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FORTY-THIRD PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—SEVENTH PERIOD

Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce, Companion of the Order of Australia

House of Representatives Office holders
Speaker—Hon. Peter Neil Slipper MP
Deputy Speaker—Ms Anna Elizabeth Burke MP
Second Deputy Speaker—Hon. Bruce Craig Scott MP
Members of the Speaker’s Panel—Hon. Dick Godfrey Harry Adams MP,
Mrs Yvette Maree D’Ath MP, Mr Steven Georganas MP, Ms Sharon Joy Grierson MP,
Dr Andrew Keith Leigh MP, Ms Kirsten Fiona Livermore MP,
Mr Geoffrey Raymond Lyons MP, Mr Robert George Mitchell MP, Mr John Paul Murphy MP,
Mr Robert James Murray Oakeshott MP, Ms Deborah Mary O’Neill MP,
Ms Amanda Louise Rishworth MP, Mr Michael Stuart Symon MP,
Mr Kelvin John Thomson MP, Ms Maria Vamvakinou MP,
Mr Anthony Harold Curties Windsor MP

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

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

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

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

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Members of the House of Representatives

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

Heads of Parliamentary Departments
Clerk of the Senate—R Laing
Clerk of the House of Representatives—B Wright
Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—C Mills
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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Each box represents a portfolio. **Cabinet Ministers are shown in bold type.** As a general rule, there is one department in each portfolio. However, there is a Department of 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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The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke) took the chair at 10:00, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Private Members' Motions
Reference to Federation Chamber

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke) (10:01): In accordance with standing order 41(g), and the determinations of the Selection Committee, I present copies of the terms of motions for which notice has been given by the honourable members for Gippsland, Fowler, Newcastle, Shortland, Greenway and Fremantle. These matters will be considered in the Federation Chamber later today.

MOTIONS

Fair Work (Job Security and Fairer Bargaining) Amendment Bill 2012

Code of Conduct for Members of Parliament

Reference to Federation Chamber

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter—Chief Government Whip) (10:01): by leave—I move:

That:

(1) the following bill be referred to the Federation Chamber for further consideration:

Fair Work (Job Security and Fairer Bargaining) Amendment 2012; and

(2) the following order of the day, private Members' business, be referred to the Federation Chamber for debate:


Question agreed to.

PETITIONS

Mr MURPHY (Reid) (10:02): On behalf of the Standing Committee on Petitions, and in accordance with standing order 207, I present the following petitions:

Falun Gong

To the Honourable Members of the House of Representatives in the Parliament assembled:

This petition of certain citizens and residents of Australia draws to the attention of the House that Falun Gong is a peaceful meditation practice based on the principles of Truthfulness, Compassion and Tolerance. Falun Gong practitioners in China have been subjected to the most brutal and relentless persecution by the Chinese Communist regime since July 1999, causing thousands to lose their lives from illegal detention and systematic torture. Such conduct stands in blatant violation to all international human rights charters that the Chinese government has itself ratified. According to investigative reports published by human rights lawyer David Matas and former Canadian Secretary of State for the Asia Pacific; David Kilgour, tens of thousands of imprisoned Falun Gong practitioners have been subjected to forced organ harvesting for China's transplant market and lost their lives (www.organharvestinvestigation.net).

We therefore ask the House to request the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister to openly and forthrightly call for an immediate end to the persecution of Falun Gong in China.

from 4,894 citizens

Marriage

PETITION TO RETAIN THE DEFINITION OF MARRIAGE BETWEEN A MAN AND A WOMAN

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

We the undersigned citizens draw to the attention of the House of Representatives assembled that the Marriage Act 2004 states "marriage means the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntary entered into for life" which is the foundation upon which families are built and on which our Australian society stands.

To amend the definition of marriage to include same sex homosexual or lesbian "marriage" would be to change the very structure of our
Australian society, especially the education system to the detriment of all, particularly children.

We, the undersigned citizens therefore request that any Marriage Equality Amendment Bill be opposed. And, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

from 156 citizens

Aged-Care Funding

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

This petition of Aged and Community Services Australia

Draws to the attention of the House its deep concern regarding the Government's decision to reduce subsidies to care for people entering nursing homes from 1 July 2012.

This will reduce the level of funding for new residents and subsequently may lead to a reduction in the number of staff therefore impacting on the level of care provided. This is not in the best interests of one of the most vulnerable groups in our society - frail older Australians.

The Department of Health and Ageing is implementing the Government's directive to achieve savings in Aged Care Funding Instrument (ACFI) subsidy payments for 2012/13 which will be in the order of $430 million. This is additional to the $50 million in 2012/13 announced in the 20 April Living Longer Living Better announcement.

As the representative body of the not-for-profit sector, our members provide services to the most vulnerable older people in our community.

We therefore ask the House to: reconsider this decision and determine in a more considered manner what is the real cost of caring for older Australians is through an independent cost of care study so that appropriate funding for care can be provided.

from 903 citizens

Drink Containers National Container Deposit Scheme

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

This petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House:

That around one third of waste collected on Clean Up Australia Day comes from plastic drink bottles and aluminium drink cans. Australia recycles only 36 per cent of glass and 31 per cent of plastic containers. South Australia has had a successful container deposit in place since 1975, and has achieved up to 90 per cent return rate on plastic, glass and aluminium cans.

We therefore ask the House to:

Introduce a national container deposit scheme on drink containers

from 4,986 citizens

Telecommunications: Burnett Regions

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

This petition of the residents/travellers of Boondooma, Durong and Monogorilby communities, request that the necessary infrastructure facilities be provided to improve the telecommunications and mobile broadband coverage in these areas of the North and South Burnett Regions.

This petition of residents/travellers draws the attention of the House to the limited, sporadic, or non existent telecommunications and mobile phone and broadband services in the above mentioned areas.

Currently, Telstra, Optus and Vodaphone claim 94 per cent of the population is included in the mobile phone network. The above mentioned area does not lie within this 94 per cent.

Each year, a number of large events, attracting sometimes, over two thousand people are conducted in the area. These events generate huge income for the area and substantially improve the financial viability of the rural committees bordering the North and South Burnett regions.

The lack of mobile coverage is a severe limitation, especially in the case of an emergency. Mobile usage would be a distinct advantage for road users, particularly in situations of breakdown and injury on this Highway.

We therefore ask the House to enact or amend legislation that requires the responsible
telecommunications provider to install the infrastructure necessary to allow equal access to telecommunications, mobile phone and broadband coverage in the above mentioned areas.

from 762 citizens

**Marriage**

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

This petition of concerned citizens of Cowra draws to the attention of the House the need to act responsibly and truthfully on the issue of same sex "marriage".

Whether or not we acknowledge Him, God exists. By acknowledging or rejecting God there are benefits or consequences. God's laws are immutable irrevocable and to ignore or reject them will be at our nation's peril. This means no same sex "marriage" - as marriage is a holy covenant designed by God, entered into by a man a woman and their Creator.

We are already experiencing the devastating effects of family breakdown on our society. Children need both a mother and a father. As humans we have an inherent need to know where and to whom we belong.

By not protecting God's model of marriage we are at risk of producing generations of individuals without an identity with implications not only to psyche, but to future partners, offspring and medical care.

History has proven over centuries the devastation that occurs when any nation turns away from God.

Such an important issue with such far-reaching consequences for our society, for our very way of life must not be entrusted to the decisions of a few; it needs to go to a referendum so the people of Australia can truly have their say.

from 70 citizens

**Australian Taxation System**

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

This petition of a concerned citizen of Australia draws to the attention of the house:

In the 1950's and '60's, the tax system was arranged to attempt a continuous system of proportional tax along the whole range. To achieve this would have been an enormous project particularly if changes to levels of tax at changing levels of income were needed.

I have programmed a system on excel by which the changing of two figures, (1) of maximum tax per cent of income (65) or (2) amounts ($450,000), to be relevant on the personal tax system. I request that this tax system be adopted for future tax use, and, with the adoption of the use of the system for company tax, as below with the required changes, 55 or so in the place in C12, replacing the 65, and $3,500,000,000 or so to replace the $450,000 in C14. I have found this to be automatic and accurate over the whole range.

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from 1 citizen

**Overseas Aid and Illegal Immigration**

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

This petition of: Concerned residents of Australia draws to the attention of the House: Reduce Overseas Aid & stop illegal immigrants.

We therefore ask the House to: Supply funds to house, & support legitimate Australians as charity begins at home

from 155 citizens

**Pacific Highway**

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

This petition of: Concerned Citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House: Lack of Funds for Upgrading the Pacific Highway

We therefore ask the House to: Urge the Government to supply urgently needed funds to
save lives and build a dual carriageway on Highway One (1).

from 243 citizens

Petitions received.

PETITIONS

Responses

Mr MURPHY (Reid) (10:03): Ministerial responses to petitions previously presented to the House have been received as follows:

Digital Television Reception in Boolarra and District

Dear Mr Murphy

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the petition from residents of Boolarra, Victoria, regarding the quality of digital television broadcast in the area.

The Australian Government understands the importance of free-to-air television to regional and rural Australians and has introduced policy and legislative measures to maximise viewers' access to digital television services. Providing equal television services to viewers in regional, rural and remote Australia is a central feature of the government's digital switchover program.

Viewers can access the most up-to-date information about local digital television services by visiting the Digital Ready website www.digitalready.gov.au and entering their address into mySwitch. mySwitch is a web-based tool which has been developed by the Digital Switchover Taskforce to assist viewers to prepare for switchover in their area. mySwitch provides information about local television services, the frequencies they are broadcast on, as well as the expected coverage of the transmission sites serving an area.

_Digital television reception in Boolarra, Victoria_

Boolarra is located within the Gippsland switchover area, which switched to digital-only broadcasting of television services on 5 May 2011.

Television services for Boolarra are broadcast from the local Boolarra transmission site, located off Bunderra Drive approximately one kilometre North West of the main town. Both digital services for the national broadcasters — the ABC and the SBS — and the three regional commercial broadcasters — Prime, WIN and Southern Cross Austereo — are broadcast from this site.

The local Boolarra transmission site was upgraded from analog to digital services on 12 February 2011 as part of an early switchover process. The digital switchover process for the Boolarra site required a switch with no simulcast period, which meant that the analog signals were turned off before the digital broadcast signals were switched on due to space restrictions on the site. In the days following the early switchover from analog to digital, the commercial broadcasters identified and resolved some technical issues with the broadcast equipment.

Following the resolution of these issues, the Digital Switchover Taskforce and the commercial broadcasters continued to receive complaints from viewers in the area regarding ongoing problems experienced by viewers when attempting to obtain adequate reception in the Boolarra area.

_Monitoring and maintenance of transmission sites by the commercial broadcasters_

The commercial broadcasters, through Regional Broadcasting Australia (RBA), have advised me that they first became aware of people experiencing difficulty with television reception in Boolarra in the first quarter of 2012. At this time, they engaged a local antenna installer to investigate viewer concerns. The installer visited several residences and noted that viewers had not yet properly tuned their reception equipment to adequately receive digital services from the local Boolarra site. The installer advised RBA that he was able to resolve all reception issues in the houses that he visited by making simple adjustments to existing reception equipment.

Also in the first quarter of 2012, RBA engineers conducted an assessment of the transmission site itself and identified a tree that had the potential to reduce the level of coverage in some parts of Boolarra. This tree was removed as part of ongoing maintenance of the site in order to continue to provide good levels of coverage.

Ongoing monitoring conducted by the commercial broadcasters also noted that there
were issues with the local WIN and Prime services, which had been observed to drop out intermittently. The issue was identified as being caused by a faulty GPS clock in the main Latrobe Valley transmission site on Mount Tassie. The Latrobe Valley site is the main feeder site for a number of other transmission sites in the area, including both Boolarra and the Jeeralang/Yinnar South sites. The faulty unit was subsequently replaced and no ongoing problems with either WIN or Prime have been observed by the commercial broadcasters.

RBA has also advised me of its ongoing maintenance activities across regional Victoria. All local transmitters have full-telemetry units installed, allowing real-time 24/7 monitoring of the sites from broadcaster operations centres. Any faults that are raised through the remote monitoring or via complaints from local viewers are passed on to a First-In Maintainer (FIM) for further assessment. FIM's are generally local contractors, often a reputable local antenna installer, who are given familiarisation training on specific transmission sites. The FIM conducts a basic assessment on the working condition of the equipment and whether or not repairs are required. If a problem is identified, engineering support is despatched from the state headquarters of the broadcaster responsible for maintaining a particular site, and spare transmission equipment is held in Melbourne, allowing for quick mobilisation if repairs are determined to be necessary.

RBA has advised that ongoing monitoring of the remote transmission logs for transmission sites in the Boolarra area have not identified any further issues since the replacement of the GPS unit at the Latrobe Valley transmission site on Mount Tassie.

Improving digital television reception in the Boolarra area

Separate to the technical issues that have been addressed by the broadcasters, there are a number of physical factors which may explain the reception difficulties residents in Boolarra have experienced.

If viewers had good analog television reception, it is generally the case that they would be likely to receive satisfactory digital television signals. Factors that can lead to poor reception of digital television services can include signal obstructions, such as the local terrain, foliage, and nearby buildings and trees. Reception may also break up or ‘pixelate’ because of old or poorly calibrated antennas, faulty cabling or connectors, incorrectly tuned set-top boxes, weather conditions, an inadequate or excessive signal, or because of ‘impulse noise’ interference caused by electrical equipment and appliances.

Some viewers in the Boolarra area may also receive digital television services from the nearby Jeeralang/Yinnar South transmission site or the more distant Latrobe Valley transmission site located on Mount Tassie, as well as from the local Boolarra site. Viewers in areas who receive services from more than one transmission site need to ensure that their antenna and television reception equipment are optimised to receive services from the site that provides the strongest and best quality signal to their residence. The Taskforce has consistently recommended that viewers in the Boolarra area who experience difficulty receiving digital television services should seek the services of an endorsed antenna installer who can provide advice on the best way to optimise equipment for the available services in the area, and for their specific residence.

I acknowledge that some residents of the Boolarra area may have experienced some difficulty obtaining adequate reception in the months following the commissioning of digital television services from the Boolarra site. However, I am confident that the broadcasters have completed all necessary adjustments to their transmission infrastructure in the region to enable them to provide adequate terrestrial digital television to residents of Boolarra, and that ongoing monitoring of transmission sites in the area is robust and responsive.

Further information about digital switchover

Further information about digital switchover may be obtained from the Digital Ready website at www.digitalready.gov.au or by calling the Digital Ready Information Line on free call number 1800 20 10 13. The Digital Ready Information Line operates seven days a week from 8.00 am to 10.00 pm (AEST).
I encourage residents of Boolarra to contact the Taskforce via the Digital Ready Information Line if they have done all that they reasonably can to receive digital television, including engaging the services of an endorsed antenna installer, and continue to experience reception difficulties.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the House Standing Committee on Petitions on an issue that is important to Boolarra residents.

from the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Senator Conroy

Falun Gong

Dear Mr Murphy

Thank you for your letter of August 20 2012 conveying a petition on the treatment of Falun Gong practitioners submitted to the Standing Committee on Petitions.

The Australian Government has long held concerns about the treatment of Falun Gong practitioners in China. Although the Government takes no position on Falun Gong beliefs, it considers that China's ban on Falun Gong and the treatment of its practitioners are in breach of international human rights standards.

The Government takes a strong and principled approach to engaging the Chinese Government on human rights. We have consistently raised Australia's concerns about the treatment of Falun Gong practitioners and about reports of organs being harvested from executed prisoners. These representations have been made through diplomatic channels in Canberra and Beijing. Most recently, we raised our concerns about freedom of religion and organ harvesting at the Australia-China Human Rights Dialogue held in Canberra in July this year.

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

from the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator Bob Carr

PETITIONS

Statements

Mr MURPHY (Reid) (10:03): Today I will revisit features of the hearings the committee held in Perth a few weeks ago.

From time to time the committee may travel to conduct a public hearing. There are occasions, particularly where a matter has been unresolved over a long period of time, is particularly unusual or complex, or has garnered notable public support, where a greater exposition of the matter would be beneficial. Public hearings provide this avenue—and these aspects of petitions were on display at the hearings that we held in Perth recently.

Hearings also enable the committee to flesh out the background of the petition and to discuss related administrative, legislative or policy matters in a practical way. While it is not the committee's role to investigate petitions beyond the discussions held at the public hearing—nor to follow-up matters with executive government—hearings provide an opportunity for members of the committee to provide direction, if known, on the manner in which petitioners may seek to resolve a matter through the appropriate channels.

At the hearing in Applecross on 30 August 2012, and the following day in Attadale, at Santa Maria College, the committee invited petitioners to comment both on the petition subject matter and on their, or the principal petitioner's, experience of petitioning. Most of the comments reinforced the fundamental value of petitioning—that is, the physical act of disseminating information about the petition within the community, to garner support, and, hopefully, to gather signatures as evidence of that support.

The testimony given by Mr Cormack, the representative of the principal petitioner on
aircraft aerobatics over Rockingham Beach, exemplified the spirit of this community approach. The principal petitioner gathered signatures directly within the Rockingham community. It was when the principal petitioner was standing outside Bunnings, collecting signatures that he met Mr Cormack for the very first time—and yet it is evident that the pair have, within a short space of time, forged a friendship over their joint concern on this matter.

In other cases, petitions were developed within already formed groups of people having a common interest. This was the case for the petition on the Dampier Archipelago, through a group supporting Australian rock art; and, similarly, for the petition calling for free-bone densitometry testing for Australian women at menopause, through Australian branches of Soroptimist International.

However, even though these petitions were formulated within associations, signatures were then collected well beyond the confines of the group. For example, Ms Hugo, the representative for the 'Dampier Archipelago petition' noted that signatures had been collected from 'all over', including when the group took guided tours. She also noted that 'people who have been on the tours often ask if they can take a petition form away and get that signed by people once they have spread the word and told people about it.'

It was also thought provoking to hear Ms Hugo comment that, 'We cannot see any other way of raising awareness but by going down this path'. And, interestingly, the petitioning approach to raising awareness was re-embraced by Soroptimist International, despite a previous petition being presented and receiving a ministerial response they had not hoped for. Their decision to prepare another petition is suggestive of the confidence that Australian people place in grass-roots democracy.

One of the benefits of signature collection, particularly from the broader community, is that it offers the petitioner a deeper understanding of public opinion and different perspectives on a particular issue. For example, at Santa Maria College, the principal petitioner, Ms Small, noted that when collecting signatures on the petition on asylum-seeker legislation and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, she did not encounter a single refusal to sign. However, she recognised that the wording of the petition may have helped 'because we were not proposing a specific model.' Her petitioning assistant, Ms Hall, however, approached people who refused to sign the petition and who stated their reasons. She accepted that this may occur—she said, 'That is completely understandable; everyone has their own opinion.'

In contrast, the committee met with the principal petitioner on a number of sole signatory petitions calling for an Australian Republic, Mr Liddelow. When asked whether he felt it would have supported his petition to have gone into the community to gather additional signatures he noted that, 'I do not think it was necessary to get signatures. I think getting the issue and getting the request to the Petitions Committee was necessary.' Mr Liddelow's comment highlights the other key aspect of the petitioning process—having a petition presented to the House for consideration by the executive government. For this part of the process to occur there is no requirement for a petition to have multiple signatures. These hearings highlight the fact that, whether petitions gather one or one million signatures, providing the petition meets all the other rules of the House, it will be exposed to the same parliamentary process. It appears, however, from feedback from
petitioners, at this and previous hearings, there is a real benefit in going out into the community to spread the word on the petition matter, irrespective of the overall number of signatures collected.

In conclusion, the committee found these hearings to be most rewarding and looks forward to other opportunities to meet with principal petitioners in different regions of Australia, in the future. Thank you.

COMMITTEES

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Committee

Report

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (10:10): On behalf of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs I present the committee's report entitled Our land, our languages: language learning in Indigenous communities together with the minutes of proceedings and evidence received by the committee.

Ordered that the report be made a parliamentary paper.

Mr NEUMANN: The Mabo decision of the High Court of Australia in June 1992 legally recognised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as having a special relationship to their land that existed prior to colonisation. The Mabo decision recognised the Terra Nullius, the concept that Australia was unoccupied at the time of colonisation, was a fiction. Similarly, the notion that Australia is a mono-lingual nation, and that only standard Australian English can benefit a person, is a fiction. Estimates indicate that, at the time of white settlement, there were 250 Australian Indigenous languages in use, and today there are only 18 languages, strong in the sense that they are spoken by significant numbers of people across all age groups.

The committee has made 30 comprehensive recommendations in this report in key areas including an acknowledgement of and focus on Indigenous languages into the Closing the Gap framework; expanding the Indigenous Languages Support program and prioritising the development of language nests, used so effectively overseas; and establishing a national Indigenous interpreting service, a recommendation of our previous report, Doing time—time for doing, a recommendation of this committee 20 years ago that was not acted upon. This committee recommends putting in place immediate measures to ensure competent interpreting services in the areas of the health and justice sectors, supporting constitutional change to include the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages; resourcing, adequately and well, bilingual school education programs for Indigenous communities where the child's first language is an Indigenous language; developing strategies for training Indigenous-language teachers to ensure improved access to full qualifications, accreditation and career pathways; compulsory English as an additional language or dialect training for all teaching degrees and mandatory EALD and cultural awareness training for teachers working in Indigenous communities; further improving community access to language materials through a dedicated Indigenous languages archive at AIATSIS; the sharing of resources with schools and educational institutions—and many more recommendations.

The committee received over 154 submissions and held 23 public hearings—not just in the capitals but in Halls Creek, Broome, Darwin, with many teleconferences across the length and breadth of the country. I thank the deputy chair, the Hon. Dr Sharman Stone, and the cooperation all
committee members on both sides of politics for this bipartisan report. I thank the amazing Dr Anna Dacre, the committee secretary, the fabulous inquiry secretaries Ms Susan Cardell and Ms Rebecca Gordon, and the ever-erudite research officer Dr John White.

This is the first parliamentary inquiry to examine the direct contribution of learning Indigenous languages and what they can do to improve the educational, vocational and economic outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It comes out of previous report *Doing time—time for doing*. Indigenous language has been identified as an important component of cultural connection and strengthening intergenerational relationships and community building. It is important that we identify the importance of translator services for our hospitals, our schools, our prisons and our courts. For too long the situation has been dire and tragic in our country. We need to recognise the positive implications for capacity building in Indigenous communities and community involvement; employment in resource management, arts and tourism; as well as interpreting. We have been proud of speakers and singers and sportspeople—people like Harold Blair, after whom my electorate is named; Albert Namatjira, the great painter; and Cathy Freeman. Each week we celebrate AFL and NRL champions with an Indigenous background. We have even gone to see *The Sapphires*, a movie about Indigenous singers. But for a long time we have failed to recognise that these are our languages, that this is our land and our continent. They have been there for tens of thousands of years and they are important. We have a responsibility.

In this report we have recognised the importance of dual naming—here in Parliament House and of streets and places elsewhere. We have a responsibility as federal politicians. We have also recognised that we need an alternative diagnostic tool to NAPLAN in the early years of schooling. It is important that, at first, young people be taught in their native language.

This is an important report which has its basis in our previous report. There is much to do. But, if we want to celebrate and recognise our Indigenous languages, we must take action and we must take action now. For too long we have failed. It is tragic. It is dire. Action is required. I urge the government to take that action and I am pleased to support this report.

**Dr Stone (Murray) (10:15):** On indulgence, as deputy chair of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, I agree with our chair, the previous speaker, that the inquiry into language learning in Indigenous communities was a most important inquiry. The Australian public has little understanding of the number, or the complexity, of Indigenous languages spoken at the time of British colonisation in 1788. All tribes and the Torres Straits Islanders were multilingual, typically speaking, as well as their own language, the languages of each of their neighbours. Australian Indigenous languages are recognised as amongst the most complex in the world in their structure and vocabulary.

The first settlement governor, Arthur Phillip, recognised that understanding the natives' languages was essential if the new settlers were to interact peacefully with the Indigenous people. On 30 October 1788, in his regular report to Lord Sydney back in London, Governor Phillip lamented:

*I now doubt whether it will be possible to get any of these people to remain with us, in order to get their language, without using force; they see no advantage that can arise from us that may make amends for the loss of the part of the harbour in which we occasionally employ the boats in fishing.*
Just two months later, Governor Phillip reported to Lord Sydney:

... one of the natives was seized for the purpose of learning the language and reconciling them to us.

However, by 1838, colonial attitudes about the usefulness of learning the Indigenous languages—and indeed about their complexity—had changed. In a lecture given in Hobart town, Captain Maconachie of the Royal Navy said:

I am … of opinion that, in attempts to civilise and convert native tribes, systematic efforts should be always made to teach them English; and that translations even of the Bible into their own language are of very doubtful utility …. The object is to raise the native, not to descend to his level, or apparently even below it, by imperfect, and therefore necessarily in many cases ludicrous, efforts to use his jargon.

This view was formalised in government policy and missionary behaviour throughout the colonies.

Indigenous children in schools were not allowed to speak their Indigenous languages. In particular, children removed from their parents were not allowed to speak their own language. There was a concerted effort for some 150 years in Australia to prevent any language other than English being used in our courts, in our hospitals or in our schools.

This inquiry aimed to identify whether it is important to recognise and help to preserve traditional languages and, if so, to identify exactly what traditional language learning gives to its speakers. We also looked at how the continued preservation and use of one's home language—in this case, traditional Indigenous language—impacts on other learning by the children, in particular their learning of standard Australian English. We found overwhelming evidence that there was an enormous benefit when the people of any human society, including our Indigenous Australians, are able to speak, preserve and indeed restore their native languages. There are enormous benefits for their sense of wellbeing, their self-esteem and to their identity as having a unique and amazing Australian Aboriginal culture.

We found the most extraordinary efforts being made, often in struggling, very poorly resourced communities, to retain their language—to make teaching materials and to have their elders engage with their younger people. Even when there were just a few words remaining, the effort to put those words together to preserve them for future generations was profound. We walked away with an enormous sense of the effort being put into language preservation and recovery by Indigenous Australians. We commend them for that. We also found that there is a significant educational advantage when any child coming to school with a first language other than English is taught in that first language. There was so much evidence that Australian teachers are not equipped to teach multilingually in any language other than English, much less complex Indigenous Australian languages. We also took much evidence about the importance of the contact languages—typically called Kriol, but there are different names for different creoles in different parts of Australia—and we acknowledge in our report the importance of also teaching in Kriol if that is the home language of the child when they first engage with the formal education system. We found that NAPLAN was useless when it came to assessing young Indigenous children's progress in literacy and numeracy when they had a home language other than English and had not been taught bilingually. We also saw interpreting in Australia as not appropriately regulated or accredited and we recommended that that be addressed. (Time expired)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): The time allotted for statements on
this report has expired. Does the member for Blair wish to move a motion in connection with the report to enable it to be debated on a later occasion?

Mr NEUMANN: I move:
That the House take note of the report.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: In accordance with standing order 39, the debate is adjourned. The resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for a later hour this day.

Report and Reference to Federation Chamber

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (10:21): by leave—I move:
That the order of the day be referred to the Federation Chamber for debate.

Question agreed to.

BILLS

Do Not Knock Register Bill 2012

Report from Committee

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (10:21): On behalf of the Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs, I present the committee's advisory report on the Do Not Knock Register Bill 2012, together with the minutes of proceedings and evidence received by the committee.

Ordered that the report be made a parliamentary paper.

Mr PERRETT: The Do Not Knock Register Bill 2012 is a private member's bill introduced into the House of Representatives on 21 May 2012 by the member for Hindmarsh, the ever hardworking Mr Steve Georganas.

The bill would set up a scheme enabling individuals to opt out of receiving unsolicited marketing calls to residential and government addresses. Unsolicited marketing calls would be prohibited to addresses registered on the Do Not Knock Register. The bill would permit 'designated marketing calls' from certain organisations and individuals including government bodies, charities, religious organisations, politicians—and I am sure from the hard work you did on the Do Not Call Register, Madam Deputy Speaker Burke, you would be familiar with this—and also political candidates.

The Selection Committee referred the bill to the Social Policy and Legal Affairs Committee for reasons of constitutionality. The committee considers it would be inappropriate for this committee to attempt to advise the parliament on the constitutionality of a bill.

Should a member of the House question the constitutionality of a bill, then that question should be put to the Attorney-General and it is for the House to determine if it will consider the bill, and ultimately for the High Court to determine the validity of a bill if passed—a river currently higher than its source, I think is the legal concept at play here. In its report, the committee presents evidence received regarding the constitutionality of the bill, but the committee draws no conclusions and makes no comment on that evidence.

The committee thought that consideration was required regarding the proposed operation of the bill and its capacity to address its policy intent. As such, the committee took evidence from consumer advocacy groups and affected industry groups.

The driving force behind the bill is the protection of vulnerable consumers, such as the elderly, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, migrants and the disabled. We heard evidence about them suffering through people calling on them at home unannounced throughout.

There are existing protections put in place by the Australian consumer law, which is a
single, national law concerning consumer protection and fair trading which only came into effect in January last year. The Australian Consumer and Competition Commission recently launched a campaign to improve consumer awareness of rights relating to door-to-door sales. Consumer advocacy groups launched a 'Do not knock' sticker campaign earlier this year. The legal protection provided to consumers by this sticker is currently being tested in the courts by the ACCC.

Affected industry groups objected to the bill, pointing to the adequacy of the existing protections and protesting the lack of consultation. They also claimed that the bill would create excessive implementation and compliance costs and would also be difficult to administer. The Australian Treasury advised against the bill, describing it as a disproportionate response which might attract significant costs.

The committee deeply sympathises with vulnerable consumers who are confronted by unscrupulous door-to-door sales practices but views educating consumers about their ACL rights and continued promotion of the do not knock sticker as the best option to address this problem. I know this myself, having come home one day to find my wife talking to a salesman despite a do not knock sticker on our mailbox, the salesman then proceeded to explain that he had a right to be there, and I proceeded to explain to him that actually he did not. My wife is a lawyer and I am a lawyer so we understand the law a bit, but more vulnerable people can be taken advantage of.

Noting the recent implementation of the ACL, the committee considers that any further regulation at this stage is premature. Further regulation would only be merited if efforts to educate consumers about the ACL prove ineffective and if courts do not uphold the legal protections provided by the do not knock sticker—the law of trespass, et cetera. If these two outcomes were to pass, the committee considers that the scheduled review of the ACL in 2015 would be an appropriate forum to consider further regulation. Therefore the committee recommends that the House of Representatives not pass the Do Not Knock Register Bill 2012 at this time.

I thank the committee for their work and particularly thank the secretariat for their energetic assistance and frank and fearless advice—sometimes a little too frank, but never too fearless. I commend the report to the House.

Mrs MOYLAN (Pearce) (10:26): From the outset I acknowledge the work of the member for Hindmarsh in bringing his private member's bill to the House. The Do Not Knock Register Bill 2012 seeks to implement a do not knock register similar to the Do Not Call Register which was implemented in 2006. Although the Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs has unanimously agreed that the bill not pass through the House, the member for Hindmarsh has clearly shone the spotlight onto a serious and growing public concern about the intrusion of door-to-door sales.

This should not be construed as a criticism of all door-to-door sales operations. Many people make their living from door-to-door sales and in many instances provide a welcome service to the community. Most of the vast army of door-to-door salespeople do act with integrity; however, as the member for Hindmarsh has highlighted in this bill, there are difficulties for many in the community who have to deal with aggressive sales personnel at the front door. Those who may be vulnerable in unsolicited marketing operations are people who have a disability, those who are elderly and those in the
community for whom English is not their first language. Evidence taken by the committee indicated that some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, for example, were in certain circumstances particularly targeted by door-to-door sales operations, and they may be particularly vulnerable because in some cases they are unable to interpret written information. This may also be true for non-English speaking people.

Family Counselling Australia did nominate some of the unscrupulous practices their clients have encountered, including misleading conduct and overpriced or shoddy goods. They did outline some of the systemic targeting practices towards certain groups in the community who could ill afford the products being offered. However, others argued that there were already measures in place to protect the vulnerable, such as the do not knock stickers available free of charge to the community from local councils. As my colleague the member for Moreton has just outlined, there is a test case going on as to whether the law of trespass can be triggered when somebody has this sticker on their front door. The committee did hear that almost 200,000 stickers have been distributed since August 2011.

I do not have time in this short debate to go through all of the recommendations but I commend the report to anyone who is concerned about these practices and who may be affected by them. Page 40 of the report also outlined a number of protections for consumers, such as the 10-day cooling-off period and the unconscionable conduct provisions. Although there has not been a flood of concern raised in the Pearce electorate, from time to time I do hear complaints about pushy salespeople and shonky door-to-door operations. These problems seem to be more acute in the eastern states in recent times in regard to electricity retailers. In the course of its inquiry, which was to examine the constitutionality of the bill, it became clear that the committee needed to consider the proposed operation of the bill and its capacity to address its policy intent.

The committee received 17 submissions and had two public hearings. In the evidence taken by the committee, there was an indication that there are a number of practical problems with establishing a do not knock register and that other measures may well resolve some of the risks for people who are most vulnerable to the more aggressive door-to-door sales tactics—but that remains to be seen.

The member for Hindmarsh, as I said, has done a very good thing in turning the spotlight on what is a very important issue, and it is hoped that the industry will now do all it can to ensure that its salespeople meet the standards expected of them and that the industry has set for them. I acknowledge the work of the other committee members in examining this particular bill, and the hardworking committee secretary, as always.

Mr PERRETT: I move:

That the House take note of the report.
That the order of the day be referred to the Federation Chamber for debate.
Question agreed to.

BILLs

Competition and Consumer Amendment (Australian Food Labelling) Bill 2012
First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Bandt.

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (10:32): It is with great pleasure that I introduce the Competition and Consumer Amendment (Australian Food Labelling) Bill 2012. Whenever the question is asked, overwhelmingly Australians tell us that they would like to be able to easily identify and buy Australian grown food, yet the truth is that current food labelling thwarts this simple request. A walk in any supermarket soon reveals the difficulty. Pick up a packet of bacon, for example, and it may well tell you that it is made in Australia. Any reasonable customer would interpret that to mean that the meat is Australian. A packet of glace cherries tells you that they are Australian owned and made. Similarly, a packet of rice crackers has a cheerful rice-cracker-shaped map of Australia on its front plus the words 'made in Australia'; flip it over and it asks you to see a website for more details. Surely the rice in the crackers is Australian grown? But visit the website you have been referred to by the packet and there is not one mention of where the rice comes from. The cherries are not Australian grown but were glazed here. As for the bacon, the meat was actually imported from another country but cured, sliced and prepared in Australia.

In all three instances, because the food in the packet was substantially transformed, as defined in the legislation, and 50 per cent or more of those transformation costs were incurred in Australia, the food can be legally labelled 'made in Australia' or 'Australian made'. Little wonder, then, that people are confused and frustrated by our current labelling laws. What people want to know is: was this food or the ingredients in it grown here? Current labelling laws leave them none the wiser.

When consumer advocacy organisation Choice surveyed their members, they found that only half of them actually understood what the current terms 'Australian made' and 'made in Australia' mean, and 90 per cent said that country of origin labelling needs to be clearer. Under current labelling laws, packaged food is treated like any other good or service, so the terms 'Australian made', 'Made in Australia' and 'Product of Australia', which has a much higher standard, can be found on virtually any other item you might purchase. But this is at the heart of the problem: food is not the same as just any other good or service and should not be lumped in with them for labelling purposes.

As the 2011 Blewett Review of Food Labelling Law and Policy stated:
As food is ingested and taken into ourselves, unlike most other consumer goods that are just used, naturally consumers are primarily focused on the components and ingredients of foods and not with their substantial transformation, packaging or value adding.
Food is not like any other good. By conflating the processing of food with the origin of ingredients we are stopping Australians from making an informed choice. The language is unnecessarily confusing. We can have clear labelling that lets Australians know if they are buying Australian grown food and if that product has been processed in Australia.

Some will no doubt point to the fact that, while over 80 per cent of Australians...
consistently tell us they want to be able to easily identify and buy Australian food, when it comes to actual purchases this number drops to between 50 and 60 per cent of people actually choosing to buy local over other, possibly cheaper, options. In short, the argument goes that price ultimately trumps country of origin for Australians when it comes to food and therefore it is not worth the bother to sort out this labelling confusion.

But there are a number of counters to this argument. Over half of Australians are very clear that they do make food-purchasing decisions based on whether the food is local. There is emphatic evidence that the current labelling regime is confusing and misleading Australians. Isn't this sufficient reason alone for the reform?

The Blewett review's findings regarding the values associated with food labelling are particularly important. They tell us that the origin of food is being used by Australians as a surrogate for other issues they care about, including food miles, animal welfare and other environmental and health concerns. In essence, Australians are looking to identify local produce as a way of ensuring the quality of food they seek and rewarding the high standards of our growers and producers.

But perhaps most important is to ask: why would we persist with a food-labelling regime that is arguably giving imported foods a competitive advantage over comparable Australian products? We know Australians clearly want to be able to identify and prefer Australian food. Therefore, surely persisting with a labelling regime where imported ingredients can be labelled as 'Made in Australia', suggesting to most people that they are grown here, is allowing imported food to masquerade as something it is not and to compete unfairly?

This argument was also taken up by the Blewett review, which stated:

There are mutual market benefits (to buyer and seller) of promoting food with positive/aspirational origins (e.g., chocolate from Switzerland), yet non-reciprocal benefits from withholding such information when it relates to origins with perceived negative connotations (e.g., food products from countries with poor human rights records). This situation constitutes market failure and the reason for government intervention on the issue of CoOL—country-of-origin labelling.

If, as some contend, Australians predominantly choose what food to buy based on price then there is even less reason to allow imported food to be passed off as Australian. Let Australian and imported food compete on equal footing, supported by accurate and transparent labelling requirements. For that to happen, current labelling requirements must change. Clearly the arguments against reform do not stack up. It is little wonder then that the Blewett review concluded that there is a strong case for reforming our country-of-origin labelling laws for food.

