During the election campaign, we had this great announcement: Labor’s new solution to climate change was a committee of 150 people chosen at random from the phone book who were going to decide what the government’s climate change policy would be—150 people on a committee were going to do the job. It was one of the most ludicrous policies I think anybody has ever heard. I was waiting for the committee of 150 to decide the defence policy, and another committee of people chosen from the electoral roll to perhaps decide on the next budget. I thought we were having an election to choose people who would make the decisions. But Labor, of course, is never capable of making any decisions at all.

Labor ditched the 150 people on the committee and now the new solution—now that the promise that we are not going to have a carbon tax has been ditched—is another new committee. This is some kind of multiparty committee, although its members really only seem to be the Greens and the Labor Party. You are not even eligible to be on this committee unless you commit up-front to a carbon tax—the carbon tax Labor said we were never going to have. But the only people who can go on this committee are those who believe in a carbon tax. This is no genuine inquiry. This is no attempt to gather the facts and make the best decisions. This is in fact an inquiry where you sign up first to the outcome before you can even be on the committee.

This is the classic way in which Labor undertakes its policy processes. We saw the humiliating spectacle of the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister with Senator Bob Brown and Senator Milne—this Greens-Labor alliance—to announce this new committee. We saw the rudeness of Senator Brown as he talked over the Prime Minister. It was clear this was a Greens initiative. This is the Greens tail wagging the Labor dog—and what a dog of a policy it is actually proving to be. The Greens are happy. If anyone has any doubt about whose idea this was, just ask the new member for Melbourne who tweeted to the world that because Melbourne went Green there would be a carbon tax committee set up. Bingo! That is exactly what happened. This is a Greens policy, born in compromise as Labor seems to walk away from the commitment that it made to the Australian people. This is a very significant issue for Australia. A carbon tax or its equally ugly big brother, an emissions trading scheme, will cost seriously the Australian economy and the Australian people.

The Australian people are upset now about the increases in the price of electricity under state Labor governments and the policies of this Labor government. If we have a carbon tax of $40 a tonne, even though the Prime Minister did not seem to know this during question time today, it will effectively double the wholesale price of electricity. So pensioners and people in households struggling to meet the cost of their electricity bill and the cost of food need to know that Labor’s and the Greens’ carbon tax proposal will double their electricity prices. It will substantially increase their food prices. It will add to the cost of transport. It will add to the cost of everything we do in this country. It will cost
Australian jobs as industry moves to places that do not have this tax and do not have this extra cost.

But what is even worse is that it will achieve nothing for the environment. Extra taxes in Australia will not change the temperature of the globe. They will not lower the sea level. They will not save the Barrier Reef. What we need is a comprehensive and properly worked through proposal and direct action, as dictated by the coalition, if we actually want to deliver on this important issue.

(Time expired)

Mr BRADBURY (Lindsay—Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer) (4.08 pm)—It gives me great pleasure to address this matter of public importance. The Leader of the Opposition began by saying that this is a historic day. I think we all must agree that this is a historic day, but perhaps the reason for it being such a moment of history is something that we might disagree upon. I say at the outset that I find it rather strange that we are held to account in a matter of public importance brought forward by the current Leader of the Opposition on trust and delivery of election commitments, because his record in government and even beyond government in opposition and particularly as Leader of the Opposition demonstrates a man whose word cannot be counted upon. It is a word that cannot be counted upon, and we have seen demonstrations and evidence of that in the last couple of days in his failure to deliver on the agreement on parliamentary reform.

That is, of course, but one example of how the Leader of the Opposition is a man whose word cannot be taken as the truth. He said just a little bit earlier this year that there was a distinction to be drawn between gospel truth and those matters that might be crafted and scripted in a not so careful way in the heat of the moment and in the heat of battle.

We saw that at a time when he was about to do a backflip on a commitment that he had previously given to not increase taxes. So he came forward and said that he would not increase taxes. That was one of the first commitments that he gave as Leader of the Opposition. The first backflip, which was only a matter of days later, was to come forward and say, ‘I will increase taxes. I will slug business in order to deliver a paid parental leave scheme.’ Even he did not have the intestinal fortitude to take that to his shadow cabinet before announcing it publicly. It is a policy that does not have the support of his own party room and it is a policy that did not have the support of the Australian people at the last election.

On the question of the truth or otherwise of statements that have been made by the Leader of the Opposition, let us have a look at what was said throughout the course of the election campaign. I welcome the commitment of the opposition to delivering the platform of matters that we took to the Australian people before the last election. I can only take it that it is a commitment of that nature because for the Leader of the Opposition, let us have a look at what was said throughout the course of the election campaign. I welcome the commitment of the opposition to delivering the platform of matters that we took to the Australian people before the last election. I can only take it that it is a commitment of that nature because for the Leader of the Opposition to come forward and challenge the government to deliver its election commitments but to then stand in the way of the delivery of those election commitments would be nothing short of hypocrisy. That is the challenge. That is the point at which the Leader of the Opposition has set that bar.

There were many things that we took to the electorate in the last election that we will now be calling the Leader of the Opposition and the opposition to account on to help us deliver. That involves delivering tax reform. It involves delivering reductions in company tax. It involves simplifying personal tax with the tick-and-flick arrangements. It involves improving retirement savings and delivering for the superannuation needs and retirement savings needs of working Australians into
the future, tackling that great challenge that our government and previous governments have identified but few have done sufficient to address—and that is the ageing population. Lifting retirement savings by lifting the standard of living of working Australians as they move towards their older years in life is something that we are committed to doing. We took a plan to the election and we intend to deliver on that plan.

I welcome the fact that the Leader of the Opposition today said he believes it is important that governments deliver on election commitments that they take to the people. I do note, however, that the Leader of the Opposition is a man who in government said immediately before an election not all that long ago that when it came to the Medicare safety net he was prepared to give a rolled gold, cast-iron guarantee and then shortly after the election in which he was a part of the government that was re-elected he had to front the people and say that that was not actually the position the government was going to take. Subsequent to that he has tried to argue, ‘Sometimes you get rolled in cabinet. I can’t help it.’

The reality is that the Leader of the Opposition is a man whose word cannot be trusted. We were not able to trust it when he was in government and he has not been a trustworthy person in opposition. What we have seen with him welching on this agreement on parliamentary reform is a man who even though just a short time ago said, ‘If it is in writing you can trust it,’ is now saying, ‘If it is in writing you can trust it as long as you have a QC’s opinion from a QC of our choice who happens to be sitting within our party room.’ I would suggest that at the very least they need a second opinion, because the reality is that the only time the Leader of the Opposition ever intended to deliver on that deal was if he formed government. He did not form government and he is pretty upset about that. I can appreciate that. That is fine. But the fact is that he broke the deal. He broke his agreement. The word that he gave he has reneged on. That is true to type for this Leader of the Opposition, because he has done it time and time again.

The Leader of the Opposition said today that this is a government that is built on a lie. I suggest that the entire election campaign of the opposition was built on one of the biggest lies that we have seen in recent Australian political history. It was built on a $10.6 billion lie. This was the lie that they tried to keep hidden. In fact, Mr Abbott referred to it as an arcane debate about costings. This was about whether or not the alternative government were ever going to be able to deliver on the commitments that they were making during the election campaign.

They visited seats all around the country. I saw Mr Abbott come into my seat and sprinkle money all around—$5 million here, a couple of million dollars there—because ‘we are going to get the budget back into surplus’. Yet there was no plan for delivering these commitments which was exposed. They were very cynical and they almost got away with it. They did not win the election, and it ended up requiring the Independents to come forward and shine a light on the big $10.6 billion hole. That is the lie upon which the opposition’s election campaign was built, and it is a lie that has now been exposed. So, please do not come into this place and tell me that this government is built on a lie.

I look forward to the opposition making good on the commitment that they have made today. No-one has stepped forward and suggested that this is not the case so I am left
to draw the conclusion that the Leader of the Opposition, speaking on behalf of all of his troops, is now saying that they believe—and notwithstanding that he failed to deliver on election commitments when he was in government—that election commitments are so important that he will ensure that we deliver those commitments.

The main example that is brought forward is the whole question of climate change. Both parties took a position to the 2007 election on climate change and a number of people on the other side of the chamber jumped up and down just before the last election and said, ‘You failed to deliver on what you called the biggest moral challenge of our time.’ Yet the only reason that commitment had not been delivered was that people on the other side, who took a similar commitment to the electorate, chose to walk away not only from that commitment but from an agreement that had been signed by the then Leader of the Opposition, the member for Wentworth.

After having knocked it back several times in the Senate the deal on the ETS deal that had been reached went through your party room, albeit with a narrow margin, and then you beheaded your leader. The qualification to election commitments is— (Time expired)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. Peter Slipper)—I would commend to the parliamentary secretary the provisions of standing order 64, which set out that he ought not refer to any member by his or her name, and he referred to the Leader of the Opposition using, I think, his name, Tony Abbott. I call the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin) (4.18 pm)—It is said that a week is a long time in politics. The three months since 23 June 2010 feel like an eternity. The date of 23 June 2010 will be one of those dates en-meshed in the collective public memory whereby people will ask, ‘Where were you when that first-term Prime Minister was knifed and brought down by his own deputy?’ It is a date to be forever known as ‘Kevin Rudd’s Fundamental Injustice Day’.

A minority Labor government was sworn in yesterday for its second term. But you could have sworn it was for its first term. Instead of embracing the achievements of the Rudd/Gillard government, Labor was distancing itself from the so-called achievements of that government at a rate of knots.

The Prime Minister is desperate for the public to believe that this is a shiny, new government and not a continuation of the old, failed government. She is desperate to adopt Julia’s ‘year zero’. She is desperate to distance herself from the failures of that Rudd/Gillard government. She is desperate to walk away from the government of which she was the deputy leader, a government of which she was the co-author of all its policies, a key member of the ‘Gang of Four’, our very own ‘Madam Mao’. She was one of the quartet responsible for the failed policies, the disastrous implementations and the broken promises of the Rudd/Gillard government.

Memories of that government will not fade. Its disastrous failures will not go away because there are families still living in homes with electrified roofs and in unsafe environments courtesy of the government’s failed insulation program. There are schools lumbered with expensive kit-form halls and canteens entirely unsuitable for use courtesy of the government’s Building the Education Revolution plan. There are record numbers of boats arriving on our shores with Christmas Island overflowing courtesy of Labor’s failed asylum seeker policies.

Yes, the ramifications of that political assassination on 23 June just will not go away
and, like Lady Macbeth washing imaginary bloodstains from her hands, the Prime Minister is busily washing her hands of the former government. But Banquo’s ghost remains in the midst of the Labor Party. The former Prime Minister just will not go away, haunting the government by his very presence and being inherently, intrinsically present in all Labor’s policies.

If members were in the Senate yesterday listening to the Governor-General’s address which outlined the government’s policy agenda, they would have heard it was all the same old Labor—the same high-taxing, high-spending old Labor. Sure, the Prime Minister would love everyone to forget that she led a disastrous election campaign that resulted in a first-term Labor government losing its majority. Sure, she is desperate for everyone to forget about the belated emergence during the election campaign of the real Julia, replacing the fake Julia, who had taken the leadership of the party. The member for Griffith knows all about the real Julia. The member for Chisholm knows all about the real Julia. What happened to EMILY’s List? What happened to the Labor sisterhood? And, as this matter of public importance shows, the Prime Minister is desperate for everyone to forget about all those pesky promises she made to the Australian people prior to the election.

Take climate change. But first cast your memory back to late April, when the then Prime Minister announced that he would dump his policy designed to combat the ‘greatest moral challenge of our age’. He was going to dump the emissions trading scheme. We all now know that he took that controversial decision at the urging of his self-proclaimed loyal deputy. That decision was the beginning of the end for the former Prime Minister, and it was all by the hand of the loyal deputy, who said that she was more likely to fly to Mars or to play full-forward for the Bulldogs than to challenge the member for Griffith for the Labor leadership.

Well, that has certainly given us an indication of the character of the new Prime Minister, for she is proving by the day that she cannot be taken at her word and she cannot be trusted. Just ask the member for Griffith. Hiding behind that giggling facade is a ruthless political operative who will stop at nothing to gain power. There is no promise that cannot be broken. There is no commitment that cannot be abandoned for the sake of political expediency.

The broken promise on a carbon tax is the new paradigm for Labor. There can be no doubt that this government gave a clear commitment to the Australian people before the election of 21 August. In response to a question about a carbon tax, the Treasurer said on 12 August on ABC television:

We have made our position very clear. We have ruled it out.

On 15 August, again on ABC television, the Treasurer said:

What we rejected is this hysterical allegation that we are moving towards a carbon tax.

The next day the Prime Minister said on Network Ten:

There will be no carbon tax under the government I lead.

Then, on 20 August, the day before the federal election, when the public was focused on the Prime Minister’s promises, she said:

I rule out a carbon tax.

It is hard to imagine a more definitive response to the question of whether the Labor Party intended to introduce a carbon tax, yet today we are faced with the government’s plans for a stacked committee to rubber-stamp a predetermined decision to introduce a carbon tax.

This is what we are going to have to expect: hypocrisy to the power of 10. No other
conclusion can be drawn. The Prime Minis-
ter and the Treasurer took a calculated deci-
sion to deceive the Australian people about
their true intentions. What possible excuse
could this tricky new Prime Minister come
up with for her broken promise? Well, so far
it is all the fault of the Greens and the Inde-
pendents. The Prime Minister is trying to
spin the line that because she lost Labor’s
majority she is forced to negotiate and
change her policies. If we follow this logic to
its conclusion, Australia has arrived at the
position where the new Prime Minister feels
no obligation at all to abide by any of her
election commitments and no qualms at all
about walking away. There is something
fundamentally rotten at the core of this gov-
ernment.

It is in reality a Labor-Greens alliance,
and we are only in the early stages of seeing
the influence of the Greens within Labor. The
closer we get to the new Senate in July
2011 the greater the influence the Greens
will exert over Labor. In many ways, mem-
ers, we are witnessing an historic event,
which is what Labor fears: the passing of the
baton from one political movement to an-
other—the cannibalisation by the Greens of
the grand old Labor movement. We know the
Greens agreed to a preference deal with La-
bor before Labor had even announced its
environment policy. It was a secret deal, but
everyone knows the outcome. The Greens
will gouge Labor from the inside out, and
they have pretty pliable material to work
with. The Greens are dealing with a Prime
Minister who will change policies in a heart-
beat if she whiffs a change in the political
breeze and with a party that will change its
leader in a heartbeat if it sniffs a change in
the political breeze.

Make no mistake: the coalition will not sit
idly by and allow dishonesty to reap a re-
ward. We will not be silenced by the sancti-
mony from Labor. The coalition will vigor-
ously scrutinise the failings of this funda-
mentally flawed government and we will
expose the deception that lies in its heart.
The Prime Minister, by her conduct and by
her behaviour, has shown the character of the
person who now leads this nation. A clear
pattern has emerged. The Prime Minister
cannot be taken at her word. The Prime Min-
ister cannot be trusted and, in the good old-
fashioned Labor tradition, Labor will con-
tinue to say one thing to the public before an
election and do precisely the opposite after
an election. Labor cannot be trusted to gov-
ern.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. Peter
Slipper)—The Deputy Leader of the Oppo-
sition’s time has expired. I also draw her at-
tention to standing order 64.

Mrs D’ATH (Petrie) (4.28 pm)—Mr
Deputy Speaker Slipper, may I congratulate
you on your new appointment. I certainly
welcome the opportunity to speak on this
MPI. I have to say that I did enjoy the theat-
rical performance by the previous speaker,
the member for Curtin. There was even ref-
erence made to Shakespeare in that perform-
ance. Maybe there should be an appointment
for the member to shadow minister for the
arts after that! We heard the member for Cur-
tin make a lot of reference to the word ‘des-
perate’. However, can I say that this matter
of public importance shows the serious des-
peration of the opposition. Their latest strat-
egy of criticising the Labor government for
failures on election commitments has to be
looked at in the context of truth and honesty
and the mover of this matter of public impor-
tance.

Let us look at the mover of this MPI and
the matter of honesty. The Leader of the Op-
position, in talking to this MPI today, re-
f erred to the prosperity that people came to
expect under the Howard government. We all
remember the slogan ‘Australians have never
been better off’. We also remember the slogan ‘Interest rates would be kept at record lows under the Howard government’. This is the same government who squandered the resources boom and who ensured that Australians were left worse off under WorkChoices. We heard the Leader of the Opposition actually say that you cannot believe his own words; it is not the gospel truth unless it is in writing. Now we hear that, when it is in writing—when it is signed by the Leader of the Opposition in good faith—that cannot be trusted either. We hear from the opposition that a signature to a document is an informal arrangement, whereas I and many institutions, including the legal institutions in this country, believe that a signed agreement entered into in good faith is actually a formal, binding document on the parties. But the Leader of the Opposition and his party say that it is an informal arrangement and that they can pick and choose what they want to stand by.

When we talk about truth and honesty we should talk about WorkChoices. We do not need to go back to the Howard government to talk about this; we need only go back to the budget reply by the Leader of the Opposition in 2010—this year; only a matter of months before the election—when he stood at the dispatch box and said: ‘In government the Liberal Party would reintroduce individual agreements and scrap unfair dismissal laws.’ He said he would do that as Prime Minister of this country. Then he changed slightly and said, ‘Work Choices is dead’. Then—and I will use the member for Curtin’s reference—the Leader of the Opposition said he may be willing to change policy if he whiffs a bit of change in the political breeze. Well, there was certainly a whiff in the air, because when the election came around Work Choices was dead, buried and cremated. We even saw the Leader of the Opposition put that in writing.

The level of desperation that the opposition party stooped to and the level of credibility that it has with the Australian public became, I think, very evident when I and other residents in my electorate started to receive in our letterboxes a flyer from the Liberal Party saying that ‘Work Choices was dead, buried and cremated.’ What does it say about a party’s credibility when it believes that it needs to spend money on distributing a flyer telling people what it is not going to do? So I think we need to put this whole debate in the context of the truth and honesty from the Leader of the Opposition.

I welcome this debate because it talks about climate change and about the truth of climate change. The Labor Party made it very clear prior to the election in 2007 and prior to the election in 2010 that we were committed to dealing with climate change in this country—and we continue to stand by that position. We held that position before the election in 2010 and we hold that position today. We make no apologies that, as a party in government and in a hung parliament, we sat down and negotiated with the crossbenchers. The crossbenchers had positions on a range of issues, including climate change. They wanted to see a party in this parliament that was genuine about addressing climate change. We make no apologies for having those discussions and for reaching an agreement with the crossbenchers that we would form a committee and genuinely sit and look at the issue of a carbon tax and climate change. If the opposition were genuine they would put up representatives to sit on that committee and talk through these important issues in the national interest.

When we talk about honesty, we should also go back to the position that the Liberal Party held in the lead-up to the 2007 election. They told the Australian people that they were committed to an emissions trading scheme. They went to the election with that.
The Labor Party also went to the 2007 election with a commitment to an emissions trading scheme. After the election in 2007, the Liberal Party walked away—not straight away—from their position. They pretended to be genuine about it for quite a while. They even had a shadow minister sit with the government and negotiate a carbon pollution reduction scheme, and they reached an agreement with the Labor Party to introduce a bill in this House for a carbon pollution reduction scheme. But the Liberal and the National parties were so opposed to recognising the importance of climate change that they chose to roll their leader.

