House of Representatives

Official Hansard

No. 1, 2015
Wednesday, 11 February 2015

FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—FIFTH PERIOD

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
SITTING DAYS—2015

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FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—FIFTH PERIOD

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

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

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

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

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

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

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<td>Zappia, Mr Antonio</td>
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**PARTY ABBREVIATIONS**

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

**Heads of Parliamentary Departments**

Clerk of the Senate—R Laing
Clerk of the House of Representatives—D Elder
Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—C Mills
Parliamentary Budget Officer—P Bowen
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<td>Senator the Hon. Nigel Scullion</td>
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<td><strong>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Charles Porter MP</td>
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<td>The Hon. Alan Tudge MP</td>
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<td><strong>Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Warren Truss MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon. Jamie Briggs MP</td>
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<tr>
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Each department represents a portfolio. **Cabinet Ministers are shown in bold type.** As a general rule, there is one department in each portfolio. However, there is a Department of Human Services in the Social Services portfolio and a Department of Veterans' Affairs in the Defence portfolio. The title of a department does not necessarily reflect the title of a minister in all cases.
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<td>Senator the Hon Kim Carr</td>
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<td>Hon Bernie Ripoll MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business</td>
<td>Julie Owens MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Cabinet Secretary</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jacinta Collins</td>
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<td>Hon Michael Danby MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Dr Jim Chalmers MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deputy Leader of the Opposition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Development</td>
<td>Senator Claire Moore</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP</td>
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<td>Senator the Hon Penny Wong</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Infrastructure and Transport</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Regional Development and Local Government</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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Wednesday, 11 February 2015

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

BILLS

Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014
Second Reading

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

Ms COLLINS (Franklin) (09:01): Like the first higher education reform bill, this bill, the Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014, represents a broken promise by the government. Before the election the government stood up and said there would be no cuts to education but this bill, just like the first higher education bill, contains cuts to higher education in this country. There are cuts to higher education to the tune of over $2 billion in this higher education reform bill.

This bill shows that the government has not changed. We heard from the Prime Minister this week that things were going to change. 'Good government starts today,' we heard on Monday. Clearly not much has changed because this bill still has those terrible things in it. It still has the $100,000 degrees that will result from fee deregulation. It still has cuts to university funding in it. It will still discourage people on low incomes and people from regional areas of Australia from going on to higher education. Not a lot has changed and you can tell that the government is still not listening and has still not learnt. If they had learnt anything they would have gone out over the break and spoken to their constituents. They would have spoken to students, and to parents who have children in high school, and they would have heard that people are frightened about these higher education reforms. They are frightened because these reforms will hurt them. They will actually cause the cost of degrees to go up.

We have heard some rhetoric from those opposite that they do not think the cost of degrees will go up. What do they base that on? Nothing. There has been no modelling released. There has been no information released about what a degree will actually cost—not from them, anyway. Of course, we have seen some modelling released. We have seen it from Universities Australia; we have seen it from the NTEU; and we have seen it from a whole range of other organisations. What that shows is that the cost of a university degree will go up. That is what it shows: it shows that it will grow up. We know from Bond University in Western Australia that degrees will go up to over $100,000. They will go up to over $100,000 because that is what the modelling that has been released to date shows. If the government has other modelling that shows differently, why have they not released it to the Australian public? Why have they not had an honest conversation with Australia? If they have modelling, where is it and what does it show? Silence. Of course, they do have some modelling; they will have done some, and the department will have some information about what degrees are going to cost. The reason they will not release it is that it shows $100,000 degrees. It will show $100,000 degrees. It will show that higher education costs will go up in this country if this reform gets through.
Labor has said very clearly that we will vote against these cuts to university funding. We have said that we will not support a system of higher fees, which will mean larger student debt, which will reduce access and which will cause greater inequality. Last time I came into this place, I spoke about my own experience and why I joined the ALP. I joined the ALP because I could not afford to stay at school. I could not afford to stay at school, because my parents were too poor. Just this year my daughter went to university. She is the first in my family to go. She and all her friends are terrified about this reform bill. As her friends have discussions, they are worried about the implications of this bill going through.

Mr Palmer interjecting—

Ms COLLINS: They are worried about it, and their parents are worried about it. They are worrying about how they are going to pay off increased loans from this bill. The member for Fairfax is quite right: they should be worried. Sadly, they are. It is causing people to make really tough decisions about whether they should invest in their future education. That is not a decision that people should have to make in a country like Australia. They should not have to make a decision about whether they can go to university depending on whether or not their parents can help them pay off any debt. They should not have to make that decision. People in Australia should be able to go to university if they are capable of going to university. They should be able to if they want to and they are capable. So many people still are having the first in their family go to university—like my daughter. So many families may not get that opportunity if this bill goes through. We may not see people from low-income families get that opportunity if this bill goes through. That is why I am pleased to say that we are voting against it.

Interestingly, in this bill we also have a regional transition fund, which is one of the differences from the previous bill. Of course, the inclusion of that transition fund proves that this bill will impact adversely on regional Australians. That is why those opposite have had to do this. During the debate on the first bill, those on the opposite side came in here and spoke about the advantages for regional students and how great it was going to be. We said: 'No, no, it's not. It's going to be bad for regional students.' They did make one change by having the regional transition fund. The minister said on the day that the original bill was defeated in the Senate that this would be a $300 million fund, but, of course, it is only $100 million, which will not do what it needs to do to encourage enough regional students and enough regional universities, and to have those opportunities for regional students. It is an admission by the government that this reform is unfair and that this bill is unfair. By having the regional transition fund in this bill, they are admitting that it is unfair. They know that their first bill was going to impact on regional students and regional universities, and they still know that this current bill is going to have that same effect. Yet yesterday we heard more members from regional Australia come into this place and argue how great this bill is for regional students—just like they did the first time—when they know that it will adversely impact on regional students and regional universities. They know this. They do know that this bill will have an adverse impact, and that is why they have a regional fund in it. But it is not going to be enough. The bill will still impact adversely on regional students.

I wanted to talk a little bit about my home state of Tasmania. We had the member for Lyons in here speaking on this bill yesterday, and he spoke on the previous bill, as did some of the other Tasmanian members. The University of Tasmania is the only university in the
state of Tasmania. We know that this higher education reform that the government has put out will adversely impact on the University of Tasmania to the point where the vice-chancellor has said that they will be worse off to the tune of $37 million per year under this bill. We are talking about a national $100 million transition fund; we are talking about one university in my home state being $30 million a year worse off.

The vice-chancellor has actually said that they will not be able to raise fees high enough to be able to recover all that money; they may be able to recover some of it. He is obviously admitting (a) they are going to increase fees, (b) they will not be able to get the money back to cover that gap and (c) therefore the university will be worse off to the point where the Tasmanian members and others talked about a special package for Tasmania, for the Tasmanian university. A special package that was only on the table if Tasmanian senators in the Senate agreed to this bill. That is what they said. They said: 'We know this is going to adversely affect the University of Tasmania. We know it so much that there will be a special package for the University of Tasmania, but you won't get it unless you support our bill.' They know that this bill is going to adversely impact on my home state to the tune of $37 million per annum, and yet they will not accept that this bill will affect all regional universities and all regional students and the transition fund is only $100 million over three years.

We know that will not be enough. We know that children from regional families in regional Australia will still have to make what we have heard from those opposite is the difficult decision about whether or not they or their children can afford to go to university. Of course, for regional students it is in some cases a much tougher decision to make because some students do have to relocate because courses may not be offered in regional Australia, and we know that situation could get worse under this bill. So regional students, despite all the rhetoric from those opposite, will not be better off because of this bill, and the fact that there is a regional transition fund shows that those opposite know it will hurt regional universities and regional students. We know that that would happen.

This bill is the second iteration and, as I said before, people on the other side clearly have not been talking to their electorates about what is contained in this bill. Clearly they have not gone out and listened to what the people in their communities are saying because this bill is a broken promise from the government. This bill is unfair. It is unfair for students in regional Australia, is unfair for students from low-income families and it is unfair for students right across the board. It is unfair because it will lead to higher fees, it will lead to $100,000 degrees; it is unfair because it will cut funding to universities, including research funding that we know is so critical to those universities that are excelling at the moment in research, such as the university in my home state of Tasmania. We know that is the case.

We have also heard a little bit from those opposite about this scholarship fund they are going to have. This scholarship fund is going to make all the difference, but we do not have any information from the government about just how this fund is going to work, how big it is going to be, what the modelling on it is, where the students who are going to be able to access it are going to come from. We do not have any of this information because of course the government has not released that either. We do not have any information on the cost of degrees coming from the government, they have not released any modelling. We do not have any information about the scholarships and how they are going to work because the government has not released that information either. We do not have any information about
the size of the fund or how many students there are, other than the minister's claim that the biggest scholarship fund in Australia's history is what it will be. He has not yet defined that, so goodness only knows what that means. I am sure that he knows, but perhaps he should share it with the Australian public given the types of reforms we are expected to be debating in this place and in the other place in coming weeks.

I am pleased that Labor has said we will not be supporting this bill a second time because no information has been shared with the public that should be shared about how it is going to impact on students. The government is saying that this reform is necessary, that this reform has to happen or the higher education system is going to be in crisis. Perhaps the government needs to go back, as governments should, and look at what actually needs to be done here: go and consult with the sector a bit more about what the real issues are and how it needs to be resolved. They should also be talking to their communities, to the students, to the parents who use our higher education system and ask what they want because at the moment I do not think the government is actually listening to the students, to the parents or to the community about their expectations of higher education in this country. I am pleased that Labor is opposing this bill.

Mr HAWKE (Mitchell) (09:14): It is painful to follow the member for Franklin in relation to the Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014 because this is one of the most important reforms to the higher education sector in many years. In opposition, the coalition took the view that if the government put forward sensible reforms that would benefit the sector then we would endorse those reforms, including, importantly, Labor's deregulation of student numbers. So I would say to the member for Franklin that, once again, we are in this ridiculous situation. You cannot deregulate the numbers without addressing the fees. And that is what Labor has done. Labor deregulated student numbers. That is a good reform; it is something we agree with. But if you do not deregulate the fee structures you cripple the universities' capacity to grow, reform and to become great institutions. And that is what this is really all about.

We are here in the second iteration of this bill, listening to the concerns, I might add, of the crossbenchers and listening to the concerns of the people who will decide the fate of this legislation. We are listening very carefully. There are no savings, now, attached to the bill, except for a minor amount, which should alleviate Labor's concerns. This is not a savings bill; this is a reform bill. This is about the reform of the higher education sector.

Why is this so important? Why does it have the support of Labor figures like John Dawkins, Maxine McKew, Peter Noonan, Gareth Evans and, notably, Dr Andrew Leigh, the shadow Assistant Treasurer. It has their support because this is an important package. They know. That is why it has the support of university vice-chancellors. We must have reform in this country. We must be able, as a parliament, to accept levels of reform, by working together and being able to realise that we may not be able to put our agenda through as we would like, but listening to the Senate, as we have done with this latest bill, and returning it here. We must be able to achieve levels of reform.

This is so important because we do not have a university in the top world rankings. We have a situation where, under Labor, we saw our education sector suffer in so many ways. Export income fell by billions of dollars from a 2009-10 peak. There is a neglect of the education sector—not just the university sector but the private education sector as well. There
has been billions and billions of dollars of lost revenue. Education exporting should perhaps be one of our biggest and best industries. It really is the biggest opportunity for reach to our friends and neighbours in Asia.

We have seen the third largest export—and the no. 1 knowledge export—suffer very much. Enrolments fell by 130,000 between 2009 and 2012—a decline of 16 per cent. That is bad for our economy. It is bad for all those who work in education and the service sectors that support education. I know, from speaking to the private sector in education, that they suffered enormously under the previous government. But this reform is important because we have to make the system sustainable for the future, and we have to deregulate the fees, giving universities flexibility. It is not accurate to say that university degrees will now be $100,000. In fact, the Queensland University of Technology—I say this to the member for Fairfax—has published fees for 2016 at a massively different set of rates than what the scare campaign has been saying.

The University of Western Australia has set fees which are less than half of what the scare campaign is claiming. Already the evidence is in that there will not be $100,000 degrees. Not all degrees will be the same. Labor struggles to understand the operation of markets, but not every degree will cost the same. There is no argument that they can put forward that says all degrees will rise in cost. Some degrees will fall commensurate with the demand and the supply in the market. That is the way it will go. Some degrees will be cheaper. Not everybody wants to do the same degree. There is not the same volumes in every degree. If we allow the market to operate a little more properly, with more flexibility, there will be a better outcome for universities and a better outcome for students. There will be a better outcome for students.

Labor is ignoring its roots. It is not thinking about those who do a trade or those who never go to university. And that is a legitimate pathway for people still in Australia today. Not everybody has to go to university. Not every university degree leads to a job. In fact, most university graduates I know, who are just of out university right now are struggling to get work because they do not have a skill. Their university degree has not equipped them with the skills to do their job. So it is not automatically the case that going to university is good. It is not automatically the case that doing two or three degrees will lead to better work or employment. That is not the automatic case in our employment market today.

If the Labor Party still represented the working class, they would understand that those people pay a big subsidy to allow people in Australia to go to university. It is a good system. The government is not only maintaining this system; it is expanding it and making it sustainable into the future. That is what this bill is about. We have a situation that is unique in almost any education market in the world, whereby nobody has to pay a cent up-front to go to university—not a cent. But that is at the expense of all those people who decide to get a trade or to do something else in their life and not go to university. That is the system we have. And it is very important to understand that, because I do not think there is anybody left in the Labor Party who has a trade; I am pretty sure they do not have that. Well, there might be one, or there might be two, but not very many. They forgot those people, and they are the bulk of people in our society.

I went to university. There is nothing wrong with going to university. And yes, I did not pay a cent up-front. And yes, I have paid it all back. It is a good system we have. The government is not touching it. The government is not altering the fundamentals of the higher
education system in this country. We are doing nothing radical. What we are doing is undertaking the inevitable task of reforming the sector. There is no doubt that anybody in government right now would have to be addressing the higher education sector and making further reform to make it more flexible and make it more deliverable. Labor knows it. The shadow Assistant Treasurer has proposed these exact proposals in his own academic work. He is an academic. I would say to the Labor Party, listen to your shadow Assistant Treasurer when he says that these reforms are vital for the future of the education sector. It is what the university vice-chancellors say. It is what Gareth Evans says. It is what Labor figures of all ilk who are genuinely about achieving good-quality reform are saying. They are saying it because they know that if we do not deregulate fees we are missing an important mechanism for our universities to be sustainable and to make progress.

And we have a real challenge in front of us in relation to this bill, because we have an obstructionist Senate, even when the government is listening very carefully to the views of the Senate. And they are right about the indexation and the bond rate. They are right to send us the feedback that it should remain at the consumer price index for all the loans that are taken out by students. So, the government has listened, and one of the key amendments in this legislation that is before us today is of course retaining the consumer price index for HECS debts. And that, from Senator Day, is sensible, it is reasonable, it is constructive and it is something the government has listened to.

We have also introduced an interest rate pause on debts for primary carers of children aged less than five years who are earning less than the minimum repayment threshold, once again taking into account feedback, looking at the disadvantaged—people who may not be able to access this system. But the bulk of students, the bulk of our society, can live with this reform, they can cope with this reform and they can adjust to this reform. And the reform will benefit not just the education sector but also all students, because universities will be able to provide better-quality education and better-quality services and compete internationally, which is most critical for the future of our education export sector.

I have not even started on the measures to address disadvantage. The Labor Party has a lot to say about fairness, but they really do not think about this deeply. The government has come up with a good program that will take a package of scholarships funded by the Commonwealth, which will mean that thousands—many thousands of places, from rural and regional communities—of students from disadvantaged backgrounds will have access to help to get to university, especially in their local area. So, this is a government that is being fair. It is considering all the reasonable and possible objections to university reform. People from regional areas cannot access it, so we have a scholarship scheme to address that. People from disadvantaged backgrounds were worried about an increase in some fees, so we have a scheme to address that—remembering that no student will pay a cent; the indexation will remain at the consumer price index so that everyone is able to repay it when they get the right job. They do not start repaying this loan until they have a really good job, earning a really decent income. That is the system as it has been, and that is the system as it will be.

So, in terms of fairness, the arguments fall flat. There is not a fairness argument against this bill. This is a constructive reform bill about building the foundations of our university and education future. The fairness arguments are gone. Let us talk to what is in front of us today, the new bill. Let us deal with the concrete proposals that the government is putting forward,
listening to the will of the Senate and being reasonable in its approach to ensuring that we can
still in this place and in this era achieve some meaningful reform without having to have so
many political fights.

The government has again made an important concession asking the ACCC to monitor
university fees. That is an important thing. The ACCC will monitor those universities fees to
ensure they are not getting out of hand, recognising that, so far, of the universities that have
put out fees for the coming years those fee increases are nothing like the scare campaign that
the Labor Party is running. In fact, it is less than a third in some cases.

As more universities come forward and more knowledgeable commentators and experts in
our field speak about what they think will happen, we hear they do not believe our markets
can sustain a huge increase in fees. It is impossible because there is not a market for it. I know
Labor does not understand markets, but if there is no demand for $100,000 degrees then there
will not be $100,000 degrees. You cannot artificially set a price so high at a price point that
people are not willing to pay.

That is what the experts in the education sector repeatedly tell us: there is no price point,
because people in this country cannot afford to pay for $100,000 degrees. That is why there
will not be $100,000 degrees; that is why there cannot be $100,000 degrees. That is the prime
reason. There is no market for those degrees. Coming from Western Sydney and growing up
in a simple household, I could not have afforded a $100,000 degree, and that is why I would
not have taken a $100,000 degree. That is why there will be no $100,000 degrees.

The member at the table looks confused, and I understand why she is confused. We will get
back to market economics some other day. I know you pretend to love markets, but you do
not. This bill before us today is, of course, reasonable. It is a reforming bill. It is something
that will allow—

Ms King: How much do you think a medical degree will cost? Medicine will not be
$100,000?

Mr HAWKE: I will take up the member at the table's objections about medicine.

Medicine is a very particular area. What about those apprentices doing a trade who are
subsidising a medical student to get a degree and to earn very good income for the rest of their
lives? What about those tradies? What about those workers? What about those people who are
never going to get degrees? They are paying twice for someone to go and get a medical
degree—so you are saying they should not make a contribution to that degree; is that what
you are saying? What about ordinary people? I think you have forgotten them You really need
to get out of Canberra more.

What this bill and legislation is about is improving the capacity of universities to function
better. You deregulated the numbers. This means as many people can go to university as
universities want, but they cannot alter their fee structures. Why would you set any business
or service that charges a fee to deregulate the numbers but not deregulate the fees? It is not
feasible. It is not practical. It is not what the shadow Assistant Treasurer thinks. It is not what
Gareth Evans thinks. It is not what John Dawkins thinks. It is not what the vice-chancellors
think. It is not what the sector thinks. They know these reforms are needed. They know they
are vital. They know reform in this country cannot be constantly obstructed by the Labor
Party just because they are trying to win elections.
We backed your deregulation of numbers. You should back our deregulation of fees, recognising that the government is going out of its way to ameliorate any unfairness and anything that can be perceived to be unfair. I commend the minister for education on the work that he has done, in so many ways, including Australian Research Council Future Fellowships, the concessional scheme that the government is implementing, all of the indexation arrangements that the government has changed and everything else that the government is doing in this bill. It is going out of its way to show the Labor Party and the Senate that we are genuine about pursuing reform. There are no more savings left in this bill. This is not a savings measure. This is about the future of our higher education sector in Australia.

Paul Kelly has been around a bit. In *The Australian*, on 27 November 2014, he wrote:

If the eminently defensible university reform compromise is not passed the result, as Universities Australia says, is that higher education will face an “inevitable decline in quality, performance, competitiveness and reputation”.

Too much is at stake. This sector is vital for our nation’s future. We must have ongoing reform, and this parliament must have the ability to pass good quality reforms into law.

**Mr PALMER** (Fairfax) (09:30): I come here today full of admiration for the education minister and his confidence in the education he himself has enjoyed, which has taken him and put him on a pedestal for all Australians to look up to in this parliament. It has given him the opportunity to bring forth his ideas for us to consider and discuss. I come here too with admiration for the Treasurer, who has gone to university, toiled through his university career and come here so the nation can enjoy the benefits of that education. But I, like the Treasurer and the Minister for Education, was the beneficiary of real reforms in the education sector made by Edward G Whitlam when he was Prime Minister of this country. The Treasurer did not pay for his education, nor did the Minister for Education. They never would have got to this place without a university education; they never would have had the opportunity.

The cost of educating someone from primary school through to high school for 12 years is far greater than the amount we lose in one year's unemployment in this country. A good education policy is not only good social policy, it is good economic policy. This country benefits by capturing its resources and there are no greater resources to be captured for the benefit of the nation than the intellect of its citizens. Intellect is not distributed evenly across society. It is not a measure of how much money you may have or what your prospects may be but of what you can contribute to the nation. No Australian, wherever they may come from, should be handicapped from going to university. I have a friend whose daughter recently graduated from university and now has four years debt. She cannot buy a home—she is newly married, but she has to slog away for four or eight years before she can get a housing loan.

When you are 23 or 24, that is the most important time of your life for taking risks, being bold and taking initiatives. We have seen what has happened in the United States with Google, Apple, and Facebook—a whole lot of innovations. Do we really want our young people to leave university and be saddled with debt—to be so conservative that they are too frightened to think, to take risks and to stimulate our economy? Because that is what this bill does. It creates more and more costs for students, the people who can least afford it. It saps their creativity. It takes from them the opportunity for the whole nation to benefit from their endeavours at a time of their life when they could make a real difference.
The Prime Minister has recently said, in the last two days, that there has been a fundamental change in the Liberal Party—a fundamental change in the government. He said they are going to listen to what is happening. Well, they are not listening to the people of Australia. They are not listening to the Senate. They are wasting their time in the House of Representatives because only an idiot expects to get a different outcome while repeatedly doing the same thing time after time. How many times does the Senate have to reject this legislation before the government gets the message? The message is: this legislation will not pass the Senate. This legislation is through, finished, wound up. Every one of our senators in the Senate will vote no. They will not take an amendment. They will not take a compromise because they believe the right to a fair and proper education is the indelible right of all Australians. The right of our people to enjoy a better and rising standard of living is fundamental to their welfare, and it is to the benefit of our nation.

What is all this about? It is about a lie. It is about saying that Australia has too much debt. We know that our debt is only 12 per cent of our GDP. We know that when Bob Menzies was Prime Minister of this country, our debt was 40 per cent of our GDP. We know that our country has the third-lowest debt in the OECD. We are one of only 13 nations that has a AAA credit rating—yet we are supposed to be having an economic crisis. The Treasurer comes out this morning. He says to the Liberal Party that he has to pursue his cuts—he has to pursue austerity in this country. In the United States, President Obama has stimulated the economy. He created real growth. It has been so successful that the European Union has done the same thing. We look around the world and find Uzbekistan and Ghana, two countries with a balanced budget. We look at the United States economy and see that for the last 50 years it has only has 12 years of a balanced budget. Are we going to follow the Uzbekistani model in our economy and balance our budget whatever that means or are we going to go for prosperity, for growth, for a strong economy and follow the lead of the United States of America?

What are we going to do? Are we going to spiral down? I tell you what: if these cuts continue, they will destroy demand in this country, they will collapse the economy and we will never get the budget back to surplus, because it is only through growth creating real wealth that you can really support our economy, support what we have got. So, rather than saying that we are going to cut, let's accept the challenge to make this country stronger, better. Let's believe in ourselves that we can create greater growth and greater prosperity for Australia.

Why does the government go away from the challenge that previous governments have accepted—to provide a better standard of living for Australians? Is it that we believe our members of this House do not have the same capability, the same talent as those that went before them to maintain the fight to keep Australia growing? Is it because we want to give up? And why do we need to continually increase taxes and introduce levies and fees that other people pay? Can't this government be as efficient as the last and the one before it and the one before that? Are we going to continually sink in a hole of non-performance, negligence and incompetence?

The Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014 will not become law. It will not go through the Senate. It wastes the taxpayers' money by having it considered in this House yet again. It is just a sign of the political process where an arrogant attitude is prevailing in the
government and they think they can pass legislation through this House without any
discussion or consultation. We have seen in Queensland what happens to an arrogant attitude.
This is a time for the government to change, to listen, to adjust its policies for what is best for
all Australians. If they continue down this path, they will be defeated at the next election.
Let's face it: without our preferences, they would not be there now. And the reality of it is
they do not have the support of the Australian people.

We only have to visit universities and talk to the students, discussing with them the
difficulties they have even coping with the large levels of debt that burden them and which
take away their creativity, knowing that that just will not happen. What we need in this
country is more compassion and a real understanding of how the economy works, to know
how important education is in the economic process and to know what opportunity means as
an Australian—to benefit from our assets. We need to know that you cannot buy success in
this country. You cannot buy success by just having a lot of money and going to the best
university if you have not got the brains to pass it, if you do not have the ability to compete.
Shouldn't we in Australia hope that all Australians compete on a level footing so we get the
very best people through our universities? If we go to Japan, China and other parts of Asia,
we see the whole country competes in education performance to get these places.

Why do we want to stifle competition? Why do we want to say that you have to have
enough money to go to university? Why do we deny people who do not have enough money
to go to university? I was the beneficiary of a free education and a free university education. I
have produced more money for this country than any member in this House—that is the fact
of the matter—and I would not have done it without Gough Whitlam's support and a free
education when I was 20, because I could not afford to go to university. Billions of dollars of
exports would have been lost to this country. That is the hard reality.

You people sit here and deny opportunity for Australians to compete in our economy, to be
all they could be. I think it is a great disgrace. And it is irrelevant; this bill is going nowhere.

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (09:39): I am very pleased to follow the member for
Fairfax, Professor Palmer. I think his speech was a ringing endorsement of the coalition's
plans for deregulation of universities to bring more competition into that sector.

What has really concerned me during this debate is the shocking scaremongering we have
heard from members of the opposition. We have heard these dishonest and deceitful claims
about $100,000 degrees. I never thought I would see in my lifetime an opposition that
actually, for political purposes, goes about discouraging young Australians from going to
university. So, I would ask all members of the opposition to think very carefully when they go
out into their electorates and spread this fear and this scaremongering: their false claims of
$100,000 degrees, their false claims that students cannot afford to get into university. That
scaremongering that they are engaged in is discouraging the young people of this country
from going to university, and that is an absolute disgrace. And it is a disgrace for crass
political purposes—that members of the opposition would actually dissuade our young people
from going to university.

We in the coalition want to see more students at university. That is what the Higher
Education and Research Reform Bill 2014, at its heart, is all about. It is about giving more
opportunities, to increase the number of students in the country who can go on to get degrees.
That is the core of this bill. We need to disabuse some of those absolutely false and
misleading claims by the opposition—the idea that it is now too costly to get into university. The facts are that in this country, after this bill, you can get into university without paying one single cent up-front. To any student who wants to back themselves, who thinks that they have the talent to go to university, to get a degree, we in the government are saying: we will back you. And we are saying that we will actually give you a gift of 50 per cent of the cost of your degree. The taxpayers of this nation will back any student who wants to try their hand at university with a gift of 50 per cent of that cost. They will never have to pay that 50 per cent back. It is a gift from the taxpayer. And regarding the remaining 50 per cent, you do not as a student have to pay one cent up-front. You only have to start to pay that back once you start to earn $50,000, and you pay that by way of a higher marginal rate of tax—at $50,000, a two per cent higher marginal rate.

And this is most important. As I said, the coalition wants to give more opportunities to the young people of this nation. We have many resources in this country. We have that black coal seam that runs down our eastern seaboard. We have minerals—iron ore, gold and uranium—buried in our outback. But our greatest resource is the citizens of this country. We see many countries throughout the world that have great mineral resources but do not have the wealth of this nation. The greatest resource that we have are our people, and it is our job in government to create the most opportunities so that our people can unleash their creative skills and their creative talents. That requires giving more people the opportunity to get to university and to go on to do further study. If this bill goes through, it will assist 80,000 people a year to get further education, to do further studies. That is what the opposition and the Greens and some of the crossbenchers in the Senate seek to block.

This bill is back for a second time, and some amendments were made after discussions with some of the more sensible crossbench senators. And I would like to go through those. The first one is the indexation of the debt. Initially it was planned that that would be at the 10-year government bond rate. It is interesting that since that last debate the 10-year government bond rate is now down to about 2½ per cent, so anyone who wants a loan it is basically at 2½ per cent. That is a pretty good offer. But we have actually gone better than that. We are going back, where the indexation on that loan will be nearly at CPI. Currently, I think we are looking at about 1.7 or 1.9 per cent—less than two per cent. That is the interest rate a student will have to pay on their debt.

Secondly, we are creating a five-year pause. If a parent becomes a primary carer for their young child, that indexation on their debt pauses for five years. This was a suggestion by Senator Madigan. I congratulate Senator Madigan on this sensible suggestion. I congratulate the Minister for Education on accepting this. This makes our HECS system even fairer. But if this bill gets held up or blocked in the Senate by Labor and the Greens, that will not go through. The five-year pause that is part of this bill will be held up. Most importantly we want to encourage people. We understand that when they have young children they may want to take time off work or time off study. This bill freezes the indexation on their student debt.

Thirdly, this bill will establish a structural adjustment fund to assist universities to a new deregulated market. I hear, with great amusement, members of the opposition standing up saying, 'This will Americanise our universities', as though there is something wrong with American universities—they have some of the top universities in the world. It appears those opposite would like to go back and 'Sovietise' our universities.
Fourthly, this will introduce a dedicated scholarship fund for universities with a high proportion of low SES students who will be funded directly by the Commonwealth on top of the existing university-based scholarships. This will be the biggest scholarship scheme in our nation’s history. Yet again, it will enable more students to study and create more opportunities.

Fifthly, it will amend the legislative guidelines to ensure that domestic fees are lower than international fees. And, also, the government will direct the ACCC to monitor university fees so there can be no collusion between them and there will be effective competition. And we have great diversity in universities around this country. There are enough universities, enough players in the market, to ensure that competition will keep university fees down and low.

While the opposition have actually failed to say what they want to do, the alternative appears to be to just continue to spend more and more money and get our nation further and further into debt. What they want to do is continue on the current fiscal deterioration that we have seen over the past six years. You have to remember the overspend in this country at the moment is $100 million every single day. We are spending more than we are raising in revenue. Now of that $100 million, $40 million is the interest on Labor's debt. We cannot go on for all time in this country continuing to overspend and borrow $100 million a day. This simply cannot continue. So if we want to put more funds into university and to get more students into university, the fairest way is to have the students who are getting the benefit of that university degree—a degree that we know will allow them to earn, on average, 75 per cent higher incomes over their life than someone who has not got a degree, the equivalent of $1 million over lifetime in additional wages and salaries over someone who does not have a university degree—to pay for it. The opposition are asking those people who do not have a university degree not only to pay the 50 per cent gift that they give to a student who goes to a university but also to fund the rest. That is inequitable and unfair.

We simply cannot continue on the way we are going, spending $100 million a day more than we raise in revenue. We are living today at the expense of people too young to vote and for those yet unborn. That is why we need to wind that back. We have to make the hard decisions, and those hard decisions mean a slight rebalance on the costs of a university degree in what is paid by government and what is paid by the student. Currently it is around 60 per cent free gift from the taxpayer, 40 per cent paid by the student. This brings it back to a 50-50 split. I do not see how anyone could say this is not fair, especially when it creates 80,000 more opportunities for our young students.

There has been overwhelming support for this legislation from those who actually think about this and are not engaged in some type of cheap political stunt for votes. The people who think about what is best for our nation going forward support this. I will go through the list. All the higher education peak bodies support the reforms. Universities Australia, the Regional Universities Network, the Australian Technology Network, the Innovative Research Universities, the Group of Eight, TAFE Directors Australia, the Australian Council of Private Education and Training and the Council for Private Education are all supporting these reforms. And the list goes on. Distinguished commentators such as David Gonski, Paul Kelly and Stephen Matchett all say these reforms are absolutely essential. So do the Business Council of Australia and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Even prominent Labor figures support this. Gareth Evans, John Dawkins and Maxine McKew have urged the
members of the opposition to stop the scaremongering and to engage positively to work out how we can make our universities stronger and better. Belinda Robinson of Universities Australia has said—and the member for Charlton might take interest in this:

It is simply not possible to maintain the standards that students expect or the international reputation that Australia's university system enjoys without full fee deregulation.

So the opposition has a choice. They can be obstructionist. They can continue with their scare campaign—this disgraceful, misleading scare campaign that they are engaged in—scaremongering students, discouraging them from going to university. I say that will be on their heads. If one student is discouraged from going to university by this scaremongering campaign with the falsehoods and false claims about $100,000 degrees, the false claims that you have to put money up front to go in, they stand condemned. They will stand condemned for every one of the 80,000 students who will miss out on Commonwealth support if this legislation is held up. They will stand condemned for those students who become primary carers for their children, who will not have their indexation frozen for five years should this legislation not pass.

This is important legislation. We would hope that the opposition, instead of being obstructionist, instead of trying to sabotage this government's attempts to repair the fiscal mess they left in almost every portfolio, would take the chance to come on board, to show that they can be constructive, to show that they can work with the government and to get this legislation through. I commend it to the House.

Mr CONROY (Charlton) (09:54): I am proud to speak against the Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014, because Labor opposes the coalition’s radical, right-wing deregulation agenda.

The member for Hughes provided a list of groups who purportedly support these reforms, but he failed to mention the one group in this country that is deadset opposed to these reforms, and that is the Australian people. Every reliable poll of the Australian people has said that they are opposed to deregulation of universities, they are opposed to the inevitable rise in fees that accompanies that and they are opposed to closing the door on a generation of young Australians accessing higher education.

Another falsehood contained in the member for Hughes's contribution was that somehow this will contribute to the bottom line of the budget and that this is about sustainability. Well, the government has already given away so much in this package to get their ideological agenda through that the purported savings from this package have moved from over $4 billion to $400 million over the forward estimates, and if they have any chance of getting this through the other place they will have to give away a lot more revenue than that.

The real truth here is that this is not about savings; this is about an ideological agenda of making it harder for working-class kids and kids from middle-class families to get to uni. It is about a narrow ideological agenda of deregulating uni fees, of returning to the fifties and sixties where only kids from wealthy families could get to university. And this amended bill is an insult to the parliament and it is an insult to the Australian people. That is why this government is so on the nose with the Australia people. That is why 39 members of that party room voted against the Prime Minister on Monday, because they realise that this bill and these reforms are electoral death out there.
This bill identifies how clearly arrogant and out of touch this government is. The parliament comprehensively rejected the government's higher education reforms last year, and yet this new reform bill is basically a carbon copy of last year's bill. The Minister for Education has admitted that it is 90 per cent the same bill. In his second reading speech he stated that the bill:

... preserves essential elements of the government's higher education reforms ...

... ... ...

It is much the same as the bill I introduced a few months ago which was yesterday defeated in the Senate ...

The only substantive change in the bill is the change in the indexation rates.

The Minister for Education is showing particular contempt for the Senate in this bill in pushing ahead with unfair changes that the Labor Party and the crossbench have clearly stated they do not and will not support. I do not often quote the Palmer United Party, but Senator Lazarus had a particularly colourful description of the minister's reforms, which I will not repeat. Suffice it to say that they were an accurate representation of these reforms. Last year's reform bill was unfair and was rejected by the parliament. This year's reform bill is still unfair, and for that reason must also be rejected by the parliament.

There are fundamental differences between what the Labor and Liberal parties believe relating to higher education. The Labor Party understands the powerful contribution tertiary education and research contribute to our economic and social good. The coalition is hell-bent on the Americanisation of the sector, and this has been so overwhelmingly rejected by the Australian people. The new bill is still fundamentally inequitable and still contains sweeping cuts in funding and support for the tertiary sector. The funding cuts are substantial and extensive. The bill provides almost $2 billion in cuts to Australian universities: $171 million in cuts to equity programs, $200 million in cuts to indexation of grant programs, $170 million in cuts to research training and $80 million in cuts to the Australian Research Council. There will be fees for PhD students for the first time ever and this bill will still mean that undergraduate students are paying $100,000 for degrees.

So in the reform bill mark 2 the cuts remain, the new fee position remains and the clear attack on the sector and on research is maintained by an out-of-touch government more interested in its own political survival than in a thriving tertiary sector that is fundamental for an economically prosperous and socially fair Australia.

I turn now to the impact on the regional universities. Just as the last bill did, this bill will have a devastating impact on regional universities, like the University of Newcastle in the region which I represent. Before looking at these impacts, and whilst talking about regional communities, I want to draw the attention of the House to the Nationals' policy on universities. The Nationals members in this place purport to represent regional Australia yet over and over again they vote with their Liberal friends for policies that hurt Australian families and the regions. This document is from the Nationals website. It is called Our Policies Building Stronger Regional Communities and lists 48 policies in different areas. But guess what? There is no policy on tertiary education—a minor oversight. Guess what? There is a policy on their abandoned Paid Parental Leave scheme; there is a policy on building the East West Link—so comprehensively rejected by the people of Victoria—but no policy or plan for universities.
Mr Nikolic interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Broadbent): I know the member for Charlton is baiting you, but it is reasonable that the member for Charlton is able to speak as others have been able to speak.

Mr CONROY: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. The Nationals are obviously of the view that regional communities do not deserve access to tertiary education. This week the Liberal member for Dobell, who represents a regional area, with a straight face accused Labor members of discouraging engagement in higher education. She obviously does not see the hypocrisy of this claim. How does slugging young Australians, Australians from Wyong or Tuggerah, with $100,000 degrees encourage engagement with higher education? The member for Dobell also stated that the sector requires ongoing support from the government. Labor agrees with that. But how cutting $2 billion from the university sector help students in Wyong? How does it help students at the Entrance?

Labor has a very different view to the coalition. In government we boosted funding for regional universities by 56 per cent and boosted regional student numbers by 30 per cent. Under the Labor government, investment in universities was increased from $8 billion in $2007 to $14 billion in 2013. Current and prospective students at the University of Newcastle—recently ranked as the best university in Australia under 50 years of age—will be hit hardest by these proposed changes.

The bill provides $100 million over three years for a regional transition fund. The minister has previously said this fund would be $300 million. This is how out to sea these guys are. One day the fund will be $300 million; the next day it is $100 million. Their higher ed policy has the same consistency and strength of thought as their submarine policy. The very fact that there needs to be a transition fund highlights how clearly this bill is unfair.

Deregulation will have a devastating impact on regional universities and communities and every coalition member, especially those who pretend to represent regional communities, should be ashamed to be supporting this bill. And that is why 39 members of the Liberal Party room tried to kill the Prime Minister on Monday.

Madam Speaker, I understand it is the pleasure of the House to defer debate on this—so I can come back and have another go.

The SPEAKER: I thank the member for Charlton for agreeing to resume his remarks later when we continue on this piece of business because it is appropriate. We now have both the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition with us in the chamber for the important presentation of the Closing the Gap statement, a statement which has been annually presented since 2008.

Debate adjourned.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Closing the Gap

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (10:03): by leave—This annual Closing the Gap statement is an important occasion for our parliament. Improving the lives of Australia’s first people is a challenge beyond partisan politics. Two centuries of occasional, partial success and frequently dashed hopes have taught us that neither side of politics can achieve
meaningful progress without working with the other. So none of us should seek to score a point, or defend a legacy here—just to reach out across the aisle because that is the only hope of success.

For so many of us in this place, few things matter more than the lot of Indigenous people. For so many of us, this is personal—not political. So we speak and act not in the service of party, but in the service of country. We know that until Indigenous Australians fully participate in the life of our country, all of us are diminished. On days such as this, we should acknowledge where we have failed. Equally, we should acknowledge where we have made progress and stir ourselves to keep persevering on this vital but difficult journey. Long after most of today’s debates and squabbles pass, this journey will continue.

Last year, when I presented the Closing the Gap statement, I said that our challenge was to turn good intentions into better outcomes. It is now one year into our plan to address the intractable disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The past year was about developing practical reforms to give us a platform from which to deliver improvements.

At the invitation of respected Gumatj leader, Galarrwuy Yunupingu, with senior ministers and officials, I spent almost a week last September running the government from North East Arnhem Land. We listened and saw first-hand, some of the challenges facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in remote communities. My Indigenous Advisory Council, chaired by Warren Mundine, has been regularly consulted on practical ways to get kids to school, adults to work and communities safe. Because we know getting kids to school, adults to work and communities safe is what matters most.

This year will be one focussed on action that will, over time, accelerate progress towards the Closing the Gap targets, including the new target of closing the school attendance gap within five years. Much more work is needed because this seventh Closing the Gap report is profoundly disappointing. Despite the concerted efforts of successive governments since the first report, we are not on track to achieve most of the targets.

There are some improvements in education and health outcomes. We are on track to halve the gap in year 12 attainment rates for Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders aged 20-24. The target to halve the gap in mortality rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children looks achievable by 2018. The new target of closing the school attendance gap within five years should be achievable; I look forward to reporting good results on this in the years to come.

However, the other targets—to close the gap in life expectancy within a generation; to ensure access to early childhood education for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander four-year-olds in remote areas; to halve the gap in reading and numeracy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students; and to halve the gaps in employment outcomes—have either not been met or are not on track to be met. This is not because of any lack of goodwill or effort by successive governments. We are trying to change entrenched and multigenerational disadvantage. This will not happen overnight and may not ever change unless we place high demands on ourselves of what we can achieve together.

When I presented this report last year, I also noted that for every step backwards, there could be two steps forward. There are backward steps in this year’s report—too many—but
there have been many steps forward. At Bwgcolman Community School on Palm Island, success is ensuring that when students graduate, they not only have a Queensland Certificate of Education, but they also have a boat licence, a first aid certificate, a learner driver's permit and industry-specific qualifications.

At Elliott in the Northern Territory, success is the school and the community working with the night patrol and the Commonwealth's Indigenous Engagement Officer to increase attendance at school. On Bathurst Island, success is introducing year 13 for mature-age students who want to increase their employment options. And, in Sydney, success is a vocational training and employment centre run by an Aboriginal owned and operated organisation, which connects Indigenous job seekers with specific work in the health sector.

Each community is different, but in every community the foundations of success are the same—education, jobs and a safer living environment, underpinned by better health. These foundations are self-evident. These success stories, and others like them, suggest that it is the practical delivery of programs and policies that is the key. Government programs can be a catalyst but success—where it is achieved—is due to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who want better for themselves.

Governments can fund and governments can urge but governments cannot change attitudes and behaviours. It is those who make the choice to send their children to school, those who make the choice to attend school and stick at it, those who make the choice to get a job and stick at it, and those who choose to abide by the law who are closing the gap. Closing the gap is not something that Canberra can do on its own. Closing the gap is not something to be granted by this parliament to Indigenous Australians. Closing the gap is to be grasped by them. Closing the gap starts with getting the kids to school. It starts with expecting much of them while they are there.

Dr Chris Sarra tells the story of getting 75 per cent in a test in year 11. His teacher said: 'Sarra got 75 per cent. Must have been an easy test!' At the time, he laughed along with the rest of the class. It was only when he was studying to be a teacher that he questioned whether or not his teachers' low expectations had stifled his sense of self and what he could achieve. As he said, 'I was being sold short; therefore, I sold myself short.' Too many young Indigenous students are being sold short through the tyranny of low expectations.

Schools attendance is fundamental. It is foundational. It is hard to be literate and numerate without attending school; it is hard to find work without a basic education; and it is hard to live well without a job. While most Indigenous families make sure their children attend school regularly, too many are still missing too much school—especially in remote areas. The government is determined to break the cycle of truancy and to ensure parents and carers take responsibility so that children get a great education.

Once those children have graduated, they should have jobs to go to. We are already acting on the recommendations of the Forrest report. We will partner with Australia's largest employers to get more Indigenous Australians into jobs—because a job is more than a pay cheque. A job is the key to social relationships, and to a sense of personal achievement and wellbeing.

And, if we are asking the private sector to take on more Indigenous employees, then we must do the same in the Commonwealth Public Sector. We intend to use more of the
Commonwealth’s $39 billion procurement budget to encourage Indigenous businesses to grow. We will provide job seekers in remote Australia with pathways to real employment through the reformed Remote Jobs and Communities Program and end sit-down money with continuous Work for the Dole. We will put in place stronger incentives to encourage potential employers to look to the bush for workers. And we will fund new enterprises that provide jobs and work experience opportunities in remote communities.

We will address violence in communities by focusing on the prevention and treatment of alcohol and drug problems; improved policing in remote areas and better support for victims of crime. Without good physical and mental health, it is hard to go to school, work, raise children, contribute to the community or live a long life. The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan does capture the voices of the community and the experts and through this plan we will continue to support families and communities to manage their health and wellbeing, to access health services when they are needed and to reduce harmful behaviours.

These are some of the practicalities of closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians—but there are other gaps to close. We continue to work towards constitutional change acknowledging the First Australians. Minister Scullion will have responsibility for progressing an extension to the recognition act.

It is always our responsibility to acknowledge the contribution of Indigenous Australians to the nation that we have become today. In coming months, we will be commemorating the centenary of the Gallipoli campaign. We will remember all who served. Among them we will remember Richard Norman Kirby from Quambone in New South Wales who joined the 1st AIF in July 1915 and served at Gallipoli and in France. For his actions in 1918, he was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal. The citation read:

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty during an attack. He rushed a machine gun post single-handed and, although wounded in the attempt, succeeded in capturing and holding two machine guns and 14 of the enemy until the remainder of his section came up. He set a fine example of courage and initiative to the men with him.

He died nine days later from his wounds and is buried in France.

Lance Corporal Kirby’s gallantry is remarkable because that was a time when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were not even counted in the census. Yet, despite so many slights and mistreatments, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people served our country with distinction. When they returned home they were denied the same entitlements as their mates. The door was shut on every day but Anzac Day. While abroad the Aboriginal soldier was a valued brother; back in Australia he returned to an unequal life and was gradually forgotten by all but his kin and closest mates.

We owe it to Lance Corporal Kirby and his brothers to build the Australia that they fought for, that they hoped in and that they shaped, which is both free and fair. We do have much work to do, but there is a superabundance of goodwill. We must strive and strive again to ensure that the First Australians never again feel like outcasts in their own country. If we do, our parliament is at its best, our country is at its best and we are at our best. I present a copy of the report.

Mr TUDGE (Aston—Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister) (10:18): by leave—I move:
That so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent Mr Shorten (Leader of the Opposition) speaking in reply to the ministerial statement for a period not exceeding 15 minutes.

Question agreed to.

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (10:19): Today especially I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land upon which we meet, the first laws-makers of our continent, and I pay my respect to their elders both past and present.

It was on the morning of 25 April 1915 that Private John Miller of the 12th Battalion was killed in action. His body is one of 493 buried in Baby 700 Cemetery on the Gallipoli peninsula. Four hundred and fifty of those soldiers from Australia and New Zealand are still unknown and unnamed. Private John Miller was one of over 1,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people known to have volunteered to serve our nation in the First World War. Like their brothers in arms many never returned from Gallipoli, Palestine or the Western Front but, unlike their comrades, many of those who did return were banned from their local RSL and from wearing the uniform in which they had served or even the medals they had won. They watched as land originally promised to Aboriginal people was confiscated for soldier settlement schemes, which they were shut out of. Indeed, even today few of our capital cities have a modest monument to their sacrifice.

It is true that the injustice inflicted on successive generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people runs right through every chapter of the Australian story. Throughout our history the First Australians have been treated as second-class citizens. Today in reaffirming our commitment to closing the gap we rededicate ourselves to historical truth. We declare once more that only when we recognise the wrongs of the past can we make them right, only when we face our national failures can we fix them. Constitutional recognition is part of this. It is long past the hour that the first members of our Australian family have their name on our nation’s birth certificate.

Today, however, is about practical change—change that improves, elevates and lengthens the lives of First Australians. Forty years ago Gough Whitlam poured a handful of Wave Hill sand through Vincent Lingiari’s fingers. ‘We’re all mates now,’ Vincent said. It was the end of an eight-year demonstration—recognition at last of their rights to the land. That day marked a great step forward. There is a famous photograph to remind us of the moment, yet when most of us look at that photo we are also reminded of all the failures since. That is the tragedy. That its Australia’s continuing tragedy.

A great nation includes everyone, and a good society leaves no-one behind, but this report confronts us with two nations—two Australias. One Australia is the country that we experience, the one that we live in and the place where our children go to school and our partners go to work. In this Australia we plan for a long life and for two decades, or more, of retirement. In this Australia we encourage our children to study hard, to seek a degree or learn a trade and to find fulfilling and rewarding work. The other Australia is a nation that most of us in this place have little knowledge of or rarely glimpse. In this other Australia life is harder and shorter, poverty and disadvantage are rife and illiteracy, depression, addiction and suicide are common. Homeownership is a distant dream. Jobs are twice as hard to find. A young person leaving school is more likely to go to jail than to university. A woman is 30 times
more likely to know the pain and fear of family violence, and 15 times more likely to be driven from her home as a result.

Today we shine a light on this other Australia. We stop looking away. Today, people who have been banished to the margins of our national mind are brought to the centre of our consciousness. Today we promise to do better; we promise to do more until we can honestly say that the gaps that separate us in health, in education, in employment, in justice and in so many areas are closed. As the Prime Minister has outlined, our progress on some of the Closing the Gap targets is on track, but elsewhere we are moving too slowly or not at all. We cannot lie to ourselves. We have to continuously, rigorously and independently measure ourselves against these long-term goals. We must constantly ask ourselves what is working and what is not. We have to remember that every ill-judged policy, every failing of bureaucracy and every retreat from responsibility has a human cost in opportunity and in life itself. There are really hard problems, and there are problems that can be solved readily and relatively cheaply. For example, preventable blindness is six times more frequent in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and partial vision loss is three times more common. Addressing vision loss alone would close 11 per cent of the gap in health.

Above all, we must be unafraid of speaking out when our system or our parliament is failing; silence and guilt achieve nothing. If we need proof and inspiration, we need only to look at Rosie Batty. A year ago, none of us knew Rosie Batty's name and today she is our Australian of the Year. From unimaginable tragedy, she has become the face and voice of women who have been neglected for far too long. Her award gives us all hope, the hope that we can completely and utterly eliminate family violence. Rosie reminds us that endemic problems are not solved by good intentions alone, but by the courageous actions of courageous people. Parliament understands that family violence is no respecter of postcode, race or faith. No community is immune.

Sadly, Indigenous women and children are more likely to experience family violence than any other group in our nation. An Indigenous woman is 35 times more likely to be hospitalised as a result of family violence and five times more likely to die. This is shocking. This is shameful. This is the other Australia. This means raising awareness and not cutting, and tackling ignorance and ambivalence head-on without apology, qualification or delay. We have a national responsibility to put an end to the acts of cowardice and cruelty that divide too many households, scar too many childhoods and claim too many lives. For our First Australians the elimination of family violence will be a watershed. It will mean safer communities and happier families, fewer young people in child protection and more women freed from debilitating fear.

The Closing the Gap framework stretches beyond the life of any government. It goes further than the electoral cycle. We cannot afford for progress to ebb and flow depending upon who is in power. This is an endeavour where every opposition wants the government to succeed. But when a government cuts $500 million from essential services, we are compelled to point out what these cuts mean. Right now, a host of vital organisations do not know whether their funding will be continued or withdrawn. When people fleeing family violence need a safe place to stay, cuts mean that shelters close. When having a lawyer can determine whether a first-time offender gets a second chance or a prison sentence, these cuts will rob Indigenous Australians of legal aid. When family and children centres are supporting children
in those vital early years, cuts will see these doors close. When essential preventative health programs are helping to tackle smoking, cuts will jeopardise that progress. When strides are being made to prevent chronic disease, cuts will hobble our advance. I say to the government: it is not too late to reverse these matters. It is not too late seek to repair that harm.

The current Closing the Gap targets are designed to span a life: birth and early childhood; starting, attending and completing school; and finding a job, staying healthy and living longer. But there is an essential plank missing from this platform: justice. Incarceration is a misfortune that blights the lives of too many of the First Australians, particularly our young people. Around three in every 100 of our population are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, yet they are more than 25 in every 100 of our prison population. This shameful situation is deteriorating. The rate of jailing Indigenous Australians has almost doubled in the last decade.

It is time to speak out against this silent emergency. It is time for the Closing the Gap framework to include a justice target. Today Australia spends nearly $800 million imprisoning Indigenous Australians, but our country pays a price far greater than this. Higher numbers of incarceration mean more children in care, more mental health issues, more broken families, fewer people in work and fewer children in school. If action is not taken and something is not done, this failure will betray the next generation of Indigenous people. Right now half of the young Australians in our juvenile detention centres are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth. And on release there is a fifty-fifty chance that they will end up in jail again within 10 years. At the same time, the school retention rate for years 7 to 12 is slightly less than fifty-fifty.

In 2015 the future of the next generation of Indigenous Australians rests on the toss of a coin: school on one side, jail on the other side. We must change this and we can. Two years ago, the town of Bourke in New South Wales topped the state for six of the eight crime categories, including family violence, sexual assault and robbery. In February 2013 the Sydney Morning Herald reported that if it was an independent nation, measured on a per capita basis, Perth would be the most dangerous country in the world. But the people of Bourke, including the large Aboriginal communities at nearby Moree Plains and Cobar decided to change that headline. The community brought together police, magistrates, legal services, mental health experts and community groups to examine the causes of crime to prevent crime—to break the cycle of disadvantage that hope-killing, morale-sapping treadmill of offending and incarceration. It is a model we can learn from: a community-owned approach championed by local people, local knowledge and local expertise.

We are blessed in Australia with inspirational Indigenous leaders, educators, advocates and role models in every field. We need to be better as a parliament and as a nation in channelling their knowledge and their ideas. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage cannot be overcome by unilateral decree. We have got to meet the challenge out there on the ground, in communities, and recognise that every community is different and that programs that serve one community will rarely serve all.

Developing and meeting a new justice target means working with state governments, law enforcement agencies, legal clinics and social services. Above all, we need to listen to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and empower them to control their own futures. This is the approach that Labor will always take. We believe in partnership, we believe in
community, we believe in local expertise. This is the promise that we make to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people today: We will never talk about you without talking to you; we will always work for you by working with you.

Closing the gap is our national responsibility. It is a shared journey and our job will not be done, our journey will not be over, until our two Australias are one.

COMMITTEES

Human Rights Committee

Report

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON (Werriwa) (10:33): On behalf of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights, I present the committee's 18th report of the 44th Parliament, incorporating the dissenting report, entitled Human rights scrutiny report.

In accordance with standing order 39 (e) the report was made a parliamentary paper.

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON: by leave—I rise to speak to the tabling of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights 18th report of the 44th Parliament.

This report provides the committee's view on the compatibility with human rights as defined in the Human Rights (Parliamentary Scrutiny) Act 2011 of bills introduced during the period 1 to 4 December 2014, legislative instruments received during the period 31 October 2014 to 22 January 2015 and legislation previously deferred by the committee. The committee has also considered responses to the committee's comments in previous reports.

Of the 26 bills considered in this report, 16 are assessed as not raising human rights concerns and four raise matters requiring further correspondence with ministers. The committee has either deferred or concluded its consideration of the remaining bills.

Bills considered that are scheduled for debate this week include: the Biosecurity Bill 2014 and related legislation and the Higher Education and Research Reform Bill.

As always the report outlines the committee's examination of the compatibility of these bills with our human rights obligations, and I encourage my fellow members and others to examine the committee's report to better inform their consideration of proposed legislation.

This report includes our examination of the Biosecurity Bill 2014 and related legislation. These bills are an excellent example of how consideration of traditional rights and freedoms in the policymaking process can greatly improve the final outcome of legislation.

The Biosecurity Bill seeks to provide a new regulatory framework to manage the risks of pests and diseases entering Australia, replacing the century-old Quarantine Act 1908. As the statement of compatibility recognises, the bill engages multiple human rights, including the right to life, the right to liberty, freedom of movement, fair trial rights and the right to privacy. This is because the bills, in seeking to manage risks to safety, include provisions that, for example, restrict the free movement of persons who may spread disease.

While the bill limits a number of fundamental rights and freedoms, the statement of compatibility provides an excellent analysis of how such limitations are reasonable and proportionate in pursuit of a legitimate objective. The bills have been drafted with Australia's human rights obligations in mind and, as the statement of compatibility says, seek 'to ensure individual liberties and freedoms are considered in conjunction with the disease risk'.

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CHAMBER
The committee commends the minister and the department for their commitment to ensuring that the bills include appropriate safeguards, and on the quality of the statement of compatibility.

I also commend the work of the Australian Public Service Commissioner in reviewing the APSC's Directions following advice from the committee. Specifically, in its sixth report of 2013, the committee raised concerns about the publication of personal information concerning public servants in the Gazette. Following the committee's comments, the commissioner launched a review and has now amended the directions to address most of the committee's concerns.

This report also considers the Minister for Education's response to the committee in relation to the Higher Education and Research Reform Amendment Bill 2014, which was introduced into this House in December. The minister's response has enabled the committee to conclude its examination of most measures in the bills. In relation to the 14 individual measures in the bills, the committee has concluded that 12 are compatible with human rights. In relation to the removal of the cap on student contribution amounts, the committee has sought further information from the minister.

I would like to remind members that the committee undertakes its scrutiny function as a technical inquiry relating to Australia's international human rights obligations. The committee does not consider the broader policy merits of legislation.

The committee's purpose is to enhance understanding of and respect for human rights in Australia and to ensure appropriate recognition of human rights issues in legislative and policy development.

The committee's engagement with proponents of legislation emphasises the importance of maintaining an effective dialogue that contributes to this broader respect for and recognition of human rights in Australia.

Members engage with the committee's work in keeping with the scrutiny tradition of undertaking technical and bipartisan inquiry into the merits of proposed legislation and, in the case of this committee's particular task, the compatibility of proposed legislation with the human rights conventions signed up to by previous Australian governments.