What is inexplicable is why this government, the same that commissioned the Blewett review, has failed to implement these key recommendations to reform country-of-origin labelling for food. The review unambiguously confirmed that the widespread and ongoing dissatisfaction and confusion across Australia regarding country-of-origin labelling is justified. It confirmed that markets cannot deliver it and that governments must.

In the absence of the government taking up this reform, the Greens have acted. With solid evidence to support the reform, and impatience from Australian growers and the community for change, we are proud to introduce this bill. There are two key parts to the amendments put forward in this bill. The
first enacts recommendation 41 of the Blewett review by creating a specific section in the Competition and Consumer Act that will deal solely with country-of-origin claims with regard to food. The purpose of this is twofold: to cease the treatment of food as just any other good; and to create a single regulatory regime, retaining mandatory labelling requirements but superseding country-of-origin labelling from the Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act.

The Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act is focused on dealing with matters relating primarily to food health and safety. As country-of-origin labelling is centrally concerned with accurate information for consumers and preventing misleading claims, regulation of the matter rests more logically in the Competition and Consumer Act.

The second part of this bill enacts recommendation 42 of the Blewett review, that country-of-origin labelling for food should be based on the ingoing weight of the ingredients and components, excluding water. This codifies the desire of most Australians to know the origin of the food they are buying first and foremost, not where any processing and packaging took place.

The bill removes the ability to make the stand-alone claim 'Made in Australia' about food, and provides unambiguous language and benchmarks. Food that is grown in Australia will be able to state exactly that on labelling, as it can now. Processed food comprising 90 per cent or more Australian ingredients by dry weight will be labelled 'Made of Australian ingredients'. This will establish an easy-to-understand, transparent premium claim that will allow Australians to finally make informed purchasing decisions.

There is often discussion in this country about how to bring the city and the bush closer together. It is a logical and necessary conversation, one that recognises that, with the majority of Australians living in cities like my electorate of Melbourne, but heavily reliant on the work of rural Australians, especially for food, it important to foster understanding and respect. However, much of the commentary on the issue is couched in terms of a divide, and other negativity.

The desire of Australians to be able to make a clear choice and buy locally grown food shows that people living in Melbourne and other cities do understand and value the work of Australian farmers, and they want to demonstrate that tangibly. The arguments for clear country-of-origin labelling to enable this are logical and longstanding, and should be honoured and enacted. This bill seeks to do just that. It should not be the case that you can go into an Australian supermarket and buy a packet of bacon that says on it, 'Made in Australia', when the meat was imported from overseas. This bill will fix that problem and benefit Australian farmers and will stop misleading Australian consumers. I commend the bill to the House.

Bill read a first time.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr KJ Thomson): In accordance with standing order 41, the second reading will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Making Marine Parks Accountable) Bill 2012

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Christensen.

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson) (10:43): I am pleased to present the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Making Marine Parks Accountable) Bill 2012.
The Gillard Labor government's current process of declaring marine protected areas is not the result of rigorous scientific analysis that has been made publicly available or extensive industry and community consultation. The government have not engaged in a proper consultation—their approach is one of 'take it or leave it', with no consideration for Australia's fishers or the coastal communities that rely on the fishing industry.

The fishing sector is worth billions of dollars to the Australian economy. The sector employs thousands of people across the whole country. However, the government has dismissed the social and economic impacts that its announcement will have on local communities which rely heavily on a vibrant fishing industry. Recreational and commercial fishers across Australia, together with the communities that rely on the fishing industry, will be adversely affected by the government's latest announcement regarding proposed marine protected areas.

Furthermore, the government has failed to understand the importance of recreational fishing to many Australians and has failed to consider the important economic contribution that recreational fishing makes to coastal communities. Fishing is a recreational past time enjoyed by five million Australians, and the industry generated by recreational fishing makes an important economic contribution upwards of $2.2 billion. In government, the coalition undertook rigorous assessments that resulted in the establishment of 11 marine protected areas. These declarations were achieved with broad community and industry support. The Liberal-National coalition acknowledges that Australia's fisheries are amongst the best managed in the world; however, the government should not take this for granted by attempting to put forward marine protected areas proposals that have not been subjected to proper scientific and commercial rigour or followed a consultation process that has been conducted in an open and transparent manner.

The Australian fishing industry is one of the most environmentally responsible fishing industries in the world. The government, in attempting to lock out fishing access, is at the same time damaging the livelihood of thousands of people across the country. This bill rectifies the government's shortcomings. It will require the minister to commission an independent social and economic impact assessment before any proclamations are made.

The bill will also require the minister to obtain independent scientific peer-reviewed advice that is made publicly available. It will also require that the government establish an independent scientific reference panel as well as a stakeholder advisory group so that decisions are made with rigour following extensive consultation and analysis of the possible scientific, economic and social impacts of any proposed marine protected areas.

Finally, the bill will put the parliament in charge of final decisions by making declarations disallowable by the parliament. This bill returns balance and fairness to marine conservation so that all Australians can have the confidence that the best decisions are being made in protecting our marine biodiversity as the fishers and communities that feed so many Australians. This bill is, as its name suggests, about control and accountability. It is about making the marine parks process accountable to the science, to the community and industries that the proposed marine parks proposal will affect. It also makes it accountable to the people by giving this parliament a say on the process. So it is all about accountability.
But it is also about taking a stand and saying who is in control in this country. The environment minister, as we have seen in recent times, is very susceptible to lobbying through social media, but in this case he has been very susceptible to lobbying by foreign environmental groups, such as the Pew foundation. What the government is seeking to do with its marine parks proposal is increase the number of marine parks, basically fishing lock-out areas, across Australian waters from 27 to 60, and it is doing it without correct and proper community consultation.

Labor is creating new marine parks as a way of placating the Greens. The new marine parks are about politics rather than the result of genuine and publicly available independent scientific investigation and community consultation. As I have said before, we have seen in recent times how the minister is very susceptible to social media campaigns and, again in this instance, Pew and GetUp! and a whole bunch of environmental groups have taken to the internet to spread chain emails, which have hit many politicians' offices, including the environment minister's. And that is what is driving this agenda, the new government by social media.

The decision to close down the Coral Sea in my area of Queensland, and also many other areas around Australia, has been driven by this Pew environmental group. The head of the Pew environmental group, a fellow by the name of Lee Crockett, who is Director, Federal Fisheries Policy for the Pew foundation in the United States, was quoted in *Fishing World* magazine as rejecting the concept of actually locking up waters in the Gulf of Mexico. He said the push to close the Coral Sea to all angling was supported by:

> … hundreds of thousands of people throughout Australia and around the world—including recreational anglers.

He went on to say that closing the Gulf of Mexico to fishing would not make sense because these waters are a 'major US economic driver'. He said:

> The Gulf offers excellent angling opportunities, and sport and commercial fishing generates billions of dollars and fresh seafood to much of the nation—

and he refers there to the United States of America. So we have, in essence, policy being driven in this country locking up Australian waters to recreational and commercial fishing, while in the case of US waters, where there may be similar vague conservation values, the Pew foundation, the driver of this policy, are not willing to go there for fear of what it may do to recreational fishermen and commercial fishermen in their country. They will not touch American waters, but they are touching Australian waters, and they are touching them with the help of this government. It begs the question: who is actually in control here?

There has been a lot of talk from the minister and from environmental groups about how this does not affect recreational fishermen, which is complete rubbish, because the sector is quite against it. Talk to the Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation, who have started the campaign Keep Australia Fishing. Talk to the Australian Marine Alliance, who represent some of the recreational-fishing groups. Talk to the Australian Fishing Trade Association, who will also tell you that they are against this proposal.

The minister talks about how no-one is taking a tinnie 400 kilometres off the coast, but, if you have a look in any North Queensland marina which is off the Coral Sea, there are not tinnies in those marinas; they are serious boats. We do not just have commercial fishermen and recreational fishing boats there; we have tourism charter
operators like Nomad Sportsfishing Adventures, which operates out of Mackay and goes out to Marion Reef, which I notice is one of the areas proposed to be locked up under the government's marine parks proposal.

I want to quote something here because it proves the falsity of the claim that this process has been based on science. Damon Olsen, who is the head of Nomad Sportsfishing Adventures, says: All we want to achieve here is to ensure that our marine reserves are implemented with thorough scientific planning, scientific principles and practical outcomes that work for all user groups. All recreational fishing groups support closed off areas, but only when thorough scientific processes have shown that these closed off areas are required. The current process is closing off huge areas to recreational fishermen simply so the government can keep green groups happy and stay in power.

He goes on to recall a meeting with the federal environment minister. He says: The current process is proposing to close off the main area of the Perth trench to all gamefishing activities, essentially shutting down the entire gamefishing industry and community in Perth. We asked the minister why this zone had been placed in it's proposed position. We were told that the minister drew that zone himself because they needed one in that area, and there was no information to tell him where to put it, so he just placed it where he thought was appropriate.

This is science by texta; this is not real science.

This bill makes the marine parks process accountable not just to the science but to the community, to the industries that it impacts upon and to the people by giving this parliament the ultimate say in the process. I am very pleased to present this bill to the House, and I look forward to its support from the crossbenchers.

Bill read a first time.
Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease and diabetes; and

(h) advances in treatment for mitochondrial dysfunction could also improve treatments for millions of people who suffer these other illnesses;

(2) recognises that:

(a) 16 to 22 September 2012 is Global Mitochondrial Disease Awareness Week;

(b) 23 September 2012 is Global World Stay in Bed Day to raise awareness and funds for research into mitochondrial disease; and

(c) the Australian Mitochondrial Disease Foundation has been working since 2009 to support patients and their families, spread information and raise the profile of this disease in the community and medical field; and

(3) calls on the Government to:

(a) encourage the public and private sectors to promote greater awareness of mitochondrial disease;

(b) help raise the profile of mitochondrial disease within the medical profession to overcome the lack of knowledge that contributes to misdiagnosis and improper treatment of this condition; and

(c) ensure there is appropriate support for patients of mitochondrial disease and their families.

Vivian French wrote a picture book that is a favourite of my two daughters, who are aged three and five, and it is called *Polly's Pink Pyjamas*. It tells the story of a little girl named Polly who wears her favourite pink pyjamas all day long. She does so by choice because she cannot decide what to wear to a children's birthday party. But for many children and adults who suffer from mitochondrial disease they have no choice about being bedridden. Mito is an incurable and debilitating genetic disorder that saps the body's cells of their energy. Being forced to stay in bed and recharge is a common symptom of the disease, and around the world a child is born every 30 minutes who will develop mitochondrial disease before their 10th birthday.

Every cell in the body contains mitochondria. These are the power plants that generate the energy organs and muscles need to make the body move and work as it should. This disease reduces the mitochondria's ability to produce energy, disrupting organ and muscle function, in some cases leading to organ failure. The heart, brain, lungs and muscles are most affected. The disease is life threatening. Unfortunately, there are few effective treatments and there is currently no cure.

One of the big challenges is raising awareness of this condition. How do you try to treat something that can present with any symptom in any organ at any age? Mito was thought to be quite rare in the 1990s and was believed to affect just one in 20,000 people. New research reveals that one in every 200 Australians is affected. That is, they carry genetic mutations that put them at risk of developing the disease or related conditions in their lifetime. Many are misdiagnosed or asymptomatic. That works out to be about 110,000 Australians—more than would fit into the Sydney Olympic stadium and enough to fill Shark Park in my electorate many times over.

Known in the medical field as the notorious masquerader, mito exists in several hundred different forms with varying effects including strokes, seizures, gastrointestinal problems, kidney and heart difficulties, muscle failure and liver disease. The disease can appear at any age and doctors cannot predict how it will progress. So little is known about mito that patients are sometimes only diagnosed on their deathbed. Many patients see a merry-go-round of specialists, at great cost, unfortunately with little result. In some cases doctors send them to psychiatrists or psychologists, convinced
that there is nothing actually physically wrong with them. Greater awareness about mito and proper diagnosis could lead to more effective treatments much sooner, not to mention saving thousands of dollars on consultations and medical expenses and bringing patients some peace of mind that at least they can put a name to their debilitating condition.

The third week in September, where we are now, is Global Mitochondrial Disease Awareness week, when leading foundations in America, Europe, New Zealand and Australia campaign together to raise awareness and support for mito patients. The highlight is World Stay in Bed Day on Sunday, 23 September. This is a poster which talks all about mito Stay in Bed Day, which is on Sunday, 23 September. I seek leave to table that for the benefit of members.

Leave granted.

Mr MORRISON: The idea is to throw a pyjama party or a 'bed in' where you wear your PJs to school or work to show support, as persistent fatigue is one of the first signs of the disease. There are clinical trials and research programs under way, but greater awareness and funds need to be raised so that important scientific work can continue. Researchers have also linked mitochondria with diseases like Alzheimer's, Parkinson's disease and diabetes. They believe that advances in the way we can treat mito disease could help improve treatments for the millions who suffer these other illnesses.

Today's motion recognises in this place the widespread unpredictable nature of this disease, as well as its severity, and seeks to promote a greater understanding of mito and support for patients. Last month, the New South Wales Legislative Assembly agreed to a motion to recognise Global Mitochondrial Disease Awareness Week, while a similar resolution has gone before the US Senate. An early day motion before the House of Commons last year put this disease on the public record in Great Britain. I am pleased today to introduce this motion to recognise the dedication of the Australian Mitochondrial Disease Foundation here at home. The AMDF has worked tirelessly since 2009 to support patients and their families spread information and raise the profile of this cruel and debilitating disease.

Dr Karen Crawley of Gymea in my own electorate of Cook has helped run the foundation for a number of years now, inspired by her 13-year-old daughter Kara's battle with this illness, which I spoke of in this place on a previous occasion. Like many children who suffer from mito, Kara is slowly losing her senses and brain function. It is literally a daily struggle for her devastated family and Karen has been told by doctors that she and her 11-year-old son Braden could also be affected by the illness. Karen's daughter now has developed dementia and forgets to call her 'Mum'. In Karen's words:

With a few years at most to live, our gorgeous girl is disappearing. I am literally watching my daughter slowly die in front of me and there is nothing I can do.

It is dedicated volunteers like Karen who have driven the foundation forward, living today with hope for tomorrow, and the willingness of gutsy patients who are helping make headway into the research. Karen herself is a GP. She runs a 24-hour helpline on her mobile for patients, families and medics with questions about mito. Since 2009, the AMDF have committed more than half a million dollars to research. The AMDF has funded five PhD research projects and organised support groups in Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne and Perth. They run information days at research
facilities across the country, including the Murdoch Childrens Research Centre in Melbourne, the Kolling Institute of Medical Research at Royal North Shore Hospital and the Children's Hospital at Westmead. The foundation has set up a nationwide patient database and is working to sync it with other global genetic registries. The foundation has funded new medical facilities and equipment like priority access to the next generation DNA sequencing facility at the Royal Perth Hospital, to facilitate faster, cheaper and more accurate diagnosis.

In my electorate each year, the Cook Community Classic raises funds and awareness for more than 30 local community organisations and we have a longstanding affiliation with the Australian Mitochondrial Disease Foundation. Community groups like Caringbah Rotary work hard to support the wonderful work of the AMDF. With encouraging research and burgeoning information and support networks, we are making progress but there is still much to be done in both the field of medicine and the wider community.

This motion today is one step forward toward achieving greater recognition and demonstrating our support for those living with mito. I encourage all Australians to show their support—including those in this House—for the Global Mitochondrial Disease Awareness Week by buying a pin and wearing their PJs with pride on World Stay in Bed Day. Polly did not need an excuse to wear a pink pyjamas, but if you ever needed a reason to sleep in on a Sunday, raising awareness for mitochondrial disease is certainly worth while.

As we sit here and reflect on the many other matters before this House, may we this week spare a thought for those who are suffering under this condition, suffering in the uncertainty that reigns around it but pushing on in the hope that there will be a cure and greater recognition. I commend the motion to the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr KJ Thomson): Is the motion seconded?

Ms Ley: I second the motion.

Ms HALL (Shortland—Government Whip) (11:04): I would like to congratulate the member for Cook for bringing this very important motion to the House. This is an opportunity to raise awareness of mitochondrial disease, to make people aware that it is quite common and that it is very debilitating. I would like to add my support to his motion, to congratulate the mitochondrial society of Australia on the work they do and to pledge my support to help them in any way I possibly can. This week, 16 to 22 September, is Global Mitochondrial Disease Awareness Week. The aim is to raise awareness of the disease amongst the community—and the medical profession, since one of the issues with the disease is that doctors do not immediately look for it. Mitochondrial disease is an incurable disorder which saps energy from the cells in our body with debilitating effects. It is a disease referred to as the 'notorious masquerader' because it mimics many other illnesses in both children and adults.

Five years ago, the term 'mitochondrial disease' did not seem to exist. It is a little-known disease which many people, including GPs as mentioned, are still not fully aware of. It is not, however, a new condition but one with a history of misdiagnosis due to the variety of symptoms associated with the disease—I will go through those symptoms a little later. Our bodies are made up of cells and the mitochondria are the batteries of those cells—providing them with energy. Mitochondria take in energy from the food we eat and that energy is then used to power
the nucleus and hence control the cells in our bodies.

Mitochondria are themselves very complex organelles and each one requires over 1,400 genes to create. Mitochondrial disease is a genetic fault in the mitochondria—a hiccup in the production of mitochondria from the time of conception. Due to this gene fault, some mitochondria grow abnormally. How many unhealthy mitochondria develop varies greatly from cell to cell and organ to organ. Mitochondrial disease is best summarised in the phrase 'any organ, any symptom, any age'. This is because mitochondria are found everywhere in the body, so mitochondrial disease can present differently in each and every person.

New presentations of this disease are still appearing regularly. We presently know of around 100 different types of mitochondrial disease and there is potential for more. The severity of the effect on body function depends on many things, including the location of the mitochondrial defect in the body and the number of unhealthy mitochondria. Some mitochondrial disorders only affect a single organ, although most involve multiple organs. The organ systems which work the hardest and the longest in our body, and thus supply the most energy, are the most affected by mitochondrial disease.

Mitochondrial disease is characterised by a multiplicity of symptoms, varying in type and severity, so making diagnosis extremely difficult. A person with advanced mitochondrial disease may present with many symptoms, while a healthy person suffering this silent genetic defect may present none at all. I heard the member for Cook talk about how his constituents worry about the fact that, whilst they are currently free of this disease, they may develop it in future. People who share the same genetic defect can also present with different symptoms. So you can see why it is called a masquerader.

Diagnosis of mitochondrial disease is problematic because it looks like so many other illnesses. The common symptom is fatigue—not the common type you feel after you have had a long and hard day, but a fatigue which feels like hitting a wall. If a person is well rested, they may feel as though they have normal energy levels. When mitochondria are working hard, a person can experience extreme fatigue, often struggling to get out of bed. These fluctuations in fatigue often make it hard for a person to present their case to the doctor. There are many different symptoms. They can vary considerably. When symptoms arise in three or more organs, the possibility of mitochondrial disease should definitely be considered. Poor growth; failure to thrive; muscle weakness; poor coordination, sensory, vision and hearing problems; reduced mental functioning; disease of organs such as the heart and deliver, which is very common; dementia—we heard about that from the member for Cook—respiratory problems; hypoglycaemia; apnoea; lactic acid disorders; seizure; gastrointestinal disorders and swallowing difficulties; developmental delays; movement disorders such as dystonia, muscle spasms and tremors; stroke; diabetes; and brain atrophy are some of the very different ways that mitochondrial disease can affect people.

This disease is nearly as common as childhood cancer and yet I suspect if you were to ask people in the community about mitochondrial disease you would find that not very many people know about it. One in 4,000 children born in the United States every year will develop mitochondrial disease by the age of 10. In adults, many diseases of the ageing can be attributed to defects in mitochondrial functioning.
As I have already said, this is a disease that has enormous impacts, and it is a disease for which there is no cure. Some of the treatments include trying to remove stressors and taking vitamins, but there is research taking place at the moment into trying to solve the puzzle. As has already been mentioned, diagnosing the disease is difficult and for practitioners it is often like putting together the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. It is a process that begins with the family GP and progresses to a mitochondrial specialist.

Considering the possibility of mitochondrial disease is the most difficult part. GPs recommend that mitochondrial disease be suspected when a common disease has atypical features and/or three or more organ systems are involved and there are recurrent setbacks or flare-ups with infections in a normal chronic illness. Basic investigations such as blood tests and eye and hearing tests can be used to begin diagnosis and they can be followed up with tests in individual organs. However, genetic testing is not a practical tool for diagnosis of mitochondrial disease given that each of the 1,400 genes which make up a single mitochondria would potentially have to be tested. It is usually up to the right specialist to make a clinical diagnosis based on the symptoms and the results of investigations. Mitochondrial disease is also being increasingly linked with mainstream illnesses. Relatively little is known about this very serious and very common disease.

The other part of the motion refers to World Stay in Bed Day, which is this Sunday, 23 September. For many of us thinking about staying in bed, this will be an opportunity to indulge in a guilt-free lazy Sunday, but for people suffering from mitochondrial disease it demonstrates a fact of life. We can join with those people and have, as the member for Cook suggested, a pyjama party, or we can simply think about the great impact that mitochondrial disease has on people. (Time expired)

Mr HUNT (Flinders) (11:14): It is a great honour to support the member for Cook, the member for Shortland and this motion on mitochondrial disease. This debate shows the parliament at its very best, and in my judgement the parliament is at its very best when it focuses on two primary functions. We only have two constitutional functions; they are, firstly, to make laws and, secondly, to represent our electorates. This motion comes from the lived experience of the member for Cook and many others as representatives of families and children who have great challenges. I know from my own experience that two causes with which I have had the honour, and indeed the joy, to be involved are juvenile diabetes, working with the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation in particular, and autism, working with Autism Victoria.

Against that background we see the issue of mitochondrial disease. Mitochondrial disease affects up to 100,000 Australians. We know that, worldwide, every 30 minutes is born a child who will develop mitochondrial disease before their 10th birthday. In Australia approximately one in every 250 people is affected by some version of mitochondrial disease, although we believe that much of it is misdiagnosed and has yet to be fully recognised.

Let us understand what it is we are talking about. Mitochondrial disease is a largely incurable genetic disorder that essentially saps the body's cells of their energy. It reduces the ability of the mitochondria to produce the energy required for critical bodily function—it disrupts muscle and organ function and in some cases leads to organ failure or even, tragically, to death. It is a disease of heaviness that limits our ability to be our full selves. I was reminded
of John Donne's meditations and his *Variations upon Divergent Occasions*. I was literally contemplating on the way into the chamber the phrase: 'No man is an island, entire of itself, each is a piece of the continent, a part of the whole. If a clod be washed away by the sea Europe is the less as well as if a promontory of thine own were'. It goes on with the critical phrase: 'Each man's death diminishes me, because I am of mankind. Therefore, never seek to know for whom the Bell tolls, it tolls for thee'.

This topic reminds us, as parliamentarians, of our good fortune and our responsibilities. Each day, and this is a largely untold part of the story of the best of the parliament, each member of this parliament encounters in their own electorate people who, for whatever reason, need or cause, desire and are in absolute need of assistance. Mitochondrial disease is one of those hidden problems that we as a society face.

We recognise that there are serious problems in relation to awareness, research and support. In terms of awareness, not many Australians—hitherto including me, I have to confess—have been fully aware of what mitochondrial disease means, in terms of the scope, with nearly 100,000 Australians suffering some form of mitochondrial disease, or the impact. The effects of its progressive impact on organs range from modest through significant, leading to a crushing lack of energy, to preventing them carrying out their most vital functions, at its worst. It affects our vital organs—in many of the worst cases the organs of the youngest of children—which are then unable to do their thing. We need to be more aware. We need champions. I honour and respect the member for Cook, who has raised this as his issue. He is a great friend and I am pleased that mitochondrial disease has a champion in the parliament. I am sure that there will be very strong support. I honour the support of those on the other side who speak today. So we recognise that there is an issue around awareness. Secondly, there is also an issue around research. Significantly, this disease is not just largely unknown but one where the diagnosis remains difficult and the treatment undeveloped. There are things we can do to deal with many of the symptoms, but the causes are one of the frontiers. This century, in my judgement, will be, among other things, the century of communications. It will be an environmental century in terms of the changes we make to the by-products of our modern life. But in particular, of all of the different radical transformations, I think it will be the century of biotechnology. One of those items in desperate need of research and development and cure and treatment is mitochondrial disease. The impact on individual lives is profound.

I want to deal with a particular case study, one which we have been given permission to use: that of Joanne Edwards from Melbourne and her daughter Annaliese. Annaliese is an 18-year-old young lady. She has had a major tremor in her hands, to the point where she cannot cut the food on her dinner plate or eat the food off a spoon. She struggles to put that food onto her fork or to write her name, let alone to pen an essay, whether on the computer or by hand. That same tremor, caused by mitochondrial disease, is also in her speech and her limbs, making it difficult for her to go about the ordinary things which we take for granted in our lives. She has been knocked with falls. She has been taken to hospital by ambulance. There are challenges in her development. And she went undiagnosed for 12 years, despite the fact that her family had taken enormous steps to find out what it was that was challenging their daughter.

Annaliese's particular strain and mutation of mitochondrial disease is not life-
threatening in and of itself. It may not be as severe as other mutations. However, it does make her day-to-day life exceptionally tough. And then there are those—and I considered looking at the case studies but chose not to—where the lives of young children were not able to pass through and they have been lost to their families. As a parent, that is every parent's nightmare—not just to lose a child but to lose them through a long, slow, tragically painful process where their child wastes away in front of them. What could possibly be worse? So we have a great human task—a moral responsibility, and I absolutely do not shy away from that—to support the research.

That leads me into the third part of what I wish to talk about, and that is the general notion of support. There are two things that we need to do. One is to deal with the research—to actually embark on a federal program—and this is a difficult time. Our nation's budget is in a very bad place and it appears, day to day, as if things are getting worse. But, that aside, in a budget which will be well over $300 billion I am sure that we can find some money somewhere for vital research which is about saving lives, protecting lives and improving the lives of those who are truly the most vulnerable. If we cannot do that then we have some serious questions as legislators, executors and representatives to ask ourselves.

We also have a duty to raise awareness. How do we support? We raise awareness. The more that we can talk about this issue the more we may take away stigma, in the same way that awareness about juvenile diabetes and autism has helped take away stigma. That is a very important part: many of these children may be stigmatised, because that can be the nature of our school environment. So we have to improve our general schooling environment, but we also have to provide specific information: that this disease of tiredness is an issue, a condition—something which is not within their control. And that is why this Sunday is Stay in Bed Day. I will be sponsoring my good friend, the member for Cook, to stay in bed, and I would encourage all Australians to sponsor him to do so on that day!

More seriously, I thank the member for bringing this motion. I commend its sentiments, and I believe that we have a deep duty to support research and awareness and to take all the steps we can to help those with mitochondrial disease. (Time expired)

Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (11:24): I join the member for Flinders in strongly supporting the member for Cook staying in bed; I think there is bipartisan consensus on that point! More seriously, I commend the member for Cook for bringing this motion before the House. Too often, discussions about health care operate at the very high level—the millions of dollars that are spent, the institutions, the hospitals, the doctors, the researchers—and sometimes there is value in a particular motion that focuses on a single disease, highlights the plight of sufferers and allows us in this place to focus briefly on their stories and what we can do to alleviate their suffering.

I must confess that, of all the diseases that scare me, a fatigue related disease is perhaps my greatest fear. In common with many in this place, I quite enjoy doing too many things, so the description of mitochondrial disease as feeling like you are hitting the wall strikes me very much. That is why Stay in Bed Day, on Sunday, 23 September, is an appropriate way to recognise sufferers of mitochondrial disease.

Mitochondrial disease was discovered fairly recently and research on it is ongoing. There is a great deal we do not know about it, but we do know that its symptoms are various and severe. They can include
deafness, eye disorder, dementia, muscle weakness, heart disease and kidney disease, to name but a few. I note in passing that one of the syndromes of mitochondrial disease is called Leigh Syndrome, which reminds me that researchers who ask for their own names to be given to a disease are brave people indeed.

The ongoing research into mitochondrial disease is of a piece with the increasing research on what has come to be known as personalised medicine. It is research which recognises that treatment for certain genetic disorders—mitochondrial disease can be caused by mutations to mitochondrial DNA—may require personalised approaches, treatments that are tailored to an individual's genetic structure. That is bringing health researchers and genetic researchers together—and some of that high-level gene research is taking place at the Australian National University. The John Curtin School of Medical Research is one of the great powerhouses of medical research in Australia, and I believe it is through research bodies such as the Curtin school that we are going to make great breakthroughs on mitochondrial and other diseases.

However, at present, as the Australian Mitochondrial Disease Foundation website notes, 'there is no cure, treatment is limited and diagnosis is difficult, costly and often missed'. That is because the mitochondrial mutations are due to the lack of an error-checking capacity of nuclear DNA. Consequently, mitochondrial disease is potentially tied in with disorders such as Alzheimer's, autism and cardiovascular disease—hence, any breakthroughs on mitochondrial disease may well affect our understanding of many other conditions.

I believe that there are two things that are at the core of dealing with mitochondrial disease. The first is ongoing research, what I think of as the push factors, for getting to a solution for mitochondrial disease, whether that is a vaccine or some other form of treatment. But there has also been increasing interest among economists on improving the pull factors—the attractiveness of finding treatments for diseases for which we do not yet have treatments. The GAVI Alliance, formerly the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation, is currently experimenting with advance market commitments. Advance market commitments are commitments by countries to purchase certain amounts of vaccines. They have been used with great success with pneumococcal vaccine. They have been discussed for use with potential vaccines for malaria and HIV. As policymakers, we need to bring all of the innovation to dealing with a problem of this kind that scientific and medical researchers bring to thinking about the disease itself. There may be a role for advance market commitments in the future as a way of encouraging researchers to find the prize.

One of the benefits of advance market commitments is that they are available to anyone who comes up with a solution, whether that is an established research team or a group of mavericks who are working in a lesser-known institution or even outside an institution. An advance market commitment rewards ingenuity, and we need as much human ingenuity as can be brought to bear on diseases like mitochondrial disease and other diseases for which vaccines do not exist, such as malaria and HIV. I commend that policy tool to the House as a valuable way of addressing diseases about which we do not yet know enough.

I commend the member for Cook for his hard work on finding a solution to mitochondrial disease and am grateful to him for his continued advocacy on this issue.
Mr IRONS (Swan) (11:32): I rise to support the motion before the House moved by the member for Cook. The member for Cook’s motion is very pertinent and self-explanatory, with a lot of information. I will read out some parts of it which I think should be mentioned in the House:

(a) mitochondrial disease:

(i) is an incurable and debilitating genetic disorder that saps the body’s cells of their energy; and

(ii) reduces the ability of mitochondria to produce energy required for vital bodily functions, disrupting important muscle and organ function and leading in some cases to organ failure or death …

The motion says that there:

(i) is a widespread lack of awareness about this disease, its symptoms or effects;

(ii) are few effective treatments for this disease; and

(iii) is currently no cure for this disease;

(f) clinical trials are underway, however research into this disease requires greater monetary and community support and recognition;

(g) scientists have linked mitochondrial dysfunction to other major diseases including Alzheimer’s disease, Parkinson’s disease and diabetes …

The motion also says that the House:

(2) recognises that:

(a) 16 to 22 September 2012 is Global Mitochondrial Disease Awareness Week …

Mitochondrial disease is quite frankly a terrible disease. It can effectively shut down the organs of the body one by one until it becomes life threatening. For those with a less severe condition, the fatigue this disease induces is life altering. When I read through this motion, I saw many parallels with a disease that I have been advocating about over the last three years: the condition of adhesive arachnoiditis. They are both diseases that have struggled to be recognised by authorities. As the member for Cook said in his opening statement, mitochondrial disease has only been recognised as a disease in its own right within the last five years.

Mitochondrial disease is known as the notorious masquerader, in that it exists in several hundred different forms, with symptoms such as strokes, seizures, gastrointestinal problems, kidney and heart difficulties, muscle failure and liver disease, and doctors often understandably fail to identify mitochondrial disease as the specific cause. In fact, so little is known about mitochondrial disease that sufferers are often diagnosed on their death bed, with many patients moving from doctor to doctor, at great cost but to no avail and with no diagnosis.

Mitochondrial disease results in severe fatigue in the short term and organ failure in the long term. This element of fatigue is recognised by World Stay in Bed Day, organised by the Australian Mitochondrial Disease Foundation, which encourages people to raise money for the cause by hosting a pyjama party or sleeping in, which I am sure many members in this place would relish the opportunity of doing. This disease changes lives. It has knock-on effects for the family around them, who provide extraordinary levels of care. I think we need to always remember in this place the strains that are placed on all aspects of family life by these diseases. I would like to give some examples of people who have suffered or are suffering from mitochondrial disease.

Pam Hausler: AMDF volunteer, mitochondrial disease sufferer. Pam has mito, as does her son. They discovered this after the diagnosis and death of her 19-year-old daughter, Shayli. Pam noticed that Shayli, from a baby, was different. Shayli did not feed well: she simply got too tired
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and fell asleep after less than two ounces formula. Shayli was never able to breastfeed through lack of energy and poor sucking reflexes. She was slow to grow, and although she smiled early she could not sit at all. When Shayli was about 10 months, Pam was taking her into the Adelaide children's hospital for physio on a daily basis. Here she also had access to other therapies, and at 11 months Shayli started attending the Woodville Spastic Centre in Adelaide as the youngest ever patient.

Shayli was described as having atypical cerebral palsy. At 14 Shayli had the first seizure, which, although a shock, seemed an inconvenience rather than anything else. Shayli was in and out of hospital, and she lost partial vision after an episode where she fitted for 12 days and went into a coma for a while.

These episodes by now were being referred to as a massive seizure, a huge migraine or perhaps a stroke—but no, it could not be a stroke because scans showed no bleeds on the brain. What was it? Shayli was tested for everything currently known to science but all came up blank. Eventually in June 1990, Shayli was in a coma from which she never recovered and she died in August aged 19. At that time the condition of mitochondrial disease had just been recognised, so Shayli had a diagnosis of MELAS in the July just before her death.

The next story I'd like to relate is from Penny Andrews of Western Australia. This is what she wrote, which I have condensed to fit into the time limit:

My husband Steven and I have four special, fantastic, gorgeous, much loved children—William, Georgia, Dimity and Thomas.

Our two gorgeous girls—Georgia who is nine and Dimity who is six—are both such good fun, full of life, great at sport and love their friends and school. And then we have our two great, loving boys: Will who is ten and Thomas who is six, who are also both full of life. They, however, are not so healthy or as active as our girls, due to a debilitating and potential fatal genetic disorder … mitochondrial disease.

It was a disease neither Steven, nor I, had ever heard of before it arrived in our family.

Our firstborn son William was diagnosed with mitochondrial disease at just three, but only after enduring many doctors, endless tests and various misdiagnoses.

He'd developed slowly, struggled with his feeding, had torticollis (wry neck), and was a shocking sleeper—just a really difficult baby. My GP at the time told me Will was just a lazy boy, a clumsy boy: oh, he just has low muscle tone, he will strengthen up … don't worry about it.

But as time went on things just weren't right and we started on the hunt for answers. During this time I had my second child, Georgia, who was a healthy and happy dream baby, thank goodness.

Just before Will turned two, we finally got in to see a specialist who took one look at Will and told us he had cerebral palsy. We were referred to another neurologist. The good news was Will didn't have cerebral palsy, but the bad news was that he had brain lesions, with a movement disorder. But this didn't give us a diagnosis to explain why our son just couldn't do what his other two-year old mates could … walk, feed himself, catch a ball, hop, float, ride a bike, hold a paint brush, or build with blocks.

I switched to practicalities, hoping that with ongoing physio and speech therapy all of this early intervention will fix our little boy. We went on with our lives with a wobbly cushion was a target for Will's condition. This was the first time
Steven or I had heard the words 'mitochondrial disease' or, in our case, 'Juvenile Leigh's disease', one of a hundred types of mito disease.

This was crazy. This 'whatever it is' is a genetic condition that we both passed on to our son. But how can our daughter be okay? I remember asking, 'She is okay, isn't she?' "Yes, Georgia is fine, but—that long pause—it's about the twins you're carrying. There is a 25 per cent chance that each of your twins could have it.'

When our twins came along, Dimity met all her milestones easily, but her twin Thomas lagged behind. Steven and I got a sinking feeling that we'd seen it all before—and we had. This time we knew how to get the diagnosis and more about what we were dealing with. Thomas was diagnosed with Juvenile Leigh's at just nine months of age. We watched Thomas eagerly, hoping he might somehow recover or that it was a mistake, but now, at six years of age, our youngest boy's symptoms are more severe than William's were at the same age. Thomas now needs his walker every day. His eyesight is also deteriorating and he has respiratory problems, poor growth, swallowing difficulties and laboured breathing. At times it's difficult to understand his speech.

William is now ten ... His life has never been really easy for him: the constant health setbacks, the constant fatiguing of his body, the rapid deterioration of his vision and his developmental delays. It's something no parent wants to ever see. We used to watch him struggle to walk ... now he needs a walker every day at school because he gets so tired—and a walker helps to ensure his safety. Some days he is so fatigued he struggles to put one foot in front of the other. It is heartbreaking that as a parent you cannot give your child the right answer. We would love to be able to tell him everything will be okay and that he will get better soon, but we can't as we just don't know what lies ahead for him.

We all want to try and do something positive about a condition that's anything but. I and others, including Dr Lamont, have set up the WA branch of the Australian Mitochondrial Disease Foundation, which aims to fund research into the diagnosis, treatment and cure of mitochondrial disorders, and to support those who are affected. Steven and I now watch both our boys and wonder what mitochondrial disease is going to do to them. We simply don't know. We live our lives with uncertainty and fear as at present there is no cure... and all we have is hope.