Mrs D’ATH—Mr Deputy Speaker, I withdraw. What I can say about election commitments is that the Labor government did deliver in its first term of government. It delivered a 50 per cent increase under the national health agreement to the health system. We committed to improving education by delivering computers in our schools. I am pleased to say that over 90 per cent of computers have already been delivered to secondary schools in the electorate of Petrie and we still have almost 18 months left to deliver on that policy program. We said that we would deliver on trade training centres and I have trade training centres being built in the electorate of Petrie right now. We have new science and language centres in our schools. We have a national curriculum being developed right now under consultation with our schools across this country. We are working to improve education. I am proud of the halls and libraries that we have in our schools across the electorate of Petrie and across this country. This has provided state-of-the-art facilities for our schools and for our schoolchildren and for our broader community.

We said that we would deliver on infrastructure and we have delivered more in the first term of government than the opposition did in 11 years, and we have much more to deliver. I am very proud of the fact that we will be delivering the Petrie to Kippa-Ring rail line in the electorate of Petrie. That will also benefit people in the electorates of Dickson and Longman. These are just some of the commitments that we have made. (Time expired)

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Mrs Mirabella interjecting—

Mrs D’ATH—I am hearing from the member for Indi about electricity and water prices and that the Australian public should be very concerned about increases in electricity and water prices. I heard the Liberal candidate in my electorate talk about what they would do to try to put pressure on to reduce water and electricity prices and that Liberal candidate at a public forum said, ‘We control the funding on health and education to the state governments, so we can put pressure on state governments.’ I think we have heard this before. I think there was a billion dollars ripped out of the health system trying to put pressure on state governments. So the member for Indi agrees that we should actually cut health and education funding out of the state systems so that we can try to reduce water and electricity prices.

Mrs Mirabella—I am hearing from the member for Indi about electricity and water prices and that the Australian public should be very concerned about increases in electricity and water prices. I heard the Liberal candidate in my electorate talk about what they would do to try to put pressure on to reduce water and electricity prices and that Liberal candidate at a public forum said, ‘We control the funding on health and education to the state governments, so we can put pressure on state governments.’ I think we have heard this before. I think there was a billion dollars ripped out of the health system trying to put pressure on state governments. So the member for Indi agrees that we should actually cut health and education funding out of the state systems so that we can try to reduce water and electricity prices.

Mrs Mirabella—Mr Deputy Speaker, on a point of order: I would ask the member for Petrie to withdraw that comment. It was an absolute and deliberate misrepresentation.

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The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott)—The member for Indi finds it offensive. If the member for Petrie would like to assist the House, she might like to withdraw that.
Mr Lyons (Bass) (4.39 pm)—I have already formally seconded the motion that the address-in-reply be agreed to and, having done so, I extend my congratulations to all members of the House of Representatives on their election on 21 August 2010. I would also like to extend my thanks to the people of Bass in Tasmania. I am very humbled and deeply honoured to be given the opportunity to represent them and to thank them for their support and trust. A successful election campaign relies on a huge team effort and I place on record my appreciation to all the supporters who letterboxed, put up signs, door-knocked, stuffed envelopes, took photographs, spread the message of the Australian Labor Party and all the other myriad tasks that a campaign requires.

In particular, I thank Senator Helen Polley, who is in the chamber today, Paul Griffin, Ross Hart, Adam Clarke, Pamela Carswell, Alan Stacey, Robyn Giblin, Sam James, Syd Edwards and many others. I also wish to thank my dad, who through all this had to be moved out of his home into alternative accommodation. Thank you, Sheryle, for all your love and support and thanks to my three beautiful daughters, Michelle, Bianca and Sarah, and their partners, Ashley and Emmett. There was one person who put all this into perspective for me and that is my grandson Harper. When it all seemed too hard and too tiring, a few moments with one-year-old Harper gave me distraction, joy, perspective and laughs. I also wish to acknowledge my predecessor in Bass, Jodie Campbell, a happy soul who graciously stepped aside to spend more time with her two beautiful daughters and who supported my campaign from start to finish.

Many people in regional and marginal Bass are doing it tough with the decline in the manufacturing, vegetable processing and timber industries. Our challenge is to find innovative white knights who will take up the opportunities which our soil, our water and the majestic beauty of our environment provide. There is no doubt that regional Bass, like the rest of regional Australia, does need to find innovative ways to build a sustainable future.

I am a passionate Tasmanian. I grew up in Tasmania and have worked in Tasmania all my life. I have a strong community obligation and commitment to sport, health, education and regional development. I believe we must reinvigorate community sport. I believe there is a need to encourage people, particularly young people, to belong to community organisations. When vandalism was on the rise in the town where I grew up, my father started a youth club. When kids were falling off horses and breaking limbs, we started a judo club to teach them how to fall. I know we are not in an era of joining or committing to any organisation and I believe Australia is worse off for that. How do we turn that around? One way is to improve recreational and sporting facilities in regional Australia which would make it more attractive for people of today. We are not in a make-do world as the Australian people once were. Therefore, to encourage participation and joining and to establish that feeling of belonging or having an ownership of community facilities, facilities must be designed and built by communities with assistance from governments.

My family have grown up. I had no set plan for bringing them up, but I do know how to keep them busy and community sport is an important part of that. I believe that we should be empowering people to provide better community facilities which will encourage not only joining but also community ownership. It is not easy to be at training four times a week, to sweep out the rooms...
after everyone has gone home, to cook the tea for the players, to mark the ground and to stand on the gate each week. The people who do that are the backbone of small and city communities alike. We must work out ways of providing assistance to provide the light of hope that those people—the real heroes of Australia—need.

Those of you who know me know that I am passionate about sport. I am passionate about improving sporting facilities in the electorate of Bass and encouraging young people to become involved in both individual and team sports. Tasmania has a rich sporting history in many fields and disciplines. We have a strong sporting pedigree, producing some of Australia’s leading sports stars. We want to continue that legacy with top-class community sporting facilities and administration. Just as many schools in Bass had not had any money spent on them for 20 years until a Labor government came to power, some sports facilities have not changed for 50 years. These are not community facilities which will motivate participation.

I am actively involved in surf-lifesaving and have been lucky enough to have assisted in running state, national and international events for surf-lifesaving. Surf-lifesaving has been a large part of my life, providing me with the opportunity to serve as a club secretary at 17 and a club captain at 18, and with the continuous satisfaction of belonging ever since. Through my daughters I became involved in netball administration, and what a wonderful opportunity we have to make a difference by assisting to improve facilities for that sport. Community football has been the poor cousin of Aussie Rules with the AFL dominating every aspect of the game, particularly venues and media. The AFL, with the extra revenue of two grand finals this year, could put some more resources into community football. My advice to the people of Australia is to visit your local club and to assist your sport by providing some assistance to that club. You will be made very welcome. The satisfaction you receive will far outweigh your contribution. Voluntary aged-care administration has been an area of great satisfaction to me and is an area that we as a government need to foster. Again, people of Australia, if you want something else in your life, offer to help at an aged-care facility.

In all these activities I meet wonderful Australians who universally believe private and public bureaucracy has gone mad. No matter where I go, the burden of excessive process exists. We seem to have promoted people who are good at process, but those people sometimes think that process is achievement. The sad part is that some cannot tell the difference. I urge all involved to think in the way an old doctor friend told me I should administer a hospital: ‘If you were at war and in the trenches, would you do it that way?’ That is a reality check worth contemplating.

I also strongly support empowering people in either government or private organisations to manage those organisations at the lowest possible level where they have full information. This creates genuine empowerment of people. I spent a large part of my working life in health administration at Beaconsfield and Launceston hospitals. The pleasure of developing services for people is not measurable. The people in health care are amazing for their commitment, skill and caring. At times it is not possible to justify on business grounds that a service should be provided for a community, but if it is genuinely needed the service is usually developed.

One thing I learnt in health care is that it is constantly evolving. The only constant is change. So the challenge is to be smart
enough to understand that a facility developed today may well have another use tomorrow. The reality is that diseases and cures can overcome all your planning. Health care in northern Tasmania will improve with the current work at the Launceston General Hospital. But that is not the end, merely a start in creating a centre of excellence.

We have an obligation to continue to work and build on the effort of past leaders going right back to 1847 when Dr Pugh was the first doctor in the Southern Hemisphere to utilise ether to successfully anaesthetise a patient during surgery. In 1896 Dr Drake returned from England and brought with him a complete X-ray unit one year after they were first invented. He also brought back bacteriological equipment. Dr John Ramsey wrote a paper in 1898 called *Intravenous injection of normal saline solution in severe case of typhoid with haemorrhage*. In 1911 Dr Ramsey was the first man on earth to successfully transfer pancreatic tissue in an attempt to heal diabetes, 10 years before the discovery of insulin. In 1911 Dr Ramsey had a cardiac arrest during a surgical procedure. He performed open-heart massage and the patient recovered—the first in the world. In 1919 Tasmania was the first state to require women to undergo a course of training to register as a midwife. The first radium needles were purchased in 1927 for Dr Holman to treat cancer patients at the Launceston General Hospital. He and Dr Ramsey formed the radiotherapy unit for the hospital.

After experiencing the polio epidemic, breathing machines were common and Dr Keverall McIntyre, obstetrician and gynaecologist at the Launceston General Hospital, invented a neonatal respirator in 1944 to assist a child’s respiration and hence reduce the all-too-common cause of death—asphyxiation. In 1974, Dr Lees and Dr McIntyre conducted the first successful reattachment of an amputated hand in Australia at Launceston General. In 1977 Professor Einoder started arthroscopic surgery in Tasmania. He did the first arthroscopic procedures in a public hospital in Australia and was told by health bureaucrats, ‘It will never catch on.’ In the 1980s Dr Rob Fassett, renal specialist, was told no renal dialysis should be done outside Hobart, but he continued and created a first-rate renal service. In 1992, the Launceston General Hospital did the first endovascular procedure in Tasmania and in 1996 it started automatic afterloading, high-dose-rate brachytherapy.

Dr Clifford Craig arrived at the Launceston General Hospital on Anzac Day 1926. His recollection of the hospital at the time was as follows:

The outstanding impression of those early days was the hospital’s strong personality. There was obviously a longstanding tradition of excellent training. All members of staff, nurses, ward maids, porters, cooks, gardeners knew what work they had to do and did it well. The hospital discipline was excellent. Such a state of affairs could only have been reached after a long period of good management by people of great capabilities.

Those traditions continue at the Launceston General Hospital today and give us an outstanding foundation for our future as a centre of excellence in training, education, research and patient care.

I have been a member of the Australian Labor Party since the early 1970s. From an early age I was encouraged by my family, particularly by my grandfather, to discuss politics and take an interest in the political issues of the day. He used to say it is always capitalised profits and socialised debt, and the recent global financial crisis brought that home to me, with the Labor government guarantees and stimulus protecting our people. The decline in manufacturing in Australia and the government money poured in to support the debt of businesses certainly con-
firms my grandfather’s theory. He, along with former Deputy Prime Minister Lance Barnard, encouraged me to stand but that was not the right time for me in terms of my other commitments. Now is the right time for me to represent the people of Bass. I hope to be able to contribute to policy, particularly in the areas of health, education, sport and regional development.

To be elected to represent the people of Bass means that I now have to show my leadership for the benefit of them. To be a good leader requires initiative, creativity, inspiration and vision. The Labor government has a commitment to lifelong learning and I have a vision for the people of Bass: that Launceston should be the Oxford of Australia, an education centre of excellence. We must create a place to live where all levels of government communicate, where all levels of government are passionate about making Bass—indeed, Australia—a better place to live. I want to inspire people to be accountable and responsible for decisions that are made at all levels of government and link progress to advance that responsibility.

Our young people need to be encouraged to find their strengths, exercise their talents and realise their dreams. I believe that young people deserve a political voice and my vision is that all young Australians will be active citizens. I believe that we as a government need to provide more education for our youth about the business and purpose of government and I hope to make a difference in this area.

When I think about all of my ambitions for the people of Bass and all the requests that I have received and those that will be made to me, it is quite daunting. However, I will assemble a strong team behind me who are also committed to Bass and we will work together to deliver. The famous George Bernard Shaw said:

We are made wise not by our recollection of our past, but by our responsibility for our future.

I will take my responsibility as a member of the House of Representatives with honour, compassion, common sense and commitment.

I am proud to be part of a government that will provide answers on issues of real significance for our society; issues such as parliamentary reform, a more inclusive society, a stronger economy, regional development, environmental responsibility, health and education. I too have great faith in the enduring strength of our democratic institutions and I will represent the people of Bass with the commitment to make a difference. I feel very humble and full of anxious anticipation to be standing here today. I pledge my commitment to make a difference for the people of Bass, for the wonderful state of Tasmania, for this federal parliament and for all Australians. It gives me great pleasure to second the motion.

The SPEAKER—Order! Before I call Mr Wyatt, I remind honourable members that this is his first speech. I therefore ask that the usual courtesies be extended to him.

Mr WYATT (Hasluck) (4.55 pm)—I acknowledge the traditional owners, the Ngambri people, on whose land this great house stands and I equally acknowledge their elders past and present. I want to personally thank Matilda House for the Welcome to Country. I also acknowledge the Nyungar people of Western Australia and my elders past and present. Their wisdom and guidance ensured that our culture, language and history has endured for 40,000 years and remains vibrant and alive today.

The decisions we make determine our destiny and the choices we make shape our personal future. It is an enormous honour that the electors of Hasluck have bestowed upon me by electing me as their representative for
this term of parliament. Only 1,093 people have been privileged to be a member of the House of Representatives. It is with deep and mixed emotion that I, as an Aboriginal man with Noongar, Yamitji and Wongi heritage, stand before you and the members of the House of Representatives as an equal. I want to reflect these feelings and sentiments so eloquently put by the two previous Aboriginal senators, Neville Bonner and Aden Ridgeway, in their maiden speeches.

In Senator Neville Bonner’s powerful first speech on 8 September 1971, he encapsulated the feelings that I am experiencing today. Equally, Senator Aden Ridgeway, in his speech 28 years after Senator Neville Bonner’s speech, also outlined the enormity of the task that I assume as a mantle of responsibility to represent the people of Hasluck and advocate for Indigenous Australians. Regrettably, 39 years later, I stand here and the same principles and ideals still apply. Not a great deal has changed significantly.

Hasluck covers an area of approximately 227 square kilometres, is the home to over 93,000 residents and includes the City of Gosnells, the western portion of the Shire of Kalamunda and parts of the Shire of Mundaring and the City of Swan. It is geographically and economically diverse and includes a range of industries, including retail, transport and service industries; some light industry such as the Cole Group and Barmacco; and market gardens and vineyards such as the Sandalford Winery. Rotary has an expression of ‘Service above self’ and it is my intention to serve the constituents of Hasluck by fighting for better outcomes that positively impact on their everyday life.

The decision of the Hasluck electors has immortalised them for creating a historic moment in Australia’s history by electing the first Aboriginal member of the House of Representatives. Researchers in the future will analyse the decision made by the people of Hasluck on 21 August 2010. What they are likely to find is that the personal and professional qualities of the candidate were the reasons for their decision.

I am fortunate that I have been elected as the member for Hasluck in Western Australia for a range of reasons, but more importantly because the seat is named after a man who devoted his life to public office and the matters that he sought to right. Sir Paul Hasluck entered federal politics in 1949 and remained as the Liberal member for Curtin until 1969. He served as Minister for Territories, Minister for Defence and Minister for External Affairs. He served as a diplomat and cabinet minister, and was the first Western Australian-born Governor-General of Australia. In reading an extract of his from the House of Representatives parliamentary debates, I was struck by a couple of salient points that remain equally important today. Sir Paul Hasluck stated that the ‘foundations of our policy are two principles’, being equality of opportunity and that ‘there should be no division into classes but that men should stand on their own worth’.

There is no ‘one size fits all’ solution to deal with any social issue. Rather, we should look at the individual needs of the person, the family and the community. For example, the needs of Gosnells residents differ from the needs of Kalamunda residents in my electorate. I want no less for the electors of Hasluck, the people of Western Australia and Australian society as we become immersed within a global economy. I want to achieve changes and outcomes, as I am sure that you all equally desire, that are inclusive because if we do not achieve those changes then we have failed those who have elected us.

I am the oldest child of Don and Mona Wyatt, who raised 10 children. My father served in the RAAF towards the end of
World War II as a driver and left to work for the Western Australian Government Railways where he worked and ended his career as a railway ganger. In 1972, when I graduated from teachers college my first pay was more than what my father was earning towards the end of his career. My mother was one of the stolen generation and spent her childhood years in Roelands Mission near Bunbury in Western Australia.

As a child, I used to listen to the stories shared between my mother and her brothers and sisters about growing up in the respective missions they were sent to. They reminisced about the people they grew up with outside of their own families and the family connections they re-established after leaving the mission. I often wondered about the experiences that remained locked away in their memories and not talked about. What I found even more fascinating was the blurring of the lines between real family and the many others who were accepted as family because they had shared a significant part of their childhood together in the mission.

We all have vivid recollections of the way things were, but as children we did not comprehend the significance of many actions until much later, when we were more capable of understanding the reality of life my mother experienced while she was in Roelands Mission and later as a domestic worker. My parents substantiated this when I was much older and the missing pieces were gained through reading the numerous entries, correspondence and field officer’s reports in my mother’s native welfare department file. It gave us an inkling of the challenges that she faced as a child and later as an adolescent woman when she was sent out to work. The letters from her parents or the entries made about parental contact over a period of time clearly established the fact that her parents had not relinquished their parental rights.

The apology to the stolen generation has been a powerful instrument in the healing of both our people and our nation. The apology was acknowledged and received in the spirit for which it was offered. When the former Prime Minister delivered the apology on 13 February 2008 in this chamber I shed tears for my mother and her siblings. My mother and her siblings, along with many others, did not live to hear the words delivered in the apology, which would have meant a great deal to them individually. I felt a sense of relief that the pain of the past had been acknowledged and that the healing could begin.

At that point, the standing orders prevented an Indigenous response. On behalf of my mother, her siblings and all Indigenous Australians, I, as an Aboriginal voice in this chamber, say thank you for the apology delivered in the federal parliament and I thank the Hon. Kevin Rudd for honouring his commitment to the stolen generation.

I hope that all governments continue to embrace new solutions to enduring problems where old approaches have failed, where enduring approaches need to change and where the future we all influence is based on mutual respect, mutual resolve and mutual responsibility. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the agencies of government need to jettison the old mindsets that embody Indigenous Australians as passive recipients of government programs and services, and to instead truly regard people as equals and allow them to be equal partners in developing their solutions. Governments must allow information to be shared so that an informed consent decision-making process is enabled. If change is to occur and become embedded and sustained then all must be equal and active partners in all facets of planning, implementation and accountability, and I would equally apply this to all Australians that we represent.
My parents instilled in us the values of having respect for others, having integrity, trusting others and accepting responsibility for our actions and decisions. We were taught that our word was to be our bond, and that prevails. However, life experiences teach you to be much more astute to those who have ulterior motives based on personal gain.

I have been a battler for most of my life but I have always driven myself to be successful in order to achieve my dreams. I used education as the way to change my life to get to where I am now and I believe that a quality education is the key to success for any young Australian. I have always been inspired by Nelson Mandela, who reinforced the importance of education with these words:

Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mine worker can become the head of the mine, that a child of a farm worker can become the president of a great nation.

As the son of a railway ganger and a domestic worker who was a part of the stolen generation, I am here before you today in this chamber because of the influence of education and my year 1 teacher, Miss Abernethy. Her unfailing faith in my ability to succeed and serve Australian society resonated on the day of the election when she turned up to hand out how-to-vote cards for me in Maddington. This ongoing support 50 years after I was in her class has been particularly humbling.