To put aside personal opinions on the policy merits of legislation is not always an easy thing to do, and, for doing so in the interests of providing credible reports to inform the debates of the parliament, I recognise and commend committee members for their service to this institution and to the legislators within it.

With these comments I commend the committee's 18th report of the 44th Parliament to the House.

BILLS
Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014
Second Reading

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

Mr CONROY (Charlton) (10:39): I am eager to talk about this horrible, horrible Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014 and the horrible reforms it represents. I had been
discussing the impact on regional universities, and in particular my home University of Newcastle. I want to talk about the example of deregulation in the United Kingdom. The UK is often held up by those opposite as a paragon of what can happen if we deregulate. What has happened in the United Kingdom proves that university deregulation is bad public policy. The Conservative-Liberal coalition government in the United Kingdom deregulated fees in 2012. This resulted in massive fee increases, and two recent reviews are absolutely scathing of the reform. The United Kingdom Higher Education Commission found that deregulation has delivered 'the worst of both worlds, where all parties feel that they are getting a bad deal' and 'where government [is] effectively funding [universities] by writing off student debt rather than investing directly in teaching grants'. The commission's second report, Regulating Higher Education, concluded that deregulation has placed at risk the United Kingdom's reputation for higher education excellence, and called for new regulation to give students greater financial protection and to secure quality standards. These two reports are fairly clear indicators that deregulation has failed in the UK, with real consequences for students and the reputation of British universities.

It is also interesting to note that when fees in the UK were deregulated they were capped at 9,000 pounds. For the 2015-16 academic year, only two universities out of 123 will not be charging 9,000 pound fees—again, real evidence that the Minister for Education's claims on fees cannot be believed. They will rise—universities will raise them as much as possible, and the UK experience demonstrates that. Yet the Abbott government wants to follow the example of the UK failure of deregulation.

Another effect of this UK legislation is the impact on part time and mature age students. I am proud of the fact that 50 per cent of students at the University of Newcastle do not come directly from high school—they are mature age students who perhaps did not get quite the marks they needed so they went out and earned an income and then entered university. That is a great second-chance opportunity. The University of Newcastle has three areas of great expertise—engineering, energy research and the training of Indigenous doctors. It is giving mature age students a great chance. Yet the impact of deregulation will be felt most keenly by these students. In the UK, part-time enrolments in universities after their reform fell from 230,000 to 139,000 in only two years. Within two years of university deregulation almost 100,000 students, over 40 per cent of part-time students, dropped out of the system because of the fee hike—yet the minister and his backers claim that this deregulation can be compensated with the scholarship scheme in their reforms. This is the biggest deception in this bill, because this scholarship scheme will receive no Commonwealth funding. It will be funded by students and universities, who will be required to direct 20 per cent of the extra income raised by higher fees to providing these scholarships. So the Commonwealth is not providing extra funding for these scholarships at all. Universities will be given the freedom to charge students significantly higher fees and then will have to use some of this revenue on scholarships. This will also create a have and have-nots approach to universities, where universities such as the Uni of Newcastle, which have a great tradition of taking students from low-income families, students from Indigenous backgrounds and students who are mature age, will have their best and brightest students cherry picked by, for example, the universities of Sydney and New South Wales with these scholarships. This is just another example of the government arguing that students will benefit from a package when the reality of the situation is the exact opposite.
A university degree that costs $100,000 does not pass the fairness test, and this unpopular aspect of the government's reforms has been overwhelmingly rejected by the Australian people. Members of the government regularly talk about intergenerational equity, and how it is wrong for this generation to burden future generations. How completely disgraceful then that men and women on that side, many of whom received a free university education, seek to force future generations to have $100,000 university degrees. There can be no doubt that fee deregulation will lead to massive fee increases. The minister and members of the government are living in fantasy land if they think this is not the case. Having university degrees that are priced out of the reach of ordinary Australian families is fundamentally unfair, and that is another clear reason why this bill cannot be allowed to pass.

This bill, in the minister's own words, is much the same bill as the first bill. It retains all the unfair aspects of the original bill that has already been rejected by the parliament. It is quite astounding that the minister introduced this near identical bill the day after the original bill was rejected by the Senate. Driven by a warped right-wing ideology and an agenda to implement reforms that have so demonstrably failed in other countries, this government's second attempt at so-called reform of higher education is pathetic and is offensive to Australians' belief in equality of opportunity and a fair go.

I am proud to be the first on my mother's side to go to university. I am proud to represent a region where four of the five top university degrees are in teaching and nursing, which are classic gateway degrees for working-class families to enter the university system. I am proud to represent my region, but this reform will not help this region. This reform will hurt my region. This reform will hurt working and middle-income families. This reform will close the door on future generations getting an education. The impact will not just be on these families and students; the impact will be on our economy, where we will lose this potential and inequality will be exacerbated. The impact will be deeply felt. It is a reform that should be opposed, and I am confident this parliament will oppose it.

Mr WYATT (Hasluck) (10:46): Deputy Speaker Mitchell, it is a pleasure to be speaking in front of you today, in particular. I noted the comments of the member for Fairfax, and I found the logic of some of the points he made very fascinating, given that he is a significant champion of deregulation in the industry sector and of having a voice from the sector influence government. It is no different in this instance, where universities are saying to us: 'We as an industry want change and reform that will enable us to provide the programs, courses and opportunities for young Australians.' Member for Charlton, it is always interesting when we make reference to comparative studies of other countries, because when we do comparatives with other countries we also have to consider the variables that came into play that we do not talk about in this chamber, because any comparative study can be flawed in the way in which it is undertaken and where the comparisons are. I do not disagree with your argument that maybe Newcastle will be affected, but there is nothing wrong with people having choices to cherry pick courses and be cherry picked for courses at universities that give them the optimum pathway to a career. That is what I see the legislation doing.

I do support the Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014, because, having had experience as a pro-chancellor of the university, I have seen the way in which the regulatory framework and the legislation inhibit us from creating niche concepts and constructs within a
university. If I could take that experience from then to now, I know that I would have relished the changes that are proposed in this bill.

This is the second time I have spoken in support of the higher education reforms in this chamber. I am pleased that higher education is being so vigorously debated, and I am pleased that both houses of the parliament have been working at getting this package right. I would ask that those who are opposed at the moment give serious consideration to the voice of the industry, who are asking for this reform, who see that there is a need for it. We should not be blockers. It does not matter whether it is the opposition or crossbenchers—open your minds and think about what it is the industry are asking for. I have seen, time and time again within this chamber, members on both sides standing up and arguing that the industry representation has to be considered in respect of the bill that we are debating at the time, and this is no different. If the industry are calling for it, then let us enact the legislation for it to occur.

I am not impressed with the misrepresentations of those opposite. We need to ensure a strong and vibrant education sector which prepares students for their future career pathways. We cannot delude ourselves into thinking that the current higher education system is meeting those needs. In my electorate of Hasluck, on average 30 minutes from Perth city, only one in six young people takes up higher education. For me, that is far too low. Meanwhile, one in 10 young people in my electorate of Hasluck is counted among Australia’s unemployed. That is too high.

At the moment, Australia’s higher education system is not working as well as it could. This gives us an opportunity to enable it to do that. The whole construct of scholarships—I will not cite the figures because I have heard them in many members’ speeches—creates an opportunity in a way that does not exist at the moment. There are many in this chamber who did receive free education. That was at a time when a government made that decision. But a person whom I regard as a good friend and whom I admire and respect, John Dawkins, as the minister for education, realised that it was not sustainable, that there was a need to have people pay their way, and he introduced a system in which all of us, with the degrees that we undertook, contributed to our higher education. It is interesting when you have Maxine McKew also calling for the passage of this bill through both houses. Belinda Robinson has made very strong cases.

Our higher education system could be more accessible to young people. Our higher education system is a crucial step which leads to jobs for more young people, by equipping them with the skills they need for the future. When we are in government, if something is not working, we have to do something about it. If the industry tell us it is not working and they want reform, then let us encourage it. Let us support them. The reforms will do something about higher education and improve on the status quo. I admit that we have a great university system. It has served us well. But we are moving into a contemporary global period in which Australia has to be highly competitive, and we need to encourage as many young people as possible to take those pathways—although not everybody wants a university course, and I acknowledge that, because there are many who want to apprenticeships and trades et cetera.

The reforms will do something about higher education, and improve on the status quo, as I have said. We have overwhelming evidence that change is needed, and I would encourage the opposition to get on board for the common sense and the common good of our country.
The reforms would, for example allow more young people in my electorate of Hasluck to access higher education. The reforms would see more young people in my electorate qualify for Commonwealth support for their higher education. It is estimated that an extra 80,000 students will get this support for bachelor degrees; certificates II, III or IV; diplomas and advanced diplomas. What a great way of encouraging young people into pathways.

This is an important point for my electorate of Hasluck, and the electorates of all members in this chamber. For the first time, the government would be supporting students undertaking a wider range of degree types. This includes the associate degrees and diploma courses that provide them with the knowledge and skills that they can directly apply in jobs. Diploma courses provide important pathways for less prepared students, giving them the opportunity to develop the skills needed for further study.

I am pleased we can lower fees for young people to encourage them to undertake these courses, and give them the best chance of success in their future pathways. The reforms would also mean that young people would not have to pay the unfair loan fees as they currently do. This, in turn, will mean that they will not have to pay higher interest rates if they are caring for young children and are earning below the minimum repayment threshold. That is an important point in the reforms.

For the young people who need it, these reforms would ensure their access to the largest Commonwealth scholarship scheme ever. The reforms would offer free education to the brightest students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. In my own electorate and in my own life experiences I have seen so many people from lower socio-economic backgrounds who never have the opportunity to go beyond their secondary schooling. And if we are in a position, as a Commonwealth, to encourage them and give them opportunities under the new reforms, then we should take that step and enable that to occur.

Young people in Hasluck are not studying for the sake of studying. They are studying so that they can get a job. I am confident that the proposed changes are focussed on their needs. They will be able to access more information about the quality of the courses and institutions they are considering. Young people and their families will be able to log on to a website that will give them access to the information about what students and employers think of the courses they are considering, because there is no sense in doing a course that is not going to lead to a job, and where there is not a market for those occupations. Young people will be able to find out how successful previous graduates have been at finding jobs.

Once they are enrolled in a course of study at TAFE or uni, these reforms will mean that students with a low socioeconomic status will not be left to battle it out alone. These reforms will increase their access to tailored support, including assistance to help with costs of living, tutorial support, and assistance at other critical points in their study. I have seen that with respect to a niece of mine, who is studying at UWA. The levels of support and interaction are tremendous but if we could make that universally available to any Australian student then it augers well for our country.

Higher education institutions will exercise the right to set fees in a competitive market. Higher education institutions have shown that they can be relied on to act responsibly in doing so. Our universities believe that without these reforms, our $15 billion education services industry would be at risk.
As I told this chamber in September last year, we cannot equip these young people for tomorrow using practices of yesterday. There has been a debate for many years on how to reform the higher education system. John Dawkins and others who have followed have certainly attempted to make significant reforms for the betterment of our society.

There is an almost universal commitment to the what; we are here to settle the how. Finally, after 33 reviews of the higher education system, there is almost universal commitment by universities and their governing bodies to the government's reforms. We have the opportunity in this session to fix Australia's higher education system, and to future-proof it for our young people. That is the story I want to take back to the electorate of Hasluck.

I want to tell the 40 students from Lumen Christi College in Martin—who were among the 80 per cent at their school to achieve the results they need to get into their first preference of university course—and I want to tell the students in the government schools in my electorate that I want them to benefit from a higher education experience that they have worked for. I want these students to enter a higher education system that is working for them, and is flexible enough to adapt to the world they live in.

In relation to this debate, two experiences have struck me. One was when I was in the United Arab Emirates, where I went to university world. When they took us through university world I was fascinated at the number of universities that had established campuses in the UAE. It was to facilitate flexible study arrangements that would allow students from anywhere in the world to go and study. I could walk from the campus established by Harvard to an Australian university campus established there. And what I got was the best of what was available. It gave me ideas and concepts for the reforms that we need in this country, because it is flexibility and choice that is important.

In the ASEAN delegation when I visited Malaysia, Brunei and the Philippines, we had discussions around the flexibility of universities and the opportunities that would prevail for Asian students coming to Australia. With such flexible approaches by Australian universities, those countries were also keen to have relationships and possibly become a hub to ensure that higher education was available to any Asian student from any country in that region to that they could study and to have choices. They talked about the historic connection to the United Kingdom. In those discussions the Australian members of the delegation suggested that Australia should be a principal port of call, because our universities were moving towards the top 100 and because the government was ambitious to ensure that the reforms that would take place would make our universities equivalent.

The other element that I think we have to factor in to giving our universities the opportunity to be able to undertake reforms is the competition that they may have in the future from online education from universities that are prepared to provide courses to Australian students online while not requiring them to go overseas. Technology has improved substantially. I see it in Australia now, where students do not front classes—they can do them from their lounge rooms. They do their assignments, they submit them and they participate in the chat rooms. And it will not be long before our universities face the threat of Harvard, Oxford and some of the world-leading universities, including from China, offering courses here, to the detriment of our higher education sector.

So I would encourage the opposition and the crossbenchers to give serious consideration to this bill and to consider not the context of today and some of the arguments that I have heard
but to think about a future in which we have future-proofed opportunities for our students and for those who wish to undertake university studies. That should be paramount in our thinking when this bill goes back to the Senate, because we have an obligation to be leaders and to make the reforms that the industry is asking for—to support the request for those reforms and to allow our universities to operate in a way that gives them greater flexibility and increases the opportunity for the number of our students wishing to study courses that will lead to jobs not only in our own states and territories in in Australia but to be competitive anywhere within the world.

I certainly support this higher education reform bill.

Ms BIRD (Cunningham) (11:01): Since the budget we have seen quite clearly that it is not only Labor that opposes the government's unfair, short-sighted higher education package. In fact, Australians across the country opposed the measures in the previous bill and also those in this Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014. I would indicate that, based on the Prime Minister's assessment, since the election there has been a period of fairly poor government—so bad that they had to consider restarting and having a new opportunity to get good government right at the beginning of this week. I would suggest that one way to achieve that might just be to pull this bill, because it is not well supported and it should be opposed.

We see that Australians in particular are concerned about the public funding cut to undergraduate courses of up to 37 per cent. We see the Australian public in particular oppose the potential for $100,000 degrees that are the result of combining both cuts and fee deregulation. We know that all Australians want to have the right to pursue their education at Australia's best universities without facing a crippling, lifetime debt.

As many speakers have said, in this world of constant change and rapid industry transformation many people will need to return to higher education. So we are not only talking about school leavers seeking their first qualifications; we are talking about many Australians who may already have a university qualification and need to upgrade it or to change it and we are talking about people who may have gone through vocational training and who seek to get higher qualifications. In a modern world a lifetime of education and training faces us. And so this is a matter for all Australians.

Our universities and the education they provide are a national asset—they are a national investment. While this provides an individual benefit to the students it also significant in providing a contribution to the public good of the nation, both economically and socially. Our universities are deeply engaged in significant and important research; particularly, it is very much a global endeavour. I just want to give the House an example from my own backyard: the University of Wollongong's Global Challenges Program.

If you go to their website you can see a description of it and understand how significant and contemporary it is. That particular program is described on that website:

OVERVIEW

Over the coming decades we will face many challenges and transformations in the way we live. The UOW Global Challenges Program recognises the interconnected nature of these transformations. The Program is designed to encourage and develop creative and community-engaged research that will help drive social, economic and cultural change in our region, and will be translatable across the globe.

The Program will initially focus on three Global Challenges - Living Well, Longer, Manufacturing Innovation, and Sustaining Coastal and Marine Zones. These are united by an overall research goal:
Transforming Lives and Regions. Each Global Challenge involves collaboration between UOW researchers and business, government, community and other research organisations. Global Challenges will articulate and pursue innovative solutions to major challenges, with a clear focus on the delivery and adoption of research outputs that have maximum impact in key areas of social, economic and community need.

And that is only one example of the important work that my own university is doing. And I know that those who have universities in their electorates across the country can see the same thing.

Australians understand that both the research and the teaching that happen in our universities are important. Yet Minister Pyne continues to hold hostage the funding for research and Future Fellowships for mid-career researchers, and he continues to ransom vital funding for research infrastructure.

So what do we have before us in the legislation mark 2? We have another proposal that is still wrong for the nation, still wrong for students and still wrong for families. The government has given up $3.5 billion of its $3.9 billion of savings, but it has not fixed the inequity that was at the heart of the original bill and which caused our major worry. The bill still contains $1.9 billion in cuts to Australian universities. It still contains $100,000 degrees for undergraduate students. It still contains $171 million in cuts to equity programs. It still contains $200 million in cuts to indexation of grant programs. It also contains $170 million in cuts to research training. It introduces fees for PhD students for the first time ever and it includes $80 million in cuts to the Australian Research Council. The massive cuts to universities remain. The new fee imposts for students remain. Nothing of substance has changed, and Labor's position remains unchanged in opposition to it.

Despite speculation in recent weeks that the government would give up its budget savings in order to achieve its ideological goals, this bill still includes the massive funding cuts that were proposed in the budget. It slashes funding for Commonwealth supported places in undergraduate degrees by an average 20 per cent, and, for some courses, by up to 37 per cent. It cuts indexation for university funding, costing universities $202 million over the forward estimates period.

These are all matters that were not considered or discussed with the community before the election. In fact, the minister, then the shadow minister, said exactly the opposite. Before the election, he indicated to the Australian people that there were no proposed changes to the way universities were funded under consideration by them, if they took government. This underpins why the package is in so much trouble with the community. There was no discussion. Before the election, there was no consideration of why these sorts of changes might have been required, how they might have been achieved and what the general population thought about them. There was no mandate for this government to proceed in the direction that it has. Quite rightly, people have had a look at it and said it is unfair, like so much of the budget. The whole reform package is about making those who can least afford it carry the weight of the government's unfair budget.

In particular, this bill now includes a transition fund of $100 million over three years for regional universities. The fact that the government even needs to propose the fund indicates that all the concerns we raised about the impact on regional universities in the first bill were actually real and accurate. There is no need for transition funds when measures are fair and
reasonable. Indeed, if the system, and the fees it introduced, were equitable, there would be no need for scholarships. The day the original bill was defeated in the Senate, the minister told Universities Australia that this transition fund would be $300 million. That is still $200 million short of what the universities are seeking, I should point out. So we end up with a measly $100 million in this bill—one fifth of the size the sector itself thinks is needed to allow for adjustment to deregulation.

Last week I attended a forum organised by the member for Indi, Cathy McGowan, where one of the very regions that will be affected gave compelling evidence about how important regional universities are to the broader economic and social wellbeing of their region. These universities are major direct employers and significant providers of education for critical regional sectors, such as health services.

I know this directly and personally through our experiences in the Illawarra region, particularly as we have been undergoing significant structural transformation in recent decades. The role of Wollongong University in supporting the research and education effort to assist that process has been integral to the success of growing new employment and transforming existing industry sectors to sustain jobs. The university is now one of the largest employers. Whereas once BlueScope was the largest employer, it has now been superseded by the university, as a direct employer, and is therefore is a significant direct economic driver in the region.

I would also like to identify that, in this context, the local TAFE institute is a critical partner in this task and has provided important skills and training expertise and service, particularly for many restructured employees. This case was, in particular, outlined in the report of the House of Representatives Education and Employment Committee, TAFE: an Australian asset. I note the government has not yet responded to the committee's report, and I would like to encourage the new minister to look seriously at the work and the bipartisan recommendations of that report. But, in support of this critical public sector work of universities, it seems that a pathetic one-off $100 million over three years is the best the Liberal-National Party can do for regional Australia.

The other persistent issue that causes us to oppose these bills in their new variation is the evidence that there will be $100,000 degrees out of this package. All of the analysis—from the Group of Eight to the National Tertiary Education Union—agrees that student fees would need to go up by around 30 per cent just to make up for the initial funding cut by this government. For some degrees, that figure is 60 per cent. But of course this legislation would implement complete deregulation of student fees, from 1 January 2016—unis can charge whatever they like. The University of Western Australia has already said it will charge all students $16,000 a year, which, overnight, more than doubles the cost of an arts degree.

I could point out to the House that there is nowhere in the world where deregulation has led to price competition and lower fees for students. In the UK, where they were deregulated in 2012, with a cap of £9,000, for the 2015-16 academic year there will be only two universities out of 123 that will not be charging the cap—that is, the maximum amount that they can charge.

It should be pointed out that in the Australian context the current student contribution rate is already a maximum rate. It is a maximum rate because the Howard government partially
deregulated student contributions to allow universities to charge anything from nought to the maximum—to the cap. No surprises, at the time, that Dr Nelson, as the minister, said:

Some institutions may increase the tuition fees in some disciplines. Some institutions have already indicated they would like to reduce their fees or make no change at all.

What actually happened? None of them have decreased their university fees. The cap—the maximum—is treated as the standard cost. Even without having a 20 per cent funding cut to contend with, every single university put its student contributions up to the maximum almost immediately. So the evidence is there to see, not only internationally, but here in our own history.

I particularly want to finish by talking about my concerns about the entrance of private providers and overseas universities under this legislation's proposal to extend access to per-student subsidies at 70 per cent of the rate for public universities. I think we need to be really conscious that there is a very real danger of poor-quality and low-cost providers aggressively entering the sector to take financial advantage of the new market. While of course many private providers have a long and quality record in the sector, and clearly not all private providers or overseas institutions would go down the cheap-and-nasty path, enough doing so will replicate the real and serious issues that have emerged in the vocational education sector. As the reports before the parliament propose, the parliament should note the increasing evidence of dodgy providers entering our vocational education system and taking advantage of vulnerable students by signing them up to inappropriate courses which they never complete, but they still end up with a VET FEE-HELP debt.

Along with shadow minister Kim Carr, I am pleased that our request to the Auditor-General to investigate potential abuses of VET FEE-HELP has been accepted. But, until many of these very real issues in the vocational sector are fully understood and effective responses are put in place, we should not take the risk with the quality of our higher education system, our fourth largest export earner.

Finally, we have to indicate that the bill before us, while amended, has not actually addressed the underlying unfairness, the underlying danger to participation and the economic capacity of our universities in particular to deliver for our regions. On that basis, it should be rejected, and the government should start good government today by pulling it from the list.

Mr RAMSEY (Grey) (11:16): I rise to speak on the Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014 and the associated amendments. I note that this bill has been in the House before but in a different form. It has been to the other place and, with significant negotiations with the crossbenchers, has come back with some improvements. It is a shame that the major party in the Senate would not engage in the same manner. In fact, we have just heard from the member for Cunningham, who says the bill should be thrown out. She said it is not well supported. It is supported by virtually all of the university sector. It is supported because they know that change needs to happen.

I believe that it is incumbent on governments, it is our responsibility, to inform the public as to why we are suggesting that changes need to be made. I am going to attempt to do that. I preface my remarks by saying that nothing remains the same. The world is constantly changing. Today's perfect solution for any problem has a use-by date, and so it is with higher education. There have been a series of reforms by different governments in the past, but
serious reform has not occurred for some time, and it is overdue. We know it is overdue because the sector is progressively declining and facing bigger and bigger problems.

It was in the 1950s, for instance, that Robert Menzies laid the foundations for the modern university sector, establishing Commonwealth scholarships to cover fees and provide a means-tested allowance for capable students from lower socioeconomic groups. His was the first government to truly recognise the value of a strong public university sector and provide a large boost in support under conditions which provided for the autonomy of universities, and a dramatic rise in graduate numbers resulted.

It was the Whitlam government in the seventies which introduced 'free education'. I say 'free' with inverted commas because we all know—we all knew then, as we know now, in fact—that there is no such thing as a free education. Someone must pay. Once again, when the fee-free university was introduced by the Whitlam government, there was a dramatic rise in numbers.

It was the Hawke government and their very competent minister John Dawkins that belled the cat on the issue of 'free education', because, as numbers attending university continued to rise, so did the unsustainable costs to government. That government, a Labor government, introduced HECS fees.

It is a recurring theme in Australia's modern history that a bigger and bigger percentage of people have elected to study at a tertiary institution. The Howard government updated the system in 1996, introducing three different tiers for HECS fees, reflecting the earning capacity of the various professions, and again in 2005, when the HECS-HELP scheme was adopted, which limited lifetime access to subsidised university education to seven years full time.

In 2009 Julia Gillard, as the Minister for Education, removed the cap on places, leading once again to higher numbers of enrolments and bigger implications for the budget. This was quite a watershed moment, I must say: uncapping places basically makes government commitment to education open ended. There are no limits on government spending under that arrangement.

It is obvious to all who take an interest in education—the students, the parents, the universities, their staff and politicians—that governments do not have spare buckets of money to throw at the sector at the moment. It does not matter who is in government or what Labor say now. Should they succeed at the next election, should they gain government at the next election, the Labor Party will be mugged by reality. The update of the intergenerational review is likely to be released in just a couple of weeks. The previous one, the 2010 intergenerational review, tells us that governments do not and will not have the money to meet soaring demand to grow our university sector and research capacity.

Don't listen to the rubbish from the opposite side, Mr Deputy Speaker. They know that it is not possible for government to contribute unlimited funds to the university sector. The member for Fraser, the shadow Assistant Treasurer, Andrew Leigh, knows that there is not an endless stream of money. There are other more pressing priorities for government for the limited finance that we have, like the NDIS, a scheme that has bipartisan support and that we all want introduced. We just cannot have sectors of government having uncapped spending and continue to pour money in endlessly.
So how pressing are these reforms, and why do we need to change now? It was interesting to listen to the member for Hasluck just before. He was speaking about international students and the information revolution. The information age and technology are providing opportunities and challenges for tertiary education that we would never even have imagined twenty years ago. Online education is here—MOOCs; full online courses; instant accessibility to lecturers; in fact, online tutorials are available not just with Australian universities but with virtually any top 500 university in the world. Australian universities will be challenged not only to hang onto Australian students but—very importantly for their financial success and viability—they will be challenged to hang onto their international students. Herein lies one of the great challenges.

As I said earlier at various times, both sides of the political spectrum have asked for savings from the tertiary sector. The previous Labor government was no different: they removed a large line of funding from the tertiary sector. It is right that governments should continue to question all of the projects that they fund. We should ask for efficiency dividends as we go along. And so it is with the university sector: as the way they deliver their platforms, as the technology becomes available, of course they can be more efficient, and we have every reason to ask them to contribute part of that back into the expanding sector.

There was a time when it was paramount for Australia to increase numbers in universities. So we pumped primed them: governments gave them progressively more money to get the university entrance numbers up. It is still important that we raise university participation, but the uncapping of places by the previous government is tempered at the moment by the fact that there are many concerns within the sector now that entrance standards are falling and that the quality of our university students being turned out in Australia may not be as high as it has been before.

The one thing that makes the Australian higher education sector very powerful and a strong economic contributor to the Australian community is that we are seen as a deliverer of quality education. We must guard this ferociously. It is not the time to be talking about the standards of university entrance, but it is one of those issues that is associated, and I am sure I will have an opportunity at another time to expand further on it.

To come directly to what is the most contentious part of what is a complete reorganisation of the funding mechanisms that govern our universities, the package of incentives to the industry, is of course the uncapping of fees—the ability of universities to charge whatever they should wish for a degree.

I talked a little before about the international market. Universities have increasingly turned to the international market, full-fee-paying students, to provide a new income stream for the sector. It has been highly successful. We have a world-class university sector, an enviable reputation and provided a new export industry for Australia worth $16.3 billion per annum. That is the income stream that underwrites the quality of Australian universities and, as a result, the way we can educate Australian students.

What would happen if we lost those international students? I can tell you what would happen: our universities would be in a state of ever-declining capacity and quality. Most of our international students are coming out of Asia. However, competition is getting hotter every day. Huge investment is turning mediocre universities into world-class universities. With the online phenomenon, which I touched on before, the question we must ask ourselves
is: why would a student living in Mumbai or in Chengdu enrol in an online degree at ANU or Adelaide University when in fact they could enrol at Princeton, Oxford or Harvard?

If we do not keep up the quality of our universities, we will lose these enrolments and the income stream underwriting Australian Universities. If we do not continue to rate in the top 100, rightly or wrongly, we will lose those students. Universities, whether we like it or not, are judged by their research achievements—by how many papers they get published in the scientific journals. We will not stay at the current ratings unless there is significant new investment. I have already established that it is unlikely investment is going to come from government, whether it be a Liberal or Labor government, given the current economic challenges facing Australian government. Both sides of politics know that.

If we do not address this issue now, more shame on us. If we just allow the status quo to continue, more shame on us as a parliament. If the taxpayer is not able to meet the challenge, it is inevitable that we will have to ask students to shoulder a bit more of the burden and, under what has been the most keenly contested part of Minister Pyne's reform, of course universities will be able to set their own fees, uncapped.

The cries of outrage from the other side of this House, saying, '100,000 degrees'—'200,000 degrees', I have heard. Of course they would say that. It is straight out of the Grimms' fairytales. In fact they have no idea. They have no way of justifying those figures. Like Grimms' fairytales, they are just made up. The $200,000 degree has come from where the sun does not shine—it is just made up.

We know, and you know, Mr Deputy Speaker Mitchell, that the higher education package, as it sits now, stipulates that universities cannot charge Australian students more than their international students, less the subsidy. We cannot charge them more than we charge international students. If universities ramp up those fees to the internationals, they will not have them. I have already told this House about why we are under intense competition from the rest of the world for those internationals students. If we doubled the fees, we will not have any of them here. If we do not have any of them here, our universities collapse, and the universities know that. That is why Universities Australia supports the package. That is why every university in Australia is behind the package. They know that without change they are in deep trouble. And that is why this bill has come back from the Senate with a raft of amendments, but not one of them has been agreed to by the Australian Labor Party because they refuse to even enter into the debate. They just say, 'No, we will stop the tide, the water will go back and we will all be safe.' It will not happen and it will not happen to our universities.

So while the focus of this bill, the contentious part, has been the uncapping of fees, there are a number of other great things coming from the government—the extension of funding to 48,000 students studying diplomas; 35,000 more starting bachelor degrees outside of universities; and the launching of the Commonwealth scholarships benefitting thousands who would not otherwise be able to access universities, particularly those Commonwealth scholarships that are sponsored directly by the government into my constituency, into lower socioeconomic groups, into universities that have lower socioeconomic groups and people affected by isolation. And we will be providing more support than ever before for those students to attend university, to contest, to apply for their dreams.
The HELP program will be strengthened. Students will be able to borrow every cent, every bit of their commitment and they will not pay a cent back until they reach a $50,000 income. If you have got kids, if you are the primary provider for kids, your interest rate will be paused and that interest-rate will only be CPI. So, in fact, the loans will be interest-free. All in all, it is a great package. It is improved by the negotiation of the crossbench senators. Just imagine what we could achieve if only both sides of the House decided to think about what is good for Australian education. (Time expired)

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (11:31): I rise to speak about the Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014. I acknowledge the previous speaker. I would like to explain why I will not be supporting the bill in this House. My message is that accessible, regional tertiary education is the key to the future of regional Australia. Any reforms need to put the needs and the future of rural and regional students, communities, businesses and institutions at the centre. I will be talking today about a forum we held in Wodonga last week and I will call for a plan B, C or D until we get this right.

Reform is needed in the higher education sector. I agree with the government on this issue. There are beneficial amendments in this current bill. However, there are many consequences of the proposed deregulation of universities. As the minister has stressed, the core of the legislation has too many disadvantages for those of us who live, work and want to study in regional areas.

I have been listening to students, to teachers, to tertiary education staff, to business owners, to local government, to parents, to the many Indi constituents who have sought to meet with me and express their concern with the deregulation of universities. They have told me stories and are worried about the unanswered questions, the cost, the many detrimental impacts that a deregulated system would have on the future viability of regional and rural communities. I have heard too many stories of unintended consequences, too many stories unanswered questions and problematic situations for me to support this legislation. My constituents have asked me to work with the government to come up with a better approach, a more inclusive approach, an approach that does not make regional students, communities and businesses suffer even greater disadvantage.

Uniformly I have been told that regional universities are much more than teaching institutions; they form the economic development and innovation hub for communities around them. They are the essential ingredient for the growth of regional professions—agriculture, health, accounting, the legal profession, business management, pharmacy, planning, engineers, bankers. They all rely on locally based, quality provision of graduate and postgraduate courses.

I was elected to this House with a clear vision for my electorate: to work for a prosperous, caring community alive with opportunities for all. A significant part of this vision was a call to action on behalf of my community to address the inequalities currently being experienced in regional Australia, especially by young people. Specifically, these inequalities include access to quality, relevant, accessible educational opportunities.

I am opposing this legislation because I believe it will neither make regional Australia a more caring place, a more prosperous place nor will it create greater opportunities in the region. I have not been convinced that the changes made—and here I would acknowledge the minister for his taking on board many suggestions made by my colleagues in the other
place—in mark 1 and now mark 2 will make tertiary education more accessible, more relevant or of greater quality for regional communities. I believe that regional communities will be severely disadvantaged by this legislation. I also believe that the process to develop the legislation is faulty. In rural parlance, we talk about making a silk purse from a sow's ear. This process has not been inclusive.

The way we do things, the people, the stakeholders we involve, are equally as important as what we do. Talking about process, about consulting with stake holders, I would like to place on record the outcomes of a forum held in Wodonga on Monday 2 February. Over 130 participants attended from all sectors of my community. This forum was hosted by La Trobe and Charles Stuart Universities. Key note speakers included the two Vice-Chancellors, local business people, representatives of the Regional Universities Network and Albury Wodonga Health.

There were three key themes: considering regional students in the proposed education reforms by Professor Sue Trinidad, Director National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education from John Curtin Institute of Public Policy at Curtin University; opportunities and challenges facing rural universities and the regional workforce by Dr Caroline Perkins, ex Director Regional Universities Network; and the role of higher education, particularly in health, by Adjunct Professor Susan O'Neill, CEO Albury Wodonga Health.

One of the more interesting consultative processes of the day were the three participatory workshop sessions and panel sessions. We talked about pathways to success—raising higher education aspirations and participation levels of regional and rural people. This was facilitated by Mr Vern Hilditch, Principal of Wodonga Senior Secondary College. We had a workshop on higher education and building sustainable regional and rural communities. This workshop was facilitated by Professor Richard Speed, Pro Vice-Chancellor Regional for La Trobe. The third workshop was on the role of higher education in the regional and rural workforce was facilitated by Julia Coyle, Dean of Students and Head of Campus at CSU.

There were some key findings from the forum. The first finding was about student equity. University participation is lower in regional areas, and it is not increasing as fast as in metropolitan areas. This situation has not changed and is not changing. As a result, in 2014 the proportion of 20- to 64-year-olds with a bachelor qualification or higher in regional areas was 17.7 per cent in regional areas; 16.2 per cent in remote areas. This is compared to 32.6 per cent in metropolitan areas—which is totally unsatisfactory. The reasons behind this—provided by DEEWR—include: access, cost, schooling, socioeconomic status and aspirations.

At the forum, we discussed taking a student-centred approach to education. How does this information manifest for young people in regional areas. University participation is lower in regional areas, and it is not increasing as fast as in metropolitan areas. This situation has not changed and is not changing. As a result, in 2014 the proportion of 20- to 64-year-olds with a bachelor qualification or higher in regional areas was 17.7 per cent in regional areas; 16.2 per cent in remote areas. This is compared to 32.6 per cent in metropolitan areas—which is totally unsatisfactory. The reasons behind this—provided by DEEWR—include: access, cost, schooling, socioeconomic status and aspirations.

At the forum, we discussed taking a student-centred approach to education. How does this information manifest for young people in regional areas. There are two ways; there is a lack of knowledge about university—only 25 per cent of students currently at university had parents who attended university. So most young people's parents did not attend university so they do not understand what is involved and they cannot offer firsthand advice on higher education. Secondly, there is a lack of confidence in young people's ability to attend university.

The forum considered student outcomes, and the group asked the question: 'When designing higher education for rural and regional communities, what are the key considerations?' There were two main findings. Firstly, create engagement with schools, students and parents; build pathways; early outreach to schools and communities linked to
later-year outreach; pathway programs; scholarships; bridging programs at school; establish pathways to enable students to move from school to TAFE or university, not only from the country to the city, but also within the regions.

The second major strategy was to build partnerships with schools, community and industry. The key to doing this is to talk about university education in general and its relevance to career and life goals; to start early with regular contact from year 7 onwards; to go deeper, increasing knowledge about universities, and building confidence for university study.

At the forum, we also discussed the role of higher education in the workforce. This is a particular passion of mine. Albury-Wodonga Health is the second-largest employer in Albury-Wodonga. It is a regional health service and it takes at least four hours to drive to the nearest metropolitan centre—in our case, Melbourne. The service relies on community and care interdependencies.

There is a slow and low turnover of staff; people stay. The attraction, recruitment and retention of health professionals is directly related to our ability to provide tertiary education. Some of the specialist skills employed by Albury-Wodonga Health include: professional nurses, paramedics, physiotherapy, speech therapy, social work, occupational therapy, psychology, accounting, business management, human resource management and marketing. And we need these locally; because, as we learnt, in Albury-Wodonga 70 per cent of jobs for that health service require professional tertiary qualifications, but it is estimated that only 20 per cent of the people have the necessary tertiary qualifications. And that is now; that is not talking about the future. But we absolutely know that when people study locally they stay locally.

So, while the forum confirmed that people are looking for reforms in the sector, we all agree that it could be better, more relevant, more efficient, more accessible, more student friendly—and we all need better access to broadband and mobile phones—the very strong response from participants was that what was being proposed, would not meet the needs.

I believe we are faced with a question of process and outcome. I have always liked this quote about the future: 'The future is not some place we are going to; the future is a place we are creating. The paths to it are not found but made, and the making of the pathways changes both the maker and the destination.' In reforming and improving the higher education sector, we are making a new path. The paths are not pre-existing. We are making them. And it is in the making of these pathways that we make our future. I want a future for regional Australia. I want a future of win-win; better in regional Australia and better in the cities.

But this current legislation has focused particularly on the needs of the university sector. It is true that it has many of the VCs agreeing with it, but it has not focused on other important stakeholders—businesses and employers, those who employ the graduates. And it has not focused on the key role of government investment in infrastructure—what universities are—education infrastructure. Universities act as an engine, drivers of regional development, regional innovation and regional growth.

I believe that in the formation of this second draft of legislation, the process has been flawed. The people who have a vested interest in the outcome, the people I represent, have not being involved: the rural and regional students, who are already paying excessive amounts for accommodation, travel and living expenses; the regional businesses desperate for locally
trained skilled professionals; and the regional development and planning authorities who are calling for the Commonwealth to play a lead role in the long-term planning of sustainable regional communities with a solid foundation in excellent infrastructure.

As an Independent member of this House I see it as my role—my duty, my job—to speak up on these issues. I need to stand up to fight to be heard with the best of my skills, to ensure that we as a parliament have the best legislation possible. I need to take action and to walk the talk of participation. I need to be evidence based. And I need my actions to be informed by my electorate. This is my intention in speaking to this legislation: to share the knowledge and outcomes of our regional forum, to make a sincere offer to the minister to meet and work with him on how these issues can be addressed, and to be solutions focused.

Let me remind this House that the expense of university study and living away from home is already too great for many rural and regional students. Our participation is significantly lower and it is becoming increasingly difficult for young people to see a pathway for themselves without the burden of debt from higher education. The time is here and now to focus on an alternative framework—a framework that is equitable and accessible for all Australians no matter where they live.

In closing I would briefly like to mention some of the specific outcomes from the forum and call on the minister to consider a plan C. Regional tertiary education warrants a higher order policy focus. There is a need for holistic consideration of relationships between communities, employees and individuals within regional tertiary education policy design. There is a need to better support interaction across TAFE and higher education and to cut through perceptions of cost shifting between the state and the Commonwealth government.

Higher education is too important for Australia to let through poor legislation. It is too important for all Australians. We need to consult and involve all sectors. We need to look for a win-win. We need a strong university sector. We need strong undergraduates and, most importantly, we need good legislation.

Mr GOODENOUGH (Moore) (11:46): The Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014 contains a range of measures designed to improve the quality of education delivered at Australian universities, TAFEs and colleges to make them competitive with the best institutions in the world. The reforms also aim to promote research and innovation in a way that achieves greater commercialisation of Australian intellectual property, which is critical for the economic development of our nation.

Another key objective is maintaining accessibility and affordability for students through the Higher Education Loan Program and Commonwealth scholarships. The aim is to make our higher education sector less institutionalised and more collaborative with industry. We need practical graduates who are in tune with commercial reality through their education and ready for employment.

The university sector is generally supportive of the government's reforms. The Commonwealth will provide approximately $15.6 billion to universities this year and it will continue to increase each year. Universities Australia issued a media release on 28 January 2015 stating:

Our appeal to Senators as they return to Canberra is not to ignore the opportunity they have to negotiate with the Government in amending and passing a legislative package that will position Australia's universities to compete with the world's best.
In my electorate of Moore the package of reforms presents a unique opportunity for Edith Cowan University. As the cornerstone of the Joondalup learning precinct, our local university is the main hub for 24,000 students and is the leading institution in the field of research, innovation and enterprise initiatives, working closely with the private sector in delivering a number of practical, real-world solutions.

I have been kept informed of the university’s programs by Professor Margaret Jones, Director of Research and Innovation, and Mr Neil Butler, community engagement and partnerships adviser. Edith Cowan University has developed a reputation for its emphasis on supporting new and established researchers and is currently developing a number of innovations that are helping shape our community. One innovation is a heart rate monitor that operates under the same principles as noise-cancelling headphones.

Traditional heart rate monitors or electrocardiograms work by measuring the electrical impulses generated by a human heart through a series of electrodes placed on a patient's body. The heart rate monitor under development at the Electron Science Research Institute at ECU works by isolating the magnetic field generated by a heart, which provides more detailed information than from an ECG. As well as providing more information about the heart for doctors, the magnetic heart rate monitor also has the advantage of not needing to be in contact with the patient's skin to work.

Another innovation is in the form of a smartphone application being developed by students which aims to help people with disabilities to contact their families or carers when they find themselves in distressing situations. Using the Please Help application disabled people can automatically dial nominated contacts for assistance and, if there is no answer, an SMS with the user's current GPS location and the nearest address is sent to an emergency contact. The idea for the app came from the WA Police in conjunction with Therapy Focus and was developed by the ECU School of Computer and Security Science students.

Three Edith Cowan University research projects have been named as finalists in the Western Australian Information and Telecommunications Alliance awards for undergraduate information, communications and technology projects: the Please Help app; an application aimed at improving diagnosis of hearing loss in children; and FireWatch, a bushfire monitoring tool developed in partnership with the state government land agency Landgate.

At a national level the work of up to 35,000 researchers and some 1,700 technical and support staff is dependent on this reform package, as are the Australian Research Council future fellowships. If funding were withheld, top researchers would be likely to abandon research careers and possibly seek positions overseas, leading to a loss of intellectual assets.

Improving access to higher education remains an important priority for the government. The bill will expand opportunities to more than 80,000 students a year to study for diplomas and pathway courses by 2018. For the first time in history direct Commonwealth financial assistance will be provided to support students studying higher education diplomas, advanced diplomas and associate and bachelor degrees enrolled in registered higher education institutions.

Graduates, on average, earn 75 per cent more over their lifetime than those who just complete year 12. The new Commonwealth scholarships, which are part of the reform package, represent the most comprehensive scholarship scheme in Australia's history.
Students from low socio-economic status backgrounds will be provided with more opportunities to participate in higher education, providing improved access to education for the most talented students from disadvantaged backgrounds. In addition to Commonwealth scholarships, there will be a dedicated scholarship fund for universities with high proportions of low-SES students that will be funded directly by the Commonwealth on top of university based scholarships.

Furthermore, to maintain the affordability and accessibility of higher education, the Higher Education Loan Program will continue taxpayer support for all students' tuition fees up-front, ensuring that repayments are due only when a student enters the workforce and earns in excess of $50,000. The proposed reforms introduce an interest rate pause on debts for primary carers of children aged less than five years and who are earning less than the minimum repayment threshold. In addition, the bill abolishes the existing 25 per cent loan fee for FEE-HELP and the 20 per cent loan fee for VET FEE-HELP from 1 January 2016. These fees currently apply to students enrolled in TAFE colleges, vocational training organisations and private colleges, bringing arrangements in line with universities.

Developing quality Australian universities that are competitive internationally remains an important objective of the higher education reforms. Currently, our universities have limited prospects of competing with the best in Europe, North America and the emerging universities of Asia. Only seven Australian universities are ranked in the top 200 internationally. As someone who has been fortunate enough to have attended Wharton business school at the University of Pennsylvania, in Philadelphia, I experienced the benefits of studying under world-renowned academic staff in the rarefied environment of an Ivy League university.

International education is worth $15 billion in export revenue to the national economy. It represents Australia's third-largest export behind iron ore and coal. Under the reforms, universities will be given autonomy to set course fees and attract students. In an article which appeared in *The Australian Financial Review* on 23 September 2014, Universities Australia said:

> It is simply not possible to maintain the standards that students expect or the international reputation that Australia's university system enjoys without full fee deregulation.

It is simply not possible to maintain the standards that students expect or the international reputation that Australia's university system enjoys without full fee deregulation. Competition will enhance quality and make higher education providers more responsive to the needs of students in the labour market. The government will also direct the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to monitor university fees. Domestic fees will be required to be lower than the international student fees minus the Commonwealth subsidy.

Under the reform package, the Abbott government will invest $11 billion over four years into university research to attract and retain some of the world's top researchers in Australia. This includes $150 million which has been allocated over the next two financial years to fund the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy, and a further $139.5 million to deliver 100 new four-year research positions per year under the Future Fellowships scheme. These measures are designed to secure Australia's place at the forefront of research.

The package of reforms will provide significant opportunities for Edith Cowan University to expand the work of its on-campus research institutes, which are already achieving at a high level. For example, Edith Cowan University's Security Research Institute is one of the leading cybersecurity and digital forensic groups in the world, recognised for its expertise in human security, physical security and aviation security. The institute consistently delivers high-
impact outcomes in computer and digital forensics, network and wireless security, information warfare, physical security and risk management. The institute's other achievements include a digital forensics tool developed in conjunction with the Western Australia Police to assist with cybercrime, preliminary crime scene investigation, disaster victim identification and evidence tracking. This collaborative effort between ECU staff, students and the Western Australia Police is an example of innovation and effective community engagement at work.

Similarly, Edith Cowan University's Health and Wellness Institute houses an innovative multidisciplinary research team in exercise medicine, dedicated to investigating the extent of how exercise can be employed in cancer management to materially improve patient outcomes, thereby providing a steady stream of patients and medical, health and research personnel necessary to support the research program. To cite an example, there is an article on page 17 of today's *The West Australian* about the university's research into mitigating the progress of Huntington's disease.

The proposed higher education reforms are designed to make universities, such as Edith Cowan University, less institutionalised and more innovative in terms of industry collaboration, delivering tangible results for the community. Another example of innovative applied research based at the local university campus is the Vario Wellness Clinic, which is a commercial entity that delivers best-practice wellness programs, integrated consulting, and assessment services to the community. The clinic offers specialised programs that have been developed for people with existing chronic conditions in the areas of exercise physiology, dietetics, physiotherapy, and psychology, including the Life Now program, which consists of specialised exercise for people with cancer.

In summary, the Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014 contains a range of measures designed to improve the quality of education delivered at Australian institutions to compete with the best in the world. The reforms also aim to promote research and innovation. Another key objective is maintaining accessibility and affordability for students through Commonwealth scholarships and the Higher Education Loan Program. These higher education reforms will provide a wide array of career pathways for my constituents, particularly our youth, and provide the highly skilled workforce we need to build a stronger economy.
proposed changes to higher education will hurt them and their children and also our society and our future prospects. And they know that Labor members stand with them and stand against these unfair changes to higher education.

So I am very pleased to take this opportunity to again speak on the Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014. I note that the Minister for Education gagged debate on this bill when it was last in this place. But, given the Prime Minister's repeated claims to be leading a more consultative government now, presumably this will not be the case on this occasion. Going to the Prime Minister's latest reboot—the one before Christmas having been so spectacularly unsuccessful—I think of his speech to the National Press Club. He began with a very interesting and a very telling phrase. He spoke of how he had spent the summer talking to many Australians—talking to, not with, much less listening or hearing what they have been saying. He continues to prefer ideology to engagement, much less evidence. And this bill really is the government in a nutshell. At its core, there is a broken promise. And of course on this side of the House we remember the Real Solutions policy document that members opposite have been hiding away since the election. At the heart of this bill there are swingeing cuts to higher education, despite promises before the election, and also, through radical fee deregulation, the prospect of $100,000 degrees, denying accessibility to education, undermining the participation that has been a signature of Labor's investment in higher education over the past 40 years.

I note that while this fee deregulation issue is clearly the most controversial part of this radical reform package it is not unequivocally the most egregious. I think we should also be thinking about the 20 per cent across-the-board cuts and their impact. But the Bills Digest says of the fee deregulation proposals contained in this bill:

This element of the reforms was not considered in the Kemp-Norton Review and there was little public discussion of this option prior to the Budget announcements.

Well, that is putting it very mildly, isn't it? But it is also telling: the government did not have the courage of its ideological convictions to put its case to the Australian people. The member for Indi touched on this point very effectively in her contribution when she went through the failings of process—from her point of view, process affecting regional communities and regional students. But these process failings—the failure to engage with the community, the failure to listen to stakeholders, the failure to look to the evidence—go to the heart of why this package of legislation must be defeated. And what is very interesting is the constant recourse to reform, which is a weasel word that animates this government like no other. I remind members opposite that reform is a process, not an end. But it seems to have become a very convenient shortcut, a polite way for the conservatives to outline their extreme version of neoliberalism—their agenda to boost inequality in Australia.

Having made these remarks, I would say that if the Prime Minister were being truly consultative then he would have listened to people such as the constituents of the member for Indi and would not be seeking to reintroduce these measures at all. The feedback from the public, like the feedback from the Senate, is overwhelmingly against the proposals in this bill.

This feedback was reinforced yesterday by Peter Dawkins, Vice-Chancellor of Victoria University in Melbourne. I think this is particularly worthy of mention, because the member for Grey in his contribution asserted falsely that all universities support this reform package. Now, just leaving to one side the blackmail at the core of the proposition that has been put to
universities through this bill—the cuts needing to be made up by fee deregulation being the government's effective proposition to those universities—I remind the member for Grey and members opposite generally that the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Canberra has consistently been a brave voice for reason and for equity in this debate and has spoken against the reform package, and he has been joined powerfully by the Vice-Chancellor of Victoria University. In an article titled 'Abandon full fee deregulation, says Victoria University VC', published in the Age on Monday, he says:

The federal government's initial package represents a radical move toward deregulation, with minimal safeguards against associated risks.

He calls on the government to look to a range of compromise options, and he goes on to say:

A range of economists and higher education experts, myself included, have pointed out significant risks with the current proposals …

So we see another vice-chancellor speaking for his constituency and against these egregious proposals from the government.

I think it is worth spending a bit of time outlining what is contained in the legislation that is before us. The purpose of the bill is to amend the Higher Education Support Act 2003, the Australian Research Council Act and some related legislation to—leaving to one side some uncontroversial matters—provide for a range of budget announcements. Again, these announcements were unknown to anyone until the handing down of the budget that continues to dominate Australian politics nearly a year after its introduction. Fee deregulation is at the heart of this proposal. It is effectively a proposal to boost the Americanisation of our higher education system and perhaps, for members opposite, to boost the Americanisation of our society as well. I think it is worth briefly touching on the US experience, where we have seen, in recent years, massive increases in fees and a significant decrease in participation as well as some evidence suggesting that the quality of these extraordinarily expensive degrees is going down, not up. Again, in considering the package, fee deregulation cannot sit alone; it is inextricably tied to the 20 per cent cut to the Commonwealth Grant Scheme for undergraduate places, taking $1 in $5 out of the support in the system. It does not end there, because it is accompanied by further cuts: cuts to Australian Research Council grants and cuts to the Research Training Scheme. These are very, very radical changes that will do nothing to boost participation in our education system and will do nothing to improve its quality.

Labor opposed this bill last year, and we still oppose it. The fundamental reason for this is pretty simple: it is about fairness. It is also about our sense of the Australia that we would like to build and we would like to shape. It is about equipping Australians to face the future and ensuring that all of our talents are maximised. This is at risk through this package of so-called reform. Labor believes that a person's intellect and their hard work should determine whether or not they can go to university, not their bank balance or their ability to service a six-figure loan—leaving aside, once more, the question of the deterrent impact on a range of communities of the prospect of these kinds of debts. As the Leader of the Opposition has said, and it is worth repeating:

Labor will vote against these cuts to university funding and student support. Labor will not support a system of higher fees, bigger student debt, reduced access and greater inequality. We will never tell Australians that the quality of their education depends on their capacity to pay.
Access to education is not just about your ability to take out a loan; it is also about your ability to service this loan. It is true—as members opposite have reminded us in this debate and, no doubt, will continue to do so—that Labor introduced the Higher Education Contribution Scheme, but we did so with fairness in mind. The evidence supports this. The evidence speaks very differently to this radical fee deregulation. Labor struck the balance between affording access to higher education to the greatest number of people—through the Dawkins reforms and those reforms which were continued under the Rudd and Gillard governments—while keeping this access affordable. In the last government, Labor removed the cap on student numbers, to complete the Dawkins project—and the Whitlam project, indeed—of affordable access. Again, it worked. The jury is in: a record number of students are enrolled in universities—especially first-in-family students—not weighed down by six-figure debts and not deterred in the first place by six-figure debts.

I have previously spoken about Nick, a constituent of mine who is a graduate of the University of Melbourne working as a research scientist. Nick wants to pursue a PhD in immunology, where he could further contribute his skills, expertise and knowledge to the Australian society. As Nick put it:

Cuts to education would mean that instead of educating the best and brightest here in Australia, they may either go overseas and never return or, they are discouraged from higher education, meaning they may never reach their full potential, or are prevented from contributing significantly to Australian society.

These cuts, in effect, would stop me from being the best that I could be, not for myself, but for Australia.

Let us all think a little bit about Nick and all of those like him. Let us think about the life course that is being reshaped and think about the advances that we may be forgoing in immunology by denying him that pathway. This is particularly ironic, because the one bit of good news, allegedly, in the government's broken budget is this Medical Research Future Fund. But, while the government cannot even articulate how that fund would work or what it would do, the one thing that we do know is that the government is cutting off its nose to spite its face. It is talking about high-end medical research while denying students the capacity to go into those graduate degrees that will equip them to be the researchers of the future.

Nick's concerns are echoed by the Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations; by the Australian Academy of Science, who touched particularly on the impact of the efficiency dividend on ARC grants as well as the implications of the increase of fees and introduction of fees for PhDs by research; and also—importantly, I think—by the Australian Medical Association, which turns to the devastating and lasting effect that these changes will have on the size, shape and distribution of the future medical workforce, saying:

There is a real danger that significantly higher fees and student debt will force graduates to pursue their careers in the highest-paid specialties in the capital cities.

Perhaps that is a matter that some of the members of the National Party might want to have regard to in their contributions in this debate.

I turn back to Nick, because he contacted me very recently to tell me that one of his colleagues in medical research has decided to move out of Australia to continue his research career because of the toxicity and contempt that the Liberal Party is demonstrating towards medical research and science through these so-called reforms. This is a loss to Australia that
is entirely at the feet of this government. It is just one story but one that I have no doubt is being replicated across Australia. And to what end? What exactly is gained by putting in place impediments and burdens for people seeking to pursue higher education?

Since the budget I have visited a number of university campuses across Victoria, and the response from staff and students has been the same: they do not support these measures. On this side of the House we stand with them. We recognise we live in a society where not everyone gets the same start in life, and this is where government can, should and must play a vital role in helping people make the most of their abilities, not loading them up with debt sentences. When we do this, we all benefit. I fear this is something members opposite cannot comprehend. Their Liberal ideology's basic assumption is that everyone just comes from money and, if you do not, that is too bad.

This debate is, as I said earlier, this government and its rotten budget in a nutshell for all those reasons of the failure of process that lie at the heart of this government's chaos and dysfunction but also in substance. I am very proud to stand here with my colleagues and give voice to the concerns of students and staff today and to share with the House the concerns that students today have for their brothers and sisters and students who may not have the chance to follow them, who may not have the opportunities that I have had, that the member for Rankin had and the member for Perth had to maximise our talents through accessible higher education.

What a contrast we have here with Labor's strong record in making tough decisions and doing real reform to open up higher education. We will continue to always stand up for affordable, accessible, quality education for all and we will continue to oppose this regressive, egregious legislation.

Mr BROUGH (Fisher) (12:16): As has been pointed out, this is the second time the Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014 has been back to this House because it was obviously rejected by the other place. I preface my remarks by reflecting on the member for Scullin. I hope he takes the time to spend just a couple of moments with me. I do not say that in the negative sense at all. He just talked about loading people up with this massive amount of debt and how unreasonable it is. I remind the member for Scullin that today—or June 2014—all Australians state and federal had a gross debt of $497 billion which we all have to pick up. A state tax comes out of your left pocket but is your left hand, and when it comes out of the federal pocket they tell you you can have the privilege of taking it out of your right, but it is still the same bunch of taxpayers. That is going to grow to $694 billion.

In particular the member for Scullin talked about the proud record of the Labor Party, and they do have some very proud records in the area of education. I stand here saying I would love to see free education, free medical systems and higher pensions. We would all love to see that. But I would also love to see who is going to pay for it, because that is where the rubber hits the road. For the member for Scullin: whilst you have a proud record, are you also proud that, since the 2011-12 Labor budget through to the 2013-14 Labor budget, up to the year 2016-17 the measures that the Labor Party put in place whilst in government totalled a reduction in higher education support of $6.652 billion? Isn't it just a tad hypocritical to say: 'We are the righteous. We are those who are for free education. We don't want to load people up with debt'? None of us want to load people up with debt. The reality is that one of the reasons we are looking at health reform, education reform and reform in the welfare system is
that the path we are on as a nation is not sustainable. I appreciate the member for Scullin having taken that couple of moments to spend time with me; thank you so much. I hope you go back to your suite and ponder as I now run through some of the many benefits that you inflicted upon the higher education system here in Australia over the last few years.