I support this motion calling for the Government to encourage the public and private sectors to promote greater— (Time expired)

Ms ROWLAND (Greenway) (11:42): I support this motion on mitochondrial disease and I commend the initiative of the member for Cook in bringing it forward. As a new mother, I think I can say what a lot of other parents know. When you are becoming a parent for the first time, it is very exciting, but, at the same time, you experience a sense of worry which is beyond any worry you thought you would ever have. When I was pregnant, I was doing a lot of work in the disability sector in support of an NDIS. That raised my own awareness about disability and it made me think a lot about the health of my unborn child—whether she would be born with any conditions or whether she would develop any conditions. I became very aware of the reality of illnesses which affect children.

Although my daughter appears to be a very healthy baby, it is indeed something when you hear about the experiences of people with children who are suffering from disease. You really cannot begin to understand the pain they experience or the ongoing struggle in their day-to-day lives. In this place you get an opportunity to do a lot of interesting things—and often some very good things—but I do think it is the cases and stories of individual constituents which bring a human face to what we do in this parliament.

In echoing the words of the member for Swan, who has just spoken, I would also like to raise the story of Pam Hausler, who is one of my constituents. Like the member for
Swan, I asked for permission to tell this story. I did so because I think it sums up very accurately what the journey of mitochondrial disease must be for people who are suffering from it or who are family members of someone suffering from it. As was mentioned, Pam Hausler is a volunteer with the Australian Mitochondrial Disease Foundation in Sydney and I commend her for that. As the member for Swan indicated, the story of Shayli, her daughter, is a tragic one. Shayli was born in Adelaide in 1971 after a dream pregnancy. She was a month overdue but no-one seemed concerned, but after she was born by emergency caesarean alarm bells did start to ring for Pam. Pam describes, as the member for Swan has outlined, how Shayli did not feed very well; she got tired and fell asleep after eating very small amounts. She was slow to grow and could not control her sitting. Again, when you are a first-time mum you do not really know whether these things are normal or not, or whether there is an underlying reason for these traits. Eventually in June 1990 she was in a coma from which he never recovered, and she died in August aged only 19. At the time of her death the condition of mitochondrial disease had only just been recognised, so they had a diagnosis just before Shayli's death.

Interestingly, and this goes to the issue of awareness and research, in those days Pam was told that her daughter was one of only three in the world who suffered from mitochondrial disease, but recent research has shown the condition is indeed at the root of many illnesses and is as common as maybe one in 200 people. Pam works as a volunteer in the office of the AMDF in Sydney, and she does what she can to raise the general public's awareness of mitochondrial disease so that eventually the funds raised will allow research to find a cure and her beautiful daughter Shayli will not have died in vain. Pam says:

Mitochondrial Disease can happen to any person at any age and affect any organ. We now know that many women with mito have Cesarean sections as their bodies are too tired to labour, and we know it's at the basis of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Parkinson's Disease, Huntington's, Cardio Myopathy, some cancerous tumors, some diabetes and some hearing loss. In fact it can affect any organ that uses a lot of energy as the mitochondria are the cells in your body that break food down into energy. Everybody needs mitochondria in order to function.

Pam has also written to me in the following terms, and this strikes a chord with me:

We all work so hard when our children are small to give them everything they need; we have sleep deprivation, anxiety, stress and more. During my first few years with Shayli I was often suffering fatigue, muscle soreness and migraine headaches, hardly surprising when my child slept 2 hours in 24 (every night for 2 years), and in the mornings I was taking her for physio at the Children's Hospital, all of which I put down to being a single mother with a disabled child. Now I know we both had mito disease. What I am finding now is that as I age, my previous symptoms worsen and a few new ones have appeared.

Finding a cure is vital, but that can only happen through research which also requires awareness of this devastating disease.

Pam says to me:

Still in 2012 there is no cure or even satisfactory treatment due to minimal funding. In the last 2 years, with the aid of research—mostly funded by public donations—a study has been done showing several conditions are Mitochondrial based …

So research remains the key to the cure of many diseases and is as essential today as it was in years past …

I strongly agree with her sentiments. The other important thing to take from the story that Pam tells is the incidence of mitochondrial disease. The research that Pam has provided to me courtesy of the AMDF states:
Until the 1990s, mitochondrial disease was thought to be rare (1 in 20,000 people), but it is now recognised as the most common subgroup of inherited metabolic disorders. Recent research shows one in 200 people, or more than 100,000 Australians, may carry genetic mutations that put them at risk for developing mitochondrial disease or other related symptoms such as diabetes, deafness or seizures during their lifetimes.

I also highlight some other research findings that Pam Hausler has provided to me showing the comparative incidence of mitochondrial disease compared to other diseases such as MS, cerebral palsy and SIDS. Based on population, mitochondrial disease has a very high incidence rate at least in Australia. I encourage anyone who is listening to this debate to look at the AMDF website. It gives some quite instructive information on the symptoms and some of the possible preventive mechanisms. The website is amdf.org.au.

I would also like to highlight some of the research attributed to that author—who I believe is Banzai—who gives a very good summary of mitochondria and some of its symptoms:

Have you ever wondered where your 'get up and go' comes from? The answer lies inside your cells were a multitude of microscopic structures called mitochondria are working industriously to maintain your health and physical well-being.

Unfortunately, there are many reasons for mitochondrial inefficiency, including lack of exercise, poor diet, toxins and a range of environmental stressors.

There is a very interesting piece here about the importance of exercise. As we know from a number of other studies, exercise is said to be the fountain of youth and energy. Another cause of mitochondrial problems is an inherent genetic mistake or mutation in DNA and that failure to produce enough energy is called mitochondrial disease or mito. I encourage everyone to increase their awareness of this terrible disease. Also I believe it is important to point out, as other speakers have done in this debate, the importance of understanding that research will put together the symptoms and lead us not only to diagnose with more efficiency but also to treat this disease in future. As the member for Shortland stated, mitochondrial disease symptoms and proving its existence is like a jigsaw puzzle. That is one the key factors that comes from the AMDF's findings. The AMDF highlights three points for suspecting mitochondrial disease: where there is a common disease which has atypical features and/or three or more organ systems are involved and/or recurrent setbacks or flare-ups when there are infections in a normal chronic illness.

In conclusion, I believe Shayli's story needed to be told. We need to emphasise the importance of research and support. I wish I could spend a day in bed for this cause, but maybe I will just end up sponsoring the member for Cook. (Time expired)

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (11:52): I also support the member for Cook's motion on mitochondrial disease. It is appropriate to reinforce the strong feelings which those on both sides of this chamber have to finding the scientific breakthroughs that can lead to a better life people born with mitochondrial conditions. The best example of science at its frontier are these mitochondrial diseases. We are only just beginning to understand the causation, the mechanisms of the disease and, ultimately, to search for a cure. I guess what holds back the awareness of mitochondrial disease is the very fact that it expresses itself in so many different ways that even primary care providers and GPs have very rarely had the experience of caring for a patient.

Most people who have specialised in neurology, ophthalmology and similar areas will have worked with people who have a
family member affected by mitochondrial disease. My background with Leber's hereditary optic neuropathy is one example where we are just starting to understand that the origins of this disease lie in the tiny mitochondria of every cell in the body. We have the figures that around 4,000 Americans and around 200 Australians every year are being diagnosed with the condition. One in 4,000 Americans and Australians by the age of 10 will have been diagnosed with the disease. The Australian Mitochondrial Disease Foundation is making a simple request of this place that everyone be more aware through an awareness week—16 to 22 September—of this disease and of the needs of the people who live with it, and is pushing very hard for a cure.

There really is no greater test of a health system than how we look after those who, through no fault of their own, are born with a condition like mitochondrial disease. It is so heterogeneous and so varied in its expression that it very rarely impacts an individual Australian with a picture of exactly what this condition looks like. Those living with this disease do not have the benefits of, say, some of the larger pathology groups like cancer and heart disease, the benefits of a really clear picture of what this condition entails. We are only now learning about the importance of mitochondria in disease functionality, the role of mtDNA, that small amount of DNA which, unlike the rest of nuclear material, has only a single maternal copy. That leads to a far more varied expression of disease than one would find in a traditionally genetic disease. Whether it is acquired or inherited, the basic situation with the 15 respiratory proteins that are coded by mitochondrial DNA is that firstly they are directly from the mother and, secondly, from that point as mitochondria replicate they are randomly assigned to these organelles. That means that any possible clinical phenotype can be witnessed by clinicians, and that is simply because it depends on which organ body these mitochondrial variations turn up in. This is called 'threshold expressivity'—the heteroplasmy that leads to mitochondria affecting one part of the body and not another. We know if it ends up in the cerebrum, or in the peripheral nerves in particular, that it can have the strongest of outcomes and the most limiting for life and for quality of life.

Research started a decade ago. There are connections between mitochondrial disease and diabetes, the diabetes and deafness syndrome being one example. Optic neuropathy, the loss of central vision, is another. It is experienced at an early age and in far more severe forms that we would commonly know. These are typically older forms of retinopathy experienced by large numbers of Australians.

As I said, this is a disease category that deserves recognition. We need to raise awareness among GPs and primary care providers. We need to make sure every Australian knows what people living with mitochondrial diseases go through and give all the support we can, not just for more scientific research but for the inevitable ethical debate that will follow. Already we see in the University of Newcastle research allowing infertile mums with mitochondrial diseases to have children through pronuclear transfer. So what level of genetic engineering is society prepared to brook in order for infertile people to have children for the first time? These are just examples of where healthy DNA is being taken out of the eggs of a woman and placed into a healthy egg to allow that process to occur.

Right now the UK is leading the way on this moral debate, whether we are talking about vitamin supplementation, pyruvate or antioxidants that are able to penetrate the cell
wall, which are the three most common forms of treatment. But more importantly, as this society, this fellowship, would be arguing, we must create awareness among Australians and care providers and push hard through medical research for a cure.

Ms SMYTH (La Trobe) (11:57): I am pleased to be able to speak in this debate today and I commend the member for Cook for bringing the matter before the House. It is a matter that has certainly been raised with me by members of my own electorate who are concerned about the debilitating effects of mitochondrial disease. I must say I had not anticipated reverting back to the dark recesses of my mind for the components of cells to participate in a debate on mitochondrial disease today, but I have had the opportunity to think about the role of mitochondria in cells. When you think about that and about the impacts of dysfunction in mitochondria on the ability to produce energy for the sustenance of all systems in the human body, it really does not take much to realise that the range of diseases that fall within heading of mitochondrial disease are very significant and have very deleterious effects on the health of those who suffer from them.

Mitochondria are the point in the human cell where around 95 per cent of energy is produced. In order for all other bodily systems to continue functioning these are obviously fairly significant cellular components. So it is important that further research be encouraged into mitochondrial disease and the causes of mutations in mitochondria to ensure that people who are facing the wide range of health impacts that arise from mitochondrial diseases might be better assisted.

I mentioned at the outset that I had heard from constituents of my electorate about the issue of mitochondrial disease. I would like to quote from some correspondence I have received from one constituent, a young woman called Amanda Filleul, who said: 'I speak now for those of all ages, the young, teenagers and adults of varying ages who suffer from this debilitating and misunderstood mitochondrial disease. Many will not get to enjoy the milestones of their lives and live to their fullest potential. We need a proactive approach. We need people to listen to our stories, to gather information and at least find, firstly, a successful treatment, if not a successful cure.' In concluding my remarks, I would say that that really does sum up the tenor of this motion, which is aimed at promoting further research and investigation into this debilitating disease and encouraging greater awareness of it in our society. I commend the motion to the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Symon): Order! The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

BILLS
Maritime Legislation Amendment Bill 2012
Transport Safety Investigation Amendment Bill 2012
Legislative Instruments Amendment (Sunsetting Measures) Bill 2012
Statute Law Revision Bill 2012
Customs Tariff Amendment (2012 Measures No. 1) Bill 2012
Customs Tariff Amendment (Schedule 4) Bill 2012
Greenhouse and Energy Minimum Standards Bill 2012
On 24 May 2012 the Selection Committee of the House of Representatives referred the bill for inquiry and report, citing the following reasons for referral/principal issues for consideration:

- the adequacy of the proposed Australian Privacy Principles
- the efficacy of the proposed measures relating to credit reporting
- whether defences to contraventions should extend to inadvertent disclosures where systems incorporate appropriate protections, and
- whether provisions relating to use of depersonalised data are appropriate.

The committee received 39 submissions from a range of individuals and organisations across Australia, and held a public hearing on 16 August 2012. A Senate committee has conducted a concurrent inquiry into the bill. As far as possible, this committee has endeavoured not to duplicate those areas it anticipated the Senate would consider and did consider in detail.

The committee has examined the bill to ensure that an appropriate balance between privacy protection and the convenient flow of data has been achieved. The committee recognises that considerable consultation has gone on prior to the introduction of this bill to the House and that many of the provisions proposed are the enactment of recommendations made in the ALRC review. In addition, the committee notes that the Attorney-General's Department is continuing to consult with stakeholders to resolve a number of the implementation details around this bill and to discuss further possible consequences of the bill.

Given the complexity of issues and the global nature of business, the committee has heard that there remain many areas of concern to industry and consumer advocates.
The committee has recommended that the bill be passed by the House of Representatives, subject to a review of the functioning of the new privacy regime 12 months after the bill commences. The committee has also recommended that suitable educational and explanatory material be developed prior to the commencement of the act to ensure that individuals understand their new privacy rights and that industry are fully aware of their obligations under the act.

I thank the committee for their work. I thank the secretariat and, in particular, Ms Zoe Scanlan, who is on secondment from the A-G's Department, for her work in preparing this report. I commend this report to the House.

Mrs MOYLAN (Pearce) (12:03): by leave—As Deputy Chair of the Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs I also rise to speak on the advisory report. The Privacy Amendment (Enhancing Privacy Protection) Bill 2012 was developed in response to the Australian Law Reform Commission 2008 report into Australia's privacy laws, which I understand have not been updated for some 20 years. The ALRC made 295 recommendations to the government, which announced that it would respond in two stages. This bill addresses the first 197 of those recommendations and it is the first stage in an ongoing process.

The matters dealt with in this bill are extremely complex and will impact on individuals and corporations, as privacy laws govern many facets of Australian life. Additional complexities arise for the many organisations that now do business on a global scale where other countries do not have such robust privacy laws in place. The committee recognises that there remain a number of outstanding concerns raised by both industry and consumers. There is always a tension between balancing the requirements of business for streamlined processes and the rights of consumers to protection. In recognition of the matters raised in the 38 submissions received and the representations of those who appeared before the committee, the committee has recommended the passage of the bill through this House, as the member for Moreton has just said, but with some conditions attached.

Recommendation 2 calls on the Attorney-General to conduct a review of this legislation 12 months after the commencement date, so as to address a number of issues. I would just like to outline these issues. They are: the defence of contravention of APP8; the conflicting overseas laws; direct marketing and opt-out provisions; de-identified data provisions; the system regulating/preventing credit reporting information overseas—that is, the Australian link requirement; and the effect of the repayment history provisions on addresses stored on file.

Given the complexities in the legislation, the committee further recommends that the Attorney-General provides educational material and that it is to be made available before the commencement of these provisions. Many of the submissions the committee received outlined the matter of the complexities in the legislation and how confusing the legislation is to administer. There is little point in having legislation passed through this House that no-one understands and that is difficult to implement, so we believe as a committee that it is important that the Attorney-General's Department make information available to assist with the transition to the new measures.

This legislation will amend the existing Privacy Act 1988, creating the Australian Privacy Principles, and these which will replace the National Privacy Principles and
the Information Privacy Principles that currently apply to both the private and the public sectors. These are a set of unified principles designed to give clarity and consistency to the laws and more comprehensive privacy protection.

The bill also introduces an expansive credit-reporting system and clarifies the powers of the Privacy Commissioner to deal with complaints, conduct investigations, make use of external dispute resolution services and promote compliance.

I take this opportunity to thank the chair and members of the committee for their contribution to this work and the committee secretariat for managing a very large workload with great skill and competence.

Privacy Amendment (Enhancing Privacy Protection) Bill 2012
Reference to Federation Chamber

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter—Chief Government Whip) (12:07): by leave—I move:

That the Privacy Amendment (Enhancing Privacy Protection) Bill 2012 be referred to the Federation Chamber for further consideration.

Question agreed to.

MOTIONS

Road User Charge Determination (No. 1) 2012
Disallowance

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Leader of The Nationals) (12:08): I move:

That the Road User Charge Determination (No. 1) 2012 made under the Fuel Tax Act 2006, be disallowed.

For many years, heavy vehicles have been charged to recover the part of road maintenance costs that are attributed to their road use. This cost is recovered in two parts: by the states and territories through registration charges and by the Commonwealth through the fuel based road user charge. The Fuel Tax Act 2006 establishes the mechanism for the collection of the road user charge by reducing the fuel tax credit provided to eligible businesses and non-profit bodies by the amount of the charge. The act provides that these entities are entitled to only a partial fuel tax credit for fuel used on a public road for business purposes in registered vehicles over 4.5 tonnes. The fuel tax credit claimable is equal to the amount of the fuel excise minus the road user charge. The road user charge is designed as a cost recovery measure paying for the road maintenance and construction costs attributed to heavy vehicle road use.

In its February 2012 report to the Standing Council on Transport and Infrastructure, or SCOTI, the National Transport Commission provided an overview of its methodology. The NTC calculates the total cost base by gathering yearly figures from the states and territories on road expenditure and then adds this to the figure that local governments report to the ABS for road expenditure. The NTC deducts expenditure on non-road costs—for example, amenity expenses—to obtain the allocated cost base. The figure is allocated to the entire vehicle fleet by...
analysing the Survey of Motor Vehicle Usage, or SMVU, to determine how much should be collected from each vehicle class—that is, cars, each type of truck, motorbikes et cetera—taking into account the size in passenger car units, the weight, the kilometres driven and the equivalent standard number of axles. This allows the NTC to calculate how much is owed by the heavy vehicle industry for cost recovery. This figure is divided between the amount collected by the road user charge and state and territory registration fees on a basis of 62 to 38. The split is largely historical and reflects the revenue share between the Commonwealth and the states and territories at the time the national charges were implemented. Fuel consumption and vehicle number figures from the SMVU are used to derive the level of registration and road user charge to recover the cost of their impact on the road network.

In 2007 the former coalition government initiated a review of the formula and consultation processes in place for determining the appropriate level of the road user charge and state and territory registration fees. However, in March 2008, the coalition successfully disallowed Labor's proposed increase to the road user charge, on the basis that consultation processes were inadequate, and automatic indexation was introduced. The government sought to address these concerns, and so industry and the coalition have not opposed increases in the road user charge and registration fees since 2009.

In December 2011, the NTC invited public comment on a consultation document which set out the data and calculations used to determine options for reviewed heavy vehicle charges that would apply from 1 July 2012. During the four-week consultation period the NTC held public forums and received written submissions on the consultation document. In February 2012, the NTC recommended a rebalance of heavy vehicle charges according to new research on the road maintenance costs associated with different types of heavy vehicles. This recommendation saw most registration charges rise but others fall. Road reconstruction expenditure from the 2010-11 natural disasters was to be excluded from the calculations. It also recommended an increase in the road user charge of 2.4 cents from 23.1 cents per litre to 25.5 cents per litre, an increase of 10.4 per cent. On 21 March 2012, the SCOTI considered the level of the road user charge and heavy vehicle registration fees. A majority of those present, or who participated in that meeting, adopted the NTC recommendation. It is clear from briefings with the department, the NTC and industry groups that there are a number of unresolved issues in relation to the proposed increase to the road user charge. The industry has expressed its dissatisfaction with the consultation process that was undertaken this year in the development of the determination. While commitments were made in 2008 to improve the relationship between industry and the NTC, and this seems to have worked successfully for the past few years, there is no doubt that issues have reoccurred in 2011-12 and those relationships have broken down. In this case, despite consultations beginning in late 2011 and the NTC providing its recommendation to SCOTI in February 2012, industry was not provided with detailed information on the formula used by the NTC or the input data and the assumptions it relies upon until March 2012—and only then as a result of a freedom of information request. So the consultation period expired without the information and details of the formula being used actually being made available to the industry.
There is a difference of opinion between the Australian Trucking Association—the ATA—and the NTC as to the most accurate number of trucks that should be used to calculate the cost attributable to the heavy vehicle industry. The NTC uses historic figures from the 2007-08 survey of motor vehicle usage to determine the number of heavy vehicles there are on our roads that must be charged to recover the costs of their road usage. The ATA believes this figure is appropriate as it provides an average of the number of trucks that would be associated with the seven-year rolling average of expenditure on roads that they use to determine the amount to be paid.

However, the ATA argues that it is more appropriate to use the actual registration information from the states and territories to determine vehicle numbers, particularly as the fuel usage figures used to determine how much should be paid by each truck are current figures. Even when using the number of trucks from the same year, the ATA and the NTC cannot agree on a number of trucks and they cannot agree why their numbers are different. The NTC believes that their figures are different because the ATA is including special purpose vehicles, which are registered but are given access to concessional registration rate or are not required to pay registration. The ATA rejects this claim and says that even if you exclude SPVs, there is still a vast difference in truck numbers—in the order of 170,000 vehicles. There is a disagreement of 170,000 as to how many trucks there are in the country! The ATA believes that the flaws in the methodology used by the NTC in determining their recommendations results in an over-collection from the heavy vehicle industry. They estimate this over-collection at $1.1 billion in 2012-13 alone.

The minister has said that the determination delivers: …full recovery from heavy vehicle users and the removal of cross-subsidisation across heavy vehicle classes.

However, the Australian Livestock and Road Transporters Association asserts that the NTC’s pricing model indicates it would see road trains overcharged by $27.9 million per year, or by 40 per cent. This undermines the minister’s statement. Using the NTC’s own figures and pricing model, the livestock and road transporters association has shown that cross-subsidisation is occurring under his determination.

The department and the minister have confirmed that the additional stimulus expenditure outlaid during the global financial downturn has been included in the seven-year rolling average of road expenditure. The minister has said:

…heavy vehicles are already benefiting from past government investment in road infrastructure … [and] The revised charges … ensure that heavy vehicles pay their fair share of this investment.

However, this money was specifically designed to stimulate the economy and was not part of the general road construction and maintenance budget that would have been anticipated by the industry. It is unreasonable to recoup stimulus expenditure from the heavy vehicle industry after the fact to help balance the federal budget.

In May 2012 transport ministers agreed to a review of the formula, as it is generally accepted by all levels of government that it may not be an accurate reflection of the costs attributable to all heavy vehicle classes. The NTC has said that this review would look at the balance of charging mechanisms, the assumptions and methodology to ‘ensure they are practical and fair’. I understand it is intended that the review be completed before the next determination on the road user charge is determined. So all ministers have now agreed that the formula is not working properly, that there is the potential for it to
be significantly impractical and unfair, yet the government is insisting on an extraordinary increase this year—before that review has been completed.

Despite a majority of SCOTI ministers, or their representatives, agreeing to the increase, various state governments have subsequently implemented alternative proposals. The Northern Territory and Western Australian governments have implemented significantly lower registration increases than would have flowed from this recommendation. The New South Wales and South Australian governments have announced concessions for certain truck configurations. It is interesting to note that the meeting at which the increase was decided was attended by more departmental officials than ministers and was, unusually, held when the Queensland government was in caretaker mode. If successful, this disallowance motion will have no effect on state government heavy vehicle registration charges, which are the responsibility of state and territory Governments. They can set them at whatever level they choose.

As a result of a readjustment in the way A-trailers are charged, the figures used to determine the amount owed by the heavy vehicle industry were recalculated. A historic underrecovery of the costs attributable to the heavy vehicle industry was identified by the NTC and corrected in this determination. In February 2012, the NTC admitted for the first time that the 'NTCs previous verification processes have revealed an under-recovery' and that, if it were not corrected, it would amount to $144 million in 2012-13.

In this respect, it should be noted that the underrecovery was not contemplated in the 2011 consultation document released to the industry. There was no reference to a $144 million shortfall during the industry consultation process. The industry was not told about this underrecovery. Possibly it was only discovered by the NTC after the consultation period was over, but they did not then go back, telling the industry that they had got all the numbers wrong, and reopen the consultation process to enable a fair and reasonable negotiation to continue. There should have been discussion with industry about whether or not there was indeed an underrecovery and, if so, how it should be addressed. Either this was incompetence or it was deceit and dishonesty. Whatever name you give it, the reality is that the consultation process with the industry—a fundamental part of the way these charges are settled, was seriously flawed. The industry and the consultation process took place on the basis of their needing to be a 5.7 per cent increase. But the government, after the consultation period was over, imposed a 10.4 per cent increase. That is clearly unfair and unjust.

In June, I wrote to the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport requesting that he withdraw his determination and replace it with a more modest increase, in line with previous annual adjustments of 5.7 per cent, pending the outcome of the current review process. The minister has rejected this offer. I have also written to the Independents, outlining the coalition's position and seeking their support for this motion so that there can indeed be seen to be a proper process. The government outlined and agreed a process in 2009, I think it was, to be properly followed. They have not done that. If the comprehensive review currently underway is intended to ensure that the road user charge is fair and practical, it is only right that this process run its course before we impose such a large increase on the industry.

It is worth noting that it was the Howard government which introduced fuel tax credits in 2006 to give a better deal to the Australian
trucking industry and other businesses that make heavy use of fuel. As the minister responsible, in 2006 I blocked moves by the Australian Transport Council and state Labor governments to increase registration charges for truck operators. In February 2008, when federal, state and territory Labor transport ministers increased taxes and charges on the trucking industry, I was dismayed by this move, as it would not only make the trucking industry worse off but see Australian families wear the flow-on effects to the prices of goods that we buy at supermarket checkouts.

The coalition's offer to the government to meet truck drivers halfway in reducing the road user charge remains on the table. If the government agrees to a reasonable 5.7 per cent increase rather than this arbitrary 10.4 per cent increase, the coalition will agree to the determination.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Symon): Is the motion seconded?

Mr Randall: Yes, the motion is seconded.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I thank the member for Canning.

Ms King (Ballarat—Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Transport and Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing) (12:26): I rise to strongly object to the member for Wide Bay's motion. As parliamentary secretary for road safety, I want to spell out some of the inevitable consequences of the motion before the chamber. The member for Wide Bay's motion in essence will leave taxpayers to foot a bill of $700 million for wear and tear of our roads that are caused by heavy vehicles. While the government are investing in our national road infrastructure, what we are seeing again is an opposition who want to rip funding out of road infrastructure.

The truck industry is growing, and unfortunately the number of road crashes involving trucks is rising with it. Over the past 10 years, the number of kilometres travelled by commercial heavy vehicles around the country has increased by more than 20 per cent, and those of us who live in regional and country areas certainly know that the number of heavy vehicles that we see on roads that were never designed to take these vehicles is growing. Truck drivers are driving longer hours and longer distances with shorter deadlines.

During last year alone, over 200 people died from crashes involving articulated and heavy rigid trucks. The statistics show that in the majority of circumstances these crashes occur on our national highways, which is why in the budget we announced a $140 million extension to the Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Program. The program improves safety and productivity for users of heavy vehicles. While we have invested to support the safety of our nation's road users by investing in road infrastructure, those opposite want to take away $700 million of funding to maintain and improve our roads. That is the consequence of the motion before the chamber.

Under our Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Program, we have already seen 236 projects delivered in its first four years. The importance of investing in new and upgraded rest areas cannot be overlooked in that process. Just last sitting I attended a parliamentary breakfast for TruckWeek hosted by the Australian Trucking Association. The guest speaker for that breakfast was Lisa Sharwood, a senior researcher who is undertaking her PhD at the moment, from the George Institute. She presented her finding on the frequency of sleep apnoea amongst Australian truck drivers. Her study found that more than 40 per cent of truck drivers could have
significant sleep disorders which could significantly increase their risk of crashing. She clearly articulated significant risk factors faced by this Australian cohort of truck drivers. She clearly articulated the need for preventative measures: physical health checks; oxygen assistance at night to assist night breathing; diet; and preventative measures on smoking—and the need for proper rest breaks. I look forward to her research being published. Members opposite who were at the breakfast would have heard the clear evidence about the importance of rest for truck drivers and the impact of fatigue on road safety, particularly in a cohort that has a higher incidence of sleep apnoea than the general population. In order for truck drivers to rest, you need rest stops. To build rest stops, you have to have money for road infrastructure.

Let me tell those opposite some of the road safety statistics. From 2001 to 2006 almost 50 Australians died on our roads from heavy vehicles in the member for Murray's electorate; another 44 in the member for Barker's electorate. In Riverina there were 36; in Wannon, 35; in Parkes, 33; in Gippsland, 28—the list goes on. Even in the electorate of the member for Wide Bay we have seen the tragic death of 26 people who were involved in heavy vehicle crashes between 2001 and 2006.

It is for reasons such as this that we have doubled the funding dedicated to the Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Program. What we see from the member for Wide Bay is a motion to disallow the increase of the road user charge—a charge which recognises the importance of industry paying its way in road infrastructure. The member has again shown his lack of vision for our nation's infrastructure and an absence of support for the Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Program. Where does the member think the $700 million is going to come from for road infrastructure? The Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Program has for the first time seen funding dedicated to rectifying the unacceptable lack of safe, modern roadside facilities along our nation's highways.

The government is taking many other steps to reduce the number of road deaths across Australia. We continue to invest more money in road infrastructure than any other government in this nation's history and, as it stands, the road budget is at a record $28 billion over six years. This includes more building of truck stops and rest areas, and it is the largest investment in road infrastructure since the creation of the national highway network itself. We are continuing to inject more funding into the Black Spot and Roads to Recovery programs, and we are continuing to implement the action items in the National Road Safety Strategy to reduce the number of road crashes involving heavy vehicles.

The steps in that strategy include: the implementation of antilock braking systems and load proportioning brake systems for heavy vehicles, considering increasing heavy vehicle cabin strength, electronic stability control and lane departure warning systems for heavy vehicles, increasing the effective application of chain of responsibility legislation to prosecute heavy vehicle speeding offences, and harmonising legislation to assist cross-border enforcement. This is in addition to the Road Safety Remuneration Bill that the government introduced into this House, and that was another example of the lack of support for safety on our roads shown by those opposite.

It is unacceptable that while only three per cent of our nation's vehicle fleet are heavy vehicles, heavy vehicles are involved in 20 per cent of road deaths. It is unacceptable that over 200 deaths each year are the result
of crashes involving heavy vehicles, with speed or fatigue being a major factor in a large proportion of these cases. Once again I appeal to those opposite to vote against this motion—particularly those National Party members in this House when the number of fatalities in their electorates involving heavy vehicles is so significant. More people die in crashes involving heavy vehicles in their electorates than in any others. The member for Wide Bay's motion contradicts the heavy vehicle charge principles that were supported under the Howard government back in 2004 and again in 2007. It is another example of members opposite putting negativity over common sense. I urge all members to support the safety of road users and vote against this motion.

Mr McCormack (Riverina) (12:33): This disallowance motion seeks to overturn the increase in road user charges for heavy vehicles which came into effect on 1 July 2012 and which has seen heavy vehicle operators slugged by 2.4 cents, with the charge rising from 23.1 cents per litre to 25.5 cents per litre—an increase of 10.4 per cent. Heavy vehicles have been charged for a number of years to recover part of the road maintenance costs attributed to their road use. This cost is recovered in two ways: firstly by the states and territories through registration charges, and secondly by the Commonwealth through the fuel-based road user charge. In 2012-13 total collections are expected to be $2.5 billion.

The Fuel Tax Act of 2006 established a mechanism for the collection of road user charges by reducing the fuel tax credit provided to eligible businesses and non-profit bodies by the amount of the charge. The act also ensures that these entities are entitled to only a partial fuel tax credit for fuel used on a public road for business purposes in registered vehicles over 4.5 tonnes. This tax credit is equal to the amount of the excise on the fuel minus the road user charge.

The National Transport Commission reported to the Standing Council on Transport and Infrastructure in February this year, giving an overview of its methodology. The NTC explained it calculates the total cost base by gathering yearly figures from the states and territories on road expenditure and then adds this to the figure local governments report to the Australian Bureau of Statistics for road expenditure. The NTC also deducts expenditure on non-road costs, for example, amenity expenses to obtain the allocated cost base. This figure is allocated to the entire vehicle fleet by analysing the survey of motor vehicle usage to determine how much should be collected from each vehicle class, taking into account size in passenger car units, weight, kilometres driven and equivalent standard number of accidents. This allows the NTC to calculate how much is owed by the heavy vehicle industry for cost recovery. This figure is divided between the amount collected by the road user charges and the state and territory registration fees on a basis of 62 to 38. The split is largely historical and reflects the revenue shares between the Commonwealth and the states and territories at the time the national charges were implemented.

Additionally, fuel consumption and vehicle number figures from the survey of motor vehicle usage are used to derive the level of registration and road user charge to recover the cost of their impact on the road network. In 2007, the former coalition government initiated a review of the formula and consultation processes in place for determining the appropriate level of the road user charge and state and territory registration fees. However, in March 2008, the coalition successfully moved to disallow Labor's proposed increase to the road user charge on the basis that consultation
processes were inadequate and automatic taxation was introduced. The government sought to address these concerns and industry and the coalition have not opposed increases to road user charges and registration fees since 2009.

The National Transport Commission invited public comment in December 2011 on a consultation document setting out the data and calculations used to determine options for a review of heavy vehicle charges to apply from 1 July 2012. During the four-week consultation period, the commission held public forums as well as receiving written submissions. In February 2012, the NTC recommended a rebalance of heavy vehicle charges according to new research on the road maintenance costs associated with different types of vehicles. This recommendation saw most registration charges increase but others fall, road reconstruction expenditure from the 2010-11 natural disasters excluded from calculations and an increase in the road user charge of 2.4c from 23.1c per litre to 25.5c per litre.

On 21 March 2012, the Standing Council on Transport and Infrastructure considered the level of the road user charge of heavy vehicles registration fees. The majority of those presents adopted the NTC recommendations. The coalition has some concerns about the increase to road use charges, which have stemmed from briefings with the department, the NTC and industry groups. The Nationals leader and shadow minister for infrastructure and transport called on the government to meet truckies halfway on the road user charges. The coalition called on the Gillard government to put the brakes on the massive increases to the road use at charges, all to no avail. This is why this disallowance motion has been brought to the House. The 10.4 per cent hike in the road user charges is in addition to be the effects of the carbon tax and comes at a time when the transport industry is struggling to survive the cost increases.

I know, certainly many of the operations throughout the Riverina, many of them family-owned and small fleets, are doing it tough. They meet all the stringent safety requirements, as they should, but they have higher fuel costs, labour costs and other expenses and they are doing it very hard and very difficult at a time when the carbon tax is certainly not helping.

The shadow minister wrote to the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport with a solution earlier this year to reduce the massive costs and to avert a political showdown. The coalition's proposal would have reduced the increase to 5.7 per cent by eliminating an unexpected $144 million surcharge being imposed to correct earlier miscalculations. Truck drivers need to be protected from the increased charges, arbitrary increases in registration and fuel excise costs. The trucking industry has been alarmed ever since the National Transport Commission decreed at 10.4 per cent increase in heavy vehicle charges, which took effect from 1 July. The Australian Trucking Association says that the decision is based on outdated truck numbers which inflate the amount drivers must pay to the government in 2012-13 and overstated road building and maintenance calculations. Instead of counting the actual number of truck registrations, the ATA says the NTC took old registration figures and extrapolated a theoretical fleet size which will see drivers fork out $700 million more than they actually should.

Making matters worse, as usual, consultation this year could well be described as shambolic. Documents provided to industry were later altered before being given to ministers for a decision. The industry was not provided with detailed
information on the model used by the NTC, nor the input data or assumptions underpinning them. In fact, these were made available only after industry secured a freedom of information request, and even then only after the NTC’s recommendations had already been accepted by the Standing Council on Transport and Infrastructure.

The ATA says that, despite the NTC’s recommendation that flood recovery expenditure be excluded from the calculations, about 20 per cent of that expenditure remains in the formula. In addition, $144 million was unexpectedly added to the amount to be collected because of a recalculation of past obligations under the model. The Australian Livestock Transporters Association estimates of the impact of the NTC’s pricing model will result in road trains being overcharged by $27.9 million per year, or by 40 per cent. As such, the principle of cost recovery by vehicle class is corrupted.

In May 2012 transport ministers agreed to review the NTC formula, accepting the general view that it may not be an accurate reflection of the costs attributable to all heavy vehicle classes. Despite SCOTI ministers agreeing to the increase, the Northern Territory and Western Australian governments have implemented significantly lower registration increases and the New South Wales and South Australian governments have announced concessions for certain truck configurations.

Since all parties seem to agree that the calculation model is in need of review, it would be palpably unfair to apply this model to justify such a massive increase. The road user charge is collected through the fuel excise system and truck registration fees, many of which will increase by more than 30 per cent. As I say, this is at a time when regional trucking companies are doing it very tough. The charge costs the road transport industry almost $2.5 billion a year and is intended to cover road maintenance and construction costs attributable to the industry. The member for Ballarat spoke of the need for sleep for truck drivers and of the tragic role that fatigue plays in road safety. Everybody in this House is very aware of the fact that truck drivers need to play by the rules, to certainly have the necessary sleep and to ensure that safety aspects are absolutely paramount. I am sure that truck owners and operators throughout the nation are also very aware of the absolute need for truck drivers, given the high incidence of their involvement in many fatal accidents and the weight their vehicles are carrying, to ensure that safety comes first and foremost.

The member for Ballarat alleged that the member for Wide Bay lacked vision for infrastructure, but I would say it is quite the opposite. The Nationals, of which the member for Wide Bay is our leader, have always known that our road networks are the arteries which feed the national economy. They are the highways which connect us as people and which deliver Australia’s commodities to markets here and to our ports, which are the gateways to international markets for our regional produce, our food and fibre. Whether it is local roads and streets or national highways and railways, a quality land transport system is vital to a strong economy. No-one knows that more than the Nationals members of parliament.