This is why I have always believed and promoted the fact that education and access to the knowledge society involves lifelong learning. An education in Corrigin, a rural town in Western Australia, has not been a barrier to my achievements. The local Rotary Club, the Country Women’s Association and a local businessman, Dean Rundle, combined their efforts to ensure I completed my secondary schooling. They met all of the costs associated with my schooling and travel and provided pocket money. They indicated to my parents that they had great faith in the pathway and journey and that I had the opportunity to travel if I was given the right support. I attended Swanleigh Residential College in Swan View to complete my leaving certificate and I graduated as a primary school teacher from Mount Lawley Teachers College.

My career led me to leadership roles in education and health both in Western Australia and in New South Wales. Co-chairing the COAG Indigenous health working group, I achieved a $1.6 billion commitment from all jurisdictions to improve Indigenous health outcomes. For me, that is the jewel in the crown of my work achievements. I was able to contribute effectively in these positions due to my life experiences.

As a teenager I would trap rabbits to put food on the table, sell the excess to the local butcher and tan the skins to provide money for our family of 10. I would get up at 4.30 am, light the fire and ride my bike to check my traps before going to school, and then after school I would chop firewood for others to earn money. On weekends and during school holidays, I worked in a variety of labouring roles, which included being a labourer for brickies, carpenters, plumbers and a roof tiling team. The work was hard but I pulled my weight to earn what I was paid. I was a rouseabout on shearing teams and learnt wool-classing. Experiences such as a farm labourer, a general hand in a local garage washing car parts in petrol on cold mornings, an undertaker’s live-in caretaker, a fettler on the railway line and a grape-picker in the Swan Valley and Caversham are not dissimilar to the experiences of residents in the seat of Hasluck.
Whilst I was campaigning and meeting people at their front doors, I was affected by the number of ordinary Australians who struggle from day to day and in particular the number of seniors, retirees and veterans struggling to make ends meet. I find this an anomaly because the wealth, prosperity and facilities that we take for granted were established and provided through the hard work and sacrifices of our elderly. Additionally, our freedom, the liberties we enjoy and the democratic processes we have today are because of our veterans and the sacrifices that they made for us. I do not want to celebrate a day or week dedicated to seniors and veterans, but instead want to work with members of this House to find real solutions that will enable them to enjoy a comfortable retirement and be financially secure. Elders within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies are revered and respected, and hold a special place—they do not go away but remain as wisdom-givers and guides in our future. The same concept has to be applied to all seniors and retirees, and the support they require should be accorded to them.

As leaders—and I see all of us in this House as leaders—we need to be pathfinders so that we can accelerate the change needed to improve outcomes for our future generations. To me, pathfinders are leaders who shape the future, which is fast, fragile, fashionable and ever-changing. As pathfinders, we forge the way forward and we draw the maps and pathways for the future generations of Australians. As pathfinders, we have to commit to and fight for change. We have to plan for a society that should exist for all Australians in 2030 and 2050.

From my professional experience, health and medical treatment is an example that gives a clear understanding of the rapid impact of change. Today, modern medicine includes substantial work surrounding stem cell research and its application to repairing vital organs and body tissue, DNA profiling and health enhancement to address predisposition to disease. This will ultimately impact on an individual’s wellbeing and prolong the quality of life. Consider the following: in the near future we will be able to have a 360-degree body scan that will identify every organ, blood vessel and nerve which in turn will be stored on a computer and uploaded, and our surgery will be programmed and robotically followed through. The complex incision, treatment of body tissue and sealing of a wound will all be supervised by a surgeon from a central control point. It sounds impossible, but imagine Henry Ford today looking at the assembly line he established. It is now that automated that he would not recognise the original process upon which it was based.

As pathfinders, we need to design education and training systems that are a means through which Australian societies better prepare future generations to invent a better tomorrow for themselves and their children. The opportunity to address this issue has been lost over recent times and we need to redress the current situation so that we develop Australia’s workforce with the skills required for the future. As leaders, we need to be the pathfinders and use our influence at the right times, for the right reasons and for the good of all not the few. We need to continue to search for the best answers and not the familiar ones because they offer the path of least resistance. We need to achieve a legacy of better outcomes for the children of the future and work for the benefit of others and not for personal gain. For all of us as pathfinders, we need to take our ideas and aspirations, act on them, see them through to success and not give up when the quest gets challenging, and remember at all times that we are all our children’s future.

I am passionate about and strongly committed to working towards achieving better
outcomes and opportunities for the residents of Hasluck, Indigenous Australians and Australian society marked by justice, legitimacy, integrity and a commitment to supporting these essential virtues. Equally, I strongly believe that we need to provide a lifelong educational pathway that positions our young people to succeed in an ever-changing world where the quick pace of the global and technological society will be ever-present in their lives; provide for our seniors, veterans and those living in poverty, who require practical solutions to their specific needs; and provide strong and visionary leadership that forges our place in the global community as a nation of people led by many, not the few.

I believe that ministers as pathfinders have the capacity to make a difference in shaping Australia’s future. The greatest strength of Australian democracy is that ministers of any party take responsibility for the provision of services, programs and funding for all Australians based on need and not on political expediency. Their thinking should extend beyond the term of a government, even though we give commitments within our election priorities. I expect that the residents of Hasluck will share equally in the evolving commitments and priorities established by ministers and I will ensure that they will not be overlooked. My commitment is to them.

Throughout the campaign and election I was strongly supported by the Hasluck division of the WA Liberal Party and the team of volunteers who provided endless hours of support and encouragement. In the 44th Parliament I hope to see Aboriginal members from all parties in their place in the House of Representatives. I have appreciated the personal support given to me since the campaign by the Hon. Tony Abbott and the Hon. Julie Bishop. My patron senator, who has walked very closely with me, Senator Judith Adams, was the mainstay of support that resulted in me standing here as the member for Hasluck in the chamber today.

The things I have done and achieved in life are not for my own edification but to make a difference for others, that they may choose a destiny that meets their needs and the needs of the society in which they live. I have the experience, wisdom, fortitude and energy to take on this responsibility and to do what has to be done to make a difference for the people of Hasluck. As a pathfinder, I will focus on the present and learn from the past to shape the future for the generations to come.

I dedicate my maiden speech, because of the support that I have received, to my fiancee, Anna, and to my sons, Aaron and Brendyn, who continue to make me proud.

The SPEAKER—Order! Before I call the honourable member for Greenway, I remind the House that this is the honourable member’s first speech and I ask the House to extend to her the usual courtesies.

Ms ROWLAND (Greenway) (5.20 pm)—In 1952, a 20-year-old man working as a junior clerk in Sydney spotted a recruitment notice for managerial positions in one of two locations in the South Pacific. Seeking a new challenge, he based his decision as to which of these two locations he would choose, the then Territory of Papua and New Guinea or Fiji, on the toss of a coin: heads, off to New Guinea or, tails, to Fiji. As the saying goes, tails never fails. So it was within weeks of that toss that he was strapped into the seat of a flying boat rising above the magnificent Sydney Harbour, bound for Suva.

Within two years he married the most eligible young lady in the city, a woman of impeccable character from a very well known family, a descendant from the royal island of Bau, the home of the great chiefs. For several years this couple adventured to far-flung
islands across the Pacific. They had two children. Then they made a decision. Those people were my parents, and their decision was to surrender their idyllic life and settle in Australia in order to give their two children, named Tony and Lyn, the best opportunities for their own futures and do the same for my brother John and me, who would be born in Australia many years later.

I pay tribute to my dad, Frank Rowland, and affirm my deepest respect for the Wildin family of my mother. I also honour my husband’s family, the Chaayas, who, as Christian Lebanese, fled Beirut and the impending civil war, coming to Australia in the early 1970s. My mother-in-law, Sue, was pregnant with the baby whom I would eventually marry.

The story of my family parallels those of so many others in the electorate of Greenway. I acknowledge the diversity of ethnicities, religions and life experiences which comprise the people of Greenway, whom I represent in this House today with great humility and determination. The election campaign in Greenway confirmed for me some beliefs that I have always considered self-evident. Above all, irrespective of one’s country of birth, or suburb of origin, every parent essentially holds the same desire: that their children should have a life better than they themselves had. The starting point for this is that parents demand the best educational opportunities for their children. As someone who was born in Blacktown and whose parents selflessly pursued that goal for me, I have always believed in education as the great enabler. It is the key to fulfilling employment, economic opportunity, the joy of teamwork and collegiality.

Education drives a virtuous cycle, with the capacity to overcome the misery of intergenerational unemployment, poverty and crime. It is from this that my belief in the Labor Party and the labour movement stems—an overarching policy objective that your postcode should not dictate your future and an obligation to generate ideas and live a life which promotes equality of opportunity. In my 20 years as a local Labor activist, this has always been my guiding objective. And so I commit to the people of Greenway that I will be a passionate advocate for the best educational infrastructure and resources for all our schools. I will strive to maximise access to trades training and higher education to achieve a society where we all benefit from the learnings of children and adults alike.

Of course I would not be in a position to make this commitment without first being elected by the people of Greenway. I sincerely thank you for the privilege of representing you. I am acutely aware of the challenges we face as communities within a community. We have a wide range of people and place, of both well-established suburbs and those at the urban fringe—from the old southerly suburbs like Lalor Park, Pendle Hill and Toongabbie, to the middle band of newer suburbs in Glenwood, Quakers Hill and Acacia Gardens, to the acreages of Riverstone and Schofields in the north—those same pastures are of course in a state of immense change as they are transformed into new suburbs such as Stanhope Gardens, The Ponds and Kellyville Ridge, where one can stand in the street and literally see the edge of metropolitan Sydney under construction.

I would not be standing here today without the incredible personal sacrifice and commitment to the cause of Labor demonstrated by so many individuals and organisations. I firstly thank my husband, Michael, who has backed me in everything I have done from the first day we met over 18 years ago. Michael worked tirelessly throughout the campaign. He maintained calm and gave me quality support no matter what the pressure. So much was this the case that Michael
was independently dubbed ‘model spouse of candidate’. Michael, you are the love of my life.

I thank every one of the local ALP branch members and other volunteers who worked for months on the campaign. I thank the campaign director of the Greenway federal electorate council, Brian Thomas, and his wife Judy. Brian, a retired professional truck driver, offered some of the most insightful observations I have ever heard about why he and so many others were prepared to do so much for my candidacy with no expectation of personal reward. He said:

‘It’s because when you help elect a local Labor representative you’re actually doing yourself a favour.

That is the great thing about true Labor people. To the New South Wales ALP state organiser, Brendan Cavanagh, thank you for assembling the most professional and dedicated group of staff any candidate could ask for and for driving such a gruelling campaign schedule. To Patrick Cook and Dominic O’Fner, I want you to know that nothing you did ever went either unnoticed by me or without my thanks, including the freezing cold mornings at our countless train station appearances and your perpetual sleep deprivation. A special thank you also to the scores of Young Labor volunteers who helped on the campaign. As a former Young Labor activist, I appreciate your generous support and I embrace my responsibility to encourage regeneration in our great movement.

Growing up in Greenway, I personally witnessed the power of education to effect change. My husband grew up in a public housing area of Mount Druitt. Like many people from diverse ethnic backgrounds who live in Greenway, he could not speak English when he started school. He attended the local public school in Shalvey until year 12. Thanks to his personal determination, supportive family and dedicated teachers, he was accepted into the University of Sydney and he earned first-class honours in economics and law. Today he is a partner at the leading law firm of Corrs Chambers Westgarth. I know there are scores of young people in Western Sydney today who have the same, if not greater, capacity to succeed. But even now we too often leave the prospects of young people to chance—the chance that they may be taken under the wing of a supportive teacher at a formative time in their life, the possibility that their family can afford all the educational resources they need.

In today’s labour market, a global market, we cannot let luck determine the educational and career prospects of our children. I believe these things because I was taught the importance of both hard work and earning my own good fortune by giving back to the community around me. My education at St Bernadette’s Lalor Park and later at Our Lady of Mercy College Parramatta taught me to be an agent of change. My teachers encouraged me to be a woman of action as well as opinion, a lesson which has guided my life.

My first job was in Greenway as a 15-year-old checkout operator in a supermarket in Blacktown, working to support myself through school and later through university. That was the lot of many of my friends at the time and it is still the case today—the well-trodden path of working and studying. Over the eight years that I scanned groceries, packed shelves and was eventually promoted to the cash office, I came to appreciate the rewards of what was often hard manual labour. My first shift was in early 1987 and I earned just under $30. I spent nearly every cent of that first pay packet on the latest Bon Jovi album. To this day I know every word of its every song.
My university studies subsequently took me into the law. During my 10 years as a lawyer at Gilbert and Tobin in Sydney I specialised in telecommunications regulation, competition, privacy and broadcasting laws. I was extremely fortunate to have the opportunity to work with senior partners who are recognised as world leaders in their fields. I worked with some of the largest companies in Australia and the world. This exposed me to the realities and the challenges of the corporate environment.

There is a long list of colleagues from this time whom I want to thank, individuals such as Gina Cass-Gottlieb, Catherine Dermody, Angus Henderson, Peter Leonard, Ara Margossian, Rob Nicholls and Peter Waters, who taught me the substantive legal and technical expertise I needed and life skills like resilience, collaboration and problem solving.

I am also grateful to Gilbert and Tobin for giving me the opportunity to work on projects around the world that nurtured my personal belief in the power of information technology to deliver just social outcomes. These included designing the regulatory environment for the high-speed broadband network in Malaysia; improving telecommunications access in remote areas of Cambodia; working in Ramallah to help establish an independent regulator and promote investment in the sector; universal service delivery in rural Sri Lanka; and infrastructure development for underserved regions of China.

It is therefore with a degree of practical expertise and responsiveness to the residents of west and north-west Sydney that I embrace the development of Australia’s National Broadband Network. Labor’s NBN plan will transform the way in which people communicate and work, enhance living standards, create better access to education and health services and deliver real choice, consistent with the role of Labor governments as catalysts for economic and social change. As a former telco regulatory lawyer, I need to emphasise the importance of the NBN as a piece of fundamental infrastructure reform—something that is often overlooked in the public debate.

Let us be clear: the wholesale only, open access infrastructure of the NBN will transform the very structure of the telco sector. By separating the network layer from the services layer, the NBN will facilitate effective competition and choice for all Australians, regardless of where they live or work. It will do this by treating the network—the ducts, the poles, the fibre cables and the electronics that constitute the NBN—as it should be: a national piece of utility infrastructure. One only needs to look at the continued growth of fixed bandwidth—a rate of 20 to 30 percent each year—to realise that Australia’s existing telco infrastructure will shortly pass its use-by date.

In 10 or 20 years our children will look back on the current debate about the NBN and will be shocked by the short-sightedness of some of the views expressed about the NBN today, particularly the commentary that is fixated on the download path: the false assumption that the NBN is merely a matter of faster emails or web-surfing. The reality is the NBN is not about the download. It is all about the upload. It is about a whole new category of enhanced services and applications that can only be achieved on a high-speed broadband platform that requires speeds only fibre technology can give—services and applications that have not even been invented yet. We have a glimpse today of what some of those applications will be, and they are positive. In the area of health, they include online medical consultations, remote diagnosis of electronic medical images and in-home monitoring of elderly people and sufferers of chronic disease.
The need for a nation to invest in a truly national broadband network is no longer the exception; it is the rule. Other countries, both within our region and beyond, understand the importance of high-speed broadband for economic growth. They understand the technical limitations of copper and wireless networks and the critical role of national government in making high-speed broadband a reality. These are not countries which adopted the adage of Sir William Preece, the chief engineer of the British Post Office, who in 1876 reportedly said:

The Americans have need of the telephone, but we do not. We have plenty of messenger boys.

This is why I commit to the residents of Greenway that I will be a strong advocate to deliver the NBN, particularly in Riverstone and its surrounding areas as the site of the first metro Sydney rollout.

On the same day that I was declared the member for Greenway a few weeks ago, I was fortunate to attend the official opening of two school infrastructure projects in my electorate, both constructed under Building the Education Revolution, at Holy Cross Primary in Glenwood and at St John’s Primary in Riverstone. In his remarks at each of these openings, Bishop Anthony Fisher commented on the importance of the highest quality educational infrastructure and resources for the future of our children. For these same reasons, I believe the NBN to be critical to the development of future generations of highly educated and inclusive citizens.

Some of those opposite have vowed to wage a campaign to destroy the NBN. I say here today: I vow that I will destroy that campaign. One of the reasons I am driven to support the NBN is that I support investing in young people. There is a special obligation here. With over eight per cent of its population under the age of five, Greenway is effectively Australia’s nursery.

I also support the investments in our young people made by many non-government organisations, including Barnardos Australia. As respite carers for a young girl through Barnardos, Michael and I learnt how sadly frequent it is the case that we as a society fail children. As a volunteer duty solicitor for female victims of domestic violence over many years, as part of my commitment to pro bono work, I have also witnessed how adults fail each other and too often it is children who suffer the most.

The past few months have also taught me about the suffering of families in Greenway who have a child with a learning or development disorder. Until I encountered these families on the campaign trail, I did not fully appreciate the meaning of the term ‘special needs child’. I remember especially one mother in Quakers Hill, who ran down the street to catch up with me while I was door-knocking. She passionately wanted me to know what it means to love and care for a child whose emotions will switch from placid to violent without warning. I could do only one thing: I listened. I found myself doing far more listening in this campaign than I had ever done in my life. I thank that particular lady and the scores of other local residents over the past months who have patiently educated me in understanding their children’s special needs and their desire for them to have a rewarding life.

I know that it is not possible to respond or connect with people unless you are genuine. I can assure the people of Greenway that I will continue to be accessible, genuine and active during this parliamentary term. I am not someone you will just see at election time. Indeed, I found the experience of putting myself forward for public life to be personally gratifying. I was constantly running
into old school friends, former teachers and my childhood netball coach, not to mention the people who saw me out and about so often that we would end up greeting one another like friends.

I was also touched over the past few months to receive so many good wishes from people who knew my mother, Marie. These well wishes came from complete strangers to me whom Mum had befriended during her life, as well as her fellow helpers on the St Bernadette’s tuckshop roster. I was 11 years old when my mother was diagnosed with breast cancer. Six years of countless drugs, chemotherapy, radiation and the most unimaginable pain followed, but her survival could be prolonged no further and she died shortly after my 17th birthday.

The Cancer Institute New South Wales notes that breast cancer remains the most prevalent form of the disease in our community, with nearly 50,000 survivors now in New South Wales. Although mortality rates declined in the decade from 1997 by 14 per cent, it is still a significant public health challenge. There remain dramatic regional variations in the relative survival rates for cancer sufferers. Statistically, Western Sydney does not fare well in the likelihood of death from cancer after diagnosis. On behalf of the survivors, their families and those who have lost, I make a special commitment to supporting cancer research, particularly to address the disparity between geographic outcomes.

It has been said that this election campaign in Greenway was not one of five weeks or nine months but rather 20 years. I want to thank my family and some of my long-time friends for being with me on that journey: David Tierney, the ‘man in the hat’, for his considered and thoughtful advice; Milton Dick for being my touchstone; Mark McLeay, who continued his commitment despite the arrival of his new baby, Xavier, in the middle of the campaign; Leo Kelly, with whom I served as a councillor and his Deputy Mayor on Blacktown City Council, and his wife, Janet; my in-laws—Sue, Sam, Myrna, Sandra and Charlie—for all their hard work and especially their good humour; the late Sylvia Whilesmith, the legendary Labor matriarch of Western Sydney; the Hon. Amanda Fazio, President of the New South Wales Legislative Council, for her mentorship; the Hon. Nathan Rees, the member for Toongabbie, who devoted so much of his personal time to the campaign; and my friend the member for Chifley. It is my pleasure that we are here together, and I know we will be an effective team to serve the people of Western Sydney. Ultimately, I thank the people of Greenway for the chance to represent them. You have given me an extraordinary opportunity to do the things that I have always believed in.