I understand why. Whilst on one hand the Labor Party says that debt is really bad to load on the individual, the former Treasurer, the member for Lilley, says debt is good. So is public debt good and private debt bad? If that is the case, I remind them it is the same private citizens of Australia who have to meet their own household debt as well as the public debt. Today, as the Treasurer has been reminding this place, we are spending $100 million that we do not have each and every day of the year. We are borrowing it. Some of that is in the area of health reform.

You would believe, if you were listening to this debate, that students at university are going to go from having absolutely free education with no requirement to make a contrition to somehow having to pay for it all. To the members of the gallery who have been listening to this, probably somewhat bemused: today the taxpayer—you sitting up there and me—pays 60 per cent of every person's education at university. And, glory be, the student, having graduated, having picked up a job that is earning more than $50,000 a year, starts to make a small contribution. If they never actually make that money, they do not actually pay it back. What is being proposed here is that it will go from a 60-40 split to one where the student—and I am not privileged to have a university education—will now pay 50 per cent and the taxpayer will pay 50 per cent. How dreadfully unfair is that!

It is not like the American system, where you pay it back the day you leave university. It is not until you are actually earning a sizeable income, knowing that you are likely to be earning at least $1 million across the course of your life as a result of that education that has been kindly contributed to by general taxpayers who have not had the privilege to go to university. We are saying, 'Let's make it sustainable and let's share equitably and equally in the cost of that education.'

Let's ask ourselves why the Labor Party felt it necessary to take $6.6 billion out of the higher education funding envelope over that period of time. It is because we are on an unsustainable trajectory. What I would like from those opposite if we are going to have a debate—if this is going to be a debating chamber rather than a slanging match and seeing who can throw the most mud—is to ask what the alternatives are.

I was in this place in 1997, which seems like eons ago now. At that time, under the Howard government, we proposed to introduce bonds for people going into high-care aged care. This was not a revolutionary policy because bonds already existed for people who were going into aged-care facilities that were low care. The Labor Party snifed the breeze and went, 'We are on a winner here; we can kick the bejeebers out of that horrible coalition for asking people to make a contribution when they are frail and going into high levels of aged care.' They won the debate; it was the public who lost. They won the debate and we retreated from that position. So you can imagine my surprise when, having come back to this place in 2013, I turned up to a meeting on health reform—and I was still in the Dark Ages, knowing that only some people pay to go into aged care—to hear this: 'No, no. On 1 July, it is all in; high care, low care, it is all the same now. Everyone pays a bond.' I said: 'No, you've got that wrong. The Labor Party would not allow that in a pink fit.' 'Oh yes,' said Jenny Macklin, the minister in the last Labor
government, with the support of the coalition. Why did we support it? Because it was responsible. Why? Because it was necessary. Why? Because it was actually equitable. We supported a Labor policy that was almost identical to that which was proposed in 1997-98 and was rejected by the Labor Party for base political reasons.

The debate we are having here today is going to be rejoined in the years to come. There is no doubt about that. If these measures are defeated in the Senate, the debate will come back—because it has to come back. You cannot borrow $100 million a day from the next generation, beleaguer them with debt and say, 'That's good enough; we have abdicated our responsibility.' So to the next Labor speaker: I invite you to take up the challenge and say why you felt it was necessary to have an efficiency dividend, raising $902 million, in your 2013-14 budget. Why did you think it was necessary to remove the 10 per cent HECS-HELP discount and the five per cent HELP repayment bonus from 1 January 2014, for savings of $276 million? Why did you think it was necessary in the same 2013-14 budget—we are not talking years and years ago now, we are talking about five minutes ago—to remove the conversion of Student Start-Up Scholarships and student loans at a saving of $1.182 billion? Why, in the same budget, did you put a cap on the tax deductibility of self-education expenditures, saving $514 million? I go all the way back to the removal of the HECS-HELP discount voluntary repayment bonus in 2011, for savings of $607 million. Would the members opposite like me to go through every single one of these so they can develop their arguments as to why they were necessary, equitable and reasonable, and why they were not attacks on the higher education system? Or is it just that we want to stick our heads in the sand and pretend the reality of the debt that we are lumped with as a nation is a mountain we will all have to climb?

I am not saying to the Labor Party, 'You were wrong in doing those things.' I am saying that you were wrong today not to have alternatives and proposals that you could argue and articulate. You could use your intelligence and your university educations to come in here with your research and tell us what other alternatives there are to make sure our higher education scheme is sustainable. It is essential to us.

The Sunshine Coast university is a wonderful institution. It has more direct contact with students than virtually every other university in Australia. We have more students going to university today than ever before because the Labor Party uncapped those places, meaning that the funding that was contributed from the Commonwealth was also no longer capped. If that is going to be sustainable we have to make sure it is paid for. These are the real questions of this government, this parliament and this nation as a whole. It is not for one side or the other simply to say no. We need to work together in the interests of the nation to ensure that our medical system is sustainable, our health system is sustainable, our welfare system is sustainable, our roads and our Defence Force are sustainable—all of those elements. It is just that, when we come to who pays and how that is achieved, people do not just differ; some say, 'Not me, not today.' That is not an option. It is today. Surely that is why we asked to be elected to this place—so that the generations before, who actually enjoy the freedom of the nation and the largesse of the nation, have an opportunity in the future not to be paying for what we have enjoyed.

The Treasurer said that every man, woman and child is going to have a personal debt load, if extrapolated across the whole community, of something in the order of $25,000 per person in the near future. That is a debt load, but you do not have an income if you are a baby, a
preschooler, a primary school student or any student. So let's get real about this. If you do not like these reforms, fine. Articulate a clear alternative. Do not stick your heads in the sand. Do not run away and then start bringing in $6.6 billion worth of cuts to higher education and say, 'Everything is all right here. It is okay. Nothing to see,' because that is the Labor way. Labor likes to talk a really good story. It likes to pull the heartstrings of people about free education and the opportunities of the individual but it does not want to acknowledge the hard fact that this nation has to pay its way. The Treasurer, the Prime Minister, the front bench and everyone who sits on the opposite side acknowledge that challenge. We understand that higher education reform is a critical component of it. We will fight for it because equity is not only for today, it is for tomorrow. That is our duty as parliamentarians, no matter what side of the chamber we sit on.

These reforms have now been to this place twice. If they do not come back again, it will then be upon us all to find additional new reforms which can take our education system further forward and ensure the young people who aspire to a higher education have real opportunities into the future. That is the task before us.

Dr CHALMERS (Rankin) (12:29): Before I get into the substance of the Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014, can I acknowledge the fine young Australians who have joined us in the galleries today from schools elsewhere in the country. Their presence does really focus our minds on issues of the future. We welcome you. Thank you so much for joining us here in the parliament in Canberra.

We are, of course, talking about the Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014 and the various associated amendments moved by crossbench senators and the government. As the previous members have said, this is the second crack the government has had at this legislation. We are in this position and talking about these matters today because the Labor Party and the Senate did absolutely the right thing when we rejected this bill last year. We represented the views of students, parents and experts who know this is all about narrowing the life choices available to so many young people, who now balk at paying $100,000 or more for a university degree. We will reject it again.

This is an issue very close to my heart. My upbringing and the community I grew up in—and represent now—has taught me the power of higher education as a major contributor to social mobility in this country. These are not issues of politics, for me, these are fundamental issues of principle and policy. I will talk about these principles and that policy today as I move through aspects of the bill.

The first thing to understand is that the difference between the first bill and the second bill is minor. The bill we are debating today is really a tinkered version of the first bill. It is still chock-full as it is amended, full of cuts to the sector and full of increased fees for our young people. For example, there are still $1.9 billion in cuts to Australian universities. There are still $171 million worth of cuts to equity programs. There are still government fees for PhD students. There are still those $100,000 degrees for undergraduates. Those are not opinions in this debate, those are facts. That is the magnitude of the cuts and the magnitude of the increased fees. The massive cuts to our most important institutions of higher education remain. Nothing of substance has changed, so Labor's position on this bill remains unchanged.

From time to time, those opposite like to quote vice chancellors from around the country who have come out to support one aspect or another of their proposed changes. It is worth
pointing out that some of them have been forced to do so by the magnitude of the cuts. If you take a lot of money out of the university system, a lot of the comments—that those opposite quote back at us—from vice chancellors are because their hands have been forced by the size of the proposed cuts. They are therefore looking for other ways to pay for the courses that they offer.

I was fortunate to listen to the characteristically great contribution by the member for Scullin, and a lot of other people on my side have made valuable contributions to this debate. I will focus on the three major reasons that I will not be voting for the government's bill this second time round. The first one is the bill's fundamental problem in limiting options for our young people.

The government's bill is built on a very different idea of Australia's conception, and that very different idea is probably why they are so on the nose in the community right now. They are attempting to create an Australia that is unrecognisable from the Australia that most people in our country cherish. One of the reasons it will be unrecognisable is that so many people from the regions or low SES areas, like the one I proudly represent, or even women—when it comes to repaying these big proposed HECS debts—will be marginalised. It says to the Australian community that we want higher education for a few of you, those fortunate enough to be from wealthy families and wealthy suburbs. The rest you need not apply. That is not the type of Australia we want to see here in the 21st century.

I mentioned before those equity programs that have been cut and how extraordinarily proud I am to represent a community that has a Logan campus of Griffith University, and I have spoken about Griffith in this place many times. I salute their work. I am very proud not just to be a graduate of Griffith but to have that Logan campus in my electorate of Rankin. One of the things I like most about Griffith University is the effort they put in to ensure that people who might otherwise be marginalised have the opportunity to participate in higher education and to graduate with a degree. They have so many programs, and I will not run through all of them. They have tremendous staff associated with those programs, particularly at Logan. They try to identify the barriers to higher education so that they can address them systematically and draw from the broadest possible pool of potential graduates to get that dynamism and creativity in our economy that comes from admitting more people into higher education.

One example is a tremendous program at Griffith called Uni-Reach, and I was really proud to present some of the Uni-Reach awards. These are given to outstanding students, usually adult learners, taking irregular pathways to university. They are really hardworking people. They have come across all kinds of barriers—financial hardship, family problems and other barriers—that have got in their way. There were some really inspiring stories at the Uni-Reach awards. I remember Kathleen McGrath, in particular. She completed grade 11 studies while caring for her family, including her two sons. She is working very hard. She hopes to study pathology at university.

Unfortunately, it is people like Kathleen who face barriers to higher education who will be hit hardest by the proposed changes to the bill. A lot of people have barriers to higher education. We should not be adding another one, which is making people baulk at those $100,000 degrees, and making them choose between having a house or an education, or having a family and an education. Those are the wrong choices for our community.
The second fundamental problem I will deal with in a bit of detail is this issue around access to the HECS-HELP scheme for New Zealand-born people in Australia. I have raised the issue before in this place. Part of the reason I do so is that I have a huge New Zealand and Pacific Islander community in my electorate. But that is not the only reason I raise it. I do not just raise it because nine of the 10 electorates with the biggest New Zealand and PI communities are in South East Queensland. Those are important representational factors, but there is a fundamental issue of justice here at play, and that fundamental issue is about creating a permanent underclass in our community. Under the current regime, not having New Zealand and PI kids able to access the HECS-HELP scheme means that they get to a certain point in high school where they realise that when they cannot access those schemes they would have to pay up-front, and that is not an option available to most people in my community—indeed, in most communities around the country.

The great Craig Emerson, my predecessor in Rankin, announced in April 2013 that we would fix this problem. Desley Scott, the former member for Woodridge, played a big part in that campaign to get that change made. A lot of people were excited in my community. A lot of people around my community raised it with me at graduation ceremonies. Unfortunately, even though it made it into the bill, the government refused to split that part out of the original bill that was rejected. That meant that the original time frame was not met. A whole year of kids with New Zealand and Pacific Islander backgrounds missed out on the HECS-HELP scheme in 2015—the year we are in now—because the government, for reasons that defy explanation as far as I am concerned, decided that they would not pull that part of the bill and pass it with our support. We are in a position where we need to see that part of the bill fixed, because we do need to offer pathways to higher education to people in our communities.

I urge the government again. I salute the work of Senator Carr in the other place and I salute the work of the member for Kingston, both of whom are trying to get this change made so that we can give certainty to a huge number of people in my community and around the country who want their kids to have the same opportunities afforded their classmates in the same schools.

The third broad area that I want to spend a little bit of time on is a fundamental question of the type of economy and the type of country that we want to create. We have huge challenges about the future economy: how do we diversify, how do we make sure we are in the innovation game and how do we make sure that we are teaching and training our young people to be really successful and to move up the value chain to do higher wage and higher skilled work? How do we give them those skills? I was at Calamvale Community College in my electorate not so long ago. Calamvale Community College is a tremendous school in my community with some great teachers—and parents and students, of course. They had a festival called the Dare to Ignite Festival, which was really about the jobs of the future, technology and how they get a slice of the action. So schools are thinking about these sorts of things. One of the problems with this bill and these changes that Minister Pyne and the government want to impose on the community is that they are limiting the choices of people who want to go to university and who want to have dynamic, creative and innovative careers, particularly as it relates to science, technology, engineering and maths. Those skills are really the skills that people will need if they are to occupy and to succeed in the jobs of the future.
In that context I was interested to hear a story today—I heard it on the radio on the way in and checked it out when I got here—about a PricewaterhouseCoopers report which warns us that Australia is at great risk of dropping out of the top 20 countries by 2050 because we risk failing to diversify and get a slice of that innovation action around the world. I want to read into the record what PwC's consulting economics and policy leader, Jeremy Thorpe, said:

We are on a slippery slope to global irrelevance, if you consider the size of the economy as the ticket to play.

It just puts pressure on us to have a long-term plan to be productive and to be innovative and to compete on a world scale even though we are smaller … We really need to have a long-term plan for innovation and that probably means investing in STEM: science, technology, engineering and maths.

Unfortunately, I read that with some interest because earlier on in the week I recalled a story in *The Australian* on Tuesday. The story said that science and engineering enrolments could fall and Australia's science research effort be hit hard if the federal government's plans to deregulate university tuition fees go ahead—that is what leading academics and science policy experts say. This story was all about how the government's proposal to cut its contribution to tuition costs by an average of 20 per cent from next year would affect science and engineering students disproportionately.

Bruce Milthorpe, the Dean of Science at the University of Technology, Sydney, said:

Science and engineering are among the ones that would get the really big cuts.

That is really dumb policy in a country like ours. With the challenges that lie ahead, you could hardly think of a more damaging economic policy than to limit access to kids from a broad and diverse range of areas, such as low-SES regions, and as many people as we can so that we are getting the best and brightest kids into our university system studying science, technology, engineering and maths and fuelling the economic growth of the future.

There are other issues that, if I had more time, I would touch on. I think that the scholarship scheme is largely a con. They are pretending that they are doing some sort of good for people from low-SES areas when in reality they are charging kids from low-SES areas more to subsidise those scholarships. Also, the structural adjustment fund I would touch on in more detail if I had time; it is fundamentally an admission of guilt about the sorts of cuts that they are making to the system.

For all of these reasons, this is why we stand with students, parents, so many people around the country and the people who work in our university system, particularly in those student equity services, to oppose this bill. We are the party of higher education. Even the member for Fisher, who is one of the more partisan people in this place, acknowledged that Labor has a proud record on education. He could not be more right. Just look at the last Labor government. It boosted universities' real revenue per student by 10 per cent, lifted investment from $8 billion in 2007 to $14 billion in 2013 and supported students with the Student Start-Up Scholarship. There are all kinds of success stories out of our Indigenous, regional and other programs. So we come to this debate with a very strong record. We want to assure people that we will continue to stand up for parents and students. I will continue to stand up for the kids in my community, who deserve an opportunity to go on to higher education.

**Ms SCOTT** (Lindsay) (12:44): I rise today in support of the Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014. Success of our universities is paramount to the future success of our country. We live in a fast, changing and dynamic world. More than ever, our children
must be provided with the skills to enable them to compete in this ever-changing global workplace. More than ever, our universities must have the shackles removed that hinder their ability to provide a dynamic education.

Let me explain. My father's father had a primary school education and a couple of trades—quite normal and acceptable for his time. My mum had a year 10 education; my dad, year 12—again, quite normal and acceptable for their times. My brothers and I all attended university. I went to the University of Western Sydney and studied business; my brother Stephen went to the University of Technology, Sydney for engineering; and my brother Glenn went to the University of Sydney to study commerce. Then my brother Glenn and I decided—perhaps it was sibling rivalry, perhaps a bonding experience—that we would embark on an MBA together. We both enrolled at the AGSM, or the University of New South Wales, and completed our MBA programs. Our decision to go into an MBA was completely based on the fact we had found that, into our 30s, we had reached a glass ceiling in our careers and needed to find another edge to continue our move forward. Comparing our experience to that of our grandparents, for my Pop Scott it was another trade to complement his workshop and for my Pop Allan it was more skills in his trades to enable him to climb the non-commissioned ranks in the Australian Army.

Even looking through my own educational experience, the method in which I have received education has diametrically changed over the last 37 years. Primary school was all about chalk, pencils, overhead projectors and a Commodore 64; high school was whiteboards, data projectors and Windows 2.1; my undergraduate degree was textbooks, CDs and a laptop; and finally, my MBA was iPads, electronic files, electronic notes, online forums, e-libraries and virtual work groups from across the country—all submitted though an electronic portal. My point is: the demands on the educational system to meet our communities' expectations are constantly, incredibly and increasingly dynamic.

The employment market is also dynamic and changing. So it is only logical that today's children in Lindsay will need different skills for tomorrow's workforce than those that are needed in today's. In fact, the jobs that many of our children will do have possibly not even been created yet.

The Penrith Business Alliance predicts that in 20 years time the manufacturing sector in our region will employ only five per cent of people in the Penrith area. Yet, as part of our growth centre objectives, the growth of our region is to move to concentrate more on jobs in the areas of health, education, technology and community service. We need reform to ensure our tertiary institutions are up to the job. We need to ensure that our tertiary institutions equip our children to perform these jobs and, in turn, secure the economic success of our region. We need to constantly reform and re-evaluate what we do to ensure that the kids of today are prepared and are keen to work across all of these growth sectors. And this generation of children needs a curriculum base that is going to prepare them for a whole new world and whole new fields to be opened up by our university sector. That is why this government keeps talking about the need for reform, and that is why the Minister for Education and Training is so passionate about taking this to a new level. He is looking at reform from the ground up.

At the other end of the spectrum is where our universities are heading right now. From my observations, they are signing deals today to feed into the innovation, health and community service sectors of tomorrow. The new courses and new fields—that I as a university student
could only dream about—include fields like civionics, where civil engineering meets electronics. For my older brother, who went to UTS and has a civil engineering degree, these are quite exciting advances. Fields like these will revolutionise technique, our technology and the efficiencies of our structures. Yet a decade ago these fields did not exist. Our universities have to be entering and investing in new fields and signing new deals if they are to remain relevant and competitive with the rest of the world.

They have a further issue, and that is more and more student demand. Universities are becoming increasingly accessible and more people than ever are getting a tertiary education. In my parent’s generation, very few people had a university experience. In my generation, around 50 per cent of people went onto university. Today university is available to anyone who wants to study and further their career. It is not the sandstone walled fortress it once was. And university has become more attractive to people—as they strive to deliver subjects that will help start students on their career journey.

That is all fantastic news—except for one thing: the money has to come from somewhere. Now there are different ways in which a university can achieve this, but let me say this: if we are to truly help them, we must cut the red tape and allow the university sector to compete for students in a world where they are not hamstrung by legislation. Some people say that is code for allowing them to jack up prices. And some prices may increase. But against that, other course costs will fall. The benefit of freeing up the system will see universities being better able to meet demand as well as being able to compete for students and to become more flexible as the nature of studies change.

One part of this debate that I do find interesting is where people refer to universities jacking up prices. The concern that I have is that really they are saying that universities are irresponsible organisations that really do not think about the needs of their students. I think that the vice-chancellors and chancellors across Australia find that quite offensive. To that end, the University of Western Sydney is one institution driving innovation and investment. In November, the university signed a memorandum of understanding with the Beijing University of Chinese Medicine as part of the landmark China-Australia free trade agreement. This relationship will allow for a new research-led Chinese medicine clinic in Sydney, better patient care and the potential for Australia to tap into the $170 billion global traditional Chinese medicine market. The aim is to encourage the use of complementary medicines as an alternative treatment in the doctor’s surgery. The University of Western Sydney is the first Chinese-accredited organisation in the Western world to tap into this traditional Asian market, which is thousands of years old. It will create hundreds, if not thousands, of jobs, bring a skills revolution into the region and transform the way we here in Australia and the Western world—and more importantly for me, in Western Sydney—look at alternative medicine.

But it does not end there—the University of Western Sydney is also in a joint venture with the federal government with the development of the Werrington Park Corporate Centre. This building, currently in development, will bring 400 jobs into my electorate—and it is not just 400 jobs, it is 400 smart jobs in health and education. This great work cannot be simply undone by a system that is already in demand and covered in red tape.

With massive investments necessary—and costs rising—all sides of politics agree Australia’s current higher education and research system is unsustainable. So how do you rein in these costs? The previous Labor government tried to deal with this by making cuts. They
made no attempt to bolster revenue to universities in spite of knowing that more revenue was needed. In fact, under their watch the international education market is estimated to have fallen from $19 million in 2009-10 to $15 billion when they left office. This government wants to strengthen our higher education system and make it more sustainable in the long term. We believe the higher education system must be fair and equitable for all Australians and this bill ensures just that. We want to provide the system with Australian students, university ready. We want investment into world class research facilities in areas that will produce the jobs of the 21st century. We need our universities to be relevant. Within reason, we want to give our universities the power to compete and set their own fee structures. And we want students protected from unrealistic debt burdens.

This bill aims to spread opportunity to more students, especially disadvantaged and rural and regional students; equip Australian universities to face the challenges of the 21st century; and ensure Australia is not left behind by intensifying global competitions and new technologies. Students are big winners under this bill. This very important piece of legislation ensures that HECS will be kept in line with the CPI—this means that there will be no changes to the HECS indexation rate. The government also plans to introduce a five-year HECS indexation pause for primary carers of a newborn baby who are earning less than the HECS minimum repayment threshold, around $50,000. Government funding will also be available to eligible higher education students studying accredited undergraduate degrees at all approved higher education institution providers, including private colleges and TAFEs. This will mean an estimated 80,000 additional students will receive Commonwealth support every year by 2018. Plus there will be more scholarships on offer with a Commonwealth scholarships scheme where $1 of every $5 of additional revenue raised by higher education providers will go towards helping students that need help the most.

According to the 2011 census data, the most common occupations in my electorate of Lindsay include clerical and administrative workers at 18.8 per cent, technicians and trades workers at 15 per cent, professionals at 14.3 per cent, machinery operators and drivers at 10.5 per cent, and managers at 10.1 per cent. Most of these occupations require some form of study. This bill will allow more people from all walks of life to access adequate and fair education and gain the necessary skills they require to pursue a career of their choice—to access those smart jobs that are on their way to Lindsay.

I would like to talk briefly about the New Colombo Plan. Under the New Colombo Plan 95 students from UWS have secured opportunities to study overseas. Recently the Minister for Foreign Affairs came to meet some of these students. She has said:

… the New Colombo Plan has been raised as a great example of the connectivity that is required in our region, building government-to-government links, people to people, university to university, business to business.

The minister went on to say that we are investing in our students and we are investing in our future, and I agree with her. Investing in our higher education system is important for our future, for all Australians. In a world of growing international competition, Universities Australia has warned us about the risk of Australia being left behind. Currently our universities have limited prospects of competing with the best in Europe and North America and the fast-developing universities of Asia. Five years ago there were no Chinese universities in the top 200 universities in the Shanghai Jiao Tong index of universities. Today there are
five. In the same period only one Australian university has entered the top 200, joining six Australian universities already there. We face the prospect of our universities falling behind, or we can do something about it now. It is essential that we look at how we can make our universities more competitive.

I see so much opportunity for the people of Western Sydney. I see the partnerships under which the University of Western Sydney has done so much to drive forward and create opportunities and jobs for tomorrow. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mrs ELLIOT** (Richmond) (12:59): I rise to speak again in opposition to the government's Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014. I spoke in opposition to the bill the first time, and essentially nothing of substance in this bill has changed. Labor's position remains unchanged as well, in opposing it. This bill is a fundamental attack on the right to access a decent education. This bill, like the last one, is in fact another broken promise. Prior to the last election, one of the promises that we heard was 'no cuts to education', yet now that is exactly what we are facing.

I would like to remind the House of the now Prime Minister's promise to Australian families and Australian students. In August 2013, in the last week before the election, the now Prime Minister told the Australian people that there would be 'no cuts to education'. In my area, we had all the National Party candidates running around saying: 'No cuts to education. None of that will be happening here. No cuts at all.' Yet look at what happened. The Prime Minister has broken his promise, the Liberal Party have broken their promise and the National Party have broken their promise yet again.

It is particularly hard for those people who live in regional and rural areas such as my electorate of Richmond. Locals on the North Coast are already under attack by this government's very cruel and unfair budget. We have already seen the government's plans for bringing in the doctor tax, for cutting pensions, for cutting family payments, for cutting very important community grants, for their petrol tax—and now they want to bring in extreme university fees.

I have pointed out many times in this House that, when it comes to representation in regional areas, there are vast, vast differences between members of the Labor Party and members of the National Party. The difference in relation to this issue is a massive one. It really goes to the core of what value you place upon education. Labor believes in the benefits of an accessible and affordable education regardless of where you live or how much your family earns. We think that people should have the right to access a decent education and have all the opportunities in life to follow the career paths that they have the capacity for. At the heart of it, we believe that a person's intellectual capacity and commitment should be the basis for determining their ability to get into university, not how much money they have to buy their way in. That is what Labor has always believed.

Whilst Labor is absolutely committed to making sure that everyone is able to access a decent education, wherever they may live, in contrast in the regions it is the National Party who are selling out rural Australia by supporting this legislation. When those National Party members come into the chamber and vote for $100,000 degrees, they are selling out people in their electorates. It is an absolute disgrace, and this issue will be one of the many that we will fight the Nationals on every day in regional and rural Australia. Make no mistake about it:
families in my electorate on the North Coast will hold the National Party responsible for these extreme university fees.

This bill has a range of very harsh measures which will result in increases in university fees, including, firstly, the unrestrained student fees, or fee deregulation. This essentially removes the price controls for students' contributions to the cost of their degrees and allows universities to set much higher fees. Labor totally opposes this measure, as the removal of price controls means that university degrees will in fact dramatically increase—in some cases to $100,000. Currently the fees are capped, and removing the cap will cause the prices to soar. That is the reality we have seen in many examples overseas when similar deregulation has occurred.

We opposed this bill the first time and we continue to oppose it now, because the second version of this bill is still unfair and it is still wrong. It is wrong for the nation, it is wrong for families and it is wrong for students. The bill still contains $1.9 billion in cuts to Australian universities, $100,000 degrees for undergraduate students, $171 million in cuts to equity programs, $200 million in cuts to indexation of grant programs, $170 million in cuts to research training, fees for PhD students for the first time ever and $80 million in cuts to the Australian Research Council. These cuts will rip $1.9 billion from universities. The cuts vary across the disciplines and will come into effect in 2016. According to Universities Australia, the cost of courses like engineering and science will have to increase by 58 per cent to make up for this harsh cut. The cost of courses in nursing will need to increase by 24 per cent, in education by 20 per cent, in agriculture by 43 per cent and in environmental studies by 110 per cent.

We have seen so many people right across the nation opposing the government's unfair attacks on education. Certainly within my electorate many families have voiced their concerns. They oppose cutting public funding to undergraduate courses by up to 37 per cent. They oppose the $100,000 degrees. They oppose the Americanisation of our world-class university system. Australians oppose all these things because they understand the value of education and the value of our universities and they know that these cuts are incredibly unfair. Some of the greatest concern, as I said, relates to the $100,000 degrees. Most of the analysis agrees that student fees would need to go up by around 30 per cent just to make up for the Liberals and Nationals' funding cuts. And, for some degrees, that figure is closer to 60 per cent.

But, of course, this legislation would implement complete deregulation of student fees from January 2016, allowing universities to charge whatever they like. In fact, the University of Western Australia has already said it will charge all students $16,000 a year, more than doubling the cost of an arts degree overnight. Nowhere in the world has deregulation led to price competition and lower fees for students. It has not happened. In the UK, fees were deregulated in 2012 with a cap of 9,000 pounds. For the 2015-16 academic year, there will be only two universities, out of 123, that will not be charging 9,000-pound fees. So we see that nowhere in the world has it worked. We can look to the United States as well, where we know that university fee rises are completely out of control.

This attack represents a plan by this government to essentially make massive cuts to higher education funding and shift the shortfall of debt onto students. It means that the reality for families and young people is that they just cannot go to university. That is what I do not think
those on the other side of the chamber understand. It means that families cannot actually get their kids to uni. Families have often told me that university is just not on their radar now for their kids and is just not an option for them at all. It means that fewer people from regional areas like mine, the North Coast of New South Wales, will just not get a chance to access higher education. I believe it is fundamentally unfair and cruel to deny those people from our regional and rural areas the opportunity to attain greater skills and greater employment prospects.

We understand how important education is. We see this government making cuts that harm young people, not just cuts to education but cuts across a whole range of different skills and training packages as well. We see so many attacks on our young people. There have been a range of harsh cuts that are really impacting and hurting our young people, from higher education cuts through to so many others.

We also saw in the budget the Abbott government cutting three really important youth unemployment prevention programs—Youth Connections, Partnership Brokers and the National Career Development Strategy. They were vital education and transition services for young Australians. That has had a huge impact in my electorate of Richmond, where a lot of young people relied upon those programs to get the training and the skills that they needed.

So we are seeing this government making cuts in higher education and also in very important skills and training programs. We saw them cut $2 billion from the skills and training sector, when they cut a whole range of programs, including programs like Tools for Your Trade, Australian Apprenticeships Access, Alternative Pathways to Trades, and Step into Skills. They cut $2 billion from the skills program.

We also saw the very harsh cut of $240 million from the Department of Social Services discretionary grants program. This has had a huge impact in my electorate also. We are currently seeing massive chaos and confusion surrounding this particular grants program. Many of those programs provided great assistance for younger people. There is so much chaos around this at the moment that many people have contacted me with their concerns about these vital programs that this particular grants program provided.

In fact, just recently I was speaking with the people from the Family Centre in Tweed Heads. They have a fantastic program in place called REALskills. This is one of those programs that is being cut. There is currently so much chaos and confusion surrounding the cut of this fantastic program. Again, this has impacts specifically on young people. This program—the REALskills high school program—occurred in our high schools. The Family Centre was able to work with a whole range of different professionals in our high schools, providing really important life skills and training for young people.

This government has axed that program—a program that made a difference in the lives of so many younger people. The program had run for 12 years and had recently received an award for the best community group at the Northern Rivers community sector awards. It is a program that is supported by all the principals in all the local high schools, and this government has cut it.

Locals are fighting back in relation to this and many other cuts. Specifically in relation to the REALskills program they have launched a petition on change.org, and I encourage people to go to that site and sign that petition. It is on my Facebook page as well. It is an important
service that provides great skills for our younger people, and I will stand with everyone in fighting this government to make sure that we get funding back for that, and many other fantastic community based programs.

We have seen cuts not just to higher education but to skills and training, to important community based programs—all of which are really hurting younger people. I find it really hard to understand how members opposite—particularly those from regional areas—will be able to explain to their electorates that they are supporting and voting for these harsh measures in this bill today.

Members of the National Party represent some of the most disadvantaged areas within Australia, and they will have to go back and face people and explain to them that they essentially voted to stop their children ever being able to go to university. They will have to do that.

My message to the Nationals today is very specific and very clear: you cannot hide out on this one. When you come into the chamber and you vote in support of this unfair legislation, you are abandoning the people of regional and rural Australia, and you will be held to account, because these measures will make it more difficult for students from regional areas to attend university and will also make it a lot harder for regional universities to compete with larger, city based institutions. And these measures will make it harder for regional universities to remain viable in the face of some of these changes.

You can contrast all of the things that the Liberal-National Party government is doing with Labor's very proud record of investment in Australian universities. Overall, Labor lifted government investment in universities from $8 billion in 2007 to $14 billion in 2013. We certainly had a whole range of programs in place, and increased our funding. We boosted funding for regional universities by 56 per cent.

There are 750,000 students at Australian universities today, and one in every four of them is there because of Labor initiatives. We put 190,000 more students on campus. We boosted Indigenous student numbers by 26 per cent. We boosted regional student numbers by 30 per cent—a huge increase—and we have more than 36,000 extra students from low-income families in universities, compared to 2007. That really does make a very big difference.

We made it easier for younger people to study with student start-up scholarships, which helped more than 427,000 Australians with the costs of study. We introduced a relocation scholarship, helping 76,000 people leave home to obtain their degrees. So Labor has a very proud record in our investment in Australian universities and making sure that younger people can access university to get the very best start in life.

As many of us on this side of the House have said, a university education is a path to greater opportunity for individuals. Part of achieving that is through making sure that universities are funded properly. Funding universities properly is a major investment in our nation's future.

But the fact is that the bill we see before the House today is bad policy from a bad government. That is all it is. We have said on many occasions that will be opposing this legislation in the strongest possible terms. I am very proud to be here today opposing this legislation. I stand with my community in my opposition. Many people have approached me about how they feel about this legislation and their opposition to it. I will stand with the
community in fighting to make sure that younger people—particularly younger people from regional and rural areas—have an opportunity to access university, because they have a right to be able to do that. They should not be disadvantaged because they live in regional and rural Australia. But this government, with this measure, and with so many other measures, are making it so much harder for regional families to get by day to day.

This bill takes away the opportunity for the children of rural and regional families to access universities and access opportunities into the future. That is why I am opposing this bill. That is why the Labor party is opposing it. Essentially, it is bad policy from a bad government.

Mr IRONS (Swan) (13:14): I, too, rise to speak on the Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014 and join with colleagues from both sides of the House to put forward an argument.

One of the things this coalition government was elected to do was to right the ship with regard to the economic disaster that was left by the previous government. Part of that is making many things sustainable. 'Sustainability' is the word that should be applicable to this particular legislation. It is a word that those opposite have never seemed to understand, let alone put into practice, so I will take the time in this place to explain the concept carefully for them here today so that they can learn what it means.

'Sustainability' is defined as pertaining to a system that maintains its own viability by using techniques that allow for continual reuse. 'Maintain its own viability': that is what this government is trying to achieve by implementing a series of reform packages in this parliament across a range of portfolios. We are trying to ensure that the services and assistance that this government provides to Australians are not something that we will only be able to achieve this year or even for the next five years. We are trying to implement reform measures that will ensure sustainability can be guaranteed for the long term.

Those opposite like to philosophise about policies that create a better health system or a better education system, but they are philosophies that are based on an alternative world rather than the economic reality in which we live. For six years, the Labor Party based their policy decisions on a world where the government could afford to cash splash with no regard for the consequences. This coalition government, too, could sprout these little philosophies, but the difference is that we do not base our policy decisions on theory; we base them on fact, best practice and what is economically responsible for our future generations. We do not base them on unsustainable ideologies, no matter how great they sound. The reality of the world, if those opposite feel like finally sitting up and listening, is that the government is not, and was never intended to be, a never-ending ATM.

The government and its fiscal balance is intended to be utilised to support those who need them most as a means to provide vital services, such as national security and our national approach to policies such as health care, while also assisting each of the states and territories to deliver policy initiatives that they are responsible for, such as building new roads, infrastructure or hospitals.

The Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014 is one such reform initiative that this government has introduced to ensure Australia's higher education system remains sustainable. It is a bill that has already been debated in this place and even more so outside it in the media and in the community. As members know, a key feature of Australia's higher
education system is its ability to be accessed by all. I am a firm believer that there should be no discrimination when it comes to any Australians accessing education of any form or at any level. When reviewing our higher education system specifically, it is clear that this government has continued this historic tradition by ensuring that all students can access higher education when they elect to further their studies beyond secondary school without having to make any up-front contributions. Instead, under the government's reform package, students will continue to have access to HECS and will not have to repay a cent until they are earning over $50,000.

I also highlight that on top of the HECS scheme which is provided by government, Australian university students only currently pay about 40 per cent on average towards the cost of their education, with the taxpayer paying the remaining 60 per cent. In today's economic climate, however, it is not possible for the government to continue sustaining these costs. That is why as part of the government's reform initiative to ensure HECS is sustainable in the long term, the government will ask students to contribute about 50 per cent towards the cost of their loan to create a much more balanced system. The government will also now be providing Commonwealth supported places for all Australian undergraduate students. This means that around 80,000 more Australian students per year will be able to access Commonwealth funding by 2018. This includes students studying diplomas, advanced diplomas and associate degrees, and bachelor and sub-bachelor courses at private providers, along with non-university higher education providers such as TAFE. Provisions in the bill before the House will also remove all FEE-HELP and VET FEE-HELP loan fees which are currently imposed on some students undertaking higher education and vocational education and training so that there is equality across all assistance measures.

As I said, the coalition government is one which is focused on improving access to our higher education system. That is why another key reform measure in this bill is to create new opportunities for students in regional areas and from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. We will achieve this through our new Commonwealth Scholarships scheme, which will require that universities and other higher education providers spend one dollar in every five dollars of additional revenue raised on scholarships for disadvantaged students. This will ensure tailored, individualised support is provided to these students, including needs-based scholarships to support students who require cost-of-living assistance.

As members are aware, these are important reform measures that have been introduced in this place previously. But I also highlight that there are a number of key amendments that are part of the current bill before the House that I would like to draw the members' attention to.

Contrary to what those opposite have tried to claim in the media, this government has conducted widespread consultation with industry professionals and has conducted good faith negotiations with those opposite and the Senate crossbench since the government first introduced these reform measures in this place in August last year. As result of these negotiations, the bill before the House proposes a number of amendments to the Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014 that was first introduced. The first of these amendments is to the indexation of HECS debts as per Senator Day's proposed amendment. Under this change, instead of moving to the 10-year bond rate, the government will be retaining the consumer price index for HECS debts. The government has also listened to and accepted Senator Madigan's amendment with regard to students who are
primary carers of children aged under five accessing higher education. This amendment will introduce an interest rate pause for these students if they are earning less than the minimum repayment threshold, while a new structural adjustment fund will also be introduced to assist universities in transitioning to the new higher education model.

In addition to the Commonwealth Scholarship scheme already proposed under the government's reform package for the higher education sector, the government will also now be introducing a dedicated scholarship fund for those universities across Australia which have a high proportion of low-socioeconomic students. I highlight that these scholarships will be funded directly from the Commonwealth and will be in addition to the Commonwealth Scholarships already in place.

Of all the reform measures this government is proposing, however, members would be aware that the most significant change is this government's move to have higher education fees deregulated. This is the reform measure that universities across Australia have long been calling for, and it is the reform measure that is needed to ensure Australia's higher education system remains sustainable. The leading university in my home state of Western Australia, the University of Western Australia, has been vocal in its call for fee deregulation to ensure that the education our students are receiving is of a world-class standard, rather than our students being left behind because universities are forced to cut costs.

As the university's vice-chancellor, Professor Paul Johnson, has previously stated:
The status quo is not feasible as it will over time erode the quality of our education and research activities - not a good position to be in when our nearest Asian competitors are investing so heavily in these areas.

This is a sentiment that I and this government understand, and we will continue to stand in this place to see it implemented.

Unfortunately, many of those valuable reform measures have been overshadowed by untruths regarding the cost of university fees if deregulation is implemented, and by the scare campaign from Labor and the Greens that Australians have witnessed in the media and in the community. This is despite the reality of fee deregulation already being revealed by universities across Australia, including the University of Western Australia. This university has now set its fees for 2016, which are less than half what is being claimed in the scare campaign of those opposite. The university has also already announced that they will target their Commonwealth Scholarships toward rural students, who will receive residential scholarships to support their studies while at university, which is directly in line with the scheme's intent.

Despite the fact that universities across Australia have already outlined why deregulation is needed—as has this government and many expert commentators, including the architect of the former Labor government's education reforms, David Gonski—those opposite refuse to accept that these reforms are necessary for the future sustainability of our higher education system. This is not really a surprise to anyone standing on this side of the House, because we know that although the Labor Party likes to claim that they are the education sector's friend and this Coalition government is the enemy, once again we need to step away from the fantasies of those opposite and take a long hard look at the reality. The reality is this: under the former Labor government, $6.6 billion in funding for higher education was cut, including more than $3 billion in their last year in office alone.
Just to add to those opposite's attempts to deceive the Australian public, a number of the cuts they proposed are the same ones they have now turned around and blocked in the Senate. This is exactly why those opposite cannot be trusted. They will backflip on their own policies if it suits their politicking of the day. I think even those opposite would struggle these days to justify why they cannot support their own previously-held policies and why they will not allow the Coalition government to get them through.

Despite those opposite, this government has, however, once again listened to all concerns raised during consultations regarding safety nets for Australian students under a deregulated system. Further amendments to this government's original reform package have therefore been added to the bill before the House to ensure students are appropriately protected. This includes the government guaranteeing that fees for Australian students will be lower than international students' fees, and the government will also ask the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to monitor fees as the new system is implemented. These are important reforms that will further strengthen Australia's higher education system for the future, and I commend Minister Pyne for his efforts in negotiating these amendments for the benefit of both students and universities.

Another key aspect of the government's reforms is ensuring that as competition is increased under a deregulated system, students are more informed about the quality of education they will receive from a higher education provider. This will ensure universities put their best foot forward in providing high quality education and do not overprice their fees. New information will therefore be provided through the Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching, so that any member of the Australian public can assess the quality of both the courses and the institutions they are considering. This will include information regarding how successful previous graduates have been at finding jobs and what other students and employers think of the course. It is expected that a new website presenting this information, and much more, will be fully implemented by August 2015.

If the measures before the House are not passed in this place and the other, there will however be significant implications for other vital education initiatives that form part of this overall reform package. These include funding initiatives such as research infrastructure, through the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy, and our very important Australian Research Council Future Fellowships.

I do, however, highlight that I understand why the Labor Party continues to oppose the bill and funding for initiatives such as these. It is because they simply do not care about these initiatives, and, as the saying goes, the proof is in the pudding. Under Labor, not a single dollar was dedicated to the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy, beyond 30 June, and there were no funding provisions for any further Future Fellowships.

This coalition government is the real friend of Australia's education sector. We have listened to universities across Australia, who have overwhelmingly called for fee deregulation, and, like many other initiatives that those opposite failed to fund in their own budget measures, we have again picked up their shortfall and ensured Australians do not miss out on the opportunities these education and research initiatives present.

To make Australia's higher education system sustainable in the long term, reform is needed, and the bill before the House will ensure best-practice measures, based on widespread industry consultation, are implemented. If those opposite want every Australian to continue
accessing higher education in the future then I will provide them with the solution: pass the
government's reforms in this place and the other. Alternatively, if they want our future
generations to suffer and higher education to no longer be sustainable, then I tell those
opposite: keep playing your political games and keep blocking this legislation, because every
member in this place and the Australian public know that it is not for the benefit of students,
as you like to claim; it is for your own.

If the claims being made in the scaremongering campaign of those opposite were remotely
ture, then universities across Australia would not be rejecting them. Mr Gonski would not be
rejecting them, and Labor's own former education minister and Treasurer, the Hon. John
Dawkins, who transformed Australia's university system under the Hawke Government,
would not be rejecting them. These industry experts are rejecting the claims of those opposite
because they know that the coalition government's education policies are the ones that will
ensure our students are provided with a world-class education and that our universities do not
fall behind other international universities.

As I said earlier, the government is not an ATM machine—no matter how many times
those opposite tried to make the Australian taxpayer accept this during the six long years of
their being in government. The coalition government is providing the necessary solutions to
Australia's fiscal imbalance and we will continue to introduce solutions in this place that are
in the best interests of the Australian people.

It is time those opposite got on board, stopped playing their political games and
remembered that it is their children's and their grandchildren's futures that they are
jeopardising every time they stand in this place and the other place to oppose another budget
savings policy. Australia's higher education system needs to be sustainable, and the coalition
government will continue to do everything in its power on behalf of the students and
universities to make that happen. I commend this bill to the House.

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (13:29): I welcome the opportunity to stand on this
side of the House, where we will oppose what was just called a budget saving policy because
it is a budget saving policy, not an education reform policy. I have listened from my office to
speaker after speaker trying to sell this lame duck to the Australian people. The Australian
people have already rejected this so-called reform masquerading as a budget saving policy. I
recall that, as a new teacher in the western suburbs of Melbourne some 30 years ago—I did
the calculations this morning—a culture of university attendance for local students was low.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): Order! It is now 1.30 pm, and the debate is
interrupted in accordance with standing order 43. The debate may be resumed at a later hour,
and the honourable member for Lalor will have leave to continue her remarks when the
debate is resumed.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Petition: Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (13:30): Today I rise to present to the House a petition that
has been certified by the House Standing Committee on Petitions.

The petition read as follows—
To the honourable the Speaker and members of the House of Representatives
This petition of concerned supporters of women's basketball in Australia draws to the attention of the House that because of Federal Liberal Government cuts to the ABC, the 2014/15 Wattle Valley WNBL season will be the last shown on ABC TV live around Australia. This will end ABC's 35 years of broadcasting and promotion of this elite women's sport in Australia.

We therefore ask the House to:

- restore the $254 million in budget cuts to the ABC
- support the ABC Board to enable the continuation of the television broadcasting of women's sport including the WNBL

from 987 citizens

Petition received.

Ms CHESTERS: Women's sport in this country is elite. It is professional. And it is time that this government got behind women's sport to ensure that, like men's sport, it has equal coverage and it has the funding that it needs. The only way to ensure that women's sport will get the chance is to ensure that it has the funding. We call on the government and the board to support the WNBL next season.

Reynolds, Lieutenant Commander Steven, CSM

Mrs McNAMARA (Dobell) (13:32): This year's Wyong Shire Council Citizen of the Year is Lieutenant Commander Steven Reynolds CSM RANR. Lieutenant Commander Reynolds joined the Royal Australian Navy at the age of 15 and has just finished over 41 years of continuous service. Lieutenant Commander Reynolds has dedicated his life to serving Australia as a member of the Defence Force and has received numerous accolades throughout his career, including being named Sailor of the Year and receiving the Peter Mitchell Prize and a Chief of Navy Commendation in 1993 and being awarded the Conspicuous Service Medal in 1997. Steven achieved the highest noncommissioned rank of warrant officer in 2000 and was successful in transferring to the officer corps in 2005. He rapidly achieved success as an officer and later that year was promoted to the rank of lieutenant commander and given a senior position on board HMAS Darwin as the senior logistic officer.

In addition to his military service, Steven also contributes to our local community and is currently the President of the Naval Association Tuggerah Lakes Sub Section as well as a committee member of The Entrance Long Jetty RSL Sub Branch.

Steven ranks his appointment as Wyong Citizen of the Year as his finest achievement. Steven is a very, very modest man, and we are proud to have him in our community. Lieutenant Commander Reynolds has served our nation and the local Central Coast community, and it is an honour to thank and recognise him in the parliament today.

Rankin Electorate: Local Legends Awards

Dr CHALMERS (Rankin) (13:33): A few weeks ago, 50 of our most outstanding local people and groups were honoured at the first ever Local Legends Awards. The Local Legends Awards are a way of recognising those who make an outstanding contribution to our local area by giving up their time to help others. I am frequently amazed by the selfless acts which help make ours a community which looks out for each other and looks after each other and by people who enhance our quality of life by dedicating their skills, their enthusiasm and their energy in a diverse range of causes right around our electorate.
A huge number of nominations were received, all of them reflecting the outstanding spirit and devotion present in our local community. The 50 successful award winners, nominated by their colleagues, reflected the diversity of our electorate, with a wide range of ages, backgrounds, community groups and all kinds of tasks represented. The recipients' contributions were to things like breakfast clubs, sporting groups and welfare groups. They are people who devote their time to make sure that other people in our community do things just a little bit easier.

I want to thank the St Maximilian Kolbe parish at Marsden for allowing us to use the hall. I want to thank the four media outlets who covered the event: The Logan Reporter, the Albert and Logan News, SinghStation and the South City Bulletin magazine. I am proud to recognise our local legends, and I would like to congratulate them all again in this place.

Lindsay Electorate: St Nicholas of Myra Church

Ms SCOTT (Lindsay) (13:35): Long has St Nicholas of Myra church stood as a beacon of faith and hope for many who have made the Penrith region their home. For more than 175 years, the church has stood by our community through the good times and the bad. From the vantage point on the hill, St Nicholas has played a pivotal role in shaping much of our city and as a result has become a pivotal part of our region.

The foundation stone of the first St Nicholas of Myra church was laid on 9 December 1839. Unlike other places of worship that have closed down or moved, St Nicholas of Myra has survived through the ages. For more than 17½ decades, St Nic's has played the central character to the personal stories of so many local families as they celebrate and commemorate some of the most special moments in their lives. St Nicholas has truly forged a unique and special place in the heart of our city.

This was one of the first churches in the region, and I recognise the inspiring and integral contributions made by many. Like their patron saint, whom the church is named after, long have the parishioners, priests and volunteers been generous with the many gifts that they have bestowed on our region. I congratulate the congregation on the wonderful events they have run to commemorate this wonderful church.

Kosky, Hon. Lynne

Mr GILES (Scullin) (13:36): On 12 December last year, Williamstown Town Hall was full, filled with nearly a thousand people for the state funeral that honoured Lynne Kosky. All the Victorian Labor family came to pay tribute—as did many others too, including the parliamentary secretary representing the Prime Minister—to this remarkable and inspirational woman and to extend our condolences to all who loved Lynne. They loved her for what she did, this true daughter of Melbourne's west. As mayor; as the saviour, amongst a few others, of the Bulldogs football team; as the member for Altona; and as a reforming minister who, amongst many other achievements, probably did more to advance the cause of education policy reform in Victoria, and perhaps in Australia, than any state minister.

Lynne gave so much to the Labor cause, especially in relation to the representation of women. But more than what she did was who she was: as a mother, a partner, a friend and mentor for so many, including me and my wife Jill. She was a woman of many parts and many talents, who had a great life, a wonderful journey which gave so much to so many. I am
pleased to pay a small tribute to it in this place, and to say that my thoughts now are with Jim, Hana and Jack, and that I will always remember Lynne Kosky. Rest in peace.

**Page Electorate: Australia Day Honours**

**Mr Hogan** (Page) (13:38): I had the great pleasure to go to many Australia Day celebrations on Australia Day a few weeks ago. I would just like to mention some of the recipients from my community. OAM recipients included Stan Gilchrist, who is Adam's father; Edna Fuller; Barry Nash; Sister Anne Gallagher; and Bob Harbord. Patricia Crowe also won an emergency services award.

There were some wonderful recipients of Citizen of the Year Awards, including Robin Spruce and Rhonda O'Connell from the Richmond Valley area; Dr Austin Curtin from Lismore; Brian Hoffman won the Kyogle award; Greg Butcher the Clarence Valley award; and Mary O'Brien the Ballina award.

Many other winners in many other categories in the Richmond Valley Council area were Michael Pontefract for the Richmond Valley Council Volunteer of the Year award; Todd Johnson as Sportsperson of the Year; and 13-year-old Maddison Morrissey, a great tennis player, won the Young Sportsperson of the Year award.

In Lismore, Jacob Botha won the Young Citizen of the Year; Reverend Dorothy Harris-Gordon, the Aboriginal Citizen of the Year; Margaret Lord, services to the community; U3A, the community group award; Paul Leadbetter, senior sportsperson; Samantha McKenna, junior sportsperson; Lismore Storm under-18 team, sports team of the year; Lorraine Vass for sustainable environment; and Karen and Ian Bowles for arts and culture.

From Ballina, there were Rachel Hughes, Ian Duncan, Mike Rushby, Margaret Ryan, Wally Mulgrave, Robyn Mostyn, Karen Rantissi, the Ballina Seagulls, Geoff Jacobs, Josh Brown and Skullcandy Oz Grom Open.

**Lalor Electorate: Thomas Carr College Trade Training Centre**

**Ms Ryan** (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (13:39): Last Thursday I had the privilege of opening the Thomas Carr College Trade Training Centre. The $3.2 million facility is part of the Wyndham cluster. This cluster received funds of $9.42 million, resulting in four centres being built within the electorate: one at Thomas Carr College opened last week; one at Grange P-12 College; one at MacKillop Catholic Regional College; and one at Wyndham Central College.

I commend Thomas Carr College, and particularly principal Dr Andrew Watson and his team, for all their efforts in delivering this marvellous facility—from the submission writing, the planning, the scoping, to the build and the final fit-out.

The Trade Training Centres in Schools Program was designed to address skill shortages in traditional trades and, importantly, in emerging industries. It was designed to equip schools with the state-of-the-art, industry-standard facilities they need. As a former principal, I would add that time and time again I have seen, and research has borne out, that a student's pride in their learning environment leads to increased self-esteem, manifesting often in improved student outcomes. These centres go a long way towards building that self-esteem.
It is extremely disappointing, however, Deputy Speaker Scott, as you will be aware, that the Abbott government has cut the program, and in doing so is denying so many other schools and students such a wonderful opportunity to broaden their educational experience.

**Solomon Electorate: Citizenship Ceremony**

*Mrs GRIGGS (Solomon) (13:41):* I rise to speak about a citizenship ceremony I recently conducted in my electorate in conjunction with Australia Day events. Solomon continues to be a place of choice for new Australians with more than 200 new citizens in January alone. It is fast becoming a cultural melting pot, with residents originating from all corners of the globe, bringing cultural and economic benefits to our region.

On Saturday, 24 January, I welcomed 68 new Australian citizens at a special ceremony I held at the Essington School. Essington School students entertained the audiences and participated in the ceremony. The music was performed by Aiyrin Oliver and the national anthem was sung by year 8 student Marcia Dawson.

I would like to put on record a special thanks to school principal David Cannon and his assistant principal Jaya Srinivas for allowing me to host the ceremony but also for providing a fantastic morning tea.

Australia Day is a time for people to come together as a nation and reflect on what it means to be Australian. These citizens were very, very happy that they could wake up on Australia Day as Australians. Countries that they had come from originally included the Philippines, India, Pakistan, China, Sri Lanka, Fiji, France, Thailand, South Africa, Sudan, Nepal, Myanmar and the UK.

**Lawrence, Ms Amber**

*Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (13:42):* On behalf of our community, I congratulate Amber Lawrence, who recently won her first Golden Guitar award for female artist of the year at the Country Music Awards in Tamworth.

The ironic fact about this award is that Amber is not from the country. She grew up in Mascot, in our community, and spent her youth at Maroubra Beach. That childhood by the beach has heavily influenced her music and her songwriting.

One of the tracks on her award-winning album is the song *Lifesaver*. It is a tear-jerking ballad about her late father who, tragically, suffered a stroke at 40 years of age—a fit, boat-rowing lifesaver at the South Maroubra surf club who tragically suffered a stroke when Amber was eight years old. The song chronicles the family coming to terms with that tragedy, and how Amber's mother then became her father's lifesaver.

Amber is beloved by our community. She regularly plays at community events. She is an ambassador for the National Stroke Foundation and for the Special Olympics. She is a very big talent—one to watch in the future. Congratulations, Amber. Our community is very proud of you.

**Moore Electorate: Whitfords Volunteer Sea Rescue Group**

*Mr GOODENOUGH (Moore) (13:44):* I formally recognise the valuable, tradition to public safety made by the volunteers of the Whitfords Volunteer Sea Rescue Group Incorporated, based in my electorate. They provide a range of marine safety services along the northern suburbs coastline of metropolitan Perth.
Volunteers conduct search and rescue patrols, and provide a marine radio safety service 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The group also delivers marine education and training on boating and related subjects such as basic navigation, marine radio operation, and the recreational skippers' ticket competency course. Over many years, I have witnessed a significant number of distressed vessels being towed back into the safety of the marina by the recognisable Whitfords Volunteer Sea Rescue patrol boats. I make special mention of the service of Commander Mark Carruthers, Deputy Commanders Ken Blackie and Mike Walters, Secretary Angela Kellett, and long-serving veteran Roger Howell. On behalf of the boating public your collective service to our community is duly recognised by this parliament.

Closing the Gap

Ms CLAYDON (Newcastle) (13:45): It is very fitting that we begin each parliamentary year with the annual Prime Minister's report on Closing the Gap. It is a unique chance for this parliament to reflect on the challenges ahead and to recommit ourselves to Closing the Gap targets in the areas of health, life expectancy, education, employment and justice. It was an honour to attend the breakfast this morning where a number of colleagues from both Houses were present.

Today's report shows that there has been some progress in Closing the Gap in a number of clear key areas including employment, but there is some very sobering reading in other parts of that report. In particular, the fact that we are lagging behind in the reading and numeracy figures, which have stagnated despite government efforts to try and boost school attendance, is something that this House should absolutely reflect on. But perhaps even more so is the fact that it is abundantly clear that we cannot afford the Abbott government cuts into those key vital Indigenous services and programs. Our Indigenous communities are hurting and they need our support at this time.

Hasluck Electorate: Roads

Mr WYATT (Hasluck) (13:47): Every day I drive through my electorate of Hasluck, I drive through the Gateway WA Perth airport and freight access project. This impressive infrastructure project will improve roads in the electorates of Swan and Hasluck and provide better airport access for Perth. The Commonwealth funds $676 million of the billion-dollar project and the Western Australian government contributes the remaining $310 million.