It was John Anderson who drove the creation of AusLink, Australia’s first national road and rail funding plan. Warren Truss, the member for Wide Bay, was the transport minister when the last coalition government committed the necessary funding to complete the four lanes of the Hume Highway between Sydney and Melbourne. I can honestly say that the improvements around Gundagai and Tarcutta in the Riverina electorate have
certainly enabled far better safety aspects for that stretch of freeway.

We know that Australia's freight task will double by 2030, but along the eastern seaboard it will treble. Communities and commuters from Sydney to the Queensland border were promised a four-lane Pacific Highway for years. That is a highway that many heavy vehicles use. The government had pledged to duplicate the Pacific Highway by 2016 but, unfortunately, that has not occurred. Labor is saying that any future money from the Commonwealth will have to be matched 50-50 by the New South Wales coalition government, even though Labor paid more than 80 per cent of the cost of projects on the highway when the state Labor government was in office in New South Wales. Labor knows that the NSW government, which is deeply in debt, cannot afford a deal such as that. The people deserve no less than they were promised.

On Saturday, at the Nationals' Federal Conference here in Canberra, I am pleased to report, the member for Wide Bay, who does not lack any vision, as the member for Ballarat would allege, announced that the next Liberal-National coalition government—hopefully, that will be at the next election—will provide the funding to complete the widening to four lanes of the Pacific Highway all the way from Sydney to the Queensland border. That was a very welcome announcement, because that particular stretch of road is used by many heavy vehicles transporting the wonderful produce of the regions to capital city ports and world markets. On top of the $3.56 billion already included in the federal budget, the coalition will redirect $2.08 billion that Labor had allocated to the Epping to Parramatta rail line, which the O'Farrell government does not regard as a priority at this time, to guarantee the completion of the Pacific Highway. I think everybody in this House should applaud that move. The new funding commitment brings the Commonwealth's funding offer up to the standard 80-20 ratio and puts an end to Labor's phoney and discredited stand-off with New South Wales.

Once this project is completed, Australia will have a four-lane national highway connecting the country's three largest cities—Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane—with four-lane connections to Sale, Toowoomba, Gympie and other centres. That is a wonderful announcement that complements the coalition's existing announcement of new major roads projects in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth and its recommitment to Tasmania's Midland Highway and the Toowoomba Range crossing. There will be more to say on roads as the months progress, not just on highways but on local roads and bridges too.

In conclusion, road user charges are being imposed unfairly. That is why this disallowance motion is necessary and is imperative. I commend it to the House.

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (12:47): I rise to oppose the irresponsible motion moved by the member for Wide Bay, as it puts at risk the extension of a vital program aimed at improving heavy vehicle safety and, in doing so, threatens our nation's road freight transport. It was great to hear the member for Riverina talk about the member for Wide Bay. I think the member for Riverina said that our roads are our arteries: under the supervision of the member for Wide Bay the arteries were starved of oxygen. We saw when we came to power that a major bypass was needed. It is amazing to think that the Leader of the Nationals, a former transport minister and a member whose electorate sits right on the Bruce Highway, could supervise such neglect of such an important highway as the Bruce Highway. It is great to see that
he is committing to the Sydney-Brisbane highway, a road I know reasonably well—I drove from Sydney to Brisbane in January—but there has been no mention from the Nationals of what they are going to do in relation to duplication and flood proofing from Brisbane up to Cairns, which is something the member for Dawson has touched on regularly.

I think the member for Wide Bay, the shadow minister for transport and infrastructure, actually drove the family truckster that was full of Liberal and Nationals over Christmas from Cairns down to Brisbane, where they inspected the Bruce Highway. I think he was behind the wheel, as Minister Albanese has mentioned in question time. Not that Minister Albanese was responding to a question from the former transport minister the member for Wide Bay—he has not asked a question about transport of the Leader of the House. In my speech I will touch on why that might be the case.

The member for Wide Bay wants to disallow the legislative instrument that increases the heavy vehicle road use charge as at 1 July 2012. That negative, short-sighted move has the potential to leave taxpayers to foot a bill of up to $700 million for the wear and tear caused to our roads by heavy vehicles. In this year's budget, the government announced a $140 million extension to the Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Program to allow the continued construction of rest areas, parking and decoupling bays, road enhancement projects and technology trials and projects that are aimed fairly and squarely at improving safety but also—for the economists out there—aimed at improving productivity. So it is good for the truckies, as it keeps them safe, which keeps other people on the road safe, so it is good for the public; but it is also good for the nation's economy.

In its first years, this program has delivered 236 projects, and there is a continuing strong demand for new and upgraded rest areas and other safety measures across the nation, in areas off the national road link and main highways, and in country areas. It is for this very reason that we doubled the amount of funding dedicated to the program—good for public safety but also good for productivity and for road users.

The extension of this important safety and productivity program comes on top of our recent establishment of the Road Safety Remuneration Tribunal to set safe rates to stem risky behaviour by heavy-vehicle drivers. The other day, in my electorate, I pulled in to grab some drinks at one of my servos, near Archerfield Airport—and this is, I was told by the truckies at the servo, the busiest servo in Australia in that it sells more diesel than any other servo in Australia—where I ran into a gentleman by the name of Steven Corcoran, who had me sign his survey. Now, I know Minister Ellis is a subscriber to Big Rigs, the free national transport newspaper, and there was an article in there about Steven Corcoran, who had been collecting signatures at truck stops and roadhouses about getting safer rates. The article quoted him as having said:

… truck drivers were 30 times more likely to die than other professions …

So good on Steve Corcoran for taking the time to go into bat for this important cause. So people do care about our truck drivers and the safety of the public. Sadly, that does not seem to be the case from those opposite, which is why we have this disallowance motion before us.

Of course, there is our historic achievement of establishing the first ever National Heavy Vehicle Regulator. That will commence on 1 January 2013. That is despite Federation occurring 112 years ago.
Now a Labor led Commonwealth government has been able to achieve this national regulator. That is a good thing too, especially with the way Campbell Newman is slashing jobs in transport in Queensland. It is amazing. What is the first thing Michael Caltabiano—who used to be Campbell Newman's council colleague in the Brisbane City Council—is doing as his new appointee in charge of Queensland transport? He is getting rid of front-line people in the transport department, the people who provide safety out on our roads. Thankfully this federal Labor government is able to bring in the new National Heavy Vehicle Regulator. The wheels of federation move slowly but, when Labor is at the wheel, they move surely—and certainly a lot faster than those opposite.

This historic reform will boost national income by up to $30 billion over coming years by providing savings and boosting our productivity—as well as saving lives. These reforms are vitally important to the heavy vehicle transport sector, which employs hundreds of thousands of Australians and plays a central role in getting our goods and services to our towns, our cities, our airports and our ports.

As I mentioned, my electorate of Moreton is in the middle of many of those highways and train lines. It has 19,000 small businesses, many of them connected with the transport industry. There is the Acacia Ridge rail yard, which is basically the end of the standard gauge line that goes all the way to Perth, and the Moolabin rail yards as well. The Brisbane Urban Corridor goes straight through my electorate, which has some of its busiest intersections—I think the intersection of Kessels Road and Mains Road is the second busiest intersection in Queensland. Thankfully, I was able to secure $300 million in funding to get a grade separation there, mainly because of the problems with trucks trying to do a hill start there in the afternoon—when people are trying to go north, south, east and west, having these big rigs trying to do hill starts creates a lot of problems. I have not seen an article about that in Big Rigs magazine yet, but I know Minister Ellis will keep me up to date.

Since 2007, the Labor government has invested a record $36 billion in our nation's infrastructure, including doubling the roads budget. I think that might be the real reason the member for Wide Bay does not ask Minister Albanese any questions about roads—we have doubled the roads budget. Compared to the former Howard government, we are investing more than twice as much in half the time: $2.8 billion since we came to government compared with $3.1 billion over 12 years. You can do the maths; anybody can do the maths: twice as much in half the time. You can dress the politics up anyway you want but these are the facts and, as I said, it might explain why the member for Wide Bay does not ask questions on transport in question time. Nothing better symbolises the neglect of our road infrastructure under 12 years of coalition government than the state of the Bruce Highway. I used to travel the Bruce Highway quite a lot: in 1988 I was teaching up at Babinda, up near Cairns, and I have gone north to Cairns ever since for holidays and when I worked for the Queensland Independent Education Union, the patch I looked after was from Longreach to Moranbah to Rockhampton and all the way down to Brisbane. So I knew that highway in intimate detail and I knew where you could get the best crab sandwiches, I knew where you could get a good cold drink as I knew every part of that highway. I think the place where you can get the best crab sandwiches might be in the member for Flynn's electorate, in Miriam Vale—if indeed that is part of the member for Flynn's electorate. So
I knew that highway intimately, every bump, every rest stop and just about every hotel along it—although, obviously, I have not driven it as much since I have been a federal member of parliament.

Taking the Bruce Highway, look at what the federal Labor government is doing. We are building 20 new rest stops and upgrading a further nine under the Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Program. In the early noughties I used to drive the Bruce Highway almost every other week, but how it has changed. This financial year we have seen the following investments along the Bruce Highway: construction of a new interchange at the intersection between the Bruce and Dawson highways, known as the Calliope Crossroads, near Gladstone, federal contribution $150 million; straightening and raising the Bruce Highway between Sandy Corner and Collinsons Lagoon, federal contribution $50 million; straightening and widening the Bruce Highway from Cabbage Tree Creek to Carman Road and across Back Creek Range, federal contribution $100 million. That is at a place where I used to swear quite a bit, from memory, while on that Back Creek Range having got behind a slow farmer or a slow rig. Also, there is straightening the Bruce Highway just south of Gin Gin and upgrading of the intersection with the Bundaberg-Gin Gin road, federal contribution, $20 million. In addition to major upgrades to key sections of the highway, our $440 million safety package is installing 52 new overtaking lanes, fixing 100 dangerous black spots, and building 20 new rest areas and stopping places as well as upgrading a further nine existing rest areas. We are also laying audible edge-line markings. This is substantial progress, substantial investment, and it has all been delivered by a federal Labor government. As I said: twice the money in half the time; that is the maths.

If the opposition motion to disallow the Road User Charge increase succeeds, it will put at significant risk hundreds of new projects aimed at improving heavy vehicle safety and productivity. And what does that do? It puts lives at risk. That is what happens. When you do not have an overtaking lane and you have a slow caravan or a couple of trucks then people try to go around too many vehicles, and lives are lost. That is what happens on the Bruce.

Unfortunately, Premier Newman has sacked 1,400 people from the Department of Transport and Main Roads. There are only 9,200 in that department. That is one in seven sacked, and many of those are frontline operators who make sure that there is vehicle safety and that our roads are safe.

So the member for Wide Bay should direct his energies towards talking to Premier Newman rather than coming in here and holding up the Labor agenda. He is putting at risk rest stops; he is putting at risk road and bridge upgrades; he is putting at risk parking and decoupling bays—all needed to ensure improved heavy vehicle safety and productivity and to increase access to the road network.

The Bruce Highway is an interesting piece of road stretching from Brisbane all the way to Cairns. Many English people might think that it is named after a Monty Python sketch but it is not. It is actually named after Stanley Bruce—one of those rare prime ministers who was actually voted out of government while prime minister and voted out of his own seat. It has only happened twice in the history of Federation. Stanley Bruce was one and John Winston Howard was the other. Largely, that was because they did not recognise some of the concerns of Queensland. We are a decentralised state. In terms of transport links, we have a hub settlement pattern straight up the highway.
from the coast, but then we have rail spurs and roads west from Rockhampton out to Longreach and from Townsville to Mount Isa, Cairns et cetera. So we need to get it right.

The people on this road are an interesting mix of tourists, heavy vehicle operators, grey nomads, businesses and locals going between coastal businesses as well. So overtaking lanes are crucial—and rest stop areas for heavy vehicles are also crucial. So I would urge the House, I would urge all those members of the Liberal and National parties from Cairns all the way down to Brisbane, to vote against this opposition motion which would disallow the road user charge determination because it will put lives at risk.

Mr O'DOWD (Flynn) (13:00): I rise today to speak on the disallowance motion which is currently before the House on the Road User Charge Determination No.1 2012, made under the Fuel Act 2006. The road transport industry is of great significance to the Australian economy and I am passionate about this industry. I myself have owned trucks for the last 30 years and, like the member for Moreton, I have travelled the Bruce Highway many, many times and done many, many miles between Rockhampton and Gin Gin, which unfortunately is the worst piece of the Bruce Highway on the Brisbane to Cairns run.

My heart goes out to an owner truck driver in Rolleston who, during the floods last year, could not move his truck for three months because of the flooding of the Panorama Creek in Rolleston. Later on, he could not move his truck for another three months because the roads where he had to get cattle off a farmer's property were too wet and boggy. So he went for six months without moving a wheel, and his registration at that time was $22,000, so you can imagine how much out of pocket he was.

As it stands, heavy vehicle road users have been charged to recover the part of the road maintenance cost attributed to the road use. This is done in two parts: firstly, by the states and territories through registration charges and, secondly, by the Commonwealth through the fuel based road user charges. Public consultation by the National Transport Commission last year has resulted in a number of recommendations that are based on outdated and unfounded theoretical information. This is not an acceptable manner to make a decision. Any good business person will tell you how healthy, long-lasting and effective decisions are made with appropriate and timely consultation.

An increase of as much as 2.4c litre is an increase from 23c per litre to 25½c per litre or, putting it in percentage terms, 10.4 per cent. This increase should not be imposed on an industry that is key to preventing us from running out of essential stocks around our great nation. There is a lot of movement in the transport industry. Much transport is now done on roads rather than on rail. When I was in the game in a big way, in the heartland of Emerald in the Queensland Central Highlands, grain, cattle and fuel were all carted mostly by rail. Sadly these days it is all carted by trucks, which adds greatly to the use of our roads, where there is a fight between tourists, general road users in their motor cars and the heavy loads of the three industries I just mentioned. Plus there is the fact that we have large mining equipment being dropped off from the ports of Brisbane from America and other places to supply the mines. This is also adding to the cluttering of our roads. Everyone is out there competing for the use of our roads. Our roads are deteriorating at a fast rate and we do need to do something urgently about it.
Truck stops are virtually non-existent between Rockhampton and Gin Gin and after five o'clock at night you are very hard pushed to get through even the trucks parked on the road at Gin Gin. The Bruce Highway needs more upgrades—as the member for Moreton said, we need more passing lanes etcetera.

We do not need a mining tax to fix our roads. We need to fix the roads under the same terms and agreements that we had in future years. This business of saying 'We'll fix the roads if you introduce a mining tax' is just poppycock. We do not need these stipulations. We just need to get about fixing our roads and stop wasting money in other areas so that it can be applied to our roads.

We are getting a return on our investment from our coal, gas, grain and cattle. They provide the money for those road upgrades—not the mining industry, which uses rail to transport coal and pipelines to produce gas and transfer it from the west to places like Gladstone.

I believe it is important that the parliament agree on a compromise of a most modest increase of 5.7 per cent, which is in line with the annual adjustment used in previous years. A 10.4 per cent increase would cripple an industry that is already struggling in a lot of areas—and the carbon tax will not help that either. We cannot cripple an industry. The mining industry at the moment is going through very tough times with the high Australian dollar and low commodity prices. There comes a time when the last straw will break the camel's back, and this, I am afraid, could happen to the transport industry.

Approximately 25 per cent of that expenditure remains in the formula. In addition $144 million was unexpectedly added to the amount to be collected because of the recalculation of the past obligations under the model. We really need to use some common sense here and look at the bigger picture of what an unsubstantiated increase of 10.4 per cent would mean for our road transport industry. I intend to raise a number of issues that I believe need to be addressed in relation to this bill. The issues are unresolved. Given the huge impact that the transport industry has on this country, I believe it is imperative that we pay close attention to some of these facts—facts such as that the Australian Livestock and Rural Transporters Association asserts that the National Transport Commission's pricing model indicates road trains would be overcharged by $27.9 million per year, or by 40 per cent, and, as such, the principle of cost recovery by vehicle class would be undermined.

Furthermore, in May this year, the transport ministers agreed to review the National Transport Commission formula, accepting the general view that it may not be an accurate reflection of the costs attributable to the heavy vehicle classes. And, despite the majority of the transport ministers agreeing to the increase, various state governments have subsequently implemented alternative proposals. The Northern Territory and Western Australian governments, for example, have now implemented significantly lower registration increases, and the New South Wales and South Australian governments have announced concessions for certain truck configurations. Let me reinforce the view expressed by the member for Wide Bay, who said that, since all parties seem to agree that the calculation model is in need of review, it would be grossly unfair to apply this model to justify such a huge increase.

One of the most alarming issues in relation to this bill is the difference in opinion between the Australian Trucking Association and the National Transport Commission as to the most accurate number
of trucks that should be used to calculate the cost attributable to the heavy vehicle industry. The National Transport Commission uses historic figures from the 2007-08 Survey of Motor Vehicle Usage to determine the number of heavy vehicles there are on our roads and what must be charged to recover the costs of their road usage. The National Transport Commission believe that figure is appropriate as it provides an average of the number of trucks that would be associated with the seven-year rolling average of expenditure on roads that they use to determine the amount to be paid.

However, on the other side of the coin, the Australian Trucking Association argues that it is more appropriate to use the actual registration information from the states and territories to determine the vehicle numbers, particularly as the fuel usage figures used to determine how much should be paid by each truck are current figures. The Australian Trucking Association believes that the flaws in the methodology used by the National Transport Commission in determining their recommendation results in an overcollection from the heavy vehicle industry. So we have a conflict. They estimate the overcollection will be $1.1 billion in 2012-13 alone.

I am not surprised that once again this industry is being hit in the leg by an unfair system, a system that is not agreed to by both associations, and therefore will suffer. It is a shame to say that at least there should be an acceptable method to come to a conclusion. We need to protect truck drivers. We should not be imposing unfair, arbitrary increases in registration and fuel excise costs. While commitments were made in 2008 to improve the relationship between the industry and the National Transport Commission and this has worked successfully in the past few years, it appears issues have reoccurred in 2011-12 and those relationships have now broken down. In this case, despite consultation beginning in late 2011 and the National Transport Commission providing its recommendations to the Standing Council on Transport and Infrastructure in February 2012, industry was not provided with detailed information on the formula used by the National Transport Commission or the input data and assumptions it relies on until March 2012. This information was discovered only as a result of a freedom of information request.

So that this parliament understands the process, I provide the following summary. The NTC calculates the total cost base by gathering yearly figures from the states and territories on road expenditure and then adds this to the figure local governments report to the ABS for road expenditure. The NTC deducts expenditure on non-road costs—for example, amenity expenses—to obtain the allocated cost base. This figure is allocated to the entire vehicle fleet by analysing the Survey of Motor Vehicle Usage to determine how much should be collected from each vehicle class, whether it be car, truck, motorbike, you name it. It takes into account weight, kilometres et cetera. This allows the NTC to calculate how much is owed by the heavy vehicle industry for cost recovery across the board, not just across a certain class. This figure is divided between the amount collected by the road user charge and state and territory registration fees on a basis of 62 to 38. The split is largely historical and reflects the revenue shared between the Commonwealth and the states and territories at the time the national charges were implemented. Fuel consumption and vehicle number figures from the SMVU are used to derive the level of registration and the road user charge to recover the cost of their impacts on the road network.

Conclusion: I believe that the coalition's proposal of, let me say, a more modest increase of 5.7 per cent, is a better solution to
redefining the road user determination charge. As well as being in line with the annual adjustment used in previous years, it would eliminate an unexpected $144 million surcharge being imposed to correct an earlier miscalculation.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (13:14): The member for Flynn does not seem to understand what this irresponsible motion would do. It is not to reduce the charge; it is to take it to zero. The government does not support this motion, which puts at risk the extension of a vital program aimed at improving heavy-vehicle safety and, in doing so, threatens our nation’s road freight transport.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr ALBANESE: For the benefit of the nongs opposite, I have not spoken in this debate. This is a motion from the member for Wide Bay.

Mr Robert: Settle down, big feller!

Mr ALBANESE: They now want to stop the minister from speaking on this motion. The member for Wide Bay’s motion would disallow the legislative instrument increasing the heavy-vehicle road user charge as of 1 July 2012. What I say to them is there are a range of National Party ministers who sat around the table and made this decision not once but twice and who continue to support this decision. If they want to lobby they should lobby their own political party because the coalition, which is in government in Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia, has supported this decision.

This is a negative and short-sighted move. It has the potential to leave taxpayers footing a bill of up to $700 million for wear and tear on our roads caused by heavy vehicles. That is an outcome that would clearly be unfair. Furthermore, in this year’s budget the government announced a $140 million extension to the Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Program. This is a program initiated by this government. Before we came to office there was no such program. Members should consider the fact that this is a change under the Fuel Tax Act 2006. This is the coalition’s legislation. This is the coalition’s system that they established when they were in government. They determined the way the road user determination would occur by the National Transport Commission. It is possible it was the member for Wide Bay, when he was a minister, who did it. It might have been Mark Vaile, the former member for Lyne. But it was certainly done by the federal National Party. Then they come in here and complain and say, ‘Oh no, the system's no good.’

Let us have a look at what we have done and what they did not do. They had charges without anything going back to the industry. The charges are based upon cost recovery, based upon costs already spent. We have invested record amounts into the nation’s roads. We ensured with this determination that we discounted all of the road expenditure that occurred as a result of the floods in Queensland. What is more, we put in place the Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Program, which is building rest stops in electorates, particularly those held by coalition members right around the country. It has already delivered 236 projects. Members, such as the member for Gippsland, have written to me—and they are going to vote against the funding for this program—about rest stops on the Princes Highway from Sale to the New South Wales border, saying that funding should be given for it. The funding comes from this program, which will cease to exist if this instrument is not carried and if the member for Wide Bay—
Mr Truss: That is not true!

Mr ALBANESE: The member for Wide Bay yet again shows his knowledge of economics and adding up. I assure the member for Wide Bay, if you have a fund that comes from this determination, which we do, the fact is this program will not exist. It is something acknowledged by the ATA and the Livestock Transporters Association. A recent review, which included industry and jurisdictional road authorities, found there is an overwhelming positive response to this program continuing strong demand for new and upgraded rest areas and other safety measures across the nation. That is why we doubled the amount of funding dedicated to this program.

It is also for this reason that, when the member for New England approached me about increasing the funding available in the program and expanding the scope of projects eligible for funding, I said 'yes' to his representations. As a result, I can advise the House that the government will increase funding for the Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Program by $10 million, in the round. That will be announced in December. I have also expanded eligible projects under this program to include rural and regional heavy-vehicle infrastructure. That is something that has been asked for, particularly by the Livestock Transporters Association. They have made strong representations on this issue—unlike those opposite, who are simply trying to stop funding for this program.

I have also included demonstration projects to facilitate innovative safety measures across the heavy-vehicles sector. The member for Wide Bay, clearly, has not been paying attention, because these guidelines have already gone out—in rounds 1 and 2 that will be announced later this year. I have already met with the ATA, the Livestock Transporters Association and other industry groups about how we make the most of this program. The extension of this important program comes on top of our recent establishment of the Road Safety Remuneration Tribunal to set safe rates, to stem risky behaviour by heavy-vehicle drivers. And there is our historic achievement of establishing the first ever national heavy-vehicle regulator, which will commence on 1 January 2013.

The national heavy-vehicle regulator, along with the national maritime and rail safety regulators, will cut the number of transport regulators operating across Australia from 23 down to three. That is a boost to national income by up to $30 billion over the next 20 years. It has been talked about for years, but delivered by this government.

These reforms are vitally important to the heavy-vehicle transport sector that employs hundreds of thousands of Australians and plays a central role in getting our goods and services to our towns, cities, airports and ports. The freight task is growing and it will continue to grow, putting even greater pressure on our road networks.

Heavy-vehicle crashes also contribute substantially to road trauma, often involving the occupants of light passenger vehicles and pedestrians. We see around 5,000 people seriously injured in trucking incidents each year, and 230 people killed in trucking incidents. The program is all about funding practical measures to reduce risk and improve road safety, not only for truckies but for all who share the roads with the big rigs.

Let me remind the member for Wide Bay that in 2004 the then Australian Transport Council established the pricing principles upon which heavy vehicles are calculated. These principles were further reinforced when COAG directed the ATC, in April...
2007, to ensure that charges deliver, and continue to deliver, full cost recovery while removing cross-subsidisation between vehicle classes. These were principles agreed under the Howard government's watch and under National Party transport ministers. These pricing principles were instrumental in the calculation of charges agreed by transport ministers in March 2012.

Let's be clear: the charge calculation methodology has not changed. The principles have not changed. And that is why we see National Party roads ministers—in New South Wales, for example—voting in favour of this determination. But the shadow minister comes in here and says that he cannot possibly support it. Why doesn't he pick up the phone to Duncan Gay and other coalition ministers who have supported this determination?

The new charges agreed by transport ministers will see A-trailer charges reduced by over 50 per cent. We have heard nothing from those opposite about that. This delivers on a key 2011 industry call that governments address high A-trailer charges which were particularly impacting operators in the rural and agricultural sectors. The new charges also incorporate the 2012 annual adjustment to ensure ongoing cost recovery consistent with the 2007 COAG directive.

The opposition's claim of over-recovery are simply not correct. The total amount of revenue to be collected from industry consistently reflect the trend in government road expenditure. Since 2007, this government has doubled the road expenditure. Look at the Bruce Highway. Again, those opposite spent $1.3 billion over 12 years; this side of the House has spent $2.8 billion. The member for Wide Bay goes around and says that the area from Cooroy to Curra—

Mr Truss: I rise on a point of order. This is a motion about the disallowance of the road-user charge. This road-user charge is not used to fund the roads that the minister is talking about so his comments are irrelevant.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mitchell): It has been a pretty wide-ranging debate.

Mr ALBANESE: This shows how little this bloke understands. The road-user charge—

Mr Truss: He's out of order and—

Mr ALBANESE: Sit down and you might learn something. The road-user charge—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr ALBANESE: looks at the previous years' expenditure on roads. It calculates it over a period of time and then works on the formula that was established by those opposite to say, 'We'll recover the costs.' So our expenditure on the Bruce Highway, the Pacific Highway and the Hume Highway is absolutely relevant. That is the basis of the determination—and yet you have the shadow minister just show, with that point of order, how ignorant he is about the system. That is the most extraordinary point of order. I have seen some crackers in this House but none worse than that one, because what that did was expose that the shadow minister does not even understand how this determination occurs.

The more you spend on roads the greater the cost recovery under the system. That is the way it works. It works not on an annual
formula but on a seven-year formula. So, because we have been in government for five years and we have doubled the road expenditure—guess what!—the road-user charge, which is there for cost recovery, goes up. It is not hard but this bloke showed, with that point of order, why his motion should be rejected. He showed, not only why it should be rejected but why he should be embarrassed.

This is a system established by the federal coalition. We have not changed the formula or the National Transport Commission. The person in charge of the National Transport Commission is the person that they appointed. Coalition state ministers voted for this change, and yet the opposition come in here and argue against it. And then they say that the spending on roads is not relevant. It is unbelievable, from those opposite. At the same time, they argue that there is no connection between the Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Program and these charges. Well, there is no connection as far as they are concerned, because they never had one. What they had was increased charges giving nothing back to the industry. Well, we have not taken that view.

The fact is that those opposite need to do more than just come out with rhetoric. We saw the farcical announcement of them delaying the Pacific Highway upgrade that they made over the weekend. We have seen, today, the complete failure to understand the system that they are seeking to disallow with this motion here today. And, for no reason other than the point of order from the member for Wide Bay, he shows that his motion is not worthy of support.

Ms LEY (Farrer) (13:29): I am pleased to speak on this disallowance motion in the House today, after the shrieking of the minister, who had to leap into the debate because there were actually no government members prepared to speak on it—the list was very short.

Mr Albanese: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I ask that the member withdraw. I am the minister; I was always going to speak on this motion. It was brought on by my motion.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): The member for Farrer would assist the chamber if she—

Ms LEY: I'm sorry—I—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hang on; the member for Farrer has not got the call. The member for Farrer would assist the chamber if she would accept the call from the Leader of the House, who was down to speak.

Ms LEY: I do not wish to be petty; I will withdraw. The Road User Charge Determination (No. 1) 2012 slugs truckies with higher fees—that is what it does. If you were a small transport operator listening to the debate in the House today and just listened to the minister talk in such a petty and ill-meaning way about the trucking industry and about the rationale behind this determination, I think you would be disgusted. This is a determination that slugs truckies with higher fees.

This is classic Labor. Their methodology is always to tax, spend and interfere, and in this case they are calling this tax a 'reform'. We had the member for Moreton earlier in his remarks saying, 'Thankfully, we were able to build a national regulator,' as if we should all breathe a sigh of relief that Labor has once again found something to regulate and therefore increase charges to people—in this case, the trucking industry. For the Labor Party, rural Australia is not just another country; it may as well be another planet. This minister comes from western Sydney. It is clear from his remarks that he does not understand what it is like to drive the long, lonely roads of rural Australia as a
truck operator, the stress that family businesses are under, the stress that truck drivers are under or the stress surrounding an industry that struggles to make money, cannot pass on its costs and has to absorb every single increase—in this case, a significant increase to their budget.

What is this road user charge doing? It is increasing by 10 per cent the rate of the heavy vehicle road user charge from 23.1c a litre to 25.5c a litre, to, in the words of the determination:

… recover an attributable portion of heavy vehicle's share of increased government road expenditure to ensure they continue to pay their way.

That is Treasury terminology, and we understand that they do not understand the real world in some instances either. But I take offence, on behalf of the truck drivers I represent, to the phrase 'to ensure they continue to pay their way'—as if somehow the trucking industry has to bear the cost of the rehabilitation and maintenance of every road in Australia.

We do not criticise the road user charging system, because we created it, as the minister said. We recognise that fact. But we do really object to this particular tax—and that is what it is—being used, this bucket of money being increased, this system being plundered to pay for pink batts, BER, $700 set-top boxes and other financial failings of this government. There is no proof that the money raised by this road user charge goes anywhere but straight into consolidated revenue. We do not have a clear link between this funding and improving the roads that Australia's truck drivers drive on. This increase from 1 July from 23.1c to 25.5c a litre is highly significant. Thirty to 35 per cent of trucking operators' budget is fuel costs. This will hit their bottom line, and it will hurt.

The government talks about savings, as if that should be a rationale for us to think that this is a good thing. The government would have us believe that this change to the road user charge was recommended by the National Transport Commission and agreed by the Commonwealth and state and territory transport ministers. The NTC is responsible for conducting an annual assessment of these charges to ensure they remain in line with heavy vehicle share of road use. It is our argument that documents provided to industry were altered before being given to those ministers for a decision. The industry was not provided with detailed information on the model used by the NTC or the input data and assumptions underpinning them. These documents were only made available after a freedom of information request, and even then only after the NTC's recommendations had already been accepted by the Standing Council on Transport and Infrastructure.

The Australian Trucking Association believes the decisions were based on outdated truck numbers which inflate the amount drivers must pay to the government and overstate road building and maintenance calculations. The ATA believes that, instead of counting the actual number of truck registrations, the NTC took old registration figures and concluded a theoretical fleet size, which will now see drivers fork out $700 million more than they should.

The coalition agrees, and we called on the government for a halfway compromise. Not only are the increases based on flawed modelling; it is our view the proposed 10 per cent hike in the charge comes in addition to the effects of the carbon tax and occurs at a time when the transport industry is already struggling to survive big cost increases. The charge is also collected through the fuel excise system and truck registration fees, many of which will rise, by more than 30 per
cent in some cases—a classic double whammy for the industry, attacked at both ends at a time they can least afford it.

We also argue that, despite the National Transport Commission’s recommendation that flood recovery expenditure be excluded from the calculations, about 25 per cent of that expenditure remains in the formula. In addition, $144 million was unexpectedly added to the amount to be collected because of a recalculation of past obligations under the model—now, what does that mean? The Australian Livestock and Rural Transporters Association has also estimated the impact of the revised pricing model will see road trains overcharged by $27.9 million each year. That is a 40 per cent hike that can and should be avoided.

In May this year, state and federal transport ministers agreed to review the NTC formula, accepting the general view that it may not be an accurate reflection of the costs attributable to all heavy vehicle classes. Since all parties seem to agree that the calculation model is in need of a review, it would be grossly unfair to apply this model to justify such a huge increase.

Deputy Speaker, as you have heard, we have not said: do not make increases. We have not said: do not ask truckies to pay their way. What we have said is: make it five per cent, not 10 per cent. Let’s meet the government halfway. Let’s recognise the reality for our struggling truck drivers. I represent 30 per cent of the state of New South Wales in the electorate of Farrer, so I have known a lot of trucks, a lot of truck drivers and a lot of family firms over the last 10 years. I called a few and asked them what they thought about this. I know that they are hardly going to say that it is a good thing. What I wanted to hear from them was what life was like for them, right here and now, as a small transport operator in rural Australia. I remind the House that there is nobody in the government benches, that I am aware of, that has had skin in this game. There does not seem to be anyone who has invested a dollar of their own money in a real job in rural Australia. There is nobody in the government who understands the life of the trucking operators that I represent. If there were, I would have expected to have more speakers lining up to speak on this bill and we would have had a more sympathetic response from the minister in terms of our offer to meet him half way.

As a trucking operator in Albury said to me this morning: It’s a huge issue for the industry! With all the other costs hitting us it’s going to devastate some of the smaller transport operators particularly.

Subcontracted Truckies simply can’t pass on these costs, so must absorb them, reducing their margins to such an extent many are leaving the industry.

Add this to the other taxes, rising cost of parts, registration, compliance and general cost of living, this will be a fatal blow for some.

I spoke to my friend, Leann James, from Broken Hill whose husband runs a livestock transport business. She said:

It’s disappointing to hear this federal government has again knocked money off the trucking industry and hit us so hard. We are aware that in 2014 we will be hit again with the carbon tax on diesel. Any increase in costs are going to have to be passed onto consumers. In a typical month we pay anywhere up to $10,000 for our fuel. In a busy month this can and has been up to $15,000.

We are continually getting rego price hikes and parts and oils are continually creeping up. It is very demoralising for any truck operator to see this continual whacking we are getting from the government. I would envisage the professional drivers, ie blokes like my husband who has been a truck driver for 42 years, might say that enough is enough if this trend keeps up. Hitting an industry already very competitive with pricing will only
push the operators who are competent and good at their job out. It is unfair to continually use this industry as a milking cow.

She asks the federal government:
Can they name anything they buy, from furniture to fresh meat and vegetables that has not been on a truck? What plan would they have to service this huge country when the truckies say that enough is enough?

I want to reflect that frustration here in the House. If I go particularly to the far west of New South Wales and look at the life of a livestock transport operator—they get up at 4 am, come home at midnight, eat dust all day with a truck and two dog trailers, the yards are bad and the sheep are not running and they just do not have time to stop. They have a deadline and many rules and regulations. We should in this House be moving motions of support and thanks to the truck drivers of this country instead of saying, 'Oh, we've found another way of slugging you, of using your industry as a milking cow to help us attempt to put our books back into balance.'

I want the minister to demonstrate that every single cent that he raises from this charge, if he manages to get it through the House today, goes directly to support the roads that trucks drive on and not into consolidated revenue, which is where I strongly suspect it goes. We on this side of the House want to make a strong statement in support of small business generally and the truck driving industry in particular and say that we will resist this increase because we know how much it will hurt and we actually care.

Mr OAKESHOTT (Lyne) (13:41): In the short time I have before 90-second statements I will put on the record that I am opposing government on this disallowance motion for different reasons than the ones that have been presented by the Leader of the National Party in introducing this disallowance, but they are important ones all the same.

Last week I wrote to the Leader of the National Party seeking confirmation that he is fully aware, in introducing this disallowance motion, that this road user charge increase has come about from agreement between federal and state roads ministers. Therefore, in blunt terms, it is the New South Wales National Party minister who has voted for and signed off on this road user charge increase. I therefore wrote last week to the Leader of the National Party for him to (a) acknowledge that it is a member of his own party in government in New South Wales who signed off on this road user charge increase, and (b) if he acknowledges that, to then get that New South Wales National Party roads minister to write directly to me and ask me to vote against this disallowance motion and against the vote that the New South Wales National Party took on this matter.

Unfortunately, over the last week I have had silence. There has been no response from the Leader of the National Party to that letter about the hypocrisy of the position being taken by the National Party when you compare their federal position to their state position in New South Wales. I would welcome that letter and I would welcome the explanation of how they are managing to walk both positions at once.

Despite that, I will still vote against this disallowance motion. I do it as someone whose first job was to work with the road transport forum, which has changed its name now, which used to be the peak lobby group for the long-distance road transport industry. It basically represents the 80 per cent of commodities that reach every home in Australia and arrive via the necessary transport model in a large country like ours and that is by road.
Those that move food and produce by road are quite often, understandably, given a bum steer by this chamber because the vast majority of people use cars and they do not like trucks on the road next to them. In reality 80 per cent of the products that hit our homes come via road. Yes, it would be preferable if it was rail or some other model, but it is not. In a country like ours they arrive by road and quite often public policy does not respect nor reflect that and we are seeking that again today. From here on in I am going to lay a challenge to this chamber and that is around linking road user charging to the broad sweep of comprehensive tax reform and to look at areas like urban congestion charges.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 43. The debate may be resumed at a later hour and the member for Lyne will have leave to continue speaking when the debate is resumed.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Club Rugby

Mr MORRISON (Cook) (13:45): It is my very melancholy obligation—to make good a promise to the member for North Sydney—to inform the House that sadly the Southern Districts Rebels went down 15 to 14 to the might of Sydney University on the weekend. The might, tradition and privilege of the University of Sydney in their eighth straight Shute Shield grand final aiming to take their 47th Sydney club rugby title while enjoying the recruiting privileges of the entire GPS system and offering university scholarships, networking and mentoring courtesy of old boys against the suburban battlers of Southern Districts, from Sylvania Waters, the Rebels who were in their very first grand final relying on locals, organising players' apprenticeships and selling beer to pay their salaries. This was a classic confrontation between two great teams of the rugby competition in Sydney.