My belief in education, my belief in family, in community and in work, my determination to pursue social justice and equality in all areas of human endeavour where I might be privileged to make a difference, my practical commitment to Labor ideals, my working life clearly defining my support for Labor in our education and NBN policies—those who commit to any of these imperatives with half-baked solutions will be judged harshly indeed. I will not be one of them. With this opportunity comes responsibility. Today I have committed to a series of actions as Greenway’s representative in the federal parliament. I expect to be judged by the people of Greenway on how I perform against those commitments. I intend to live up to that responsibility with civility, with dedication and, most of all, with compassion.

Mr BALDWIN (Paterson) (5.40 pm)—I commence my remarks today by congratulating Ken Wyatt, the member for Hasluck, our first Indigenous Australian member in the
House of Representatives, on a very moving and impressive speech. Ken Wyatt, you have done all Australians proud today with your address. I also rise today as a very proud elected member of this parliament. It is an honour and a privilege to continue to represent the people of the Paterson electorate, many of whom I have come to know personally and all of whom I serve with pride. I certainly think that I have one of the best electorates in the country but, then again, I may be a little biased.

This is the fifth term that I have had the pleasure of committing to fight for my constituents, and yet it is with equal if not more passion that I do so here today. I say that because I am absolutely committed to holding the Gillard Labor government to account. This is a government which has already broken a major promise to the Australian people just weeks after being elected and is now determined to impose a carbon tax that will drive up power bills and the cost of living. I will fight this unjustified tax, as I am sure it will be one of the major issues in this term of government.

Before I address some of the other priorities for the next three years, I would like to acknowledge the changes that have been made since I last stood here. Firstly, congratulations to you, Mr Speaker, on your deserved reappointment. To the Deputy Speaker, the Hon. Peter Slipper, and the Second Deputy Speaker, the Hon. Bruce Scott, my congratulations also. I would also like to officially welcome back to my electorate of Paterson the areas of East Maitland, Luskin-tyre, Hillsborough, Rosebrook, Melville, Maitland Vale and the parts of Millers Forest, all of which I have represented before in this parliament, all of which have been constantly shuffled through redistributions. To the Gloucester shire, I bid goodbye. While it is with sadness that I say farewell, I am confident that my colleague the member for Lyne will actively represent the needs of the Gloucester community. In particular, I look forward to working with the member for Lyne on future projects, including the ongoing campaign for the much-needed federal roads funding for the upgrade of Bucketts Way.

In my time as the member for Paterson we have come a long way and there have been great achievements and improvements across the electorate. However, there is always more that can be done. At the top of that list are the promises that the Gillard Labor government made to my constituents during the election campaign. These promises must be met as soon as possible.

Promise No. 1 was the redevelopment of the Birubi Point Surf Lifesaving Club. The government had committed $2.2 million to help build new offices, function space and a kitchen. I will also continue to represent the Fingal Beach Surf Life Saving Club, which missed out on the $1 million funding needed to replace its burnt out surf club. Both provide great services to our community.

Promise No. 2 was the $1.25 million that the coalition pledged to implement the Great Lakes Water Quality Improvement Plan, which the Labor Party also matched. Quality water is important not only for our environmental health but also as a strong tourism drawcard for the Great Lakes region, and that is why I will be ensuring that this government keeps its promise to fund this important initiative.

Promise No. 3 was for $7 million for a GP superclinic in Raymond Terrace. I would never refuse any funding for health services in the Paterson electorate but I have been discussing this matter with various local health providers—including the Hunter Rural Division of General Practice; GP Access, representing the urban division of general practice; and the community alike—and they
are unanimous in their opinion that this funding would be better distributed across a range of areas resulting in better health outcomes for the population.

The overall consensus is that the $7 million should be divided and invested in at least three areas of critical need. Firstly, I believe a portion of the $7 million should be invested in the already approved HealthOne clinic in Raymond Terrace, which has been a work in progress by the New South Wales government since 2005. Hunter New England Area Health Service purchased the old swimming pool site in Raymond Terrace for this project. Capital works documentation has been sent to the state Department of Health. Preliminary concept plans have been drawn up and a development application has been prepared to lodge with the Port Stephens Council. The plan is to commence building in 2011, opening in June 2012. The HealthOne facility will accommodate GPs, community health and allied health together with visiting specialists and other ambulatory care providers.

The Gillard Labor government made a rash decision as a grab for votes and promised $7 million for one GP superclinic—mind you, the one at Nelson Bay was only $2.5 million—without any community consultation. It makes no sense to duplicate a clinic that is already well into the planning stages and would be up and running well before a GP superclinic could be. After all, the Gillard Labor government has only completed a tiny fraction of the 36 clinics it promised during the 2007 election campaign, let alone in this latest round. I briefly raised this with the Minister for Health and Ageing yesterday and will seek a formal meeting in the coming weeks. I will indicate that it would be far more beneficial for the federal government to put a portion of the $7 million towards the HealthOne clinic and to use the rest for other projects.

Value for money is important, especially when other communities are screaming out for GP services. Recently the last GP service in the area of Clarence Town closed due to the retirement of its doctor. Community groups such as the Dungog/Clarence Town Country Women’s Association and Clarence Town Lions Club have written to me concerned that their community has now lost both medical practices. I have had the opportunity to meet with these community groups and with the CEO of the Hunter Rural Division of General Practice, Alison Crocker, to discuss options and a way forward to ensure growing communities like Clarence Town and the surrounds recover these important services. The residents of the Medowie-Salt Ash area have also been vocal in their need for increased GP services. The RAAF personnel around this area have already missed out because of the breaking of the Labor Party’s promise at the 2007 election to build a defence family healthcare clinic—a facility which would have eased the pressure in getting to see a GP in that area.

Securing access to GPs and specialist medical services for the people of Paterson electorate has always been a priority of mine. In Paterson we have a rapidly ageing population, while the median age of our doctors is also increasing. This means that demand for health services is becoming greater while more doctors are nearing retiring age, creating a doctor shortage as currently evidenced in Clarence Town. For all of the rhetoric that we have heard from this Labor government over the past couple of years regarding the overhaul of our health system, very little has changed or improved. However, now the Gillard Labor government has a chance to improve the lives of our regional patients by working with our local communities, and I urge it to do so.

The final promise that I would like to draw attention to is to alleviate the effects of
planned aircraft noise from the introduction of the Joint Strike Fighter program at RAAF Base Williamtown. The Australian Noise Exposure Forecast, 2025 ANEF, was introduced in October 2009 and superseded by the draft Australian Noise Exposure Concept, ANEC 2025, released in May 2010. This has created a great amount of anxiety within my constituents, and it is the government’s responsibility to deliver a fair outcome for residents and for the RAAF alike. During the election campaign, Labor promised to convene a strategic task force of government agencies and local residents to explore all options and to remove the 2025 air noise draft mapping. This announcement contained absolutely no tangible ideas to shift the current mapping and, worse still, only sought to duplicate the Williamtown Consultative Forum which was already in place.

As a result, I will instead be fighting for the Gillard Labor government to adopt the coalition’s four-point plan, developed in consultation with the community, to alleviate the effects of aircraft noise and provide greater certainty for RAAF Base Williamtown. That includes installing a second instrument landing system to increase the number of aircraft approaches from the sea rather than over developed residential areas. Secondly, it should extend the runway towards the sand hills by the maximum amount to move the noise footprint away from the Raymond Terrace and Brandy Hill areas. Thirdly, the 2025 mapping should be immediately repealed and replaced with a new ANEC, incorporating all of the above measures. Finally, an independent audit committee should be established to examine all proposals to mitigate the noise effect, including the grandfathering rule used by Ipswich council to address construction and development issues under noise affected areas. It is simply unacceptable that the people of Port Stephens should be burdened with the potential impacts on their health and property values when they simply do not have to be. The government needs to address the concerns of our community and provide for the operations at RAAF Base Williamtown for the long term. Neither residents nor I will allow Labor to forget its responsibilities.

As the member for Paterson I pride myself on knowing the needs of my constituents, because I am out and about in the electorate almost every day talking to them and taking up their fight here in Canberra. For that reason I will be making representations on behalf of my constituents to the government to act on all the commitments made during the election campaign, whether by the ALP or the coalition. Those commitments made by me were based on months of discussions with my constituents. The worthy projects include a hydrotherapy pool and chemotherapy units at Forster-Tuncurry so that patients do not have to travel to Taree for treatment. Travel is the last stress patients need when they are battling illness.

Digital television upgrades at Vacy and Elizabeth Beach: reception upgrades would ensure that my constituents can access reliable, local, clear digital television. This not only has impacts for news and entertainment but will also ensure that local businesses can advertise to local people. This is important for our local community.

I will continue to fight for skate parks for Wallalong and Paterson so that the children in those towns have somewhere safe away from traffic to ride their scooters, bicycles and skateboards. Skate parks also encourage kids to be social and to stay active—important lessons to be carried throughout life.

Crime and antisocial behaviour are issues that need to be addressed in the Paterson electorate and closed-circuit television cameras have a proven track record in combating
illegal behaviour. As such, in 2007 I successfully fought to have CCTV cameras placed in vandalism hot spots in Nelson Bay, and now, following their success, other business owners have told me they would like to have security cameras rolled out as well. That is why I am pushing for federal funding to roll out a series of cameras across Dungog, Port Stephens, Forster and East Maitland.

I will also fight to ensure funding is allocated to three Green Army projects under whichever name this Labor government may deem to put them, those being the Pipers Creek Walkway, Tilligerry Habitat Reserve and Mangrove Boardwalk. Why? Because these projects are important to our community, important to the environment. These projects were to deliver significant training and practical experience in the vital areas of environmental management while delivering community benefits.

Last but certainly not least, I will continue to fight for the $71 million to upgrade roads between Paterson, Vacy and Gresford, the Bucketts Way, the Lakes Way, the Nelson Bay to Fingal bypass and Main Road 301 between Raymond Terrace and Dungog. Labor made absolutely no commitment to new road funding for the electorate of Paterson during the election campaign. All their candidate would say is that he would fight for funding, but not one dollar was committed. But it is an issue which is always at the top of my agenda. I have always believed that when you build a road you create a highway to opportunity. Good quality roads are a basic need for regional communities, which rely on roads to access health, education and other vital facilities. Quality roads encourage economic growth in smaller towns and safety for drivers. Every dollar invested potentially saves a life.

Roads are also one of the reasons I oppose the Tillegra Dam, which is sure to be an important issue during this term of government. The damage bill to local roads due to truck movements in construction has been estimated at between $30 million and $35 million, yet the New South Wales Labor government has committed just $1 million in repair work. There have also been serious questions raised about the dam’s effect on the local environment. All these issues have created division and uncertainty for local businesses and residents alike in the Dungog area. The most recent independent review by the Centre for International Economics, CIE, has rejected the $477 million dam as the best way to meet the Hunter region’s future water needs. I stand by my decision in 2009 to stand up against the dam, and in 2010 I am still yet to be convinced it is the best solution for the Hunter’s future water needs. I will continue to place pressure on our state Labor government and federal Labor government to stop work on the dam and reconsider other water supply options.

Finally, I would like to draw attention to the Greens-Labor plan to install Commonwealth marine protected areas up and down the east coast of Australia, including the entire coastal fringe of the Paterson electorate. The Gillard Labor government completely failed to negotiate with my constituents on this matter, despite the fact that much of the Paterson community lives, works and plays on the coast. I wholeheartedly support the protection of our marine environment. It would be natural; I come from the diving industry. However, I am also keenly aware of the rights of fishing and tourism communities which rely on our waterways for their livelihoods. That is why it is vital that the right balance be struck, through constant and thorough consultation. My constituents can rest assured that I will do everything within my power to ensure their coastal rights are protected.
As I have said before, it is paramount that we hold the Gillard Labor government to account. Regardless of any changes to parliamentary procedure, that is the job of the opposition and I am absolutely committed to it. Already, just weeks after the election, Prime Minister Gillard has broken a promise to the Australian people. Prime Minister Gillard categorically ruled out a carbon tax before the election; now she is working to impose one in this term.

There have been far too many broken promises under Labor, and Australia cannot afford another term like the last one under Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard. We as a nation are in record debt and we have seen record waste through mismanaged programs like the school halls rip-off and the insulation disaster. Interest rates are spiralling upwards because of the national debt, and grocery and power prices will skyrocket under the Julia Gillard-Bob Brown carbon tax. My pledge is to work every day to ensure that the Gillard Labor government cannot continue to break the promises it makes to my constituents. We as a coalition will also fight to ensure that Labor hears our voice loud and clear. Had it heeded our advice prior to rolling out the insulation scheme or the BER program, we would not have seen such waste and tragedy.

I am proud to represent the electorate of Paterson and work hard all year round to represent my community. Of course, even though the work level stays constant, stress levels have been high over the past several weeks in light of the election campaign. With that in mind I would like to say a few thank yous. I believe a local member is only as strong as the team behind him, and in Paterson my team produced an unprecedented result, with a swing of almost five per cent towards the coalition, winning the seat with 51.3 per cent of the primary vote. This was in spite of a redistribution which lowered our winning margin to under half a per cent. To my staff members, chief of staff Sarah Harrison, electorate advisers Adam Olsen, Simon Ryan and Gary Hoson, media adviser Alexandra Wilson and my former defence adviser Richard Briedis: you all put your lives on hold and embraced the even longer working hours, unusual requests and constant stress that always accompany a Team Baldwin election campaign. You are an asset to the office. More importantly, your knowledge and contentment are assets to the Paterson community. To the family and friends of my staff: thank you for lending me your loved ones 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

To the volunteers who worked tirelessly and passionately for me throughout the campaign, doing everything from driving to stuffing envelopes to answering phones to manning the information booths, nothing was ever too much trouble. A special thank you to Councillor Bob Geoghegan, my campaign director, Councillor Stephen Mudd and his wife Ros, Dennis and Elizabeth Martin, Pam and Alan Walker, Kim Cregan, Michelle Mexon, Susan Swords, Cassandra Ryan, David Lonie, Di Gibbs, Rob Olsen, Colin Haddow, Sonny Morris, and especially to Doreen Bradley and of course Lady, our little mascot. To the 700-plus local volunteers who turned out on polling day from the wee hours of the morning until the last vote was counted in the evening, time does not permit me to name you all but to all of you I express my sincere gratitude. You came from every corner of the electorate to champion our cause and it made the difference. It is a pleasure to represent you in this parliament.

To my immediate family—my wife, Cynthia, and my children, Robbie, David and Samantha—I say thank you. It is wonderful to be able to share this moment with you. I know that it has sometimes been difficult to spend time together. As a husband and a father I am often missing in action. But I do
know that I always have your love and support, and you have mine. It is this support that allows me to properly serve the Paterson electorate, not only making things better for my family and my children but for all families and all children. In the words of William Shakespeare:

I can no other answer make but thanks, and thanks.

Finally, I say to my constituents: I am energised and ready to take on all the challenges of the future to make sure that Paterson continues to be a wonderful place to live and to work. I will fight to deliver the outcomes we deserve as well as hold this government to account. My door is always open. Thank you again for giving me the honour of being your voice in the Australian parliament. I will make sure our voice is heard loud and clear, because I listen locally and act nationally.

The SPEAKER—Order! Before I call Mr Mitchell, I remind honourable members that this is his first speech. I therefore ask that the usual courtesies be extended to him.

Mr MITCHELL (McEwen) (6.01 pm)—Today I humbly and proudly rise as the elected member for McEwen. It is both an honour and a great privilege to be elected to the Australian parliament to serve in this place as a representative of a vibrant, strong and resilient community. I shall never underestimate the responsibility that comes with this honour, nor the opportunities that it brings to help shape a better Australia for our future.

Today, as I reflect on the journey that has brought me to this place, I consider the formative events in my life, both personal and professional, all of which have shaped my perspectives on the issues confronting our great nation. I grew up on the outskirts of Melbourne in the working-class suburb of Dallas, a suburb that has enjoyed great improvements under the current member for Calwell’s time in this place. Our family home was not blessed with all the material trappings of wealth, but we enjoyed a very warm and loving environment. Both of my parents worked very hard to give us opportunities in life. I am now able to reflect fondly on those times we had as kids packing up the car and the caravan and heading off to the far-flung corners of Australia, taking in all its magnificent sights and experiences.

I was always raised to accept people as they are, to acknowledge that it is our unique personalities and character traits that make our diverse and accepting Australian society a great one in the context of a sometimes intolerant world. Likewise, my parents always encouraged me to pursue my interests, trust my instincts and back my judgments. It is from them that I first learnt the value of serving the community, of helping others and of seeking to do what is best. It is to them that I wish to first say thank you. George and Lorraine, you have been an inspiration. I also want to thank my sister, Glenda, and my brother-in-law, Gary, who have always been pillars of strength to me, encouraging me to follow my dreams and giving me support in those endeavours.

But it is with a heavy heart that I want to acknowledge those special persons in my life who cannot be here to share this occasion. First, there is Carol, the mother of my partner, Lisa. Carol was a true salt-of-the-earth mum. She showed over the many years that a mother’s unconditional love and enduring encouragement is the bond that keeps a family together. Carol was always supportive, always interested in what you were doing and always quick with a ‘Robbie, would you like a cup of coffee, love?’ That was Carol’s way of taking the opportunity to sit with you and ask, ‘How was your day?’ and ask what was going on with your life. There are many jokes we can make about mothers-in-law, but my mother-in-law was a good one.
Also, I would like to acknowledge my younger brother, Jason, who passed away suddenly from Marfan syndrome when he was 29. It is a little-known disease that affects on average one in 3,000 people, yet most of us, doctors included, have little knowledge of the symptoms and effects. Marfan syndrome is a life-threatening disorder of the body’s connective tissue. It is caused by a faulty gene that hampers the elasticity of arteries. For most people with Marfan syndrome the most serious problem is in the aorta, which becomes prone to dissection and a tearing between its layers. Should the aorta tear, you have an immediate life-threatening problem, and, in Jason’s case, death occurred very quickly. It is one of the reasons I am incredibly proud of the fact that this government delivered a national organ transplant authority. The authority will help many Australians receive life-saving transplants, and that is all because a Labor government chose to make a difference.

After leaving school in year 10, I completed an apprenticeship in shoemaking. I worked in tough conditions in a workplace that was poor in its respect for its workers. Yet, despite those hardships, I was constantly buoyed by the positivism and high work ethic of my culturally and ethnically diverse colleagues, who had often been suffering from extreme poverty and oppression when they left their home countries. They shared one common aspiration: to better their lives and the lives of their families. Reflecting upon this period of my life, I can now see the many parallels between that experience and the experience of modern Australia, a country that is sometimes struggling to understand the challenges of our diverse community and, in equal measure, to grasp the benefits of it. Yet we are driven by a fundamental desire at the heart of our national being to build a better Australia for ourselves and for our loved ones. I recall today with fondness the many people I met there, some of whom I am proud to still call friends today.

This period had an indelible effect on my sense of justice in the workplace, in particular my personal disdain for discriminatory practices. To me, no form of discrimination is as abhorrent as that which preys on personal weaknesses, such as an inability to speak fluent English or an individual’s lack of understanding and comprehension of their workplace rights. I believe that it is the right of every working Australian to expect a safe, discrimination-free workplace. I also firmly believe that working Australians should be able to collectively bargain for a better future.