The project will improve five main interchanges, widening the Tonkin Highway to six lanes and converting the Leach Highway into an expressway. The project involves over 600 local businesses and employs 1,300 people in construction. Its centrepiece will be a three-level interchange that is 13.9 metres high, as tall as a netball or basketball court is wide. When I visited the project to mark its halfway point on 29 January this year, I stood under part of the interchange in awe. This huge project is now over 60 per cent complete and could be finished ahead of schedule next year. It is also $45 million under budget. I fought for the use of that $45 million to upgrade a problem intersection in my electorate.

Thanks to the Gateway WA project, the Berkshire Road and Roe Highway intersection in Forrestfield will soon have an overpass to prevent the accidents that were troubling many of my constituents. I am proud that the Commonwealth can continue to deliver better roads for Western Australians and for the residents of Hasluck.
Hetherington, Mr Robert (Bob)

Ms MacTIERNAN (Perth) (13:48): Today I acknowledge the passing of a Labor doyen in Western Australia, Bob Hetherington, who died in peace 10 days ago at the grand old age of 92. Bob represented Labor in the legislative council for 12 years from 1977. At the time of his preselection, Bob had been a lecturer in politics in Western Australia for 10 years. He was a part of a group of energetic recruits into a modernising Western Australian Labor parliamentary team and his preselection was considered to be a great coup for Labor. I recall the excitement his preselection generated with my friends who had been his students. He had been such a powerful and inspiring educator of politics. He was appointed deputy leader of the opposition the year he entered the parliament.

Bob brought life experience as well as intellect to his roles in academia and politics. At 18, Bob enlisted in the AIF and served in New Guinea and Morotai. He rose to the rank of sergeant. He grasped the opportunity for returned servicemen to gain a university education and went on to have a distinguished academic career. Bob was well known for his advocacy for mental health and for the enlightened treatment of schizophrenia. Bob remained a Labor supporter, committed to all that was decent in public policy, until his last days.

To Bob's wife, Pen, his children and grandchildren, our deepest sympathy. Bob was truly a gentleman and a scholar, and I know I will miss him.

Employment

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (13:50): I want to talk to the 130,000 young Australians that leave school and cannot get a job, the 157,000 Australians who transition from youth allowance onto Newstart every year. For them, it does not matter how wealthy Australia is; they are completely dislocated from opportunity. We need to do better than we have.

I see in the gallery a number of people who work in industry, who get their hands dirty and who have been lucky enough to get a trade and have a career. But not everybody has that. Many, by virtue of where they live or by virtue of their family situation, mental illness, poverty or for whatever reason, have not been able to secure that start in life, and it is not good enough.

We started with Work for the Dole in the mid-90s, but work experience is what Australians need. Young people should not be dislocated and despondent and given no hope at all. They need to be put cheek by jowl next to real workers to be able to build their experience. Allowing work experience to exist for four weeks a year for a young person to give themselves their first chance to build a resume, first chance to build some confidence and first chance to be in the right place at the right time is key. We need to take those young Australians. It is not enough just to be on a transition of applying for jobs and having no hope. We need to give them real world, real life experience that has never been offered by the other side of politics. We will do that. The message from the coalition is simple: we will connect you with real work, give you experience and give you a start in the private sector where the opportunity to grow the economy lies.

Community Legal Centres

Ms BURKE (Chisholm) (13:51): I would respond to that, but I have got something far more important to talk about. I rise to condemn the government cuts to community legal centres.
Mr Laming: There is nothing more important than young people getting a job.

Ms BURKE: There is nothing more important than young people getting a job, but your government is actually condemning them to unemployment for life.

Domestic violence is the most common cause of homelessness in Australia amongst women and children. It is an issue which accounts for 40 per cent of police time and costs the economy $13.6 billion each year. Community legal centres are on the front line, supporting and fighting for victims of domestic violence. This is the moment in time to deal with domestic violence once and for all.

I want to pay tribute to the Victorian government, who are putting it at the forefront of their issues in this round in their first term of government. They are pulling together all the resources and working wholeheartedly to finally end this national disgrace. The $300 million federal cut to community legal services does exactly the opposite: it ensures that thousands of people in desperate need of help simply will not get it, leaving behind more victims, with fewer services.

Chisholm is home to two legal services, the Eastern Community Legal Centre and the Monash Oakleigh Legal Service. They do a great job but will struggle in the face of these disgraceful cuts. Domestic violence should already be a thing of the past. We should not still be talking about it. All I have left to ask is: how can the Prime Minister take from the most vulnerable and those who need it most? Where is justice in this society?

Reid Electorate: Chinese New Year

Mr LAUNDY (Reid) (13:53): Next week across the electorate of Reid we will be celebrating Chinese New Year at numerous festivals, parades and celebrations. This year we celebrate the Year of the Sheep—or of the goat, as some of my Chinese friends refer to it. The sheep is the eighth sign in the Chinese calendar, and, just as the number eight is particularly lucky, so is the sign of the sheep. People born in the Year of the Sheep are said to be tender, polite, clever, gentle, creative and compassionate. That sounds a lot like you, Deputy Speaker.

Chinese New Year is the most important time in Chinese culture. It is a time to celebrate the coming new year, reflect on the past year, and spend time with our family and friends. It is also a great time to remind ourselves of the incredible contribution that Chinese migrants have made to Australia over many generations. Migrants from China have enriched our communities and, through their hard work and commitment to education, the Chinese-Australian community has established businesses that are driving growth in our economy.

Of course, this year will be especially important for both Australia and China. The landmark China-Australia free trade agreement will unlock substantial new benefits for Australians for years to come. There is much to celebrate this year, and the Year of the Sheep promises to be a great one. I look forward to joining my community in celebrating the new year next week. From my family, to all Australians of Chinese background: I wish you wealth, health and prosperity—and, as they say, Kung Hei Fat Choy.

Hotham Electorate: Oakleigh Amateur Football Club

Ms O’NEIL (Hotham) (13:54): In Hotham we have some great community and sporting groups. One of these is the Oakleigh Amateur Football Club, better known locally as the Oakleigh Krushers. The Krushers were created by two local clubs merging in 1992: Oakleigh Sacred Heart football club and Emmanuel football club. This was no easy merger. We know
these clubs had a bit of fierce competition on the football field, but they were able to come together, and since 1992 this club has provided a means for thousands of local young people to play a great game of community footy.

I want to single out just three of the many amazing people involved in this terrific local club. Firstly, I want to acknowledge Barry Alexander, the club president. This year Barry celebrated 30 years as club president. He has dedicated his life to the club and embodies the true meaning of a community person. Barry's right-hand man is Oakleigh living legend Bruce 'Chooka' Garner. Chooka was born and bred in Oakleigh and has been grounds-manager, player and old-wise-head for the last 30 years. Finally, I acknowledge my good mate Pat Heverin: a committed volunteer, a great servant of the club, and always ready to shout the bar after a win—so I am told. These three work tirelessly to ensure young people in Oakleigh have a safe and happy environment in which to play the game they love. They are true living legends who ask for nothing in return.

I hear great things about the preseason and I hope to report back later in the year that the Krushers have a victory season in 2015.

**Banks Electorate: Hurstville Seniors Computer Club**

**Mr COLEMAN** (Banks) (13:56): I rise this afternoon to thank the Hurstville Seniors Computer Club for hosting me at their recent meeting.

The Hurstville Seniors Computer Club has been around since 1998—nearly 20 years. The role of the club is to encourage older people in our local community to learn important computer skills. Of course, with every day that passes, the importance of technology increases and increases. The club has over 300 members and it is run on a voluntary basis. People pay just $15 per year to attend the meetings and training sessions. It really makes a difference for older people in my community.

There are courses about how to use the internet, Excel, Microsoft Word and various other courses as well. The Club offers courses on things as diverse as video editing, web design and genealogy—websites like Ancestry.com. It was good to speak to members of the committee and I very much appreciated their hospitality. I particularly want to thank: President Pamela Samuels, Vice President Clyde Bevan and Treasurer Geoff Turton. Thank you for your time and I look forward to visiting you again very soon.

**Baker, Mrs Maisie, AO**

**Mr FEENEY** (Batman) (13:57): Today I rise to speak in recognition of the outstanding achievements of one of my electorate's most active and dedicated community members, Mrs Maisie Baker. On Australia Day this year, Maisie was posthumously awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for her outstanding work with the community, having sadly passed away four months before the announcement of the award.

Maisie is well known in Batman for her work with Relay for Life, the Regent Presbyterian Church, the Regent Uniting Church, the Anti-Cancer Council, the Tyler Street Primary School and the Pink Lady organisation. One of her lasting legacies is the establishment of a Junior Neighbourhood Watch program at Tyler Street Primary School in Preston. This program has since been taken up by Victoria Police as a model for other primary schools. This most recent accolade is in addition to other well deserved awards, including an Australia Day Award from Darebin City Council in 2009.
Our warmest congratulations on this most recent award go out to her family, as do our deepest condolences on her loss. Maisie's kind spirit and dedication to helping others will be truly missed.

Bennelong Electorate: North Epping Bowling and Community Club

Mr ALEXANDER (Bennelong) (13:59): I rise to inform the House that North Epping Bowling and Community Club in my electorate of Bennelong has recently been awarded $50,000 from the Abbott government to build new multipurpose sports facilities. This was a commitment I took to the last election; to provide local residents with greater access to improved sporting facilities, to encourage all ages towards healthier lifestyles.

The funding is part of the community development grant program which has already provided Bennelong with over $1.2 million towards local community initiatives. This includes an upgrade to the facilities at Eastwood-Ryde Netball Association and the funding of the previous Labor government's failed promise to build the Ryde River Walk. The need to develop the North Epping Bowling and Community Club stems from the great popularity and success of the local netball teams, who have outgrown their current facilities. This is a testament to all the hard work and dedication of the hundreds of volunteers, parents and participants to make this little corner of Bennelong such a special place.

The SPEAKER: In accordance with standing order 43, the time for members' statements has concluded.

CONDOLENCES

Uren, Hon. Thomas, AC

Debate resumed on the motion:

That the House record its deep regret at the death, on 26 January 2015, of the Honourable Thomas Uren AC, a former Minister and Member of this House for the Division of Reid from 1958 to 1990, place on record its appreciation of his long and meritorious public service, and tender its profound sympathy to his family in their bereavement.

The SPEAKER (14:00): The question is that the motion moved by the honourable Prime Minister be agreed to. I ask all honourable members to signify their approval by rising in their places.

Question agreed to, honourable members standing in their places.

The SPEAKER: I thank the House.

Enderby, Hon. Keppel Earl, QC

Report from Federation Chamber

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

Debate resumed on the motion:

That the House record its deep regret at the death on 7 January 2015 of the Honourable Keppel Earl Enderby, a former Minister and Member of this House for the Division of Australian Capital Territory and Canberra from 1970 to 1975, place on record its appreciation of his long and meritorious public service, and tender its profound sympathy to his family in their bereavement.
The SPEAKER (14:01): The question is that the motion moved by the honourable Prime Minister be agreed to. As a mark of respect I ask all present to signify their approval by rising in their places.

Question agreed to, honourable members standing in their places.

The SPEAKER: I thank the House.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Indigenous Affairs

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:02): My question is to the Prime Minister. The rate of incarceration of Indigenous Australians has almost doubled in the last decade. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up just over three per cent of our population yet they make up over 25 per cent of our prison population. This is shameful. Will the Prime Minister commit to a new justice target within the Closing the Gap framework?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:02): I appreciate this question from the Leader of the Opposition. I understand his quite appropriate concerns about this particular issue. Yes, the rate of incarceration of Indigenous Australians is horribly high—vastly disproportionate to their ratio in the population. We do need to get it down. I think the best way to get it down is to get the fundamentals right and the fundamentals are getting kids to school, adults to work and communities safe.

I do want to see in all significant Indigenous communities—in all communities with a significant law and order problem—a resident police presence. Over the years there has not been a sufficiently strong resident police presence in so many of these remote Indigenous communities. For instance, in the last few years of the Howard government I was the minister with whole-of-government responsibility for the APY Lands in South Australia, an area about the size of Scotland with about 3,000 people, five significant communities and just eight resident police. The police lived at a place that had virtually no local people living there—Umuwa. I think you would remember it, shadow minister. It was called the Canberra of the lands. It was an administrative centre. It was not a place where anyone lived. I think all but two of the resident police lived there. By contrast, Ceduna, a town of about 3,000 people, had 27 resident police.

This is a very serious problem. It has been somewhat addressed in the days since then. The Northern Territory intervention was part of somewhat addressing this. There are other places like Aurukun in Cape York with about 1,200 people. When I was there last there were 12 resident police, so I think that is starting to approach the kinds of ratios you would expect.

I do take the Leader of the Opposition's question seriously. I think it is important to reduce incarceration, but the best way to reduce incarceration is to reduce crime. That is the best way to reduce incarceration—to reduce crime. We do that by having proper policing in these places. The other thing we should be looking at is the healthy wealthy card, which is an important part of the Forrest review, because if we can make this work it will ensure that people are spending their money on the kinds of things that will help them rather than the kinds of things that will hurt them.
National Security

Mr LAUNDY (Reid) (14:05): My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister update the House on the counter-terrorism operation in Sydney yesterday and the government's efforts to keep the community safe in my electorate of Reid and right around Australia?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:06): I am grateful for that question from the member for Reid. I appreciate his concerns. I appreciate the concerns of all members of this House to keep our community safe. I regret to say that this country has already had two brushes with terrorism: there was the attack on police officers in Victoria in September and then we had the terrorist incident in Martin Place in December. We could easily have had a third but for strong action by New South Wales Police and the joint counter-terrorist team yesterday.

Yesterday two people were arrested and charged for acts in preparation of a terrorist offence. Police found a large ISIL or Daesh flag, a machete, a hunting knife and a video recording of one suspect kneeling in front of the ISIL flag with the two knives whilst making a statement in Arabic. Police acted because they assessed that a terrorist attack was imminent. This was an imminent attack in Australia inspired by the ISIL or Daesh death cult.

It is absolutely imperative that we support our police and security agencies, and I thank them. I am sure that every member of the House would wish to thank them for their constant vigilance, their commitment and their professionalism, as demonstrated yet again just in these last 24 hours. This is a serious problem, and I fear it will get worse before it gets better. As we have seen again and again in recent times, the death cult is reaching out all around the world, including here in Australia, and, regrettably, there are people in this country who are susceptible to these incitements to extremism and even terrorism.

We know that some 90 Australians are currently fighting with the death cult in Syria and Iraq, and we think that about 20 Australians have been killed. About 20, we believe, have returned to Australia, and about 140 are actively supporting the death cult here onshore. Some 65 passports have been cancelled in the last year alone. The threat is real, but the government will act with greater funding for our agencies and with appropriate laws that will keep our country and our citizens as safe as they can humanly be.

Defence Procurement

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:09): Did the Prime Minister promise Senator Edwards on the weekend that there would be 'a full and open tender' to build Australia's future submarines? And, if the Prime Minister did not promise Senator Edwards 'a full and open tender', what precisely did the Prime Minister promise to obtain his vote?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:09): I said that there would be a competitive evaluation process. That is precisely the process that members opposite put in place for major defence procurement exercises themselves—a competitive evaluation process. It really does come a bit rich for this opposition to ask questions about the submarine procurement process when they procrastinated for fully six years. For six years they sat on their hands while the defence of Australia suffered; that is what they did. We all know that they cut billions and billions of dollars out of defence procurement.
Mr Dreyfus: Not true.

The SPEAKER: The member for Isaacs will desist!

Mr ABBOTT: We all know that on their watch not a single naval shipbuilding order was placed—not one, not one was placed under the members opposite. They sent the double hulling of HMAS Success to Singapore. They sent the icebreaker tender overseas. They bought a new amphibious ship from the Royal Navy. These are people who dumped on defence jobs throughout the six years that they were in power. Defence industry employment dropped by 10 per cent when the members opposite were in power.

What do they want now? They want an open tender. They do not understand the difference between an open tender and a competitive evaluation process. Do you know about an open tender? Anyone can compete. What the Leader of the Opposition wants is for anyone to be able to compete to provide Australia’s next generation of submarines. He might want the Russians to compete—the Putin class subs. That is what we will get from the Leader of the Opposition. First of all, he attacks the Japanese in some bout of antediluvian xenophobia and says that we cannot possibly have Japanese involvement in the submarine contract because of what happened in Sydney Harbour. Now he says you have got to have an open tender. We could have Kim Jong-il class submarines or Vladimir Putin submarines. You cannot trust the members opposite with the defence of this country, but you can trust this government.

National Security

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (14:13): My question is to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Will the minister update the House on the work the government is doing with our friends and allies to combat the terrorist threat?

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin—Minister for Foreign Affairs) (14:13): The counter-terrorism raids in Sydney this morning remind us of the very real threat of terrorism to Australians here and overseas. It is a global threat and it demands a global response. I can confirm to the member for Hughes, and indeed to this House, that Australia is taking a lead role internationally to combat the terrorist threat, and we are working to strengthen our counter-terrorism cooperation with our friends, allies and partners. I can confirm that the list of those who are in pursuit of this task is growing.

Twenty Australian government agencies are working to improve the capacity of other countries in our region, including Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines, to combat terrorism in areas such as law enforcement, criminal justice, border and transport security and counter-terrorism financing. In the Middle East, along with the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and others, we are supporting international efforts to combat Daesh, this vile terrorist organisation, and we are building up our counter-terrorism networks to stem the flow of foreign fighters, including from Australia to Iraq and Syria.

During my recent visit to the United Arab Emirates, Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah and I discussed ways to strengthen our cooperation with countries of the Middle East to combat Daesh. The UAE and Jordan are conducting air strikes against Daesh targets in Syria. Australia, as part of international coalition, has taken part in hundreds of air strikes against Daesh targets to disrupt Daesh in Iraq. We have over 600 personnel in the Middle East. This is a substantial contribution to this global effort to combat terrorism. Alarmingly, we have indications that Daesh is seeking to spread its evil tentacles to Afghanistan, where it is
actively seeking to recruit foreign fighters to its cause. I was briefed on this potentially evil connection during my visit to Afghanistan on Australia Day. I confirmed to President Ghani and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Australia's ongoing commitment to combating the terrorist threat in Afghanistan and to building on the security gains in that country since 2001. We will continue to work closely with the US and the UK to strengthen cooperation, particularly through the Five Eyes intelligence arrangement. This was a key focus of last week's Australian-UK ministerial meeting in Sydney. We are also increasing the exchange of information, experiences and intelligence on foreign fighters throughout our region, throughout the Middle East and in Europe.

This government is utterly committed to taking a lead role in international efforts to combat terrorism so that we can keep our country and our people safe.

**Defence Procurement**

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:16): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to comments made by Senator Edwards about Australian workers building our future submarines. He said, 'Five o'clock Friday they were precluded; nine o'clock Monday they were included.' Yet the finance minister has said, 'There is actually no change in policy.' Prime Minister, who is correct? When will the chaos and incompetence stop and when does this good government you promised actually start?

The SPEAKER: The last part of the question is sounding remarkably like debate, but I call the honourable the Prime Minister.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:17): As is absolutely crystal clear, there will be a competitive evaluation process, exactly the same kind of process that governments of both persuasions have put in place for all major defence procurement projects. There will be a competitive evaluation process and the Australian Submarine Corporation is welcome to be a part of it.

I am very happy to get questions from the Leader of the Opposition about this, because let's look at the record of the Labor Party. The Labor Party in government did not build HMAS Choules here in Australia. It went out and bought it from the Royal Navy. It did not build icebreakers in Australia; they are being built in Europe. It did not repair HMAS Success here in Australia. It sent it to Singapore to be double hulled. Immediately following the 2009 white paper, the Labor Party in government cut or deferred $16 billion from Australia's defence budget. Decisions made by members opposite when they were in government led to 119 defence projects being delayed, 43 defence projects being reduced and eight projects cancelled, risking critical capability gaps.

If members opposite were serious about submarines, why did they sit on their hands for six years? They sat on their hands for six years while the defence of Australia suffered. That is what they did. I want to make it absolutely crystal clear to the Australian people: the defence of this country is safe in the hands of this government.

**Health Care**

Mr WILKIE (Denison) (14:19): My question is to the Prime Minister. Prime Minister, the government claims the GP co-payment is necessary to rein in Medicare. However, GP services are a small fraction of Medicare costs and just one-fifth the size of the total hospital bill. The reality is that GPs keep down the cost of other health care, especially ER
departments. Prime Minister, why would you target GPs when they are in fact saving money for taxpayers and when the Medicare blow-out lies elsewhere?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:19): I am happy to take the question from the member for Denison and to agree with him that in fact good general practice is an absolutely vital part of our healthcare system. I was the health minister for four years and I did everything I could to improve our health system, including the operation of general practice. There were bulk-billing incentive payments put in and there were GP care plans established and expanded under my stewardship of that portfolio. I appreciate, in a way that I suspect not all health ministers have, that GPs are not the gatekeepers to the system. They are certainly not just gatekeepers to the health system. They are at the heart of holistic patient care. Good general practice is at the absolute heart of holistic patient care.

I absolutely take the point that the member for Denison makes that general practice is but a part of our Medicare system. I might also make the point that the PBS is perhaps a fifth of our healthcare spend. There are co-payments in the PBS; there always have been, and those co-payments are supported by all sides of this House, I presume. But I want to conclude the answer by reminding the member for Denison of the fundamental principles that this government is pursuing—

Mr Wilkie: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order on relevance. The question is: why are we targeting GPs?

The SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat. There is no point of order.

Mr ABBOTT: Just as I was the best friend of Medicare as health minister, I am determined to be the best friend of Medicare as Prime Minister. All of our changes in health are designed (a) to protect the vulnerable, (b) to ensure that our health system is strengthened for the long term and (c) to guarantee that our health services get better and better over time. That is why the health minister is now engaged in very extensive consultations and dialogue with a whole range of medical professionals, and I can assure the member and the House that the government will not be taking further proposals forward in this area without the backing of the medical profession.

Foreign Investment

Mr RAMSEY (Grey) (14:23): My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer update the House on how we are ensuring foreign investment in agriculture is in Australia’s national interest, and how does responsible foreign investment help boost growth and jobs?

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney—The Treasurer) (14:23): I thank the member for Grey for his question. The member for Grey’s electorate, in the north of South Australia, is over 900,000 square kilometres, and 8,000 people in his electorate work in the agricultural sector. Like many people on this side of the House, he understands agriculture, and like many people on this side of the House he has farming experience.

Mr Perrett: How is your hobby farm going, Joe?

The SPEAKER: The member for Moreton!

Mr HOCKEY: That experience is hugely important—it is well understood on this side of the House that you need foreign investment, you need capital investment, to help drive better outcomes and greater productivity right across the economy but in particular in agriculture. It
is vitally important that we have integrity, and are seen to have integrity, in our foreign investment regime. Since 2012 the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister for Agriculture and a range of other colleagues have been consulting widely with the community about how we can continue to build confidence in the foreign investment regime particularly in relation to agriculture.

Mr Perrett: Don't forget Malcolm.

The SPEAKER: The member for Moreton is warned.

Mr HOCKEY: Today the Prime Minister has announced that from 1 March this year the screening threshold for foreign investment in agricultural land will be cut from $252 million to $15 million. That cut in the threshold to $15 million is a cumulative total, so if a foreign investor currently holds $13 million of agricultural land and they make an acquisition that extends beyond $15 million, it is all triggered even though it might be less than the $15 million for a single purchase. The reason we are doing this is that it is in the national interest to better understand the levels of foreign investment in agricultural land. There is more work to be done. Following the excellent work by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer, as chair of the House of Representatives committee, we will be saying more about the overall foreign investment regime and in particular in relation to residential land and residential purchases in Australia. We will also be saying more about how we can improve the transparency of ownership of land and in particular residential land in Australia. So from 1 March the new regime begins, and I say emphatically that this is the first word and not the last word on the integrity of the foreign investment regime.

Defence Procurement

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:26): My question is to the Prime Minister. Prime Minister, didn't the government promise before the election to build Australia's future submarines in Adelaide? Will they be built there?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:26): Where they are built depends upon the results of the competitive evaluation process. But I will tell you what—they will be built. If members opposite were still in government they would still be sitting on their hands, the procrastination would be continuing, and there would be a massive submarine capability gap at the end of the next decade.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Sydney has asked her question and will desist, as will the member for McMahon.

Mr ABBOTT: What we said pre-election was absolutely crystal clear—

Ms Rishworth: Yes, you would build 12 submarines in Adelaide.

The SPEAKER: The member for Kingston is warned.

Mr ABBOTT: What we said was that the Australian work on the new submarines would centre on the South Australian shipyards. There will be more subs, because we take the defence of Australia seriously. There will be more subs because the defence of Australia matters to people on this side of the parliament, and more subs means more jobs in South Australia.
Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It is difficult for the Prime Minister to be relevant without saying the word 'Adelaide'.

The SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat.

Infrastructure

Mr BUCHHOLZ (Wright—Government Whip) (14:28): My question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development. Will the minister update the House on the infrastructure projects that this government is funding and building?

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (14:28): I thank the honourable member for Wright for his question. The facts clearly are that this government's $50 billion infrastructure program is already providing a major boost to our Australian economy. It is providing jobs and building the infrastructure needed for the 21st century.

Mr Albanese interjecting—

The SPEAKER: I was patient with the member for Grayndler yesterday but I will not be today.

Mr Albanese interjecting—

The SPEAKER: You can leave right now under 94(a).

Mr TRUSS: Twenty-two major new projects were commenced in 2014, and another 47 will be getting underway this year. I know members opposite like to take credit for the projects that have commenced under this government and will be commencing in the year ahead—

Dr Chalmers interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Rankin is warned.

Mr Albanese interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Grayndler, I said, may leave under 94(a)—now.

The member for Grayndler then left the chamber.

Mr TRUSS: Some of them were being funded from the mythical revenue from the mining tax—

Mr Burke: I rise on a point of order, Madam Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Deputy Prime Minister will resume his seat. The Manager of Opposition Business on a point of order.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, that is now 300 times you have evicted members—

The SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat. You were called for a point of order and abused it. You will resume your seat. Resume your seat!

Mr TRUSS: Labor are seeking to take credit for projects that they had not funded, they had not built and, in some cases, they had not even talked about. The coalition is funding and delivering on its commitments in relation to infrastructure: $2.9 billion for the Western Sydney roads package, including Bringelly Road, which I spoke about yesterday—no commitment from Labor to Western Sydney roads—and almost $2 billion for the
Toowoomba range crossing, a project of great interest to the member for Wright. Labor have never supported that project. Indeed, they have been a constant critic of it. What about the $925 million for the Perth Freight Link? Again, Labor are critics of the project. They have not funded it and it is not on their list. What about the Outback Way or the Great Ocean Road, projects to which we have committed where Labor is lost in action? And the Pacific Highway—Labor in government walked away from the 2016 target completion date, then demanded that New South Wales pay 50 per cent of the cost, when the traditional arrangements were 80-20. The facts are: this government has restored the 80-20 funding mix, and we have got it back on track—$3 billion committed, much more than Labor had ever offered. And what about, for that matter, the Bruce Highway—an $8.5 billion plan with the former Queensland government? Labor offered only $4.1 billion. There are more than 30 projects that we will be building on the Bruce Highway that Labor never even thought of. What about, for that matter, WestConnex? Yes, they said they would build WestConnex, so long as there was no toll—and they would build Gateway North so long as there was a toll! The reality is: this government has delivered, where Labor— (Time expired)

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER (14:32): I wish to advise that we have with us in the gallery today the Heywire Regional Youth Summit. These are 40 young leaders from regional Australia, and we make them most welcome.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Defence Procurement

Mr BUTLER (Port Adelaide) (14:32): My question is to the Prime Minister. Liberal Senator Sean Edwards said, in relation to the Future Submarine Project:

I'm very pleased with the decision of the Prime Minister … it now commits the government to a full and open tender …

Does the Prime Minister agree with the expletive-filled assessment from his junior infrastructure minister—reported in today's West Australian—that Senator Edwards was 'lying and deliberately misrepresenting the PM's position'?

Mr Champion: Trouble in paradise!

The SPEAKER: Unless the member for Wakefield is anxious to go to paradise, he will desist.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: We will have some silence now, thank you.

Mr Husic: There are some images that can't be unseen!

The SPEAKER: We will have some silence. The Prime Minister will resume his seat.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: It does sound like paradise lost.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:33): I am sure the member is interested in all the defence work that is being done in South Australia. There is $1 billion worth of defence procurement and sustainment work being undertaken in South Australia.
Mr Butler interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member has asked his question and will desist.

Mr ABBOTT: That includes 44 separate acquisition projects in South Australia, such as the work on the Air Warfare Destroyer Program, the support and upgrade of the Royal Australian Air Force's P3 Orion aircraft fleet—

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Mr ABBOTT: Don't you want the answer?

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister will resume his seat. The Manager of Opposition Business on a point of order?

Mr Burke: Direct relevance, Madam Speaker. It is a long way away.

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister has the call and will pay attention to the question.

Mr ABBOTT: I was asked about defence in South Australia, and that is exactly what I am talking about. The government will spend $34 million in South Australia on the Future Submarine program, building our competencies and knowledge base in cooperation with industry. South Australia is also home to 58 separate sustainment programs, including the sustainment of the Collins class submarine and the Jindalee over-the-horizon radar network. So there is $1 billion worth of defence procurement going on in South Australia right now and, on that, the member for Mayo and Senator Edwards are absolutely in agreement. They love it. They both love it, as they should. But I tell you what we are not going to do. We will have a competitive overvaluation process, but I tell you what: we will not go to open tender, because only Labor wants to see Australian submarines possibly built in Russia or North Korea.

Foreign Investment

Mr HOGAN (Page) (14:35): My question is to the Minister for Agriculture. Will the minister update the House on how the government is better monitoring foreign investment in Australian agriculture?

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr Bowen: This'll be a good one!

The SPEAKER: We will have some silence for the answer, particularly from the member for McMahon.

Mr JOYCE (New England—Minister for Agriculture) (14:36): I thank the honourable member for his question, because it is vitally important, being someone who actually owns a property, to understand how we want to make sure that we have got better oversight on the purchase of our most precious asset, which is the land we stand on. This nation is defined by the land we stand on. It is precious to the Indigenous people, it is precious to everybody else and we want to have proper controls and a proper understanding of exactly who owns that asset and where that asset is held. If we run out of gold, we can always dig deeper to find better and find more, but there is no more land. In fact, the stock of land throughout the globe is actually getting less. So it is definitely the most precious asset—because it is what we feed ourselves with.
Of course, it is not very important to those opposite, because when we went to the Australian people it was made absolutely abundantly clear to us that $240 million—now $252 million—was vastly too high. The idea that someone, on one day, could go to the north of a town and buy a place for $250 million, come back the next day and buy more land to the south for $250 million, come back the next day and buy something to the west for $250 million and then, on the next day—the final day—buy more land for $250 million and never be triggered to go to the Foreign Investment Review Board was an absolute absurdity. It was as relevant to the people of the western suburbs as it was to the people of the Western District.

I will tell you who it was not relevant to—that is the Australian Labor Party. Senator Wong and the shadow minister for agriculture said that they unilaterally want to move it to $1 billion. What that would mean, at $500 an acre, would be that you would have to buy a property in excess of three times the size of the ACT before it would trigger an investigation by the Foreign Investment Review Board.

This is a policy that you stand by right now, and this is a policy that the Australian people are hearing loud and clear. The only way you feel you are going to pay off your debt is to sell the place—sell the joint. That is exactly how it is going to work under the Labor Party. You have no respect for the views of the Australian people.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

The SPEAKER: Has the minister completed his answer?

Mr JOYCE: No.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, could you ask the minister, for the remainder of his answer, to address his remarks through the chair.

The SPEAKER: The minister has the call and will so address his remarks.

Mr JOYCE: We have a policy debate, and that is something that rarely happens here. On the other side the Australian Labor Party support moving the limit to $1 billion. The Australian people have to understand that if you vote for them they want to move the limit to $1 billion—one thousand million dollars. On this side the limit is $15 million. There is a policy debate. There is something we can discuss on 2GB or on whatever talkback radio station you want to go on.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER (14:39): I advise the House that we have with us in the Speaker’s gallery the German parliamentary Committee for Economic Affairs and Energy, led by its chairman, Dr Peter Ramsauer MP. Also with him is Ambassador His Excellency Dr Christoph Muller from the Federal Republic of Germany. We make you all most welcome.

Honourable members: Hear, hear.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Defence Procurement

Mr FEENEY (Batman) (14:40): Can the Prime Minister please advise the House as to whether he, or anyone acting on his behalf, has entered into an agreement with Prime Minister Abe and/or the government of Japan concerning the Future Submarine Project. If so, what is the nature of such an agreement?
Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:40): Of course we are exploring the potential for defence cooperation with Japan. Of course we are exploring the potential for defence cooperation with Japan. Is this another outbreak of xenophobia amongst members opposite? Is this the latest example of the kind of ranting we saw from the Leader of the Opposition at the ASC shipyard a few months ago?

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence on my left. The member for Lingiari and the member for Isaacs will desist.

Mr ABBOTT: Of course we are looking at defence cooperation with Japan. And, yes, we have agreements for defence cooperation with Japan. We openly engaged in those when I was in Japan in about June of last year.

Mr Snowdon interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Lingiari will desist immediately.

Mr ABBOTT: So we are certainly talking to the Japanese about a whole range of defence cooperation—a whole range of defence procurement. But we are not talking just to the Japanese. We are talking to the French. We are talking to the Germans. And we are talking to the Australian Submarine Corporation. That is what sensible governments do.

Members opposite sat on their hands for six years. They sat on their hands for six years. They were just paralysed. So what is happening here is that, yet again, this government is fixing up another bit of Labor chaos. That is what we are doing. More Labor chaos is being fixed up by us.

I will just make the fundamental principles clear. We want the best possible subs for the best possible price. We want the world's best conventional submarines. Who builds them and where they are built will depend upon a competitive evaluation process. That is as it should be. That is what an adult government does. What we have, I am afraid, in this parliament today, is an utterly unprincipled and utterly unscrupulous opposition. They were incompetent in government and now they are determined to be wreckers in opposition. Frankly, this kind of behaviour is just shameful.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence—and that includes the member for Isaacs and the member for Parramatta.

Education: Remote Schools

Ms PRICE (Durack) (14:43): My question is to the Minister for Education and Training. Will the minister update the House on the government's program to expand direct and explicit instruction in 34 remote schools in Western Australia and the Northern Territory?

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education and Training) (14:43): I can tell the member for Durack that, in more good news from the coalition government, we are moving decisively to try and address the gap in Indigenous education through some of the methods that we are employing since being elected.

We believe—and I am sure that this would be a bipartisan view—that we have to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians around education. Therefore, today is a good day to talk about some of the measures the government has implemented.
I can tell you that we have put $900 million, over the next four years, into the extra Indigenous loading for Indigenous students as part of the new school funding model. I personally reversed the cut that Labor made to the boarding schools for Indigenous students, putting $6.8 million back into support Indigenous students in Australian boarding schools. The member for Solomon played a very large part in bringing that about.

Today I can announce that 300 teachers—

Mr Snowdon interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Lingiari will desist or leave!

Mr PYNE: He took the money out, Madam Speaker, so he is a bit embarrassed that we put it back in!

Today I can announce that 300 teachers have been trained intensively in explicit and direct instruction as part of the $22 million-program that the government announced last year and that we implemented as part of last year’s budget to expand explicit and direct instruction, back-to-basics teaching in very remote and remote schools—34 across Western Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory.

This is great news. It means that the transformative program run by Noel Pearson’s Cape York council for the last few years—the Good to Great Schools program—will get a much wider airing across rural, remote and very remote schools. It is a trial program—it is a pilot—because I see 34 schools as the beginning of that program. I would like to see that expanded further so that all students who need access to explicit and direct instruction get it.

The transformative impact of being able to address education disadvantage must be known to everyone in this House. Getting students to school and keeping them there is going to happen much more easily if, when they are there, they are having a good experience—they are learning. And explicit and direct instruction has proved in Cape York that it does transform the lives and the attitudes of young Indigenous students. It makes them want to go to school and it makes them want to learn. And if we can address education, and if we can address jobs and the rule of law in Indigenous communities, we will go a long way to closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Budget

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (14:46): My question is to the Prime Minister. This morning the Treasurer said that the independent pre-election economic forecast was wrong. But in June, the Minister for Social Services—a person who has an interest in such matters—said, and I quote:

… as we know, the PEFO is where the officials tell the truth about what the budget really is …

Prime Minister: who is right? The Treasurer? The wannabe Treasurer? Or should we check with the member for Wentworth?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:47): Well, Madam Speaker, I can tell you who is always wrong, and that is the members opposite.

Every single budget prediction was always wrong! They said the right thing: they said that we needed a stronger budget for a stronger economy. They said a budget surplus was important. But they never, ever delivered. They thought the budget surplus was so important that they claimed actually to have delivered one! The Leader of the Opposition himself was
constantly bombarding his own electorate with claims that a budget surplus had already been achieved.

Let's look at what members opposite said before the election and what actually happened. They said as we were going into the election that the budget deficit for 2013-14 would be $18 billion. Well, it turned out not to be $18 billion but $48 billion, a budget black hole of unparalleled proportions that they created, that they knew about and that they should have been up-front and honest about. They were fundamentally dishonest before the election. And no wonder that this government has had to take very strong action—to bring the budget under control.

We know what this Leader of the Opposition is against. He is against budget reform and he is against any savings whatsoever—even savings that he supported in government. He supported the savings in government and he banked them, but he failed to legislate them and then he opposes them in opposition! That is the kind of fraudulence that we get from the Leader of the Opposition.

This Leader of the Opposition is against anything that might be unpopular. He is even against a South Australian Labor government studying nuclear energy. So far this Leader of the Opposition's only contribution to public policy is to run around the country screaming, 'That's unfair!' What is unfair is the fact that this Leader of the Opposition helped to create a budget disaster. They booby-trapped the budget in government and now they are sabotaging the task of budget repair. Well, the Australian people are awake to this guy.

Mr Dreyfus: They're awake to you!

The SPEAKER: The member for Isaacs will desist!

Mr ABBOTT: The Australian people understand: Shorten by name, short on trust, short on credibility and short on any sense of budget responsibility.

Indigenous Employment

Mr WILSON (O'Connor) (14:50): My question is to the Assistant Minister for Employment. Will the minister update the House on how the government's new employment services system will improve employment outcomes for Indigenous job seekers?

Mr HARTSUYKER (Cowper—Deputy Leader of the House and Assistant Minister for Employment) (14:50): I thank the member for his question. Might I say that employment is one of the keys to closing the gap and creating a brighter future for Indigenous Australians.

The Prime Minister's Closing the gap report makes it clear that much more work is needed to close the gap on Indigenous employment. The majority of Indigenous job seekers live in regional and metropolitan Australia and are supported by the government's employment services system. Some nine per cent of the current employment services case load—or about 74,000 job seekers—identify as Indigenous, and if we are to close the gap it is vital that these job seekers get the support they need to get and keep a job. To provide this support, the government has included specific reform to boost Indigenous employment outcomes in the new employment services system that will start on 1 July this year.

I have made some significant improvements in the system to address this concern. For the first time there will be targets for Indigenous employment such that employment service providers will not be able to pay lip service to the important task of getting more Indigenous
job seekers into work. The system will be changed to provide more incentive to deliver results, and the important outcome that we want is to get more Indigenous job seekers off welfare and into work.

I will be holding employment service providers accountable through the star-rating system to ensure they are meeting their obligation to get appropriate numbers of Indigenous job seekers into work—to ensure that they are meeting their Indigenous employment targets. To support them in their work, we are providing subsidies for employers to take on more Indigenous Australians and offer those Australians the opportunity to work. I am pleased to note that many companies have recently announced that they are taking on more Indigenous Australians—companies such as QANTAS, Westpac and Leighton—giving some of our first Australians a leg-up into the workforce, giving them the opportunities that employment would bring. I would certainly be encouraging all Australian employers to consider taking on an Indigenous job seeker to give them the benefits of work and to enable them to enjoy the opportunities that work can bring.

Treasurer

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (14:53): My question is to the Prime Minister. Last night the Treasurer referred to the 'Labor controlled Senate' and said of the Labor Party, 'They have the biggest block of votes in the Senate.' Prime Minister, given Labor has 25 seats in the Senate, while the coalition has 33, does the Prime Minister have confidence in a Treasurer who cannot count?

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence on my right! There will also be silence on my left!

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:53): The Labor Party and their Greens coalition partners are the largest block in the Senate, by far. I am very pleased to say that last night the Senate did finally pass a measure that members opposite embraced while in government. They banked it, but they did not legislate it. Then they opposed it when we came into government. They opposed it tooth and nail. They opposed it up hill and down dale, but, as a sign of the careful, painstaking, courteous and collegial approach that this government takes with the Senate, we got it through last night.

I am pleased to say that there were some 400 budget measures last year. Well over 300 have been implemented. As of yesterday, there were some $16 billion worth of budget improvements to the bottom line. I am pleased that that has now been supplemented by $1.3 billion because, while members opposite do nothing but obstruct, nothing but complain, nothing but wreck, there is at least some sense of responsibility on the crossbench, and we are always prepared to work with responsible people in the Senate.

Mr Bowen: I seek leave to table the composition of the Senate. It even has a pie chart to make it easier for the Treasurer.

The SPEAKER: No. The member will resume his seat.

Health Care

Mr TEHAN (Wannon) (14:56): My question is to the Minister for Health. Would the minister please explain what the government is doing to improve cancer services in my electorate of Wannon?
Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (14:56): May I thank my friend the member for Wannon for his question. I know that cancer treatment is a strong focus for him. He is co-chair of Parliamentarians Supporting Cancer Causes, so he joins all members and senators, across parties, in wanting to see better outcomes, better screening, better diagnoses, better treatment and better medicines for cancer, which is the major cause of illness in Australia. As we all know—because everyone has been touched by someone's cancer story and cancer journey—cancer has a significant impact on individuals, families and the health system.

The good news is that our survival rates are amongst the best in the world, but, as the member for Wannon would be acutely aware, mortality rates for all types of cancer combined are significantly higher in rural, remote and very remote areas of Australia—much more so than in our major cities. Every regional member of parliament is determined to address this. Women living in remote and very remote areas of Australia have over three times the mortality rate of cervical cancer. There is 1.3 times the rate of lung cancer and breast cancer for people in rural Australia compared with our major cities. In the period 2006 to 2010, five-year survival from all cancers combined was higher in major cities than regional areas. So, the bad news is: the further you live from a metropolitan city, the less likely you are to reach a five-year survival target if you have a cancer diagnosis.

The member for Wannon is absolutely committed to this cause. The coalition committed $10 million during the election campaign to fund a vital piece of health infrastructure in his electorate. He lobbied hard to secure Commonwealth funding for Peter's Project, a fully integrated, state-of-the-art cancer centre in Warrnambool, right there in rural Australia, where it counts. This is a perfect example of the coalition's targeted spending on frontline health services—something we are absolutely committed to. It is fantastic to see positive projects like this that will make a real difference to the lives of country people. Amongst other things, the facility will provide two radiotherapy bunkers, a CT simulator, a physics laboratory, a wellness centre, therapy rooms, oncology consulting suites, a clinical trials office and spaces for treatment—real frontline services that will have a real impact on the lives of those within the member's electorate and the surrounding areas of rural Victoria who have been diagnosed with cancer. I commend the member for Wannon for his excellent advocacy.

Budget

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:59): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to an interview that the Treasurer conducted on radio this morning. When he was asked why he has gone from a rooster to a feather duster in a very short time, the Treasurer replied, 'That's a bit unfair.' Prime Minister, what is more unfair: the Treasurer's hurt feelings or his rotten budget hurting millions of Australians?

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence for the answer, and that includes the member for Charlton!

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (15:00): Do you know why I respect and admire this Treasurer? I respect and admire this Treasurer because he is serious about grappling with the problems that this country faces. This Treasurer and this government are serious about tackling the long-term problems that this country faces, but members opposite
are just in denial. They are simply in denial. There is something deeply distressing for the future of our country when the alternative government is in denial—

Ms Plibersek interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Sydney will desist!

Mr ABBOTT: about the problem that it created, because that is the situation that we are in now. Members opposite know that a surplus is important. They know that no country can persistently run up—

Ms Owens interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Parramatta is warned!

Mr ABBOTT: deficit after deficit after deficit. After running up more than a quarter of a trillion dollars in cumulative deficits, after giving us the six worst budget results in Australian history, after giving us a cumulative projected debt of $667 billion 10 years out and $123 billion of projected further deficits—after doing all of that—after booby trapping the budget with unsustainable spending years and years into the future, now they are trying to sabotage the solution. That is what they are doing. They booby trapped the budget for their own political purposes, and now they are trying to sabotage the solution. Frankly, it is absolutely contemptible.

Ms Butler interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Griffith is warned!

Mr ABBOTT: This government is serious. We have made a good start on the task of budget repair. We have made a very good start on the task of budget repair. More than three-quarters of the budget measures are now fully implemented—some $17 billion worth of fiscal improvement over the forward estimates. We have made a good start.

And the tragedy is that the Labor Party, the once-great Labor Party that used to have a long-term commitment to the economic future of this country, have completely abdicated. They have completely abdicated. What that shows is that the Leader of the Opposition has failed the ultimate test of leadership. He was a senior part of the worst government in our history. He has learnt nothing, and he cannot change.

Free Trade Agreements

Mr NIKOLIC (Bass) (15:03): My question is to the Minister for Trade and Investment.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Just wait. I have been very patient, and I have warned a number. We will have silence for the rest of question time so we can hear both the answers and the questions; otherwise, people will leave.

Mr NIKOLIC: My question is to the Minister for Trade and Investment. I remind the minister that two of the three landmark free trade agreements concluded with our North Asian neighbours are now in force. Will the minister inform the House of any immediate benefits that have resulted from their introduction, particularly in my home state of Tasmania?

Mr ROBB (Goldstein—Minister for Trade and Investment) (15:03): I thank the member for Bass. He is proving to be an extremely strong and effective member for that seat. He is out and about already promoting the benefits of the free trade agreements. Of course, the Korean
one took effect in the middle of December, and the Japanese one took effect in the middle of January. The member for Bass has already received some great feedback recently from a Launceston cray fisherman, Karl Krause.

The SPEAKER: The member for Lalor is not in her seat.

Mr ROBB: He fishes the waters off Flinders Island. Karl said: 'Our crays are now in hot demand in both countries, with tariffs at 20 per cent going to zero, ensuring enduring price gains for years and years.'

Of course, the member for Bass has also been one of the great advocates for the irrigation projects in Tasmania, including of a shovel-ready project in Scottsdale, which I happened to visit a couple of years ago with the now member for Bass. Scottsdale is a former great town in the north-east. A few years ago, an earlier Labor government closed three timber mills by closing down forestry in Scottsdale. They killed jobs and they killed growth in that area. We are breathing life back into those jobs and that place. We are supporting irrigation projects—

Ms Chesters interjecting—

The SPEAKER: I said there will be silence. The member for Bendigo can leave under 94(a).

The member for Bendigo then left the chamber.

Mr ROBB: which will allow advantage to be taken of these free trade agreements. We will see tariffs on potatoes down from 304 per cent to zero; tariffs on carrots from 30 per cent to zero; turnips, 30 per cent to zero; wine, 15 per cent to zero; and so many more. All of these things will be advantaged by these developments that we have with the free trade agreements.

Ms Collins interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Franklin will desist!

Mr ROBB: We are seeing evidence of this from Reid Fruits. They are one of the biggest cherry-exporting companies in Australia. They are in Tasmania. They have already signed contracts and shipped 183 tonnes of cherries to Korea. Last year they shipped five tonnes. Because of the tariff reduction, they are now shipping 183 tonnes, worth nearly $3 million. That is 600 people, 600 jobs, at the peak of the season. With a 24 per cent tariff reduction, they are now making millions of dollars.

From day one, we have been on about growth and jobs. In this regard, the free trade agreements are having an immediate impact in Tasmania and the rest of the country.

United Nations Climate Change Conference

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (15:07): My question is to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. I refer to reports last year that the minister went bananas because the Prime Minister's office insisted she be accompanied by the trade minister to the UN climate change conference in Lima. In this new era of good government, can the foreign minister advise whether she will be allowed to represent Australia at the UN climate change meeting in Paris unsupervised?

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin—Minister for Foreign Affairs) (15:07): I thank the member for her question, but that is so yesterday.

Mr Dreyfus interjecting—
The SPEAKER: The foreign minister has the call. The member for Isaacs will desist or leave. The choice is his.

Ms JULIE BISHOP: What surprises me about this question is that the shadow foreign minister had such a poor record in government as a member of a cabinet that did so little to promote Australia's reputation and image overseas; that she was a member of a cabinet that so trashed our reputation. Whereas the coalition believes that our job in foreign policy is to project and protect our reputation as—

Mr Perrett interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Moreton will leave forthwith under 94(a). He is lucky not to be named.

Ms JULIE BISHOP: an open, liberal, Western democracy committed to freedom, committed to human rights; that we are an open, export-oriented economy, and all that we do in foreign policy is designed to project and protect that image and that reputation.

Mr Conroy interjecting—

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

Ms JULIE BISHOP: I am just surprised that the member would even pop her head up today, because yesterday, when she asked me about the aid budget, she refused to acknowledge that the aid budget is in this position, because the opposition will not even pass savings that they took to the last election; that they so trashed our budget that we had a $48 billion deficit. Of course the cuts to the aid budget sit fairly and squarely with this shadow foreign minister as part of the cabinet that so destroyed our financial standing. What amazes me is that she actually has the gall to stand up here when she still believes that Africa is a country. I raise this because the shadow foreign minister has repeatedly said that Africa is a country, to the point where the 54 countries in Africa have started a campaign that 'Africa is not a country'.

The SPEAKER: We will not have any props, thank you. The foreign minister will not use props.

Ms JULIE BISHOP: This is a campaign begun by schools in Africa who want to reject the stereotypes, the misinformation—

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, on a point of order—

The SPEAKER: The member for Watson will resume his seat.

Mr Dreyfus interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Isaacs will leave under 94(a). I think I might name the member for Isaacs. I name the member for Isaacs.

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education and Training) (15:10): Madam Speaker, I move:

That the member for Isaacs be suspended from the service of the House.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the member for Isaacs be suspended from the House.
The House divided. [15:14]
(The Speaker—Hon. Bronwyn Bishop)

Ayes ...................... 85
Noes ...................... 53
Majority ............... 32

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Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER (15:18): The honourable member for Isaacs is suspended from the service of the House for 24 hours under standing order 94(b).

The member for Isaacs then left the chamber.

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

COMMITTEES

Selection Committee

Report

The SPEAKER (15:19): I present report No. 19 of the Selection Committee relating to the consideration of committee and delegation business and private members' business on Monday, 23 February 2015. The report will be printed in the Hansard for today and the committee’s determinations will appear on tomorrow’s Notice Paper. Copies of the report have been placed on the table.

The report read as follows—

NOES

Bandt, AP
Bowen, CE
Burke, AE
Butler, MC
Byrne, AM
Champion, ND
Claydon, SC
Danby, M
Elliot, MJ
Feehan, D
Fitzgibbon, JA
Gray, G
Hall, JG (teller)
Husic, EN
King, CF
Macklin, JL
Marles, RD
Mitchell, RG
O'Connor, BPJ
Owens, J
Pilibbersek, TJ
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JG (teller)
Snowdon, WE
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Watts, TG
Zappia, A

Bird, SL
Brodtmann, G
Burke, AS
Butler, TM
Chalmers, JE
Clare, JD
Collins, JM
Dreyfus, MA
Ellis, KM
Ferguson, LDT
Giles, AJ
Griffin, AP
Hayes, CP
Jones, SP
Leigh, AK
MacTiernan, AJGC
McGowan, C
Neumann, SK
O'Neil, CE
Parke, M
Ripoll, BF
Rowland, MA
Shorten, WR
Swan, WM
Vamvakoumou, M
Wilkie, AD
Report relating to the consideration of committee and delegation business and of private Members' business

1. The committee met in private session on Tuesday, 10 February 2015.
2. The committee determined the order of precedence and times to be allotted for consideration of committee and delegation business and private Members' business on Monday, 23 February 2015, as follows:

Items for House of Representatives Chamber (10.10 am to 12 noon)

COMMITTEE AND DELEGATION BUSINESS

Presentation and statements

1 Standing Committee on the Environment:  
Streamlining environmental legislation: Inquiry into streamlining environmental regulation, 'green tape' and one stop shops.

The Committee determined that statements may be made—all statements to conclude by 10.20 am.

Speech time limits—
  Mr Hawke—5 minutes.
  Next Member—5 minutes.
  [Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 2 x 5 mins]

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Notices

1 MS L.M. CHESTERS: To move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:
  (a) Family Day Care (FDC) is a flexible, quality early education program in Australia that:
     (i) provides flexible programs that cater to the needs of thousands of working parents;
     (ii) operates under the National Quality Framework; and
     (iii) currently has the capacity to care and educate children in their own homes; and
  (b) the Government:
     (i) is cutting $157 million and implementing changes to the Community Support Program (CSP) that will remove the funding of over 80 per cent of FDC services around Australia; and
     (ii) informed the FDC sector that the program changes would only impact new applicants, then introduced a budget proposal to apply the new guidelines to all services; and

(2) calls on the Government to:
  (a) genuinely consult with FDC providers about what sensible rule changes are needed, if any; and
  (b) re-instate CSP funding for all FDC services currently funded under the program.

(Notice given 2 September 2014.)

Time allotted—50 minutes.

Speech time limits—
  Ms L.M. Chesters—5 minutes.
  Other Members—5 minutes each.
  [Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 10 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.
2 MRS PRENTICE: To move:

That this House:

(1) celebrates the release of Mr Peter Greste by the Egyptian Government;
(2) commends the Greste family on its courage, resilience and grace for more than 400 days;
(3) congratulates the Australian Foreign Minister and Prime Minister on their unrelenting pursuit of Mr Greste's cause;
(4) commends the efforts of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Egypt under the direction of Mr Justin Brown and Ambassador Dr Ralph King;
(5) thanks the Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry for their role in Mr Greste's release;
(6) calls for the immediate release of Mr Greste's colleagues, Mr Baher Mohamed and Mr Mohamed Fahmy;
(7) recognises the many thousands of ordinary Australians and others around the world that showed their support to the Greste family during the past year; and
(8) notes that 'Telling the truth is not terrorism and Journalism is not a crime'.

(Notice given 9 February 2015.)

Time allotted—remaining private Members' business time prior to 12 noon.

Speech time limits—

Mrs Prentice—5 minutes.

Other Members—5 minutes each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 10 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

Items for Federation Chamber (11 am to 1.30 pm)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Notices

1 MR DANBY: To move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) 27 January 2015 marked the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz by the allies;
(b) over a million Jews and 150,000 non-Jews were murdered in the Auschwitz death camp; and
(c) 27 January has since become International Holocaust Day, and is marked by ceremonies around the world acknowledging the horrific nature of the official policy of genocide against Jews that was manifested in the Holocaust and that claimed 6 million lives;

(2) calls on all Australians to remember these crimes against humanity in order to ensure Australia's continuing condemnation of any attempts to repeat such horrors; and

(3) in light of Australia having one of the largest groups of Holocaust survivors and the bipartisan support for the previous government's legacy to the maintenance of the memorial of the camp, calls on Australia to keep a representative on the international committee that supervises the maintenance of the memorial at Auschwitz.

(Notice given 10 February 2015.)

Time allotted—20 minutes.

Speech time limits—
Mr Danby—5 minutes.

Other Members—5 minutes each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 4 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

2 MR MATHESON: To move:

That this House:

(1) notes:
(a) the importance of complementary medicines and practices, including traditional Chinese medicines, to the international healthcare landscape;
(b) that the Australian complementary medicines industry is worth over $3.8 billion; and
(c) that Australia is the first western nation to nationally regulate Chinese medicine practitioners; and

(2) acknowledges:
(a) the National Institute of Complementary Medicine (NICM), hosted by the University of Western Sydney, as Australia's premier research facility in complementary medicine, being the only Australian complementary medicine research centre to receive the top ranking of five in the Commonwealth Excellence in Research for Australia scheme; and
(b) the role of the NICM in fostering collaboration and engagement with Chinese hospitals, research centres and universities to provide trade, research and investment opportunities in Australia.

(Notice given 1 October 2014.)

Time allotted—30 minutes.

Speech time limits—

Mr Matheson—5 minutes.

Other Members—5 minutes each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 6 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

3 DR LEIGH: To move:

That this House:

(1) recognises that:
(a) the Government's failure to tackle multinational profit shifting in Australia;
(b) every dollar that is avoided by multinational companies must be paid for by Australian taxpayers and businesses, or by cutting services; and
(c) unfair tax arrangements distort investment decisions and put local companies at a disadvantage against international conglomerates;

(2) acknowledges:
(a) the $1.1 billion of multinational tax measures that the Government has handed back to large multinationals, including:
(i) $280 million in reforms to the offshore banking unit regime;
(ii) $113 million in legislative elements to improve tax compliance;
(iii) $140 million from not proceeding with changes to rules applying to multiple entry consolidated groups; and
(iv) $600 million from the abolition of section 25-90 of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997;
(b) the Treasurer's laggard implementation of the new G20 reporting standard behind the group of 40 'early adopters';
(c) the $200 million and thousands of staff cuts from the Australian Taxation Office which severely limit its compliance and investigative power; and
(d) the significant gap between this Government's rhetoric and its actions when it comes to ensuring multinationals pay their fair share of tax; and
(3) calls on the Treasurer to bring the same zeal to stopping multinational tax avoidance that he brings to his budget cuts on Australia's least well off.

(N) (Notice given 24 November 2014.)

Time allotted—20 minutes.