It would be unsportsmanlike for me to mention that the Sydney Morning Herald put down the late game try that delivered it to Sydney University to a 'suspect pass, a controversial pass'. But as the coach, Cameron Blades, for the Rebels was in a very sportsmanlike fashion able to point out, this was a great game. It was a gut-wrenching result for the boys from Southern Districts. There were moments in the game where we could have closed it out but it was a good life lesson for these young men. To Sydney University and to the member for North Sydney, I offer my congratulations. Sydney rugby deserves to be supported by those further up the chain in the Wallabies and the franchise owners because club rugby is where the game is played.

International Day of Democracy

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (13:46): I rise today to note the fact that Saturday 15 September was the International Day of Democracy, a day set aside by the UN General Assembly to celebrate democracy and remind us that the need to protect and promote democracy is as urgent now as ever before. In April this year the first Global Parliamentary Report was launched by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the United Nations Development Programme. The report focuses on the relationship between parliaments and citizens and provides an assessment of the state of parliaments worldwide.

I am pleased to note that a democracy exhibition has been launched in Parliament House, which examines developments in democracy over the centuries, including Australia's contribution to parliamentary democracy. The exhibition pays special tribute to women who have advanced democratic development including the
suffragettes, who campaigned for women’s equal participation in political life and Aung San Suu Kyi, for promoting democracy in Burma. Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Australia, of which I am the federal parliament’s representative, has invited Australians to think about women who have worked for democratic rights and who inspire us, and to nominate these female champions of democracy. The nominations can be sent in via a new website that has been launched by the national women parliamentarians committee at www.wcomm.org.

Finally it is fitting to note in the context of the International Day of Democracy the recent announcement by the Prime Minister of a 10-year initiative to empower women and address gender inequality in Pacific island countries, including mentoring and training for Pacific women parliamentarians and candidates. This is a truly meaningful contribution to democracy in our region.

**Chatterbox Challenge**

**Mr EWEN JONES** (Herbert) (13:48): I rise to speak about the Chatterbox Challenge, a challenge thrown out to people around Townsville and around Australia to help raise funds and awareness for people living with disabilities. It is sponsored by a group of seven charities: the Spinal Industry Association, UnitingCare, Cerebral Palsy League, Life Without Barriers, Centrecare, Multicap and Endeavour Foundation. I was asked by Verena Coome from the Endeavour Foundation in Townsville to be an ambassador for it. I said, ‘No problems, what will it take?’ She said, ‘It will take you to not speak for a day.’ Well, how they laughed.

I did it on Friday. I went one entire day without speaking. In the process, I raised over $3,000 for these charities. My family and my office all believe that there should be a Chatterbox Challenge for a week, maybe a year, a decade—they are all in favour of that.

To my donors, I say thank you very much, and to those small businesses and to Senator Scott Ryan, with whom I spent most of the day on Friday, who took great delight in asking me questions that I could not answer with a shrug. I would like to mention one particular business. I do not want to name them so I will only use their initials: Kylie Church Laird and Andrew Laird of Betty Blue and the Lemon Tart, who kept asking me if I would like something more. They said, ‘If you will just say something Ewen, we will come on board.’ It is a great cause, we were pleased to have helped out. *(Time expired)*

**Protests**

**Mr KELVIN THOMSON** (Wills) (13:50): I was disgusted by the placard held by one protester in Sydney over the weekend which read, ‘Behead those who insult Islam’. This is clearly an incitement to violence, and something I never want to see again in this country. I do not know whether this or other protesters who engaged in incitement to violence are Australian citizens or not, but I encourage Australia’s immigration authorities to find out. If they are not Australian citizens, I suggest the immigration authorities consider their powers to take action to deport them—we will be a better country without them.

If they are Australian citizens, let me point out that the citizenship oath requires citizens to swear their allegiance to Australia, ‘whose democratic beliefs I share, whose rights and liberties I respect, and whose laws I will uphold and obey’. This does not mean you uphold the laws you agree with, or which do not conflict with your religious convictions. It means you uphold all Australian laws. It does not mean you uphold the rights and liberties of those Australian citizens you
agree with, and incite violence against those you do not. It means you uphold the rights and liberties of all Australians.

I know the great majority of Australian Muslims including those in my electorate, share my disgust at this behaviour, and it is important that all of us who do not in any way condone political or religious violence speak up to defend this most essential and valuable component of the Australian way of life.

National Police Remembrance Day

Mr MATHESON (Macarthur) (13:51): I would like to take this opportunity to speak about National Police Remembrance Day, which is held every year on 29 September. The day holds great significance for the police forces in Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and the Solomon Islands because it is a chance for members of the force to stop and remember those colleagues who have lost their lives in the line of duty. It is also a time for the public to recognise the sacrifices that the members of our police forces make each time they put on their uniform to go to work. I was a police officer for nearly 25 years so I can relate to the challenging and confronting situations our officers face on a daily basis. I will always remember the first fatal motor vehicle accident I attended. Police men and women deal with so many heartbreaking circumstances everyday. They leave their own families at home to go out and risk their lives to protect others. This is why I join many residents in Macarthur who believe that the fine men and women in our Police Force deserve the utmost respect and admiration.

Next Friday I will join residents at Campbelltown Police Station from 6am for a special memorial service and flag-lowering ceremony for National Police Remembrance Day. The event is well-attended each year; it is a great show of support for our young men and women who currently serve Macarthur in the Police Force. I encourage everyone in this place to attend the National Police Remembrance Day service next week as we pause to remember those courageous officers who have died in the line of duty. It is important that we also take the time to thank our serving officers for the risks they take every day to keep our communities a safe place to live. Lest we forget those who have sacrificed their lives.

Hunter Electorate: Rugby League

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter—Chief Government Whip) (13:52): The Grand Final for the 'real NRL' will be played in Newcastle on Sunday. To my great joy my own former club, the club my son plays for and the club my father and brother played for, will contest that Grand Final. The Cessnock Goannas will go head-to-head with the Newcastle based Western Suburbs club.

It was almost an all-coalfields Grand Final and no-one would have been more happy than me if we had been playing Maitland on Sunday. It was not to be, but I am delighted to say that the Maitland club will contest the reserve-grade Grand Final, and I wish them all the very best. Of course, I wish the Goannas all the very best on Sunday, the players and the coaching and training staff. They have been the best team all year and they certainly deserve to be premiers in 2013.

Flynn Electorate: Gregory Mine Closure

Mr O'DOWD (Flynn) (13:53): Go the Goannas! I would like to extend my sympathy today to those employees affected by the decision to close the Gregory Coal Mine in the Central Highlands region of Flynn. Gregory holds special significance for me. I was fortunate enough to have benefitted from its establishment through the
fuel distributorship I operated in the early 1980s in Emerald. The mine has been operational since the late seventies.

This mine has been an integral and longstanding feature of the Central Highlands and this closure certainly heralds the end of an era. Every mine has a life expectancy and, unfortunately, market conditions and federal government taxes have meant that the Gregory Mine's time has come.

There is also currently much talk in the resources sector over recent state government actions. I would therefore like to assure both the industry and its employees that, at a federal level, the coalition remains committed to repealing the carbon and mining taxes.

To the affected employees: I wish you every success in finding alternative employment; and to BMA: I trust that your stewardship over these tenements remains responsible and with longevity in mind. Uncertain times calls for certainty in federal government, something we sadly lack at the moment.

State Liberal Governments

Mr LYONS (Bass) (13:55): I rise to speak about Premier Campbell Newman's upcoming visit to my home state of Tasmania. It is an interesting choice to have Mr Newman as the keynote speaker at the Tasmanian Liberal Party fundraiser. Why isn't the Leader of the Opposition attending? Is he too ashamed to show his face in Tasmania after his flapping and flapping on GST distribution? Or is it because the Tasmanian Liberals see Mr Newman as their greatest inspiration? They obviously admire his slash-and-burn attack on the people of Queensland.

There is a clear precedent formed by Liberal state governments. In New South Wales, after slashing $1.7 billion from education earlier this year, Barry O'Farrell is now planning to take $3 billion out of health services. Campbell Newman is relishing the fight on jobs losses. He has slashed the Public Service. His budget has attacked the most vulnerable.

South Australian Liberals are the latest in the Liberal plan. Isobel Redman plans to slash 20,000 government jobs; and in Victoria Ted Baillieu is planning even more TAFE cuts, selling off campus after campus, lifting fees and sacking teachers.

Liberals in every state want to slash jobs and public services. Tony Abbott would do the same if he became Prime Minister. Let's not have him!

Forrest Electorate: Aged Care

Ms MARINO (Forrest—Opposition Whip) (13:56): I want to talk about the changes to the ACFI funding model and what that has done to the small rural and regional aged-care providers in my electorate. This is creating a major problem for those small providers—in fact, it is putting them at real threat. They are at risk right now. If you are one of the people in one of those facilities you would be very concerned. I want to speak up on behalf of all of those who have rung me, very concerned about what this change means to the services being provided for their families in those facilities with the changes the government has made. As usual, we have seen smoke and mirrors from this government—in fact, there will be no new funding till beyond the election. And, of course, there is only a minimal amount of $500-odd million in that tranche; the rest is redirection. That is exactly what we see from this government: instead of growing the pie, whether it is in business or in other areas, they simply change how they are going to direct it. That is exactly what they have done with this. And that is why the
aged-care providers in my electorate are extremely concerned about how they are going to get through, how they are going to continue to provide the services that they need to for their residents. It is a threat to those who desperately need to increase the size of their facilities and the aged-care beds that have not been taken up in Western Australia because the providers are not able to generate profits.\textit{(Time expired)}

\textbf{Hargreaves, John, MLA}  
\textbf{Canberra Raiders}

\textbf{Ms BRODTMANN} (Canberra) (13:58):
It is with great pleasure that I rise today to acknowledge a great Canberran, John Hargreaves, on his retirement from the ACT Legislative Assembly. John was first elected to the assembly in March 1998, making him one of the longest serving MLAs since self-government. He has had a colourful career in politics and his sense of humour and oratory will be greatly missed by his colleagues.

John was born in the UK in 1949, migrated to Australia at the age of three and moved to Canberra in 1968. He undertook National Service and served in the Army Reserve. Before entering politics he was a public servant for nearly 30 years, earning him the Long and Dedicated Service Award for the ACT.

As a MLA John has been a longstanding member of several committees and served as a minister in a number of portfolios such as Disabilities, Housing, Community Services and Multicultural Affairs. He has been a fine representative for the electorate of Brindabella and his contribution to the local community in the ACT has not gone unnoticed.

John is also a fierce and one-eyed Collingwood supporter, and I join with him in saying: go Pies! I am confident John Hargreaves will look back on his many years in politics with pride and I wish him all the best for his retirement.

In closing I want to say that I am proud of the Raiders' achievements this year and congratulate South Sydney, and the member for Grayndler, on Saturday's victory.

\textbf{The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke)}: Nobody wants 30 seconds? The member for Dunkley, take 30 seconds; we still have 30 seconds.

\textbf{McCarthy, Mr John}  
\textbf{Mr BILLSON} (Dunkley) (13:59): I would like to commend the Mornington Peninsula community for its efforts on the weekend. There was a difficult football championship, respecting the death of a very loved member, John McCarthy. To all of those who participated in the local footy competition with heavy hearts, I congratulate them on their dignity and their best wishes to Johnny's family.

\textbf{The DEPUTY SPEAKER}: I thank the member for Dunkley, and I know a lot of Victorians are mourning the loss of a rather decent young man, by all accounts.

\textbf{CONDOLENCES}

\textbf{Galagher, Private Nathanael John  
Aubrey  
McDonald, Lance Corporal Mervyn John}  

\textbf{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 deaths on 30 August 2012, of Lance Corporal Mervyn John McDonald and Private Nathanael John Aubrey Galagher while on combat operations in Afghanistan, and place on record its appreciation of their service to their country and
tender its profound sympathy to their families and friends in their bereavement.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke) (14:01): I understand it is the wish of the House to consider the matter immediately. 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.

Martin, Sapper James
Milosevic, Lance Corporal Stjepan (Rick)
Poate, Private Robert

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 deaths, in the early hours of 30 August 2012, of Lance Corporal Stjepan (Rick) Milosevic, Sapper James Thomas Martin and Private Robert Hugh Frederick Poate during operations in Afghanistan, and place on record its appreciation of their service to their country and tender its profound sympathy to their families and friends in their bereavement.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke) (14:02): I understand it is the wish of the House to consider the matter immediately. 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.

STATEMENTS

Protests

Mr SWAN (Lilley—Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer) (14:02): Over the weekend we saw some violent protests in the streets of cities of Australia. I think all Australians would be sickened by the behaviour we saw over the weekend. I think we all condemn this behaviour in the strongest possible terms, particularly the use of children to carry offensive placards. I think the parliament is at one in condemning this behaviour. I know that Muslim leaders have condemned this behaviour as well. We want to see no part in Australian society for this sort of behaviour into the future.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:03): Australians would have been shocked at the scenes of violence and intolerance on the streets of Sydney on Saturday. There is no place in Australia for such behaviour, and we condemn it in the strongest possible terms. Ours is a nation that for decades has welcomed millions of people from diverse ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds. Australia is often regarded as one of the most successful multicultural societies on Earth, where people from every corner of the planet live peacefully, side by side. As the Leader of the Opposition said yesterday, newcomers to this country are not expected to surrender their heritage, but they are expected to surrender their hatreds.

We have fostered a society based on pillars of respect and tolerance for the diversity within our society. It is underpinned by the rule of law, whereby all Australians are equally subject to the laws of our land, regardless of their background. We strongly support the right of individuals and groups to stage peaceful protests about issues they hold dear. There is no excuse for
resorting to violence, particularly against the police, who are doing their duty of ensuring the safety of others and protecting property.

The riot on Saturday was purportedly sparked by an amateur video that insulted the prophet Mohammed, and that is being promoted around the world by extremists. It was given as the reason for the murderous rampage against the United States Embassy in Libya, where four American officials were killed, including the ambassador. The video was not produced by the United States government, and nor was it endorsed by the United States government. This video was in fact strongly condemned by US officials. The rioters had no reason whatsoever for seeking to violently target the offices of the US consulate in Sydney. Our fear is that extremist elements in Australia and in other countries are using this YouTube video to incite hatred and incite violence in pursuit of long-held goals.

We acknowledge the condemnation of this riot by Muslim community leaders, who have expressed outrage and horror at the scenes of violence. We stand with the brave officers of the New South Wales Police Force, who were subject to injury and violent attack. We are united with all Australians in condemnation of the actions of the few who took part in that violence, of those who incited it and of any person who seeks to undermine the peaceful fabric of our tolerant, multicultural society.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Mr SWAN (Lilley—Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer) (14:05): I inform the House that the Prime Minister and the Minister for Defence will be absent from question time today and tomorrow. They are in Western Australia to attend the funerals of Lance Corporal Mervyn McDonald and Sapper James Martin. The Special Minister of State will also attend the funeral of Lance Corporal McDonald today. I will answer questions on behalf of the Prime Minister. The Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence Science and Personnel will answer questions on behalf of the Minister for Defence. The Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations will also answer questions on behalf of the Special Minister of State and Minister for the Public Service and Integrity. The Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency and Minister for Industry and Innovation and the Minister for Housing and Homelessness and Minister for Small Business will be absent from question time today and tomorrow for personal reasons. The Minister for Infrastructure and Transport will answer questions relating to climate change and energy efficiency. The Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government and Minister for the Arts will answer questions relating to industry and innovation.

Mr Randall: Is anyone home?

Mr SWAN: The Minister for School Education and Minister for Early Childhood and Youth will answer questions on behalf of the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Science and Research. The Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs will answer questions relating to housing, homelessness and human services, and the Assistant Treasurer will answer questions relating to small business. The Minister for Home Affairs, Minister for Justice and Minister for Defence Materiel is in Sydney on portfolio business and also will be absent from question time today. The Attorney-General will answer questions relating to justice and home affairs and the Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence Science and Personnel will answer questions relating to defence matters.
Mr Albanese: I would ask the member for Canning to withdraw.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): For the assistance of the House could the member for Canning—

Mr Randall: Saying 'Is anyone home?' is not unparliamentary, but to assist the House I will withdraw.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. I was going to point out that we have not even got to question time yet and I have already had to say 'Order', which I thought was a bit ridiculous!

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Mustafa, Mr Taji

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:07): My question is to the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship. I remind the minister that the government granted a visa to hate-preacher Taji Mustafa to speak at the Hizb ut-Tahrir conference yesterday, despite the coalition requesting on numerous occasions, and again last week, that he not do so. I also remind the minister that he ruled out revoking the visa yesterday. Will the minister explain why the government allows preachers of hate into our country?

Mr BOWEN (McMahon—Minister for Immigration and Citizenship) (14:07): I thank the honourable member for her question. The question goes to an invitation from an organisation known as HUT for a conference that was held yesterday. HUT has not been proscribed in Australia and nor has it been proscribed in the United States or the United Kingdom.

Mr BOWEN (McMahon—Minister for Immigration and Citizenship) (14:07): I thank the honourable member for her question. The question goes to an invitation from an organisation known as HUT for a conference that was held yesterday. HUT has not been proscribed in Australia and nor has it been proscribed in the United States or the United Kingdom.

Mr Pyne: Why not?

Mr BOWEN: When the honourable Manager of Opposition Business asks why it has not been proscribed, he might want to check with the honourable member for Berowra, who said in 2007, when he was Attorney-General, that it should not be proscribed.

The situation is that this entry permit was issued in accordance with the normal procedures for British nationals. I refer the honourable member to the normal procedures that apply. This individual was not on the movement alert list because he is not speaking at an organisation that is proscribed in Australia, and nor is it proscribed in like-minded countries, for the reasons very eloquently put by former Attorney-General the member for Berowra.

Ms JULIE BISHOP: My question is to the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship. I remind the minister that the government granted a visa to hate-preacher Taji Mustafa to speak at the Hizb ut-Tahrir conference yesterday, despite the coalition requesting on numerous occasions, and again last week, that he not do so. I also remind the minister that he ruled out revoking the visa yesterday. Will the minister explain why the government allows preachers of hate into our country?

Mr BOWEN: I remind the honourable member that this organisation is not proscribed in Australia or in like-minded countries, and the normal rules for entry of British nationals have applied.

Mrs Mirabella: So, it is okay to lead the way on the carbon tax—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Indi! It was quite a breath of fresh air last week.

Ms Julie Bishop: I seek leave to table a letter from last Friday from the Leader of the Opposition to the Prime Minister requesting that a visa not be granted, or at least revoked if it was granted. The letter of 14 September—

Mr Albanese: Leave is not granted. It has already been made public.
Mr Morrison: I seek leave to table a letter I sent to the minister on 13 September, the day before, which has not been released publicly. Perhaps the minister would allow that—

Mr Albanese: It is not within standing orders for someone who has not asked a question about the issue to seek leave.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Cook will resume his seat. I call the Manager of Opposition Business.

Mr Pyne: I hesitate to rise, and with the greatest of respect, during the latest fracas I believe you made a comment that I thought was offensive to the member for Indi and unnecessary, and I would ask you to withdraw it and apologise to her.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat. The Manager of Opposition Business is reflecting on the chair. I was merely pointing out that under standing order 65(b) the member for Indi, who has just returned to the chamber, should not be interjecting so audibly.

Mrs Mirabella: So it is my voice that is the problem?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, the member for Indi is a constant interjector. The member for Bass has the call.

Economy

Mr Lyons (Bass) (14:12): My question is to the Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer. Will the Treasurer update the House on what recent international economic developments say about the strength of our economy and why responsible budgeting is important for keeping our economy and community strong?

Mr Swan (Lilley—Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer) (14:12): I thank the member for Bass for that important question, because we do have significant challenges in the global economy. We have many European countries in recession and we have weak growth in the United States. And, of course, many developed countries across the world are not back to where they were prior to the global financial crisis. That means very high levels of unemployment right across developed economies.

I think everybody in the House can take heart from developments in the international economy over the past four or five days. We have seen the intervention of the ECB in Europe, which was certainly welcome—the intervention by Mario Draghi—and we have seen the decisions in the United States for QE3. I think we can take some heart from those announcements, which will simply support global growth.

But we are not immune from challenges in the global economy. One thing that has strengthened our economy has been the decisive action taken by this government, in the face of the global financial crisis and the global recession, to support jobs and support small business in the Australian economy. So, we have not suffered the capital destruction and the closures of the small businesses that we have seen in other developed economies, and we have of course had very strong employment growth.

Those actions were opposed by those opposite. They opposed the support we put in place for our economy to support small business and employment. We know that the Leader of the Opposition actually slept through the critical vote during that period, showing you the values that he brought to that debate: the lack of concern for skills, the lack of concern for jobs and the lack of support for a strong community.

Since that time we have put in place savings in our budget of $130 billion to bring the budget back to surplus in 2012-13 and to make room for our priorities. It has been all
about the values that we on this side of the House hold to support communities, small business and jobs. We believe that everyone in this country must have a say in our prosperity and a stake in our prosperity into the future.

The values of those opposite are entirely different. We have seen in the past week or two a sneak preview of what an Abbott government would do in this country if it were in charge.

**Mr Hockey:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order that goes to relevance. The Treasurer was asked about international information about the state of the economy. How could this possibly be relevant to the question?

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke):** The member for North Sydney will resume his seat. The Deputy Prime Minister has the call.

**Mr SWAN:** I was also asked about domestic fiscal policy. We have put in place responsible savings built on our values. Those opposite have an entirely different set of propositions which are built on their values. Their values are ones which take the axe to essential services in health and education, slashing employment in a savage way, particularly in my home state of Queensland—14,000 people hit immediately.

We have seen it again today in their proposal to get rid of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority, a vital element of flood recovery in the great state of Queensland. *(Time expired)*

**Carbon Pricing**

**Mr BILLSON** (Dunkley) (14:16): My question is to the Treasurer. I refer the Treasurer to this electricity bill from Pittiagias Foods that shows its off-peak power has increased by 83 per cent as a direct result of the carbon tax that has driven up their entire bill by more than the government's predicted 10 per cent. Given that businesses and families are being hit with carbon tax increases above the government's predicted 10 per cent increase, why won't the government agree to urgently revise the modelling behind the world's largest carbon tax?

**Mr SWAN** (Lilley—Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer) (14:16): I certainly welcome the question, but I am sure it is not welcomed by the member for Wentworth. The fact is we have seen the opposition come in here week in and week out making all sorts of inaccurate claims about the impact of a carbon price, whether it is on electricity bills or anything else. We know that electricity prices in this country have increased by about 50 per cent in the past four years without a carbon price. Depending on where you are, we know that has substantially come from decisions taken by state governments, particularly their overinvestment in poles and wires. Of course, we never hear about that. In my home state of Queensland, dividends taken out of the system by the Queensland government are responsible for something like $400 in every bill for every household.

We know the opposition are running out of steam when it comes to their scare campaign about carbon pricing. We have not been getting quite the same volume of questions that we were getting before. The sky has not fallen in. Central Queensland has not been wiped off the face of the map.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke):** Order! The Deputy Prime Minister will return to the question before the chair.

**Mr SWAN:** I am referring to the carbon price and the fact that the overall impact of the carbon price is 0.7 per cent, less than 1c in every dollar. The government have been up-front. We indicated what the impact would be on household electricity bills. We
said all of those things, but that did not stop those opposite coming into the House and predicting doom and gloom. They said it was going to be a wrecking ball; it was going to wreck the economy. That has not happened. They have been walking back from that week after week. You can see the air coming out of that fear campaign. You can see it virtually evaporating, much to the chagrin of all of those opposite.

**Mr Billson:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The question was about whether the government will revise its modelling as this bill shows electricity prices have gone up by more than 10 per cent.

**Mr SWAN:** Not even the Leader of the Opposition now believes his own scare campaign. Those opposite do not believe it any longer. So we can continue to get these questions with exaggeration and all of the hype, but it is not true and nobody is buying it any more.

**Mr BILLSON** (Dunkley) (14:19): Madam Deputy Speaker, I ask a supplementary question. Rather than denigrating and ridiculing the concerns of Australians about the effect of the carbon tax on their livelihoods, why won’t you simply answer the question: will you revise the modelling of the carbon tax to reflect its real impact?

**Mr SWAN** (Lilley—Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer) (14:19): The modelling of the carbon price is in the Treasury modelling and it is accurate.

**Mr Billson:** I seek leave to table this document that shows how the off-peak power price has gone up 83 per cent and across the whole bill a whole lot more than the 10 per cent you said.

Leave not granted.

**Mr Albanese:** I table the pamphlet from John Alexander prior to the last election that said he would campaign for the Parramatta to Epping rail link.

**Pacific Highway**

**Ms SAFFIN** (Page) (14:20): My question is to the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport. Will the minister please outline the government’s commitment to the duplication of the Pacific Highway, and are there any obstacles to achieving full duplication of the highway by 2016?

**Mr ALBANESE** (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (14:21): I thank the member for Page for her question. She knows that we have already committed some $4.1 billion to the Pacific Highway, which compares to the $1.3 billion over double the time—12 years—that the Howard government committed. In addition to that, in the recent budget we allowed for $3.56 billion to be put on the table for the full duplication of the Pacific Highway by 2016 based upon a matching commitment from New South Wales, which was both the timeline of 2016 that the Howard government put and also the funding model that the Howard government put when the National Party had ministers. Over the weekend the federal coalition gave the state coalition, their mates in Macquarie Street, the green light to abandon the 2016 timeline. They have deferred the full duplication to beyond the current decade. Indeed, when they were in government, they said the opposite. They said the Pacific Highway was a state road and they called for the New South Wales Labor government to do more. The member for Cowper had this to say: 'It's a state road. New South Wales refused to commit one extra dollar of state government funding to a road they are responsible for.' The state coalition was saying the same thing: 'Yes, I will match that money,' said Duncan Gay, 'and save the lives
of people in New South Wales that have to use this highway.'

On the weekend, the member for Wide Bay made an announcement about how they were going to take the allocated money from the Parramatta to Epping rail link that had been pushed back for two years because of the inaction of the state government. They said that that would enable them to fully duplicate the highway and meet the target of 2016. There is only $67.9 million available under the Parramatta to Epping rail link between now and 2016. So they push it out beyond 2020, and, in spite of that, they are still half a billion dollars short because of the failure of the state government to honour the commitments that they made in the 2011 election campaign.

Right now today there are over a thousand people working up and down the Pacific Highway. When we had the economic stimulus plan we put money into fully, 100 per cent funded projects such as the Kempsey bypass to make sure we could get it done. Those opposite have given a green light for New South Wales to abandon their commitment to this highway and at the same time they have walked away from the provision of infrastructure into public transport.

Ms SAFFIN (Page) (14:24): Minister, you raised the Parramatta to Epping rail link in your answer. Can you please outline why it is important for the government to also invest in public transport in our cities?

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (14:24): I thank the member for her question. We know that the promise to fix the Pacific Highway is in tatters. What we have also seen, both with the announcement on Saturday and the interview—the train wreck of an interview yesterday morning on Australian Agenda—is that the coalition have maintained their position of opposition to funding public transport in Australia. In 12 years they did not contribute a zack to any public transport project around Australia. In Sydney they committed a total of $300 million in funding a portion of the M7 in their entire 12 years in office.

We on this side of the House believe in urban public transport. The Noarlunga to Seaford line, on which the bridge was completed last week—and the member for Kingston was there—the regional rail link in Victoria, the Moreton Bay rail link, the Gold Coast light rail, the Perth City rail link, Melbourne Metro 1, Brisbane innercity rail study, Perth light rail study—all of these projects are important. We have committed more to urban public transport since 2007 than all governments combined in the previous 107 years—all governments combined versus this government since 2007. We understand you have got to look after people in the regions and the city. (Time expired)

Carbon Pricing

Mr TUDGE (Aston) (14:26): My question is to the Treasurer. I refer the Treasurer to this letter and electricity bill from Jamie Foster, who runs Advantage Engineering in Braeside. He states: 'We will now have to pay an extra $1,200 a month to operate. To stay competitive I cannot pass costs on, so that equates to one part-time employee's job. The carbon tax will cost people's jobs.' Treasurer, why did you tell Advantage Engineering before the last election that the introduction of a carbon tax was an hysterical allegation? (Time expired)

Mr SWAN (Lilley—Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer) (14:27): I certainly thank the member for that question because, like many members of this House, I have been a long-term believer in putting a price
on carbon and doing that through an emissions trading scheme. Of course, that was the policy of the previous, Howard government, and it is the approach of every living Liberal leader. It was also the approach of the current Leader of the Opposition and it all changed when he got rid of the member for Wentworth.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): The Deputy Prime Minister will resume his seat. The Manager of Opposition Business on a point of order.

Mr Pyne: Madam Deputy Speaker, I am struggling to realise how he could be relevant to the question when he was in fact in favour of a citizens assembly before the last election. He was in fact in favour of a carbon tax—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat. The Deputy Prime Minister has the call and will refer to the question before the chair.

Mr SWAN: I am, Madam Deputy Speaker. We have put a price on carbon to drive investment in particular in renewable energy. We have put in place a range of supports, particularly for trade exposed industries, and also for households. In terms of the impact on households, it has gone through the system, as the Treasury modelling said it would. I have not seen any particular amount or bill that the member is talking about. But if he is true to form with all the exaggeration that we have seen previously, it will simply be incorrect yet again.

Obviously the opposition has decided today that they want to resurrect their fear campaign. They can do that. But the truth is that the introduction of a price on carbon has gone very smoothly in our economy. The consequence of that will be that we will get a price on carbon. We will drive the investment in renewable energy. It will secure prosperity for the future. It will mean that we will continue to grow and to create jobs. A prosperous economy in the 21st century has got to be one which is driven by renewable energy. A price on carbon is for the long-term good of this country and it does not matter how much those opposite run a fear campaign; its introduction is there for all to see and it is not having the impact that those opposite have been claiming. We have not seen Whyalla wiped from the map, we have not seen the destruction of the Central Queensland coalfields—we have not seen any of those outcomes. We have not seen the wrecking ball through our economy. Those opposite now simply have no political strategy whatsoever.

Mr Tudge: Madam Deputy Speaker, I seek leave to table the transcript from Meet the Press on 16 August 2010 where the Treasurer says that the introduction of the carbon tax was a 'hysterical allegation'.

Leave not granted.

Mr Albanese: I table the Sky News Australian Agenda transcript from yesterday with the Leader of the National Party. It is a ripper!

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke) (14:30): I welcome to the gallery today the former Speaker of the House and member for Wannon the Hon. David Hawker. I thank him for being present. I believe he has been out riding motorcycles and enjoying himself in Canberra today.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Coal Seam Gas

Mr WINDSOR (New England) (14:30): My question is to the Minister for the Environment and relates to the national partnership agreement with the New South
Wales government on coal seam gas and large coal mining developments. Given that the New South Wales government has now established its so-called strategic land use and aquifer interference policies, where do these policies fit within the national partnership agreement and the protocols and milestones associated with that agreement?

Mr BURKE (Watson—Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities) (14:31): I thank the member for New England for the question. The member for New England was involved in the negotiations right from the beginning on the establishment of the independent expert scientific committee. As members would know who have dealt with the water area—in particular, the member for Wentworth—there is a great level of complexity when you are dealing with underground water as to the extent to which you have connectivity to both surface water and underground water often in very different areas. The science on this requires significantly more work and, for that reason, an independent committee was established and extraordinarily well funded.

I find it extraordinary that those opposite would view the campaigns on coal seam gas and concerns about water as being run purely by GetUp. If they met one or two farmers they might take a broader view. The member for New England knows too well the concerns in the lead-up to the New South Wales election about wanting to determine whether or not prime agricultural land was to be protected in some way. We eventually had the announcement of a policy from the New South Wales government—one of the governments that had signed up to use the independent expert committee. Both farmers groups and conservation groups have complained fairly strongly that it has fallen a long way short of the expectations that they had. There is some additional land which arguably has been set aside for agricultural use in the Hunter, and some in New England as well, but it is way short of the expectations that were given in advance of the election.

The part of the process that New South Wales has announced will interact with the independent expert scientific committee is what is known as their gateway process. The gateway process used to have an exceptional circumstances clause but that clause is now gone. So all large coal and coal seam gas projects in New South Wales will have to go through the gateway process. It involves an expert panel and it is at that point that the independent expert scientific committee will plug its information into the New South Wales process. So there is a direct pathway for the national partnerships that were established and expected.

The states involved on national partnerships at the moment are Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. It is largely irrelevant to Tasmania; Western Australia has refused to be part of it; and the Northern Territory is still in negotiations. Ultimately what is behind all of this is to acknowledge that, on underground water, we potentially have very serious environmental and agricultural issues at stake. It is not enough to simply expect decisions to be made on data which has not been fully researched. Rather—and the member for New England has been entirely involved with this—it is better to make sure that the scientific work is done, that it is done independently, and that it is well funded. (Time expired)

Mr WINDSOR (New England) (14:34): Madam Deputy Speaker, I ask a supplementary question. Given the minister's answer in relation to the so-called gateway process, which I believe does not have any legislative backing, does that process and the
associated protocols meet with the guidelines that were expressed in the national partnerships agreement?

Mr BURKE (Watson—Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities) (14:34): I thank the member for New England for the question and his ongoing interest in the issue. My officials are still working through what the New South Wales media statements of last week will fully mean in a legislative sense. What they have done is announce the different parts of it. They have referred, for example, to a commissioner, a gateway process and a large number of processes. But on the details of the legislative underpinnings and how that will interact with the national partnerships agreements, it is fair to say the jury is still out.

National Disability Insurance Scheme

Mrs D’ATH (Petrie) (14:35): My question is to the Minister for Families, Community Services, Indigenous Affairs and Disability Reform. How is the government investing to better support people with disability, their families and carers? What are the challenges to this historic investment?

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga—Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister for Disability Reform) (14:35): I thank the member for Petrie for her question and, in particular, for her advocacy for people with disability and carers in her part of Brisbane. I know that she is campaigning hard to make sure that people in Queensland with a disability and their carers and families get a fair go. Of course, that is exactly what this government is determined to do. We are determined to build a National Disability Insurance Scheme. The Treasurer announced in this year's budget an extra $1 billion so that we can start the National Disability Insurance Scheme from July next year. We have done this with the agreement of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory—but not Queensland.

What this government also realises is that we have got a lot of work to do in the meantime. We are delivering additional support for people with disability and their carers. Since 2007 we have delivered $800 million for disability care and support in Queensland alone. What we of course have also done is deliver to the 35,000 carers in Queensland extra income support, to the 150,000 Queenslander with disabilities we have also delivered an increase to their disability support pension. Of course at the same time that the Queensland government is slashing and burning and cutting grants to community sector workers, cutting grants to many organisations that people depend on in Queensland, we are seeing 385 staff lose their jobs in the community services sector alone in Queensland. And while this is all happening of course we have the shadow treasurer saying that he thinks all of these cuts are courageous. We have Senator Joyce saying that he backs Campbell and these cuts 100 per cent.

Mr Pyne: Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The minister was asked about the government's policies and what the government was doing. Previous speakers have ruled as irrelevancies talking about other levels of government or other political parties. I therefore ask you to bring her back to the question.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat. The minister has the call.

Ms MACKLIN: I was also asked about challenges. The biggest challenge sits right opposite, because when you were in government you were the ones that cut disability care and support funding so that
people with disability found their care and support disappear when you were in government.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Just before I call the member for Paterson, in the gallery today we have the Council of the National Rural Health Alliance. I welcome them—they are in the very bright blue T-shirts—to the gallery today. And we have representatives from the Australian Mitochondrial Disease Awareness Foundation.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Carbon Pricing

Mr BALDWIN (Paterson) (14:39): My question is to the Treasurer. I remind the Treasurer of comments from Victorian chicken meat boss Mike Shaw that the carbon tax has 'bowled over chicken growers with the triple-whammy price hike', with electricity up 13 to 16 per cent, LPG up 3.72c a litre, and landfill charges that have surged by $26 a tonne. Treasurer, Mr Shaw warns that without a cent of compensation for farmers or the ability to pass on increased costs: 'The only thing that is going to happen is we'll all go broke.' Treasurer, what do you expect our farmers to do?

Mr SWAN (Lilley—Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer) (14:40): If there have been unjustified price increases, they should be referred to the ACCC. Because, as I have said before, the overall impact on the economy is 0.7 per cent, less than one cent in the dollar. Yes, it does have a more significant impact on electricity. But, overall, in terms of our economy, price rises of that magnitude should be referred to the ACCC.

Health

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (14:40): My question is to the Minister for Health. Will the minister inform the House what the government is doing to improve health care for all Australians? How does this compare with other approaches to health care investment?

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Minister for Health) (14:41): I want to thank the member for Blair for his question. The member understands what it means to have a strong and vibrant health system. In his electorate recently, we have just committed $21 million for a new cancer centre in Springfield. I was up there in Blair recently with the member for Blair and the member for Oxley, not just looking at the site of the new Springfield cancer centre but also meeting with the West Moreton-Oxley Medicare Local that are delivering much better primary health care services in the areas represented by the member for Oxley and the member for Blair—better allied health, better extended hours GP services and better mental health, all on the ground up there.

All over Australia families like those families in Blair and in Oxley can see that our agenda is making real differences to their lives—investing and improving, in contrast with the slashing of services that we are seeing from state governments. We are graduating more doctors and more nurses—a thousand extra nurses a year, and 6,000 extra doctors over a decade—in contrast to the slashing of GP training places and the shortages that were left by the Leader of the Opposition when he was health minister. There are record bulk-billing rates versus record low bulk-billing rates. In contrast to our $20 billion investment into hospitals, $1 billion was cut by the Leader of the Opposition when he was the health minister.

The contrast is a stark one. I know that it upsets those opposite to have these issues raised. The dental scheme that we have introduced into the parliament just recently includes $4.1 billion to be spent on better...
dental care for 3.4 million Australian children, better investment in the dental care of adults, and about $1.5 billion extra for public dental care. Those opposite are saying, 'Where does it come from?' Yes, we will close the chronic disease dental scheme, because it is a rorted scheme. It is a scheme that was supposed to cost $90 million a year that was costing $80 million a month. It is a rorted scheme.