Following my apprenticeship, I spent a few years as a service contractor for the RACV and as a tow truck operator before moving into the transport industry and building a career in sales and management. It was there that I spent more than 10 years working with owner-drivers, mechanics and fleet owners, supplying their replacement parts to keep this vital industry on the move. The experience enabled me to better understand the issues faced by truck drivers and fleet operators, issues that continue today, such as long hours, poor pay rates, non-uniform road laws and, sometimes, unscrupulous operators who will continue to pressure owner-drivers to risk their life and limb for a pittance. More can and should be done to provide a safe and secure workplace for the transport industry workers of Australia and, in turn, the travelling public.

It was during this time that I had the good fortune of meeting Mr Don Nardella, a man who I continue to consider to be a great friend. Don encouraged me to join the Labor family, to be part of a movement which shares my values of fairness and support for those in need—a movement which, as former Labor Prime Minister Ben Chifley said in his
famous Light on the Hill speech, strives to bring something ‘better to the people, better standards of living, greater happiness to the mass of the people’. He went on to say:

If the movement can make someone more comfortable, give to some father or mother a greater feeling of security for their children, a feeling that if a depression comes there will be work, that the government is striving its hardest to do its best, then the Labour movement will be completely justified.

These words still ring true today. The obligations of the labour movement then remain the obligations of the labour movement now—to strive for the betterment of our society and our nation, to support those who have put their trust and their faith in us that we may improve their lives, and to be there to support those around the globe who need a helping hand. We are the Lucky Country and I believe it is incumbent on us, as a matter of international decency, to aim to meet the Millennium Development Goals, to help those who, for whatever reason, find themselves in a country less fortunate than ours.

It is with these obligations in mind that I recall the first time I had the great pleasure of meeting a gentleman who would become a mentor and a sounding post for me, a man who in his own right embodied the values of Chifley. The man I refer to is Peter Cleeland. As members would be aware, Peter sadly passed away in 2007. But it is my firm belief that his legacy of public service remains a standard to which others should aspire. As a policeman, as a councillor and as a federal member, Peter gave so much of himself to his community, and, in my case, he gave me a start down a path the result of which, in part, is my presence here today.

I first met Peter at a local community festival. Following a pleasant exchange I left with a native tree and, importantly, an invitation to the next ALP branch meeting. Suffice to say my gardening skills meant that the tree did not last long, but my friendship with Peter continued for many, many years. Peter introduced me to great Labor people, many of whom have been involved in the most recent election campaign, most notably my good friend Councillor Pam McLeod. These people assisted and encouraged me to develop my understanding of the political process. To my mind this was critical to my journey, as I had decided by this time that I could not effect change for the betterment of our communities without being prepared to put myself forward, to stand up to scrutiny and to be part of a movement to make this country better.

In 1999 I gratefully received the endorsement of the ALP as its candidate for the Central Highlands in the Victorian Legislative Council. History records that I was not elected. Ben Hardman won the seat of Seymour, Andre Haermeyer retained the seat of Yan Yean, and, most importantly, Steve Bracks led Labor to a historic victory. In the following years I watched as a minority government delivered a new style of leadership—one which would listen and act for all Victorians, no matter where they lived—and ended the conservative parties’ treatment of regional Victoria as the toenail of the state.

In 2002 I decided to again stand for preselection. On this occasion I was elected to the Legislative Council, where under Steve Bracks we started a challenging process of parliamentary reform. At the same time, the state government placed an emphasis on rural and regional community needs, in turn delivering much needed investment in infrastructure and services that has allowed regional Victoria to grow and prosper. It was during this time that I also met Joe Helper, who has become a great friend to me, and I thank him for his assistance in my being here today.
In 2007 I received support from the ALP to stand for the federal seat of McEwen. As I reflect upon this period I can honestly say that, despite the end result, this was an exciting time for all involved. The campaign had a real energy about it. It was clear that the Howard government had become arrogant and out of touch in the eyes of the community and that Labor was ready and able to govern. As members would recall, McEwen came down to the wire. It took some eight long months and five recounts to finally get a result. Sadly, it was not the result that I had sought.

Those members who sit here today who have themselves been the unfortunate recipients of electoral defeat will understand the period of self-reflection that inevitably follows. It was in this time that I recall the words that I had learnt at a very young age: it does not matter how many times you get knocked down; what is important is that you get back up one more time. That campaign and the community support I received made me more determined to continue on and work for the ALP victory in McEwen.

As the member for Maribyrnong quoted to the House in 2008:
Mankind … is divided between the party of Conservatism and the party of Innovation, between the Past and the Future, between Memory and Hope.

Never more evident were these words than at this year’s federal election. We had Julia Gillard’s Labor Party ‘moving forward’— moving forward in protecting the economy, moving forward in health and moving forward in education and infrastructure. On the other hand there were those opposite. Their message was clear: stop, cut, end, turn back—not an inspiring plan, hardly what one would call a vision for the future of this great nation. They are stuck in the past and not offering the community any hope, any innovation or any future.

McEwen is by its very nature diverse—diverse in topography, diverse in demography and diverse in the needs and the wants that will drive our communities towards a more prosperous future. There are the growing outer-metropolitan suburbs of the south, the regional towns and communities across the north and west and the leafy ranges of the east. There are sections of the electorate which require better access to health, education and job opportunities to grow and survive, while other rural areas have suffered through the worst drought in living history and need continued economic support.

In 2009 the local community was devastated by the disaster we know as Black Saturday. Whole towns were ripped apart and decimated by these awful fires—fires which, in the space of a single day, had become the deadliest and worst-ever natural disaster in Australian history, with a death toll of 173, more than 2,000 homes lost, several townships completely obliterated and more than 7,000 people displaced and struggling to rebuild their lives. The scars on the landscape are slowly beginning to heal but we should remember that the scars in the hearts and the minds of the community may never heal.

Personally, I was pretty lucky on that day. The fire came into our street on three sides. I want to put on record my thanks for the unbelievable courage and dedication shown by our volunteers in fighting this raging inferno. They kept it at bay and saved us from joining the many families who lost all they had. It was a terrible night. I recall a lady in a car driving very slowly down our street. I went over to her and she sat there sobbing at what she thought she had left behind. Was her husband still alive? Did she still have a home to go back to? Sadly, I felt a deep sense of helplessness. Having no water and no power,
I could not even invite her in for a cup of coffee or a drink to try to ease her fears. But I stayed with her until she was composed enough to continue to town, to her family, just before the rain of burnt gum leaves started to fall in our yard. Yes, it was a sleepless night for me, but my family was safely out of the area already. As I said, we were lucky. At a community meeting some days later I met that lady who had driven up my street. I am glad to say that both her husband and her home survived.

At this point I wish to pay tribute to the former member for McEwen, who worked tirelessly for the community during the days and months that followed those tragic events. I also wish to acknowledge former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, who led a government which acted decisively and assisted the member for McEwen by opening up direct lines of communication and delivering assistance and extra resources to help her at that extraordinary time of community need. Ms Bailey’s long career is evidence that she indeed served her party well in this place and I really wish her well for her future.

Election campaigns are never about the candidate alone. They require the support of a network of people willing to contribute and sacrifice their time, and certainly my campaign was no exception. It is my belief that the strength of the ALP is derived from our branch members who for so long have manned our polling booths, held fundraisers, attended street stalls and helped out campaigning. I do not for a moment doubt that we would not have been successful in McEwen without the fantastic support, the hard work and the commitment of all the members and volunteers. So to all involved, I say a special thank you for your long-standing commitment to our party locally.

Young Labor came out to help on many occasions during the campaign—they are a dedicated group of young adults who believe in our party. This was obvious when they spent the day in the rain and the hail letter-boxing the Romsey community. I pay tribute to our union friends who have been so supportive in campaigning in McEwen against Work Choices in particular. I want to thank Caesar Melham and the AWU, Wayne Mader and the TWU, and Michael O’Conner and the CFMEU timber workers who were there with me all the way. I also appreciate the support, guidance and advice I have received over my journey to this place from my friends in the parliament—Senator Steve Conroy, the member for Maribyrnong Bill Shorten, Senator David Feeney, and of course my neighbour, the member for Scullin Harry Jenkins.

The former Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, came out and campaigned with me—he is a man who loves the party so much that he continues to travel the country to support our candidates. Of course, to Julia Gillard, our Prime Minister, who I have known for a long time, I want to thank her for her continuous support, for her great leadership, and for the visions and plans that she has for this country and our community. I thank all the members of my campaign team, and in particular Denise Power, Santo Spinello and Carmel Barrot. Carmel has been with me throughout the ups and downs of this journey and her loyalty, dedication and commitment have never wavered. I would also like to say a special thank you to Claire McClelland. Claire’s patience, friendship and work ethic are something to be admired and I cannot thank her enough. I do not think we would have achieved this result without her.

I want to thank our local community. This campaign was about moving forward and it inspired so many voters to get involved in the political process for the first time. It was truly amazing to see the emails and grassroots support I received from community
members who stood up and took their own
action to ensure a better future for our coun-
ytry. I want to note a couple of these people in
particular, such as a woman who emailed me
and made me laugh on one of those darker
campaign days. Such moments of levity can
be worth their weight in gold. In her email
she wrote:
I’m really hoping that the Liberals don’t win this
election because if Tony Abbott becomes Prime
Minister I’m leaving the country.
I assured her we were doing our best to keep
her here. And there was the pensioner who
hand-wrote a letter saying:
I heard the ALP needs money to keep pressure on
the campaign ... The ALP has already done so
much to bring Australia forward it can’t stop now
... I hope this donation helps ... PS: I wish I
could give more.
She enclosed $30 of her pension. And there
was the lady I met at a street stall in Doreen
who emailed me saying:
I lead a comfortable life. Whatever the result on
August 21st, nothing much will change for me ...
But it is not about me, it’s about my three grand-
children, and your kids and the type of society we
want them to grow up in.
This was part of a letter that she wrote,
printed and hand delivered to her commu-
nity:
Sometimes a person has to stand up against po-
itical policies that are blatantly unjust. Some-
times a person has to stand up for what is right,
responsible and fair. On August 21 I will be vot-
ing against the Liberals and I hope you will do the
same.
In my mind this is what the political process
is all about. It is about our future, our com-
munity and their voice. It is not just about
what I will do; it is about what we can do
together. This is why I chose to stand again
to represent our community and listen and
work with them to deliver a better Australia.
I firmly believe it is our job to leave this
country in a better place than it was when we
arrived.
Mr Speaker, I reserve the most important
thankyous for the end. Firstly, I want to give
an extra special word of thanks for the non-
stop support and love to my partner, Lisa.
Lisa understood that I needed to spend time
away from the family to pursue my dreams.
This meant that she inevitably had to shoul-
der more of the family workload, often atten-
tending important events in our daughter
Rachael’s formative years on her own. With-
out Lisa’s unqualified support I would not be
here today. I want to thank Rachael for her
support over the years. As Rachael is very
aware, it is sometimes not easy being the
child of a politician, especially when you get
your photo in those flyers that go out to the
electorate!
I am honoured and proud to be given the
responsibility of representing the good peo-
ples of McEwen in this place and I look for-
toward to representing their views and contrib-
uting in a constructive way to a government
that will govern for all Australians. I thank
the House for extending me the customary
courtesy.
Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Leader of the
Nationals) (6.21 pm)—The Governor-
General’s speech demonstrates that the new
Labor-Green-Independent alliance govern-
ment will be no different from the old Labor
government rejected by the people last
month. It is clear that the new government
will be characterised by the same all-talk no-
action, all-stunts no-results, all-spin no-
substance style of its predecessor. There will
be more broken promises, more waste and
more mismanagement.
In the Governor-General’s speech she
talked about a public forum and a debate on
tax reform even though the government ruled
out new Henry taxes during the election
campaign, and a multi-party climate change
committee even though the Prime Minister said absolutely ‘there will be no carbon tax’ during the election campaign. The speech refers to more reviews, strategies, committees and policy development. There will be at least five new bureaucratic and regulatory agencies. This is the Labor we know. It is the Labor government that we saw in the last federal parliament and that we see in New South Wales, Queensland and other states.

The 2010 federal election was a rejection of the Rudd-Gillard government. The coalition received over 600,000 more primary votes than Labor. For the first time in 70 years there are more people sitting in the opposition party room than there are in the government room. Yet through an alliance with the Greens and the majority of the so-called Independents Labor remains in government. The prospect of a Greens-Labor rainbow coalition has certainly sent shudders through the people of regional Australia. The regions feel threatened by Greens policies, like an even bigger mining tax, a giant new emissions trading scheme also imposed on agriculture, bans on fishing in many marine areas, death duties, an open-door policy on boat arrivals and an end to coal extraction and other mining. There will be food and fibre shortages in Australia as the Greens pursue their policies to end intensive agriculture and stop irrigation in the Murray-Darling Basin. Of course, that is not all.

Labor itself has been a very city-centric government. In the Rudd-Gillard government every cabinet minister lived in a capital city. The regions were simply out of sight and out of mind. Because of its lack of interest in regional Australia, Labor treated regional Australians with contempt. Labor closed most of the offices of the regional development department but set up a ‘better cities’ unit in Sydney. Labor axed area consultative committees, even though during the 2007 election it promised to keep them. I note that the new Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government said at the Press Club today that he actually wrote that promise which the government subsequently dishonoured. It has replaced the area consultative committees with empty RDA committees that have nothing to do.

The first budget of Labor slashed $1 billion from regional programs, and even more went in the second budget. Labor moved funding from regional roads to the cities. Eighty-two per cent of the money spent on their strategic roads program went to Labor electorates. Labor abolished the Sustainable Regions program and the Regional Partnerships program and have replaced them with a Better Regions program, but only projects nominated by Labor candidates could be funded under that scheme. Labor wound back the quarantine service and Customs, 312 staff were dumped from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and the entire department was turned into just a part-time portfolio. They axed the television and mobile phone black spot programs. They stole the $2 billion from the perpetual Communications Fund, allegedly to prop up the NBN. But two million Australians, mostly in rural and regional areas, have been removed from the commitment to receive high-speed broadband through fibre optic cable. The Melbourne-Brisbane railway has been put on the never never. Labor neglected the regions. Is it any wonder therefore that in this last election the regions rejected Labor?

For the Nationals this was our best election result since World War II. All of our sitting members received substantial swings to them. Our marginal seats have become notionally safe—although we never regard any electorate as safe. I particularly congratulate the new members for Dawson, Flynn and Riverina, who will no doubt make their maiden speeches in this parliament very shortly. It is great to have those areas in the
Nationals fold. Tony Crook was elected under the Nationals banner in O'Connor. I hope that someday soon he may see his way clear to join other Nats in our party room. I also acknowledge the election of Bridget McKenzie, who restores the Nationals position in the Victorian coalition Senate team. It was an excellent result for the Nationals. In particular, also, it was a rejection of Labor.

But the Governor-General in her speech said that the government will be different this time around—that there will be a new approach towards regional Australia coming from Labor and that we are going to have a new cabinet level minister for regional Australia. I thought Mr Albanese was a cabinet minister when he had responsibility for regional Australia. I know he did not do much for regional Australia but he was a cabinet level minister. What we still have from this government is a city-centric cabinet. Every minister in the cabinet still lives in a capital city, except one who recently moved to Newcastle. We no longer have a regional development minister in central Sydney; now the regional development minister comes from central Melbourne. The agriculture minister is no longer living in central Sydney; now he comes from central Brisbane. I do not think their focus will have changed. There is no difference in the sort of decision making and city-centric approach that Labor will take.

I have noticed some saying in recent times that there will be an unparalleled focus on regional Australia in the new parliament. As Leader of the Nationals I say that this is a very good thing. I welcome this new-found interest from the capital city media in regional Australia. I frankly resent suggestions from some city writers that extra assistance and support for the regions is somehow or other not warranted. I find it offensive when the city media are quite happy to accept expenditure of billions of dollars in cities on new stadiums and convention centres and firework displays and are quite happy to have endless subsidies for urban public transport but if somebody in a country area wants a bit of help to get a doctor to locate in their town or they want to rebuild their broken down local hall or get a decent road or an air service that is somehow or other characterised as pork-barrelling. Frankly, that is unacceptable.

For some, the attention on regions is a novelty. For us on this side of the House, and especially for the party that I lead, that has been our focus for more than 90 years. There is a very long list of policies and programs that the Country Party and the Nationals have championed and implemented that have made this nation a better place. There were the Sustainable Regions Program; the National Water Initiative; the $1.1 billion Connect Australia package and the $2 billion perpetual Communications Fund for regional telecommunications; the support for the dairy industry and the sugar industry when they were going through difficult times; and the modern drought assistance program which has helped keep country Australia alive during the drought, which hopefully is now drawing towards an end. There were the AusLink program, the first national program for the construction of road and rail projects; country of origin labelling laws; we doubled the size of the quarantine service; the $500 million Agriculture Advancing Australia package; the Natural Heritage Trust; the rural transaction centres to help restore services to regional communities; the development of the Ord River Irrigation Scheme; the campaign to eradicate brucellosis and tuberculosis; and the standard gauge railway line on the India-Pacific between Sydney and Perth. There were the Australian Industry Development Corporation; the expansion of the Australian Trade Commission Service; the abolition of Commonwealth estate and gift
duties; the expansion of uranium mining and exports; the Primary Industry Bank of Australia; the ban on commercial whaling and on exploration for the drilling of oil on the Great Barrier Reef; and the declaration of the first stages of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. There were the Burdekin River dam; the Australian Bicentennial Road Development program and, if you go back further, the beef roads program; the introduction of television in 1956; and of course the historic Australia-Japan Agreement on Commerce, now more than 50 years of age, followed up by a whole range of free trade agreements.

For the Nationals, these have been our core objectives. These are things that have mattered to us and that we have been able to deliver in company with our coalition partners. We have always thought that the regions deserve a fair share of our nation’s wealth as they create the majority of our export dollars. When the regions prosper so does our nation.

When I went to school I was taught that wool made up over half of our nation’s total export earnings. Of course, other agricultural sectors made up a fair share of the balance. Now it is iron ore, coal, gold, gas, bauxite and a range of agricultural products that make up the majority of our exports. These exports all come from the regions.

In years gone by this contribution was perhaps better understood and noticed in Australia. But because we have become so urbanised the cities do not seem to care so much as they did in the past. They do not understand the nature of our economy and the way in which the regions contribute to its growth and development. There is a massive transfer of income from the regions to the cities.

We are all proud of having good cities and we want them to grow and be strong, but regional Australia does have a right to a fair share of our nation’s growth and prosperity. It is because Labor lost its focus and understanding of those issues that they also lost so many seats outside of the capital cities. It was because the Rudd and Gillard governments treated regional Australia with contempt that country people revolted. Voters looked at almost three years of Labor and three years of waste, mismanagement and neglect and said, ‘Enough is enough.’ Labor’s vote collapsed absolutely in the regions because the Labor Party had no core interest in those people who lived outside the capital cities and just saw the regions as a place where they could extract money and abolish programs and in the process, unfortunately, destroy the hope and optimism of people who live in country areas.

Let us also get the facts clear that the Greens’ vote only marginally improved in the regions. That fact remains far from Senator Bob Brown’s incredible claim that his party is the most popular party in the bush. The Greens won only one out of 150 seats that they contested and that was in the city. The Green vote was not strong in regional Australia and what vote they did receive was boosted by protest votes against the major parties.