Dr Leigh—5 minutes.
Other Members—5 minutes each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 4 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

4 MR LAUNDY: To move:

That this House notes that the:

(1) United Nations commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) released its report in March 2014;
(2) report found that 'systemic, widespread and gross human rights violations have been and are being committed by the DPRK, its institutions and officials' against its own people, including:
   (a) violations of the:
      (i) freedoms of thought, expression and religion;
      (ii) freedom of movement and residence; and
      (iii) right to food and related aspects of the right to life;
   (b) discrimination;
   (c) arbitrary detention, torture, executions and prison camps; and
   (d) abductions and enforced disappearances from other countries;

(3) report found that crimes against humanity have been committed in the DPRK 'pursuant to policies established at the highest level of the State'; and

(4) Government:
   (a) welcomes the United Nations Security Council's decision on 23 December 2014 to include a standing agenda item on the situation in the DPRK under which it can continue to consider the dire human rights situation; and
   (b) continues to call on the DPRK to:
      (i) treat its citizens in accordance with human rights standards; and
      (ii) create the conditions for meaningful inter-Korean dialogue and Six Party Talks, including honouring DPRK commitments to denuclearise and demonstrating good faith, such as participating in inter-Korean family reunions.

Time allotted—40 minutes.

Mr Laundy—10 minutes.
Next Member—10 minutes.
Other Members—5 minutes each.
5 MR THOMSON: To move:

That this House:

(1) stresses the superiority of collective security through the United Nations over unilateral action or 'coalition of the willing' type adventurism, and strongly supports the 'responsibility to protect' principle as a vehicle to protect civilians; and

(2) urges the Government to:

(a) encourage the United Nations to establish peacekeeping forces in the world's trouble spots to protect civilians and to extinguish conflicts before they escalate in ways which potentially draw in Australia; and

(b) implement the recommendations of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade regarding the establishment of a mediation unit within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to assist in resolving intrastate and interstate disputes before they develop into open conflict (similar to the Norwegian model).

(NOTICE GIVEN 25 NOVEMBER 2014)

Time allotted—remaining private Members’ business time prior to 1.30 pm.

Speech time limits—

Mr Thomson—5 minutes.

Other Members—5 minutes. each.

The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

DOCUMENTS

Presentation

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education and Training) (15:19): Documents are presented as listed in the schedule circulated to honourable members. Details of the documents will be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings.

COMMITTEES

Constitutional Recognition of ATSIP

Corporations and Financial Services Committee

Privileges and Members' Interests Committee

Membership

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education and Training) (15:19): by leave—I move:

That:

(1) Mr Porter be discharged from the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and that, in his place, Ms Henderson be appointed a member of the committee;

(2) Mr Sukkar be discharged from the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services and that, in his place, Mrs Sudmalis be appointed a member of the committee; and
(3) Mr Porter be discharged from the Standing Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests and that, in his place, Mr Pasin be appointed a member of the committee.

Question agreed to.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Abbott Government

The SPEAKER (15:20): I have received a letter from the honourable the Leader of the Opposition proposing that a definite matter of public importance be submitted to the House for discussion, namely:

The Liberal-National Government's failure to listen, learn and change.

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

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

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (15:20): Last Monday just passed, we saw the Liberal caucus engage in an experiment of hope over experience. I think we understand and Australia understands and at least 39 and perhaps even more of the coalition understand—I suspect many more—that this is a government who will not listen, cannot learn and will never change. If we needed further proof of this fact, we saw the remarkable 7.30 interview—and I am not talking about Mr Hockey's interview last night—of the Prime Minister on Monday night. There the Prime Minister declared—even though he could not answer which Prime Minister he was, which Tony Abbott—he said, 'I am a fighting man.' Well, the people of Australia know that they have a fighting man for their Prime Minister. This must make them feel very happy.

We saw from the PMO bunker earlier in the day those bizarre proof of life videos saying, 'If you are watching this, I am still the leader.' We have seen the ball of energy. I understand the Prime Minister is a fighting man. But Australians understand he is just fighting mad. We see him as a ball of energy. There is no doubt that the Prime Minister is a pugilist, a most renowned pugilist. There he is, dancing around the ring, shadowboxing, occasionally connecting with his own chin. He keeps moving around. No-one in Australia doubts the energy of our Prime Minister. He is a very energetic man. He circles around, chasing himself, snapping and biting, seeing off his rivals. The one thing the Liberal government in Australia has is a fighting man as a leader.

But, unfortunately for Australians, the fighting man can never learn and can never change. Of course not everyone in the coalition is a fighting man. We have the member for Wentworth here. He is not a fighting man, is he? We saw that. I acknowledge that he can do a Eurovision audition as well as anyone on the government's front bench. But, as I said on Monday, never in Australian politics have we seen a man who so much wanted the job but just would not do anything to get the job. I understand the great conundrum of the member for Wentworth: 'Why won't people just hire me to do the job?' For all of his political career, he has asked that existential question—which no-one else, to be fair, in this parliament has had to ask—'Should I be Labor or should I be Liberal?'

What I also understand and what Australians understand is that—to be fair to the member for Wentworth—previously he has had an instinct for some causes of progress. No-one can deny his leadership of the republican cause at the end of the last century. No-one can deny
that he was a man of principle and would never support a proposition which would not see an emissions trading scheme. But unfortunately, this Monday we saw the member for Wentworth, the man who was not a fighting man, look at the fighting man Tony Abbott and do what many Australians would do if they saw someone shuffling around, swinging punches, snapping and biting; he crossed the road to avoid him. Very prudent, Member for Wentworth.

But one group who will not cross the road to avoid this Prime Minister is the Labor Party. We will fight this unfair budget and we will make sure that this government is held to account. The reason the Labor Party and the opposition is holding this government to account is that we do not believe in marginalising the middle class. We understand cost-of-living pressures; we are in touch with the real issues that people face every day. We do not support the increases in prohibitive childcare fees. We will never vote to wreck Medicare with a GP tax.

We have seen all of the contenders bounce up to the dispatch box this week from the government, and the record is very clear. They were happy to back down against their leader when it came to Prince Philip, but they were not happy to back down against the GP tax because none of them every opposed it. They do not oppose the $100,000 university degrees. They certainly were all there to be counted to cut the pension or to freeze the superannuation of workers. They are happy enough to see the unemployed not receive dole payments for six months. This is the calibre of this government. It is not just the fighting man, the Prime Minister, who is at fault in this government; it is the whole of their leadership and the whole of their cabinet and ministry.

There are people, unfortunately, in this government who will never cross the road to avoid Tony Abbott's brand of unfairness. They may want his job but they certainly will not change his policies. Every last member of this government has put their name to the budget. They are incapable of learning and they will never learn.

Then we come to the latest debacle this week. I speak of the submarine project. To be fair, most Australians had never heard of Senator Edwards until he famously decided to join the political process. But it is clear that there was a deal done in return for Senator Edwards' vote. What is crazy is that Australians are already paying twice for the submarines to be built in Adelaide. The Liberal Party of Australia lied, lied and lied to South Australians and Australians. They said they would build the submarines in South Australia, and today we heard our Prime Minister say: 'It depends'. We never saw 'it depends' in the fine print of the Liberal Party election policy.

Amazingly, this morning as we were talking about closing the gap and the opposition pointed to the cuts to Indigenous funding in Australia, outraged members of the government walked out. Why aren't they walking out over a tawdry $20 billion deal for one vote or two votes? We hear the government saying they have this all under control. 'You can trust the government with this matter.' The truth of the matter is: this government has been dragged kicking and screaming to any form of process on the submarines and the decision about where the submarines go. This government has to be fought to make it look after Australian jobs.

The government says that they have learnt the error of their ways. This government reassures Australians—they had the rebooting before Christmas; they had the mark II and the mark III versions of the government—and on Monday we remarkably heard our Prime Minister say that 'good government starts now'. What on earth has this government been
doing for the last 500-plus days? How on earth can they have the cheek and effrontery to present to Australia and say: 'We have learnt. After 500 days we have decided that we are going to become a good government.' Yet, by Wednesday, they had flown the minister and they had the poor old backbenchers as fodder, standing in front of the submarine corporation, and they cannot even work out what their position is on submarine purchasing. We can give them a position: build the submarines in Australia.

This is not a government capable of learning and changing. We know that. They know that. And deep in the hearts of the Liberal backbench they know that too. Somewhat remarkably, the Prime Minister of Australia got 39 votes against him—and there was not even a challenger. It is a problem for Australia when the Prime Minister's own backbench—and indeed some of his frontbench—will not even vote for our Prime Minister.

So, yes, we do not believe this government is capable of learning. We do not believe this government is capable of changing. Australians intuitively understand that powerful older men in their late 50s and early 60s find it very hard to fundamentally change who they are. We have seen this government in question time all this week declare that it is everyone else's problem.

What is ironic about Senator Edwards is that he has discovered what millions of Australians have already learnt: pensioners, people in the Defence Force, people seeking to educate their children in higher education, people going to the doctor. Senator Edwards has learnt what we all know about this government: they will lie to you to get their vote and then you can expect that promise to be broken.

Labor does not change its priorities. We fundamentally believe in growing the national economy. We fundamentally believe in defending Medicare. We fundamentally believe in protecting our pensioners. We fundamentally believe in keeping our promises to the Australian electorate. We believe fundamentally in a proper healthcare system.

Labor would welcome the opportunity, if this government chooses, to have an early election, because we know that we are on the side of the great Australian people. We are ready for whatever this government's current chaos and incompetence brings forward in terms of leadership spills, division or chaos. What is really the case here in Australian politics is that this government has broken trust in the Australian political process. There is a covenant of trust between the government and its voters. When you lie and lie to the Australian people and break your promises, Australians will not give you another chance. We say to the government that it does not matter who you present to be your chief salesman, Australians do not want what you are selling Australians.

We have watched the government all this week thrash and flail around and declare that they have learnt from their mistakes. If they have really learnt from their mistakes, do you know what they should do? Drop the GP tax, drop the pension cuts, drop the attack on $100,000 university degrees and the $6,000 payments to families— (Time expired)

Mr TUDGE (Aston—Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister) (15:31): Don't you just love taking lectures on leadership from the man who assassinated not just one Prime Minister but two prime ministers? Regardless of where Bill Shorten goes from here, he will now go down in the history books of Australia as being the man who has assassinated, knocked off, more prime ministers than any other person who has entered this parliament.
Congratulations, Bill Shorten. Mr Shorten has the loyalty of a rat. I tell you what, we are not going to be taking lectures from a man who may have expertise in knocking off prime ministers but when it comes to policy is just such a pale imitation of some of the Labor leaders of the past who actually believed in economic reform, who believed in trying to grow the economy and who believed in deregulation, such as Bob Hawke and Paul Keating. He is an absolute pale imitation of those leaders.

I am very happy to be speaking on this matter of public importance. In some respects we have had a tough week—of course we have. We have had a very difficult week—one which as a member of parliament you never really want to go through. But have we listened? Have we learnt? Have we acted? Absolutely we have. We changed some personnel in December and have made some adjustments to our policy already. Already we are making some changes to the way we will engage with the community. Yes, we have listened. Yes, we have learnt. Yes, we have acted.

If you are going to make accusations about the way Liberal and National parties behave and conduct ourselves here then you better have a pretty squeaky clean record. I would like to examine the Labor Party's record in relation to their accusations. Have they been a party that has listened, that has learnt and that has acted? Perhaps we can start by looking at the overall budget management which the Labor Party oversaw for six years and now in opposition are starting to comment on as well. The biggest debate we have had for seven years now is the fiscal management of this country. We know that when the Labor Party took over from the coalition government there was $20 billion in budget surplus and $90 billion in the bank. Of course we all know what happened over the following six years. There was budget deficit after budget deficit after budget deficit—the biggest budget deficits in Australian political history.

Today of course we have to pay $1 billion a month just on the interest on Labor's debt. Do you know what that gets you? One billion dollars can build you a full tertiary hospital each and every month. That money is just gone. That money has been paid for on the interest. We do not get anything back for that. We could build a hospital each and every month. Today we still are borrowing $100 million per day just to pay for the deficits that Labor left. The size of the debt and deficit that the Labor Party left is quite extraordinary. Of course it was not just what they did in office but they also legislated incredible growth in expenditure for the years ahead. In fact, their forecast was six per cent in real growth in expenditure in the years ahead despite the $50 billion budget deficits and commodity prices coming off that meant our revenues were also going to be coming off.

Had they not listened to Peter Costello? Had they not listened to the Australian public, economists or international accolades—at all of those who said: 'Gee, look at the fantastic fiscal position under the Howard-Costello governments. We are so jealous. How did they do it?' Did they not listen to that? Have they not appreciated the importance of running budget surpluses? In some respects they had, and this is the funny thing. In some respects the Labor Party do understand the importance of budget surpluses because they say so themselves. They understand it but they just do not have the spine, the ticker and the capacity to actually deliver them.

Let us go back and look at some of the things people said. Mr Swan, who was the Treasurer for so long, said:
… meandering back to surplus—would compound the pressures in our economy and push up the cost of living for pensioners and working people.

He said:

So coming back to surplus is about making sure we help those people sitting around the kitchen table when they're figuring out how they will make ends meet.

Chris Bowen, now the shadow Treasurer, said:

The Government needed to make responsible spending cuts to put downward pressure on inflation and therefore interest rates.

They even went through the pretence of saying that it is very important to keep expenditure under control so we could get back to surplus. They committed to two per cent real growth in government expenditure. So they sort of had learnt but they simply had no capacity to act. Perhaps the greatest illustration of this is exactly what the budget deficits were each and every year under the Labor Party.

Listen to what Wayne Swan said. In 2008 he said in the budget, 'It is a surplus built on disciplined spending’—a $27 billion deficit. The next year: 'The savings decisions we have taken will have put us back to surplus in 2015-16’—a budget deficit of $54 billion. The next year, for the third time, Mr Swan says, ‘A strategy that will see the budget return to surplus in three years time’—another deficit. He said: 'We will be back in the next year. We will be back in the black by 2012-13, on time as promised’—a $43 billion deficit. The next year: 'The budget delivers a surplus this coming year on time as promised, and surpluses each year thereafter’—an $18 billion deficit. And the final one, in 2013-14, 'This budget sets us on a sensible pathway to surplus,’ he says, and what was it? It was $47 billion of deficit.

All the rhetoric is there. They understand the importance of budget surpluses. I think they do, but they do not have the spine, the capacity or the will to actually deliver upon it. For their expenditure they had a target of two per cent growth, and what actually was it during the entire year of the Labor Party? It was 3.6 per cent growth. And what did they lock into the forward estimates frequently through legislation? Six per cent growth. What is more, now that they are in opposition, as the coalition are trying again to fix a budget mess which the Labor Party has left, what do the Labor Party do? It blocks every single measure and not just the measures that we announced before the election and are trying to put through but the measures which they themselves had announced, had locked into their budget, but had not legislated to bring those savings into effect.

When we were actually trying to legislate to bring into effect those savings that the Labor Party had proposed, what do you think the Labor Party did? They opposed it. They opposed their own savings. They are not fair dinkum at all about getting back to surplus. They no longer even talk about it. I believe there are some sensible people who still understand the importance of running budget surpluses, who still understand the importance of getting control of the overall debt of Labor. They understand, as we do, deep in our veins, that debt today is put on to future generations, who will have to pay it back. We understand that it is intergenerational theft to be running up massive budget deficits today and that it is our future children and grandchildren who will be paying it back. We understand, deeply in the marrow of our bones, that you cannot continue to spend more than you earn, otherwise you will follow countries that we have seen in Europe, where they continue to spend more and more and more above what they are earning. Look at what happened to them. We are the responsible side of
this parliament. We are the ones that understand that you must live within your means when it comes to budgetary policy. Labor, I think, sometimes do understand that, but just do not have the ticker to deliver.

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (15:41): I think what you see in the previous speaker is the perfect illustration of the reason that we had to have this matter of public importance debate today, because what we have heard on the one hand from the Prime Minister is, 'I am humbled,' 'I have listened,' 'I have learned,' 'I will change my ways,' 'Please forgive me,' 'Give me another chance,' 'Another six months.' 'Hold Malcolm back for a little while yet' and 'Hold ScoMo and Julie Bishop off for a little while yet.' But what we see is that there is no—

Mr Turnbull: Mr Deputy Speaker, a point of order: would the member for Sydney refer to honourable members by their titles.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): I would remind the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to refer—

Ms PLIBERSEK: I thank the future Prime Minister, his majesty of Wentworth, for the intervention!

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: It is a fault on both sides of the House, I acknowledge, and it should be learned by both sides.

Ms PLIBERSEK: What you see is the reason for this matter of public importance. You have got a Prime Minister who is desperately trying to convince people that something has changed and that it is all going to be different from now on—since the 16 or 17 months we have had, where no Australian felt better off, where every Australian felt under attack by this government's policies—because today is the first day of good government.

We have the Prime Minister saying on 9 February, 'I have listened,' 'I have learned,' 'I have changed' and 'The government will change with me.' Then you have the previous member saying: 'Hang on a minute. We still are committed to all the cuts that people find so unpalatable.' You have got the member for Wentworth saying, 'Of course I support unreservedly and wholeheartedly every element of the budget.' You have got the Treasurer on 7.30 last night to Leigh Sales, when asked whether he will persist with policies like the GP tax, the $100,000 university degrees and pension cuts, saying, 'We are because we have no choice.' You have got the Minister for Foreign Affairs saying yesterday that the whole cabinet has to take responsibility for the budget.

You have the whole of the leadership of the Liberal Party—as competitive as they are with one another, undermining as they are with one another—agree on this one fundamental fact: the cuts stay. The $100,000 university degrees stay, the GP tax stays, the billion dollar cut to child care stays and the cuts to the age pension stay. Frankly, that does not sound like a government that has learnt its lesson. It does not sound like a Prime Minister who has learnt his lesson. It does not sound like any real change, sadly, for the Australian families that are suffering cuts of up to $6,000 on an income of $65,000. It does not sound like real change to me.

Perhaps the best illustration of this, other than backing in this toxic budget, is the shambles we have seen over the last few days in determining whether Australia's future submarines would be built in Adelaide, as the government clearly promised before the election, or
whether they are going to be built somewhere else. We had a classic answer from the Prime Minister today in which he not only claimed that under Labor the submarines would be built in North Korea but also said they would be built by a dead man. I think Kim Jong-il has been gone for a while now, so he really jumped the shark on that one!

But here we have a submarine promise very clearly made before the last election to the people of South Australia: they will be built here, and the jobs that come with them will be South Australian jobs. Then there was some sort of arrangement—we are not clear what, because the Prime Minister clearly refused to answer the question today—made with Japan, an arrangement that the Australian people are not to be party to. Then we had, on Friday, some promise made to Senator Edwards. Again, it is not clear what the promise was, because we had two such clearly different accounts, one from Senator Edwards, saying, 'Absolutely I was told that there would be a tender process and that South Australian workers would potentially get work from this' and one from the Prime Minister, saying, 'Oh, no; I never said anything like that.' This is a broken promise about a broken promise about a broken promise. We have had three completely different promises about where these submarines would be built, and it looks like all of them now will be broken. The tragic thing about all this, of course, is that the people who always suffer at the end of the day are ordinary working Australians. They have a government in chaos. They have frontbenchers undermining each other, all lobbying for the top job. And we see education expenses going up, health cuts, pension cuts—all of the things that this government promised they would not do.

Mr TEHAN (Wannon) (15:46): In March 2008 the Leader of the Opposition gave, I think, his most memorable quote. Words fail me. I wish he had said this a few more times since then, because, as we have seen again today, the opposition leader is not short on opening his mouth. The pity is that we cannot harness what comes out of his mouth, because I am sure if we could we would send the first hot-air balloon to the moon. Let's look at today's MPI, where he has been preaching about listening, learning and changing. Let's talk about changing. Over here, we saw, on your side, that you had done nothing when it came to opening access to overseas markets—absolutely nothing. If anything, it went the other way. What did we do when we came in? We changed that: free trade agreements with South Korea, Japan and China in the space of 12 months. That is real change. That is a change compared with those opposite, who sat on their hands doing nothing, to provide a future for this nation, a future in a globalised world, a future when our exports need to access markets at the most competitive rate possible. And it is our goods and our services that need to access these markets in a globally competitive way, because, if they do not, we are shackling our economy. And just remember: in six years, you did nothing, yet we have brought about real change in this area.

And then there is listening, and sadly you have failed to listen on that side. That is why you want to bring back the carbon tax, before there is any type of international agreement in this area, once again hurting our competitiveness. And you do not care. You sit there and you are happy for us to become an average country. You do not have a vision for where we want to be as a nation. You have no vision. All you want to look after are your own particular interest groups. Yet what do we want to do? We want to make sure that every industry, every family, every worker has a future in this country.
And let's have a look at another area which Mr Blowhard, the Leader of the Opposition, has been rambling on about—Mr Blowhard—and it goes to living within our means. What are you proposing in order to deal with the fact that we are spending $100 million more each day? What are you proposing for us to deal with this? Absolutely nothing; some three-word slogan, 'go for growth'. But seriously, we are robbing future generations unless we deal with this—$100 million each day; we are spending more than we are earning. Yet you sit over there, oblivious to this fact, offering not one solution to this problem. It is about time you all collectively had a good, hard look at yourselves—have a look at the real leadership required to take this nation forward, because you are offering absolutely nothing. Don't come in here and lecture us on listening, learning and delivering, because in government you failed on this, and in opposition you are failing again. We have a vision, we have a plan for this nation's future. Let us get on and deliver it.

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (15:51): I think this matter of public importance has become even more important as we hear speaker after speaker not changing tack on the opposite side of the House. They are committed—absolutely committed—to their unfair budget. And whatever the Prime Minister says to get votes on that side of the House—that he has changed, that he has learnt, that he has listened—obviously those speaking on the MPI did not get the speaking points. Or, what I think is more likely to be true is that they have not learnt or listened and certainly have not changed. The parliamentary secretary said that there have been extraordinary events this week and indeed that they had probably had a better week. I would have to say that that is something that I do agree with the parliamentary secretary on: the government could have had a better week.

Of course, if they were to do what the Australian people want them to do—that is, drop their unfair budget—that would be a true sign that they had listened, learnt and changed. But, of course, we do not have that. We have every single member of the cabinet saying that they are backing the GP tax, we have every single member of the cabinet saying that they agree with $100,000 degrees, we have every single member of the cabinet saying, 'Yes, we should cut the pension,' and we have every single member of the saying that they believe that we should cut the SBS and the ABC. Not only do we have every member of the cabinet saying this; we seem to have every member of the backbench saying this. They certainly were not saying this last weekend. In fact, 39 of them were obviously so upset about this. But today we have seen that the government has not changed its spots. It still continues to pursue an unfair budget that the Australian people did not vote for at the last election. Indeed, the reason why we see this unfair budget here today and why the government will not change their course is that they have not listened. They have not listened, have not changed and have not learnt.

Indeed, we know that this unfair budget is deeply unpopular in the Australian community and, indeed, deeply unpopular in the Senate. We have heard speaker after speaker get up and say, 'It's been a bad week, but we will continue to pursue it.' Indeed, we have heard even more than that. We have heard those on the opposite side say: 'It's everyone else's fault we're not popular. It's the Labor's Party's fault we're not popular. It's the Australian people's fault we're not popular. It's the Senate's fault we're not popular.' Let us give those on the opposite side the news that actually they have to change. It is not the Senate that has to change, it is not the Australian people that have to change, and it is not the Labor Party that has to change. We are standing up for people. We are standing up against the government's broken promises and
giving people a voice in this place. If the Prime Minister really wants to ensure that his position is protected over the next month, two months, three months or six months then, really, what we need to see is him abandon this unfair budget and these unfair changes.

Of course, the other promise that the Prime Minister made this week was that he was going to start providing an adult government; he was going to end the chaos and start providing stable government. We know that that has not been the case previously, but he said that he had turned over a new leaf. Then we saw the debacle of the submarine decision. We have seen clearly today that the Prime Minister is going to have two choices: he is going to have to break his promise to Prime Minister Abe or break his promise to the Australian people. So someone is going to be bitterly disappointed, and I am extremely concerned that it will be the Australian people that miss out, and South Australians in particular. Poor Senator Edwards—I do not say that lightly; Senator Edwards obviously believed in good faith that the Prime Minister had struck a deal with him to ensure his leadership—was led down a garden path. He was absolutely tricked. Now we have seen that the Prime Minister has not only broken all the promises that he made before the election but also, within one or two days, broken the promise that he made to Senator Edwards. This is an appalling, chaotic way to run what is a critically important project for South Australia. If the government really have listened, learnt and changed, we will see these submarines built in South Australia, but I doubt that will happen.

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (15:56): I am pleased to make a contribution to today's MPI on the subject of listening, learning and changing. At the start, what needs to be recognised by the debt and deficit deniers on the other side of the chamber is that the federal Treasury is currently having to borrow $100 million every single day of the year. Our excess spending is $100 million a day. Close to $40 million of that is the interest payment on this previous Labor government's debt.

What does the Leader of the Opposition suggest that we should do about this? I quote from his recent appearance on the ABC's 7.30. He said:

... we've got to go for growth. And the way you go for growth is you spend money ... what I'm spelling out is our direction for the future.

That is, spending money. So, if we are going to learn, for a good place to start I say that we should go back to the time of the Great Depression and to the words of US Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau. In 1939, when the US had been through seven years of high unemployment and when the US had continued to run budget deficit after budget deficit, Morgenthau said:

No, gentlemen, we have tried spending money. We are spending more than we have ever spent before and it does not work. And I have just one interest, and if I am wrong, as far as I am concerned, somebody else can have my job. I want to see this country prosperous. I want to see people get a job. I want to see people get enough to eat.

... ... ...

I say after eight years of this Administration we have just as much unemployment as when we started.

... ... ...

And an enormous debt to boot!

He went on:
… what are we going to do about it?

He also said:
… the biggest deterrent of all … is that the country does not know when the end is in sight and this unbalancing of the budget …

That is the biggest deterrent of all. We cannot continue to borrow $100 million every day indefinitely.

While we are on the subject of listening, learning and changing, I would like to quote from today's editorial in The Daily Telegraph headed 'Bill Shorten an economic Pontius Pilate':

He was at it again during Question Time on Monday. "You are an extreme government motivated by an extreme ideology," Shorten railed, looking like a furious, slightly less orange Oompa Loompa.

It goes on: … he could perhaps use some remedial … education. It is by no means extreme to seek a balanced budget or to aim for a budget surplus.

It goes on: This from the man who was a key player in the knifing of the last two Labor prime ministers.

… … …

Abattoir workers have less blood on their hands after a 12-hour shift slaughtering haemophiliac cattle.

It concludes: The next time Bill Shorten wants to discuss social justice and unfairness, he ought to first consider his own actions. He should also consider the damage committed against future generations of Australians by his Pontius Pilate-like, cynical refusal to assist the government in reducing our national debt …

That was today's editorial from The Daily Telegraph.

One of the great philosophers of our time, Edmund Burke, talked about the contract between generations. He described it as a partnership 'not only between those who are living', but between those who are dead and between those who are still born. This opposition is simply proposing a plan to allow today's voters to live at the expense of those who are too young to vote or those who are still born.

Mr Mitchell interjecting—

Mr CRAIG KELLY: This is the tragedy of what this government is doing. You are engaged in intergenerational theft against the future kids and grandkids of our nation. You are an absolute disgrace.

On the subject of listening, learning and changing, we know what happens should this Labor Party ever get back into power. They will bring back the carbon tax as sure as night follows day. They will be weak on border protection. We saw 800 boats, 50,000 arrivals, an $11 billion blow-out in costs and over 1,000 deaths at sea. They will bring those policies back, and we will see bigger and bigger debt and a continual intergenerational theft against our children and grandchildren. You lot are an absolute disgrace. (Time expired)

Mr MITCHELL (McEwen—Second Deputy Speaker) (16:01): It is embarrassing for the government to have to put up someone who talks about robbing from stillborn babies. What an absolute disgrace. It shows just how low this government is. This government came to
power with the promise it would be an adult government, it would be a better government, and what did it do? It broke every promise it made—every single promise. No cuts to health—broken. No changes to pension—broken. They wanted to go out and get young people under the age of 30 and make them wait six months after they lose a job that could be in the automotive manufacturing industry, which this government closed with its ham-fisted approach, causing a great rise in unemployment in places like Victoria and Brisbane, where manufacturing was a key part of our success. Then you get the creodont over there who says, 'Oh, if it wasn't for Tony, we wouldn't have low petrol prices.' What an absolute blockhead to sit there and say the Prime Minister is the reason we have low petrol prices.

They also came out in their first term of government—in the first session—and what did they do? They went over there, did their little deal with the Greens and removed the debt ceiling in this country. We do not know day to day how much debt this country is in, because they did a little side deal and took it off the books. They could not be open and honest. We had a debt ceiling and would have to come in and actually explain to the parliament what we were getting money for, but what did they do? They removed that.

This week we have seen the extraordinarily repentant member for Warringah. Every day he is like he is in a confessional box at the party room—'I repent my sins; I will change'—and he comes out and does exactly the same thing. Nothing has changed, and people see through that. People know that nothing has changed with this Prime Minister. He has always been just a brawler. That is all he has ever done; that is all he will ever do. The country needs leadership.

Ms Claydon interjecting—

Mr MITCHELL: Well, we have the shadow boxer sitting down at the front bench over there in the member for Wentworth, who, when it came to the crunch, did not have the guts to stand up to the Prime Minister. He will never have the guts to run this country.

But we have seen this week in and out all the little dealings and side dealings done, people flipping sides—and all we have seen constantly is the same rhetoric from those opposite, constantly talking about the same things. They support a GP tax. They sit there and say, 'Medicare is unsustainable,' but not one cent goes to Medicare. So how do you make it sustainable by not putting more money in it? You have actually doubled the debt and you sit there and talk about borrowing money. Seriously, Craig; mate, try to read what you have said and what you have done.

The difference between us and those in the government is that we actually stand up for Australian families. We stand and make sure people can get jobs, get to see a doctor when they need it, get their kids the opportunity to go to school without being forced to carry a $100,000 on their backs as they go out in the world and start their lives. We actually go out and support industries to make sure jobs are there and the jobs are sustainable.

The first thing you did this year after you hit control-alt-delete for the third time—'We're gonna reboot; we're gonna reboot'—is come out and have this inquiry into removing the minimum wage and taking away penalty rates. And what does the member for Warringah come out and say? He comes out and says, 'Well, if you don't want to work weekends, you don't have to.' There are many people—people about whom those opposite obviously have no care—like police—

Mr Whiteley: I'm in a marginal seat, mate; seven days a week!
Mr MITCHELL: Well, you don't have to work if you don't want to work! That was the key that your boss said. And there were many ambulance officers, nurses and people like that who have to work weekends—many young people who started out in jobs as baristas, waiters and that sort who have to work weekends. They do not get a choice. But, because that lot over there are so far out of touch, they do not realise this. They just think everything is rosy. But these young people who work those jobs and the people who work in our hospitals, police and emergency services and defence personnel—are we going to go to war and say: 'Listen boys. It's five o'clock. Sorry, got to knock off; we're not working weekends.' That is the stupidity of the bloke who is running this country, and that is why Australians see through it. That is why each and every day, without fail, you see his numbers drop. Only Labor will stand up for this country for our future. (Time expired)

Mr HAWKE (Mitchell) (16:06): Where to start on that I do not know, but it was fascinating to hear the member for McEwen's views on the debt ceiling. It is obvious he has a PhD in economics. If the member for Hughes is a creodont then you are a quagga, if I may put it to you that way, Member for McEwen.

I am known for my controversial views and my outspokenness. But I want to say to my colleagues that I do not think I am being controversial or outspoken when I say this could be the worst MPI in the history of federation; I think it is probably so. This is, perhaps, a complete joke that the Labor Party has put forward to us today, considering they are talking about listening and learning. At two elections now they have failed to learn or to listen to the Australian people give the clear signal they have been trying to give—that the opposition are completely out of touch with Australian people.

There is no greater sign of that than the Leader of the Opposition who wants to return us to carbon pricing—even though on two occasions, at two elections, the Australian people have said, 'Not before the rest of the world and not in our time.' Not listening and not learning—you should get a medal for it! You really should, because your lessons have not been learnt. When I hear the Leader of the Opposition tell us that his plan, his program, his policy and his way forward is to go for growth, I wonder who you have been listening to and who you have been learning from. We listened to the Australian people and we learned that 'go for growth' is really not a great slogan to win an election with. I would encourage the Labor Party to stick with 'go for growth'. 'Go for growth' should be your next election slogan. Give it a run and see how it goes with the Australian people.

The reality is we have a very serious situation put before us by the Labor Party. The Labor Party has left Australians with $100 million in interest to be paid on debt every single day. They have left us with a reform legacy that would challenge any competent government. There is so much reform this country needs which has been squibbed on by Labor, including important procurement and defence decisions like submarines. How dare they lecture us about making tough decisions on submarines when they squibbed on them for six years! How dare they tell us that we refuse to make a decision about a capability gap in one of our most important procurements for Defence in the last 100 years! That decision was extremely important. You were incapable of making it. Tell that to the workers you brought here today from Adelaide—tell them that you could not make it. You had six years of government to get their contracts for them and you refused to make that decision. Go and tell them that. Go and tell them you are incapable of making those decisions. You simply could not do it because
your governments were so dysfunctional. One hundred million dollars a day—it is a deficit and debt crisis.

The Labor Party's answer is that we do not have a debt or deficit problem. Their response is that there is no problem: 'Why do we have a problem? What are the problems? There is no problem.' They say we can just continue to spend in the manner they did when they were in office, which was to throw other people's money away as if there was no tomorrow.

It is clear this MPI is a complete joke because the Labor Party has refused to learn the lessons of its time in office. The lessons are: you cannot spend away tomorrow today; you cannot simply borrow—not just to fund big and important items, but the daily activities of government as well; you cannot just borrow every day to fund every single activity you wish to undertake. You have to have a reasonable and appropriate approach to economic expenditure and ensure you can fund your bills. It is good to see the Minister for Communications at the table because the NBN is one of the worst examples of a government simply having no idea how they could possibly fund a massive enterprise. You could ask the Labor Party, 'Where was the modelling for the NBN?'. They ask us every day, 'Where is your modelling? Where is your modelling for this? Where is your modelling for that?' Where was their modelling for the NBN—the mooted NBN—which was the single biggest item of expenditure by a federal government in the history of the federal government? There was no modelling done or undertaken and no modelling provided to the Australian people. That is the lesson that has simply not been learnt by the Australian Labor Party.

This MPI is a complete and utter joke. Australians do not want this parliament engaged in Canberra insider games, discussing these matters endlessly back and forwards. This is a government that is working hard to deliver for families—working on jobs, working on the economy and working on reining in the debt and deficit legacy that has been left to us by the most incompetent government in our history. We will continue to work hard on meeting that challenge.

Ms CLAYDON (Newcastle) (16:11): I have no doubt the members opposite are uncomfortable with this debate and do not wish to have this debate today. Indeed, the member for Mitchell declares his weariness and his boredom at today's MPI debate because we again have to draw attention to the Abbott government's failure to listen, learn and change. It is the worst debate ever, he insists. Well, that reflects the worst government performance ever. It is members on this side of the House, like many members of our community, who have to, on a daily basis, reflect on your broken promises—the broken promises this Prime Minister continues to add to on a day-by-day basis.

Today, however, I want to start by reminding members opposite of the words of your Prime Minister on the night that he was elected:

I now look forward to forming a government that is competent, that is trustworthy, and which purposely and steadfastly and methodically sets about delivering on our commitments to you, the Australian people.

Prime Minister, you have failed the Australian people. You have failed to form a government that is competent; you have failed to form a government that is trustworthy; and you have most definitely failed to act purposefully, steadfastly or methodically to deliver on your pre-election promises. Despite these obvious failures and, indeed, many others, you continue to let the Australian people down as you fail to listen, learn and change. You have shut your
doors, switched off the phones and failed to listen to the voicemail messages. Your promise to listen to your backbench is not enough. You need to listen to the Australian people and you need to change tack.

Community groups, service providers and advocacy groups in my electorate of Newcastle, which rely on government funding to deliver vital community services, have been completely shut out of the discussions here. They have tried writing letters and they have tried being polite to you; now they are having to scream from the rooftops to get your attention and let you know just how cruel these cuts are, what changes the cuts are forcing upon them and how hard these changes are hitting our community. The levels of uncertainty and the ongoing limbo you leave them in is pushing them all to breaking point.

From our homeless organisations to Indigenous health, our legal service providers, our GPs, the Hunter Medicare Local, the University of Newcastle, our shipbuilders at Forgacs in Newcastle—all of these organisations and service providers cannot wait any longer for you to get your house in order. They cannot afford to keep waiting for the Prime Minister and this government to get back to the job of governing.

There is plenty of action from the Prime Minister when it is his job on the line, but they are not so worried about the hundreds of other jobs in my electorate—and in plenty of others—who are also faced with their jobs on the line. These are the jobs of hardworking Australian men and women. You need to listen and you need to act. They need the certainty. They need you to make right decisions for Newcastle and the broader Australian community.

The Australian people are firmly telling you that they do not like what you are doing and they do not trust you. They are not satisfied with your performance, because you are not listening; you are completely out of touch. It is truly astonishing that in 16 months you have become so completely and utterly out of touch with the Australian people you purport to represent.

The member for Wentworth confirmed yesterday in question time that it is not just the Prime Minister who has his fingers jammed firmly in his ears, it is the entire government that cannot listen. The Minister for Communications—the man who is putting himself forward, albeit in a shadowy way, as the alternative leader of the government—said in question time, 'Of course every single member of the government supported every element in the budget; of course. We are a united government.' The nation erupted in laughter.

The Minister for Finance, Senator Mathias Cormann, confirmed how out of touch the government is when he said on the weekend, 'No minister has ever said to me that this budget is unfair.' (Time expired)

Ms PRICE (Durack) (16:16): I am also very pleased to speak on this rather unusual matter of public importance and very pleased to talk about this government and how it is undertaking the listening, learning and implementing of change from Australia so that we can turn around the mess created by those opposite and their abysmal social and economic mismanagement.

Those opposite raised this matter today: the need to listen, the need to learn and the need to change. Those opposite have graciously—at long last—publicly acknowledged the need to do just that, to change the financial downward slope that our government inherited from the dark days of the incompetent Labor system of mismanagement.
I thank those opposite for drawing attention to their own shortcomings, of the need for our
government to step in and make changes to preserve the outgoing financial tide and to pick up
the pieces for the Australian people. As a government we inherited from Labor an appalling
financial situation just 15 months ago. We learnt that major systemic changes will be required
to reverse the downward spiral, to reverse the debt that Labor created, to repair and recalibrate
the NBN and education, to rebuild our international reputation to revive trade, to stop the
boats—the list goes on.

Those opposite have noted that our government is moving carefully, with a plan, and its
eye firmly focused on the endgame. We shall not be distracted as we make incremental
changes based on an informed plan, not based on fast-fire quick fixes. Yes, our government
has learnt from the blunders of Labor. Our government has learnt that the way Labor tried to
govern was without a plan and without listening; however, Labor certainly did introduce
change, there is no denying that—and each Labor change led from one calamity to another.
There is a very long list. I will give a couple of examples: their poorly thought out and
expensive mining tax; Labor's total mismanagement of maritime arrivals—Labor's boat policy
was 'Let them come in; the water is fine;' and who can forget the pink batts debacle?

Yes, we have learnt from Labor. We have learnt what not to do. Those opposite had to
learn the hard way. They went down in a screaming heap when the people of Australia told
them loud and clear that they had mismanaged the country and our reputation throughout the
world. They were not listening. They were out of touch with voters and they were not making
changes that would see them turn the tide of driving the country right to the wall.

This week, we move into a new parliamentary year. It is true that the summer break has
provided more time for members to reflect, listen, learn and consider the government's plans
to rebuild the nation. These plans and major changes must be borne out in our policy and
legislative timetable. Our government's change agenda must be underpinned by a sound
budget and debt position. All of Australia knows this and they are tired of hearing it. That is
what I have heard from my constituents. But they want us to get on with it: stick with the
planned changes, hold our nerve and get the budget and debt under control.

This week we debate another major systemic change regarding higher education. The
successful passage of the Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014 will lead to great
changes and benefits for students in the bush—who I am particularly interested in—but also
to the city. For those who can take a long-term view, there will be paybacks for the Australian
nation. We will be making possible the world-class education that Australian students need
and deserve, opening up higher education to those from lower socioeconomic—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Randall): Order! The time allotted for this discussion has expired.
BILLS

Treasury Legislation Amendment (Repeal Day) Bill 2014
Customs Amendment Bill 2014
Amending Acts 1970 to 1979 Repeal Bill 2014
Statute Law Revision Bill (No. 2) 2014

Returned from Senate

Messages received from the Senate returning the bills without amendment or request.

Tax Laws Amendment (Research and Development) Bill 2013

Consideration of Senate Message

Bill returned from the Senate with amendments.

Ordered that the amendments be considered at a later hour this day.

Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014

Second Reading

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

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (16:22): I do recall that, when I was a new teacher in the western suburbs of Melbourne, the culture of university attendance for local students was low in my beginning years. The area had poor year 12 retention rates; indeed, year 10 was the norm for most. This was because retention to year 12 was not a priority for anyone in those days—certainly not in the education sector. Many saw secondary school as a sorting system to determine whether students left at year 10 or went on to try their luck for entry to university. Attendance at university was not something that was aspired to by most children in the west of Melbourne. This culture, however, was slowly changing. The Whitlam years had opened up access to university for many from my era. This impact took longer to reach the west of Melbourne, but slowly it did. I would argue that teachers raised in the west, who had been the first in their families to attend university, made it their business to ensure that the talented and capable students in their classrooms in the west were encouraged, supported and urged to pursue tertiary education.

Over time, much was done to increase access for the students that I taught. A new emphasis on year 12 retention by state governments meant that many students who completed school could apply for and be accepted into university places in the later years of my teaching. In more recent times, I saw the impact of the changes by the former Labor government—indeed, by my predecessor in Lalor, Julia Gillard—continue to grow that expectation and continue to grow the numbers of students from Lalor attending university.

The previous Labor government had a proud record of investment in Australia’s universities. We boosted real revenue per student, including government and student contributions, by 10 per cent. That was an extra $1,700 for universities to spend on quality teaching for every student. Overall, Labor lifted government investment in universities from $8 billion in 2007 to $14 billion in 2013. That is $8 billion to $14 billion in six years. Labor
committed to proper indexation for university funds. If the Howard government funding model had been kept, universities today would be worse off to the tune of $3 billion.

There are 750,000 students at Australian universities today, and one in every four is there because of Labor. We put 190,000 more students on campus, we boosted Indigenous student numbers by 26 per cent and we boosted regional student numbers by 30 per cent. We have more than 36,000 extra students from low-income families in universities now compared to 2007. Labor also invested $4.35 billion in world-class research and teaching facilities through the Education Investment Fund, something that was highly valued by the university sector, and those facilities, of course, are being well used now. This included $500 million earmarked for regional Australia so that country kids would have the same access to quality courses, and universities would be able to attract and retain world-class researchers. We did this because we on this side understand, in a way that the coalition never has and never will, what universities mean. These changes meant that suddenly students from my community could clearly see a pathway to university and beyond. And, yes, they did make a financial contribution through the HECS program. But the electorate knows the difference between an affordable contribution—paid most often after the fact through an affordable contributions scheme—and this scheme, which will create long-term unaffordable debt with interest and impede access for many—and, worse, possibly the most able.

These Labor reforms are now at risk. Students in Lalor come from families that do not like debt. The thought of taking on a $100,000 debt in order to obtain a qualification is very scary, and the government know that—they know it very well. It is why they run election campaigns on debt and deficit. It is why they cynically use our personal aversion to debt. They cynically use it to claim that Medicare is unaffordable and throw numbers like confetti to blur the arguments. Then they stand here, salesman after salesman across the last two days, to convince those same families that government debt is bad but that student debt is good. They put forward this unfair higher education reform that will lead to unheard-of and unaffordable debt levels for students. They know—and, if they do not, they would if they gave it a moment's contemplation. These changes will slow or stall the number of young people from my electorate and from the electorates of Bendigo, Rankin, Gellibrand, Newcastle and Chifley—from working-class areas.

The effect is already there. This summer when I ran into former students, they had received good ATAR scores and were expecting to receive university offers, but there was a hesitation to go forward. Would the rules change part-way through their degree? Would the debt be too great? Was finding a job now and entering the workforce a better option given the rising youth unemployment figures? That is why these $5 billion cuts to higher education are so destructive. These cuts mark the end of Australia's fair and equitable higher education system. These cuts will bring the curtain down on the Whitlam university legacy of university based on merit, not pay cheques, and of aspiration regardless of postcode.

I will vote against these cuts to university funding and student support. Labor will vote against these cuts. Labor will not support a system of unfair, unaffordable fees, bigger student debt, reduced access and greater inequality. I will not stand by and see a system that for students in Lalor will mean that the quality of their education will depend on their capacity to pay. I will vote against that not just because it will create inequity in our system but because it is the wrong thing for the country. We need our best and our brightest in our universities.
We need our young people to be more educated than ever before, not less educated. As a country we cannot afford to go backwards in student retention and university numbers. To maintain our living standards and to build our economy, we need more students—students with the most capacity and the most commitment—in our lectures theatres, laboratories and tute rooms. This is at risk under this reform.

The Minister for Education and Training, Christopher Pyne, often claims his higher education changes will actually benefit students from low socioeconomic backgrounds because they include the so-called 'Commonwealth scholarships'. Indeed, again over summer we have been subjected to a huge advertising blitz, costing almost $15 million, making those claims. This is possibly the biggest con in the whole package. The scholarship scheme will receive no Commonwealth funding. It is to be funded entirely by students. Under the scheme universities will be required to direct 20 per cent of the additional revenue raised by higher fees to providing equity scholarships. Christopher Pyne has not released any information about just how big he expects the fund to be. That is because, if he does, we will be able to work out exactly how much he expects most low- and middle-income kids to pay to fund other kids who are just a little smarter or a little poorer. Remember, $1 in every $5 of the additional revenue universities raise above their current per-student incomes will go towards this fund. This means that the extra amount students are paying—that is, the extra above the 30 per cent hike needed to make up for the funding cuts—will be five times the size of the 'biggest Commonwealth scholarships fund in Australia's history'.

Tweaking the so-called Commonwealth scholarships will not make them fair or sensible policy. Like so much of this package, the scheme is fundamentally flawed. The tweak in this bill is, of course, the regional transitions fund—a fund that, by its inclusion, is further evidence of the unfairness of the bill itself. If the bill were fair there would be no need for this fund. It is somewhat sad that the Nationals MPs sitting opposite could only wrangle $100 million for this fund as a token to their regional communities to counter the unfairness of the bill and its impact on the students from the regional communities they represent.

These are not the only issues I take with this bill. The bill contains $1.9 billion in cuts to Australian universities and the potential for $100,000 degrees for undergraduate students—and yes, I have heard speaker after speaker from the government side of the chamber claim that Labor are running a scare campaign on this. They have stood here, one after the other—salesmen of something they cannot actually sell because they cannot predict the cost. There is no price tag being set on the other side of the chamber.

The bill includes $171 million in cuts to equity programs, $200 million in cuts to indexation of grant programs, $170 million in cuts to research training, fees for PhD students for the first time ever and $80 million in cuts to the Australian Research Council. And these cuts are masquerading as reform. This bill may have been tweaked from the one we saw last year, but the massive cuts to universities remain. The new fee imposts for students remain. Students in Lalor, having made inroads to university attendance, will find their numbers dropping.

The worst of this, for me, is that the universities asked for a national conversation about higher education reform and deregulation, and in its place they got these cuts. In its place they got a rushed piece of policy—no national conversation. In fact, the first time the bill was brought into this chamber, very few members opposite stood to speak about it or debate it at
all. Instead of planning in response to that conversation, this government has given us cuts hidden in a chaotic plan for deregulation.

The Australian people have got a broken promise and a breach of the social contract on higher education. The community got an expensive advertising campaign because they signed petitions clearly stating what they thought of the plan. They got a Prime Minister deaf to Australians' public concern for equity and a fair go. They got a government determined to turn back the clock to a time when your future, regardless of your ability or commitment, was determined by your postcode and your family income and when privilege was perpetuated by access to quality education determined by birth. What they got today is a government that says it has listened but is taking action that the electorate has resoundingly rejected.

I have a message for the government. Because we have had quotes thrown at us so many times in the last six months—usually Labor Party leaders in the Australian government—this time I will quote Abraham Lincoln: 'With public sentiment, nothing can fail. Without it, nothing can succeed.' This is not a debate that a serious government would have on higher education. This is a spending cut dressed up as a reform. Like my Labor colleagues, I will oppose this bill and continue to oppose any reforms to higher education that have not been the result of a serious conversation as a nation. I look forward to a time in the future when that serious debate might occur; although I note that it might take a change of government for us to have a conversation about higher education.

Mr MATHESON (Macarthur) (16:36): I thank the House for the opportunity to speak on today's bill, the Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014. My electorate of Macarthur in south-west Sydney spans an area that has some of the finest agricultural land in the country. It is also one of the most economically significant and fastest-growing metropolitan regions in Australia. Even though we have much to be thankful for in Macarthur, there are still many people in my electorate who struggle to make ends meet and simply cannot afford to go to university or who live too far away to realistically commute. The reason I support this bill is that it implements reforms to higher education that seek to spread opportunity to more students, especially disadvantaged and rural or regional students.

A large section of the Macarthur community will benefit from this bill because hundreds if not thousands of people will reap the rewards of higher education who otherwise would have been unable to. When I finished school in 1975, soon after university fees were abolished by the Whitlam government, it was considered free to go to university. The notion that a student's merit rather than a parent's wealth should decide who benefits from tertiary education was fine in principle; however, in reality, there were so few places on offer for my generation that going to university was nothing more than a pipe dream for all but a very select few.

In 2015, I am happy to say that participation rates at university are much higher but there are still many people in Macarthur and throughout Australia who are denied the opportunity to go into higher education. Of course there are a number of existing programs aimed at addressing the divide between those that can go to university and those that cannot. The University of Western Sydney, for instance, which has a campus in my electorate of Macarthur, is participating in the Bridges to Higher Education project. This $21.2 million project, funded by the Commonwealth government's Higher Education Participation Program, improves participation rates of students from communities under-presented in higher education.
education by breaking down the barriers to entry for anyone looking to receive a tertiary education. This bill significantly bolsters HEPP to create a new scholarship fund within this program to assist disadvantaged students into higher education. I am delighted to notify the House today that the University of Western Sydney will be eligible to participate in the new scholarship fund through HEPP because of its high intake of low-socioeconomic students.

In addition, the government will create a Commonwealth Scholarships scheme, the greatest scholarship scheme in Australia's history, so that universities and higher education providers can provide tailored, individualised support to disadvantaged students. Through this scheme, higher education providers have the potential to offer needs-based scholarships to help meet costs of living as well as cover fee exemptions, tutorial support and assistance at other crucial points in their study. In an opinion piece published in the Australian Financial Review last year, Professor Alex Cameron, the deputy vice-chancellor at the University of Western Australia, said that a person's proximity to a university campus is a major determinant in setting an individual's expectations and aspirations of attending university. As Professor Cameron says:

In the absence of financial support the compounding of low socioeconomic status and a lack of a local campus can represent an insurmountable obstacle to moving and meeting the costs of living away from home.

Professor Cameron qualifies this statement by saying that although a lack of income support is a major access barrier for disadvantaged students, deregulation will give universities the opportunity to address this problem. This is not lip-service to the benefits of deregulation. Professor Cameron explains that the University of Western Australia's planned tuition level of $16,000 a year will give them the capacity to provide substantial scholarships at their student residences for all of their rural students on top of their current scholarship programs. Equally, the University of Sydney has pledged to create a fairer and more diverse institution if the government's higher education reforms succeed. In October last year, vice-chancellor Michael Spence made it clear that deregulation of fees would allow Sydney University to double its existing $80 million scholarship program.

With the establishment of the South West Growth Centre in the heart of Macarthur, which has the capacity to create over 22,000 jobs, not to mention the thousands of jobs that will be created through Badgerys Creek airport and the Western Sydney Infrastructure Plan, it is now more important than ever that we get more people into higher education so that people in Macarthur and New South Wales can take advantage of this once in a lifetime opportunity. This reform will allow the next generation of residents in Macarthur to benefit from the Western Sydney infrastructure boom that this government has already set in place.

Those currently denied the opportunity to receive higher education because of where they live or how much money they have will now have more choice and more pathways into higher education than ever before. This reform will also provide equity throughout the higher education sector by extending Commonwealth funding to all Australian higher education students studying bachelor courses in non-university higher education institutions. This reform will-mean that we will no longer discriminate against students who want to undertake vocational education and training by removing all FEE-HELP and VET-HELP loan fees which are currently imposed on some students undertaking higher education and vocational education and training. This is a fair and long-overdue change. Why should someone wanting
to be a bricklayer or a plumber pay a 20 per cent fee on a VET loan when a person studying to be an accountant or a lawyer pays no fee on their HECS loan? Under these reforms those wanting to study higher education at a TAFE can do this and receive financial assistance. Those wanting to study a higher education diploma can do this and receive financial assistance as well. Anyone wishing to study an accredited undergraduate qualification will be able to do so with Commonwealth support.

Under these reforms, no student needs to pay a cent upfront for higher education and no one needs to repay anything until they are earning over $50,000 a year. This will guarantee that higher education is affordable and accessible to all. As you can see, the guiding principle of these reforms has been to widen opportunity and give everyone a chance at finding a place in higher education who wants it. As the Minister for Education explained late last year, the government wants universities and other higher education institutions to compete with each other including on price. The government wants each institution to be accountable to their students for the type and quality of courses they offer. Fee deregulation will enable our institutions to set their own direction and serve their students and communities as well as they possibly can and compete with the best in the world.

Signs of this positive transformation can already be seen at the University of Western Sydney. After last year’s Budget, UWS vice-chancellor Barney Glover recognised that the university is firmly part of the Greater Western Sydney community, and that there is a need to provide students in the Macarthur region with high-quality, accessible higher education. Accordingly, UWS became the first institution in New South Wales to freeze fees for the rest of the year, ensuring that all enrolled students at the university would have their fees capped for the duration of their courses. This fact flies in the face of Labor’s scare campaign that the university sector would introduce standard $100,000 degrees. We hear that scaremongering every day of the week. Incidentally, Geoff Sharrock investigated Labor’s $100,000 degree claims for The Conversation and found them to be misleading. Sharrock explains that Labor have arrived at these artificially high estimates by assuming worst case scenario tuition prices, applying a six per cent interest rate which is not applicable and then presenting a graduate’s total repayment in nominal dollars without adjusting for inflation. UWS’s response to fee deregulation—making their tuition fees more competitive—proves that the measures in this bill can and will work.

When Labor were in office, they cut $6.6 billion in funding to higher education. They keep denying that. Yes, they cut $6.6 billion in funding to higher education. People out there in my community are aware of the fact that Labor were prepared to make significant cuts, including cuts that they are now blocking in the Senate. Labor’s cuts were ultimately a desperate grab for funds to help their ballooning deficit, which led them to borrow the equivalent of $9,500 for every man, woman and child in Australia.

Under Labor, international education went backwards. Export income fell by billions from its 2009-10 peak, due to Labor’s neglect, policy weakness and bungled handling of what is now Australia’s third largest export. The number of international student enrolments paints an equally damning picture, falling 130,000 between 2009 and 2012. This represents a decline of 16 per cent over the 2009 to 2013 period, which was bad for the university sector and ultimately bad for our economy. Now in opposition, Labor offer no credible alternative to our higher education reforms and yet they continue to reject the advice of prominent Labor
figures like Gareth Evans, John Dawkins and Maxine McKew. If Labor do not support reform or at least engage in constructive dialogue with the government, and this reform bill is not passed the Senate, then the consequences could be dire.

If the bill does not pass, an estimated 80,000 students will miss out on Commonwealth support each year until 2018; around 50,000 higher education students and 80,000 vocational education and training students will face a 25 per cent loan fee for FEE-HELP and 20 per cent loan fee for VET FEE-HELP loans; thousands of disadvantaged higher education students will not receive assistance to access a place at university and they will not receive support for their living costs through the proposed new Commonwealth Scholarship scheme or through the new scholarship fund within the Higher Education Participation Program.

Debt, the deficit legacy left to us by the Labor Party, the political irresponsibility of the current opposition—these are all the kinds of issues that we are dealing with on a daily basis, so I call on the Senate to put an end to this impasse, support our reforms and allow the government to get on with the job of fixing Labor’s debt and deficit. Labor are in debt-and-deficit denial. They continue to bury their heads in the sand and are prepared to pass their debt and deficit on to future generations without even blinking an eyelid.

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter) (16:47): Earlier in the week in this place, I made a contribution on a biosecurity bill. On that occasion, I equated biosecurity with defence, making the point that it was every bit as important. Why? Because both deal with existential threats, one relating to potential attack on our homeland and the other relating to food security and therefore the ability to sustain ourselves. You could probably mount an argument that education also goes to our very existence, but I will not try to make that argument today. I will simply say that education policy, if not an existential issue, certainly goes very much to what we are as a nation—how wealthy and prosperous we are as a nation, where we sit as a nation in the global community, how much influence we exert as a nation—the list goes on and on—and, indeed, how happy we are as a nation. Only this morning we read of a report by UK based economists who are suggesting that, in the absence of change, Australia is very much at risk of sliding down the rankings of countries in the global community and sliding out of the G20, which would be a very, very unfortunate outcome indeed for this country. They equate that largely to where we are heading in terms of our education system.

The Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014 is the higher education deregulation bill mark 2. Labor opposed the first bill. I certainly supported that decision. I spoke against the bill and voted for that position, and I will be doing as the Labor Party is doing on university deregulation bill mark 2, and that is speaking against and voting against the proposition. It is fair to say not much has changed in this bill, save for, arguably, the $100 million transition fund. But I will return to that. For those listening to the debate who do not watch these things as closely as those of us here and find the debate somewhat complex, it is all pretty simple: the government are now going to allow the universities to charge whatever they like for university courses. There will be no government control over that. Therefore, they will be allowing universities to charge students more money, and of course there will be no compensation as such for students. We welcome the fact that the government have backed down on the increase in the rate of interest on HECS loans and debt, but there will be no compensation as such for students.
The government is taking $2 billion out of the system over the forward estimates and trying to argue that somehow that is not just a cut but it represents reform of the system. I do not buy that argument. It is a cut. It is a budget saving measure wrapped around a concocted budget emergency, as the government calls it. I heard people in the MPI earlier talking about cost-benefit analyses for things like the NBN and other pieces of infrastructure. Well, when measuring the return on the investment in education, many, many things have to be taken into account. Some of those I mentioned earlier—our prosperity, our wealth, our place in the world et cetera.

I am going to focus today—in this opportunity to make a brief contribution—on how the Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014 affects rural and regional Australia. I was somewhat interested that, with bill mark 1, there were not too many coalition members representing rural and regional Australia making a contribution. I think the reason is self-evident: while they had no choice but to toe the party line on that first bill, they were not really supportive of the bill and they were not prepared to come into this place and defend the bill. I see some of them have added themselves to the list this time around, which I find a little bit bemusing, because I have made the point that not much has changed, and I suggest there might have been a bit of influence from the Chief Government Whip and whoever instructs them.

But it is nice to see National Party MPs and Liberals representing regional and rural Australia in here at least attempting to defend what is a very difficult proposition to defend. I saw the members for Lyons and Braddon, in particular, in here—which is very interesting, given the potential impact of this bill on Tasmania. I was trying to check whether the member for Page has made a contribution, but I was not able to because the list has been updated. I do not think he made a contribute last time around—I could be wrong; I will check—and I do not know whether he made a contribution this time, but I suspect he did not. I guess he might be running into the chamber in a moment if I have misrepresented him. But certainly his part of the world is one which will be substantially adversely impacted by this bill.

To those listening, remember this: universities cannot always just ramp up fees to match the cuts being imposed by the government, because their students usually simply cannot afford it. In universities like the alma mater of the Minister for Communications sitting at the table, Sydney University, Melbourne University, the ANU and the sandstone universities generally you will find as a percentage of their student population about six, seven or eight per cent who come from low-socioeconomic backgrounds. If you come to my own region, to Newcastle, to Charles Sturt and like regional universities, you will find that proportion of poor students is around 24 per cent. At Southern Cross, which would be of interest to the member for Page, I think it is more like 26 per cent.

So you have to think about the capacity of universities to recoup these budget cuts by raising fees for their students. Rural and regional students more typically simply cannot afford it. And I am tiring of hearing this rhetoric about new scholarships being created to help these students. The fact is that the scholarships are only coming out of the fee increases. So if the university does not increase the fees, the scholarships do not come. Again, rural and regional universities have a limited capacity to increase the fees, because their students simply cannot afford it.
So we end up having a two-tier system basically, with the big city campuses raking in the money as they ramp their fees up considerably, while the rural and regional campuses struggle through the decrease in funding, unable to recoup it through increased fees—and, as I said, the scholarships are a misrepresentation of the situation. On that basis I fear a two-tier system more generally. I can see the day when our sandstone universities and those close to them—close to their status—will be doing all the research, while the rural and regional universities will be teaching only. That will be a great loss to the economic capacity of this country's great regions.

I heard the member for Macarthur quoting either the vice-chancellor or a senior academic at a Western Australian university. It is a shame that he had to go to Western Australia from Western Sydney to get the quote he was looking for. I did not hear him quote anyone from the University of Western Sydney. I do not know what their position is, but I can be fairly certain I think that they would have grave concerns about this bill, including concerns that the big sandstone universities exercising the scholarships system—and they will have plenty of scholarships because they will be able to substantially raise their fees with no problem at all—will be making decisions about where the scholarships go. They will be looking around for the best and the brightest, whether they be in Hobart, Launceston, Western Sydney or wherever, and plucking, choosing—stealing, if you like—and poaching the best and the brightest around the country into their sandstone universities, with obvious implications and consequences for rural and regional universities.

I have heard a couple of interesting contributions. I heard the member for Lyons say that this was going to be a great thing for Tasmanian universities. He said that it was going to create what he called 'reverse migration'. He declared that, rather than lose young people, Tasmania was now going to have an influx of young people looking for a cheaper university course in Tasmania—cheaper than they can find in Sydney or Melbourne. I find that a rather extraordinary way of looking at things. Even if it were true, I go back to addressing the issue I raised about the sandstone universities being able to poach the best and the brightest, with obvious consequences and implications for others. In any case, who really believes that anyone migrating to Tasmania to do a university degree is likely to stay in Tasmania? If they are from Melbourne or Sydney, obviously the opposite will be the effect. So let us not have any of this folly. The member for Forrest said that her regional students were going to rush to Perth to do their studies and become the best and the brightest and then they would come back to Forrest. That is not my experience. So often once you lose them they never return. But, in any case, how does the member for Forrest think that her students are going to be able to afford to pay the big fees in this deregulated system they might expect to pay in a capital city? It is not likely.

This is bad legislation. The Labor Party opposes it. I oppose it. We do not want $100,000 degrees in this country. We want a country where equity applies. We want to live in a country where, no matter what your background, you have the opportunity to play out your aspirations with have an equal opportunity to get the very best education in this country. We do not want sandstone and city universities plucking the best and the brightest out of Western Sydney and out of our regions because they can afford to do so—with the obvious impact on our average scores in rural and regional universities. We do not want our rural and regional universities to
lose their research capacity, with all the implications that has for local economies and local communities. These are not good things.

I said that I would go back to the transition fund. The $100 million is simply an acknowledgement that there is a problem but does not provide the fix. While $100 million sounds a lot of money when quickly said to the ordinary Australian, it will go nowhere near what is necessary to compensate regional universities for the loss of that funding.

I seem to recall that that the Minister for Education, on the day the government folded the tent on the original bill, suggested that he might create a $300 million fund, and the experts saying, 'Well, that would be at least a couple of hundred million dollars short of what would be required to help these regional universities transition to this new deregulated environment. And now, having concluded that half a billion dollars was necessary, the minister is offering a mere $100 million. It will not be enough.

And here is the real problem now—and it is of concern to the Labor Party—the clock is ticking for the universities. They have budgets to implement. They have planning to do for the next academic year in 2016, and they simply do not know what their funding environment is going to look like at this stage. We are well into February and I understand that late March is drop-dead time for most of their planning. Here we are in the House dealing with bill mark 2; and when it gets through this place, of course, it is off to the Senate. And, no doubt, and absolutely justifiably, it will be off to a Senate committee and all the time that takes. So I do not see any prospect of this bill getting anywhere far well before that drop-dead date for the universities.

There is only one group of people in this place responsible for that, and that is the government and the minister, who has completely botched this process, wrapping up cuts as reform first without consulting with the sector. Then he had to go and consult, came back and changed a few things—not much, unfortunately, but changed a few things—and here we are in mid-February and he is still trying to progress this ill-thought-out bill through this place and has yet to run the gauntlet of the Senate.

That is a real problem—it is a real problem for our universities, for our students and for Australia's future. So maybe it is time the minister folded his tent once again, came back to the drawing board and talked to all the interested parties in this place and outside this place, to see whether we cannot get a resolution to this very serious problem we have before us.

So, again, I oppose the bill on that basis and I appeal to the minister and to his Prime Minister—and all those in their cabinet—to reconsider a bill which I think is going to be of great disadvantage to our country, particularly to our regional communities. It is not the bill that we want to put us on track to maintain our position, our ranking and our status in the global community.

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde) (17:02): It is with great pleasure that I stand here to speak on the Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014 this afternoon. It was interesting listening to the member for Hunter's contribution. It is like much that Labor has done since they have been on the opposition benches, and that is to whitewash history and fail to talk about the $6 billion-odd that they pulled out of the higher education sector when they were in government. But I will get to that a little bit later.
This bill represents the most significant reform to Australia's higher education sector in a generation. It has major benefits for students. The reason is that we see that it is our job to widen opportunity and to give everyone a chance at university, despite those opposite and the Green cohorts, who are looking to stick to the old outdated model that everybody in higher education knows is no longer working.

Some of the benefits for students in these higher education reforms are that the bill makes possible the world-class education that Australian students need and deserve; it creates the largest Commonwealth Scholarships scheme ever; it provides Commonwealth support for tens of thousands of students who currently do not get it; and it provides pathways into higher education for tens of thousands of students who would otherwise miss out. In addition, this bill abolishes the unfair loan fees for FEE-HELP and VET FEE-HELP students.

As I touched on in my opening remarks, I think it is always constructive to consider for a moment how we got into this position in the first place. The reason we are in this position is because those opposite, who like to whitewash history, cut $6.6 billion from the higher education sector. And, as usual, they offer no alternative but a scare campaign. We have not seen a single credible alternative from those opposite—Labor, who left funding cliffs for research fellowships and university infrastructure. And no-one seriously believes that they have the ability to provide our universities with the resources they need to compete in a global education marketplace. The simple fact of the matter is that they actually have no plan for the higher education sector.

In April 2013, Labor cut some $2.8 billion of funding to universities and students, and capped self-education expenses, which risked leaving thousands of Australian nurses, teachers and other professionals out of pocket for their professional development costs. Labor's cuts to universities were a desperate grab for funds to help their ballooning deficit and their mirage of budget surpluses that never existed. I am sure the member for Moreton, now at the table—good friend that he is!—put a flyer out in his electorate to say that they had returned to surplus when, in fact they had not.

Mr Perrett: No, I didn't, actually!

Mr VAN MANEN: Well, if he did not, he is one of the few on that side who have not. I will give him due credit for that!

Labor's $2,000 cap on the tax deductibility of self-education expenses was desperate and would have hurt many thousands of Australians. Labor left a complicated and unwieldy mess, with large increases in regulation, compliance, reporting and unnecessary red tape and regulatory duplication applying to universities. And it was not only in the university sector: there are plenty of other sectors in our community that I have spoken to that Labor did exactly the same thing to. I think it is something they are good at: red tape, regulation, tying people up and producing nothing productive. This meant universities spent an estimated $280 million per year just on compliance and reporting.

Labor's poor track record is evidenced by the two independent reviews of regulation and reporting that the previous Labor government failed to respond to, in 2013. Labor cut the Sustainable Research Excellence Scheme by nearly $500 million in the 2012 MYEFO. Labor made no provision beyond 2015 for the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure...
Strategy and the Future Fellows program for research talent. Labor was therefore happy to let Australia's research efforts fall off a funding cliff.

Under Labor, international education went backwards. Export income from international education fell by billions of dollars from its 2009-10 peak because of Labor's neglect, policy weaknesses and bungled handling of what is now Australia's third largest export and our number one knowledge export. The number of international student enrolments during that period fell by 130,000. This represents a decline in enrolments of 16 per cent. That is bad for our economy and for all those who work in education and support services such as travel and accommodation.

There are many prominent figures—past luminaries of the Labor party—who have noted the desirability of the opposition's actual participation in shaping the higher education reform proposals currently before the Senate. These include the honourable John Dawkins, former education minister and Treasurer; the honourable Maxine McKee; and Professor Peter Noonan, the former adviser to Mr Dawkins. Interestingly, one of their current members, the honourable Dr Leigh, has also noted the benefits of deregulation and shown that the claim it will hurt disadvantaged students is simply false.

I think that is a good synopsis of why we are in this situation. What is our solution to clean up Labor's mess and to help future students in our higher education sector? Firstly, we are looking to expand the demand-driven Commonwealth funding system for students studying for higher education diplomas, advanced diplomas and associate degrees—an investment of some $372 million over three years. We are extending Commonwealth funding to all Australian higher education students in non-university higher education institutions studying bachelor courses—an investment in our students, in the future leaders of our community, of nearly $500 million over three years. By 2018, over 80,000 students each year will be provided additional support. This includes an estimated 48,000 students in diploma, advanced diploma and associate degree courses, and some 35,000 additional students undertaking bachelor courses.

There will be more opportunities for students from low socio-economic status backgrounds through new Commonwealth Scholarships, the greatest scholarship scheme in Australia's history. This will effectively mean free education for the brightest students from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. In addition to Commonwealth Scholarships, there will be a dedicated scholarship fund for universities with high proportions of low SES students. This will be funded directly by the Commonwealth, on top of university-based scholarships.

We will free universities to set their own fees and compete for students. This competition will enhance the quality of education, and make higher education providers more responsive to the needs of students and the labour market. By creating a situation in which universities and colleges compete, students win.

Domestic fees will be required to be lower than international student fees, less the Commonwealth subsidy. The government will also direct the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to monitor university fees.

As part of these changes, we will also strengthen the Higher Education Loan Program, which sees taxpayers support all students' tuition fees up-front, and ensures that students repay their loans only once they are earning an income of over $50,000 per annum. There is
no change to the current arrangement whereby no-one needs to pay a cent up front—despite some of the comments from those opposite in their scare campaign.

We have also introduced an interest rate pause on debts for primary carers of children aged less than five years who are earning less than the minimum repayment threshold. We are removing all FEE-HELP and VET FEE-HELP loan fees, which are currently imposed on some students undertaking higher education and vocational education and training.

Importantly, we are starting to reinvest in our research sector, with $150 million in 2015-16 for the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy; $140 million to deliver 100 new four-year research positions per year under the Future Fellowships scheme; $26 million to accelerate research in dementia; $42 million to support new research into tropical disease; and $24 million to support the Antarctic Gateway Partnership.

In closing, I think it is safe to say that this package of reforms is clearly designed to create a foundation and a framework for the long-term sustainability and growth of our higher education sector. Our higher education reform package, I believe, is a fair and balanced package that aims to spread opportunities for students and ensures Australia is not left behind in the global competition, both in terms of skills and education.

Mr WATTS (Gellibrand) (17:14): On Monday of this week, the Prime Minister told the Australian public that ‘good government starts today’. He told his party room that, if they just gave him a chance, if they gave him six months, he would change. There would be no more captain's picks, no more asking for forgiveness instead of permission and no more knighting princes. Well, you do not have to be Dr Phil to be sceptical about a repeat offender like this Prime Minister promising that they would change, five years into a relationship. Talk is cheap. As the Prime Minister knows full well, promises are easy to make and hard to deliver on. It is actions, not words, that count.

That brings us to the Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014. While the Prime Minister promises change, what he is actually delivering is more of the same: another bungled, broken promise, another ideologically driven attempt to change our country under the cover of a manufactured crisis. This bill in particular is deja vu all over again. Fresh from the Minister for Education's humiliating defeat at the hands of the Senate last year, the minister is once again trying to push through his toxic plans to inflict $100,000 degrees on Australian students and their families. This is not change; this is more of the same, and more and more Australians are beginning to speak out against it, including the 39 members of the coalition backbench—some of whom may be leaving the chamber as we speak.

This week the Vice-Chancellor of Victoria University, Peter Dawkins, from my own electorate, in Footscray, spoke out against the changes to funding that would pave the way for $100,000 degrees in these reforms. He is one of a growing number of voices who deplore the ad hoc, high-handed policymaking of this fractured and disunified government. Professor Dawkins argues:

The federal government's initial package represents a radical move toward deregulation, with minimal safeguards against associated risks.

Professor Dawkins joins a growing chorus of criticism by experts and members of the university sector about these proposed changes. They have also failed to gain support from Stephen Parker, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Canberra, who said that the
proposed changes to higher education funding could 'blight the lives of a generation, unless Australia comes to its senses'.

Any MP need only stand on the corner of any street in their electorate, and they will soon hear directly from the voters what Australian families think of these reforms. It begs the question: how are we still talking about the higher education and research reform amendment bill? On the eve of the 2013 federal election, Tony Abbott sat in front of a camera and made a last pledge to the Australian public before they entered the ballot boxes. While being interviewed on SBS, the now Prime Minister said there would be 'no cuts to education, no cuts to health, no change to pensions, no change to the GST and no cuts to the ABC or SBS'. Now we all know that, as the Prime Minister himself has said in the past, you really need to get it in writing from this Prime Minister before you can have too much faith that the commitment is going to be kept.

So let us turn to the Real Solutions policy pamphlet, a policy pamphlet that dare not speak its name amongst those opposite. Page 41 of Real Solutions tells us that an Abbott government would 'ensure the continuation of the current arrangements of university funding'. So we have got him on TV and we have got him in writing: no cuts and no changes to university funding.

Unlike many other coalition promises, this one seemed to survive the transition from opposition to government. Two months after the federal election, in November 2013, the Minister for Education was asked on Sky News whether he was considering raising university fees. His answer was unambiguous. The minister remarked:

… I am not even considering it—

that is, raising university fees—

because we promised that we wouldn't and Tony Abbott made it very clear before the election that we would keep our promises.

Well, we have all seen the footage, and we have read the transcripts.

In stark contrast to these promises is the bill before the House today. It is just as unpopular and unfair as the Abbott government is itself. It is quite clear to the majority of Australians that these cuts to higher education are an affront to the dignity of our egalitarian society. This bill is really about promoting elitism and exclusion rather than equity and equality of opportunity. However, more than its ideological extremism, this bill best illustrates this government's ham-fisted approach to reform.

There has been a lot of talk from conservatives in recent time about the implications of recent election results and the challenge to the Prime Minister's leadership—the fastest challenge of a sitting Prime Minister since Federation—and many are suggesting that our democracy is somehow broken. The Australian's economics correspondent, Adam Creighton, has written that Australian democracy is 'probably not sustainable'. Melbourne radio host Neil Mitchell stated that the recent election result in Queensland showed that Australia had become:

… ungovernable. Nobody will be willing to make tough decisions

Another radio presenter in Melbourne, Tom Elliott, went so far as to say on 3AW:

We need a benign dictatorship, we need a committee of proven, talented people, give them 5 years
Instead of blaming the voters, conservatives need to look in the mirror to understand why reform has stalled under this government and under the state Liberal governments.

This government has thrown the reform book out the window. The OECD's Making Reform Happen project, a long-term, multicountry study of the effective ingredients of successful reform processes in developed countries, offers a tool kit for effective reformers. It is one that the Abbott government could learn a thing or two from. The major findings from this report process were:

It is important to have an electoral mandate for reform.

Now, as I have already outlined to the House, the Abbott government has failed on this measure comprehensively with respect to these higher education reforms. It is no way to make the biggest changes to our higher education system in 25 years by dropping them on both the Australian public and the sector in two lines in a budget speech after promising at the previous election that there would be no changes.

The next recommendation of the OECD is:

Effective communication is essential.

No, the OECD did not mean a taxpayer funded advertising campaign, as has been recently launched by the education minister—another direct broken promise of Tony Abbott's, who said that there would be no government funded advertising program of any initiative in the budget. What is required is an articulation of the need for reform. As I say, this government has confected a crisis in our university system—a university system that is regarded by international observers, particularly in the United States, as a model worthy of imitation.

The next recommendation from the OECD is:

Policy design must be underpinned by solid research and analysis.

The chorus of opposition to these reforms from academics and experts in education policy really tells the story here. Professor Bruce Chapman, the architect of the original HECS Scheme, has made it very clear that this government is taking the principles of HECS into uncharted waters and that there could be very serious consequences for the equity provisions of this policy system. Joseph Stiglitz has similarly praised the enormous contribution that Australia's higher education system makes to combating the progress of inequality in this country.

The OECD has also said that 'leadership is critical' to the delivery of reform. On this point I will let the Prime Minister's 68 per cent public disapproval rating speak for itself. The next recommendation from the OECD is:

Successful reforms often take several attempts.

On this one I will give it to Christopher Pyne—he is continuing to try in the face of defeat. The final recommendation from the OECD is:

It usually pays to engage opponents of reform rather than simply trying to override their opposition.

Now, the education minister's ability to build consensus in this chamber is legendary. However, unfortunately, on this bill his efforts to engage his opponents have consisted more of the harassment of Senate crossbenchers by a flood of text messages than any sense to gain a sense of common purpose.
Democracy is not broken in Australia. Reform is not dead. We are not in the last days of the Roman republic. What is needed is a change of leadership. What is needed is grown-up, adult government. Rather than providing the grown-up, adult government, as promised by the Prime Minister in opposition, watching this government try to implement reform in this country in recent times has been like watching a two-year-old trying to eat spaghetti with their fingers. They are getting it all over themselves. It is just a mess.

Instead of attempting to build consensus in the parliament and in the community, seeking compromise or consulting with those affected, the minister has chosen to continue the combative approach to policymaking that has characterised his party's chaotic tactics. When he meets opposition from students, the Senate, the community, families, vice-chancellors, the minister for education simply puts his hands over his ears and tries another advertising campaign. He failed attempts to push through radical changes to higher education funding last year, then immediately jumped onto 7.30 to inform us that he planned to come back with his unfair changes as soon as parliament resumed in 2015. Today, in the first sitting week of the year, there has been no change; there have been no lessons learnt; and we are back where we started. It is indicative of a government ravaged by internal fracturing and poisoned by stubborn ideological zeal.

As I said earlier, the Prime Minister promised before the election that there would be no cuts to education funding. In the first Abbott budget, the first Hockey budget, the government cut federal funding of tertiary education by 20 per cent. If that were not enough, the Liberals then used their own savage cuts to education funding to justify pushing through the deregulation of university fees we see in the bill before us today. In a move that can only be considered masochistic, the government is trying to create an environment that would necessitate these awful policy changes. All of the analysis, from the Group of Eight to the National Tertiary Education Union, says that, as a result of these cuts to base university funding, fees for students will need to go up by around 30 per cent just to make up for this base funding cut.

This legislation would see a further slashing of funding for Commonwealth supported places in undergraduate degrees by an average of 20 per cent, and up to 37 per cent for some. The legislation does not stop there, instead proposing a complete deregulation of student fees from 2016, allowing universities to charge whatever they like, truly bringing the prospect of common $100,000 degrees into the frame.

The education minister wants to take us down the American road of higher education, where your ability to attend a university depends on your parents' bank account, not your industry or intelligence. This is not the Australia that I know. The United States is also suffering from the burden of deregulation in the form of student debt. The United States now has more student debt than credit card debt. Is this really this kind of society that we want to live in?

Likewise, if the US system does not serve as a perfect example of the negative effects of deregulation on universities, attempts at deregulation of universities in the United Kingdom have had similar debilitating results. The UK Higher Education Commission has released scathing reports of the impact that deregulation has had on English universities. Three years after its implementation, deregulation has raised doubts over the sector's quality and reputation as well as its financial sustainability going forward.
Without a white paper, community consultation, an electoral mandate or any sense of common purpose across this parliament, how can this government continue to try and franticly and chaotically force this legislation through? The irony is not lost on me that the only thing that we can now really trust this government to do is to follow through on its broken promises. The Liberal Party went to the last election with a list of promises—promises that quite obviously meant nothing to either the Prime Minister or his minister for education. In fact the minister for education had the gall, late last year, to claim that the coalition did not even have a higher education policy at the last election. That is taking it to whole other level: not only breaking a promise but denying the existence of the promise in the first place.

When they are criticised for cutting funding to universities, the government's media minders tell them to talk about the range of new scholarships on offer. We have heard it from members opposite talking about this bill. They say it as if we had not been inundated with their taxpayer funded ads on television—ads about changes to higher education for a proposed bill that has not yet passed the parliament. This scholarship fund, 'the biggest Commonwealth scholarship fund in Australia's history', as the education minister likes to remind us, will be funded exclusively by other students. This Commonwealth fund is not made up of Commonwealth funding; rather, it is funded by charging students more to go to university. One dollar in every $5 raised by deregulating university fees will go to this fund. This is a direct impost on future students.

Like so much of this proposed bill, the Commonwealth scholarship fund is clouded in a haze of technocratic jargon, misinformation and deception, designed to disguise an extreme ideological agenda. This comedy of errors would be amusing if it were not so destructive and dangerous. It is utterly unsurprising in this context that the Prime Minister's disapproval rating now sits at 68 per cent, and as Leigh Sales said on 7.30 this week to a stuttering Prime Minister hanging by a thread:

Clearly the public is not buying what you're saying there.

Indeed, the Liberal Party itself has not been this unpopular since the Minister for Communications, the white knight who will supposedly save the Liberal-National government, was leading the Liberal Party in 2009. Sadly, while all of this week's news will undoubtedly focus on the fracturing and disunity of the government leading this country down the garden path, effective governance makes way for petty politics. But what we do in this House matters, particularly the contents of this bill. I know that members of my electorate are very concerned about the consequences of this bill for their future and their children's future—for their ability to see a different and better life for their children.

Labor will not support this bill. We will vote against any attempt to cut university funding. We will not support greater inequality and reduced access as a result of higher fees and bigger debts. Finally, we will never tell Australian students that their ability to undertake transformative education depends on the size of their parents' bank account. The Prime Minister said—(Time expired)

Mr COLEMAN (Banks) (17:29): In question time today, the Prime Minister made the observation that the Leader of the Opposition has been running around the country trying to scare people about fairness or supposed unfairness. Never was a truer observation made and nowhere is it more true than in this area of higher education reform. What the opposition has sought to do is cloud the debate, provide a whole series of falsehoods about the purported
impact of these reforms and, frankly, mislead the Australian people about what is actually in these reforms and what their real impact will be on Australians. Let's address directly the issue of fairness in these reforms in some detail. I then want to also touch on some broader aspects of the legislation as well.

Firstly, under this legislation, nobody is required to pay for a university course up-front. Let's just make that very clear. Despite the obfuscation and the weasel words of those opposite, nobody, under this legislation, is required to pay for a university course up-front. The HECS system as it exists today continues, so nobody has to pay up front.

Secondly, nobody has to repay anything under their HECS obligation until they earn at least $50,000 per year. So if they are out of the workforce, if they are unemployed, if they are working part-time or if they are in a full-time job that pays less than $50,000 a year, their obligation to repay HECS in that year is zero. Nobody has to pay anything up-front and nobody has to make any repayments until they earn at least $50,000 a year. And if they only earn $50,000 a year, the payment is very modest indeed at that level and obviously rises as one's income rises. Again, we cannot emphasise this point enough on fairness.

Thirdly, nobody has to pay an interest rate higher than CPI. Just as it is now, whatever the CPI rate is, under the legislation that is before the House today, is what people will be required to pay in the future. So no payment up-front, no requirement to pay anything at all until you earn $50,000 a year and then, when you do start to make repayments, you do so with interest calculated at CPI.

Finally, if you have a child who is under the age of five and if you are not earning over $50,000 a year—probably because you are looking after that child or perhaps working part-time—not only do you not have to make any HECS payments but you do not have any interest calculated during those five years either. That is a very important point. If we want a focus on fairness, and it is entirely appropriate to consider issues of fairness, nobody is required to pay any interest whilst they have a child under the age of five if they are earning less than $50,000 a year.

It is very difficult to see how a system under which nobody has to pay anything up front, nobody has to repay anything until they are earning $50,000 a year and nobody has to pay an interest rate greater than CPI can be a negative thing in terms of access to Australian universities. In terms of access, it is very important to note a couple of other provisions of this legislation. The first one is we anticipate there are about 80,000 students who currently do not receive Commonwealth support for their courses because they are sub-bachelor courses, diploma courses, associate courses and so on that do not fit the strict definitions of what gets Commonwealth support at the moment. But in the future they will. We think there will be about 80,000 people by 2018, in three years, who will have direct Commonwealth subsidies going to their course, which should have a downward impact on what they are personally required to contribute.

In addition, under this bill, we will implement the largest system scholarships in Australian history. So for disadvantaged students and for students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, a large pool of new scholarships will come into place and that is a great thing for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.
Let's run through that list again because they are very important points: no-one has to pay up-front; no-one has to repay anything until they earn $50,000 a year; nobody has to pay interest greater than the level of CPI; anyone who has a child under the age of five who is earning less and $50,000 does not even have to pay CPI—nothing, it does not go up at all; the largest scheme of scholarships in the history of the Commonwealth; and 80,000 more students than today getting Commonwealth subsidies towards their higher education. So if the Leader of the Opposition and those opposite want to run around and talk about fairness, that is a debate we are very willing to have because this bill has some extremely important reforms in it and it is structured in such a way that it does not remove opportunity to attend university. In fact, it substantially expands it for many thousands of Australians.

One of the key provisions of the bill is the ability for universities in the future to set their own fees. This is an important bill. As you know, at present every university in the country charges exactly the same amount, generally the same amount, within bands, for different courses. So if you are at a rural university or if you are at a major metropolitan university, the amount will be precisely the same. It is important to note there is some differentiation in the system already because there are different fees within different bands. When they take on their HECS obligation, students know that there are different fee bands. Some courses have a lower HECS obligation than others. So students are already choosing the amount of HECS obligation they are willing to take on. They are fully aware that some courses have a higher HECS obligation than others.

So this notion that the current system does not involve students making any evaluation between the value of different courses is wrong, because they do. Students now say, this is a band 1 course and it will cost this much, and this is a band 3 course—and so on. They take that into account when deciding what they want to study.

So, under this scheme, students will be able to choose from the options given to them by the universities around the nation what is the course that they want to do. That means that students will be able to choose the course that they believe provides them with the best value. As a consequence, universities will be responsive to those student demands. So, if a university has a particularly strong demand for a particular course, that suggests that course is particularly important and that university will be encouraged to continue to invest in that area and perhaps specialise in that area. And that is a good thing, because universities specialising in areas in which they are particularly strong makes a lot of sense.

Once students make that decision and make that choice to take on the particular HECS obligation, it is important to note that overall across the system the relative contribution of students and government to the cost of education is about 50-50. It varies from individual to individual but across the system it is about 50-50. That is, I believe and I think the Australian people believe, a very fair mix. When you take on a university degree, you get a significant personal benefit. There is a benefit to the community as well of course, because education leads to productivity and further development of our society and economy. But there is a clear personal benefit. So it is appropriate to have a broad 50-50 mix of contribution from the student and the government. It is extremely important to note that nobody is required to pay anything upfront under these rules. Students will elect what HECS obligation they are willing to take on.
Because of the importance of these reforms and the need to set up the education system for the future, they have been the subject of widespread support. Universities Australia, which is the peak body representing Australian universities, has made it clear that it believes that fee deregulation is an important step forward that will allow Australia universities to have the sustainable funding base that they need to invest in the future.

Interestingly and tellingly, we have seen some important interventions from representatives from the Australian Labor Party. I think John Dawkins—the original architect of the HECS system and other important education reforms—made it very clear that he was disappointed in the obstructionist attitude of those opposite on these issues. We also had the former member for Bennelong calling for a less obstructionist approach. And the Business Council of Australia has pointed to the importance of university reform for productivity in the future. And the list goes on.

There is no credible alternative to these proposals. There is an absolute lack of ideas from those opposite. What we see in this space, as we see in so many others, is a sense of simply saying no; no solutions to the problem that they created, no solutions to the lack of funding that they provided to the higher education sector; and a willingness to just run around the country trying to scare people. That is not the task of reforming governments. Indeed it was not the task of previous reforming governments of those opposite. But the opposition that we find ourselves with is an obstructionist, mediocre, intellectually thin and very negative group. Simply running around the country trying to scare people is not going to work, because the Australian people are far more sophisticated than that.

The Australian people know that nobody is required to pay upfront for a university course. Nobody is required to pay anything back until they earn at least $50,000 a year. Nobody is required to pay interest at a rate higher than CPI. Nobody with a child under the age of five is required to pay any interest at all. The scholarship program is the largest in Australian history. There are about 80,000 people who are going to have access to Commonwealth funding who do not have access to Commonwealth funding today. Those points are very important. It is very clear that this is a system that is entirely fair, that provides universities with the framework they need to specialise in the areas where there is the demand.

It is important to not pretend that every university is exactly the same, because there is a differentiation across our university sector. Some universities have fantastic law schools; some universities have fantastic schools of agricultural economics. The variations across our university sector are immense. Pretending that every university is exactly the same is a system that leads to a lack of investment and to a lack of growth opportunities for the funding of the Australian university sector. These are good reforms, important reforms for the university system, and I commend them to the House.

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (17:44): For an education minister Mr Pyne is a pretty slow learner. Last year the Senate sent this government a very clear message. The Senate, representing the Australian people from various points on the political spectrum, sent a very clear message. The Senate said: 'Australia is a country where, no matter how much you earn, you should be able to go to university and should not be deterred from going or forced to make certain choices on the basis of the size of the debt that you might incur.' The Senate sent the very clear message that in Australia you should not graduate from university with a debt the size of a small mortgage. If people have to graduate with a debt the size of a small
mortgage, it is clear that people may not go in the first place or, if they do go, they will be forced to make certain choices for the rest of their life that they otherwise might not. People have looked to the United States, where students carry around with them five- or six-figure debts for their whole lives and are forced to make decisions about where they live and what kinds of jobs they will take because they have this debt hanging around their neck and said: 'We don't want that. We do not want Australia to become like the United States where the gap between the haves and have-nots just grows.'

The Senate saw through the blackmail of this government that is encapsulated in this Higher Education and Research Reform Bill 2014 and the last bill. The blackmail was, 'We are going to cut funding to universities by about 20 per cent,' and when the universities said, 'Hang on, that is not sustainable,' they took that as some kind of imprimatur for their policies. People can see through that. They are putting a gun to the head of universities and saying, 'We are going to cut your funding by 20 per cent unless you get together and say you are going to support our bill.' People can see through that because people are not dumb.

Independent review after independent review has told us that universities in this country need a boost in funding and yet this government comes along, after having made the promise that there would be no cuts to education, and says it is going to take 20 per cent out of base funding for universities. The Senate stood up to this government and said: 'No, hang on. Not only are you breaking a promise and not only did you not tell people at the election that you were going to do this but this is fundamentally unfair and will grow the gap between the haves and the have-nots in this country.' Instead of saying, 'I hear what you are saying, let us find a different way,' the minister said: 'I will turn around tomorrow and introduce exactly the same bill. I will take some of the worst bits off it because you have called me on it—you have called me on the fact that my original intention was to make women pay more and to give people crippling debts that would keep on growing so when women took time out of the workforce to have kids their debt would keep increasing even though they were not earning anything. You have found me out on that so I will take that bit out, but I will leave the rest in and pretend it is now fair.'

This message was not just coming from the Senate. This message is coming loud and clear from the Australian people. People in Australia know that once you deregulate university fees and say, 'You can just go for it now, guys; you institutions can charge whatever you like,' some courses will have their prices skyrocket out of the reach of ordinary citizens. That stands to reason. We have heard lecture after lecture from members of the government about how price signals are wonderful because they allow people to make choices. Anyone can look at any other commodity in the market to know that if you can charge whatever you want for it then people will charge a very high price knowing that there is a small proportion of the population that is able to pay that price and everyone else can go hang. That is exactly what universities will do.

The universities that are well established and well off and that are currently attractive because of their good institutional reputation or location will be able to charge whatever the hell they like in certain subjects. Each year there are only a few hundred places for subjects like law, medicine and vet science and when the places are limited the prices will go up and up. People saw last year the University of Western Australia and Melbourne University say that $100,000 for a degree is not unrealistic, especially when you look at what international
students are paying at the moment. The minister comes in here and tells us that we should be satisfied with this bill because there will be a new cap in it and you will not have to pay more than an international student is paying. Some comfort that is, knowing that some degrees at the moment are in the vicinity of $100,000. He just made the point that we made all of last year and are going to continue to make all of this year.

The University of Western Australia says expect that some degrees could cost in the order of $100,000 and a lot of institutions now require you to do an undergraduate generalist degree before you can go into a specialised degree like law or medicine—these things are becoming postgraduate degrees now, so some students are going to have to do two degrees. If they want to get into medicine or law, they will have to do the generalist undergraduate and then go into the specialist one, so costs are going to go up and up. I would have thought that members of the government would read their journal of record The Australian, which made the point recently that students studying veterinary science are going to be up for around $200,000 at some universities. That will go down well in rural and regional Australia! That will get people staying on the farm. This government is proposing $200,000 to do vet science.

People know that once you say, 'Let it rip,' and people can charge whatever they like for education the cost of some degrees is going to be out of the reach of the everyday Australian. They are not going to want to graduate and then have to find a job, start a family and get a mortgage with a small mortgage already hanging around their neck, but that is what this government is condemning people to. Not only that, but if you happen to graduate and it takes a little while to find a job, heaven help you after six months because they are going to kick you off the dole and you will have nothing except a $200,000 degree. While you look for a job you will be forced to live on zero dollars a week.

If this government gets its way with this legislation and its other legislation, we will see the tipping point in this country, where, as a result of this government's action, future generations and people under 30 are going to be worse off than their parents, and the people who came before them. That is going to be the legacy of this government if this legislation and other legislation is passed. They stand up part of this bill and say, 'It is all going to be all right because there are scholarships,' but what they do not tell you is that they are not putting a dollar towards those scholarships. The funding for those scholarships is going to have to be met from the universities themselves. So they cut university funding by 20 per cent and say to universities, 'You are going to have to fund a bunch of scholarships as well as a 20 per cent funding cut.' Where is it going to come from? The money is going to come from the students in the form of higher fees, so this wonderful scholarship program that you are talking about is actually going to put fees up even further for everyone else.

They came back again at the start of this week and said: 'We're all ears. We hear what the Australian people are telling us and we understand that we might have got a few things wrong.' Obviously this is not one of them. Obviously this government have no compunction at all about making people graduate with a debt the size of a small mortgage before they have even started their working life. That is not off the table. They are pressing ahead with that. I must say that after hearing the government saying, 'We are all ears,' and, 'We hear the message,' I am yet to find one policy that they are firmly committed to scrapping, or one policy that was in last year's budget that they are firmly committed to taking off the table. It
seems to be the case that they want to get it all through, and they are coming back and pushing again and again. They are going to be met with the same response and rightly so.

One of the other things that people have picked up on over the last few months is that not only is this bill taking 20 per cent of funding away from universities and then saying to them, 'From your cut funding you have to find money to fund some scholarships'; it is also going to take a pot of money that would have gone to universities and give it over to the private sector. It is going to give to the private sector $500 million that would otherwise have gone to universities. They are, in effect, not only going to deregulate but going to privatise universities as well. I struggled to find that in the government's election platform, but that is what they are going to do.

You do not have to look further than my home state of Victoria to see what the effect of doing that will be. It will rip money out of the public system and public education suffers, and that money then goes straight across to a private provider, who takes a whack of it in profit. That stands to reason; they are in business and they are private operators. That is fine. Good on them, but why should we, the public, be subsidising them at the cost of universities? That is what this government is asking us to do. In the TAFE sector and the vocational education sector last year, according to some research that has just been done, the private providers in the sector made $230 million profit, and that is off the back of public subsidies. So $230 million in Victoria that could have gone into TAFE to skill people up for the future is now going straight into the hands of private operators in the form of profit. And this government, with this legislation, wants to do that with $500 million of taxpayers' money—shovel it off to their mates in the private sector. It will be interesting to have a look at the list of Liberal Party donors. Why should the federal government and the Australian taxpayer subsidise a private for-profit education operator? Let them run their business, and good luck to them, but it is not our job to subsidise them.

I thought this government was all about saying that industry had to stand on its own two feet and that it is going to withdraw industry assistance. It seems that does not apply here; they are all too happy to gut universities and just shovel the money into the pockets of the private sector. What we know, and we have seen it in Victoria, is that when you introduce that kind of model the quality goes down because money that would have otherwise gone to teaching and research is now going towards someone's bottom line and is not finding its way back into the system at all, all courtesy of the taxpayer.

I take my hat off to the hundreds of thousands of students, family members, community members around the country and the National Tertiary Education Union and others, who have campaigned so strongly to say, 'This will fundamentally change the direction of education in Australia forever,' and, 'This will make Australia a more unequal country.' I say to them: thank you for your campaign because you have helped call this government out. If the government wants to find a reason as to why it is languishing in the polls—it is not the salesman; it is what you are trying to sell. People just do not want it.

If you think the answer is to come back here and say that you will just push this bill through as quickly as possible, do not be surprised if what happened in Queensland and what happened in Victoria happens to you again very soon. So it should because you have overstepped the mark. You have broken a fundamental compact with the people of this country, who want Australia to be a place where we look after each other, where no matter
where you come from and how much money you earn you will get a good quality health care and a good quality education, and where when you get sick they check your Medicare card not your credit card. They want a place where when you go to university you do not leave with a debt the size of a small mortgage. You have pushed people too far and that is why you are in trouble. People want to make sure that in Australia education is available to everyone and remains so. That is why I am very proud to be opposing this bill. I will continue to fight for more money for our universities and better support for students. It will not be a moment too soon that this bill is defeated yet again in the Senate.

Debate adjourned.

BUSINESS

Rearrangement

Mr ANDREWS (Menzies—Minister for Defence) (17:59): I move:

That business intervening before order of the day No. 7, Government business, be postponed until a later hour this day.

Question agreed to.

MOTIONS

Sydney: Martin Place Siege

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this House:

(1) recognise the tragic events around the siege of the Lindt Cafe in Martin Place, Sydney on 15 and 16 December, 2014;
(2) extend its deepest and heartfelt sympathies to the family and friends of Katrina Dawson and Tori Johnson for their loss;
(3) honour the courage and fortitude shown by those held in the Lindt Cafe;
(4) acknowledge the response of the law enforcement and security agencies and emergency services personnel to a difficult and dangerous situation;
(5) recognise the calm and steadfast response of the people of Sydney, as well as the wholehearted support of the Australian people for the people held inside the Lindt Cafe and their families both during and after the siege;
(6) thank the leaders and people of other nations who stood with Australia during this testing time;
(7) note with sadness that other countries have recently suffered at the hands of terrorists, including France, Canada, Iraq, Egypt, Nigeria, Japan and Jordan;
(8) declare our deep repugnance of terrorism in all forms; and
(9) affirm the unity and resolve of this Parliament to protect our citizens and our democratic freedoms.

Mr DANBY (Melbourne Ports) (18:00): I rise to express, as have my colleagues on both sides of this House, the horror and sadness that we felt, and still feel, over the attack in the Lindt cafe in Martin Place in December. It is appropriate that this House pass this condolence motion, and am honoured to speak to it.

We remember that this event took place at almost the same moment that 145 children, in a school in Pakistan, were murdered by the same mentality—the same 'cult', as the Prime Minister calls them—by a different faction of the jihadism which is evident throughout the
world. It is a tragedy not just for Australia. There are much worse things happening to other people in other nations, and to Australians overseas, and we have a special insight into it now because we have seen it here on our own mainland. Our hearts must go out particularly to the mothers and fathers of those poor young women in Nigeria who have been kidnapped by those brutes and whom the Nigerian army, even with international assistance, have been unable to retrieve.

I want to say something about the bravery of all of the hostages, as has been recalled in various media appearances and in various speeches in this House. I share my colleagues' admiration for the bravery of our fellow citizens and acknowledge the 16 hours of terror that they suffered. Katrina Dawson, the barrister, is someone who impressed me very much. My wife is also a highly capable barrister and I see in Ms Dawson a reflection of my own personal circumstances. She was a mother of three and we mourn for her children and her husband for the years they have to go without her, so unnecessarily. Tori Johnson, aged 34, the manager of the restaurant, was one who was particularly focused on by the person who engineered the siege. I have recommended to opposition leader Bill Shorten that he should be nominated for the Cross of Valour, Australia's highest civilian bravery decoration.

The actions of Man Haron Monis have rightly been described by commentators as a 'lone wolf' attack. Monis claimed to be acting on behalf of Daesh, and the attack was subsequently claimed by that group, but there does not appear to be any evidence that his attack, unlike the attack in Paris, was conducted in any manner of cooperation with one of these monster organisations in the Middle East. Monis took it upon himself to conduct this attack and he did so. In a sense it does not matter whether he was in direct contact with them, because Daesh—IS, as people call it—appealed to its ideological adherents to conduct just this kind of random attack. That is the danger that is a continuum in the international circumstances all around the world that we must feel here in Australia. It is impossible for our police and security agencies to know what is in the mind of every person who reads the evil scripts written for them by Daesh, or al-Qaeda of the Arabian Peninsula, or Boko Haram or some other of these deranged jihadist groups.

This was not the only lone wolf attack in recent months and years. Indeed, there has been a spate of such attacks where an individual, or sometimes a group of two, has attacked random passers-by as Daesh has argued for. We saw it in the Boston bombing of 2013; the brutal slaying of Fusilier Lee Rigby in the UK the following month; the attack on the Jewish museum in Belgium in May last year, where four innocent people visiting the museum were murdered by a returnee—just as we have got this phenomenon here in Australia—from an experience of fighting with Daesh in Syria and Iraq. The Canadian parliament was attacked. The clerk of the Canadian parliament had to shoot dead a jihadist attacker to prevent further casualties amongst MPs or staff. We have seen numerous lone wolf attacks in Israel, including the stabbing to death of four rabbis at prayer in a part of West Jerusalem. It was nothing to do with a conflict, nothing to do with settlements. It was completely away from that area. There was a group of people who oppose praying on the Temple Mount because, to them, that is a violation of the spirituality of that place, but they were singled out by two people who lived in the area who went in, stabbed them to death and tried to run away.

Most recently, of course, there were the execution-style slayings of the Charlie Hebdo staff and the siege at a Jewish supermarket in Paris—not a random attack, as someone in
Washington claimed recently, although they are trying to walk that back. It was not a random attack but a deliberate attack on a kosher supermarket. Because the people in there were Jewish they are particularly fearful of these jihadists all around the world. These operations, which terrified France, were coordinated by al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula in some kind of macabre competition with Daesh, who do the random attacks, the lone wolf attacks, and al-Qaeda thought, 'These people are getting all the international publicity; we'd better get in and kill some people in Paris too.' What a terrible international phenomena they are. We all have to act together to prevent these kinds of things spreading and coming more to this country.

These attacks have in common two things: perpetrators motivated by violent jihadism and a heeding of the call by the organised jihadi groups for individuals to take it upon themselves to randomly kill infidels. When looked at collectively, these attacks signify a trend, a continuum. These events in Sydney were part of a continuum of tragedies that are happening all around the world. Since the September 11 attacks, Western countries have enacted numerous laws to prevent terrorist acts occurring on their soil. In the face of new tactics and new technologies, parliaments have adapted. In this context, I am proud of the bipartisan nature of counterterrorism legislation passed by this parliament.

As democracies have adapted, so have the espousing terrorists ideologies. Now, as I have said, we have a competition between Da'esh and al-Qaeda to see how many people they can kill and terrorise in the Middle East, and how many people their supporters can kill and terrorise in the West and perhaps Asia. So, individuals and small groups have to be disrupted and arrested, as we have seen today, if we want to prevent these attacks being perpetrated by so-called cleanskins happening again in our country.

The individual at the centre of this event might have been stopped. Monis was out on bail for alleged involvement in his ex-wife's murder, among many other charges, which has led many Australians to question why he was at large. I would encourage people who have that sceptical view to listen to a report by the ABC's religion program five years ago, in which the presenter asks why Monis was allowed to proliferate his brand of extremism for so long. The report is available on the ABC website. As I said, that program was made five years ago—long before this tragic event. Taking Monis off their watch list was a mistake by the security services, but we should not blame them. How many extremists can ASIO and the AFP monitor? However, people who are vexatious or mentally ill, yet proclaim an affinity to jihadism or speak positively of any of the groups listed as terrorists by the Australian government must be taken seriously. Perhaps they should remain in custody. Even these mentally challenged people must be included in the lone wolf threat. Unattached, ideologically agitated jihadists who are appealed to by Da'esh to mount spontaneous attacks in places like Australia are people we should be considering.

As the member for Fraser said, when we enter this place representing 100,000 constituents and their families we feel a deep sense of responsibility. It is the gravity of this place that decisions we make directly affect the security and safety of those Australians who entrust us with this responsibility. Parliament has a responsibility to do all it can to maintain Australia's record of preventing these attacks in Australia. That is why we must take the report that the government is presenting very seriously, and I am pleased that the Prime Minister has undertaken to bring this back to the House.
There are many Australians involved with the organisation Da'esh over in Syria and Iraq. There are people coming back here; there are people already back here. We have a responsibility to see that we suppress these people. I am sure all members of parliament wish the ADF forces over there assisting the international forces success in suppressing Daesh, but we also have a responsibility here at home. Many Australians are killed overseas in terror attacks, and we want to ensure that deaths are prevented here. We have to learn from this report and we have to see that there are no more Lindts in Australia. That should be our tribute to the victims. (Time expired)

Mr VARVARIS (Barton) (18:10): I share the sentiments expressed by my colleagues who have spoken on this sad tragedy so far. Words can only express so much of what we all felt on that day and what we still feel as we recount the shocking details. It was a typical Monday in Sydney, a day where some people were wrapping up work in the lead-up to the Christmas holidays whilst others were hurrying about completing their Christmas shopping duties in the heart of the Sydney CBD, Martin Place. Coffee shops were still open and catering to the business and leisure set, with noisy city vehicles in the background echoing off the laneways and tall buildings in the financial and legal centre of the town. The day could not be more ordinary, yet only a few hours later things would change horrifically.

December 15 2014 is a day that shattered our sense of humanity. It was a day that Sydneysiders and all Australians were assaulted by the actions of a lone gunman, who was unstable, fanatical and had a depraved sense of identity. The lone gunman stepped into the Lindt chocolate cafe, ordered coffee and a slice of cake and sat down like everyone else. Except that he was not like everyone else. What he did next was terrifying, unjustifiable, and an act of pure evil. He held hostage the 10 customers inside the cafe as well as the eight employees, and demanded that they obey his orders or else. He threatened innocent civilians with threats of violence, unwarranted and unjustified.

From this point onwards, a lengthy 16-hour negotiation process would commence with police. Without doubt the Martin Place siege of 15 December was an act which caused unrest in our peaceful country. The act instilled fear in all Australians for the duration of the horrific siege, leaving many questioning and many who may still find fear within them. Till this day, it has been difficult to comprehend what was going through the terrorist's mind and, furthermore, the absolute sense of fear and shock that the hostages would have felt. For many of us, whether we live in Sydney or not, the assault and threat of violence on an innocent life is unthinkable. The siege embodies an attack on the very fabric of humanity and of the Australian way of life.

Each and every person inside that cafe had their hopes and dreams virtually snuffed out the minute they were kept captive. Their lives will never be the same again. But what is truly most heartbreaking and inconceivable is the loss of lives, hours later, of the Lindt cafe manager, Tori Johnson, and barrister Katrina Dawson. The context and manner in which these two innocent individuals died is the most gut-wrenching news we all had to learn. Our sense of freedom and justice was dismantled that day, and, whilst strangers united in condemning the attack rallied around our law enforcement officers who helped end the siege, I know none of these details would console the families of Tori and Katrina. These were hardworking individuals who were loved by their families and friends, going about their day, working as they normally do or stepping out for a coffee; their lives snuffed out instantaneously.
To the family of Tori Johnson and to his partner, I am so very sorry for your loss and I extend to you my deepest and heartfelt sympathies. No parents would envisage having to bury their own child and certainly not in such circumstances. My condolences go to the family of Katrina Dawson. For starters, I could not imagine what pain and suffering you are currently going through. I, like many of my parliamentary colleagues with young children, cannot imagine the agony of losing a child, or a child losing a parent. No family, no partner or husband, no sister, brother, son or daughter, should ever have to go through what the Johnson and Dawson families have had to endure.

Tori and Katrina were simply at the wrong place at the wrong time and, as such, became unsuspecting victims in a fanatical plan conspired by a madman. Yet the pain they have suffered has been inflicted on us all as Australians. We are a peaceful, strong, civil and democratic society which values each and every person's life. To other nations, we are a beacon of hope and liberty. We are united and strong because of the values we share and the respect we have for each other and for life itself, and nothing will ever take this away.

No religion condones violence and death. No nation tolerates such sheer disregard for human life. Australians will never back down from defending our values and our way of life. This was an immeasurable tragedy that should never have occurred, and it is a testing time for all of us as we attempt to grasp what occurred that day. Many constituents in my electorate of Barton have contacted me to express their disgust, horror and anguish after learning the gruesome details of the siege. But the undertone in all their messages has been that we, as Australians, will never cower or falter when faced with acts of violence. We do not recoil when faced with a death cult, and we stand our ground when we are faced with diabolical acts motivated by a perverted sense of justice.

Our unity in these testing times gives more reason than ever for us to preserve our democratic freedoms, something that I trust both sides of politics to steadfastly adhere to. My thoughts and prayers are with the victims and the families of everyone involved in the siege as we grieve with them. I hope that they can move on from the terrible events of that day as they draw comfort from the millions of Australians who continue to support them. There is no place for hateful ideology and violence in any civilised democracy. Each and every one of us has a right to live in peace, to practise freedom and liberty. We defend one another when harm comes our way, as we have always done, since the days of the Anzacs. I pay my deepest respects to Tori and Katrina and to everyone affected by this atrocity. We are greater than the sum of our parts and we will rise above this. I commend this motion to the House.

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (18:17): When the first reports of the Martin Place siege hit the airwaves, after the initial shock I think the thought of many people in this country was, 'That could have been me.' It could have been any one of us in that cafe at that time, doing nothing more than having a morning cup of coffee. Then, as the events unfolded and came to their tragic end, people around the country, who were gearing up for the end of the year, were heartbroken to know that Tori Johnson's partner was not going to see him again and that Katrina Dawson's kids were heading towards a Christmas without their mum and that a husband had lost his wife.

As we find out more of the stories now from the people who were held hostage in the siege, we understand more fully what we saw and recognised immediately on their faces, when we saw them inside the cafe in those first moments, before the footage was cut. We saw people...
who had perhaps resigned themselves to the worst and were struggling to comes to grips with it, knowing that they might not be able to have that last goodbye with the people who were close to them.

The emergency services personnel and security forces, who train their whole career for an event like this, would also, no doubt, hope that an event like this never happens, and yet they were called on to go into a situation that many of us would hope to never experience in our lives. We know now—it became apparent at the time—that all of these people and all who were close to them were the victims of criminal acts from a violent man with a criminal record. Those acts are going to define the lives of the people who have been left behind, and those acts took the lives of two people who did no more than be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

For myself, and, I am sure, on behalf of the people of Melbourne and on behalf of my party, I pay tribute to the courage of all of the people who have been directly or indirectly touched by this tragedy. For those close to the people who were killed, and those who were in the cafe at some point or another during those fateful hours, this must be unimaginably tough. I really do not think that any of us can truly put ourselves in your shoes. We try and imagine it. I recoil in horror, and I think many others do as well. The toughness is, of course, not over and will linger for some time for those people. It may in fact be a continuing tough process for them as the inquiries and the discussions continue, but it is our obligation as parliamentarians to look at what happened and to discuss it and to work out how we can try and prevent anything like this from ever happening again.

One of the things we know is that here was someone with known mental health issues who was on bail for a violent crime who was able to get a gun. One of the questions that will be traversed during the inquiry is: how did that happen? We also know, as previous speakers have raised, that we are now in an environment where groups like IS or Daesh, or others around the world who wish to do us harm, are not now recruiting or organising in mosques; they are inflaming people who are perhaps on the edge of society anyway while those people are sitting in their homes using their computers, watching videos on their computers. That is now how a lot of these so-called lone-wolf attacks are predicted to arise.

We have to ask ourselves then how we stop people getting into a situation where they feel it is the right thing to come and do us harm and they draw no distinction between doing harm and not, where terror groups like IS are then able to prey them and use them to come and attack us. As I think the member for Melbourne Ports said, it almost in a sense does not matter whether or not this person was part of a hierarchical chain of command or was just someone acting on their own at the behest of the likes of Daesh; what matters is that we have to work out how to make sure that this is not a template for the future and work how to make sure that extreme propaganda when it hits the airwaves does not result in people in this country, whether they were born here or born overseas, wanting to come and do us harm.

As we have those discussions and many others, that may be quite raw for those who are close and affected by this tragedy. But I do hope it is of some comfort to those who have been affected by the siege and whose lives have been irrevocably changed to know that everyone in this parliament, no matter where you come from, is thinking of them. We are at one in supporting the victims of the siege. We are at one in wanting to make sure that it never happens again and that what people like about Australia—its peace, its democracy, its
commitment to resolving disputes without resorting to violence—is something that is never shaken.

In that respect, I am filled with optimism seeing the response to the tragedy. The fact that Martin Place became a sea of flowers and not of violence speaks volumes of the spirit of the Australian people and is a sign that, if the intention of that man who was behind the siege was to disrupt and make us fight each other, it failed. If the intention was to make people change their values of democracy and friendship, that failed. We saw that not only physically with the flowers but we saw that virtually as well. Within a matter of hours the #illridewithyou hashtag took off on Twitter and other forms of social media as people stood side by side with another and said immediately, 'We understand that this is not something that is representative of the faith, because no-one who truly is a person of faith would think it is in any way justifiable to take people hostage and then see two of them killed.' The fact that that happened so quickly and that people were willing to stand next to their neighbour and say, 'I understand you are not responsible and if anyone says that I will stand next to you,' is remarkable—and an outpouring the likes of which I have not seen for a very long time.

So I do take some comfort, and I hope the families and friends of those who are affected by the siege take some comfort, in knowing that, in the wake of the siege, Australia has comprehensively rejected violence and Australia has chosen peace and friendship. Our thoughts will continue to be with you and I am sure that everyone in this parliament will do whatever they can to support anyone who in any way has been affected by this terrible tragedy. I commend the motion to the House.

**Dr STONE** (Murray) (18:26): On behalf of the electorate of Murray, I want to participate in this debate on the motion moved by our Prime Minister, Mr Abbott, which expresses condolences for all of those who were affected by the siege in Martin Place, Sydney. The 16th of December 2014 will be deeply etched in the memories of particularly the families who lost Tori Johnson and Katrina Dawson, but also we remember the other families who are no doubt still suffering extreme anxiety and distress having been close to one of the 17 who were taken hostage, and also of course we remember the families of the police who were wounded in that siege.