Opposition members interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Cook will resume his seat. The minister has the call and has the right to be heard in silence.

Ms PLIBERSEK: The contrast in Queensland: dentists sacked in the Brisbane Dental Hospital, dental services downgraded at the Royal Children's Hospital, and $1.4 million cut from the metro health oral budget. And, do you know what? The Leader of the Opposition says Campbell Newman has his full support. The shadow Treasurer: 'Campbell Newman has my full support.' Barnaby Joyce: Campbell has his full support. Three billion dollars was cut from the New South Wales health budget, and the shadow health minister loves— (Time expired)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: If those opposite continue to assist with the baying of time there might not be any people left at the end of question time. It is highly disorderly.

Mustafa, Mr Taji

Mr MORRISON (Cook) (14:44): My question is to the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship. Does the minister accept that Taji Mustafa, a leader of Hizb ut-Tahrir, is a member of a political movement directed towards non-peaceful overthrow of another government, such as Israel's military destruction, or that holds extremist views that are both proscribed grounds to deny Mr Mustafa's visa on public-interest grounds under the character test, under his discretion, in section 501 of the Migration Act?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The minister for—

Opposition members interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I am hesitating because I have been reading—as we have been going along—not in respect of the question but rule 101C(ii), 'questions critical of the character or conduct of other persons must be in writing.' That refers to anybody being asked a question before the parliament. I was hesitating before the Leader of the House got to his feet because I felt that the question was in breach of that standing order.

Mr Albanese: Madam Deputy Speaker, on the point of order: notwithstanding the fact that the minister for immigration has indicated he is certainly willing to answer the question, I am concerned, as Leader of the House, about this. There is a reason we have a standing order on asking for legal opinions in the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business on a point of order.

Mr Pyne: Madam Deputy Speaker, a point of order on the two points that have been raised: one by yourself and one by the Leader of the House. In terms of dealing with the one from the Leader of the House, the minister is not being asked for a legal opinion, he is being asked why he has not acted within his own powers and his own discretion. In terms of your concern, if your concern were followed through for all questions and answers, Madam Deputy Speaker, but particularly questions, then virtually no question about the opposition or Campbell Newman or Barry O'Farrell or anybody else would be asked in this place.
The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I think members of the public, who are not in office, and that is what the standing order refers to, to give them—if you want to read, I am referring to the standing orders.

Mr Randall interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The standing orders are the standing orders, the member for Canning. I am going to ask the member for Banks to resume his seat and for the member for Cook to read the question again, in silence, so I can hear the question. That would be helpful from all members in the chambers.

Mr MORRISON: Does the minister accept that Taji Mustafa, a leader of Hizb ut-Tahrir, is a member of a political movement directed towards non-peaceful overthrow of another government—such as Israel's military destruction—or holds extremist views, that are both proscribed grounds to deny Mr Mustafa's visa on public-interest grounds under the character test, under his discretion, in section 501 of the Migration Act? To assist the House, I seek leave to table the public interest criteria I am making reference to.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will allow the question in respect of the minister's responsibility. I will deal with the tabling at the end of the question.

Mr BOWEN (McMahon—Minister for Immigration and Citizenship) (14:48): I am very happy to take that question from the member for Cook. It goes to my powers under the Migration Act in relation to the character test and the public-interest test. In relation to that test I refer the honourable member to my previous answer, which outlined the fact that this is not a proscribed organisation. In relation to the views of that individual, every member of this House would have very strong views about the position taken by that individual.

Mr Pyne: Madam Deputy Speaker, on a point of order: the question was not about proscribed organisations, it was about his own discretion. For that reason, he is not being relevant to the question.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The minister is being relevant to the question.

Mr BOWEN: In relation to the minister's personal powers, these are to be exercised appropriately and carefully. For the information of the House, I have personally considered the character test on 38 occasions during my time as minister for immigration and on 27 of those occasions I have taken the decision to cancel or refuse a visa. It is a parallel exercise with due care and diligence and the member for Cook might like to get a reminder from the member for Menzies about what happens when a minister does not do that.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the House, was leave granted to table the document?

Mr Albanese: No, leave is not granted. I table the press release from the Prime Minister, on 10 October 2007, supporting the Pacific Highway duplication by 2016, with matching financial commitment from New South Wales.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The minister has resumed his seat. The Leader of the House has declined to give leave.

Honourable members interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There is a great deal of puerile behaviour that goes on in this place.

Education

Mr MELHAM (Banks) (14:51): My question is to the Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth. Will the minister inform the House about the future prospects of Australia's schools? What
challenges do our schools face and how is the government addressing these?

Mr GARRETT (Kingsford Smith—Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth) (14:51): I thank the member for Banks for his question. In the investment that the Gillard Labor government has provided in his electorate he can see some 107 projects benefiting 46 schools with seven libraries, 22 classrooms, and 5,000 computers delivered. And Riverwood Public School and Sir Joseph Banks High School being involved in the Smarter Schools National Partnerships.

And we continue that investment in schools around Australia because we know that the future prospects of Australian schools are dependent on the investment that they get and on the policies in place to lift education outcomes, support teachers in the classrooms and make sure that principals have got more opportunities and autonomy to lead their schools. And we understand that the link—the connection—between education and a strong economy and a fairer society is an absolute one. That is why we have a National Plan for School Improvement so that all kids can get a good education. Because if kids get a good education now then they get a good job in the future. And we want to put Australian schools in the world's top five. And under our plan all schools will see their funding rise; no school will see funding cut and no school will see funding frozen.

Is there a challenge to this particular commitment? Yes. We see what happens when the Liberal Party is in charge of education budgets—and nowhere more clearly than in New South Wales, where there has been $1.7 billion worth of cuts identified by Premier O'Farrell; 1,000 jobs to go; funding freezes for non-government schools; 800 job losses for TAFE; TAFE fees going up: cuts to the tune of $1.7 billion.

If we look across the landscape of coalition states and we see the same thing happening. What comes on the chopping block?—health and education. This is a taste of what is likely to come at the next election—certainly if the federal Liberal Party should prevail at that election. On top of the existing $2.8 billion in cuts that we have underway already, we also saw this weekend the member for Sturt, the shadow opposition spokesman, completely exposed on how he would grow school funding. Up to this point in time he has said that he would provide school funding increases to six per cent.

And now what he is saying is that he will only apply it to the level of the flawed funding model of the Howard government at 3.9 per cent under the AGSRC. So he has betrayed the non-government schools that he was promising would get a six per cent increase by going back on his word. And the impact of any coalition government in this place is not only to have $2.8 billion worth of cuts but to be committed to a funding system which would see funding for all schools go down over time.

Mr Pyne: I seek leave to table a document in which Kim Beazley, the former minister of education, introduced the AGSRC, which the minister describes as a flawed funding model.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): The member for Sturt will resume his seat. Leader of the House, is leave granted?

Mr Albanese: I refer to my previous statement: it has been ruled by previous speakers that someone who has not asked a question cannot seek leave to table a question. If he has an education question he
can ask it now and then he can seek leave to table it.

Leave not granted.

Mr Pyne: It's the Beazley model, you fool.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business will withdraw.

Mr PYNE: I withdraw.

Mr Gibbons interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Was it the member for Bass or the member for McEwen who just called that out, or was it completely somebody else? Somebody over there should fess up because I heard it and I want them to withdraw it. Was it the member for Throsby? One of you did it.

Mr Gibbons: I withdraw.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Bendigo, thank you for being so honest. There has to be someone with chivalry in this place!

Honourable members interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Cook has the call. It is an important issue, I dare say, and he should be heard in silence.

Mustafa, Mr Taji

Mr MORRISON (Cook) (14:56): My question is to the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship. I refer the minister to his previous answer and ask: has the minister considered the specific case of Taji Mustafa's visa with respect to his compliance with the public interest criteria of the character test under section 501 of the Migration Act? If so, what was the result of his consideration of this case? If not, why not?

Mr BOWEN (McMahon—Minister for Immigration and Citizenship) (14:56): I thank the honourable member for his question. Such is his interest in this matter that he wrote to me on Thursday and, funnily enough, he also released details to the journalists in the press gallery at a very similar time as writing to me. Such is his public interest concern in this particular case.

In relation to my powers under the character test and the public interest test I will conduct myself in the same way as I have in the other 38 cases that I have personally considered and I will—

Mr Morrison: I rise on a point of order in terms of specific relevance. I asked whether he had considered this specific case. Has he considered this specific case, and if not, why not? If so, what was the outcome?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): The minister has the call and will refer to the question before the chair.

Mr BOWEN: I conduct myself in relation to the character test in accordance with my responsibilities under the act. To do otherwise would be to open the Commonwealth to potential overturning of the decision and a potential very serious compensation case, as the honourable member for Menzies well remembers.

Opposition members interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Cook is warned.

Taxation

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (14:58): My question is to the Assistant Treasurer and Minister Assisting for Deregulation. What has the government done to reduce the tax burden as a proportion of GDP for Australian families and businesses. How does this compare with other policies to raise taxes and cut vital services, and what would be their impact?

Mr BRADBURY (Lindsay—Assistant Treasurer and Minister Assisting for Deregulation) (14:58): I thank the member for Parramatta for her question. She is a very effective voice for the people of western
Sydney in this place. As she knows, this government has delivered several rounds of tax cuts because we want to give hard-working families and businesses the chance to get ahead. We have provided $47 billion worth of tax cuts, with the latest round of these tax cuts coming into effect on 1 July this year. And, of course, we have delivered $2 billion worth of tax relief to small businesses, through the instant asset write-off. And we have done all of this at a time that we have been handing down a budget that returns our budget to surplus ahead of every other major advance economy in the world.

Australia's tax-to-GDP ratio was at record high levels when the previous government were in office. The tax-to-GDP ratio, which of course is the amount of tax collected as a proportion of the economy, hit record high levels under the former government. At the moment, it is at 22.1 per cent, which is lower than at any point under the previous government. In fact, if Australians were paying the same rate of tax today as they were when the previous government was in office, they would be paying an extra $24 billion in tax every year.

But of course the Liberals have no interest in genuine tax relief. They have opposed nine tax cuts to families and to small businesses, including a cut in the company tax rate. Not only did they oppose the cut in the company tax rate but they want to increase taxes for companies. Several thousand businesses will be slugged with an increase in tax of 1½ per cent to fund their paid parental leave scheme. In doing so, consumers will all be hit at the checkouts with higher prices.

We see on the weekend that their colleague in New South Wales, Premier O'Farrell, is now talking about jacking up the GST. Of course, this was not an isolated incident; it came in response to an invitation he received from the member for North Sydney. The member for North Sydney in July said:

If you are going to have a discussion about changing the GST the states have to lead the argument because they are the ones that need the revenue.

Premier O'Farrell has responded on cue. He came out on the weekend suggesting that we should increase the GST. We know that will be welcomed by those opposite, but if you want to increase the GST there are only two ways you can do it. You either jack up the rate or you take away the exemptions. We all know the biggest exemption is on fresh food. So they either want to jack up the rate of GST, extending it to fresh food, or have a look at what the other exemptions are. The two other biggest exemptions are health and education services. It is not bad enough they want to rip money away from these services—now they want to hit them with the GST. We all know they believe it should be a tax that applies to everything; now they want to do that. (Time expired)

Mustafa, Mr Taji

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Manager of Opposition Business) (15:01): I have a question to the Attorney-General. Did she have foreknowledge and security advice in relation to the visit of Taji Mustafa before he visited Australia last week to address the Hizb ut-Tahrir conference?

Ms ROXON (Gellibrand—Attorney-General and Minister for Emergency Management) (15:02): I understand the question and the reason that it has been asked but, consistent with longstanding practice, I obviously would not comment on individual security advice that we are given. I can confirm to the House a matter that I think the immigration minister was trying to make clear over the cacophony that was
coming from the other side. There are of course two different issues that are being addressed here. One is the proscription of terrorist organisations, of which there are 17 in this country. There is a very detailed process which is gone through. It is an important factor that people should be aware of, and it is a matter that I think it is important that people understand. That process needs to be gone through—both in consultation with the states, it is acted on in particular advice—

Ms Julie Bishop: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The Attorney-General was not asked about proscribed terrorist organisations. She was asked about the minister's discretion specifically. That is the issue—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): The Deputy Leader of the Opposition will resume her seat.

Ms Julie Bishop: Just a minute—she was asked about what the Attorney-General's office—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition will resume her seat. The Attorney-General has the call.

Ms ROXON: The point that I was going to go on to make is that obviously, if people are in any way involved with organisations that are on that proscription list, there are certain processes that are gone through which would have an impact on the way a discretion was exercised by a minister.

Ms ROXON: The minister himself has already answered the question with regard to the requirements under the immigration act, and, having been on the receiving end of quite a number of actions—

Mr Morrison: No; it's a question.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: No; two supplementaries have already been asked.

Fisheries

Mr KELVIN THOMSON (Wills) (15:05): My question is to the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities. How does the government intend to use new powers under environmental law to protect our oceans and fish stocks? What has been the response to this and what additional scientific work will now be done as a result of these changes?

Mr BURKE (Watson—Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities) (15:05): I want to thank the member for Wills for the question. The member for Wills is one of the first members of the parliament to express particular high levels of concern about wanting to make sure that our fishing remains sustainable.

Of course, he was reflecting views that have been described by those opposite as only coming from environment groups. Nothing could be further from the truth.
There has been no group making more noise in respect of this issue than recreational fishers. Recreational fishers have been responding loudly and strongly with two messages. Firstly, they want to make sure that in the years to come we have not overfished the stock. They want to make sure that they and their kids and grandkids can continue to catch fish in the same numbers that they can now. The second message that has come in response to the government’s action is a genuine level of shock that an opposition which campaigned as through it were the friend of recreational fishing has gone missing on this issue and has actually become the chief opponent of a recreational fishing campaign. Recreational fishers have discovered, without any doubt, that those opposite stand against them when it comes to what happens 5½ kilometres from shore. They might be friends if there is a zone 400 kilometres away, but if it is as soon as you reach Commonwealth waters, those opposite and recreational fishers stand opposite each other, opposing each other, every step of the way in this debate.

This legislation is now being dealt with in the Senate. It was delayed for an hour while opposition speakers debated for an hour whether or not they had time to debate it in the Senate, but then, having done that, the debate commenced. After question time the debate in the other place will continue. I certainly hope that they reach a conclusion in that debate today, because we want to be in a situation where the law is proclaimed and we want to be in a situation where the government is able to action the new laws and the new legal powers which it makes available.

On proclamation of this legislation I will be using the legal authority made available to me and to the fisheries minister to be able to conduct the scientific research, which I wanted to be able to conduct, before conditions were put in place. In any other area of environmental law you can do it. In any other area of environmental law, if the information is not there, you can make sure that the studies are done before the decision has to be made. Until this law is through, you cannot do that and you do not have those same powers with respect to fisheries. This government makes no apologies for wanting to have a highly precautionary level of care when it comes to our oceans. Those opposite might be able to turn a blind eye to these issues, but we will not. (Time expired)

Mr KELVIN THOMSON (Wills) (15:08): Madam Deputy Speaker, I ask a supplementary question. I thank the minister for his answer and ask: why is it important when it comes to fisheries that we get the science right?

Mr BURKE (Watson—Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities) (15:08): I thank the member for Wills for the supplementary because it is so important to be able to get the scientific information right on this and to fill those knowledge gaps. It is not only the government and this parliament that have this view. When this issue was put before the Tasmanian parliament as to whether or not there was enough scientific information, every member of the Tasmanian parliament voted unanimously that the work had not yet been done for this trawler to commence operations. On the weekend the Victorian National Party minister, Peter Walsh, said that they would put a 12-month ban in place, the draft notice would ban large mid-water trawlers from operating in waters within three nautical miles of the Victorian coastline which fall under Victorian jurisdiction.

The Liberals in Tasmania know, the Liberals in Victoria know, but those opposite, when it comes to a choice between
staying with recreational fishing or perhaps being on the conservation side of an issue, would rather desert every recreational angler in the country, desert them completely, because they could not bear to be on the side of conservation, even on an issue as important as this.

Mr Tehan interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Wannon is warned. The Deputy Prime Minister has the call.

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

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Mr MORRISON (Cook) (15:10): Madam Deputy Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation.

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

Mr MORRISON: I do.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Cook has the call.

Mr MORRISON: Thank you. In question time today the minister for immigration said that I had provided a copy of the letter that I sent to him seeking information on the minister's actions to deny a visa to Mr Taji Mustafa, and he indicated that I had provided that to the press. That is totally untrue and he should withdraw the accusation.

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Manager of Opposition Business) (15:11): Madam Deputy Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Does the Manager of Opposition Business claim to have been misrepresented?

Mr PYNE: I do.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please proceed.

Mr PYNE: In question time today the minister for schools attempted to pretend that I had said that I supported the Howard flawed AGSRC model. In fact the AGSRC model was introduced by the previous Labor government, by Mr Beazley, the then minister for employment, education and training.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business must demonstrate where he has been misrepresented.

Mr PYNE: I would recommend that the minister read the Hansard. I seek leave to table the Hansard of 4 November 1992 which clearly shows that it was a Beazley government, a Beazley ministry, implementation of the AGSRC.

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

Mr Pyne interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat. The Manager of Opposition Business is now defying the chair. Is leave granted to table the document?

Mr Albanese: Is leave granted to table Hansard in Hansard? Is that what I am being asked? Hansard is already in Hansard.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Leader of the House will resume his seat. The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat. The member for Hume has the call.

QUESTIONS TO THE SPEAKER

Parliamentary Computing Network

Mr SCHULTZ (Hume) (15:12): I seek clarification on an issue and I want to put a question to you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, last Thursday it was brought to my attention that the Outlook services of several members of parliament in
the parliamentary network were part of a serious security issue. The issue involved the ability for people viewing an email with the member's address within to gain visual access to the member's Outlook calendar by simply hovering the cursor over the email address. I asked my staff to make some short reports of their experience with this which they did. That prompted me to send an email to the department at about 5.30 on Thursday night. Following on from the incident on Thursday the Outlook calendar privileges for one of my staff in my electorate office in Cowra were removed overnight, Thursday, by persons unknown. These have since been restored and they were restored because there was a phone call from my senior secretary to the department which stimulated the issue.

I then asked the department for a report on the above matters with answers to the following questions: (1) When did 2020 first become aware of the security issue and why did they not alert offices to the problem? (2) Were staff also affected? (3) Given the seriousness of the matter can you please confirm that: the problem was a glitch which occurred with the changeover and installation of Windows 7 and the Office 2012 upgrade, or an event which was caused due to persons hacking into the parliamentary system? (4) Who removed the permissions for staff member Maree Ireland? (5) I would also like a response addressing these matters as soon as possible—preferably Monday morning at the latest.

Madam Deputy Speaker, on the following night at 6.32 pm a security-in-confidence email went out to all senators and members reporting the procedures relating to Outlook access on the PCN.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Hume, I think there is going to be quite a deal in your question—

Mr SCHULTZ: The point I am getting to—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, I think it is a very important issue. If you could refer the written documentation to me—

Mr SCHULTZ: The response I got did not address the issue. It simply told the staff to follow a procedure, which they already had done and were capable of doing. I have received no answers to this date. I would ask you as Deputy Speaker to chase the issue up on behalf of all members.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (15:21): I thank the member for Hume for raising the issue and I will ask the Speaker to follow it up with the various individuals.

PRIVILEGE

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (15:22): Mr Speaker has asked me to deliver the following statement on his behalf:

Last Thursday, the Honourable Member for North Sydney raised a matter of privilege following a request that had been made during Question Time for the Deputy Prime Minister to present a document.

Standing order 201 provides that if a Minister quotes from a document relating to public affairs a Member may ask for it to be presented, and the document must be presented unless the Minister states that it is confidential. The practice of the House is that when a request for presentation is made the Speaker first asks the Minister whether he or she has read from the document. The Speaker always accepts the Minister's response as the Speaker is not in a position to determine whether in fact a Minister has been reading from a document or not. If the answer is "no", that ends the matter; if the answer is "yes", the Speaker then asks whether the document is confidential. Again, the Speaker always accepts the Minister's response as the Speaker is not in a position to determine whether or not a document is confidential or not. More detail on this practice is given in House of Representatives Practice, 6th edition, p 606.
On 22 May, on my behalf, Madam Deputy Speaker read out a statement about the consideration of claims that a Member had deliberately misled the House. The statement read in part:

To establish that contempt has been committed it would need to be shown that:
(1) a statement had in fact been misleading;
(2) the member knew at the time the statement was incorrect; and
(3) the misleading had been deliberate.

There needs to be prima facie evidence of these matters to establish a case for precedence to be given to a motion.

… the matter of deliberately misleading the House is a very serious one and rightly there should be prima facie evidence that the House has been misled and that the misleading has been deliberate.

I have examined the Hansard record of the matter now in question and the photograph presented by the Honourable Member.

Although different in its particulars, this complaint has elements in common with other claims that have been made that a Member has deliberately misled the House.

As explained to the House on 22 May, claims of this kind have been raised as matters of privilege or contempt on a number of occasions, but no Speaker has ever given precedence to allow such a matter to be referred to the Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests. This position is consistent with the policy of restraint in the exercise of the penal jurisdiction that has been cited many times by Speakers, and by the Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests, since the review of the law of privilege and contempt that was conducted in 1982-84.

It is always open to the House to refer a matter to the Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests. The Speaker's role is to determine whether priority over other business should be given to motions for referral. In terms of the approach to such matters in the past, it is clear to me that the present complaint would not require a departure from the approach that has been taken by successive Speakers to such complaints.

### MOTIONS

**Road User Charge Determination (No. 1) 2012 Disallowance**

Debate resumed on the motion:

That the Road User Charge Determination (No. 1) 2012 made under the Fuel Tax Act 2006, be disallowed.

**Mr OAKESHOTT**  (Lyne)  (15:18): In continuation, I finished by making the point that I will not be supporting the government on this disallowance motion even though I still await the letter from the Leader of the Nationals after having written to him last week seeking some guidance as to why on earth this House is being asked by the Leader of the Nationals federally to do what the New South Wales Nationals did not.

It is my understanding that the New South Wales Nationals roads minister, Duncan Gay, voted for this road user charge increase through state and federal processes. I have therefore asked for some guidance from the federal Leader of the Nationals to get the New South Wales roads minister to put in writing an explanation of why I should do what he did not when he was given the chance to do so.

If the Nationals as a body support the transport industry, the movers of product, the movers of food and the movers of 80 per cent of products to Australian households then surely this is a fight that should have been run and won through the processes of COAG and the National Transport Commission and the processes between the state and federal governments. It is disappointing now that it looks to be this House, the federal Nationals leader, myself and others who are now doing a job that should have been done by the New South Wales roads minister.
I would also like to make a point about where some of that money ends up going. There was an announcement over the weekend which, on the surface, looked to be a good announcement. It looked to be the completion of the Pacific Highway by 2016. It looked to be an new 80/20 agreement between the federal government and the state government. And it looked to be one that involves new money. It is this last point I would like some clarification on from the Nationals because I would like to remind them to look at the budget papers of the last two years if they are making this announcement based on a redirection of funds from the Epping to Parramatta rail line. If they then compare that to the forward estimates from May this year, they will see a significant, in fact record, increase in funding from the Commonwealth to the Pacific Highway completion going from $1 billion in 2011 up to $3.56 billion in 2012. It is my understanding that at the same time the Epping to Parramatta rail line forward estimates have moved roughly comparably, so there is only $67 million in the 2012 budget for the forward estimates for the Epping to Parramatta rail line. As anyone knows: you cannot spend money twice. So, already, in the $3.56 billion allocated in the May budget this year, the Epping to Parramatta rail-line money has been redirected. It is a good idea, which I saw come from the Nationals' federal conference over the weekend—it is just 12 months too late.

The question therefore is: are the Nationals double-accounting the money from the Epping to Parramatta rail-line? If they are, this is once again a trick from opposition that does not contribute to the completion of the Pacific Highway at all. If they are not, and if they are genuinely talking about new money, if they are talking about a new funding model that is different from the fifty-fifty split between the Commonwealth and the state of the Howard and Vaile years, and they are now talking about an eighty-twenty model funding arrangement between the federal government and the state, and if they are now locking into a 2016 completion deadline based on that model and based on new funding of $2 billion coming in from somewhere, then I will back the Nationals and the Liberals 100 per cent for that commitment. But, if they are doing that based on redirecting Epping-to-Parramatta rail money that has already been redirected, I will not—that is a trick, that is a con and that adds to the cynicism of North Coast residents, who are completely sick of both political parties saying one thing in opposition and doing another in government. So I would ask for clarification on that.

The third point I would like to make—

Mr Hunt: You mean like a carbon tax!

Mr OAKESHOTT: Well, I have been completely consistent about an emissions trading scheme. I just wish the shadow minister was equally consistent for an emissions trading scheme. It is a great pity! I wish the person in the chair had been as consistent on an emissions trading scheme!

Mr Tehan interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): Order! The member for Lyne is now reflecting on the chair. He might not realise that. So I am going to ask him to stop dealing with the interjections and return to the motion before the House.
Mr OAKESHOTT: The third point I would like to make with regard to road funding relates to the situation of local government. Seventy per cent of the road network in Australia does fall under the local government network. I hope many members in this chamber are of a view that the local road network has failed. The rate base of most councils, particularly regional councils, is low and has difficulty keeping pace with the current costs and current expectations in new local road building of roughly $1 million per kilometre. Local councils cannot keep pace with that sort of—

Mr Tehan: Why did this government cut the grants to them?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Wannon is warned!

Mr OAKESHOTT: Thank you. If you don't want me to respond, please don't start it! Roughly $1 million per kilometre, in 2012 terms, is too much of an ask for the 650-odd local councils in Australia. They do need a new funding model, and it does need some sort of conversation from both the state and federal governments, that is not only about highways, is not only about state and regional roads, but is also about the status of and the funding commitment to local roads.

I am going against this disallowance motion, not because it came from the Leader of the Nationals, and not because he has failed to get me this letter from the New South Wales National Party leader, who voted for this increase in road user charges; it is because I want to start to get better outcomes in comprehensive tax reform and a greater commitment from political leaders, federal and state, on some of the issues that have been talked about for too long and on which the conversation has failed to progress.

In my previous contribution I started to talk about urban congestion charging. It was recommended to government and opposition by Treasury, that the time has come for the conversation to begin on how we start to introduce, over time, something akin to urban congestion charging—as per the Henry tax reform report, and as per most who are trying to get better outcomes in road use funding models and the contribution back to things like public transport and local roads.

So if the idea is to once again just load up the heavy-transport sector, to once again load up those who produce the food and move the food—and move 80 per cent of the retail product to the homes of Australia—I am not interested, unless it is a comprehensive conversation around how we deliver better transport funding models across the board. We cannot keep picking off the truckies and leaving the rest of the conversation unaddressed. I know there are many in this House who will see that as political fodder, and probably attack me in the west of Sydney and in Melbourne, but if we are going to load up one sector, if we are going to load up regional Australia, if we are going to load up the trucking industry, we have to have a much better conversation across the board about how we tax and transfer in the transport sector, and in the public transport sector, than we have today.

Mr WINDSOR (New England) (15:28): I would like to speak briefly to this motion. I will be supporting the government, and I will make some comments in relation to that in a moment. But I think it might be appropriate, if people are listening to this debate—because there are some interesting positions that have been taken by a number of people on this issue—to give some context, to look at the history of the decision-making process. One of the major determinants of my decision is that there has been a process in place, and that process has essentially been followed—and I would like to go through that. I had a similar recourse to process last
week on the fishing industry debate. A process had been established, and in that case the government saw fit to walk outside that particular process.

Just for those who are not familiar with this particular issue, I will walk through it briefly. The National Road Transport Commission was formed in 1991. Prime Minister Howard, in 2003, beefed this up with the National Transport Commission Act. The National Transport Commission was then formed in 2004. The ministerial council was then called the Australian Transport Council and is now called the Standing Council on Transport and Infrastructure. This change occurred this year and was agreed to at the February 2011 meeting of the Australian Council of Australian Governments. The National Transport Commission presented a new charging model to the Standing Council on Transport and Infrastructure. The outcomes of the agenda papers clearly show that the National Transport Commission charging model recommended an increase in the road user charge from 23.1c to 25.5c a litre, on page 25 of the National Transport Commission’s *Heavy vehicle charges* paper. Hence what came to be known as resolution 3(b), I think it is, of the meeting of the Standing Council on Transport and Infrastructure committee was passed.

There has been a lot of debate in here, and the member for Lyne a moment ago asked the shadow minister for transport for some documentation as to how New South Wales had voted on this particular issue. It is very clear, if one takes the time to go through the documentation, that in the New South Wales case the Hon. Duncan Gay—who was represented by Mr Tim Reardon, Deputy Director General, Policy and Regulation, Transport New South Wales—supported the resolution. I think, from memory, that the Northern Territory and Western Australia had some reservations in terms of the future model. But essentially all states, as part of that COAG process, through that National Transport Commission—or SCOTI—supported the concept.

So it is very strange, when you have had a process that has been supported by both sides of government—the Liberal-National government and the Labor Party, when it came to power—to suddenly find that there is a disallowance motion in this particular bill. That would not have anything to do with the nature of this particular parliament, of course—the fact that it is a hung parliament. I am sure that would not have entered into the political discussions that the various players have had. But I would adhere to the process in terms of this particular motion and hence will be supporting the government.

I have some history in relation to these issues, but particularly with the A-trailer issue that was raised a few years ago and is being addressed through this documentation as well. But there are also people within the transport sector who are supportive of the changes, who are supportive of the process. There are people who actually believe that safety is important in terms of this particular industry and that cost recovery, which a lot of political parties have spoken about over the years, is important in terms of the road users. This is about a road user charge. I could enter into a whole range of debates both with the government and with the opposition about the 38c per litre that car road users pay and the amount of that that is returned to the roads. For those who might be listening, that is about $362 million that is raised.

There has been a lot of talk from time to time about the significance of Roads to Recovery, which is a good policy. It was put in place during the Howard Anderson years and has been substantially supported—and
increased, actually, in a number of budgets—by the government. It is a good policy. But when people suggest that that is as far as the string should go, I would say that it is only about a cent per litre out of the 38c that is actually returned to the Roads to Recovery program. Something like $2 billion in total is returned to roads, in associated grants and other things. But something like $15 billion is raised. So a very small proportion of what is raised from the motorist actually goes back into some form of road construction.

Nonetheless, the transport industry and others—both sides of government, the Howard governments as well as the Rudd and Gillard governments—have supported the concept of cost recovery as a component of the structure of transport arrangements within the Australian nation. And the states and territories have supported that concept as well, because they are the recipients of some of that money. The Council of Australian Governments process was set up to deal with these issues. There are cross-border issues and different legislative structures are put in place. In this particular case, the various states and territories have walked through, they have agreed with the process, they have agreed with the increase. I could read out the actual wording, if people are interested in it, but 3(b) of the agenda was accepted by all of them. And all of a sudden, because of the nature of this particular parliament—and I can hear them out there now—the dogs will be whistling about the way in which the votes are taken, and the man who just looked at me will be one of them; he will be whistling away at his dogs. I'll be running, and it will all be a tragedy.

Mr Hartsuyker: You'll be running soon!

Mr WINDSOR: It will all be a tragedy. I will be delighted to enter that debate. I know that the member in question was here over the weekend. The member resides along the Pacific Highway and I am absolutely delighted to see that the Independents, Rob Oakeshott, who actually has the Pacific Highway running through his seat, and I, are the cause of this great largesse that is going to be expended by the National Party, if in fact they do come to power at the next election. There seems to be some degree of debate about that in today's press.

I was so chuffed I left a message on the member for Lyne's phone to suggest that the Independents had had such a significant impact on these people that at a federal conference they would announce that they had even moved the Pacific Highway into my seat so that they can fund it and, in a theoretical sense, it will get rid of me at the next poll. I congratulate you, Member for Lyne. The recognition of the brand 'Independent' in this particular case is an outstanding one. I think the community along the Pacific Highway, as has quite rightly been pointed out, has been taken for granted for many years by past governments. It is on the agenda with both the current government and possibly with a future government, if they do come to power.

I would like the shadow minister for transport, if he could, to clarify the portion of the Pacific Highway that actually does go through my electorate so that I can make some release on the funding stream that will come across to what I call the New England Highway, but apparently it is being renamed.

Safety is a very important issue for the road transport industry. Irrespective of whether or not we agree with the Transport Workers' Union or various players within the industry, such owners of large fleets, all of us recognise the pressures that owner-drivers, particularly, and others, are put under from time to time in the delivery of their products. I am delighted to see that $40 million out of these funds was going towards...
safety—lay-bys et cetera—that the road transport industry can take advantage of. In my discussions with the minister for transport he has indicated that another $10 million will go towards the livestock and road transport industry, particularly in relation to sale yard safety, loading ramps, wash-down bays, the sort of things that the industry for many years has been crying out for. Even though, in a sense, this is about cost recovery—and the various states and the Commonwealth have agreed to that—part of that cost recovery is a benefit back to those industry groups that are using the roads and have been subjected to quite great stresses in terms of safety. Whether it is wash-down bays, loading ramps or gates at sale yards where trucks are loaded, there will be an additional funding, which I think will be announced in December, available to various shires and interest groups and the industry itself to apply for to incorporate into the benefit that will flow to the industry in terms of safety.

I am very pleased to have been associated with this. I believe that the Australian Livestock and Rural Transporters Association, the CEO of which is Philip Halton, will be indicating by way of press release some of the issues they have raised—legitimate issues—through this process. I am pleased to see that they have been able to obtain some recompense for some of the issues they raised in terms of this additional $10 million, as well as the $40 million that was also going to be made available out of this funding, to go towards shoring up lay-bys and making sure that the roads are safer, particularly for the heavy vehicle road users, who use the system so effectively.

In conclusion, I refer people to a bit of historical documentation on this. We can all play the short-term game of politics, but there has been a fairly long established process that has been brought in by both sides of parliament. We need to try to adhere to those processes otherwise you have this convoluted tennis match going on where you can just score points against the other. It is quite obvious to me. I have great respect for Warren Truss. I hope he stays here and the other fellow stays where he is, because I think Australia would be better off with Warren Truss in this particular part of the parliament than some of the others who aspire to get here.

I say to Warren Truss that this is not the time to play a game with this particular process. This has obviously been adhered to by the states and territories and by the Commonwealth and I would be very reluctant to support bombing that process out. Hence I will not be supporting the disallowance.

Mr RAMSEY (Grey) (15:43): I rise to speak on the Road User Charge Determination (No. 1) 2012. I come from the electorate of Grey, which is almost 1,000 kilometres across and 1,000 kilometres from top to bottom. Transport is the lifeblood of an electorate like Grey. We are an agricultural region and a mining region. We supply resources to the rest of the state and the nation, and we pay freight both ways, so any policy artificially increasing the price of freight has a very real impact on all of my communities, and not just the truckies that service them.

We in the coalition have concerns there is overcharging in the case of the new road users charge, which I will explain later on. Mr Deputy Speaker, we are dealing with a tax and spend government, a government that has spent itself into a very unviable position and is looking to try in any way possible to claw back any of the debt they have run up. Unfortunately, in this case it seems to be coming, at least partially, from the transport industry. The old sticker that
we used to see on the back of windows that said ‘Truckies carry Australia’ is as true today as the day they were printed.

Just to give some framework to the road user charge, I would also like to have a brief look at the recent changes in state taxation for road users. From 1 July 2012—apart from a couple of states, it must be said—the fuel tax credit claimed by truck operators decreased from 15.043c to 12.643c per litre, and so the effective tax paid by the industry increased by 10.4 per cent from 23.1c to 25.5c a litre. There was also a decision to increase many truck and trailer registration charges, even though the registration charge on an A-trailer did fall. Registration charges for multicomination prime movers increased by almost 22 per cent, with the charge for a three-axle multicomination prime mover increasing by $1,693 from $7,764 in 2011-12 to $9,457 this year. The registration for many rigid trucks also increased substantially and the total registration charge for the trucks that really do service this area of Australia, my electorate—the nine-axle B-doubles—will fall $1,300 from the $15,000, but the registration charges for the triple road trains—and I might point out that B-doubles are not the flavour of the month in South Australia because we have the option of the B-triples—increased from $13,693 to $16,607.

It is certain the transport industry does not have a lot of friends in government, but it is also certain that there is a lot of public misinformation about trucks and truckies and the transport task in Australia. Truckies are constantly demonised for filling up the road with these monstrous great road trains. I point out to people that in the unfortunate case of an accident the effect of a car getting hit by a 22-tonne rigid tipper or a 90-tonne B-triple is exactly the same. If you do not have the B-triples on the road, you are going to have five to six times as many rigid tippers on the road. It would be a far more dangerous place. People should think about that argument before they start getting stuck into truckies. In fact, their safety record is very good. More often than not, when trucks are involved in an accident, it is not their fault.

Even before the carbon tax, which is set to give another effective 25 per cent increase to the road user charge in 2014, we have loaded up this industry. A large regional operator in the industry recently told me that, despite government rhetoric that transport will not pay carbon tax until 2014, since July almost all of his suppliers have raised prices, not blaming the carbon tax alone, it must be said, but citing the tax as part of the reason and taking the opportunity to lift prices. If they had solely blamed the carbon tax they would have the government and the ACCC on their backs. But the increases have been significant.

The Australian Trucking Association has maintained since day 1 that the mechanism used to calculate the road user charge is flawed, leading to overcharging to the tune of $700 million. I was listening to the member for Windsor's comments and he pointed to this side of the chamber and said we are playing politics because the House is hung. He said there is a process and we should follow it. But the problem is that the process is flawed. I would have thought that the member for Windsor would be backing a review of the process before these charges are implemented to make sure that we have the process right.