Three regional Independents were elected, but they are the same three regional Independents that we had in the last parliament. Other country Independents did quite poorly during the election campaign. Very few, if any, cracked double figures. The concept that somehow or other the Independents have some special new function or new place in the parliament, particularly the rural and regional Independents, needs to be treated on the basis of the facts. It is for these reasons that I find it surprising that the majority of the Independents chose to back Labor to form a minority government. In their seats Labor polled eight per cent, 13 per cent and 20 per cent. The people of Lyne, New Eng-
land and Kennedy did not want a Labor government. They voted decisively against Labor.

Worst of all this has been a lost opportunity for the regions. The Independents were not offered a better deal by the ALP for their electorates or for regional Australia. What the coalition put on the table during the election campaign was far superior and far more generous to the regions than what was offered by the ALP. For instance, during the election campaign the coalition committed to a new $1 billion regional education fund to seek to address the imbalance in educational outcomes in regional Australia and a new $300 million bridges renewal fund. Our affordable approach to broadband would have delivered similar or faster speeds to regional people in a quicker time than Labor’s wildly expensive and largely uncosted National Broadband Network.

Perhaps that is not widely understood. The broadband plan of the Liberal and National parties would have delivered to regional Australia speeds faster than Labor was proposing, at a fraction of the cost. There is now talk about building the NBN from the outside in. It was always our proposal to go to the areas that do not have broadband now and give them priority rather than, as Labor is proposing under the NBN, simply duplicating existing networks to provide more competition in the cities.

During the election campaign the coalition also promised local hospital boards and more scholarships for doctors, nurses and dentists for regional students. We promised more health professionals in regional areas, major road and rail upgrades and the restoration of our quarantine and Customs services to restore the security of our borders. We promised lower taxes for small businesses and we promised to reverse Labor’s draconian cuts to the independent youth allowance, which so disadvantaged regional Australia. There was a $1.5 billion mental health initiative, which would have opened up a large number of new Headspace services in regional areas, and there was much more.

I hope that one day we will have the chance to implement these visionary and comprehensive policies for the good of all regional people. The reality is that a coalition government has delivered enormously for regional Australia over the decades. Much more needs to be done. We had much more on the agenda as part of our commitments in the last election campaign, and of course when the coalition makes election commitments we actually expect to honour our promises. Labor simply walks away from them, as they did at the last election and as they are certain to do again.

Labor’s blankets and beads approach offers none of this comprehensive plan to help build better regions for Australia. The centrepiece of what Labor is offering is a regional development program that is dependent upon the introduction of a mining tax which will not collect any revenue until at least 2015, and that is two more elections away. That requires a lot of hope, faith and trust in a government that has never delivered for regional Australia. And of course the mining tax will rip billions of dollars out of investment and will cost thousands of jobs in regional Australia. To get back a few hundred million dollars from the billions the government actually expects to collect from this tax is hardly a decent or fair deal for the regions.

I remind people of the commitments that the federal Labor Party has made so far for the expenditure of the mining tax funds, which are supposed to go to the regions. The biggest single commitment is for roads around Perth Airport. Whilst those roads are necessary, no-one ever told me that Perth
was regional Australia. So in fact Labor is not focusing on delivering to the regions; this is simply another tax for Labor to spend money and pork-barrel their programs.

The deal that was offered to the Independents did not sound like a good one to me when it was made and it does not sound like a good deal to me now. But of course that is a matter for judgment by the Australian people. I am just disappointed that the opportunity for a new start, a new deal, a grand new opportunity for regional Australia, has been lost. In all of the rhetoric and all of the talk about new paradigms and the rest, the reality is that regional Australia has lost the opportunity to have a better future than will now be available.

I congratulate the Prime Minister and her team on the unusual alliance that she has managed to pull together to deliver the magic 76 seats, and when she puts forward policies that support regional Australia she can count on our support. May I also congratulate those who have been elected and those who have already spoken. I am sure they will make a very substantial contribution to the parliament. I hope they will remember that our country is made up not just of cities but also of people who live and work in the regions.

What we need is a fair go for all Australians. If the Prime Minister does not deliver a fair deal for regional Australia, she can count on getting a very difficult time from us. This parliament is not a place for the fainthearted. It should be a place that is prepared to make the bold decisions needed to deliver fairness and a good outcome for all Australians, even those who live outside the capital cities.

Mr CRAIG THOMSON (Dobell) (6.41 pm)—I rise to make my contribution as a member returned from a non-capital-city seat, a regional seat. I want to start by thanking the people of Dobell, who returned me with an increased majority. They were listening to the government and looking at the work that the government has done over the last three years. People on the Central Coast made a judgment, not only returning me with an increased majority but, to my great pleasure, electing a new member for Robertson with an increased majority as well. In these two seats in the very fast-growing regional area of the Central Coast, the government's record convinced people on the ground that the Gillard government would be the best government to represent them to make sure that their interests were best looked after.

The reason for this was quite simple. If you start to look at the things that really matter for people, first and foremost, always, are jobs. In my electorate and on the Central Coast generally, jobs are always a difficult issue. We tend to have higher unemployment than the national average; currently it is just a tick over six per cent. We have difficulties with youth unemployment and teenage unemployment. Youth unemployment is a little over 13 per cent. Teenage unemployment is as high as 32 per cent, coming down from 42 per cent. Of course, when people were looking at the policies and the records of the parties, they looked at what this government had done for the people of the Central Coast through the global financial crisis. The area has higher than normal unemployment and also a great deal of hidden unemployment. As the member for Robertson pointed out in her maiden speech, over 40,000 people commute from the Central Coast to either Sydney or Newcastle. People would prefer to work on the Central Coast, but there are no jobs there. The people of the Central Coast realised that jobs were a crucial issue upon which they would base their decision about who would be the best party to govern. One of the reasons that we got such a good result on the Central Coast is that jobs were, first and foremost, front and centre of the position
that our government took in relation to the
global financial crisis.

If you were going to design a stimulus
package to keep jobs on the Central Coast,
you would design it in exactly the same way
that the stimulus package of ours was de-
signed. You would make sure that you
boosted retail. The biggest employer on the
Central Coast is retail. The cash handouts
made sure that shops did not shut and that
people were not turned out of their jobs in
the retail area. This area is most vulnerable
when there are downturns in the economy.
This area has the largest proportion of jobs
on the Central Coast, and we could have po-
tentially seen thousands of people losing
their employment.

The second biggest area of occupational
employment on the Central Coast is tradies.
Building the Education Revolution meant
that tradies were employed at schools—there
are 106 schools on the Central Coast—and
local people worked on those jobs. Building
the Education Revolution made sure that
local people were employed, that they were
able to take home a pay cheque and that their
families were looked after because they were
kept in jobs. Ninety-eight per cent of the
people who worked on those 106 schools
were living on the Central Coast. In fact, we
had people who used to commute to Sydney
but who ended up with jobs on the Central
Coast through Building the Education Revo-
lution.

The Labor government’s policies for this
term and the previous term are about a lot
more than just stimulus packages and getting
through the global financial crisis. Issues
such as health played a major role in people
deciding which way they were going to vote
on the Central Coast. Of course, there were
some pretty stark choices. The Labor gov-
ernment is investing over $28 million in a
regional cancer centre—the first cancer cen-
tre to provide treatments on the Central
Coast. Before this time, people had to travel
either down to Sydney or up to Newcastle to
get proper treatment. This area had been ne-
glected for years. During the 12 years of the
coalition government, they did nothing for
people on the Central Coast who were suffer-
ing from cancer. The Labor government got
in there, pulled its sleeves up and made sure
that it put investment into these services so
that people would be looked after. I have
spoken to many people who either are cancer
survivors or have lost relatives to cancer.
They said to me: ‘Look, to travel down to
Sydney for cancer treatment when you are as
sick as I was, or as sick as my family mem-
ber was, we just did not do it. We chose not
to go.’ Their health was compromised be-
cause these services were not available on
the Central Coast. But this government has
made sure that they are now being provided.

The Central Coast has the fourth and fifth
busiest emergency departments in New
South Wales. Wyong Hospital has the fourth
busiest emergency department and Gosford
Hospital has the fifth busiest emergency de-
partment. An important issue for everyone
living in the area is that they have proper
access to these hospitals—that these hospita-
tals are not blocked up. Wyong Hospital had
one of the highest incidences of people turn-
ing up to the emergency department who
should be seeing a GP because we simply did
not have enough GPs or enough after-hours
services on the Central Coast. So what did
this government do at the 2007 election? We
promised a GP superclinic. In the term of the
last government we got the temporary GP
superclinic service up and running at War-
nervale, right near the hospital. It ensures
that people are able to get after-hours access
to GP services.

A super GP centre is about much more
than just GPs. A centre will be built—it has
been approved by the council and the land is
being purchased—and will employ over 100 staff. It will make sure that people who live in the growth areas of Hamlyn Terrace, Warnervale and Woongarrah—where a lot of young families live—and who have not been able to see a doctor will be able to see a doctor; they will not have to queue up for hours at a public hospital.

One of the problems with a busy regional public hospital such as Wyong Hospital is making sure that you can attract staff, and one of the key issues in attracting staff is having them trained at the hospitals so that they understand the area in which they will be working. When they see how beautiful the Central Coast is, they will naturally want to live and work there. This government promised and delivered over $5 million to ensure that doctors and health professionals from the University of Newcastle were trained at Wyong Hospital, making it a true teaching hospital by enabling health professionals and doctors to do their training there. This will mean that some of the workforce shortages that naturally occur in areas outside the capital cities will be overcome as people who are working at the hospital and living in the area will decide to stay and make their future life there.

Another key area of reform in health was making sure that we had local health networks. One of the big bugbears for everyone on the Central Coast is that we have an area health service that includes northern Sydney as well as the Central Coast. It was my campaign to make sure that we put forward a Central Coast area health service and that the network operated for the Central Coast rather than for the Central Coast and northern Sydney. Over 300,000 people live on the Central Coast. It is big enough to have its own health facilities. It needs to have its own health facilities so that it can focus its resources on where they are needed locally. I am happy to say that the New South Wales government acceded to our request and today announced the Central Coast Area Health Service. That is a great win for the people of the Central Coast. It also means that under the Labor government’s reforms to funding health services and the introduction of casemix funding, new growth areas with very busy hospitals like Wyong Hospital and Gosford Hospital will see major benefits. Funding will not be based on some historic model; it will be based on the actual work that is done at the hospital. That is good news for everyone who lives on the Central Coast and who requires those services to make sure that they can live the sort of life that people often do in the city.

I want to go back to education though because that was a major issue that made people choose to vote for the Labor Party on the Central Coast. It was not just about the jobs, even though that was an incredibly important issue. It was also about building the social infrastructure that these schools have been crying out for over many years. At every school opening that I went to, at every building that was opened—whether they were classrooms, libraries or school halls—the school principal—be it of a private school, a Catholic school or a government school—would start off by saying, ‘We always had these buildings on our wish list but we never thought we would see them being built.’ They always started off by saying how effective this was going to be in being able to deliver increased education services to the kids on the Central Coast. They could see the direct correlation between the capital investment in the schools and the delivery of the education services to the kids on the Central Coast. That in itself is something worth noting, making a great distinction between ourselves on this side of the House and those on the other side of the House. Putting aside the issue and importance of the jobs, just building this infrastructure in schools is go-
ing to pay dividends for many, many genera-
tions.

The education policies of this side of the
House were far more than that. It was about
making sure that there were different streams
at the schools, making sure that we had trade
training at schools. I have visited Wadalba
Community School, which has kindergarten
through to year 12. They have set up because
of the trade training centre that is being built
there as part of a consortium with four other
schools. They now have three streams of
education that people can choose and mix
between at that school. It is important with
areas like the Central Coast that we look at
these different pathways, the different ways
in which kids can be taught, because schools
on the Central Coast have retention rates of
only around 40 per cent, so 60 per cent of
kids are dropping out.

That goes back to the point I made at the
start of my contribution about youth unem-
ployment and teenage unemployment. When
you have teenage unemployment at 32 per
cent and youth unemployment at 13 per cent,
it is not good enough to say, ‘We are just
going to keep on going the same way.’ It is
not good enough to say, ‘We will build a few
flag poles and put them into the schools and
that will mean kids will be able to get jobs.’
You need to change the way in which educa-
tion is delivered. That is what this govern-
ment has been doing and is going to continue
do. That is one of the things that the peo-
ple in my electorate and in the electorate of
Robertson clearly identified as being a major
distinction between our side of politics and
those who sit opposite.

The people on the Central Coast saw that
we acted decisively in terms of the economy
and the global financial crisis. They saw that
we had a plan for the future that included
making sure that money was spent locally,
that jobs were kept locally, that we were go-
ing to stimulate growth. With some irony we
heard the member for Paterson talking about
our policies pushing up interest rates. Interest
rates are still 2½ per cent lower than what
they were when the coalition was last in
government. The people of the Central Coast
understand that you need to have good and
progressive economic managers to manage
the economy to make sure that their interests
are looked after. Compare the way in which
this government has managed the global fi-
nancial crisis with the bumbling efforts in
terms of the economy that we have seen
from the other side, who cannot seem to add
up their money. After the election we found
the massive $11 billion black hole in their
funding promises. Compare that to the re-
sponsible position taken by this government
to make sure that we are securing jobs and
also that we are going ahead with our impor-
tant social programs, both in health and edu-
cation.

Locally we also made sure that in terms of
jobs we invested in our surf clubs. Surf-
lifesaving on the Central Coast is part of the
fabric of the Central Coast. It has a great his-
tory. Surf clubs like Soldier’s Beach were
pioneers in many of the techniques of surf-
lifesaving. One of the problems that we had
on the Central Coast was that many of our
surf clubs were falling down. It is important
to make sure that people who go to the
beach, be they locals or tourists, have surflif-
savers there with the facilities to make
sure they can protect them when they are
swimming. This government invested $5
million. It created local jobs on the Central
Coast, in looking at rebuilding Shelly Beach
surf-lifesaving club and Soldier’s Beach
surf-lifesaving club.

We also have committed $2.7 million to a
jobs incubator at Wyong. This is to look at
trying to tackle both youth unemployment
and another way to tackle the sorts of unem-
ployment problems that we have on the Cen-
tral Coast. A series of workshops will be set up where people can try to translate businesses that work at home into businesses that employ people on the Central Coast, because small business is the heart and soul of employment there. That is why this government has made many commitments to small business, including funding the BEC for the first time on the Central Coast. It has done a fantastic job promoting small business.

Of course, the NBN was a major issue on the Central Coast. I would just like to quote Edgar Adams who writes for the *Central Coast Business Journal*. He can hardly be described as a left-winger at all. He wrote in his recent editorial that there is no question that here on the Central Coast, and across the nation, the lack of policies and the ignorance of the difference between fibre optic and wireless communication cost the coalition this election. He understands there is a major difference. Obviously, given his contribution, the Leader of the National Party does not understand that, but I can say that the people of the Central Coast certainly understood that.

The environmental promises that we have made and delivered on include $20 million for the Tuggerah Lakes, making sure that we have secured the water supply of the Central Coast by building a pipeline with over $80 million of federal government money, which will be in place by June of next year, and the strong stance that I have taken in terms of opposing a coalmine to be built on the Central Coast. I have committed to making sure that I do everything I possibly can to stop that coalmine, which is not in the interests of people on the Central Coast. They were some of the major issues in my area that saw a swing in the seats of Robertson and Dobell to the Labor Party.

Of course that swing did not come about just because of the candidate. Quite clearly there was a lot of help on the ground from people who assisted me throughout that campaign. I would like to place on record my thanks to Isobel and Bernie Lowe, Pat and Owen Llewellyn, David Sykes, Peter Cooley, Daniel Parish and Daniel Jaggers. I particularly thank those last two for driving a bus around the electorate. I thank Peter, Alice and Stella Wilson, who had their photo plastered all over a bus. It is pretty hard when you are an ambulance officer and a primary school teacher and you have yourself and your young daughter plastered over a bus driving around the electorate. I would really like to thank them.

I would also like to thank all the staff in my office: Sue Mueller, Emma Harding, Neil Rose, David Gardiner, Luke McDermott, Cheryl Greenwald, and Matt Burke for the time that he was there. I thank Kayla Murnane and Sam Dastyari from the party’s head office, Senator Steve Hutchins for his support, and my parents. Of course I would like to thank my partner, Zoe Arnold, the most and my little baby, Matilda, who had to put up with a lot during the election. I would also like to thank my partner’s mother, Sara Bestry, and her son Lachie, who worked as well. I am out of time and I seek leave to table a list of other people I would like to thank in relation to their support throughout the election.

Leave granted.

**Mr BRIGGS** (Mayo) (7.01 pm)—I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this address-in-reply. It is the first opportunity I have had on an address-in-reply but it is the second time I have been elected to this place. It is a great honour to stand here. I acknowledge all the re-elected members, particularly the member for Canning, who withstood a ferocious firestorm over in the west and managed to hold his seat in difficult circumstances. He did very well indeed. Congratu-
lations to him and to all the other members who were elected, particularly those new members who have been elected to this place. It is a great honour. With only 1,000-odd people ever having been elected to this place, it is something that people should be very proud of. Today on our side we have seen the first Indigenous Australian elected to the House of Representatives, the member for Hasluck. We are very proud on our side of the House of his efforts in being elected and of his contribution to the parliament today.

Politics is a cut-throat business and unfortunately there were some who stood at the last election on both sides—more on the other side than on ours—and were not successful. I pay tribute to two people in particular. Jason Wood, who was the member for La Trobe, is a good man and did a very good job from 2004, when he was elected. He faced a very difficult election and nearly hung on in very tough circumstances. He is a good man and I am sure we will remain in contact. Wilson Tuckey served this place for 30 years and served the Liberal Party for all of that time. While Wilson at times tested all of us, he had a proud record in this place and a proud record of contribution to our party. I acknowledge his service and his contribution, as I am sure all of our members do.

Mr Champion—You can take his role!

Mr BRIGGS—It is an honour to be elected in the same parliament as the member for Wakefield and others. I thank the people of Mayo for their trust in me and for the small improvement on the margin that was held by the former member for Mayo at the 2007 election—just a small improvement, but enough for bragging rights at least. I am pleased with that result and I am pleased the people of Mayo gave me that trust. I thank them for that and I do not take that trust for granted. It is there to be taken away at any time at future elections.

During the campaign we all made a series of commitments to our electorates and we all seek to implement those commitments. I am no different to other members of this place on both sides who have made those commitments. I want to address a couple of those commitments in particular this evening. Hopefully Labor ministers and the government take them up and implement them because they were good commitments that were well thought through. They would make a genuine difference to my people in the electorate of Mayo.

At the moment the biggest issue facing people in Mount Barker, where I live, is the second freeway interchange off the South Eastern Freeway into Mount Barker. It is an area that has grown significantly and has been one of the fastest growing areas in the country in the last 10 years. If the Rann state Labor government has its way, it will grow even quicker still, which I will address a bit later. This issue needs to be resolved and it needs to be addressed. We had a plan to provide funding towards the building of this second freeway interchange. It is an important project and I do hope the federal transport minister pinches it and implements it, because his state counterparts have failed in this area. They have failed to provide any decent assistance to the Mount Barker and Adelaide Hills community to upgrade this infrastructure, given the very large amount of development that has occurred in our area over the last 10 years or so. This leads into an issue that did dominate part of the campaign—that is, population growth and population growth in areas such as mine where state governments are not thinking it through and are not planning properly. I know the member for Wakefield has made comments in his electorate as well in relation to the
state government planning on how population movement and growth will occur.