I am particularly pleased to speak on behalf of Murray, because we are an extraordinary place. We have one of the most multicultural communities outside any capital city. In particular, we have a lot of Islamic communities and refugees. In this appalling situation in Martin Place, a man claiming to be a Muslim cleric—a madman, in fact; an evil person—who had a long criminal record and who had been granted political asylum in Australia committed the most heinous of violent offences, hoping no doubt to cause a real tension and reaction in the Australian public so there was hatred and vilification between different faith groups. I want to stress that, as a consequence of that terrible event, some of our young multicultural youth communities in the Goulburn Valley got themselves together and they said, 'We've got to make sure that we can demonstrate from our small rural and regional community in northern Victoria that, while we are Islamic, Christian, Sikhs, Buddhists and a whole range of people of faith and we are people who have no faith, we live in harmony and tolerance with one another.' In particular, our Al Kasem Youth Organisation organised what we called the Shepparton Twilight Vigil. It occurred just a few nights after this siege.
The vigil was prompted of course by the terrible siege itself, but it was also a response to the Facebook posting by Rachael Jacobs, who had noticed a Muslim woman taking off her headscarf when she was riding on public transport. Clearly worried and nervous about a reaction from the public, she had taken her headscarf off just hours after the siege. Ms Jacobs said to her, 'I'll be with you; I'll accompany you so that you are safe.' So our young Shepparton people said, 'Let's celebrate that tolerance and that loving friendship and at the same time let's pay our respects to the victims of that terrible siege in Sydney.'

And so, our twilight vigil took place, as I said, in partnership with the Al Kasem Youth Organisation, a group of Muslim youth; the Greater Shepparton City Council; and the Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District, which includes members and representatives from our African nations, the Middle East, our Islander communities and some of our older migrant communities from Europe. They were also joined by the youth group Word and Mouth and the Victoria Police.

The night was kind to us; we had an extraordinarily beautiful and peaceful evening. We joined around the big lake in the centre of Shepparton and each person took a candle. They walked around the lake shore in family groups, arm-in-arm perhaps with people who they had not met for a long time or some who they had not met before. Having walked right around the lake and having put our flowers in front of the special podiums that had been arranged, there were a number of speeches. Those speeches were from the Al Kasem Youth Organisation itself, from the Mayor of the Greater Shepparton City Council, from another councillor—himself from a Muslim background and originally from Albania. There were the most impassioned and significant speeches made. All of them talked about the incredible tolerance that we extend in our community, the loving care we have for one another and the fact that the most important thing is who we are in our community, not what we are, where we are from or when we happen to practise our faith—whether that is on a Saturday, a Sunday or a Friday night or at no time at all.

I have to say that I was so proud, looking around the big crowd—there were hundreds of people there. Many of them were in traditional cultural dress. It is a fact in Shepparton that even though you are, perhaps, in the Turkish community and you came to Australia three generations ago, you will still wear your traditional dress, because no-one insists on or expects you to wear anything different. So we had people in Sikh traditional cultural dress, we had people in the dress of the Hazara from Pakistan and Afghanistan and people from Iraq, Jordan and Iran, and we had our Islanders. And, of course, the whole evening began with a wonderful local Indigenous man playing the didgeridoo.

It was an extraordinary evening—a very moving evening. One of the very special things about that evening was that what we were trying to say was that an act by an evil madman like this person in Sydney, who took it upon himself to kill and who no doubt wanted to make a big name for himself as a martyr, had no impact on a community like ours and, in fact, on the broader Australian society. In fact, what he did was bring us closer together. It gave us an opportunity to demonstrate that we may have come from all over the globe—so many people like him have been granted political asylum in small communities like Shepparton and Mooroopna and the Goulburn Valley—but we do not take that peace and security for granted. We are going to work at it. It was so special.
The Al Kasem Youth Organisation were the key organisers—the first to begin this idea—and they led the ceremony we had around the foreshore of our lake. Ali Al Bayati—one of the key Al Kasem Youth Organisation members—stressed that the event was for all people, of all different beliefs and cultures, and that he hoped that the community would come together:

We can demonstrate to people in Australia and all over the world that we can stand together and be there for each other. That was done symbolically and very beautifully through this twilight vigil.

Just a couple of nights ago, before parliament started sitting, at about nine o'clock on a Friday in Shepparton—just on dusk—I saw something remarkable. I saw a middle-aged woman in her traditional Middle Eastern dress. I would say she was probably from Iraq. She had very conservative, dark, full-length clothing on. She was walking up the street, which was pretty much deserted on this Friday evening. The thing that was so remarkable to me was that she was in her full traditional dress, walking along proudly, but she was also alone. She was totally alone and obviously she felt totally secure and in no way threatened. She was simply going about her business just on dusk, walking up the main street of Shepparton. And I thought, 'Well, this is our country.' She did not have to worry about taking off her scarf or her long, full-length clothing; she did not have to worry about having a different colour. She was perfectly secure and safe in our community, and may it always be like that.

Again, on behalf of my electorate of Murray and on behalf of all my communities—the three mosques in Shepparton, the mosque in Cobram, the Sikh temple in Shepparton, the various Christian churches that we have and our Islander community special churches—I say, 'We are all one'. And we also acknowledge those who do not go to a church at all—we are all one. The key thing is that we care for one another, we are tolerant and we look to what individuals can contribute to our great nation. We look to how they care for their families, how they obey the rule of law in our country and how they set about to make sure that no-one is persecuted simply because they have come from a different place or because they espouse a different religion to our own.

I think this is a very important motion and I am very proud and pleased to commend it, and also to commend my great community in northern Victoria.

Ms O'NEIL (Hotham) (18:35): I really appreciate the opportunity to add some words to the condolence motion today on the Martin Place siege.

I was very struck, listening to the comments by the member for Murray. Like the member, I represent a very multicultural community. I think that being a part of that community is the only way to understand how terribly wrong this person who committed this act of terrorism was. They tried to do something that would divide Australians and which would create deep divisions between people, based on their culture, their race and their religion. But what he has actually done through these acts of absolute horror is to bring Australians together, the exact opposite of what he was trying to do. I have absolutely seen that in my community in Hotham, and I do want to take the opportunity this evening to talk on behalf of the 150,000-odd people that I have the very great privilege of representing in this chamber.

We come from a very diverse community—about 170 nationalities, many races, religions, lots of different family structures and different choices that people have made about how to live their lives. But I know that on 15 December last year everyone who lives in my
community stopped in their tracks, and what we saw was this crazed, lone gunman take 18
Australians hostage—just people who were going about their everyday business.

This is the most shocking act that I can think of in my lifetime as an adult in Australia. I
have never seen anything like this happen before. It was a day when all of us who were
outside that cafe stood shoulder to shoulder with the people that were inside and so terrified.

I do not want to use the time this evening to debate what intention the person may have had
and whether this was in fact an act of terrorism or otherwise; I do not want to talk about
whether officials did the right thing. I just want to use this chance to say, on behalf of the
150,000 people that I represent, how sorry I am to all of the people who were affected by this
tragedy. I want the people who were affected to know that we are with them in their grief and
that we continue to stand with them and think with them as they try to process this virtually
unimaginable tragedy that they have been affected by.

I also want to say on behalf of the people of Hotham how proud I am of how Australians
reacted to the incidents on 15 and 16 December. How did we respond to the Martin Place
siege? Was it with aggression, with violence? No, none of those things. Australians instead
responded with love. Instead of anger, they built a huge monument of flowers that, over the
weeks that followed, just about covered Martin Place. I cannot think of a better metaphor for
the way that people reacted to this awful tragedy. I went past our Lindt Cafe in Melbourne a
couple of weeks after the tragedy unfolded, and even all the way down in Melbourne,
hundreds of kilometres away, Melburnians had covered our Lindt Cafe with flowers, too,
standing shoulder to shoulder with Sydneysiders.

I do not think that I can imagine a country in the world, other than Australia, reacting in
this way. I think we all know that in the face of incidents like this humans can go to very dark
places. But, instead, we saw Australians show our country to be open and tolerant and, really,
a great country—I truly do believe that.

I know how easy it would have been for me to imagine—having travelled and been to so
many different societies and cultures—that people might take the chance to try to attack races
or religions. But, again, that is not what we saw. What we saw instead was thousands upon
thousands of Australians reach out to other Australians of Muslim background and say 'I will
ride with you'. Hundreds of thousands of Australians, instead of acting with anger or going to
a place that lacks generosity, said, 'I will protect others in my community who might be
feeling vulnerable at this time'. That is the kind of mature place—the most mature and
multicultural place—that Australia is. Instead of hate, we responded with love. That is
something that I am incredibly proud of.

With the indulgence of the House I will just say a few words about the people who died in
this tragedy. Katrina Dawson was the sister of a friend of mine, a person who I truly and
greatly respect and admire. I want to say, particularly to her family—because of that personal
connection—how truly sorry I am that this has happened. I know that I cannot do anything
about that, and that nothing I say today is going to bring Katrina back. But I want you to
know that you are in my thoughts—that you have been in my thoughts since this occurred. I
know it has been a shattering experience, but I also know that Katrina's good works will live
on through the establishment of the Katrina Dawson foundation, and through this I know that
she will continue to have an impact on life in Australia.
The same goes, of course, for Tori Johnson, who, with Katrina, showed so much bravery on that day.

To the families of Tori and Katrina, to Sydneysiders who were exposed to this horrific act, to everyone who was personally affected by this, on behalf of the people of Hotham, I want you to know how sorry we are, how much you remain in our thoughts, and of course in the thoughts of everyone in this chamber.

Mr Coleman (Banks) (18:42): I rise to speak on the condolence motion related to the tragic events at Martin Place in December. We like to think of Sydney as a global city, but we also like to think of it as a little removed from some of the darker problems of the globe. The Martin Place siege has challenged that idea of distance—something that is very important to the psychology of Sydney and to our nation more generally. We knew that the world had changed, but we wanted to believe that our city had not. On that day we knew that we were no longer immune.

So many Sydneysiders had a personal connection to the siege, myself included, and this horrible event hit our city very hard. The night after the siege I found myself wanting to do something to convey my feelings for the victims and the other hostages. So I drove into the city to pay my respects. It was about 10 o’clock by the time I arrived. There were hundreds of people lining up to leave a tribute: silent, pensive, utterly respectful. In its own way, it was beautiful. I have never seen anything like it, and I hope I will never see anything like it again.

Terrorism is called what it is because of the chilling effect it aims to have on good people. We cannot pretend that the Martin Place siege did not have such an effect in Sydney on that awful day. But we also know that the quiet, determined, united response of Sydneysiders is a far more powerful force than anything that evil can muster.

In defending against terrorism, government policy sometimes comes into conflict with the more stringent requirements of civil liberties. Sometimes the steps needed to clamp down on terror are difficult, and involve some constraints on our freedoms. This is the key tension point in government’s response to this awful phenomenon. While there is always room for debate on these matters, erring on the side of community protection is, in my view, always the right response.

Two innocent people died at Martin Place. Tori Johnson and Katrina Dawson died because of the unspeakable, evil act of one man. We must never forget them. It is impossible to understand what their families have gone through. Nothing can convey the depth of their pain or our inadequacy in relieving it.

We are merely politicians. Our response is inevitably confined to the practical tasks of government. This is inadequate, but it is all that we can do. Sydneysiders responded to the Martin Place siege with a silent dignity that will never be forgotten. Here, we should respond by rededicating ourselves to the task of protecting our community from those who would seek to commit acts of evil against us.

Mr Hayes (Fowler—Chief Opposition Whip) (18:46): It was just a short two months ago that Sydney and our entire nation stood still, closely following the events that were unfolding in the Lindt Chocolate Cafe in Martin Place. It was a day of disbelief, almost a day that was surreal. We followed events as they occurred, minute by minute, on our TV sets. It started off as an ordinary day for most of us. However, for 17 people who walked into that
cafe, probably following a daily ritual of having a cup of coffee and catching up with friends, on this day a horrific chain of events unfolded, while the rest of us looked on. While we hoped and prayed that the situation would end peacefully, sadly that was not to be. In those horrific circumstances, Katrina Dawson, a lawyer and young mother of three, together with Tori Johnson, the manager of the Lindt cafe, paid the ultimate price for one man’s deranged belief and actions.

My thoughts are with their families but also with the surviving hostages and those helping them to get through this very difficult and challenging time in their lives. I cannot begin to imagine the effect that enduring such a traumatic ordeal would have on a person, but certainly I know it will be lasting for some time. They deserve to know that our community supports them and will always support them. Having said that, I hope there is some measure of solace that they can take in the outpouring of solidarity and unity across our nation in the support for them.

As a representative of the most multicultural electorate in this country, I am proud to say that we have not let this tragedy divide our communities. On the day of the siege in Martin Place, on 15 December last year, I was actually attending the school presentation of the Green Valley Islamic College, in my electorate. I got to see firsthand the impact that the siege was having on the school community. Together with the students, the teachers and the religious leaders from the mosque, we were all horrified that something like this could occur in our city, in our community. But—to an extent, more pertinent for them under these circumstances—they showed outrage that their religion could be hijacked by a person claiming to be acting on behalf of Islam. Understandably, we all had a deep concern for those trapped inside the cafe and that dreadful fear of what this could mean for the future peace and harmony of our country.

In the days and weeks that followed, we saw the compassion of our community very much on display. The floral tributes sprang up around Martin Place and across the country. Indeed, in my electorate, in Freedom Plaza—which I know you have visited, Mr Deputy Speaker Kelly—floral tributes spread there. These outpourings of solidarity and emotional tributes that followed the events on 15 and 16 December show a determination by our community to be above ignorance and above hatred. I am proud that our society has used this tragedy to reaffirm its commitment to peace and harmony.

In the aftermath of the Martin Place siege, as a community we are still coming to terms with the frightening reality that terror has the potential of striking with little or no warning. We are not isolated. In that, we clearly have lost some of our innocence. Through this terrifying event, I think we have learnt much about community solidarity.

Also, what was evident and has been evident since is the pride that we justifiably have in the professionalism of the men and women of our police and emergency services. The New South Wales police officers who attended the scene in Martin Place on that day certainly deserve nothing but praise for how they handled this very difficult and complex situation. I have often said that it takes a special type of person with a special kind of courage to wear the police uniform, and the events of December last year have demonstrated just how unpredictable and dangerous their job can be.

We will never forget those two innocent lives that were lost. We will never bring them back. We will never again see ourselves detached or immune from tragedies or humanitarian
crises. We are not immune any longer. It is not a matter of tuning in and seeing things occur in other nations around the globe; we now know that we are very much able to find these in our own backyard. We must be prepared. We must be equipped.

But if there is a positive that can be drawn, it is that we have men and women in our community that are brave enough and certainly competent enough to respond to and deal with these tragedies. We can also take away from this incident our own ability to support each other and to come through the other side very much stronger, united and committed to peace and harmony.

I offer my sincere condolences to the families of Katrina Dawson and Tori Johnson. May they rest in peace and never be forgotten.

Mr TEHAN (Wannon) (18:53): I would like to associate myself with the remarks of the member for Hotham, the member for Banks and the member for Fowler for the speeches they have given while I have been sitting here in the chamber.

When the Sydney siege happened, I think we were all caught by surprise. I know that it occurred a couple of weeks after the parliament had finalised proceedings for the year. I think we all went back to our electorates to spend some time with our constituents and reflect on the year that had been.

For some of us, we still had some work to do—and I know the member for Bass is here in the chamber with me today. The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security was beginning its inquiry into metadata, and we had a hearing the day after the siege ended, on 17 December. It will live with me for an extremely long time, that morning when we gathered back here in Parliament House and we had the police, the intelligence agencies and the Australian Crime Commission all appear before us. Obviously, they had been involved in trying to ensure that the best possible outcome could occur as a result of what had happened, as a result of this terrorist act by this single actor—one of the most difficult challenges our law enforcement and intelligence agencies can face.

On that morning, on behalf of the committee, I read a statement which I would like to read again for the House:

The attack on the Lindt cafe in Sydney marks a despicable attack on Australians at home. Tragically, two innocent people have lost their lives: Katrina Dawson and Tori Johnson. The impact on their families and their friends will be deep and everlasting. Our thoughts are with them. To the hostages who escaped this harrowing ordeal, we extend our sympathy and support. We would also like to acknowledge the professionalism of our law enforcement and intelligence agencies—in particular, the New South Wales police. Under pressure, they displayed their dedication and commitment when it mattered most.

Threats of terrorism or terrorist acts will not change this nation. They will only strengthen our resolve. The values that we hold dear as Australians are the best way to defeat this evil. As the Prime Minister has already stated, we will continue to be a free, open and generous society. Australians will continue to open their hearts to every community that makes up our wonderful multicultural nation.

In the aftermath of the siege, as the previous members have spoken about, the floral tribute that appeared at Martin Place was quite extraordinary. I do not think that my words can quite describe everything that that floral tribute meant. Sometimes we have to look to others who are better with words to try and get a sense of what occurred. I think this poem really sums up the sentiment of what everyone was saying by placing their flowers at Martin Place:
For winter's rains and ruins are over,
And all the season of snow and sins;
The days dividing lover and lover,
The light that loses, the nights that wins;
And time remember'd is grief forgotten,
And frosts are slain and flowers begotten,
And in green underwood and cover
Blossom by blossom the spring begins.

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON (Werriwa) (18:58): I obviously express condolences to the families of Tori and Katrina, and also for the other people that were under grave threat to their lives during that period. I want to especially associate myself with the comments of the member for Murray in this debate, which went to the need for tolerance and understanding in this country in the aftermath of this horrific event.

You, Mr Deputy Speaker Kelly, would well and truly know that once in a blue moon I would agree with Liberal Councillors Hadid, Mannoun and Hachiti on Liverpool Council. However, I absolutely associate myself with the comments they have made demanding an apology from Councillor Marcus Cornish of Penrith council in the last few days.

If I could briefly return to our friend Mr Man Haron Monis before I get to this point: this is a person who, allegedly, fled Iran after a fraud; a travel agent who fabricated his religious credentials; a man who had faced charges in regard to murder, intimidation and aggravated sexual assault; and who had sent hate mail to people whose families had been victims overseas.

He was, of course, repudiated totally by a significant number of Islamic centres in Sydney, who did not take up is offer to preach at their respective mosques, an example of that being the Nabi Akram Islamic Centre, a Shia site in Cowper Street Granville, where my friend Hamid Nassib was amongst people who rejected him as not being the kind of person that they want to have giving lectures on religious beliefs. He was quoted in The Sydney Morning Herald amongst many others who said this person, back before he committed these horrendous actions, had nothing to do with Islam.

I want to turn to the question of Penrith council and the debate about a mosque in the council area. Because if we are to learn from this, essentially it is crucial to undermine real terrorism—and Mr Monis was not a terrorist; he was just an absolute criminal of the worst order as his track record showed—we must seek to incorporate Islamic Australians. What we are seeing on Penrith council is a small group within the Liberal Party—and I stress that—described as the 'Taliban faction', who, fortunately, were outvoted nine to two on the council about having a mosque there.

I particularly want to commend the Liberal mayor of the Penrith area, a moderate person who joined with the absolute majority of Liberals, Greens, Independents and Labor to reject Mr Cornish's concepts. But Mr Cornish showed exactly how we are not going to dissuade people from joining extremist groups. Obviously there are social or economic factors such as unemployment and marginalisation but we must seek to incorporate Australian Muslims into broader society. What we had out there was an outburst of extreme Islamaphobia. He has gone on the record saying this mosque must be built in Liverpool because Liverpool is
identified with criminality and there are more Muslims out there. Yes, the proportion of Muslims in the Liverpool council area, which I share with yourself, Mr Deputy Speaker Kelly, is 10.1 per cent and the percentage in Penrith is only 1.9 per cent. However, the actual religious centre is Shia, a distinct minority among Sydney's Muslims. I do not have separate figures as to their concentration beyond Arncliffe.

What are we saying? Are we saying that we will decry Muslims and other ethnic groups concentrating in particular suburbs of Sydney and basically forming so-called ghettos but we will not allow religious centres in other areas, which would essentially attract them to those centres? It would disperse the population more. The more mosques and religious centres we have, the more schools we have actually is a force for basically widening the diversity of settlement. But the same people who say, 'Oh well, it is all about Sharia law; it is about the question of terrorism et cetera', go and basically create problems for us in this marginalisation, this stigmatisation, these attacks.

Marcus Cornish is an expert in this. I do not know where we got these statistics from but Councillor Marcus Cornish has alleged someone told him that most of the people moving into the Kemps Creek area come from Auburn and Liverpool. We have a bureau of statistics in this country. We have got a Census but this person must have expertise beyond all of these institutions and all of these methods of collecting statistics because he apparently knows that.

Monis sought to associate himself with ISIL. As we know, he had to get the flag from somewhere else. He had no contacts whatsoever. ISIL and groups like them utilised him afterwards to in some ways praise his actions. But it is very important that we do not see this as the work of extremist terrorist organisations. It is very much a personalised criminality that he has undertaken.

I remember Australia's Islamic community in Western Sydney before September 11. It was a community which had basically integrated into the wider society in a very real sense. I think most members of this House would know, with the possible exception of the member for Berowra, there is nobody else who has associated with this community as much as I. After many years of contact with the Islamic community, I did not know that it was a problem to shake hands. Because in a lot of the houses I went into, women never raised the issue with me. That was the way it was.

What we had after September 11 was a drift towards fervency. In some sense, there will be a lot of people in this House who believe in religious fervency. We had the community under assault, under investigation, under the spotlight and people had to make a choice. They could either stick out and be loyal with people or they had to retreat and get out of the community. It is crucial that we do not have conduct such as we are witnessing at Penrith council, admittedly by only two of the councillors, that basically says to people again, 'You are on the fringe, you are outside, you should not have a religious centre, you are associated with criminality and you are associated with what is bad in our society.'

As I said, I want to praise the entire Liverpool council, which basically said to Mr Cornish an apology is overdue. This kind of stigmatisation is not to be tolerated. Once again, I join with members in the basic tenor of this debate in saying that this was a reprehensible action that we witnessed. I am feeling very deeply for all of those involved. We saw its manifestation in the flowers and other aspects in Sydney. It really was representative of the society that we want.
Ms HENDERSON (Corangamite) (19:05): I rise to speak on this condolence motion on behalf of many people across the Corangamite electorate who were outraged by the act of terror which we witnessed unfold on the morning of 15 December 2014 through that today until the early hours of the next morning. This is the sort of incident that we like to think we are immune from in Australia. My thoughts and prayers are with all of the people who were affected by this unspeakable act of violence. In particular we mourn them loss of Tori Johnson and Katrina Dawson. Katrina Dawson was a 38-year-old barrister, a devoted mother of three beautiful children—Sasha, Oliver and Chloe—the beloved wife of Paul Smith. She was someone, he said, when he met his future wife, 'It did not take long to realise I had met my perfect partner.' I also want to acknowledge particularly Tori's family, his close friends, and his partner of some 14 years, Thomas Zinn. Three hostages were wounded during the raid: Marcia Mikhael, Robin Hope and Louisa Hope. And we heard the gruesome stories of the hostages who survived.

So many Australians were touched and horrified at what they were witnessing that morning. I spent part of my law studies studying law in Sydney and I spent a fair bit of time around that precinct. One of my closest friends, Angela Pearman is a barrister who has chambers across from the Lindt cafe. And the first thing I did was ring her, and hope and pray that she was not in that cafe. Her son was working nearby and they were both safe. I think I went through what many others went through in Sydney; hoping that loved ones and family and friends who worked in that precinct were okay. I think it has touched many of us directly and all of Australia indirectly in some way.

The two victims and the hostages were decent, innocent people just going about their ordinary lives. We can be very proud of the way police and security agencies have responded to this incident. I want to particularly congratulate the New South Wales Police for the commitment and professionalism they showed during these very difficult times.

I think it is also worth commending the people of Sydney for the calm way they reacted to this horrific incident. Australians will never forget the response of those who live locally who came into the city in the days after the Sydney siege and who filled Martin Place with a sea of flowers. It was incredibly emotional to watch the friends and families of the victims walk through that sea of flowers and try to come to grips with what had happened.

I also think it was representative of the fact that Australians will not succumb to fear. Australians are a free, open and generous people and they flocked to Martin Place. It was very symbolic of a stand that so many of us took; we were saying we will not let this defeat us.

Rest assured, as we have spoken about many times in this House, I particularly want to note the bipartisan support of members opposite in these endeavours. The Australian government is doing everything it possibly can to keep Australia safe and secure.

Last year the government provided an additional $630 million to our police and security services to strengthen our national security laws and address the most pressing gaps in their ability to combat the growing threat of homegrown terrorism but also in relation to terrorist threats overseas.

In closing, we are and we will continue to do everything in our power to keep Australians safe. Rest in peace, Tori Johnson and Katrina Dawson.
Mr WOOD (La Trobe) (19:11): First of all can I congratulate the member for Corangamite for her contribution, and all the members. It has been very touching. It is one of those few times in parliament where we all rise together with the same voice to speak on behalf of all Australians.

Like many Australians the way I became aware of the events of 15 December 2014 was from an SMS. My cousin Nathan texted me and, from memory, he said something like, 'we are all okay'. And I thought to myself, 'something has happened'. Then I looked on the internet and saw the events that were unfolding. I then rang him up. He had been working close by just the day before. That was the crucial or scary aspect of this event; it could have happened to anyone, anywhere.

The ordeal lasted 17 hours and tragically took the lives of Katrina Dawson, 38, and Tori Johnson, 34. I pass on my condolences. We truly lament their loss for their family and friends, and obviously this will impact them for the rest of their lives. But also all Australians will never forget what has happened.

The 14 other survivors of the siege will have memories of these hours and I am sure they have nightmares. This week when I looked up into the gallery and saw the faces of the hostages, you could see in their faces the fear and the emotion. You could see it was obviously still with them and it will be with them for a very long time.

The events I saw on TV, as all Australians did, the awful situation of hostages—mums and dads—up against the window of the cafe were absolutely terrifying. You cannot imagine what they have been through. These are the sorts of images we do not expect to see in Australia. We expect to see them in places like the Middle East. It could have been any of us, in any cafe in Australia. It could have been anyone just going about their day-to-day lives.

It was simply shocking. This is what terrorism is about. It is about putting fear into the public to stop them going about their daily lives. I can say to those wannabe terrorists and those sad people who are converted to terrorism, that you will never stop the Australian public from doing what they want to do—that is, living in freedom. The terror suspect—and he is not even worth naming so I will not—in this case was a lone wolf. For whatever reason he thought this was his mission in life and trying to put terror into other people.

As a former police officer I need to commend the New South Wales Police officers. I have gone through many doors, executed many search warrants with firearms out. But normally when you do this it is at the crack of dawn, first thing in the morning. When these police officers went through the door, they went in knowing that there was an armed offender—someone had just been shot; a number of shots had been fired. They put their lives on the line. Not only the first guy through the door but every single police officer who went through that door—one after another—was putting themselves in harm's way for one thing and one thing only and that was to carry out their duty and protect the public. I am so impressed with their actions.

I have also had an incident occur next to my electorate in Endeavour Hills. Sadly again a young Muslim man had been converted to become an extremist. For whatever reason he decided to take his war out against the police. We are hearing around the world that the police in blue and the military in green who put their hand up to protect and serve the public are targets. We have seen awful barbaric attacks where police have been stabbed and killed in the
UK and France. This occasion was just up the road from my electorate office. The young man in this case was converted at a much younger age—Numan Haider. I have passed my condolences on to his family. We have a very strong Afghan community in my local area. I have had a function since and the Afghan community were absolutely horrified with this incident. The parents are good parents.

The sad aspect of this is that you have people targeting young Muslims trying to convince them that there is this awful path to follow to go against the so-called infidels. We have seen what has happened overseas. The acts of terrorism are getting worse. There was the pilot in Jordan who was burnt alive in a cage. Who would come up with something like that? Then there is what happened in Pakistan with all the children being murdered by the Taliban and the recent events of the two Japanese hostages who were killed. These are the most barbaric acts, but the world is actually uniting against what is happening because this is not the way good people who support a good religion would ever act. That is not what this is about. This is not about religion. It is not about Islam. It is simply about changing Islam to become terrorism. That is the really sad aspect of this.

In Australia I have acknowledged that the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition have made statements of condolence today and previous statements on other events when it comes to national security. Both sides of the House are in every way trying to work together to make Australia a safer place to live. My thoughts again are with all the victims: sadly, those I mentioned right at the start—Katrina Dawson and Tori Johnson—and their families and the hostage survivors. Again our thoughts are with them. We will never forget what has happened to them and their loved ones.

Mr Turnbull (Wentworth—Minister for Communications) (19:18): The siege in the Lindt cafe was an extraordinary moment in time for the city of Sydney. It affected everybody in that city—my city—and all Australians. We see tragedies and sieges in the news all the time of course, but this was occurring in such a familiar place, right in the heart of our city, right in Martin Place and in a cafe—the most normal, innocuous, natural place. Anyone could imagine themselves having been there themselves. This was not in a far off location; this was right in the heart of our city. So it shocked the city.

Yet on the night of the 15th, the first day of the siege, I think most of us went to bed praying but also hoping that the siege would be resolved peacefully, as most sieges are. There was a sense of anxious optimism. Then of course we woke up to the news that the gunman had shot one of the hostages, Tori Johnson, the manager—a really wonderful young man, a very brave young man—and in the firefight that followed the terrorist was killed and tragically Katrina Dawson was killed. Katrina Dawson was also a young person, one of the most brilliant young barristers at the Sydney bar and a mother of three. The loss and tragedy for her family is indescribable.

That morning was a real shock for the city. It was stunning. I remember so vividly catching the train from Edgecliff to North Sydney. On the two trains I was on—I changed trains at town hall—there was an extraordinary mood that was so palpable you could almost reach out and touch it. People were not talking to each other; they were deep inside their own hearts. They were thinking. You could read their minds. They were filled with a determined love. There was no hatred there. There was no anger there, remarkably. You could just feel the compassion. It was as though the city had decided that it had been confronted with the most
crazy, vicious, death-loving hatred and had decided to respond with love—not a wishy-washy love but a love that was determined, that was strong and saying: 'We will not bow to your hatred. We are better than you. Our values are better than you. Our love is stronger than your hate.' That is what I felt in that train.

A little later in the day there was a mass at St Mary's Cathedral that I attended. Again you could feel that there. You could feel the love of Christ in that cathedral in a way that, regrettably, you do not always feel in church. It was full of love. So much hatred had caused so much harm and death in Martin Place, but there in the rest of the city it was filled with love. Then you saw in Martin Place people coming, laying their flowers, showing their strength, showing their solidarity and showing that love is always stronger than hate. I have never been so proud to be an Australian and I have never been so proud to be a Sydneysider. It would have been so easy for people just to dissolve in a sea of hatred and antagonism.

We run ourselves down a bit—we are always knocking ourselves, Australians. We are a great country and we are a really good people, and we showed our goodness in the wake of that siege. We showed that love is stronger than hatred. We showed that we are not going to play to the tune of the terrorist because—what does the terrorist want to do? What is the terrorist's objective? The terrorist's objective is to create a frightening sensation and, as the member for La Trobe said, 'To scare people out of their ordinary lives.' The whole city and the whole nation said: 'No, life goes on. Yes, we will be vigilant. Yes, we will take care, of course.' And we will do everything we can, as our government does, as the Prime Minister has said, to ensure that our security and police services have the resources to prevent incidents like this wherever they can be prevented. But above all our strongest armour is not with the police. Our strongest armour is in our heart. It is that strength of that determined love that is the greatest challenge to the hatred of the death loving terrorism that has caused the appalling siege in Martin Place.

So this is a terrible tragedy and the House extend its condolences on behalf of the whole nation to the families of Tori Johnson and Katrina Dawson, and we extend our love to all of the people that have been affected by this—all those hostages. Who could imagine a more terrifying time than being bailed up in that cafe with the gunman, not knowing whether you are about to be blown up or shot, not knowing how a resolution could come.

In passing on our condolences, we also affirm our solidarity. It is wonderful that there is such bipartisan solidarity on this. We disagree so often in this place—and we are, after all, paid to disagree, and it would be a pretty poor democracy if we all had the same view. But on this I know that every member of this House, every member of the Senate and every Australian is absolutely united in that determined love—love that triumphs over hate—and a determination not to be cowed, not to be bullied and not to be led into an orgy of retaliation and hatred. That is only playing into the hands of the terrorists, because that is what they want us to do. They want to frighten us and they want to drive us into a reactive hatred. They want us to be like them. They want us to be as hate filled as them. We defy them with love. We defy them with a determined love.

Mr FLETCHER (Bradfield—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Communications) (19:27): The siege at the Lindt cafe was terrifying for several reasons. It was carried out in full view of the media and in turn, the Australian and, indeed, the world community—reflecting it would seem a quite deliberate decision on the part of the gunman—
and meant that all of us watched in horror as we began to understand the gravity of the situation that those inside the cafe faced.

It occurred in an iconic location, familiar to nearly anybody who lives in Sydney and to people from all around Australia. Martin Place, after all, is the very heart of the central business district of our largest city, the place where the Anzac Day service occurs and where so many other events are held. It is, I think, human nature that such an event has an even more dramatic and immediate impact on us when it occurs in familiar territory. And of course it occurred in the course of an ordinary and unremarkable event in the life of any modern Australian: going to get a coffee. Could there be a more potent reminder of how capricious life can be, that such a mundane act should expose the victims to this horror?

So many of us would have watched this awful drama play out feeling a grim suspicion that there was very likely someone inside the Lindt cafe whom we knew, or to whom we were connected by only one or two degrees of separation. Several speakers on this motion have revealed that this was the case for them, and in my own case I learned that one of the victims: Sydney barrister, wife and mother, Katrina Dawson, was the sister of Angus Dawson, a partner at management consulting firm, McKinsey, with whom I had worked on several projects over the years. I was pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Angus briefly the other day, when he and other family members and victims of the siege were in Parliament House, and to express, using the same inadequate words that we all find ourselves using in these circumstances, my sorrow for the loss suffered by him and his family.

I want to express on behalf of the people of Bradfield my very great sorrow at the loss of Katrina Dawson and the loss of Tori Johnson, the manager of the Lindt cafe. To all who were held hostage throughout that dreadful period, I express my sympathy and my admiration for your courage.

To those who took the bold gamble to escape during the siege, I want to acknowledge your will to live and your determination to seize the chance when it came. To the police and emergency services, I want to say how comforting it was, in this dreadful period, to see highly skilled and trained men and women working calmly in the face of great pressure, aiming to save lives and end the siege. You carefully worked to see if the situation could be resolved without violence. And when the shocking moment came in which the gunman killed Tori Johnson—and it became clear that a peaceful resolution was no longer possible—you acted immediately and with great courage to storm the building, undoubtedly saving lives in the process.

This has been a testing event for our country. It has shocked many of us with the realisation that the threat of terror, in this case purportedly in the name of Islam, is not something theoretical and remote. It is all too real. It is a threat that we will face for many years, it seems, and there is much work underway in responding to the threat and seeking to best protect the Australian community.

There is some comfort to be found in the magnificent and quite spontaneous reaction of Australians to this tragedy. Let us hold to that comfort as we express our sadness at the death of two fine young Australians, at the great loss suffered by their families and at the physical and mental injury suffered by other victims.

Debate interrupted.
ADJOURNMENT

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott) (19:31): Order! It being just past 7.30 pm, I propose the question:
That the House do now adjourn.

McMahon, Mr Les
Enderby, Hon. Keppel Earl, QC

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (19:31): I want to talk about two great Australians, two long-term residents of my electorate. We mentioned Les McMahon today at question time. As the current member for Sydney, I want to pay my respects to that former member for Sydney, Les McMahon. He was a man of strong convictions. On some issues perhaps we would not have agreed, but I wholeheartedly endorse his words in his first speech when he said that the difference between us in the Labor Party and our opponents is this:

We in the Labor Party have an enduring commitment to a view about society. It is this: in modern countries opportunities are for all citizens, opportunities for a complete education, opportunities for dignity in retirement, opportunities for proper medical treatment, opportunities to share in the nation’s wealth and resources, the opportunities for decent housing, the opportunities for civilised conditions in our cities and in our towns and the opportunities to preserve and promote the natural beauty of the land. These opportunities can be provided only if governments and the community itself acting through its selected representatives will provide them.

Les McMahon’s loyalty remained always to the Labor Party. It is a measure of the man that, when he was defeated as a sitting member in a preselection, he handed out for the winning candidate on election day. He was a dedicated and committed local member. He was accessible and proud of the urban renewal legacy left by the Whitlam government. The people of Sydney owe a great deal to Les McMahon’s enthusiastic and energetic championing of their interests. Our sympathies are with his family and friends.

I want to also mention my friend Kep Enderby. I first met Kep and his wife Dot during my preselection for the seat of Sydney. At a time and of an age when many people might have decided they deserved a well-earned break, especially after a life crowded with achievements, Kep was still active, still working and advocating for the causes he believed in, still engaged in the fortunes and affairs of his beloved Labor Party. He and Dot were generous with their time, supportive and encouraging, both during my preselection and in the years since. I will always be grateful for that.

But my gratitude goes well beyond the personal kindness they showed me. We are all profoundly grateful for the work Kep did as a minister in the Whitlam government when for three short years he had the opportunity to change our nation and indeed he put his deep-held and abiding beliefs in the equal rights and equal dignity of all people—male and female, gay and straight, of all ethnicities and creeds. As a federal minister, Kep was an unfailing champion of a fair, progressive, and tolerant Australia on matters which were among the most challenging of the period.

As minister for secondary industry and minister for supply, he introduced Public Service Bill (No. 4) in 1973, which, in his words, would have ensured that ‘all positions in the Australian Public Service are to be open equally to men and women applicants who can
perform the full range of duties required.’ It seems unremarkable today but it was remarkable at the time—as was his work as Attorney-General from February 1975. During this period, he introduced the Anti-Discrimination Act. He introduced the Family Law Act, which included no-fault divorce. His contributions to a more just, more humane society included the abolition of the federal death penalty and the decriminalisation of both homosexuality and abortion in the ACT.

His belief in the importance of human rights and civil liberties in upholding the fundamental dignity of all men and women was deep and profound, and it informed everything he did, during and after politics, including being one of the founders of the New South Wales Council of Civil Liberties and becoming the head of the Voluntary Euthanasia Society of New South Wales. I must say that, in both of those roles, he lobbied me very convincingly.

Like so many members of the Whitlam government, he had served in World War II—like Gough, in the RAAF, although, being 10 years younger than his leader, Kep only reached service age in the final years of the war. And his commitment to Esperanto, including teaching himself the language and becoming President of the World Esperanto Association—which may seem a little eccentric today—was part of his deep commitment to the cause of peace and international understanding. Having come of age in the midst of a conflict which consumed the world, he understood, better than many of us from more fortunate generations, how high the stakes are in the pursuit of peace, how sharp the cost of failure.

He was a great correspondent with my office. I saw him only very shortly before his death. He will be greatly missed.

North Queensland
Petition: Abbot Point

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson—The Nationals Deputy Whip) (19:36): I hear many voices in this job, often spin doctors and mostly media commentators and agitators, relentlessly pursuing their own agendas. But in the real world, real people are trying to earn a living, make ends meet, and improve their lot in life. Tonight, I am their voice in speech and in the form of a petition, which I will shortly seek leave to table.

Some years ago, I led a convoy of Liberal and National MPs, including the Deputy Prime Minister, along the entire 1,700-kilometre length of the Bruce Highway. We listened to what people had to say; we consulted with individuals, councils, and community groups who provided input on what to fix and how to fix it. As a result, the biggest funding commitment in the history of the Bruce Highway has projects under way and already completed.

Today, there are strong and passionate voices in North Queensland railing against the 100 per cent fly-in fly-out mining operations that were approved under the former Bligh Labor government in Queensland. I campaigned against this geographic discrimination when it was brought in then, and I still do now. In a desperate bid to win the Queensland election, Labor's leader, Annastacia Palaszczuk, made this commitment in writing:

All existing 100% FIFO arrangements will be reviewed within the first 100 days of a Labor Government and where a mining operation is located near a regional community, 100% FIFO will not be permitted.
That was on page 5 of Ms Palaszczuk's own policy document 'Strong and Sustainable Resource Communities'. Despite the potential new Labor deputy premier, Jackie Trad, trying to back-track on that commitment, the people of North Queensland and I, as their voice in this place, will hold Labor to their word should they form government in Queensland.

When I listen to North Queenslanders, they are not concerned about the machinations of parliament—parties, leadership and question time. They want someone to stand up for them—who will stand up to the sugar mills that are riding roughshod over canegrowers and taking away farmers' rights to have a say in how their sugar is marketed. Yesterday, I chaired the first meeting of a Sugar Marketing Code of Conduct Task Force where it was agreed the best means of achieving the right outcome is extensive consultation with the industry. As task force chair, I will be facilitating meetings with growers, with millers and with other stakeholders to ensure we are listening to the right people, explaining the problems, canvassing solutions and building collaborative outcomes.

Policies should be created less by government and more by people who know and understand issues and industries. In the Whitsundays, it is the local people who see the potential of super yacht visitations. Locals, including Paul Darrouzet from the Abel Point marina, explained to me that every week one of these super yachts is in dock, $50,000 is injected into the local economy. In Noumea, I understand the average stay for a super yacht is a week or more and they have 200 visits a year—or roughly a $10 million injection into their economy. This is where the government needs to review environmental regulations and taxation issues that prevent the industry from developing, that prevent those super yachts from docking in our ports.

Voices in the tourism industry in the Whitsundays also tell me that water quality on the Great Barrier Reef is critical to the future of their industry. I am currently working with locals such as the charter boat operators to secure research funds for improving water quality in our region, which will then improve the tourism experience and secure the industry long-term. Unfortunately, the water quality issue and issues concerning the entire reef have been hijacked by radical greens to fight an entirely different agenda—to close down all mining in Australia. The voices of GetUp! and the extreme greens are very, very loud but also very, very wrong. They campaigned against 'toxic sludge being dumped on the reef' in an attempt to shut down coal mining by blocking dredging at Abbot Point. However, the dredged material is natural sand—hardly toxic sludge—and, far from being dumped on the reef, the proposal that the project proponents, the federal government and I support is for the material to be disposed of on land. Most of the antimining, anticapitalism antijobs brigade are not local voices. The local voices, the voices of those who know the area, who know the project and understand exactly what is planned and what the impacts will be, are right here in this petition.

I seek leave to table this petition of 1,057 signatures representing the views of the small town of Bowen, which desperately needs some of the benefits that will come with the thousands upon thousands of jobs created by Abbot Point, the Carmichael mine and associated infrastructure. These voices are calling for immediate legislative changes that would reduce the powers of groups or individuals to further delay the Abbot Point expansion.

Leave granted.

The petition read as follows—
To the Honourable The Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives

This petition of concerned citizens draws to the attention of the House: that we support the Abbot Point Coal Terminal expansion and further draw to the House's attention the detrimental impact of past and current delays by groups and individuals ideologically opposed to the expansion and the dredging required at the port of Abbot Point and the effects that it is having on Bowen and surrounding communities, including business closures, unemployment, the relocation of residents, bankruptcies, mortgagee auctions, stress related illnesses and a decline in property valuations.

We therefore ask the House to: implement immediate legislative changes that would reduce the powers of groups or individuals to further delay the Abbot Point Expansion.

from 1,057 citizens

Petition received.

Defence Procurement

Ms KATE ELLIS (Adelaide) (19:41): I once again express my outrage at the betrayal of Australia's submarine workers and at the absolute chaos that has been created by those opposite who have gone against every explicit promise that was made to the people of South Australia before the last election that there would be 12 submarines built in Adelaide. That is what those opposite took to the last election and that is what we have seen them trying to wriggle out of ever since. This week we have seen the extent of the utter chaos that those opposite have created. The government's handling of this issue of Australia's future submarines has shown that they are as far away from good government as you could ever imagine. The situation is laughable. Some of the press conferences and interviews have been that absurd that if it were not for the seriousness of the repercussions people could sit back and have a giggle at the expense of those opposite.

I remind those opposite, as I call on them to keep to the word they gave to the Australian public, that this is an issue that is absolutely critical to many, many South Australian families. This is an issue which is absolutely critical to Australia's shipbuilding industry, and this is an issue which is about much more than the politics that we have seen over the last few days. This is an issue which is about hundreds of workers—about their employment, about their security and stability and about them feeling like they have been totally forgotten by this government with the game playing that has been going on. The original promise made by those opposite stated:

We will deliver those submarines from right here at ASC in South Australia. The Coalition today is committed to building 12 new submarines here in Adelaide.

That was their election commitment. Of course that has been torn up and tossed aside. We also know that they were not content to stop there. We then had the former defence minister insult every one of the ASC workers when in this parliament he stood up and said that he would not trust them to build him a canoe. What a disgraceful example of the Australian government betraying Australia's hardworking men and women.

But then, in the last week, we have seen the total farce of Senator Edwards and the member for Hindmarsh claiming to have secured a tender for our submarines. They were proud to get out there on radio on Monday. We saw that absurd press conference, which is estimated to have cost over $30,000—getting the South Australian members to fly back home to Adelaide, to all stand up with the Leader of the South Australian Liberal Party standing alongside them, and the Minister for Defence—when it turns out that they actually have not secured a tender
at all. Senator Edwards explains this by saying: 'Don't get caught up. I mean, Defence say something; I say another. The defence minister—I mean, it's all the same.' Well, no, it is not the same. We have South Australian members claiming that they received a promise from the Prime Minister that there would be a tender. We now have the Prime Minister and the defence minister backtracking on that. We know there are only two possible explanations: either the South Australian members of the coalition are entirely incompetent or the Prime Minister and the defence minister are entirely unbelievable and dishonest. I suspect it is a bit from column A and a bit from column B.

We also had the PM today in question time claiming that it is not possible in Defence to have an open tender and that somehow we are suggesting that we should be handing over our Defence Force to the Russians and the North Koreans. Prime Minister, you will need to do much better than that, because we only need to look back to the Howard government to see that it is of course entirely possible to have a tender. Under the Howard government, Defence Minister Senator Hill put out a press release entitled: 'Tenders called to build air warfare destroyers'. Ten years ago the Howard government asked for proposals that would involve the construction of air warfare destroyers in Australia. It was possible then. It is possible now. But we need those opposite, and particularly the South Australian Liberals, to grow a backbone, do what they were elected to do and stand up and represent our community and our workforce.

Closing the Gap

Fisher Electorate: Digital Economy

Mr BROUGH (Fisher) (19:46): I want to address two subjects tonight. The first one is the very disappointing report on closing the gap, which was spoken to today by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. I think anybody who read that report or heard about it today would be more than disappointed, because the aspirations of our nation unfortunately are not being met. I want to draw the attention of the House to just one issue. We all talk about school attendance and how important it is. We all know that and we all accept that. In any life, black or white, if you do not have an education, you limit your opportunities. In remote communities, you have got to ask yourself why children do not go to school. There are many facets. We all say to our own children: 'Go to school. Get a good education, because it will lead to a job, which will lead to a good, solid, secure outcome for you. You might go into an apprenticeship. You might go on to university. You might go on to TAFE.' But in these remote communities there is an element missing which takes away the purpose for which we get an education—because an education is not a means in itself; it is a means to an end, and the end is to have an employment potential. But, in these communities, they are without an economic base. These remote communities are without an economy. They have no freehold. They have no free enterprise. You can have a community of 3,000 people, as you might have in Wadeye. In a community like that in any typical country town, you would have cafes, you would have motor vehicle repair shops, you would have a myriad of small and micro businesses. But, because of land tenure issues, it does not happen.

The point I want to raise tonight is that this is the elephant in the room. Why would a child go to school and get an education—when they want to live where they have been brought up, on their land, for which they have a great affinity—if there are only a handful of government-sponsored jobs there? Until we acknowledge that, face that and deal with it, we are going to
condemn these people to a dream that is beyond their reach. I would ask every member of this place to reflect upon that, to visit these communities, to understand the depth of despair when you do not have a future because there are no jobs within the community in which you choose to live.

I would also like to talk, on a more positive note, about a local issue. The local issue is something that is changing the world. I believe that the Treasurer might have spoken to the cabinet about this issue, according to the papers recently, and it is to do with digitisation. For those who do not know, Uber is a different way of travelling, a different way of moving around. It is but one example. Just to put into context how the world is changing: Uber is where a person with their own car basically operates like a cab driver, but without the licence. It is clean, it is efficient and it works. It is also flexible and it gives people an income. People thought that it would close down the cab industry. From the statistics in America, in individual cities, Uber is now taking three times as much as the entire cab industry. In other words, it is not only disrupting; it is changing the way in which we operate.

On the Sunshine Coast, I and a bunch of businesspeople—Mal Pratt, Tony Riddle and Glenn Ferguson—are working together as a team to create our own start-up organisation. By going to Sydney recently, we met with Fishburners, Telstra and Google, and, with the help of a lot of good people, we are going to give young people an opportunity on the Sunshine Coast to be able to be disrupt in the way that Uber has around the world and perhaps create billion-dollar industries from the Sunshine Coast. This is the future. It is going to change much of the way we do business in Australia and around the world. You can start from nothing, from virtually nowhere, and in no time have turnover in the hundreds of millions of dollars and be affecting the way we do business around the world. But it starts with good people, like the ones I have mentioned, putting their heart, soul, money, effort, experience and life in business to the test, creating something on the Sunshine Coast so people of all ages, young and old, can take their ideas from an embryonic stage into fruition and, in doing so, create the wealth the Sunshine Coast needs and the opportunities the world demands—changing the world from the Sunshine Coast.

**Domestic Violence**

Mr WATTS (Gellibrand) (19:51): It is very welcome that over the past 12 months, the problem of men's violence against women in our community has become an issue of national conversation in Australia. The naming of campaigner Rosie Batty as Australian of the Year for 2015 is symbolic of the rising prominence of this issue in the public consciousness. This conversation is not always easy and can demand difficult conversations with friends. We have had to have one such difficult conversation this week.

White Ribbon is a national, campaign that is led by men to end men's violence against women. Given that the root cause of men's violence against women is gender inequality, the engagement of men in the fight against this scourge is crucial. Many years of academic research has shown that the promotion of gender equality and respectful relationships is crucial to changing the community attitudes that enable violence against women. White Ribbon plays a very important role in encouraging men to take responsibility and to combat these attitudes in our community. However, as a male-led group attempting to address gender inequality and to change men's attitudes towards women, White Ribbon has always occupied a delicate space.
There have always been some who understandably questioned whether the answer to a problem created by men is more men. There have also been some who have been worried about the risk of such a campaign giving credibility, and even more power, to men with views that perpetuate the kind of gender inequality at the heart of this matter. I feel this delicacy myself when speak on these issues. However, I am firmly of the view that, given the primary challenge in preventing this violence is to change the attitudes of men in our community, men need to be a major part of the response to this problem. It is frustrating, but many of the men who harbour the kinds of sexist views that underpin gender inequality, simply will not take in this message if it is being delivered by a woman.

This kind of prejudice is the very nub of the issue and is something that White Ribbon has played a very valuable leadership role in addressing. However, given that men can be both part of the problem and part of the solution, they carry special obligations when engaging in this debate. The first is to listen to the women around them about their experiences of gender inequality—experiences that by definition we cannot understand firsthand. The second is to take responsibility for attitudes and actions that perpetuate gender inequality and, as a result, men's violence against women.

It is in these respects that a recent opinion piece published by Tanveer Ahmed, currently a White Ribbon Australia ambassador, was both wrong and repugnant. Instead of asking men to take responsibility for their attitudes and actions, the piece claims that men's social and cultural 'disempowerment' is an increasing driver of family violence. There is no evidence for this view. The drivers of men's violence against women have not changed over time. Violence against women is a crime of control. It is a crime committed by men who feel entitled to exercise power over the women in their life through violence and intimidation. Worrying about 'male disempowerment' in this context perpetuates this power problem. Perhaps most concerning about Mr Tanveer's piece is his nonsense raving about men being under attack from 'radical feminists' preaching 'male villainy, denial of biologically based sex differences and a cult of victimhood'.

We need to do better than to allow men's violence against women to become another cheap front in the culture wars. One woman a week is killed in this country by a partner or former partner, and surely we can avoid turning this into an undergraduate debating point. I encourage Mr Ahmed to do the decent thing and stand down as a White Ribbon ambassador as soon as possible. His views are utterly contrary to those of both White Ribbon and the broader sector that is trying to end this violence. If Mr Ahmed does not resign I firmly believe that the White Ribbon board should remove him from his position to avoid further damage being caused to the ambassador program.

In this respect, I am pleased to inform the House that late last year White Ribbon introduced a new ambassador education and screening process to avoid situations of this kind. I was one of the first people to complete this program and can report that it required the completion of an interactive online education program that took me more than two hours to complete and a thirty minute interview in which I was again tested on the content of the program and questioned about my personal background. I also understand that White Ribbon now undertakes background checks of applicants to be ambassadors.

This education program is delivered by Andrew O'Keefe, a past chairman of White Ribbon and current ambassador, and explains the causes of men's violence against women and teaches
men how to take personal responsibility for their attitudes and behaviours. As Mr O'Keefe put it recently, no man is perfect, but they ought to keep asking themselves questions about the impact of their attitudes and behaviour on the women and the world around them. He says that they should be asking questions like:

- How do I manage conflict in my relationship?
- Do I show my sons and daughters what respect and equality really mean by trying to live a respectful life myself?
- Do I do my fair share of the housework? Do I take an active role in nurturing my kids instead of just being a good-time dad? Do I treat my partner with kindness and respect by valuing her contributions and making space for her interests? Do I show my kids that a man doesn't have to be the tough-guy in control of every situation? And do I celebrate the achievements of my boys and girls equally—

These are the valuable messages that White Ribbon ambassadors can deliver to other men. The men asking these difficult questions of themselves and others deserve better than to be tarred with the same brush as Mr Ahmed.

**Health Care**

**Ms GAMBARO** (Brisbane) (19:56): Australia's healthcare system is at a cross road. The system we set up in July 1975 when Medibank officially commenced, almost 40 years ago, no longer meets our needs. When we consider that Australia's population in 1975 was 13.9 million as opposed to the 23.7 million we are today then this should be no surprise.

Treasury's first *Intergenerational report* in 2007 forecast that the Australian government's expenditure on health was projected to increase as a proportion of GDP from 3.5 per cent in 2006-07 to 7.3 per cent in 2046-47, with about a quarter of these increased costs coming from an ageing population. Treasury's 2010 *Intergenerational report* identifies a number of drivers of the expected rise to extend beyond just an ageing population to include population growth, demographic pressures, demand for higher standards of care and rapid technological innovation. Another thing that should not surprise us, and it is something for which we can be thankful is that medical knowledge, technologies and treatments have not remained static; they have changed and evolved and will hopefully continue to evolve into the future for our collective benefit.

All of this change and growing demand, however, creates stresses that the existing structure of Medicare cannot handle, and ultimately this is not a sustainable dynamic. The gravity of this situation has been well and truly recognised by the new Minister for Health, the Hon. Sussan Ley, and in her statement on 16 January this year she pointed out the following inconvenient and uncomfortable truth about Medicare, and I quote:

> It's not sustainable now. The Medicare levy raises $10 billion approximately at the moment and the cost of Medicare is $20 billion. So the Medicare levy is hopelessly inadequate in funding Medicare, but the scary thing is in 10 years' time, the cost of Medicare will be $34 billion and while the Medicare levy will be a bit more, it will be nowhere near that figure. So everyone recognises we need to make Medicare sustainable and we can't have it collapse under its own weight.

If we want Australians to have access to the best quality health care in the world, which is what our citizens have come to expect—and which they rightly should have—then Medicare requires structural reform.

In my view, this is the one of the greatest public policy challenges confronting our country right now. We need to properly acknowledge it and move collectively and cooperatively to
address it. Failure to do so will fundamentally change Australians' quality of life for the worse. A sustainable future for Medicare cannot be achieved through a process of finger-pointing and recrimination. Demonising doctors, engaging in cheap political point-scoring or going for a quick fix, dare I say it—a bandaid—will not get the job done. If we are to assume that everyone, the medical profession, politicians of all persuasions and patients, all wants the same thing—that is, the best possible health outcomes for all Australians now and into the future—then we must all be engaged in creating the solution. Good policy does not happen in a vacuum. It will not magically appear out of thin air. And, while the logic of this statement might seem self-evident and obvious, the highly regrettable combative nature of our political environment can make the achievement of this goal seemingly impossible.

My challenge to everyone in this place is to put aside petty political divisions and support the Medicare consultation process Minister Ley is currently undertaking around the country. If ever there was a public policy issue demanding bipartisan support then this is it. I also challenge the medical profession to be part of this process. I know the minister wants to hear from you—and, in my electorate of Brisbane, I want to hear from you. In this regard I want to thank those members of the medical profession who only last week made time to meet with the minister and I as well with my parliamentary colleagues the member for Longman and the member for Petrie. Your insights were invaluable. I want to specifically acknowledge the doctors from the Northside Local Medical Association; Abbe Anderson and staff from the Medicare Local Metro North Brisbane; the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners; Dr Shaun Rudd, President of AMA Queensland; and the Redcliffe and District Local Medical Association.

The challenge of meeting the future healthcare needs of Australians has not crept up on us in the dark. We cannot and must not fail in our responsibility to meet it.

House adjourned at 20:00

NOTICES

The followings notices were given:

Ms O'Dwyer to present a bill for an act to amend the law relating to the governance, performance and accountability of, and the use and management of resources by, the Commonwealth, Commonwealth entities and Commonwealth companies, and to deal with consequential and transitional matters in connection with the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013, and for other purposes.