In effect, the National Transport Commission is using an estimate of truck numbers based on the 2008 figures. This figure is allocated to the entire vehicle fleet by analysing the survey of motor vehicle usage to determine how much should be
collected from each vehicle class—that is, cars, each type of truck, motorbikes et cetera—taking into account size in passenger car units, weight, kilometres driven and the equivalent standard number of axles. Supposedly this allows the National Transport Commission to calculate how much is owed by the heavy vehicle industry for cost recovery.

However, the reality is that truck registrations are much higher than the survey of motor vehicle usage indicates—and it is not hard to find the correct figures. All NatRoad had to do was go to the state registration authorities and get the actual numbers. We do not need an estimate based on 2008 figures; we need the actual numbers. Why wouldn't the National Transport Commission use those actual numbers? It really does make one wonder if they are on the job.

If the number of registrations is higher, if there are more trucks on the road and their individual accounts are collected as a proportion of the total maintenance bill, obviously the collections will far exceed the required amount. That is not even an error; it is a dereliction of duty. If we are to raise taxes on the road by a significant amount, we should have the figures right. In fact, in South Australia alone, according to the National Transport Commission's formula, the government should collect $75.4 million. That is, if they went off the current registrations, the tax would be $75.4 million. However, based on the registration figures from 2008 extrapolated through to 2012 they will be collecting $110 million—a $35.6 million overrecovery. That is just in South Australia. The government's efforts to achieve national laws and regulation once again seem to be failing. These laws and regulations are not performing as we would all like them to and as I would hope the government would like them to do. Despite a majority of the ministers on the Standing Council on Transport and Infrastructure agreeing to the increase, various state governments have subsequently implemented alternative proposals. I have drifted onto the registration area, so I will continue and then come back to the road user charge. The ministers did disagree, and the Northern Territory and Western Australian governments, as I alluded to earlier, have implemented significantly lower registration increases. There is not a coherent view across all governments in Australia at the moment. Quite simply, this is a problem that should not have arisen.

It seems clear to me that the government, in establishing its total road maintenance figure, have used the amount of money that was spent on roads in Australia in the financial year. In that case, it includes much of the flood reparations in Queensland. Flood damage can hardly be blamed on the truckers of Australia. It was an act of God. The government have imposed a levy on all Australians to help pay for the flood damage, yet they have still rolled that figure into the total road repair bill for the year to establish the total cost. So it is misleading, mean and sneaky. Not only is the mechanism flawed, because there are more trucks on the road than the extrapolated figures indicate; the government has been inflating the amount of money—the total road rebuilding figure—that is spent within Australia by adding in the Queensland flood figures. That simply should not be part of the equation. This is the reason for the disallowance motion: the sums are not right.

The government are trying to claw back money from the stimulus package. Remember, Mr Deputy Speaker, the stimulus package was about keeping the economy going. They are trying to draw back funds from the stimulus package and from the flood reparations and put them into the total
road maintenance bill and say, 'This is what we spend on roads every year,' underestimating the number of trucks and then dividing it up between the truckies and the road. No wonder the trucking industry is not happy.

I support the disallowance motion because the increases in road user charges are based on dodgy modelling and are yet another example of a government seeking to cover its out-of-control spending.

Ms MARINO (Forrest—Opposition Whip) (15:55): I support the comments made by the member for Grey in relation to this road user charge determination disallowance motion moved by the member for Wide Bay. The member from Grey and I are from regional electorates and we do know about the cost of transport, we do know what job the trucking and transport industry does for us in regional areas and we do know that road transport is basically the artery of our lives, providing us with everything that we use, that we eat and that we build with. It is the artery of life in rural and regional Australia.

Mr Hartsuyker: Absolutely right, member for Forrest!

Ms MARINO: Exactly. We do know, from listening to the member for Grey, that the government's modelling and process in coming to this increased cost are flawed. I will not go through it again, because the member for Grey has done so. I know not only that the transport sector is one of the most competitive in Australia but also that a lot of operators in my electorate—and, I suspect, right around Australia—are doing it particularly tough already. The question is: do they need another one of this government's taxes? No, they do not. They do not need to help this government recover all of its waste and mismanagement, but that is what they are being used for in this process.

We do know that there is an over-recovery in this program, and we heard the member for Grey express exactly what that was. I was very interested in one of the Independent's comments that additional funds for this would be used for other purposes. If it is just about cost recovery, why will additional funds be used for other purposes? Either it is overcharged or it is not. Either there is sufficient for cost recovery to go to the purpose intended or there is an additional amount being recovered from the transport industry to use for the government's alternative purposes because of the amount of money they have wasted right across the board.

For owner operators out there, truck drivers—I know a lot of them because I come from the industry—every single cent that adds to their cost of doing business means that they are less likely to be in business, or it is part of their profit margin that is very tight. It is an extremely competitive market and environment. We know that every single additional burden placed on the trucking companies and their drivers by this government is cumulative. They have seen it over and over and it has not stopped yet—we know the carbon tax will go directly onto fuel in 2014. They know this is just the next hike in taxes, not the last one.

The compounding impact on regional Australia is far greater than it is anywhere else. But unfortunately this government ignores regional Australia, does not consider how tough it is in regional Australia, does not consider the amount of kilometres we have to do both ways. My electorate is 12½ thousand square kilometres. So the tax applies both ways. It is 320 kilometres from Perth. The transport companies in my
electorate travel thousands of kilometres interstate, and they are doing these kilometres day after day and night after night. That is what is required to get all that we need to us in rural and regional Australia. It does need those people to be on the road, to be committed to the work that they do and do well.

What we see is a never-ending litany of government red tape, compliance, tax upon tax, and fees and charges. It is making the transport business not only more expensive but very difficult to manage. We know, as I said earlier, that the transport sector is the lifeblood of rural and regional Australia. It delivers the staples of life. The government seems to forget that. In rural and regional areas, we do not have choice. If it does not come on the back of a truck to us, it does not come— we do not have it; it does not arrive.

Australia’s 597,000 trucks travel 16.1 billion kilometres a year. It is an industry that employs 220,000 people. It is an extremely vital industry that we in regional areas know we cannot do without. We cannot walk around the corner to a shop. But even if we did, I guarantee you, even in a city, the majority of goods are delivered on the back of a truck—and those people go all night. I drive constantly throughout my electorate and I have enormous respect for the industry—not just because I was brought up in the industry but because I see those men and women on the road at all hours of the day and night doing a great job for Australia.

Western Australia has had the highest growth of total interstate road freight—from, to and through—from 1972 to 2007. As I said, my family is in the road transport, heavy haulage and earthmoving sector. My father was a pioneer of cartage, contracting and earthmoving in the south-west of Western Australia and my broader family is still involved. We were a small business—and my brother is still involved. I know that every single cent that adds to a small business is a cost that basically means they are less profitable, less able to stay in business. I understand exactly what every additional cent of cost adds to this industry and to these individuals.

Way back in 2007, Australian trucks transported 277 million tonnes of food and animals around our nation. Both the diesel fuel excise rise and the carbon tax will add cost to every single tonne, as will this road user charge. From what I can understand from listening to the debate today, a fair proportion of this is not going to cost recovery; it is going to go into consolidated revenue and be used for a range of purposes. We know that from what we have heard in the debate today. So that does not stack up. As the member for Grey mentioned, there is an overcharge of $700 million. We know that it has been a flawed process.

The minister gave a fairly shocking rant earlier, I must say. The minister has never worked in this industry and does not understand how it works and what it takes on the ground. I would say that owner-drivers will find it very difficult to manage this additional cost impost in spite of what the minister said earlier. In my electorate there are people like Collie Freightlines delivering daily general freight between Perth and the south-west. Whether you are a courier, or delivering waste bins or involved in freight of any sort, in freight and haulage every cent matters and every additional cost matters.

In spite of what the minister said, not every state minister agrees with this. The transport minister in Western Australia, Troy Buswell, who, incidentally, comes from my electorate, very directly understands the cost. He expressed his concern at those meetings about the additional cost for the transport sector in Western Australia. He understands our distances. Western Australia is a huge
state where every additional sent in fuel costs has an impact.

What I have got back from my industry is about the additional cost of not only this but also the carbon tax. They know that this is going to add cost from 2014. It will come in the form of the reduction in the diesel fuel rebate of nearly 7c a litre. We are not talking fish and chips here. In anybody's terms, that is an awful lot of money in a fuel bill in any operator's situation. You know the number of litres it takes for the freight task in this nation—and this is 7c a litre on the truck transport sector from 2014. So that is what they have got to look forward to—and I am sure they are excited about that. And they are expected to absorb this. These are people who have already spent money on the Euro 5 and Euro 6 engines—they are applying the blue to their engines—and often the actual air that goes in comes out cleaner. They are doing their bit, and have done so for a long time. But they are going to have to pay a second time. We have got the road user charge and we have got the carbon tax as well. Any truck drivers out there watching this would literally be spitting chips. There is also an assumption that they are making great profits and can absorb this and the carbon tax easily.

I have seen the effect of this in my part of the world with Giacci's, Leeuwin Transport, Livestock Transporters, AgSpread, Couriers, Meeres, Dino's Bulk Haulage, Cawara Transport, Piacentini's, Catalano's—all of them. South West Express, a local transport company based in Bunbury, has already been hit by the carbon tax—through refrigerant. They have three trucks whose cooling units have broken down and needed to be replaced. The cost of the refrigerant has gone up by $75 a kilo—and from July, following the imposition of the carbon tax, the cost of replacement gas is going to be $750 more! That is just one example of how this is affecting South West Express.

And they are not the only ones. The amount of refrigerated transport that has to run from the city areas right through to the country areas and interstate is significant. Whereas it might previously have cost South West Express $500 to regas each of their new trucks, it is now over $1,000 a unit. So we are seeing layer upon layer of costs and the government just keeps adding to that—taxing and increasing costs for the transport sector. Some of them can pass on the costs and some of them cannot—in particular, small businesses. And consumers who need to regas their car will find out exactly what this does as well. So on top of the 2.4c a litre rise in the diesel fuel excise this will mean greater costs and greater impact in regional areas. It is that compounding effect in regional Australia that the government just does not understand or does not want to understand—I am not sure which. It does not understand or it does not want to understand. We just keep loading up and adding cost to regional and rural businesses and regional and rural Australians. How much of a load does this government expect us to bear out in regional Australia? It is just compounding, and there is almost an absolute disrespect in the way that this government handles issues affecting rural and regional Australia.

As I said, perhaps the government could argue that we should be grateful for the two-year delay regarding the fuel excise. After all, we do know that mining, marine and rail services are all paying this additional tax right now. They are paying that right now. But someone should really point out to the Prime Minister that mining, oil and gas production and fishing generally take place in regional areas, so the impact is direct. I do not know where the government thinks Western Australia's wheat, gas and iron will come from if not a rural and regional area.
Concerns have been highlighted, also, by the Australian Trucking Association, who did not support these reforms, for so many reasons. The most worrying impact would be as a result of location charging, where it would appear that rural and regional Australia will suffer the consequences. They get it. They operate in our part of the world. They are part of us. They understand the impacts that this will have on them, their businesses, their drivers. I really want to stand up for the smaller operators in this discussion today. As I said earlier, it is the staples of life that the transport industry delivers to every Australian. Those of us who live in regional areas have enormous respect for that. We see these men and women working day and night to deliver the staples of life that we need, that we cannot do without.

We hear a lot of complaints about truck drivers, and we do know that a lot of those are totally inaccurate. I would say in this place that I have enormous respect for those who work in this industry in any form of the transport, freight, heavy haulage and earthmoving sector. I understand the job you do for us. Yes, my family has been and is part of it. That is quite possibly the reason why I have a far greater understanding than this government and many members on the opposite side.

Mr HARTSUYKER (Cowper) (16:10): I welcome the opportunity to speak on this disallowance motion because it is the coalition who understands the difficulty the transport industry is facing at the moment. It is the coalition that understands the stresses that are imposed on small business. We recognise that many small business operators have their house on the line. Every time that truck goes out it has to make a profit because they have repayments to make, they have the bank to keep happy. It is a very difficult environment.

And what does this government do when businesses are facing falling traffic volumes, falling freight volumes and falling profitability? It increases the road user charge by some 10.4 per cent. That is the action of a government that does not understand business. That is the action of a government that does not understand the fact that the heavy lifting in the freight task is done by the heavy haulage industry, that every item we export begins its journey on a local road. It is transported—so much of it—on the back of a truck. Rail has its place in the transport task but, unfortunately, road will still be doing the major part of the heavy lifting, particularly in regional and rural Australia.

Those regional electorates will be facing and bearing the biggest brunt of this cost increase that will be passed on. It will be impossible, given business conditions at the moment, for businesses to absorb increased transport costs. Businesses are too competitive. The environment is too competitive. But, rather than listen to the concerns of business, we have a government pushing up the road user charge by 10.4 per cent. That is why the coalition, in introducing this disallowance motion, is bringing some common sense to this debate. We need a viable road transport industry. We need viable trucking operators. We need to support small business. We need to keep transport costs as low as possible because it is vitally important for the people of regional Australia and the Australian economy more generally.

We saw the coalition at the weekend, at the national party conference, pledging to invest $5.6 billion in the Pacific Highway to make our freight task more efficient, to make the transport industry more efficient—$5.6 billion, $2 billion of new money. It took the coalition in opposition to commit the funds that are needed to finish the Pacific
Highway. We have a government that pledged funds in the budget and we had the member for Lyne come out and say he had expended all this political capital on securing certain concessions in the budget. But what really happened was not a budget commitment. It was a hoax; it was a confidence trick. Because that $3.5 billion commitment depended on matching funding from the state—funding that the states did not have. It was a cruel hoax on the people who live on the North Coast.

We had that same budget announcement supported by the member for Page, also supporting the cruel hoax. The member for Page knew, the member for Lyne knew and the government knew that the state government could not match that funding, and there was a $2 billion hole. That caused a $2 billion hole in that commitment, because the state in financial difficulty just could not match it.

There is a clear choice in the election that is coming up, between the coalition, who are committing $5.6 billion in real money, and the Labor Party and the member for Lyne and the member for Page, who are peddling an illusion. The difference is in the order of $4 billion. A vote for Labor and the member for Lyne and the member for Page at the next election is a vote to have $4 billion less committed to the Pacific Highway. A vote for the coalition is an additional $4 billion over what the current government and what the Independents and what the member for Page are promising to commit to the project. It was a cruel hoax; it was a confidence trick. The current minister for transport knew the states could not match the funding. So he thought he was on pretty safe ground. He could claim the moral high ground—'We're putting extra funding into the Pacific Highway'—in the full knowledge that that funding would not be drawn down because of the condition he put on that it had to be matched dollar for dollar by the state of New South Wales, and he knew that that was just not going to happen. The people in my electorate and the people on the North Coast know the importance of the Pacific Highway to the freight transport task and to safe travel along the highway. They know the importance of getting those heavy vehicles out of the main street. They know the benefits in transport time and travel time that will be achieved through an improved highway. But what did we have? We had the government, with the support of the Independents, contriving a confidence trick—to be seen putting money into the highway when, in fact, the investment was going to be substantially less because New South Wales could not match the funding. That shows the depth of their commitment: a $4 billion gap now between what the coalition will put into the highway and what the Independents, the member for Page and the government are going to put into the highway. It is a gap in our productivity.

A completed Pacific Highway will mean greater national productivity. It will mean a massive return on investment in the funds already invested in the road by reducing travel time. It is a project that is welcomed not only by people on the east coast but also by the entire country, because we are increasing the productivity of our nation through improved transport. I welcome the opportunity to talk on this disallowance motion. Reducing costs to the transport sector is vital. Having a more sensible approach to the road-user charge, as proposed by the coalition, is an important step in providing some relief to the transport industry and at the same balancing the need for some degree of increase in the road-user charge—but one that is manageable, not 10.4 per cent, which is not a manageable increase. That flies in the face of business doing it
tough. That flies in the face of common sense.

We also see the transport industry, I am sure, looking forward to 2014. We will have the member for Lyne, if he is re-elected, the member for New England and the member for Page queuing up to vote for a carbon tax on the heavy vehicle industry, to put further burden on the transport industry—to make it that much tougher. Not happy with a 10.4 per cent increase in the road-user charge today they will be backing up their cart again to put more burden on the transport industry and to have a carbon tax on heavy transport as of 2014. That is a further burden that this industry cannot afford to bear. So they should hang their heads in shame that they would propose a carbon tax that is going to ultimately be foisted on the road-transport industry.

Again, as with the Pacific Highway, people have a clear choice. A vote for the coalition is a vote to get rid of the carbon tax. It is a vote to take pressure off the transport industry and a vote for a party, a coalition, that knows what the transport industry needs, that knows how small business works and that knows we need to have an efficient transport sector free from the cost burdens that this government seeks to impose. I look forward to this disallowance motion being voted on in the House. It is very important that the motion is successful, because we have a government that is out of touch—out of touch with the transport sector, out of touch with the needs of small business and out of touch with ordinary Australians. Through proposing a 10.4 per cent increase in the road-user charge they just make it even more clear how out of touch they are.

Question put.

The House divided. [16:22]
The numbers for the “Ayes” and the “Noes” being equal, the Deputy Speaker gave her casting vote with the “Noes” saying that she did so in accordance with precedents for retaining a proposition in its original state.

Question negatived.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Mr RUDDOCK (Berowra) (16:29): I wish to make a personal explanation.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): Does the honourable member claim to have been misrepresented?

Mr RUDDOCK: Yes.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please proceed.

Mr RUDDOCK: In the Sydney Morning Herald today it says:

A spokeswoman for the Immigration Minister, Chris Bowen, said the former attorney-general Philip Ruddock had rejected calls in 2007 for the group to be banned.

The group that was being referred to was Hizb ut-Tahrir. In 2007, when there was concern about Hizb ut-Tahrir, I sought advice from the competent agency as to whether there was sufficient evidence for that matter—that is, the matter of prescription—to be considered, and the agency at that time said there was insufficient evidence.
Ms Saffin, by leave—This report deals with four referrals, with an estimated total cost of almost $1.12 billion. The majority of this cost is a Defence project estimated at $870 million. This is the largest single project that my committee has scrutinised in the current parliament. The other three referrals together account for the remaining $250 million. For each of the four referrals, the committee recommends the House of Representatives agree to the works proceeding.

The first inquiry examined a Defence Housing Australia proposal for the development and construction of housing for Defence personnel at a site in Kellyville, Sydney, New South Wales. The key objective of the project is to assist in reducing the proportion of Defence families residing in private rental accommodation in the Richmond region of Sydney to below the target of 15 per cent. The current proportion of Defence families in private rental accommodation in the Richmond region is 19 per cent.

Defence Housing Australia plans to develop road and civil infrastructure for 65 serviced allotments on a greenfield site close to the Rouse Hill Town Centre. Defence Housing Australia then intends to construct 34 dwellings for Defence personnel. Five of these dwellings will incorporate what is known as a 'Fonzie flat'—named after the character Fonzie in the Happy Days television series—a small self-contained unit built above the garage. The remaining allotments will be offered for individual sale. Defence Housing Australia gave a comprehensive briefing on social and community amenities in the locality. The committee considers that the location of the development will provide significant benefit and amenity for future residents.

I will now speak to the second of the four inquiries covered by this report. The high voltage electrical distribution upgrade project aims to improve the electrical supply and distribution network at Holsworthy Barracks. This will be achieved by ensuring a more reliable electrical supply, with adequate capacity to service growing demand at the barracks. The project will deliver a new 33-kilovolt electrical supply to the barracks and improve existing electrical infrastructure. The committee heard that in 2012 there has been an average of 1.72 power outages per week affecting the barracks. Most of this is due to storm damage to overhead cables. Therefore, where possible, electrical distribution infrastructure will be located underground. The project also includes additional capacity to meet anticipated growing demand to 2030.

The committee had some concerns about the completeness and timeliness of information presented to it prior to the public hearing but was satisfied with the evidence from the day and from subsequent submissions. For future inquiries, the committee encourages Defence to provide comprehensive information at the time of the referral. That just makes the work that the committee does a lot easier, not having to wait for the day of the public inquiry. However, we did get the requisite information.
The third inquiry covered in this report examined the Moorebank Units Relocation, commonly called the MUR. This project proposes to remove Defence units and facilities from Steele Barracks, the site of the future Moorebank intermodal terminal, and relocate them to Holsworthy Barracks. It also involves consolidation of facilities at Holsworthy Barracks to deliver more efficient facilities to support Defence capability. This is the $870 million project I referred to earlier—the largest one that my committee has dealt with in this parliament. The works at Holsworthy Barracks will comprise five precincts. These are a new entry precinct, a School of Military Engineering precinct, a mess precinct, a physical fitness complex precinct and a training precinct. The works will also include the demolition of buildings that require replacement due to age or contamination.

The committee first inspected Steele Barracks and received a briefing before meeting informally with a number of Defence personnel during the site tour. A memorable highlight for the committee was seeing the explosive-detection dogs undertaking a training exercise under the expert direction of their handlers. I note there were no live explosives—they just went through the exercise. The committee learned more about the proud history of the School of Military Engineering and the strong ties that the sappers and many in the local community have with Steele Barracks. As part of the relocation a number of significant heritage items will be transported from Steele Barracks to Holsworthy and incorporated into the new precinct.

The committee also inspected Holsworthy Barracks, where it met special forces soldiers and discussed their training needs, amongst other things. The committee viewed the existing physical fitness complex, which would clearly struggle to meet any additional demand arising as a result of the Moorebank Units Relocation. The existing facility will be replaced by a consolidated physical fitness complex to cater for the training needs of over 3,500 personnel, including special forces soldiers, and for the rehabilitation of injured soldiers. The quality of Defence's submissions and briefings to the committee for this project was excellent. The committee was satisfied with the inspections and thanks all Defence personnel for their contributions.

Mr Deputy Speaker Georganas, I move to the fourth inquiry in this report. The proposed Base Infrastructure Works Project under the Base Security Improvement Program will deliver new security measures at 16 military bases around Australia.

These measures include enhancing entry zones to increase access control capability and enhancing security capabilities and arrangements. Although the committee did not inspect all 16 bases, it received a comprehensive briefing covering all the proposed sites. Once again the committee was impressed by the excellent quality of the information provided at the briefings and hearings.

Two of the sites that the committee did inspect while in Sydney—Victoria Barracks and Garden Island—have significant heritage value. The committee was pleased to note the careful and detailed consideration given to providing enhanced security solutions which will have minimal impact on the heritage aspects of these sites. That will require some very challenging work to achieve those dual outcomes.

The committee also expressed some concerns about access points at two of the bases in terms of the traffic. The first is at Simpson Barracks in Victoria, where residential concerns were raised in relation to the development of a new access point. The
committee had visited the site while in Victoria and discussed this issue at length during the public hearing. The committee notes that Defence has since met with residents and is making representations to address some local traffic issues. The committee knows that some of these, again, can be difficult to resolve, but usually you can get to some satisfactory arrangement by the continuation of the engagement with locals, and we were assured by Defence that that was taking place.

The second concern relates to an access point at Victoria Barracks in Sydney on Moore Park Road. The committee expressed concerns about traffic and road safety. Defence identified two further opportunities to improve safety at this access point. Given that Defence was able to propose additional safety measures, the committee encourages Defence to explore opportunities to consider whether similar measures would be beneficial at the other project sites.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in closing I thank members and senators for their work in relation to these inquiries. They were rather large inquiries and took a lot of time. I also thank the secretariat for the good work that they did, because it was a lot of work for them to get the report prepared and done for the parliament so that we could continue to do our work in a timely fashion. I commend the report to the House.

BILLS

Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Bill 2012

Report from Committee

Ms O'NEILL (Robertson) (16:40): by leave—I present corrigenda to the report of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services into the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Bill as tabled on 10 September 2012.

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and Large Coal Mining Development) Bill 2012

Consideration of Senate Message

Debate resumed.

Senate's amendments—

(1) Clause 2, page 2 (cell at table item 2, column 2), omit the cell, substitute:

A single day to be fixed by Proclamation.

However, if the provision(s) do not commence within the period of 6 months beginning on the day this Act receives the Royal Assent, they commence on the day after the end of that period.

(2) Schedule 1, item 2, page 3 (line 29), after "resources", insert "and/or land and its use".

(3) Schedule 1, item 4, page 4 (line 30), after "qualifications", insert "or expertise".

(4) Schedule 1, item 4, page 5 (line 17), after "resources", insert "and/or land and its use".

(5) Schedule 1, item 4, page 5 (line 23), after "resources", insert "and/or land and its use".

(6) Schedule 1, item 4, page 6 (line 2), after "resources", insert "and/or land and its use".

(7) Schedule 1, item 4, page 6 (line 5), after "resources", insert "and/or land and its use".

(8) Schedule 1, item 4, page 6 (line 9), after "resources", insert "and/or land and its use".

(9) Schedule 1, item 4, page 6 (line 11), after "resources", insert "and/or land and its use".

(10) Schedule 1, item 4, page 6 (line 17), after "resources", insert "and/or land and its use".

(11) Schedule 1, item 6, page 7 (line 15), after "resources", insert ", and/or land and its use,".

(12) Schedule 1, item 7, page 7 (line 20), after "resources", insert "and/or land and its use".
Mr BURKE (Watson—Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities) (16:41): I move:

That Senate amendments Nos (2) and (4) to (13) be disagreed to.

These amendments make a number of changes, which I do not think any member of this House saw coming, and were the consequence of a rather surprising unity ticket that Senators Heffernan and Nash formed with the Greens. In that surprising unity ticket that they formed in the Senate they did the opposite of what I am hearing members of the coalition argue should happen to my legal powers. We have just had a week where we have had significant debate as to whether or not my legal powers over the marine environment should be extended. But nothing that the government put forward to this House last week matches the extent to which the Senate are now asking and inviting me to expand the authority of national environmental law.

When the government, together with the member for New England, went to a lot of work to determine how we could improve the quality of scientific work that would inform environmental decisions, the principal concern raised by the member for New England and which the government signed up to, was to make sure that the quality of our research into water was as good as it possibly could be. For that reason we determined to establish an independent committee and we also established to fund, and significantly fund, that independent committee.

The Senate have decided that that work, which I can direct the committee to do, not only should be about water and water and water resources, but should actually be about land and its use. So, effectively, forget all the arguments that coalition senators are making in the Senate right now about whether national environmental law should be expanded. What they did last week was provide an overarching interest for national environmental law in pretty much every land-use decision that is made whenever you have a coal seam gas or a coal mining project.

They are significant decisions and they are decisions that matter a lot to local communities. They are decisions over which we have no federal constitutional head of power, so the legal challenges would come thick and fast, and they would win. It is an area where it has nothing to do with any environmental decision that I might subsequently make. So we end up with a situation where we send an expert scientific committee off to do scientific work on land-use decisions, which can go into anything such as council zoning which could be a land-use decision, and all this work gets done and comes back and is, in fact, irrelevant to the environmental decisions that get made at the end of it. What possessed Senators Heffernan and Nash to sponsor this in the other place is beyond me. But I want to make clear that while I appreciate the compliment from the Senators involved and from the coalition over there that they would like me to have an interest in pretty much every land use decision in country New South Wales and most of southern Queensland, we really do not think it is an appropriate policy to go down the path of. So I am hoping for a calmer and more sensible response from the coalition in this place than we got from the coalition in the other place.

There would be uncertainty about what is meant by land and its use. It would completely blow up the agreements we have with the states. I cannot imagine Queensland and New South Wales for a minute having
anything to do with the National Partnership Agreements if we said we were now going to have federal oversight over every land use decision they made. It would be reasonable for them to reject it because it is something that is within their province. It is core business for state governments to be making these calls. There will be times when we think they make them the wrong way and people will use the parliament to make speeches about it and to rally against state decisions when we think they have done these jobs poorly. But it is not something that is the province of national environmental law, nor should it be so. It would massively increase the work of the committee. What is generous and required funding in the order of $150 million plus a further $50 million for scientific research would immediately overnight become grossly inadequate if we now had to get to the bottom of every land use and planning decision.

I appreciate that there can be some good local politics on this issue but, in policy terms, what the Senate has thrown up is something that we would not go near. It is contrary to everything I have heard from the Leader of the Opposition—once he backed off on how far the law should go on land use. I really do commend all members to join the government in rejecting these amendments.

Mr IAN MACFARLANE (Groom) (16:46): I thank the minister for his comments and his cooperation on this issue. The coalition has at all times supported the formation of the independent expert committee. I think it is essential in this sometimes controversial space that we give communities, landholders and those interested in the environment the confidence that we have people with expertise on the job to make sure that anything that is done in the extraction of coal seam gas or coal is done with the protection of particularly the aquifers but also the productivity of the land.

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (16:47): I hope that this House does agree to these Senate amendments. I can enlighten the House as to the rationale for them. The Greens have been campaigning for some time on the question of potential impacts of coal seam gas not only on water but on land and on communities as well. There have been a number of groups campaigning because of the concern about the massive expansion, largely unchecked, of coal seam gas we have seen in this country.

The Greens proposed a number of ways of going further than this bill goes but we did welcome it as a first step. We commended the work done by the member for New England to bring this about. There were a number of issues we raised in the other place to improve the bill. One of them—where working with others succeeded—was on the question of what happens when salt is brought to the surface of land when coal seams are dewatered to get the gas to flow. We were concerned that issue was not something that was going to be considered by the committee that would have been established.

An amendment was successfully moved in the Senate to expand the remit of the committee. It would not expand it into a vastly new area but would be very much connected to the question of water. We were pleased the amendment was agreed to by a number of Independents and members from other political parties. I note that Senator Heffernan and Senator Joyce in the other place were very active on this question and were the driving forces behind getting their side to agree to this amendment.

I am very concerned that now the bill has come back here to this place that the coalition will change its position. Because, unless these amendments are agreed to, the committee will not be able to look at some
very important water connected but land based impacts of CSG including salinity as well as climate impacts and impacts on farm operations from surface infrastructure.

The amendment came out of an attempt to address a very real problem and the coalition understood those arguments in the Senate. It would be very concerning if the rationale behind that suddenly changed now that is has been brought back here. I could speculate on why that might be and whether it is a case of coalition senators being prepared to go to the bush and say one thing yet when it comes to the question of how they actually vote when legislation comes back here, the leadership team says, 'You can go and say whatever you like, but, when it comes to the way we are going to vote, that is not actually how we are going to vote.' If that was the case, that is the inference that people would be entitled to draw about the coalition's concern on the salinity issue. If Senator Heffernan and the others had taken the time to actually look at the legislation and the accompanying documents, the national partnership agreement, that goes with it—and the cases that the member for Melbourne just raised—they should be aware that the salinity issue can be looked at without much risk at all. In fact, part of the national partnerships approach does include the capacity to have bioregional assessments that the independent scientific committee that we are talking about. Bioregional, by its very nature, means more than water; it means the impact of water on the bioregion and the cumulative impacts of mining and coal-seam gas, agroforestry or any other activity on a particular region.

Mr WINDSOR (New England) (16:51): The Senate played a similar game with this issue on another occasion where there was an attempt some years ago now to move an amendment to the 2007 Water Act that actually put in place a clause that before exploration licences were granted that the appropriate bioregional assessment processes be put in place. That was supported in this chamber by the coalition, and then supported in the Senate by the coalition, and then recanted the next morning. So I am not surprised that this issue does have some sensitivity. If you read the speeches of that particular debate that night you would see that the claims that you had to be a member of the National Party to achieve something in this particular area, and the next day they all recanted on the demands on the Minerals Council. But I think there are people in this chamber, including the shadow minister I might add, who have better heads for what is practical in terms of these particular issues. I will be supporting the government in its initiative.

In terms of the salinity issue, if Senator Heffernan and the others had taken the time to actually look at the legislation and the accompanying documents, the national partnership agreement, that goes with it—and the cases that the member for Melbourne just raised—they should be aware that the salinity issue can be looked at without much risk at all. In fact, part of the national partnerships approach does include the capacity to have bioregional assessments that the independent scientific committee that we are talking about. Bioregional, by its very nature, means more than water; it means the impact of water on the bioregion and the cumulative impacts of mining and coal-seam gas, agroforestry or any other activity on a particular region.

This was supported back in 2008 by the Minerals Council environmental officer, a lady called Melanie Stutsel. They actually called for a bioregional process to be put in place before exploration and production licenses were granted—for very good reason: so that the mining industry would actually know where it was more than likely it would have success if it in fact spent a lot of money exploring. It would be able to be assured of some likelihood of success, or would not go there if in fact the bioregional assessment process indicated that either the one-off mine or coal-seam gas industry venture, or a cumulative number of ventures in a particular region or catchment. It would have some clarity as to its likelihood in terms of being able to get that process up and running.
A lot of those processes are state related—I think we are all aware of that—and there are concerns. I am very concerned in New South Wales, for instance. Only last week the New South Wales government announced its aquifer interference policy and its strategic land use management policy, which has received enormous disregard from the community, part of which is in my electorate, where people are very concerned. I know the minister, the shadow minister and many other ministers and shadow ministers have been to parts of the Liverpool Plains. There are similar issues on the Darling Downs. There are issues in the member for Parkes’ electorate, in that magnificent plain country between Balata and Moree, the Edgeroi area—right through that country. There are very valid issues. It is not, as occurs from time to time, the sort of NIMBY effect—’I want this to go ahead, as long as it's not here’. There are significant issues that we do not know about in terms of water, particularly, and the relationship that groundwater has (extension of time granted), particularly in terms of heavy metals and run-off et cetera; or the relationship that surface water may have with some of these mining or coal-seam gas activities, which, if based on a floodplain, will at some stage be affected by flood—otherwise it would not be called a ‘floodplain’!

I think that is where Senator Heffernan, Senator Joyce and others come from in their concerns about land use and soil. So I do not suggest that they are not well-intentioned on that particular issue. But the minister has made the point, I think adequately, that those jurisdictional issues are very much at a state level and would blow—and that may have been their intent—apart the capacity to have the states and the Commonwealth coming together in a national partnerships agreement that they have to actually set up an independent scientific committee which has, as part of its powers, the capacity to put in place bioregional assessments of catchments which can in fact catch some of these other issues. Even if they did not, I think the issues that member for Melbourne raised in terms of salt coming up from a coal-seam gas well, for instance, and impacting on land are important. There are a number of clauses in the national partnerships agreement. There are also a number in the establishment of the independent scientific committee that indicate that, in those sorts of circumstances, it would obviously be covered.

The other issue that I want to raise is about the New South Wales government's proposal. I raised this during question time, but I will take the opportunity again to raise it with the minister. There was an agreement with the New South Wales government, the Queensland government, the Victorian government et cetera. They have signed off on the national partnership agreement that does give certain powers to the Commonwealth, and certain shared powers between the states and the Commonwealth. One of the issues that has always been there is that, to comply with the national partnership agreement, the states have to put in place a set of protocols to address some of these issues. There are even clauses that may well provide for the states to actually legislate to have those protocols put in place.

I asked the minister in question time today, and I ask him again—and I do not know the answer to this, so I am not trying to play some sort of political game; I just want to get to the bottom of this—to have a very serious look at the aquifer interference policy and the strategic land use policy that have been announced, as well as this so-called gateway process that various industry groups may have to go through to gain acceptance at a state level. Are they considered as addressing the protocols that were demanded in the national partnership agreement? My
understanding is that they do not have any significant—if any—legislative backing; they are essentially a policy, which could go anywhere. So the question again to the minister—and I do not expect him to answer it today, but I think it is important that people in my electorate and others have a clear view of this by the end of the week—is, what does that actually mean in terms of the document that has been signed? What does it actually mean in terms of the bioregional assessment process and the way in which the independent scientific committee can bear upon that by way of recommendation? And what does that mean in terms of outcomes from that process?

I think Senator Heffernan has been reported—and I consider myself a friend of 'Wild Bill'—as saying that it is a 'toothless tiger'. I would hate to think that he is trying to subvert that process, as the Senate did once before, because it is a very important process. People are demanding some objectivity in terms of the science of these processes. People—in my electorate, at least, and I think I speak for other areas as well—are not opposed to these industries going forward in certain areas, as long as the precautionary principle and the objectivity of science is clearly there—and this process would allow for that. (Time expired)

Mr BURKE (Watson—Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities) (17:01): I want to thank those members who have contributed to this debate on the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and Large Coal Mining Development) Bill. I can confirm to the member for New England that in relation to the issues he raised during question time I commenced a process, on returning to my office, to get more information on the direct interaction and to make sure that the New South Wales principles sufficiently meet the expectations of the Commonwealth. And I am not sure if it has been communicated to the office of the member for New England yet, but I have also instructed that a briefing be made available for the member this week so that officials are able to directly update him and also answer questions back and forth. I do respect the long-term interest he has in making sure we get the science right on this issue and making sure that the state governments meet the expectations that we would hope.

I should also flag for the benefit of members that, if we are successful in having the House disagree with the amendments that are before us, then the next thing I would do after that vote is move some alternative amendments that deal with the issue of salinity. I know some members have been questioning whether or not that will occur, and I want to leave all members of the House in no doubt that it will.

Effectively, there have been a number of occasions now when I have been encouraged to make decisions without having, completed and in front of me, the best-quality scientific information that I would want. I am grateful for the work the member for New England has done to make sure that, in relation to the impact on underground water of coal seam gas and large-scale coal mines, scientific work is now being done, well in advance of individual applications coming forward. It provides a much better base for decision making. When people ask, 'Is it a toothless tiger?' I would say: knowledge never is. This is about making sure we get the knowledge and we get the information.

I was in a similar situation when the Queensland government in the Alpha dispute wanted me to make decisions without full surveys and without my taking into...
consideration all the information I needed to be able to make a proper environmental decision. While as late as yesterday the Deputy Premier was whingeing about delays, I make no apology for making sure that we get the information before we make the decisions. The debate we dealt with on the supertrawler last week was no different. If the answer to significant questions is simply, 'Well, we haven't studied that bit of it yet,' then I want a better answer before we hit time in order to be able to make a decision.

I commend these amendments to the chamber. Hopefully with the amendments that follow we can meet some of the concerns that are out there in communities without embarking on the pathway of deeply questionable policy that somehow possessed unexpectedly a few members of the coalition in the Senate.