At the moment, there is a genuine challenge from the state government, who have decided to release a large amount of land, which is not supported by the community, is not supported by the local members, both state and federal, and is not supported by the Mount Barker council. It has gone through a process in which the development panel took submissions. They are now at the end of that process. However, a really concerning aspect of this process is that a state government minister, Mr Holloway, is saying that he will not release publicly the advice that he will get from this development panel assessment. That is a mistake. I agree with the member for Lyne, who says, ‘Let the sun shine in on these sorts of issues.’ This advice should be released publicly so that we can see what the state Labor government has been told. The infrastructure spending should be there. That is why my major commitment in this campaign was to address some of those infrastructure bottlenecks. This is a big issue and it will continue to be.

On top of that, there are the issues of community safety and community facilities. We had a very good plan, which was released by the shadow minister for customs, the member for Stirling. He came up with a plan in relation to CCTV and community safety. We had two announcements in the electorate in relation to Mount Barker and, in particular, Victor Harbor, which is an older community whose residents are very concerned about community safety. It is something that governments should look at and consider.

In relation to specific promises, the community of Victor Harbor has for many years been campaigning for a pool. We promised funding towards it. It is a worthwhile project and I hope that the Labor government will consider it in the near future under their regional programs.

The biggest issue in my electorate continues to be water, the Lower Lakes and the Murray-Darling Basin. Fortunately, in the last few weeks and months we have had quite substantial rainfall. It has been for some a very joyous occasion to see the northern parts of Victoria under water. That means that water will flow into the river and into the Lower Lakes. For the first time in about 10 years, there is water flowing out of the mouth of the Murray. For the first time in a very long time, the dredging equipment can stop operation at the Murray mouth. That is great news. Lake Alexandrina is connected again to Lake Albert and the Goolwa Channel. These are all good events. For the first time in a long time, people can see some light at the end of the tunnel after what has been a debilitating and dreadful drought.

The rainfall highlights just how bad the drought was in 2006 and 2007. In the first week of September, the inflows into the Murray-Darling Basin were more than the inflows in 2006 and 2007 combined. That probably shows just how dry those years were rather than how wet August and the early parts of September were.

This issue will continue to be a major challenge for us. Next Friday the guide to the Murray-Darling Basin plan will be released. This plan was initiated by John Howard and the member for Wentworth in January 2007, when we released for the first time a national plan to deal with the Murray-Darling Basin. That was the first time that a government had taken on this issue. It is still to be resolved. The criticism that we rightly made of the former minister for water during the election campaign was that she had been too slow in implementing this plan and that it had been too delayed. This plan will be a very important document. It will give consideration to
the science of the basin. It needs to give consideration to the communities that it will affect. We all wait with bated breath to see what is in it so that we can move the basin forward in a sustainable manner, continue to grow our own food in the Murray-Darling Basin and have a sustainable and healthy environment so that the Lower Lakes in my electorate survive and flourish.

There are other local challenges that I will continue to pursue in this parliament in the next three years. Some of those are the ongoing cost of doing business on Kangaroo Island and the challenges that its people have with their road network. Being a very large island with a very small population, it has a very small revenue base and has constant difficulties keeping its vast road network up to date and safe. It is a tourism mecca for South Australia. It is South Australia’s largest tourism icon and one of the country’s largest tourism icons. It does not get enough funding from state government in particular, who have really dropped the ball in dealing with Kangaroo Island. Unfortunately, the federal government needs to provide more assistance so that this island can continue to be the great tourism destination that it is. About 60 per cent of international tourists who visit South Australia do so to visit Kangaroo Island. Unfortunately, the nature of the towns and villages and the areas between them is very hilly. The roads are very windy. Unfortunately, sometimes the quality of the roads is not up to the way that people drive on them. There needs to be improved driving efforts but also increased funding to address the many black spots that we have to ensure that people are safer on those roads.

Finally, the other local issue I wanted to address briefly this evening is the ongoing challenge of the freight rail network that goes straight through the Adelaide Hills and which is far out of date. A longer term solution should be planned to look at taking this rail network onto the flat lands north of the Adelaide Hills, bypassing the pristine environs of the Adelaide Hills and into the lower part of Mitcham, which also affects the member for Boothby’s electorate. It is a big issue. I know some do not think it is a big issue but we will continue to look at long-term solutions. It is not going to be fixed in five minutes but it should be addressed in the coming years. It will be economically efficient to get the rail out of the Adelaide Hills because you will get—

Mr Champion—Is that a commitment?

Mr Briggs—Yes, it will cost significant amounts of money; however, it will be economically efficient to double stack and
keep the line flat, rather than go up and down my beautiful Adelaide Hills.

In addition to these local issues, in this term my leader has asked me to take on the additional responsibility of being the coalition spokesperson on scrutiny of government. That is a task I relish and I very much appreciate being given the opportunity. There is much to get into. Only today we saw another Auditor-General’s report on the green loans debacle, which I understand is very interesting reading. I have not yet had the opportunity to get into it, but it seems that there are some interesting comments by the independent Auditor-General—who we all very much respect in this chamber. When he makes reports and findings like this we take them very seriously.

This is a role that I take seriously. I appreciate the opportunity and I acknowledge the work of Senator Barnett, who had this role in the previous parliament. As Senator Barnett did, I will look at the issues arising from this government losing its way in implementing its programs, including the BER program, which was the biggest government waste in the history of the Commonwealth, the pink batts program and, as I mentioned, the green loans program. We will now also have the NBN, at a cost of $5,000 per hook-up, with areas like mine being completely left off the map. At the Forbes rich list conference in Sydney today a very astute observer asked, ‘Why would you spend that much money?’ This issue has got a long way to run. I will be fascinated to see the member for Wentworth pick apart the communications minister this evening on television because I am sure there is much there that I will be able to focus on as the scrutiny of government spokesman.

We are focused on this important issue. It is one of the issues that led to this government, for the first time since the Second World War—since the early 1930s, in fact—losing its majority after just one term. The waste and mismanagement of this government will dog it. It is a bad government and it looks like it will get worse, unfortunately. If I can play my part in exposing its failures then I will be very pleased to do so.

I also acknowledge, as the member for Dobell did, some of the people who helped ensure that I remained in this place and kept the seat of Mayo from the red horde who challenged me on 21 August. Obviously, they include the Mayo FEC and the loyal people—although my FEC president did manage to get out of the country for those three months. That was convenient for young Mr Downer. In his place were Andrew Horwood as my campaign manager, and Marg and Colin Westmore, David Hall and Ross Mitchell, who took a week’s annual leave in the last week to help me out. Without the work and assistance of these people, none of us would be here. These are the kinds of people you always owe a debt of gratitude to.

Obviously, I also acknowledge my staff, who worked as hard as they possibly could in those at times difficult circumstances. Unfortunately, one of those staff who performed very well, Andrew Ockenden, is off now to be an associate of the District Court—for some reason he thinks that is more attractive than working in politics. We wish him well. He is a very bright spark who will do very well in the future, and I suspect that one day we will possibly see him in this place.

Finally, we always need to acknowledge the assistance of our families: my wife, Estee, and my two children, and the additional one we will have February, which we are all excited about. Without their support and help, we would not be able to do this.

Mr HAYES (Fowler) (7.19 pm)—I start by congratulating you, Mr Deputy Speaker Scott, on your re-election as the Second Dep-
uty Speaker of the House. Well done. You do have the confidence of this side of the parliament. It is indeed a great honour today to be speaking as the newly elected member for Fowler. While I have changed electorates, I assure you my philosophy and attitude as a member of parliament remains the same. I will represent the people of Fowler in the only way I know: diligently and with determination.

During my previous two terms of parliament I have prided myself on having an open-door policy with all my constituents. I know the reason I am here is to give voice to the people and the communities of my electorate. This is something I am definitely committed to. I want the people of my electorate to know that I am available to them whenever they need my help. I want people to know that I will be an active member and will pursue their interests in the federal parliament.

I was recently asked by a local journalist about what my priorities might be as I came into the electorate of Fowler. I told her that I had five ambitions in establishing myself as a local member committed to the people of Fowler. My ambitions include ensuring that I am available to the community, and I will run an office dedicated to servicing the needs of both individuals and the community alike. I will work with organisations that particularly support the disadvantaged, the homeless, the disabled and the aged to assist them in their vital role. Through government, I hope to help create local employment opportunities, particularly for the young—and unfortunately we do have a very high youth unemployment rate. I also like to think that I will bring greater awareness to the issue of domestic violence and the impact it is having on our community. I also indicate that wherever possible I will support our police in the vital work that they do in protecting our community. I am prepared to be judged against these personal ambitions and the results that I achieve for the people and community of Fowler.

It would be remiss of me not to mention some of the organisations that make up the fabric and spirit of Fowler. I am very indebted to those organisations that have made me feel most welcome. Firstly, there is the New South Wales chapter of the Vietnamese Community in Australia, which I know to be an extremely professional organisation led by Thanh Nguyen. The interests of the Australian Vietnamese community are certainly in good hands through the diligent work of that organisation.

The VCA’s hospitality and kindness is matched by many other organisations and people in Fowler, including the south-west Chinese association, which incorporates 40 individual Australian-Chinese associations operating in the area; Julio Gruttiilini and the Cabramatta Community Centre; Ricci Bartels and the Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre; Kamalle Debosssey and Dr Vincent Ogu from the Liverpool Migrant Resource Centre; the Bonnyrigg Men’s Shed; the Liverpool Women’s Health Centre; and the Joan Harrison Support Services for Women, just to name a few. These organisations have indicated their preparedness to work with me. My position is to not simply go out into the community and pretend to reinvent the wheel but to work with all those organisations that are doing good work in the community. In Fowler we are blessed with organisations and people who are prepared to respond to the diverse needs of the community.

It is obvious from the list I just read out that Fowler is a culturally diverse community. In fact, Fowler has the highest proportion of people born overseas than any electorate in this country. Nearly 70,000 people or 49 per cent of the current electorate of Fowler were born outside the country. As a
consequence, we celebrate various cultural events such as the recent Moon Festival, the Multicultural Eid Festival and Fair, the Vietnamese and Chinese lunar New Year and NAIDOC Week. It is a culturally rich community with a patchwork of extended communities that are nurtured by various organisations committed to maintaining the value of their heritage and their culture.

This country has been welcoming migrants from all over the world for many years now. We are a diverse nation and, quite frankly, we are all the better for it. People from various countries who now call the electorate of Fowler home have helped make this community in the south-west of Sydney far more vibrant, dynamic and inclusive. Migrants come to this country for various reasons. Some seek safety; others want to buy into the freedoms this country has to offer. But all of them come here with a view to building better lives for themselves and for their families. Whatever the reasons are that they come to our shores, the contribution they make to our community deserves to be recognised. They bring their customs, languages and some of their traditional recipes and foods. They also bring their skills, courage and determination, which combine to build a better future not only for themselves but also for the community as a whole.

The presence of a multicultural community should be celebrated as it enriches us as a nation. I am certainly looking forward to learning more about the diverse cultures in Fowler over the coming years. I will be proud to work with each community support organisation to help them achieve what they set out to do—to preserve their culture whilst participating in the general framework of Australian life.

It is not only the traditions and the cultures that I intend to honour as the member for Fowler; I will also honour the election commitments I made and those made by the federal Labor Party. One such commitment was $15 million for the Liverpool GP superclinic. This is a fantastic win for the people of the south-west of Sydney. It will offer after-hours GP services as well as facilities to train future health professionals in the region. I personally lobbied the Minister for Health, Nicola Roxon, for one of Labor’s GP superclinics to be located in this area to take the pressure off the Liverpool and Fairfield general hospitals. I understand the government expects to put out an invitation to tender very shortly for the construction and operation of this superclinic.

Health reform was a common topic during the mobile offices I conducted during the nine months leading up to the last election. This superclinic is welcomed by the community as a whole. The community know that we need to take pressure off the current health system in the south-west of Sydney. Through this $15 million investment in the superclinic, the Labor government have made it very clear that we are not prepared to leave the health system in a business as usual situation. The commitment to a GP superclinic follows the $47 million federal Labor commitment to the Ingham Health Research Institute in Liverpool and the $106 million commitment to local schools to improve their infrastructure and provide the tools for quality education for local kids.

Federal Labor are also responsible for the new autism-specific childcare centre that was recently opened in Liverpool, one of six funded nationally. All of us with children know the difficulties and challenges involved in raising kids and helping them realise their full potential. However, the families of children with disabilities face many more complications and worries. Through this specialised early childhood centre, parents will have access to early childhood intervention at the time when they need it most. I pay specific
tribute to Grace Fava from the Autism Advisory and Support Service whom I worked with to ensure that this particular centre was built in Liverpool. Her dream has now been realised.

Debate interrupted.

ADJOURNMENT

The SPEAKER—Order! It being 7.30 pm, I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

Taxation

Mr BILLSON (Dunkley) (7.30 pm)—
Thank you for the call, Mr Speaker, and congratulations on continuing in the role. The coalition recognises that merit matters most. It took a little while for some of your own colleagues to get there, but I am very happy to see you in the chair.

Tonight I will use a few minutes to highlight how, on the back of the big carbon tax on the Australian public, there is another very worrying, very damaging and I think deliberately deceitful campaign that the Gillard Labor government is running. It relates to the attack on independent contractors. There are more than two million Australians who are self-employed and pursue their livelihoods through independent contracting, and they were assured by Labor in writing prior to the 2007 election that there would be no change to the taxation laws relating to their legitimate business activities. Right throughout the term of the Rudd-Gillard government, despite that written assurance we’ll make no change; therefore, as interesting as your recommendations are, we don’t want to know about them’? No, that is not what happened. Senator Nick Sherry, in his role as Assistant Treasurer, welcomed gleefully these recommendations to turn the taxation administrative and compliance regime for more than two million independent contractors on its head. He said, ‘Thank you.’ He accused independent contractors of being involved in sham arrangements that ‘were a threat to the integrity of the tax base’ as if they were somehow undermining the rights and opportunities of others in the workforce who chose not to be self-employed—as if somehow the opportunities of others were being diminished by independent contractors.

He then went on to praise the union movement for their vigorous advocacy, and we thought, ‘There’s something on here.’ Off those recommendations went to the Henry tax review and, rather than Labor saying to
the Henry tax review, ‘We have given a written assurance of no change; therefore don’t place much weight on this,’ they were waved through with excitement and fanfare, with the government sponsoring the very changes they had promised not to make.

What has been revealed in recent weeks, after months and months of the coalition saying, ‘There’s something very pongy and slippery going on here,’ is that our suspicions have proved to be correct. For over a year the union movement has been meeting with Rudd-Gillard Labor government ministers to mount an attack on independent contracting at the very time they had promised the Australian public there would be no change. In that first term of this terrible Labor government they were out doing the very thing that they had said in writing to the Australian public and to independent contractors they would not do.

So what happened in the lead-up to the last election? Independent contractors, the small business community and the coalition were calling on the government to be clear, open and honest about their plans. We said, ‘Will you repeat that assurance of no change?’ They tried to wave it off. In the end, the best answer we could get was that change was not government policy. Yet now, with this task force of union overlords having met more than three times with people including Prime Minister Gillard and senior government ministers and as those very ministers mouth weasel words that this is not government policy at this time, we see revealed in the light of day that there is a plan to do over independent contracting in Australia. I am grateful that the Australian Financial Review and some specialist commentators have taken an interest in this matter. I urge all independent contractors and self-employed people—the two million that derive their livelihood from that mode of engagement—to rise up and say to this Labor government, ‘We know why you hate small business but please don’t do it over again on the independent contracting community.’

National Police Remembrance Day

Mr HAYES (Fowler) (7.34 pm)—I rise to speak on St Michael’s Day, St Michael being the patron saint of law enforcement. It is a day that all police recognise as Police Remembrance Day. It is a time for police across the nation and the community to pause to honour the lives and memories of the many very fine men and women who have given their lives in the protection of our community.

Tragically, on 9 September we were only too well reminded of the inherent dangers faced by police following the death of Detective Constable William ‘Bill’ Crews, who was accidentally shot while on a drug raid in Sydney’s south-west with the Middle Eastern Organised Crime Squad. I take this opportunity to again offer my deepest sympathies and condolences to both his family and his colleagues.

Earlier this morning, along with 100 serving and former police officers from the New South Wales Police Force and the Australian Federal Police, I took part in a special ceremony held in Queanbeyan. It was a moving service which was also attended by the Monaro Local Area Commander, Gary Merryweather, and Commander Bruce Hill, Deputy Chief Police Officer with the AFP, together with the CEO of the Police Federation of Australia, Mark Burgess.

The National Police Memorial here in Canberra, which I know the minister at the table, the Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Justice, Brendan O’Connor, visited this afternoon to lay a wreath, has personal significance for me, having had some involvement in the establishment of that memorial, along with my colleagues in the PFA. I would like to personally congratulate...
the PFA for their foresight and remarkable efforts in preserving the memory of more than 700 police officers around Australia who have been killed on duty or have died as a result of their duties since the advent of policing in this country. Besides the services I just spoke of, I also was very proud to join with 800 police officers and their supporters two weekends ago in the inaugural Wall to Wall Ride for Remembrance in order to pay tribute to the brave police officers who have lost their lives. The police commissioners of New South Wales, Tasmania, the Northern Territory, Western Australia and the Australian Federal Police also participated in that ride and I commend them for taking time out of their busy schedules to show their respect to colleagues.

Importantly, funds raised from the ride will go to Police Legacy to support the partners and children of officers who have been killed. I know that policing comes with a degree of risk, which, thankfully, most members of the community will never have to face. With the recent death of the 26-year-old Detective Constable Crews, the timing of this ride could not have been more poignant as a reminder of the dangers involved in police work. Through my close involvement with police over many years I have come to understand that it takes a special type of person with a special type of courage to commit to wear the police uniform. We are truly indebted to the men and women who choose to do so.

Today is the day when we remember the loved ones of those police officers who have been killed, people whose lives have been affected forever with the passing of a partner, father, mother, sibling, workmate, friend or colleague. We should never forget the families of those who have given their lives in the protection of our community. I commend the work of Police Legacy. Finally, to all serving members of police forces across Australia, I assure them that they are making a genuine difference in our community. On behalf of a very grateful community, I say thank you.

The SPEAKER—I am sure that members of the House would want me to associate them with the remarks of the member for Fowler.

Mitchell Electorate: Transport Infrastructure

Mr HAWKE (Mitchell) (7.39 pm)—I commend the member for Fowler on his very fine remarks and I associate myself with those remarks. He is a fine person.

I turn tonight to what is still the most important issue in my electorate of Mitchell. In my first words in the 43rd Parliament I want to reflect the ongoing concern of my electorate about rail infrastructure in Sydney. When I think about the rail infrastructure promises which have come over many decades now from Labor state and federal governments, I also turn to the words of the Prime Minister in the last week of the election campaign which gave rise to yet another series of concerns about whether promises on rail will be met in Sydney. That is because we have had a decade of announcements about the Parramatta to Epping rail link and about the north-west rail line. Indeed, during the federal election campaign we were stunned in Sydney one day to hear that there would be a Parramatta to Epping rail link. I remind the House that this was first announced in 1998 with a completion date of 2006—so it was going to be finished four years ago.

In 2003, the Epping to Parramatta rail section was deemed too expensive and was cancelled. Then, of course, in the federal election campaign we heard that the federal government would contribute $2.1 billion for the rail link from Parramatta to Epping. The opposition rightly pointed out that this had been an announcement cobbled up on the back of a ballot paper and we learned subsequently
that there was no modelling or planning or any other information provided to departments—in fact, the state departments were completely in the dark. When we looked for the detail of what would be regarded as a very important infrastructure project, there was none to be found.