Ms J I Bishop to move:
That this House:
(1) notes:
   (a) that two Australians, Mr Andrew Chan and Mr Myuran Sukumaran, are presently imprisoned in Kerobokan prison in Indonesia and are facing execution for the crime of drug trafficking;
   (b) the serious nature of Mr Chan's and Mr Sukumaran's crimes, befitting lengthy prison terms as just punishment;
   (c) Australia's abolition of capital punishment, the international trend away from capital punishment, and the success of Indonesia's efforts to save the lives of its own citizens sentenced to death in foreign jurisdictions;
(d) the genuine remorse demonstrated by Mr Chan and Mr Sukumaran and their efforts at rehabilitation and reform in Kerobokan Prison, benefitting other prisoners; and

(e) the widespread support of the Australian people for the commutation of the death sentences of Mr Chan and Mr Sukumaran to lengthy prison sentences, as shown in the recent campaigns across the country calling for mercy to be shown to them; and

(2) encourages Indonesia to:

(a) give consideration to the circumstances of Mr Chan and Mr Sukumaran and their rehabilitation in prison, their suffering and that of their families; and

(b) stay their executions and commute their sentences to an appropriate term of imprisonment.

Ms King to move:
That the House condemns the Government for:

(1) promising, before the 2013 election, no cuts to health, but hitting Australians with an unfair GP co-payment after coming to office;

(2) inflicting untold damage on Australia's health system through its unfair GP co-payment;

(3) its ideological attack on Medicare—an attack which will have long term negative impacts on the health of all Australians;

(4) slugging Australians every time they go to the doctor; and

(5) scaring Australians, particularly parents and the elderly.

Ms Rishworth to move:
That the House:

(1) notes that prior to the 2013 election, the Coalition promised that it would 'ensure the continuation of the current arrangements of university funding' but did the exact opposite after the election;

(2) condemns the Government for its plans to:

(a) force Australian students to pay $100,000 for university degrees;

(b) saddle Australian students with a debt sentence;

(c) force young Australians to choose between owning a home and getting a degree; and

(d) force Australians to choose between starting a family and getting a degree; and

(3) condemns the Government for:

(a) saying one thing on higher education before the election and doing the opposite after; and

(b) its failure to listen to the Australian people who have comprehensively rejected its plans for $100,000 university degrees.

Mr Feeney to move:
That the House:

(1) notes the former Minister for Defence promised on 8 May 2013 in relation to Australia's future submarine project that 'The Coalition today is committed to building 12 new submarines here in Adelaide';

(2) condemns the Government for:

(a) breaking its election promise;

(b) putting the jobs of thousands of highly skilled Australians at risk; and

(c) its chaotic and incompetent management of Australia's future submarine project;
(3) condemns the Prime Minister for putting his job ahead of the jobs of ordinary Australians by trading their future for votes in his party room; and
(4) calls on the Government to honour its promise before the election to build Australia's future submarines in Adelaide.
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott) took the chair at 09:30.

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

International Development Assistance

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (09:30): Last year I was fortunate to visit Laos as a guest of Gavi, the global Vaccine Alliance. In a rural village on the outskirts of Vientiane, I was fortunate to witness Australian aid dollars in action at the local clinic. Young girls, primary school girls, were lining up with their little yellow vaccination books receiving the HPV vaccine well aware that the vaccine was protecting them and reducing the likelihood of developing cervical cancer later in their lives. Those were Australian aid dollars at work making a difference to young girls in our region.

In June of last year the Minister for Foreign Affairs declared that a priority for the government would be the empowerment of women and girls. At the moment the government is reviewing the aid budget—reviewing its priorities for the delivery of aid throughout our region. Unfortunately, under this government we have seen an unprecedented attack on Australia’s foreign aid—$11 billion of cuts have diminished our nation’s contribution to the world’s poor by an embarrassing 22c in every $100 of national income. Worse, according to a new analysis of the government’s figures by the child rights organisation Plan International Australia, girls in the developing world will be hardest hit by Australia’s government’s aid cuts.

Drawing on data released by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Plan International’s modelling reveals that in the next financial year alone the government’s latest cuts could mean 220,000 fewer girls will be enrolled in school; 400,000 fewer girls will be immunised; 3,150 fewer classrooms where girls can learn will be renovated or built; 157,000 fewer girls will see improved access to safe drinking water; and 750,000 fewer textbooks will be made available for girls.

Plan's CEO, Ian Wishart, said that the government’s cuts will hinder the empowerment of girls and their need to escape poverty. He said it:

… is deeply dispiriting because we know from experience and research that investing in girls is the most effective way to lead developing nations out of poverty.

We know, for example, that each extra year of secondary school increases a girl’s potential income by 25 per cent, and research shows that they are most likely to invest in their community, their families and their countries. There are many people the government owes an explanation to, and it is a great tragedy that the developing world's girls are on that list.

Emergency Services Volunteers

Ms MARINO (Forrest—Government Whip) (09:32): I would like to bring to the attention of the House and the Australian people the great work done by volunteers of St John Ambulance services in the south-west of Western Australia and the electorate of Forrest. St John's has nine purely volunteer subcentres in the region including: Augusta, Boyanup, Brunswick Junction, Capel, Donnybrook, Dunsborough, Harvey, Margaret River and Nannup. They also manage three joint volunteer career subcentres in Australind, Busselton and Collie and one purely career substation in Bunbury.
The subcentres have 367 volunteers in total, all of whom are providing an outstanding and magnificent service to their local communities. In total nine of the 13 substations offer first aid training, and they have trained over 9,500 people from the south-west in first aid. All substations except Bunbury also offer volunteers officer training.

I would like to congratulate and thank all the St John Ambulance volunteers from the south-west for their outstanding contribution. In the financial year of 2013-14, they contributed 184,697 hours of their own time to support their community, averaging 503 hours per volunteer. As the daughter of long-term volunteer and St John Ambulance life member at Brunswick Junction, I am directly aware of the sort of commitment to the community this effort takes.

I would also like to thank the firefighters who have volunteered their time at the Northcliffe, Waroona Boddington and other fires throughout the south-west. They have our greatest gratitude and respect for their efforts. Across the south-west will we have 570 volunteer fire and rescue personnel, 29 specific volunteer fire personnel, 4,934 local bushfire service volunteers, 294 SES volunteers and 300 marine rescue volunteers. Including St John Ambulance, that is 6,494 volunteers in all of these areas who look after our local community.

In this House today, I am very proud to acknowledge their efforts and I salute all their work. I know these are all very dedicated people. When we look at these emergency services, these are vital, particularly in rural and regional areas. They save people's lives, they protect property and they put their own lives at risk frequently. None of us in this nation can underestimate the value of these volunteers. The St John Ambulance people do an extraordinary job. I have seen this firsthand. I watch every time I see the ambulances go out, and in my community mostly they are all volunteers. They do an outstanding job.

Great Barrier Reef

Mr SWAN (Lilley) (09:35): What we have not seen this week from the government is a reboot; what we have seen this week is a re-run. It is like watching an old sitcom when you know all the punchlines—but the jokes are the government's policies. If the government wanted to restore some of its credibility, it could start with meaningful action on climate change. It could drop its shameful Direct Action Plan which, according to the Climate Change Authority, is unlikely to deliver even the minimum five per cent target without significant complementary action.

As a Queenslander, I grew up in one of the most unique environments on the planet bordered by one of the seven natural wonders of the world, the Great Barrier Reef. If we do not take effective action on climate change, the barrier reef is finished. The clock is ticking and the alarms are going off.

The fifth IPCC report released in 2014 concluded that without significant action for climate change, extensive and permanent damage caused by increasing water temperatures around coral reef systems in Australia would occur by mid-century—that is the alarm that is going off. This point was made by President Obama in his Brisbane address at the G20.

But what was the response of the Liberal Party? Rather than change their climate change policies, they carry on as if the reef were not threatened or that it could, in fact, be saved by adaptation policies. Of course, that is scientific voodoo—nothing more, nothing less. The only
thing that can save the Great Barrier Reef is stopping our oceans from warming and rising. That means we have to take effective action on carbon emissions.

A recent study by the Australian Institute of Marine Science found that long-lived corals in the Great Barrier Reef are now growing 15 per cent less than they were before 1990. They also found that this was unprecedented in the 400 years of records they have inspected. Similar results have been found by several other studies for other regions. What we have in the government is a bunch of climate change denialists running around who want to give handouts to big polluters.

One of my proudest days in the parliament was the day that we took effective action on carbon emissions and climate change. We did that because we wanted to be able to look our grandchildren in the eye, our future generations, and say, 'We took serious action to stop dangerous climate change and to save our precious environment, most particularly the Great Barrier Reef.'

The Great Barrier Reef is in good condition relative to other coral reefs elsewhere in the world, but we know its health has been reduced. It can only be saved for our grandchildren and subsequent generations by effective action on climate change and none of this voodoo science from the government—(Time expired)

Fadden Electorate: Youth Leadership

Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Assistant Minister for Defence) (09:38): I rise today during this first week of parliament in 2015 to acknowledge some of the most important leaders in our community: our emerging junior leaders in our great schools, especially my schools on the northern Gold Coast. As the school year now begins in earnest, our newly elected school leaders will begin their extraordinarily significant and very important task of leading their schools, setting the example, and supporting and mentoring their fellow students.

I have 28 great schools within my electorate of Fadden with a new one opening this year. I visit them all as often as I can to encourage and support their young leaders and to recognise the future generation. I always enjoy saying to the student leaders in the Gold Coast, 'You are our plan A. And guess what plan B is? We don't have one. You are it. You are the gift your parents give to a generation they will not see. You are the future of our country.'

I enjoy participating in awards ceremonies, school presentations and inductions. I speak often about the role of democracy and the role of students in that democracy. I always enjoy question and answers with students, and some of the trickiest questions I have ever encountered have not been in question time, at the hands of the Leader of the Opposition, but from a student in year 6 or 7 brimming with pride and with an inquisitive mind.

It is true that Fadden's newest crops of school leaders will need to mentor and support their fellow students. I also encourage them in this challenging task with the wise words of Ralph Nader, who said of leadership, 'I start with the premise that the function of leadership is to produce more leaders, not more followers.' I also add, that people do not care how much you know until they know how much you care. So I would encourage the student leaders in my electorate of Fadden to please support your fellow students. They look up to you. Do so with an eye to growing the next generation of leaders within your communities.

It is also important to mentor our young leaders and help them grow and achieve their goals. That is why I have created the Stuart Robert MP Leadership Medal, which is awarded
in most schools throughout the northern Gold Coast to promote and encourage leadership. It is my hope that upon graduation, and perhaps some reflection, students will continue with their leadership journeys in the wider community and reach their full potential.

Suffice to say, that through my school visits, I have had the great privilege of getting to know many of these young leaders. I always find myself tremendously impressed with their self-confidence, resilience, courage and commitment to what they do. They do us all proud. Perhaps we, here, have much to learn from them. They are certainly the product of all the support and encouragement their parents and schools give them.

Congratulations to our 2015 Fadden school leaders. I look forward to following your leadership journey with great interest. It is now my great pleasure, with much pride, to seek leave to table the list of names of our student leaders for 2015.

Leave granted.

**Tasmania: Local Government Elections**

Mr WILKIE (Denison) (09:42): Local government elections were held in Tasmania last October. In the city of Glenorchy, which covers about half of the Denison electorate, Kristie Johnston was re-elected alderman with a staggering four quotas, and mayor with almost 60 per cent of the primary vote.

By any measure, Kristie's result was a staggering personal achievement but, more importantly, it was dramatic evidence of the broad community disgust with the years of Glenorchy City Council maladministration and the overwhelming public endorsement of Kristie's commitment to clean it up.

In the circumstances, you would think that all aldermen would have had the good sense to respect the outcome, and pitch in and help Kristie sort things out. But did they? Some did not. Instead, they decided to embark on a guerrilla campaign of destabilisation and deceit born of blind hatred. Just in the last week, we had the ludicrous situation where aldermen had not been provided with an important report on council restructuring and were expected to endorse it without having ever seen it. The mayor properly suspended the meeting convened to endorse the report, only to find that aldermen ignored the suspension and voted for the changes anyway. No wonder the matter is now in the hands of the Tasmanian Director of Local Government.

This puerile behaviour would be laughable if it were not so serious. Juvenile it certainly is, that some Glenorchy aldermen think it is okay to ignore the mayor's entirely proper instructions, to rubber-stamp council decisions and to sack staff without proper consideration or process. No wonder many of the public hate politics and hate politicians so much these days, when the members of their own community—the aldermen in their own council—are so shamelessly contemptuous of our democratic institutions and of the result of a properly convened election. Of course, these dunderheads think they are clever by trying to create an impression of chaos under the new mayor. The problem for them, though, is that the community is wise to their juvenile antics and sees them for what they are—sore losers with no care for the public interest. These are the same people who oversaw rate increases of more than 35 per cent over five years.

Mark my words: Mayor Kristie Johnston is fighting the good fight to clean up Glenorchy and she will win. She should not have to do it alone, because, in my experience, Alderman
Harry Quick, David Pearce, Jan Dunsby and Matt Stevenson are all people of good heart. They, with the community overwhelmingly behind them, will provide the foundation to rebuild Glenorchy, and they can count on my support if they work together to do so.

**Gippsland Electorate: Bushfires**

Mr CHESTER (Gippsland—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence) (09:45): I appreciate the opportunity to reflect today on the anniversaries of major fire events that have occurred in my electorate of Gippsland during my time as a member of parliament. Last Saturday was the sixth anniversary of the Black Saturday bushfires of 2009 and Monday was the first anniversary of the Hernes Oak-Hazelwood Mine fire of 2014. Both of these events had a devastating effect on the local communities in different ways, particularly around the Latrobe Valley region.

The Black Saturday bushfires impacted on large parts of Victoria, claiming the lives of 173 people. It was the worst bushfire event in our nation’s history. I would like to again express my condolences to the people who lost loved ones and property in those fires and to let them know we have not forgotten them. Of those 173 souls lost in the Black Saturday fires, 11 of the victims died in the Churchill fire complex in my electorate of Gippsland. A total of 35 people were injured and 145 homes were destroyed. Without any exaggeration, it was a devastating event for my community. The fire impacted heavily on people living in towns in the Latrobe Valley region but it also spread right across Gippsland to places like Yarram and Woodside.

Our community resilience was sorely tested on the days following the fire event, and Gippsland and La Trobe Valley certainly passed that test. At the time, we all pledged not to forget the people who were affected by that bushfire event. I am proud and pleased to say that my community has not forgotten. On Saturday, the Latrobe City Council officially opened a new reflection space in Traralgon’s Victory Park. This space honours the 11 lives lost from that fire event. It complements other memorials established in towns such as Boolarra, Yinnar, Hazelwood and Jeeralang, Callignee, Traralgon South and Koornalla. I look forward to visiting the new memorial the next time I am in Traralgon, and I commend the Latrobe City Council for implementing this new space at the request of local residents.

As I mentioned, this week is also the first anniversary of the Hernes Oak and Hazelwood Mine Fire, which took hold on 9 February 2014. Thankfully, this blaze did not directly claim lives like the Black Saturday fires did, but it did cause extraordinary angst and health concerns to people living in Morwell and surrounding towns. The fire was the result of a series of small fires that caused embers to spot into the mine. The Hazelwood Mine fire inquiry found it was most likely a smaller fire near Hernes Oak that caused the mine fire and spotting from a nearby fire at Drifffield may have also been a factor in that event. Both of these fires were deemed to be suspicious and are being investigated by police. I would urge people to remain vigilant throughout the summer months about any suspicious activity. We have escaped a major fire season at this stage in Gippsland, but there are still risks ahead.

As I said, I take this opportunity to express my thoughts to all the people of Gippsland who have been directly impacted by these bushfires in recent times. I would also like to congratulate and thank the volunteer and professional firefighters who do such an amazing job on behalf of our community.
Indigenous Health

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Throsby) (09:48): The good news is that life expectancy for all Australians is increasing. Between 2005 and 2012, the life expectancy for Australian men increased by 1.6 years. The bad news is that these improvements driven by better diet, reductions in smoking and improved health are not being equally shared. Life expectancy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders has increased by up to 18 months—something that we all rejoice in—but there is still an unacceptable gap—a stubborn gap of 10 years between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have higher rates of cancer, diabetes and preventable diseases and, as the Closing the gap report released today shows, suffer preventable deaths related to chronic diseases at rates that could be halved within three years through the systematic application of existing techniques and therapies. As the report shows, addressing these challenges requires funding, a policy commitment from government and community control and leadership.

I am proud of the work that is being done by community leaders in my electorate of Throsby. Recently, I joined a group of about 30 cyclists who were riding from Albury to Albion Park in my electorate to raise awareness of health in Aboriginal communities along the way. The group were led by Dale Wright, Shane Venables, Ben Russell and Layne Brown.

Leaving Albury on 16 November, the cyclists were there to deliver a message and to show a better example. This annual ride began in 2012. Participants have since at least doubled the number involved, including men and women, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. The rides have called in at schools, community events and Aboriginal medical services along the way, riding with locals for parts of the journey to help spread the message. Importantly, riders have had a great opportunity to share their stories between Shellharbour and Albury. Today, Australia is reminded that closing the gap is a critical and urgent concern. We must not delay. We must not lose our focus and we must act.

To be frank, today's Closing the gap report has highlighted some disappointing progress. The government's decision to cut $130 million from Indigenous health programs will not help in closing the gap. Cuts to tackling Indigenous smoking programs will not help in closing the gap. The policy paralysis on ATSI health programs will not help in closing the gap. Of course, the idea that increasing the cost of accessing your GP through the GP tax is going to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians is simply farcical. We need to focus as a parliament and the government needs to adopt the recommendation—(Time expired)

Sikh Community

Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt) (09:51): In February 2012, this parliament recognised a terrible act of genocide. Seven thousand men and boys were massacred in Bosnia in 1995 because of their Muslim faith. What if I told you that, in India in 1984, more than five times that many people, 37,000, who were predominantly men and young boys, were massacred and that more than 300,000 people were displaced or made homeless for a similar reason? Since then, the persecution has continued to this day—all because of their Sikh faith. I have spoken several times in this place about why these events of November 1984 took place.
Today, I rise to recognise the event that I took part in at the end of last year, the Sikh Genocide Remembrance March in Melbourne. On 13 December, I led around 1,000 Sikhs through the city centre to commemorate the 30th anniversary of this terrible time. It was an amazing experience to walk in a sea of colourful turbans and saris and feel the emotion of the day. Back in 1944, Raphael Lemkin coined the term ‘genocide’ after seeing the horror of the Holocaust in Nazi occupied Europe. It is a blight on humankind that, despite there now being a universal understanding of what genocide is, these atrocious acts have not stopped. Thirty years on, the physical wounds from the violence may have healed but the damage inflicted on the psyche of a generation of Sikhs remains.

I have been involved in this cause for several years now, all thanks to my very good friend Daljit Singh. On November 2012, I tabled a petition in parliament with more than 4½ thousand signatures calling on Australia to recognise the event as an act of genocide. Unfortunately, it was ignored by the foreign minister in the previous government. I would particularly like to acknowledge the Supreme Sikh Council of Australia and representatives of the Sikh Genocide Recognition National Committee for their work in raising awareness about this issue. I would like to acknowledge Daljit Singh, Gurjeet Singh, Harkirat Singh, Gurbaz Singh, Gurmeet Singh, Jatinder Singh and Harpal Singh. I would also like to acknowledge key international guests who also attended the march. These include Jagmeet Singh MP, member of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, Canada; Jatinder Singh; Gurpatwant Singh Pannu, Sikhs for Justice, USA; and Harinder Singh, Sikh Research Institute.

I pledge my support to continue working to achieve recognition in the Australian parliament for the Sikh genocide. I urge the Australian parliament to recognise this horrible event because until such time—we cannot change the past. But what we can do is recognise these acts for what they really were. That is very important in bringing closure and recognition for this wonderful group of Australians who are part of our community.

Donaldson, Mrs Shirley

Mr GRAY (Brand) (09:54): I rise to speak about a constituent, Shirley Donaldson. Shirley died on 13 November. She was 86 years old. Shirley Donaldson was a stalwart of the Australian Labor Party. Shirley was an elder of the Safety Bay/Rockingham branch and, together with her husband, John, a life member of the Australian Labor Party. Life membership is an honour bestowed on very few people, and very few party members, in recognition of their outstanding service to the Labor movement. Shirley certainly was a worthy recipient.

Shirley was involved in the Labor Party for more than 60 years in Willagee, Yangebup and then Rockingham. Shirley became good friends with numerous state and federal politicians, including Kim Beazley senior, Kim Beazley junior, Wendy Fatin, John Dawkins, Carmen Lawrence, Norman Marlborough, Alan Carpenter, Chris Evans, Senator Louise Pratt and, of course, the future Premier of Western Australia, Mark McGowan. She was a great supporter of mine.

The former Western Australian Premier, Alan Carpenter, accredited Shirley and her husband, John, with introducing him to the Labor Party. It was they who suggested he join and look to a political career. They were incredibly proud when Alan was selected to be the Premier of Western Australia when Geoff Gallop retired from politics.
Shirley was a very active member of the party. She and John would walk the pavement doorknocking and delivering pamphlets during many election campaigns, including all of mine. She attended the innumerable meetings, events and fundraisers that make up the Labor political calendar. Her vigour and commitment demonstrated her belief in the democratic process, in social justice, in the rights and equality of all people and in Labor values.

Shirley always looked for the best in people and lived by the motto 'If you can't make friends, then don't make enemies—unless, of course, they are Liberals'. She was a charming and delightful person. She was kind, warm, hospitable, friendly and good humoured.

Shirley and her husband, John, were soul mates for 72 years, from the very first time Shirley caught John's eye was when she was just 14 years old and they both worked at Watson's in Hamilton Hill. My thoughts are with her husband, John, her three children, her nine grandchildren and her 16 great-grandchildren.

Shirley Donaldson was an extraordinary woman. She led an extraordinary life. She was proud to support her community through her political action and participation and proud to be a Labor member, and we are proud of Shirley.

Sitting suspended from 09:57 to 10:38

Lyons Electorate: Australia Day Honours

Mr HUTCHINSON (Lyons) (10:38): I take this opportunity to acknowledge the recipients at the recent Australia Day awards in my electorate of Lyons. The list is as follows.

Mr Geoffrey Butler from St Helens, in the north-east of Tasmania, was awarded the Australia Medal. This is the second one for his family. His wife, Heather, was awarded the honour in 2012. Mr Butler was chairman of the St Helens Athletic Club and he continues as a board member of Medea Park. He is a volunteer at the St Helens Volunteer Ambulance Station, the Rotary Club of St Helens and the Break 0 Day Business Enterprise Board, and he was previously a Labor Party state president.

Mr John Beswick, from Deviot on the West Tamar, was also awarded the Australia Medal. John was a Bass Liberal MP between 1979 and 1988, a former deputy premier of Tasmania and held various portfolios, including forestry, employment and primary industry. He served with the Launceston City Mission, the North-Eastern Art and Craft Association, the Derby Development Association and the West Tamar Uniting Parish Church.

Laura Double, who I know personally, was awarded the Order of Australia Medal. Laura is a Campbell Town woman who started volunteer work in the community when her brother was involved in a serious car crash which resulted in a brain injury. She raised money to buy a jaws of life for Campbell Town district and for repairs to churches at both Campbell Town and Ross. She has ongoing involvement with the Midlands Pony Club.

Deborah De Williams was awarded the Australia Medal. Deborah is a Midway Point woman who has been fundraising for her community from a very young age. She became the first woman to walk a continuous lap around Australia to raise money for breast cancer.

Trevor Clark, from Exeter, was awarded the Order of Australia Medal. Since 1983, Trevor has volunteered for the Gravelly Beach Fire Brigade, and for years he has offered his time to organise the Exeter Show. He also helped to set up Exeter village market.
Graeme McDermott, from Oatlands in the Southern Midlands, was awarded the Order of Australia Medal. Graeme has been President of the Oatlands District Homes Association for a decade and has worked for many years with the Rotary Club of Oatlands. He is on the board of JobMatch, Lake Dulverton-Callington Park Committee and the Police Association of Tasmania.

Joan Barnes, from Longford, was awarded the Order of Australia Medal for community service and for many other activities. Joan is a member of the Longford Garden Club, the Longford Show Society and the Longford Tennis Club. She volunteers at the local op shop and for Meals-on-Wheels and is also a counsellor in the Helping Hands Association.

Leila Nichols, from Nubeena, was awarded the Order of Australia Medal for her community service, especially during the January 2013 bushfires on the Tasman Peninsula, where, for nine consecutive days, she served meals to people who had lost their homes.

The former mayor of the Sorell Council, Carmel Torenius, was awarded the Order of Australia Medal. Carmel has been a tireless contributor to her community, including the Primrose Sands RSL, the Dodges Ferry Recreation Centre, the Dodges Ferry Sea Rescue and the South Eastern Regional Development Association. (Time expired)

Richmond Electorate: Australia Day Honours

Mrs ELLIOT (Richmond) (10:39): On Australia Day this year I had the privilege of attending the Byron Shire's Citizenship and Awards Ceremony at the Brunswick Bowls Club. It was a great day. The ceremony started with the recognition of the outstanding contributions made by many citizens and community groups. This year's 2015 Byron Shire Citizen of the Year was awarded to Adrienne Sheppard—a remarkable woman—from Mullumbimby. Adrienne was nominated in recognition of her more than 30 years of community involvement. She has given her time, energy and experience to help those in our community who have found themselves marginalised and in need of help.

Adrienne has championed and supported a variety of community groups that are all working to help people in need of assistance and advocacy. Whether it is a NAIDOC family fun day, Yarn Up, a homeless forum or anything else that provides an opportunity to assist the disadvantaged or marginalized in our community, Adrienne is there helping out. Nothing is too much trouble for her. Adrienne's volunteerism and membership is spread over many organisations, which include rainforest regeneration groups; a refugee settlement group, where she was one of the original workers with refugee settlers in the Byron Shire; WIK—Women's Indigenous Reconciliation; Sisters for Reconciliation; and Grace Space, where she supports older people. Adrienne is also involved in a soup kitchen where she serves meals prepared from her own home for people in need in the community. She is also involved in a bush tucker garden maintenance and education program, which I note is a particular passion of Adrienne's. And she volunteers as a foot masseur for aged residents at Coolamon Nursing Home, Mullumbimby.

Adrienne has been and continues to be a constant beacon of inspiration with her gentle nature, positive attitude and deep sense of civic duty. Armed with a very infectious smile, she works tirelessly for our local community. Adrienne is driven by sense of compassion, mixed with love and humour. She treats everyone with the same dignity and respect. I thank her for
her dedication and I acknowledge the wonderful honour of Byron Shire Citizen of the Year. It was indeed an honour for me to be there as she was presented with that award.

I also note on this day that the Tweed Shire presented their Australia Day community awards as well. The Citizen of the Year for the Tweed Shire was George Anderson—and I congratulate him. George is a Murwillumbah resident and was a World War II bomber crew member. He has been handcrafting wooden treasures for charity for many years, alongside decades of dedication to community service organisations. He is 89 years old. It was wonderful that he was awarded Tweed Shire Citizen of the Year. George has worked for Legacy Australia for the past three decades, helping many of the regions war widows. He was honoured for a perfect meeting attendance record for the past 40 years at the Murwillumbah Lions Club. It is a remarkable achievement by George Anderson.

I congratulate both Tweed Shire Citizen of the Year, George Anderson, and Byron Shire Citizen of the Year, Adrienne Sheppard. We are very fortunate to have such wonderful and outstanding people in our community.

Papua New Guinea: Domestic Violence

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (10:39): Prime Minister Tony Abbott often says that to be born in Australia is to win the lottery of life. Sadly, some of our newest neighbours in Papua New Guinea are not so lucky. They often lack access to the most basic medical treatment, and women and girls in Papua New Guinea are more likely to experience domestic violence than those in any other country in the world. This is a problem that we do not wish for our neighbours, and there are many organisations who offer support to the people of Papua New Guinea.

Violence against women, both physical and sexual, is at an appalling level in Papua New Guinea. However, one group, the Leniata Legacy, is aiming to make a difference by engaging in a five-pillar approach of awareness, advocacy, education, charity and empowerment. The legacy wants to engage all Papua New Guineans, both male and female, to challenge the view that violence against women is unacceptable.

The Leniata Legacy reports that two in three women are subject to physical violence, and more than 50 per cent are subject to sexual assaults, in Papua New Guinea. This is where programs undertaken by the Leniata Legacy are so important. Indeed, Papua New Guinea averages only one doctor for more than 17,000 people and has a large number of very isolated communities without ready access to even the most basic of modern medical treatment. Tragically, five women die in childbirth in Papua New Guinea every day, and one in 13 children die before the age of five. It is impossible for most people in these communities to travel to the nearest medical clinic for the simplest of procedures, let alone be diagnosed and treated for more serious conditions in Port Moresby.

YWAM Medical Ships have been providing basic health services such as immunisations, dentistry, antenatal clinics and health education to villagers and health workers in very remote parts of Papua New Guinea. Completely staffed and crewed by volunteers, the ship travels to remote areas and allows people to be treated for simple procedures like infection control to more complicated eye surgery in the on-board operating theatre. Since 2010, YWAM and the MV Pacific Link have achieved 249,000 health outputs for remote PNG residents. This is
outstanding work done by a completely volunteer workforce of medical professionals working in challenging conditions. Last year I attended the launch of YWAM's new medical ship, the MV Ammari. It will increase the capacity of the medical ship program by 500 per cent to help more than 188,000 people a year.

Recently, I had the opportunity to travel to Port Moresby to inspect private and public health facilities, and to look at options for making our aid program even more effective. I was pleased to have private discussions with Prime Minister O'Neill, sports minister, and local member, Justin Tkatchenko, Minister for Health, Michal Malabag and, of course, my good friend Rimbink Pato, the Minister for Foreign Affairs. I thank them all for taking time from their busy schedules.

I particularly congratulate Amyna and Mohamed Sultan on their persistence and determination to establish the new Pacific International Hospital, which will be officially opened this Friday. The new hospital is very impressive and equal to the best in the world.

Asian Football Confederation Asian Cup

Ms CLAYDON (Newcastle) (10:47): Throughout January, my electorate of Newcastle hosted the greatest celebration of the world game that Australia has ever seen. We played host to four matches of the AFC Asian Cup, a tournament attended by the best football teams in Asia, with more than one billion people across the region tuning in to watch 32 matches. The tournament was the largest sporting event in Australia since the 2000 Sydney Olympics, and I am proud to say it was a raging success. The President of the Asian Football Confederation praised the event as the most successful Asian Cup ever.

Throughout the month, the city of Newcastle and the broader Hunter region were alive and pulsating with football fever. Nearly 60,000 fans attended the Newcastle matches, and neighbouring towns, like Cessnock, hosted some of the world's best footballers for training camps and warm-up matches—matches where local teams and players, like those from the Lambton Jaffas, were able to live out their dreams, lining up to play against English and German league superstars. Newcastle hosted matches featuring Japan, Palestine, Oman, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Iraq and the home team, Australia. The city went Cahill-mad when the Socceroos hit town for the semifinal and thousands of children and adults—I might add—had an up-close, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to watch and interact with their footballing heroes.

The benefit both to the regional economy and to the community at large cannot be undervalued. It is estimated that more than $13 million was injected into the local Newcastle economy through the city's hosting of these matches. Socially, we benefitted from an enriching multicultural experience, with fans from Middle Eastern and Asian backgrounds sharing their love of football and their nations' cultures with the Newcastle community.

Newcastle's role as a host city continues our strong record of holding major sporting events, such as the Asia-Pacific Special Olympic Games, the Australia versus Scotland rugby test match and Australian University Games. Capacity to host successful major events cannot, however, occur without long-term vision, significant government support, planning and investment. In the case of Newcastle, particular acknowledgement must go to the former state and federal Labor governments who invested more than $92 million from 2005 to 2009 to ensure that Newcastle had its own world-class stadium. It was, after all, this critical piece of
infrastructure that gave Newcastle the capacity to bid for four matches of the Asian Cup in the first place. Labor understands the benefit of investments in the regions to drive local economies and community engagement. That is why I am committed to working collaboratively with my local and state government colleagues to build on Labor's legacy in Newcastle and work towards the development of a new elite sporting precinct for our city. Finally, I would like to thank those who made the AFC Asian Cup such a success, including the local organising committee CEO, Michael Brown, and the extraordinary team of volunteers. (Time expired)

**Roberts, Mr George**

Mr Ewen Jones (Herbert) (10:50): Last month was going to be a fantastic month. We were all going to gather together to celebrate George Roberts' 100th birthday. Sadly, one week short of his 100th birthday, George Roberts passed away. For the average citizen in Townsville, to know George Roberts is to cross the bridge that is named after him or to drive past George Roberts Hall at James Cook University. But George Roberts was far more than a name on a couple signs somewhere; George Roberts was an absolute visionary of a man. He served during the Second World War; he was a great solicitor; he built a lot of Townsville. Just after I was elected, one of my staff came through and said: 'There's a Mr George Roberts on the phone. He says he'd like to speak to you. Will I just take a message?' I said: 'No, you will not! You'll put him straight through.' To get a call from George Roberts meant that something fantastic was about to happen. He might be about to belt you over the head with an idea and tell you what you must do, but he would also come to you with a great deal of empathy and a fantastic vision. We would not have had James Cook University and we would not have had the land for James Cook University without George Roberts. His children will tell you that their Sunday drives were in the car across paddocks as he skirted the scene in what was then the bush.

His funeral service was packed out at St James Cathedral in Townsville. Bishop Bill Ray, who had only just lost his mother, said fantastic words and gave an insight of a man he still called Mr Roberts. He said he believed that men of George Roberts's stature earned the right to be called Mr Roberts. I always called him Mr Roberts as well, even though he would always say, 'Call me George'. And even though I got to know him a little bit towards the end of his life, and his voice was a little bit croaky, you knew there was still steel in his spine.

We in this place, and people who live their lives a little bit publicly, we are seen a lot and we seem to be doing a lot. But as George Roberts would tell you, he could not do any of it without his family. He could not do any of it without having his family's support. And he did it because of his family. He did it because he wanted to make sure his family, his children, had the education, that they had the opportunities that he so drastically strived for. As I said, we would not have James Cook University, we would not have the RSL villas, we would not have the Good Shepherd nursing home, we would not have the Jezzine Barracks without George Roberts. He was a fantastic man, great to be around, and our city will miss him greatly. We still have a lot of good people in Townsville, but we are the city today, and will continue to grow, because of his vision. I am glad I got to know him; I am glad his family has got to know me a little as well.
Infrastructure

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (10:53): The government admitted that they have been a bad government since their election in 2013 when the Prime Minister made the extraordinary comment, 'Good government begins today'. It is as if they were so pleased at having graduated from opposition they decided to have a gap year. Yesterday, we saw another example of how this government is failing when the Deputy Prime Minister, in answer to a question in question time, outlined a series of projects that were commenced by the former Labor government and then attempted to take credit for it. That is what happens when you actually breach a promise that was made that there would be cranes in the sky and bulldozers on the capital cities' streets on new projects—all of which have commenced.

The Deputy Prime Minister went through a series of projects on the Pacific and Bruce highways, none of which are new initiatives of the government. He then went on to speak about Adelaide's north-south transport corridor; the South Road Superway is part of that and was promised, funded, built and opened due to the former Labor government. The Torrens Road to Torrens River section was funded in the 2013 budget. Preconstruction work began in 2013, and it is proceeding. Sydney's F3 to M2 project—claimed to be a new project because it has a new name, NorthConnex—was agreed to in a formal agreement, signed by me as minister and by New South Wales roads minister Duncan Gay in June 2013.

But perhaps the most absurd is the Northern Sydney Freight Corridor upgrade. Here is a press release from then Premier Barry O'Farrell and me—in 2011, when construction began, after three years of preconstruction work. Mr O'Farrell said: 'That is why this is a Christmas gift for Sydney.' It was supposed to be a Christmas gift for 2011; not for 2012 or 2013 or 2014—but 2011. This is after three years of preconstruction work. This is a vital project, to boost freight and to separate the freight and passenger lines. This is a government that has no new ideas and is being punished for it. *(Time expired)*

Calare Electorate: Green Army

Mr JOHN COBB (Calare) (10:56): Today I would like to bring some sanity back into the chamber and talk about the Green Army projects in my electorate of Calare, and how they have already begun to deliver positive results.

Green Corps, which we had back in the previous coalition government years, was an extremely successful project which brought together people—unemployed people generally—to help them get used to a working life and to set them up to get jobs out in the world. But the Green Army is a little different in that it involves people who are quite likely to be already employed and who actually choose to go into the Green Army, but the Green Corps was and the Green Army is totally dependent on having each group of people reach their potential. In the case I am talking about I think they were aged from 17 and 18 years to about 24 and 25 years. The team leader is still incredibly important to their ability to reach their potential.

The group we met with the other day at Bathurst were under Jack Fry, their overseer. He reported that they were nearly two weeks ahead of schedule. They had to deal with incredibly inclement weather—although we are rather glad they did because we needed the rain—and the team has put in a lot of hard work. They have gotten rid of over two tonnes of rubbish, and they have tidied up the edge of Bathurst city. They have removed two kilometres of unwanted fencing. They have cleaned up local waterways.
It has been a great result. And not only are the participants of the project generating real environmental and conservation benefits for the region; they are also gaining incredibly valuable practical training which will stand them in good stead and actually give them credits towards entering the workforce in the environmental area. And that is what the project is about; giving young people the best chance they can, particularly if they choose to go into that area. I am hoping that the Bathurst Green Army team have set—because they are the first one in my electorate to get going—a great example that everybody else can follow on from.

I just got word that another one is about to start a project—in Cabonne, in my own LGA. It will focus on reintroducing and removing vegetation along Molong, Boree, Mandagery Creeks and Belubula River, an area where I hope to see a new dam in the near future. (Time expired)

South Australian Bushfires

Mr CHAMPION (Wakefield) (10:59): Early in the new year, the state of South Australia—and in particular my electorate—was faced with a major emergency in the emergence of the Sampson Flat bushfire. Nothing, I think, exhibits the adversity of this country quite like bushfire. It is particularly confronting to all those who have to deal with it, those people who live in bushfire-prone areas, but it also elicits a great deal of sympathy and concern from people not just in my state but around the country.

I would like to thank all those emergency service volunteers and personnel who were integral to keeping areas of my electorate and, indeed, other areas of South Australia safe. In particular I want to thank the brigades in my area: the Alma, Balaklava, Clare, Concordia, Dalkeith, Dublin, Freeling, Gawler River, Greenock, Hamley Bridge, Kapunda, Lyndoch, Mallala, Manoora, Mudla Wirra, Northern Barossa Group, Nuriootpa, One Tree Hill, Owen, Port Wakefield, Rhynie, Riverton, Roseworthy, Saddlerworth, Salisbury, Sheoak Oak Log, Tanunda, Tarlee, Two Wells, Virginia, Waterloo, Watervale, Williamstown and Woolshed/Wasleys brigades. I would like to thank all of those brigades for their commitment in confronting these bushfires, which were truly terrifying. If you went up to One Tree Hill or Williamstown on the days of the fires, as I did, you really were confronted by a vision of Hades. It was truly terrifying. So, to those men and women who were out in the thick of it, we extend our thanks and our appreciation for their efforts in protecting human life. We were very lucky not to have any lives lost in these bushfires, because people sensibly evacuated, and I would like to thank the residents for that.

I would particularly like to thank Captain Tom Walsh of the One Tree Hill CFS brigade. He stepped into that role just this year, and his was one of the first brigades to respond. I would like to thank Captain Justin Baxter of the Dalkeith brigade. I am a member of the brigade, but I do not do nearly as much as the captain and his crew. They, along with all the other community members, really did contribute so much. I would also like to thank Tony Piccolo, the Minister for Emergency Services, and Michael Keenan, the Minister for Justice, who both acted as you would expect, allowing the federal government, the state government and the local council all to act together to work against what was a terrible emergency in my state and in my electorate. Thank you to all of those who contributed to that effort. (Time expired)
Lindsay Electorate: Honours Recipients

Ms SCOTT (Lindsay) (11:02): It is with much pride that I rise today to acknowledge the work, passion and dedication of some of our most remarkable local citizens, acknowledged on both the Penrith City Council's honours list and the Australia Day Honours List. Firstly, I would like to recognise Emu Plains resident Barbara Mitchell. Barbara was awarded an Order of Australia Medal for her incredible service and dedication to the international community of Bangladesh through a humanitarian medical program. By day, Barbara works as a nurse, but since 2007 Barbara has organised a self-funded team of medical professionals to travel to Bangladesh. There they perform life-saving surgeries on young children whose families cannot afford to pay for some of these much-needed transformational operations. So far, they have performed 639 operations, including for cleft palates and for children who have suffered from severe burns or have had foot deformities.

Today I also stand to acknowledge the work of Mark White. Mark has been awarded an OAM for his dedication and service to the Museum of Fire, as well as the preservation of fire vehicles. Mark's commitment to the iconic Penrith tourist attraction has seen the organisation become one of the premier museums of its type anywhere in the world.

I would also like to acknowledge David Bentham, who has won an Order of Australia Medal for serving on the board of the NRMA and for his role as a councillor in the neighbouring hills district.

I would also like to acknowledge the citizens recognised by Penrith City Council—in particular Penrith Citizen of the Year David Currie. David was an inspiration for and a champion of people with a disability. A local for 70 years he, for many decades, has devoted his time to several charities and to campaigning for the rights of people with a disability.

The Penrith Young Person of the Year, Max Fenton, is a passionate campaigner helping the young disadvantaged in our community. Max is a wonderful young man.

Our Sports Person of the Year, Tahlia Tupaea, plays representative tennis, loves basketball and is a star on the athletics field. She is the second youngest debutante ever in the Women's National Basketball League.

Our Penrith Local Hero, Lesley Smith, is a respected volunteer with the Rural Fire Service.

Local Appreciation Awards were also awarded to five wonderful, exceptional citizens: to Sally Wawn, for generously volunteering her time and skills to help our local sporting and community groups; to Sudanese-born Abaker Athum, for his creativity as a hop-hop artist in generating opportunities for young people in St Marys; to Dr Om Dhungyel, for his ongoing work within the Bhutanese community; to Dr Alexis Leones, for her many cultural events; and to Sally Reedy for her volunteer work with St John Ambulance and the State Emergency Service.

I congratulate these wonderful citizens. (Time expired)

Domestic Violence

Mr GILES (Scullin) (11:05): I rise to speak against the Abbott government's funding cuts to the Whittlesea Community Legal Service in Epping, and to highlight to this chamber the significance of this to the rapidly growing communities of the Scullin electorate and indeed also the electorate of McEwen.
In 2013, the Labor government committed $480,000 to this legal service over four years. These were hard-won gains, and I pay tribute to Harry Jenkins, the former member for Scullin, for his endeavours over many years in lobbying for the establishment and funding of this service. I also acknowledge the contribution of the member for Isaacs, the then Attorney-General, in this regard. This legal service employs front-line lawyers and support staff to help with family law, mortgage stress, employment law, child protection matters and also consumer law, and this additional funding helped the legal service meet the demand for domestic violence and family law services in Melbourne's north—a demand which is growing at an extraordinary and troubling rate.

Unfortunately, the present government has decided that it will not honour the final two years of this agreement. Funding levels will now be reduced by $120,000 a year from 1 July this year. This will result in a significant reduction in the legal service's capacity to support people with a range of legal matters—in particular, family violence.

This impact will be compounded by the fact that funding for another lawyer working with the local Family Relationship Centre to assist separating couples with legal advice, casework and legal education will also be withdrawn in the 2017-18 financial year. This is deeply concerning and, indeed, distressing, as Melbourne's north is consistently overrepresented in family violence statistics.

So, recently, I met with my colleague the member for McEwen and state members from Melbourne's north to hear from Jemal Ahmet and Peta Falau from Whittlesea Community Connections about the difference Labor's funding had made to, and the devastating effect the Liberals' cuts will have on, our communities. The legal service is the entry point for almost 80 per cent of Whittlesea Community Connections' domestic violence clients, of which they see more than one every working day. Whittlesea Community Connections advises that demand for services related to domestic violence grew by more than 29 per cent over the last year.

Victoria Police statistics show that the City of Whittlesea has one of the highest family violence rates in the northern metropolitan region, increasing by 35 per cent over the last two years. Over the last 14 years, there has been an increase of 268 per cent. Incidents of family violence increased last financial year to 2,359, and 60 per cent of all the assaults recorded by police arose from family violence.

These are shocking statistics. And so, while I welcome the focus by the Abbott government on ending family violence, ultimately the women of Melbourne's north need more than just talk and announcements. The cuts to this legal service in Epping have to be some of the cruellest cuts of all. I call on this government to match its rhetoric with action and to honour the full agreement with Whittlesea Community Legal Service, maintain its existing levels of funding and do justice to vulnerable women in Melbourne's north.

Health Care

Dr SOUTHCOTT (Boothby) (11:08): I rise to speak about an issue very important to my constituents, to local veterans groups and to anyone interested in making sure that South Australians have widespread access to quality hospital services. The South Australian government is trying, yet again, to shut down the Repatriation General Hospital in my electorate. Let us be clear: this is nothing new. This state government has been trying to shut
down the Repat since 2010 when their Sustainable Budget Commission recommended closing the Repat. Back then, the public backlash was so strong that they promised:
The Repat Hospital is here to stay; the Repat Hospital will never ever be closed by a Labor Government...

Then, in 2012, they closed the Repat's acute referral unit, which provided emergency triage for 7,000 veterans and patients every year. Now, they are just looking for another excuse to close down this iconic hospital.

The closure of the Repat hospital will not only disadvantage South Australian veterans. It will also have serious, negative and long-term impacts on the health of the broader community, particularly people living in the southern suburbs—and especially my constituents who live in the suburbs immediately surrounding the Repat.

There is a real concern that Flinders Medical Centre, which is also in my electorate, will be overwhelmed by the flood of work if the Repat closes. Last year, 25 per cent of all orthopaedic and urological elective surgery performed in South Australia was done at the Repat. Flinders did less than three per cent. A senior surgeon has advised that Flinders Medical Centre, which is already at capacity, would be unable to cope with the extra burden of ophthalmology, orthopaedic and urology work.

Last year I wrote to South Australian health minister, Jack Snelling, on behalf of my constituents concerned about the Repat's closure. The response I received six months ago said that it 'will continue to play a critical role in South Australia's health care system.' Now, six months later, they are announcing a proposal for its closure.

South Australians know that the Repat continues to be an important part of South Australia's hospital network and a centre of excellence in the area of veterans' health and mental health. They are not going to let state Labor close it without a fight. I encourage all South Australians to support the current 'Save the Repat' campaign. They can sign the petition to save the Repat at www.savetherepat.com, on the 'Save the Repat' Facebook page, or in person in my office or at RSL subbranches around the state.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ewen Jones): There are no further constituency statements by honourable members.

CONDOLENCES

Enderby, Hon. Keppel Earl, QC

Debate resumed on the motion:

That the House record its deep regret at the death on 7 January 2015 of the Honourable Keppel Earl Enderby, a former Minister and Member of this House for the Division of Australian Capital Territory and Canberra from 1970 to 1975, place on record its appreciation of his long and meritorious public service, and tender its profound sympathy to his family in their bereavement.

Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (11:12): Jonathan Swift once said that vision is the art of seeing the invisible. The ability to see through the fog of the present to the clarity of tomorrow exemplifies the great progressives of our age. From early on in his life and legal career it was clear that Keppel Enderby, known as Kep, was something of a master in this art. Initially drawn to a burgeoning Canberra in the early 1960s to lecture in law at the Australian National University, Kep wasted no time making his presence felt in the bush capital. By 1970 he had
secured Labor preselection for the Australian Capital Territory electorate—and he entered parliament in the same year.

As it happened, my parents knew him through a mutual friend. They recall him as a whirlwind of ideas. Apparently, I even stayed at his home in 1972. It was a few months before I was born, so my memories of it are a little hazy.

When then Attorney-General Lionel Murphy was appointed to the High Court in February 1975, Enderby went to Gough Whitlam with a forceful case for replacing Murphy in the role of Attorney-General. In an exchange characteristic of the period, Enderby went down to the Prime Minister's office and told him, 'Oh, come off it, I think I deserve it', to which Whitlam reportedly replied: 'All right, you bastard.'

Enderby served only nine months as Attorney-General. But during the period he helped shepherd some of the Whitlam era's most notable social reforms through a turbulent legislature. This included the legalisation of homosexuality and abortion in the territories, no-fault divorce, and the Racial Discrimination Act. Each was seen as radical for its time but, looking back at the words with which they were introduced, the vision was palpable.

Speaking on the Racial Discrimination Bill 1975, Kep Enderby said:

The Bill will … make it unlawful for a person to do an act involving discrimination based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin which impairs the enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms. The Bill will guarantee equality before the law without distinction as to race.

On introducing no-fault divorce, he said:

It gets rid of the legalism because it establishes family courts. … I speak as a lawyer who has the role of deciding these matters.

He also spoke about the value of no-fault divorce:

… to try and bring about conciliation in a less rigid, less legalistic, less frightening way than under the present system.

Reforms like this were part of the foundations for a more open, tolerant and modern Australia.

Kep Enderby's relatively short term in parliament saw him serve as the last member to represent the entire territory in the lower house and the first to represent the newly-created division of Canberra. Unfortunately, Labor lost that seat when the government was swept from office in 1975—a pattern repeated in 1996 but not, thankfully, in 2013, otherwise my good friend the member for Canberra would not be here today.

Like Jim Fraser, after whom my electorate is named, Enderby was a proud and passionate advocate for Canberra. His efforts in championing civil liberties for the Australian people translated seamlessly into his representation of Australians in the territory and his push to enfranchise them. In decriminalising homosexuality and abortion, Enderby not only improved the lives of Canberrans. These changes impacted over two million people in the Australian Capital Territory, Northern Territory, Christmas Island and Papua New Guinea that previously had their penal codes derived from nearby states. The changes came through a criminal code for the territories, which reflected Enderby's understanding of the fundamental inequity in punishments being imposed by judges who sit in the Australian Capital Territory but administered by someone else.
Kep Enderby had many sides to him. He was a skilled golfer: New South Wales amateur golf champion 1946; second amateur, British Open, 1951; and leading amateur, Australian Open, 1947—among other awards.

After politics, Enderby learned the world language of Esperanto and became president of the World Esperanto Association. This prompted leading ABC broadcaster Phillip Adams to eulogise: 'Mia malnova amiko Keppel Grafo Enderby, politika idealisto kaj Esperanto defendanto, mortinta ce 88.'

He served as a Justice of the Supreme Court of New South Wales from 1982 to 1992.

He married Dorothy Leaper—Dot—in 1964. They had a son and a daughter.

ACT MLA Chris Bourke has spoken about Kep Enderby’s championing the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people during the Aboriginal Tent Embassy protest. He said:

In 1972, as ALP spokesperson for the Interior, Enderby stood up against the McMahon government’s attempts to tear down the Tent Embassy.

ACT Chief Minister Andrew Barr has described him as 'a passionate Labor man who fought strongly for Labor values'.

Age did not weary this great crusader. Right up until his later years, Kep Enderby remained a vocal proponent of civil liberties, unafraid to write and speak on controversial issues such as the rights of prisoners. Thanks to the changes Enderby brought about, Australians now suffer less discrimination than they did before his time in politics.

Our challenge now is to find the issues that demand reform, from prominent issues such as inequality and climate change to invisible issues such as end-of-life care and civic participation. The work of progressive change is never done and each generation can draw inspiration from those like Kep Enderby who were the mighty builders of ages past.

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (11:18): Last month I was saddened to learn the passing of the Hon. Keppel Earl Enderby QC and I would like to use this opportunity today to highlight some of his legacies, particularly to Canberra where he was the federal member between 1970 and 1975. Like so many in Labor, Kep Enderby's life had humble beginnings. He was born in Dubbo on 25 June 1926. His parents owned a milk bar and he attended the local high school. During his teen years, he earned money by selling ice-creams at the theatre. He served as a pilot in the Air Force from 1944 to 1945 and then moved to Sydney to study law under the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme, which was a Chifley government initiative. He was admitted to the New South Wales Bar in 1950 and then moved to England where he worked for a while in the bar. He returned to Australia in 1955 and then settled in Canberra, in our wonderful national capital, in 1962. It was during this time that he was a lecturer at the Australian National University.

He became increasingly involved in the Labor Party, and in 1970 was elected as the member for the ACT, which became the seat of Canberra, which I now proudly and passionately hold. He served his community until the dismissal in 1975. Kep was active in the community long before he entered politics. He was an active civil rights advocate in the 1950s and 1960s, and he continued to campaign on issues like prisoner welfare and voluntary euthanasia after he left politics. He served as a Supreme Court judge between 1982 and 1992, and he was also the head of the Serious Offenders Review Council and was one of the
founders of the New South Wales Council of Civil Liberties. Kep will be remembered for his long and dedicated service to our country. In Canberra he will be remembered as a champion of homosexual law reform, of abortion rights and of fierce opposition to poker machines.

In a way, Canberrans have traditionally been altruistic. Canberrans have come to serve in the national capital in the public service, to make a difference, to serve their nation and to serve their democracy, so we are traditionally a community that thinks larger than just ourselves and that thinks broader than just the community. We think about the nation and how we can best serve it. As a result of that, we tend to have progressive politics and progressive views on things. I think that, in those very early days of Canberra coming together as a national capital following the investment that Robert Menzies made in the 1950s and the move of people to Canberra,—the significant moves in the 1960s and 1970s—Kep Enderby reflected and, in a way, was at the forefront of those progressive views of the community. Those policies, those reforms, are the ones that we hold very dear in this community. As you know, we are very strong proponents of marriage equality and we are generally a progressive community. I think Kep Enderby did not just reflect that, but was at the forefront of those views.

He fought for ACT residents and those of the Northern Territory to be represented in the Senate. He also helped steer controversial legislation through the parliament including no-fault divorce, as we have just heard, and the Racial Discrimination Act. His most important initiatives were in the law where he is credited with a host of legal reforms including the Trade Practices Act, the Family Law Act and the introduction of legal aid, which was a significant reform that opened up access to legal services for so many of the disadvantaged and underprivileged. These are policies and rights that we take for granted today. Without Kep Enderby's tireless work, they may have taken decades longer to pass into law. And, he achieved all of this during his nine-month stint as Attorney-General. What he achieved in a very short amount of time was pretty extraordinary.

I have been talking to people over the past few weeks who knew Kep, because I did not know him. I spoke to a number of Labor Party people, and Kep was described to me as having a gifted mind, a mind that traversed a range of issues, that had progressive thoughts on those issues and that managed to realise many of those issues into policy and into changes that benefited the nation. His gifted mind help achieve so much for Canberra and, more widely, for Australia. As the current member for Canberra I pay tribute to his vision for our city and our nation. His electorate, my electorate, is a far better place because of him.

Aside from the law and politics, Kep had a love of golf and competed in the 1951 British Open as an amateur. He also loved flying, and he was flying helicopters well into his 60s. As we have also heard, another one of his passions—and I am not going to speak Esperanto—was the Esperanto movement. After learning Esperanto in 1987 he was made the president of the Australian Esperanto Association from 1992 to 1997.

He is survived by his wife, Dorothy, their son Keir and daughter Jo as well as many grandchildren. I offer the Enderby family my deepest condolences. Vale Kep Enderby.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hawke): I understand it is the wish of honourable members to signify at this stage their respect and sympathy by rising in their places.

Honourable members having stood in their places—
The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I thank the chamber.

Mr BROAD (Mallee) (11:24): by leave—I move:
That further proceedings be conducted in the House.
Question agreed to.

Federation Chamber adjourned at 11:25.
Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, in writing, on 21 October 2014:

(1) Is it a fact that, as reported in a recent media report 'Just Plane Risky' by Aleks Devic (Herald Sun, 16 October 2014), an Australian Transport Safety Bureau report has found that (a) amateur-built aircraft have an accident rate three times higher than factory-built aircraft on similar flights, (b) the fatal and serious injury accident rate is more than five times higher in amateur-built aircraft than factory-built aircraft, and (c) crashes of amateur-built planes had caused 26 deaths, 21 serious injuries and 26 minor injuries from 1998 to 2010.

(2) What action is he taking, or will he take, to reduce the (a) risk of aviation accidents involving amateur-built aircraft, and (b) incidence of amateur-built aircraft overflying highly populated residential areas.

Mr Truss: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(1) (a) Yes.
(b) Yes.
(c) No the ATSB research report AR-2007-043(2), titled 'Amateur-built aircraft—Analysis of accidents involving VH-registered non-factory-built aeroplanes 1988-2010', found that from 1998 to 2010 there were 26 accidents in which there was at least one fatality, 21 non-fatals in which there was at least one serious injury, and 26 non-fatal or non-serious injury accidents in which there was at least one minor injury.

(2) The regulations that deal with this matter were introduced in 1999 and extended the Australian aircraft manufacturing and certification regime to align with common international standards, in particular the United States Federal Aviation Regulations. However, recognising that operating an amateur-built aircraft, where the major portion of which has been fabricated and assembled by a person who undertook the construction project solely for the person's own education or recreation, has a greater level of associated risk, regulation 262AP of the Civil Aviation Regulations 1988 requires that potential passengers are warned of the heightened risk associated with such operations.

CASA has commenced work on legislative amendments that will provide clear minimum requirements and standards for the continuing airworthiness and additional operational permissions for experimental aircraft, including the minimum maintenance requirements and related competencies. This work also includes minimum standards for flight over built up areas and flight in conditions other than by day and under the Visual Flight Rules.

Over the past three years, CASA has implemented a number of initiatives focussed on the safety enhancement of amateur built aircraft operations and the education of people engaged in those operations, in ordinary operations and those which may be permitted to occur over built up areas alike. This includes a review of the regulatory training and education of amateur built aircraft owners through the Sport Aircraft Association of Australia Maintenance Procedures Course. This course provides training and education to amateur built aircraft builders on their safety responsibilities under the applicable regulatory requirements, including the requirements governing the issue of approvals to operate amateur-built aircraft over built up areas.