My electorate has the most families in Australia with couples who have dependent children. We are one of the of the fastest-growing corridors in Australia and we have been waiting for a rail line. We also have the dubious distinction of being No. 1 in cars per household of any electorate in the country because there are no transport alternatives. In the north-west of Sydney we have been promised a rail line for just short of 15 years. It is a vital infrastructure project. Yesterday in her address outlining the government’s commitment, the Governor-General said:

… to this end, the government is investing $37 billion in transport infrastructure through the Nation Building Program over the six-year period to 2013-14. The government’s commitments include major urban rail projects in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, the most significant investment in public transport yet made by the Commonwealth.

I could not let this opportunity pass tonight without reflecting that my electorate has the worst transport alternatives of any area in this country today. It is one of the fastest growing areas of our country. It has the highest rate of families and car ownership and no public transport alternatives. Transport is the No. 1 concern and people in my electorate are rightly sick of being committed to about public transport alternatives. They are tired of promise after broken promise. We hear talk about carbon reduction and about doing practical things to stop climate change; yet successive Labor governments break promise after promise over real practical measures such as a rail line which would fix this issue. I note that the member for Parramatta is here tonight. I say to her that it would be great to hear her speak out in relation to getting rail infrastructure projects for Sydney because the No. 1 concern of people in north-west Sydney and in her electorate of Parramatta is improving transport alternatives in the Sydney hub.

Hearing the Governor-General outline the government’s plans was interesting. Couple it with, ‘All bets are off,’ as the Prime Minister said, or key government promises made before the election ‘no longer necessarily apply’ because of the new environment created by the hung parliament. The Prime Minister of the country outlined that key promises no longer apply. I put on the table tonight that my electorate and the people of Western Sydney and north-west Sydney expect this government to keep to the promise it committed to prior to the election to build the Parramatta to Epping rail link. People expect this government to deliver better rail infrastructure because it makes these announcements and it lauds them. If you announced you were going to build a main line, if you announced you were going to fund it and if you announced before the election that this was your top priority, then people in this country would expect you to go ahead and do it.

New South Wales Labor is facing a wipe-out at the next state election in March 2011 precisely because of this—it does not meet the commitments it gives repeatedly to electorates. That is one ingredient which is leading to that circumstance. I say to this government that the people of Mitchell expect better transport infrastructure. The federal government is planning it and I ask that it delivers it.

Hindmarsh Electorate: Security

Mr GEORGANAS (Hindmarsh) (7.44 pm)—I rise tonight to talk about a commitment that was made in my electorate of Hindmarsh over the last 12 months, and I am
very pleased that the Minister for Home Affairs is here in the chamber, because the commitment involved $350,000 under the minister’s Safer Suburbs program to fund CCTV cameras and lighting in the seaside precinct of the suburb of Glenelg in my electorate.

Those of you who have visited my electorate or know of Glenelg know that it is the crown of tourism in South Australia. If you come to Adelaide as a tourist there is absolutely no doubt that you would visit Glenelg. It offers fantastic shops and beaches, beautiful restaurants, and as I said, attracts thousands of tourists every year from around South Australia, interstate and overseas. I am very pleased to say that my electorate office is also situated in Glenelg and I very much enjoy walking down Jetty Road and meeting many of my constituents at many of the cafés—such as Zest Cafe, the Strand, and Cibo’s—and talking to them about a whole range of things. The Glenelg precinct is also a popular spot after sundown when some of Adelaide’s best bars, pubs, restaurants and nightclubs get going until the early hours of the morning. During summer we have festivals and all sorts of activities that take place. On New Year’s Eve we also have a fantastic party that brings tens of thousands of people to the area.

While it is fantastic to have so many attractions, and it is great to have a very wonderful area in the electorate, many of the local residents, especially a large proportion of older people, have written to me over the past few years and have raised their concerns about a rise in antisocial behaviour by a small group of people during the early hours of the morning, or when the pubs and clubs are closing. They say that while the large majority of visitors to the area are very well behaved and are considerate of the residents, a very small proportion occasionally behave in an antisocial way by leaving bottles and other rubbish in public places and making noises as they pass residential streets on the way back to their cars, and sometimes tipping over rubbish bins and vandalising cars and street trees. Business owners in the main street of Jetty Road are also concerned about this issue, as are taxi drivers, who have a taxi rank located in this road near one of the main nightspots. They are also concerned about their safety because of the lack of CCTV coverage there.

Having heard these concerns from businesses, local residents, the Jetty Road Glenelg Mainstreet Board and the Neighbourhood Watch group in the area, I invited the honourable Minister for Home Affairs to visit. I am pleased to acknowledge the consideration he gave to my constituents and businesses in the area as he took time to visit Glenelg on three separate occasions—not once, not twice, but three separate occasions over the weeks that followed—to consult with all of the stakeholders.

During the first of these visits we went for a walk through the hot spots, conducted by the Mayor of the City of Holdfast Bay, Ken Rolland, and the CEO together with representatives from Neighbourhood Watch, the Glenelg Residents Association and the mainstreet board to discuss the issues and see what measures we could put in place. A few weeks later, on the second visit, we also met with Chief Inspector Les Buckley from South Australia Police and later with the President of the Taxi Council of South Australia, Wally Sievers.

I was very pleased on behalf of all those stakeholders, but especially for the residents, business owners and visitors to Glenelg when the minister, who is here in the chamber with us tonight, announced that the government would provide $350,000 to the City of Holdfast Council to implement some measures, including extra street lighting in
High Street in Glenelg, new CCTV cameras at the western corner of Colley Reserve, new CCTV cameras at the rear of the Glenelg Town Hall, and relocating the CCTV at the taxi rank for better coverage. I am very pleased that I have been able to deliver all these things for the residents of Hindmarsh and the residents of Glenelg. (Time expired)

Ms LEY (Farrer) (7.49 pm)—It is appropriate that the first speech that I make in the new parliament concerns the issue that really defines the electorate of Farrer, and that is water. My electorate contains most of the New South Wales Murray River, the Menindee Lakes and the Lower Darling River, as well as the important regional cities of Albury, on the Murray, and Broken Hill, the silver city, which relies on Menindee Lakes for water and feels a close connection with this lake system, an area steeped in Indigenous culture and of great historical significance.

During this winter and spring those of us in the southern Murray-Darling Basin have watched with delight as rain has fallen, storages have filled, rivers have run and plantings have flourished. In fact, flooding rains brought Murray system inflows during the second week of September to a total of 1,090 gigalitres—more than for the entire water year of 2006-07.

However, the basin communities that I represent await the first stage of the release of the Murray-Darling Basin Authority’s Basin Plan on 8 October with great trepidation. Without wishing to scaremonger, this plan has the potential to reduce water allocations to a stage where some irrigation communities will become almost unviable. The plan was delayed because of the election, and that was the wrong thing to do. Farmers cannot prepare for a future with less water if they do not know what the availability of this most significant input will be. Banks and other lenders cannot provide ongoing credit and other means of support unless they have an idea of that all important bottom line.

I do applaud the Murray-Darling Basin Authority’s CEO, Rob Freeman, for his recent acknowledgement of the pain being experienced in the basin, but I am not sure about his statement that the rain creates a more stable foundation on which to produce the new basin plan. The fact that rain has fallen should not allow governments or their agencies to feel anything less than a deep sense of responsibility and accountability for the changes they propose to make to water allocations.

We all accept that we will have sustainable diversion limits, or caps on water extraction, for the valleys in the basin. The question is what these limits will be, how communities will cope and how we can achieve an end result that is in the interests of all Australians, city and country. The end result is critical, and the government is responsible for that result. It is not the Murray-Darling Basin Authority that makes the final decision under the Water Act—it is the minister. I welcome statements made so far by Minister Burke that he appreciates the negative socioeconomic impacts of the Basin Plan and that he wants to be better informed about those impacts. I thank him for his willingness to engage with the communities that I represent. I know he will treat them with respect.

Irrigation feeds the nation and the world. We are crying out for recognition from governments that our towns matter, that our people are doing something worthwhile, that our farmers are not environmental vandals because we use water to grow food and that given half a chance after long years of drought we will thrive and really are a great place to live, work and raise a family. I
would like to invite the minister to visit the New South Wales central Murray and Sunraysia regions and see the level of investment and commitment that we bring to Australia’s rural and regional future.

I also wish to raise the issue of the Labor Party’s policy towards Menindee Lakes. Rightly or wrongly, Broken Hill people feel that this government is prepared to sacrifice this lake system for its environmental watering plan, also part of the wider Basin Plan. My question is this: why would you drain environmental wetlands for environmental water? In order, presumably, to give authorities the scope to drain the lakes whenever it suits them, the previous government allocated $16 million to a feasibility study into storing water in an aquifer 20 kilometres south of the town of Menindee. That is a good 100 kilometres from Broken Hill, I think. How do we know this would work? What would be the cost every time you turned on your tap in Broken Hill and, most importantly, who would pay? Usually it is the end user.

I do urge the new water minister and indeed all Australians to visit the magnificent Menindee Lakes, which are now full for the first time in 12 or 14 years and are home to more species of birds than Kakadu National Park. We really must recognise the environmental and cultural significance and the amenities that these lakes provide to everybody touring through the back country looking at how Australia is reborn after recent rains and really appreciate the contribution that we make in western New South Wales to the nation’s bottom line.

Parramasala

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (7.54 pm)—This is my first opportunity to acknowledge the beginning of something great in Western Sydney. In November this year the best of India and its region will come to Parramatta through a new international festival called Parramasala—a five-day celebration of extraordinary works from the Indian subcontinent. This event follows on from the successful staging of a performance by the famous musician Rahman in Parramatta Park, an event that attracted around 60,000 people. New festivals of this quality do not come around often, particularly events that are such a good match for Western Sydney and its population.

When it comes to things Indian most of our attention lately has not been on the arts; it has been on the preparation for the Commonwealth Games, which will be hosted by India shortly. I know that all of us here wish them well. I hope once the games begin that it is a great event, highlighting the best in sport, venues and hospitality. My wish for India, our friend, is that the games bring to them all that they hope for and that the world sees India through these games as the extraordinary country that it is and that the games open the eyes of the world to the rich, vibrant world that is India.

I know my own large Indian community want us all in this country to see their first homeland in the best light, to share their love of their country of birth with those of us who share their new home, Australia, their country of choice. I know my community are holding their breath as this is the event that they have been looking forward to. I am holding my breath with them. I know too that they are also looking forward to Parramasala and an opportunity here in their own community to showcase the best of their country of birth.

For me, India has much more to offer than cricket. My community does remind me over and over again that Australia and India share a love of cricket, but I have known and loved classical Indian music, dance and art for many years. Western classical music and
dance are great art forms requiring years of training and discipline; Indian classical music and dance require no less. They are truly great classical forms. It is a great pleasure for me in my electorate to be invited to the recitals in music and dance and to see young Australian boys and girls performing at a high level in these extremely difficult and complex forms. We are well and truly growing our own cultural form here in Australia. I have had the opportunity over many years to hear some extraordinary musicians, contemporary improvisers, from around the world—performers that stretch the edges in style and standards—performing in Western Sydney, often just down the road, who have been brought to Australia by strong community organisations in my local area. For cultural life, Western Sydney provides extraordinary variety and often at the highest standard. I want to acknowledge the work of the many community organisations that have built the standard and variety of cultural expression in Western Sydney and very much formed the basis of this new festival.

I am pleased to see that in November this year we will see a logical extension of what our diverse communities brought with them when they made Australia their home—a festival of South Asian arts staged in Parramatta. Parramasala will bring the best from the subcontinent to Australia and it too will provide an opportunity to showcase the rich cultural traditions of the subcontinent—classical forms and modern forms infused with tradition—and collaborations with artists from across the globe. I am really excited by this event and I am pleased to see that parliament will not be sitting because I might have been absent without a pair. I doubt that my cries of, ‘It was Nitin Sawhney,’ would have cut it when it came to explaining my absence. But, more seriously, the arrival of Parramasala on the festival calendar should herald the arrival of a significant ongoing contributor to cultural life in Western Sydney and Australia. It is not a small event. It is funded by Events New South Wales and the Parramatta City Council. For me, it is one of the most exciting programs for an arts event that I have seen in Australia in recent years. I am particularly proud that it is going to take place in my backyard.

I will not go through the program in any depth because it would feel like a total plug, but I will just mention one fantastic event—*A Throw of the Dice*, which is a long-lost 1929 silent film by German director Franz Osten set in India, with composer Nitin Sawhney performing on stage with orchestra and traditional Indian musicians. It is a fantastic event which was originally staged in Trafalgar Square for thousands of people and we will see it in Parramatta Park in just a few weeks time. Some events in the cultural life of a nation deserve to be marked—the emergence of a new writer or film director or the opening of a new concert hall, which supports so much activity. I believe that this event, Parramasala, in the heart of Western Sydney is one such an event.

The SPEAKER—Order! It being 8 pm, the debate is interrupted. House adjourned at 8 pm

NOTICES

The following notices were given:

**Mr Rudd** to present a bill for an act to make provision relating to sanctions to facilitate the conduct of Australia’s external affairs, and for related purposes.

**Mr Rudd** to present a bill for an act to provide for the establishment and management of the Australian Civilian Corps, and for other purposes.

**Mr Albanese** to present a bill for an act to amend the law relating to airports, and for related purposes.
Mr Albanese to present a bill for an act to amend the law in relation to the protection of the sea, and for related purposes.

Mr Albanese to present a bill for an act to amend the law relating to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and the Special Broadcasting Service Corporation, and for related purposes.

Mr Albanese to present a bill for an act to amend the law relating to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and the Special Broadcasting Service Corporation, and for related purposes.

Mr McClelland to present a bill for an act relating to the resolution of civil disputes, and for related purposes.

Mr McClelland to present a bill for an act to deal with consequential matters in connection with the Human Rights (Parliamentary Scrutiny) Act 2010, and for other purposes.

Mr McClelland to present a bill for an act to amend the law relating to terrorism and national security, and for other purposes.

Mr McClelland to present a bill for an act to establish a Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights, and for related purposes.

Mr McClelland to present a bill for an act to establish a Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement, and for related purposes.

Mr McClelland to present a bill for an act to amend the law relating to telecommunication interception and access, and intelligence services, and for related purposes.

Mr Snowdon to present a bill for an act to amend the law relating to veterans’ affairs and military rehabilitation and compensation, and for other purposes.

Mr Gray to present a bill for an act to amend the law relating to governance arrangements, and for related purposes.

Ms King to present a bill for an act to amend the Therapeutic Goods Act 1989, and for related purposes.

Ms King to present a bill for an act to amend the Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act 1991, and for other purposes.

Ms Marino to move:
That this House:
(1) requires the Government:
(a) urgently to introduce legislation to reinstate the former workplace participation criteria for independent youth allowance, to apply to students whose family home is located in inner regional areas as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics instrument Australian Standard Geographical Classification; and
(b) to appropriate funds necessary to meet the additional cost of expanding the criteria for participation, with the funds to come from the Education Investment Fund; and
(2) to send a message to the Senate acquainting it of this resolution and request that it concur.

Mr Pyne to present a bill for an act to establish a Commission of Inquiry into the Building the Education Revolution Program, and for related purposes.

Mr Adams to move:
That this House:
(1) recognises that the forestry industry is an important part of the Australian economy but is currently in crisis;
(2) understands that it is necessary to secure the viability of forestry dependent communities and to create well paid, high skilled jobs by value adding to our natural resource;
(3) supports the process whereby the forestry unions, government, industry, environment and community groups working together will allow a complete restructure of the industry
that will determine that any transition is fair and just for workers, their families and communities; and

(4) calls on the House to ensure that interim payments to those facing hardships because of the transition, and those exiting the industry, can be assisted in a timely manner.

**Mr Adams** to move:

That this House:

(1) notes that pensioners have difficulty in keeping up with living costs;

(2) understands that when there is a Commonwealth pension rise, most of it is taken up by States and Territories lifting housing rents and power costs;

(3) notes that all low income people are becoming further impoverished by changes to the pensions;

(4) recommends to the Treasurer to enact legislation so that States and Territories are limited in passing on such rises in full to their instruments; and

(5) puts into place a more useful poverty measurement than is currently used.

**Mrs Moylan** to move:

That this House:

(1) acknowledges the work of carers, and in particular ageing parents caring for profoundly disabled dependents;

(2) recognises that ageing parent carers remain deeply concerned about the diminishing capacity to care for their dependent children;

(3) appreciates the special challenges faced by families, and in particular ageing parents, who wish to make provision for the needs of their disabled dependents;

(4) notes that:

(a) disability trusts were established in September 2006 by the Coalition Government to assist families make provision for the future housing and care needs of dependents with severe disabilities;

(b) despite the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs estimating that over four years, 5000 people with severe disability would benefit from Special Disability Trusts, as at 31 March 2010, 423 people have been assessed as eligible, and only 91 trusts have been established; and

(c) since establishing Special Disability Trusts, it has become apparent that the conditions governing eligibility and management, as well as direct and wider taxation implications, have limited the workability and uptake of the trusts;

(5) acknowledges that conditions diminishing the attractiveness of the trusts include the:

(a) complex application of taxation rules;

(b) inflexibility in what trust funds may be used for;

(c) inability for beneficiaries, through Special Disability Trusts, to claim the first home owners grant and other home saving initiatives;

(d) high initial eligibility threshold requiring a beneficiary to be eligible for at least a Carer Allowance, the regulations of which state, *inter alia*, that care for a ‘significant period’ must be given, defined as at least 20 hours a week of care;

(e) eligibility requirements disfavouring mental impairment disabilities; and

(f) attribution of Capital Gains Tax to transferees where, in particular, houses are placed into Special Disability Trusts;

(6) condemns the Government for not taking seriously the recommendations outlined in the October 2008 Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs report entitled: *Building Trust, Supporting Families through Disability Trusts*; and

(7) calls on the Government to fully examine the viability of implementing the Senate Committee’s recommendations with a view to assisting ageing parents to adequately address the future needs of their profoundly disabled dependents.
Mr Hockey to move:
That this House:
(1) notes that:
   (a) Australia’s Future Tax System Review (the ‘Henry Review’) made a large number of recommendations in relation to the system of taxation;
   (b) the Government implemented very few of the recommendations;
   (c) the Government has so far not released any of the Treasury modelling or other relevant information and advice underlying the recommendations; and
   (d) release of that information would be in the best interests of the community by facilitating a fully informed public debate about the way forward for taxation reform;
(2) orders the Government to release within five working days from the date of this motion, all of the relevant modelling, costings, working papers and supporting information underlying the ‘Henry Review’;
(3) requires that, from the date of this motion, no existing papers, emails or other information relating to the ‘Henry Review’ may be destroyed; and
(4) requires the Secretary of the Treasury to warrant to the House that all relevant documentation underlying the ‘Henry Review’ has been released.

Ms Rishworth to move:
That this House:
(1) notes significant community concern regarding the clarity, simplicity and accuracy of food labelling, including labelling identifying the:
   (a) origin of the food;
   (b) nutritional value of the food; and
   (c) food production methods used, including the use of food technologies;
(2) recognises that:
   (a) adequate food labelling laws should aim foremost to protect the health and safety of consumers and eliminate deceitful or misleading labelling information;
   (b) having clear, simple and accurate labelling on food empowers consumers and enables them to make informed food choices; and
   (c) for food labelling laws to be effective, they need to be rigorously and consistently enforced;
(3) supports the Australian and New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council’s establishment of an independent review into food labelling; and
(4) encourages the Government and State and Territory governments to examine the results of this review, and work together to ensure that our food labelling laws deliver the outcomes our community desires.