Question agreed to.

Mr BURKE (Watson—Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities) (17:05): I move:

That the amendments set out in the schedule circulated to honourable members be made in place of the Senate amendments which have just been disagreed to.

(1) Schedule 1, item 2, page 3 (line 29), after "water resources", insert ", including any impacts of associated salt production and/or salinity".

(2) Schedule 1, item 4, page 5 (line 17), after "water resources", insert ", including any impacts of associated salt production and/or salinity".

(3) Schedule 1, item 4, page 5 (line 23), after "water resources", insert ", including any impacts of associated salt production and/or salinity".

(4) Schedule 1, item 4, page 6 (line 2), after "water resources", insert ", including any impacts of associated salt production and/or salinity".

(5) Schedule 1, item 4, page 6 (line 5), after "water resources", insert ", including any impacts of associated salt production and/or salinity".

(6) Schedule 1, item 4, page 6 (line 9), after "water resources", insert ", including any impacts of associated salt production and/or salinity".

(7) Schedule 1, item 4, page 6 (line 13), after "development", insert ", including from any impacts of associated salt production and/or salinity".

(8) Schedule 1, item 4, page 6 (line 17), after "resources", insert ", including any impacts of associated salt production and/or salinity".

(9) Schedule 1, item 6, page 7 (line 15), after "area", insert ", including any impacts of associated salt production and/or salinity".

(10) Schedule 1, item 7, page 7 (line 20), after "water resources", insert "(including any impacts of associated salt production and/or salinity)".

(11) Schedule 1, item 10, page 8 (line 8), after "resources", insert "(including any impacts of associated salt production and/or salinity)".

The amendments I am proposing now clarify a few things. First of all, they clarify that I must obtain advice from the committee when I believe a coal seam gas or large coalmining development will have a significant impact on water resources, including but not limited to the impacts of associated salt production and/or salinity.

Salt production and consequent salinity impacts are major issues in considering coal seam gas and large-scale coalmining proposals. Salt and related salinity impacts may arise from co-produced water during coal seam gas development, including aquifer interactions and groundwater and surface water diversions from large coalmining developments. They are therefore relevant considerations in working out whether these developments will have a significant impact on water resources. The amendments make it clear that the coal seam gas Committee will have to consider the impact of salt production and/or salinity.

I have to say, I do not view these amendments as producing anything significantly different to what we already
had. I am not sure how you can take into account the impact on a water resource without taking into account the impacts on salinity. It would be a strange study of a water resource that managed to ignore the issue of salinity, but I am told that this will help us with Senators! So I am moving it.

Mr IAN MACFARLANE (Groom) (17:06): The coalition will be supporting these amendments to the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and Large Coal Mining Development) Bill 2012. Obviously, as we mentioned in the earlier debate, it is important that the level of confidence in the community on this issue of coal seam gas is raised. We do have confidence in the expert panel. During the passage of the legislation in relation to the establishment of the expert panel the minister agreed that there would be people on the panel with expertise in certain areas, and those people have been nominated already.

The coalition does support the coal-seam industry, where it does not impact on underground water and on the quality of land and its productivity. It goes without saying that there has been a huge economic boost to rural communities. I say to those people who oppose the coal-seam industry, regardless of what it does to ensure that it is protecting the environment, that they should go out there and have a look at communities that, during my 57 years of life, have done nothing but go backwards. I always quote the example of the property I farmed single-handedly, and the one next door that I also farmed single-handedly, prior to leaving active farming. When I was a boy those properties employed seven full-time-equivalents and, as I said, I managed those properties by myself.

So if you wondered why rural communities were dying, it was not because their productivity was falling—in fact it is going up. It is just that you do not need the people out there in rural communities. The other half of the story is that when I left my district and moved to Toowoomba the school actually came with me—they put it on the back of a truck and it is now out at Glenvale School. In the district where I grew up, where my daughter went to school and where my sister and brother went to school no longer exists.

If we are serious about reinvigorating rural communities, we will not just do it with agriculture and tourism. We need active industries out there. The coal-seam industry has injected 7,000 jobs into Queensland in three months, predominantly in rural areas. While we do have to be extraordinarily careful with this industry to ensure that we protect our long-term legacy, we should with one hand be guiding and steering it and ensuring that protection, but with the other hand we should be thanking it for the economic contribution it is making to areas I genuinely thought we could never save, in terms of their communities and the facilities available in them, and of course in terms of the economic value to the state—about $1 billion worth of royalties. And, of course, with everything like this the inevitable taxes go to the Commonwealth, which I certainly support being paid in this instance.

I support the minister's amendments. The coalition will be supporting them.

Mr WINDSOR (New England) (17:09): I also support the amendments, although, as I alluded to earlier, I do think that a technical amendment is superfluous to the arrangements. But, nonetheless, if it helps people clarify what the words mean it is a positive thing.
The member for Groom, the shadow minister, made some important statements—I thought the school following him was quite interesting! He talked about the reinvigoration of communities. There is no doubt that in certain areas that is happening, and no doubt there are other parts of Australia where mining and coal-seam gas are having negative impacts on communities. Also, there is the fly-in-fly-out issue, which is being looked at at the moment. There are ebbs and flows and positives and negatives.

But the one thing that the scientific committee, the National Partnerships agreement and people's genuine concerns express is that they do not want to rush in to some of these things. I am opposed to the people who are just opposed for the sake of being opposed. I do not agree with those people at all. There has to be an objective process that makes a determination that people on all sides can have some faith in. Regrettably, in New South Wales—I cannot speak for Queensland, although I think there are some aspects of it there—the community has had very little faith in the decision-making process, particularly when it is applied to some of the more sensitive lands that have groundwater and surface water issues, productivity issues and perhaps even salinity issues.

I physically live 800 metres from a coal mine, and I hope to live there for a long time. It was a coal mine 80 years ago, too, and new people came along and wanted to open it up and get into other seams. I was one of those people who actually encouraged it, back in about 1996, when I was a state member of parliament. I do not come from a perspective where I am anti these things. In my view there are plenty of areas where mining can take place and there will be very little impact on water resources, whether it is ground or surface water flows. All human activity has some impact. We are not going to get away from an impact-free world. What I have been arguing is that some of these more sensitive areas should be sussed out before we make decisions.

There is a lot of talk about the importance of the coal-seam gas industry. In fact, the gas industry themselves were running ads in New South Wales that in known deposits there was something like 5,000 years of gas for powering a city the size of Sydney. If this is the case, couldn't we just wait a little while, if that much is known now? It is not an energy security issue that is going to paralyse the city or the state. We need some more objective science in terms of the sensitive areas.

Essentially, the debate that has been going on for many years now. I congratulate people like Tim Duddy, on the Liverpool Plains, and people like the Namoi Catchment Management Authority, which regrettably has been politicised since the change of government. Those people were the forerunners. The minister is well aware of the water study that was part funded here and part funded by the industry—the shenanigans that have gone on with that as to who will have access to what.

I agree with the member for Groom that it is very important to reinvigorate our communities, but it is very important that we do not desolate them in the future. If we make major decisions in the absence of objective science, whether it is through salinity, poor floodplain management or the mixing of a whole range of aquifer waters, irrespective of how it happens, if we run that risk you cannot reverse it. We have to be very careful to err on the side of certainty. The precautionary principle should apply. There is plenty of gas and coal there in other deposits. (Time expired)

Mr OAKESHOTT (Lyne) (17:15): I will just speak very briefly. I want to put on the
record the importance of this legislation and welcome the news that it does look like it will pass this chamber with some minor amendments. I would like to congratulate, in particular, the member for New England. There are a couple of us who stood on our digs through the mining resource rent tax issues of last year, but I certainly acknowledge the lead of the member for New England in making sure this change was considered as part of that process so that we are now seeing a very real and material outcome as a consequence of those negotiations.

I know there are plenty of people who say plenty of things about minority governments. I know there are plenty of views within political parties about how difficult the parliamentary chamber can be to get passage of legislation through. This is yet another example of the importance of allowing more than just an executive voice in the decision-making process. This has allowed the community voice that was very loud but struggling to be heard into the process and for the executive to respond in what I think is some sensible legislation that has recalibrated the balance for some legislation that was all about large-scale mining and coal seam gas mining at the expense of independent science in the process and at the expense of the community voice and concerns around loss of amenity within that process.

I am comfortable that we have taken some steps forward with this legislation. The concern now is whether there is the investment from both the Commonwealth and the states in using this legislation in the intended spirit of the negotiations between the Commonwealth and the states and between crossbenchers and government. That is the next chapter in this. I congratulate organisations like the various farmers’ bodies, the New South Wales farmers, the Country Women's Association, who stood on their digs and stood outside parliament for the first time in their 90-year history over this topic, and the various other bodies. I also acknowledge Adam Bandt, the member for Melbourne, representing the Greens in the chamber.

This has been an unusual coalition, but it has been a coalition that gives a damn about land, the land sector, the next boom for Australia, which is food production, and making sure that community amenity and community voice is not lost in the chase for taxes and royalties in harvesting resources. I also thank the minister in the chair for listening to that and for driving a sensible process. In planning terms, it has been pretty quick to turn this around in six months. It is appreciated. Now I challenge the minister to make sure it is used appropriately. If the states fall out of line and do not listen to the scientific advice, we will have to revisit this to make sure those community concerns are heard and respected in the future.

Mr BURKE (Watson—Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities) (17:18): I thank all contributors to the debate. I acknowledge in particular the contributions from the crossbench and the high level of community passion that the members there are representing. There was some doubt as to whether or not these amendments had been fully circulated in advance. Just to ease that, I formally present the schedule of amendments and the accompanying explanatory memorandum. I would urge all members to support the amendments. If any of you know a coalition senator, please talk to them and let's just get this thing moving.

Question agreed to.

Mr BURKE (Watson—Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities) (17:19):
There were two amendments moved within the Senate that I think we should agree to. I move:

(1) Clause 2, page 2 (cell at table item 2, column 2), omit the cell, substitute:

A single day to be fixed by Proclamation.

However, if the provision(s) do not commence within the period of 6 months beginning on the day this Act receives the Royal Assent, they commence on the day after the end of that period.

(3) Schedule 1, item 4, page 4 (line 30), after "qualifications", insert "or expertise".

The first of these amendments deals with the fact that when we sent the legislation across to the other place we thought they had plenty of time to get it through so that the starting date could be 1 July. It is now clear that they have not approved it by 1 July this year and so, with that in mind, we have changed some words to allow it to commence on a date to be fixed by proclamation with the proviso that if the provisions do not commence within the period of six months beginning on the day the act receives royal assent they then commence one day after that period. That needed to be tidied up simply because of the delays in the Senate in dealing with it.

The second amendment is consequential on an amendment that was carried, I think, unanimously in this place and moved by the member for Groom where there was a clarification of the expertise required for membership of the committee. That relevant clause actually appeared in two different places in the bill. This House only amended one of them. The Senate then corrected that, and the House should support that amendment.

Question agreed to.

Mr BURKE (Watson—Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities) (17:21): I have also been advised that, for amendments which were carried last week in this House on the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Declared Fishing Activities) Bill, a number of explanatory memoranda had not been prepared at the time; those have now been prepared and I present them to the parliament.

Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Bill 2012
Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (Consequential and Transitional) Bill 2012

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

Ms GAMBARO (Brisbane) (17:22): I rise to speak on the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Bill 2012 and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (Consequential and Transitional) Bill 2012. As the shadow minister and other members on this side have indicated, the coalition will be opposing these bills.

These bills are of particular interest to me, both as the member for Brisbane and as the shadow parliamentary secretary for international development assistance. They have applications in both those areas. The Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Bill 2012 and the associated bill create a new regulator for the not-for-profit sector. These pieces of legislation create a new independent statutory office, the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission, or ACNC, as it will be known.

I congratulate and pay tribute to all of those people and community groups that work in the not-for-profit sector for the incredible work they do in enriching other
people's lives in our community. They are made up of all sorts of entities that are neither commercial nor government. This sector plays a critical role in enhancing our communities culturally, socially, economically, environmentally and, much more importantly, provides assistance and support for the most vulnerable people in our community.

I want to recognise and salute the fantastic work that the not-for-profit organisations in my electorate of Brisbane do and the incredible contribution they make to our local community. Whether they are churches, charities, industry associations, aid associations, animal welfare associations, sporting clubs, veterans associations or the many hundreds of organisations that work diligently on behalf of the people of Brisbane, I want to acknowledge them foremost and congratulate them on the fine work they do in enriching our society. Never was this more apparent than when we had the 2011 floods in South-East Queensland. A whole host of these organisation were out there on the ground immediately doing a superb job and helping those in need who had their livelihoods and their possessions devastated by that terrible tragedy.

I also want to make special mention of a great organisation called ChaplainWatch, which works in my electorate. Many members would be aware the electorate of Brisbane contains the Fortitude Valley, which is the social playground of Brisbane. It is a major social precinct. Every weekend approximately 30,000 people—mostly young people—flock to the Valley for a night out. ChaplainWatch has a weekend patrol service that is dedicated to helping those in need or in crisis during the late-night hours in the Fortitude Valley. Those night do not always end happily, unfortunately. ChaplainWatch provides a service to those in potential situations of getting into trouble and provides assistance with a number of incidents that occur in the Valley. Last year they attended 880 incidents involving 1,215 people. In many instances it is a case of just being there to diffuse situations that can become very explosive, particularly when alcohol is involved. They provide an incredible service. I want to thank Lance Mergard and his wonderful team for the great work they do. They recently visited me and expressed a need for another vehicle so that they can expand and continue the wonderful work that they do. They do this work not only in the Brisbane CBD and Fortitude Valley but also in Caxton Street.

Given the government's priority regarding not-for-profit organisations, they should encourage the work that ChaplainWatch do. You would think the goal would be to try and relieve the burden of regulation on not-for-profit organisations so that they can concentrate on the great work that they do and so that they can help more and more people, instead of having to spend more of their valuable time and resources on dealing with more regulation and more paperwork. These bills do not support these organisations; in fact, all they do is add more red tape and more compliance costs to this very important not-for-profit sector.

We oppose the government's proposed new regulator for charities and not-for-profits because it will not reduce red tape; all it will do is add another layer of red tape. It treats the sector as untrustworthy and the people involved in it as tainted; it will hinder the activities of charities and not-for-profits; and it will clearly discourage involvement in civil society. It is also very clear, from the deliberations of the House Standing Committee on Economics inquiry into these bills, that the sector does not support it either.
As we know, the not-for-profit sector is currently regulated at a state government level. The states have not agreed to hand over any of their powers with respect to charities and not-for-profits to the Commonwealth, so the new regulator will simply be an another layer of needless red tape. Unless and until the states and territories agree to hand over their powers to the Commonwealth regulator and harmonise their laws, these bills are going to add more and more layers of red tape, which the sector will have to meet.

These bills set up a framework for a set of governance standards which will apply to most registered entities and will cover things such as the content of an entity's governing laws, the conduct of the entity and the processes that the entity has in place. This legislation also imposes a range of reporting requirements on the not-for-profit sector. As other members have noted, some of these not-for-profit entities have to comply with the Corporations Act, the state regulator, ASIC, any government department it receives grants or funding from and many more regulatory bodies. And now there will be one more—the ACNC.

An independent school in my electorate gave me a recent example. A lot of independent schools are quite worried about this legislation. They have boards and entities set up for their operations and other activities. Many of them have old boys' or old girls' associations. They have foundations that promote philanthropy. This school has asked to remain anonymous at this stage, but they are very concerned—they are concerned particularly about compliance, and they are concerned about the reporting regime. Independent schools currently report through DEEWR on their full financial status and they report in the required DEEWR format. They are already having to submit audited financial statements to DEEWR annually.

As well as that, independent schools in Australia already have extensive information available to the public on the My School ACARA website. This applies to all independent schools, regardless of which ACNC registered entity category they are in. Requiring independent schools to report similar but different data to the ACNC is just adding another unnecessary layer of red tape. In addition, independent schools also provide regular financial reports to their state government. This could result in independent schools requiring more administrative positions to fulfil all of the reporting requirements, again taking away funds from the delivery of much needed front-line educational services and positions.

The proposed compliance processes appear to be more onerous than those of public companies. In addition, the independent sector is most concerned about reporting requirements when schools receive donations—will there be an additional level of reporting when they fundraise? It goes on and on. The second concern relates to the statutory definition of the word 'charity'. The sector is concerned about the time and financial costs of having to prove public benefit when this notion has been long established. It is important to remain charitable to again reduce compliance costs for schools, focus on education and reduce fees to parents.

As regulations on the governance of entities are yet to be defined, these schools just do not know what these will be and how they will impact on them. There is a great deal of confusion out there. The schools representative said to me via email: Schools don't mind being transparent it is just very hard when you need to redo numbers in four different formats depending on who you report to...
These bills now impose a whole new level of regulation and uncertainty on schools. This unfortunately means the diversion of resources into compliance instead of contributing to the education of students.

Another part of the NFP sector that will be hurt is sporting clubs and associations that have NFP status. Not only do they have additional insurance and safety responsibilities which require high levels of compliance; now they will also have ACNC reporting requirements to adhere to as well. Also, keep in mind that a lot of clubs are manned by people who dedicate their service to volunteering, and they will now have this additional burden placed on them.

The ACNC will have far-reaching powers; powers that will elevate it to being one of the most powerful Commonwealth regulators. These bills provide the ACNC with the authority to issue warning notices, issue directions, enter into enforceable undertakings, apply to the courts for injunctions, suspend or remove responsible entities, and appoint acting responsible entities. Interestingly, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference said:

> The lengthy list of powers proposed in the ACNC Bill focuses on matters which appear more appropriate for a criminal investigation authority rather than a body which is intended to promote and educate.

The sector is also concerned that there is currently no single reference point for the NFP sector to access information, education or guidance. That is why the coalition supports a smaller commission to engage in innovation, advocacy and education.

This government is effectively reversing the current approach, telling the sector they need a watchdog to promote transparency and trust from the sector. The community trusts the sector and there has been no evidence provided by the government that problems exist to the extent that warrants the suite of powers that would be granted to the new commissioner.

In conclusion, the coalition opposes these bills because we want to relieve the burden of regulation for the not-for-profit entities and organisations. Unfortunately, these bills do the exact opposite.

**Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (17:35):** It is my pleasure to speak on the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Bill 2012. Strengthening Australian community life is a great passion of mine but it is an area which, in recent decades, we have sadly seen go backwards. I am going to do a little auto-citation, for which I apologise. In a book called *Disconnected* that I wrote a couple of years ago, I said that pretty much whichever way you cut it Australians are less involved in formal organisations than they were a generation ago. If you ask individuals whether they are active members of an organisation, you find that in 1967 33 per cent said yes but by 2004 just 18 per cent said yes.

If you look at the *Directory of Australia Associations*, the so-called bible for Australian associations, you find that the raw number of Australian associations has not kept pace with the Australian population. From the 1970s to 2010, the number of associations in that directory fell from 7,000 to 4,300. Put another way, there were about seven associations per 10,000 adults in the late 1970s and less than three associations for every 10,000 adults by 2010. That means that the associations we have are older than they once were. In the late 1970s, the typical association was about 22 years old; now, the typical association is about 39 years old. We are not growing new associations the way Australia traditionally has—the way we did in the 1950s and 1960s, when we saw the birth of the Endeavour Foundation,
Community Aid Abroad, Brisbane's Blue Nursing Service, World Vision Australia, UNICEF Australia, the Scout Association of Australia, Choice and International Pen Friends, to name just a few.

If you ask the associations themselves, they tell you they are shedding members. The RSL, Scouts, Guides, Rotary, Lions, the Mothers' Union—if you put together what these organisations are reporting back, it is possible to track an index of organisational membership. Compared with 1950, membership was down by 14 per cent in 1980 and was down a full 67 per cent by 2009. So it is vital that we as policymakers do what we can to increase the strength of Australia's organisations.

As a member of parliament, I take great pleasure in being involved in the associations in my local community. Just looking back through my diary for the last fortnight, I have been involved with Micah Challenge; People Power; the Canberra Times Fun Run, which raised money for a range of different charities; the University of the Third Age; and Care Australia.

Australia's associations need a system of regulation which is as good as we can provide for them. The Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission is aiming to be a one-stop shop for Australia's charities. The notion of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission is that charities and not-for-profits will provide their information once to a single organisation. That organisation will then pass that information on to other Commonwealth agencies, including the tax office. Once we get buy-in from states and territories, it will also be passing that information on to state and territory government agencies as well.

This is what past reviews into the sector have called for. As the inquiry into the bill by the House Standing Committee on Economics noted, there have been five major reviews into regulation and taxation of the sector since 2000—the inquiry into the definition of charities and related organisations in 2001, the inquiry by the Senate Standing Committee on Economics in 2008, the Henry review in 2009, a Productivity Commission review in 2010 and a Senate Economics Legislation Committee inquiry, also in 2010. All those reports recommended a single national regulator for the sector. It is a straightforward approach and one which would bring Australia into line with other jurisdictions. As the report points out, the United Kingdom, Canada and New Zealand have this same sort of single regulator. Moving towards a single regulator is good for the growth of the charitable sector. If we want to, we can squib this reform, as previous parliaments going back to 2001 have—that was when the first inquiry recommended such a one-stop shop for charities. But, if we do that, we would be doing Australia's charities a disservice and we would be continuing the red-tape burden which falls upon them.

As was pointed out by witnesses to the inquiry, the not-for-profit sector already has a regulator—by default. It is called the Australian Taxation Office. The Australian Taxation Office is not particularly pleased about this and many charities are not particularly pleased by it either. It has strained the relationship between charities and the Australian Taxation Office. But let's not pretend, as the member for Menzies has attempted to do, that there is no additional red tape being imposed upon Australia's charities. We heard a great deal of evidence from charities about the burden of having to provide the same information to multiple government agencies and about grant requirements which are subtly different and so require charities to employ people to provide information to government
agencies—when they could otherwise be increasing their expenditure on front-line services.

So this notion of the charitable passport is enormously appealing and will allow us to continue to grow the sector. As the report notes:

The current regulatory framework for the sector is fragmented, inconsistent, and uncoordinated across a range of government agencies.

The report went on to note that it is vital we cut the level of red tape within the sector. The Treasury submission to the inquiry said:

For some entities the reductions [in red tape] will happen immediately, particularly those entities that are regulated at the Commonwealth level.

The Treasury submission went on to say that those entities will see a reduction in their red-tape and compliance costs.

Reducing multiple reporting is absolutely critical. The Community Council of Australia said:

I do not think people quite realise how often charities have to demonstrate their bona fides, and the capacity to do that, by having the equivalent of a charities passport, has incredible appeal

In summarising the situation I referred to earlier—the Australian Taxation Office becoming the default regulator for the sector—ACOSS said:

... it was never intended (nor has it wanted) to be the sector’s regulator; and the relationship between the sector and the ATO is less than positive as a result.

If we are able to provide a more streamlined reporting arrangement for Australia's charities, that will provide great benefit to these charities.

Some have asked why the states and territories have not signed on already, but I think this is putting the cart before the horse. It is vital that we build the ACNC and then allow states and territories to look at exactly what they will be signing up to. I fully expect that states and territories will do just that. It is strongly in their interests not to be collecting data that is already held by an ACNC. It is in their interests to be able to simply encourage charities to use a charitable passport. That ought to free up public servants in states and territories to focus on service delivery, not on requiring not-for-profits to provide information they have already provided to other agencies.

I commend the member for Parramatta for her excellent chairing of the committee. The report made a number of recommendations. It suggested, for example, that in the case of private ancillary funds, a tax-effective mechanism for individuals to pursue philanthropy which requires at least five per cent of the wealth of the PAF to be distributed annually and that the government investigate ways to strengthen protection in the bills for private donors who wish to keep their philanthropy anonymous. Recognising the desire for anonymity is an important feature in the bill. The committee also referred to the director's liability regime. The report said:

The committee is concerned that either the directors' liability regime is unduly onerous, as suggested by a significant portion of expert evidence presented to the committee, or that, as presented in the Bill, it is not sufficiently comprehensible for people to understand its intent or purported mode of operation. ... Placing an unnecessary burden of liability could be seen as ... a disincentive, which is opposed to the purpose and objects of the Bill. The committee therefore recommends that Treasury read draft this section of the legislation with a view to clarifying its intent and operation.

The committee went on to note that the penalty amounts in the bill were roughly comparable with state and territory provisions but there was uncertainty among some witnesses as to the amount of discretion that would be available to the commissioner. The committee recommended
accordingly that the explanatory
memorandum to the bills clarify that the
commissioner has the discretion not to
impose an administrative penalty.

The committee scrutinised the bills
thoroughly but the majority of the committee
came strongly to the view that this is an
important bill, that this bill will cut through
red tape for the charitable and not-for-profit
sector, a bill which will reduce frustrating
and unnecessary duplication. I could see in
the eyes of many of the witnesses the sheer
sense of frustration at having to write the
same details on the same forms. We have all
had it from time to time when dealing with
an agency that requires us to provide back to
it information which it knows already. But
how much more frustrating must it be for
many of these charities and not-for-profit to
have to remit information to a second
government agency which it knows is
already held by the first government agency.

I am surprised that the coalition are not
supporting this bill. I know there is a strong
tradition in the conservative parties of
supporting the charitable sector and of
reducing regulation. I am disappointed that
the member for Menzies has chosen to run
something of a scare campaign on this bill
and has chosen to suggest that the
government is increasing regulation;
whereas, in fact, we are in fact simply doing
what so many inquiries, going back to an
inquiry under the coalition in 2001, have
recommended—that is, to take the approach
that Britain, Canada and New Zealand have
taken, to cut through the duplication by
allowing the equivalent of a charities
passport. The member for Menzies has been
selectively quoting from the sector and has
not recognised in many cases that
organisations he has quoted strongly support
the bill. For example, ACOSS, the
Community Council for Australia, the
National Roundtable of Nonprofit
Organisations, Philanthropy Australia, the
Smith Family, the RSPCA and Chartered
Secretaries Australia are all supporters of the
Australian Charities and Not-for-profits
Commission. I commend the bill to the
House.

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (17:50):
Hundreds of thousands of Australians each
year participate in volunteering across
Australia through local sports clubs, scout
groups, surf lifesaving clubs, religious
groups and other community organisations.
The most recent census showed that more
than three million Australians participated in
voluntary work for an organisation or group.
Of course, this figure does not include the
many millions of Australians who conduct
selfless voluntary work for others in the
normal course of their lives without even
considering it to be volunteering their time.
The disparity is reflected in the Australian
Bureau of Statistics' 2010 general social
survey, which indicated that more than six
million Australians volunteer every year,
including many from different cultural
backgrounds who are frequently not aware
that some of their work in the community is
actually volunteering.

Their work is funnelled through the
charities and not-for-profit sector, with
thousands of Australians managing and
handling the many hours of administration,
financial accounting and reporting, and
compliance with federal, state and territory
regulations. There are people like Craig
Michaels at Connected, parents and
volunteers at the Glenleighden School, Gwen
Braga through her involvement in many
community organisations, Anne Huggett at
Mitchelton Meals on Wheels and Leith
Manifold at Meals on Wheels Western
Suburbs, as well as those at Kenmore and
Ashgrove in my electorate, Merv Brown at
Gaythorne RSL, Jutta Godwin of the
Cubberla-Witton Creek Catchment Network,
the wonderful members of the Moggill and Brookfield Country Women's Association and Cecily Walker of the Indooroopilly Senior Citizens, to name just a few. I am sure every member of this House could spend hours listing the enduring hard work of those who give up their time to assist others in their communities. It is no different in Ryan. Indeed, who can forget Brisbane's 'mud army' during the 2011 floods?

In November last year, we saw an attack on volunteerism by the Gillard Labor government in their changes to occupational health and safety laws, which effectively turned volunteers into workers, leaving community groups burdened with strict regulations accompanied by harsh punishments for noncompliance. Those changes last year meant that a Meals on Wheels worker could be fined up to $300,000 or jailed for up to five years due to noncompliance with the so-called harmonised laws. Under the auspices of harmonisation, the Gillard Labor government failed to support the volunteering, charity and not-for-profit sector in this country. That same process has been occurring with the bills before the House today, with a Labor government that has failed once again to consult appropriately with the sector itself, failed to provide certainty with regard to the obligations and responsibilities of organisations and those governing the organisations, and failed to devise legislation that would ease the regulatory burden.

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economics has previously conducted an inquiry into draft legislation proposed by the government, and the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services tabled its report on 10 September 2012, just a few weeks after the bill was introduced into parliament on 23 August 2012. I note that previously the government introduced revised legislation on 6 July 2012 and set a deadline for submissions to the House economics committee of 20 July 2012, giving community organisations and the sector only nine working days to respond to changes that would so fundamentally change the sector.

These reports have exposed a number of issues with the draft legislation, issues highlighted in the 43 submissions to the inquiry from organisations across the board, including the Salvation Army, Anglicare, World Vision, the Institute of Chartered Accountants, the Australian Institute of Company Directors and the Independent Schools Council of Australia. Previously, organisations such as Surf Life Saving Australia, which would be heavily impacted by these changes, have made submissions. The concerns raised through these inquiries have not been adequately addressed to the satisfaction of key stakeholders in the sector, nor for that matter to the satisfaction of the coalition. For that reason, we oppose these bills.

As many members have commented, the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Bill 2012 and the associated Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (Consequential and Transitional) Bill 2012 primarily seek to establish the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission, ACNC. Originally, this was supposed to come into operation by 1 July 2012, then 1 October 2012. Of course, the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee delivered its report on 12 September 2012.

Presently, there is no single institution responsible for the regulation of the not-for-profit sector. For both different and overlapping purposes, different parts of the NFP sector are across Commonwealth, state, territory and local governments. At the
federal level, the Australian Taxation Office and the Australian Securities and Investments Commission act as de facto regulators in various areas. The Australian Taxation Office looks at organisations seeking to access tax concessions, including income tax exemption and deductible gift recipient status. This required endorsement from the ATO makes it the default determiner of charitable status, while ASIC has a smaller role, regulating approximately 11,000 NFP entities incorporated as entities.

There are over 600,000 entities in the NFP sector, of which approximately 440,000 are small, unincorporated entities. Less than one-tenth, 59,000, are determined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics to be what is called 'economically significant'—that is, they employ paid staff or have a significant tax base. Naturally, state and territory governments have certain governance and reporting requirements on entities that receive state and territory funding as well as regulate incorporated associations and charitable trusts. Not-for-profit non-government schools also have quite onerous reporting to, for example, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, through their financial questionnaire, which is described in the submission by the Independent Schools Council of Australia as an 'annual collection of financial income, expenditure and liabilities from all non-government schools receiving Australian government general recurrent grants'. Their submission also goes on to list the other bodies to which many schools must report, including ASIC, state and territory registrars of associations and the ATO.

Of course, in an ideal world, it would be fantastic that a not-for-profit entity could register its details with one commission, once a year, and not have to worry about duplicating that administrative burden to comply with all the federal, state and territory and local government levels. Not-for-profit agencies have raised the issue of inconsistent and increasingly and excessively complex reporting requirements. Sadly, today's bills do not achieve that aim. Instead, there is a considerable lack of clarity in the bills about the specific steps which need to happen before the ACNC comes into place. If, as the government claims, these measures will result in a red-tape reduction for charities by streamline regulatory requirements, then why have they not been up-front about how or why the federal government is going to supplant the roles which the states currently undertake?

In one of the many submissions the Australian Institute of Company Directors has made in this area, specifically in relation to the most recent report, comments included:

… no agreement has been reached with the States...

… … …

As it currently stands, the Bill therefore adds an existing layer of regulation for charities currently required to comply with State legislation. They say they are not satisfied at all that proper steps have been taken to liaise with states and territories for them to agree to hand over their powers to a Commonwealth regulator. Anglicare noted in their submission that harmonisation of regulations across jurisdictions will require 'a lengthy transition period'—more evidence that the industry is extremely concerned about this legislation. Another measure in these bills which is of great concern to the not-for-profit sector is the prescriptive implementation of the set of external conduct standards which will apply to all registered entities, regardless of the entity type. The governance standards can cover a broad range of issues including the content of an entity's governing rules and
the processes which a registered entity must have in place. The many thousands of volunteers who organise and run charities and not-for-profit organisations across Australia do not want a new regulatory burden or prescriptive conduct standards. They just want some advice and direction from people with volunteering experience so they can get on with their volunteer work. I fear that the conduct standards imposed on all registered entities with the ACNC will act as a disincentive for Australians to become involved in charitable and not-for-profit organisations and even more so in the setting up of new organisations.

I note that the Community Council for Australia:… supports the ACNC Bills on the basis that they provide for the establishment of an independent and responsive regulator for the charities and not-for-profit sector.
The CCA represents a very impressive list of charities and has on its board members such as Brett Williamson from Surf Life Saving Australia and the Reverend Tim Costello of World Vision Australia. For large well-established charities and not-for-profits with experience and capability in terms of administration, it is possible that the ACNC could achieve its overarching purpose for streamlining reporting and conduct. However, many submissions expressed the view that it would be difficult for people in regional areas working in other very small not-for-profits to know exactly what is required of them from the ACNC. Indeed, as the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference noted:
A fundamental value is the independence of the charities. Their ability to organise their structure and governance to suit their own activities should not be compromised by prescriptive and unnecessary standards.
Many submissions echoed this sentiment. A one-size-fits-all approach to every charity and not-for-profit, the coalition believes, will decrease versatility within the sector. I understand that there are concerns in the community about the conduct of some organisations to which they donate their money, but that is not a justification for burdensome regulation that applies to each and every charitable and not-for-profit organisation.

This is why the coalition opposes the passage of these bills today. However, we also have a plan to assist Australians effectively in this area. On 18 June 2012, the shadow minister for families, housing and human services, the member for Menzies, announced that the coalition would support a small, independent charities commission, which would serve as an educative and training body for the sector. Such a commission would indeed support the sector by providing information about the process of registration for new organisations, it would advocate for the rights of these organisations and, further, it would help facilitate the interaction between government and the charitable and not-for-profit sector. This type of coordination is what the coalition supports, real on-the-ground support for community organisations, rather than a centralised government decreeing to each and every organisation in this country the exacting reporting and conduct requirements proposed in this legislation which will ultimately be handed down as regulation.

Members should resist any push that proposes a government-knows-best view and indeed any push that centralises functions of government to the Commonwealth where there does not exist any rational basis to do so. We must respect personal and community responsibility which we see so often in the charity and not-for-profit sector. We know that by fostering community spirit we reduce reliance on government.
At present, although these measures proposed in the ACNC bills have undergone many revisions, it is certainly not a process anyone would describe as exhaustive. The government addressed some concerns coming from the sector in the revised versions of the legislation, but ultimately I do not accept that the government has adequately addressed those concerns. The coalition will always support volunteering in Australia and we will always support charities and the not-for-profit sector. In that area it is incumbent upon government to reduce red tape and to remove the duplication of services where appropriate. These bills do not achieve that aim, and therefore do not support volunteering or charities nor the not-for-profit sector. For that reason, I oppose these bills.

Debate adjourned.

BILLS

Privacy Amendment (Enhancing Privacy Protection) Bill 2012

Report from Main Committee

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

Ordered that this bill be considered immediately.

Bill agreed to.

Third Reading

Mr RIPOLL (Oxley—Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer) (18:06): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Bill 2012

Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (Consequential and Transitional) Bill 2012

Second Reading

Cognate debate.

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (18:07): It is a great pleasure to rise to speak tonight about the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Bill 2012 and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (Consequential and Transitional) Bill 2012, known as bill 2. The existing framework for the regulation of the not-for-profit sector is complex. At the Commonwealth level there are increasing compliance and administrative costs, particularly for not-for-profit organisations. These operate over a number of jurisdictions
and therefore new legislation is needed to improve efficiency and make the process of regulation simpler and easier for the not-for-profit organisations in our community.

As we all know, the not-for-profit sector is an invaluable part of the Australian community. We rely on not-for-profit organisations to deliver many, many programs and services. I see it every day in the community of Canberra. The sector is the backbone of so much community activity, especially in areas such as health, social inclusion and welfare. In every community, the work of not-for-profit groups is part of the fabric of our society.

As I mentioned, in my electorate of Canberra I meet every day with not-for-profit organisations through a variety of means and I meet with many, many volunteers who work in the sector. Canberra has one of the highest volunteering rates in Australia. We are very proud of that. People are constantly amazed at the quality of the volunteers we have here, their levels of education and the skill sets that they bring to their volunteering roles. I am always amazed at the commitment and passion that the volunteers bring to whatever organisation they are involved in. Many are involved in many organisations in addition to looking after the grandkids and also taking some time out to do U3A.

So we are blessed in the quality and the skill sets of the volunteers we have in Canberra, which is why I want to draw Canberrans' attention to the National Volunteer Awards that are now open. These awards recognise the contribution of over six million Australians who volunteer in communities across the country. The awards now include a senior volunteer category to acknowledge the invaluable contribution that older Australians make to our community. I particularly note that there are a number of older Canberrans who are out volunteering in the community and doing all sorts of things, from driving trucks to doing the books, to stocking shelves for OzHarvest to knitting jumpers for small children. It is an endless range of work that they are involved in.

Madam Deputy Speaker, with your indulgence I want to quickly go through those categories because I do want to bring people's attention to them. We have the volunteer of the year award, the junior volunteer award, the youth volunteer award, the senior volunteer award, which is a new category, the business volunteer award, the education award, the emergency management volunteer award, the environment award, the innovation in volunteering award and the long-term commitment to community service award. I have been to many of the award ceremonies here in the ACT and the quality of the volunteers—the finalists and also the winners—is just extraordinary. For information on the application process, and I encourage everyone to apply, people should speak to their local member or go to the website. But speak to your local member in the first instance to get the details of that.

As I mentioned, in my electorate I am out and about every day meeting with a number of not-for-profit organisations. One of the largest in the Canberra electorate is Communities@Work. Communities@Work provides services to more than 13,000 clients each year. One of the services that it provides, which it took on probably a few years ago, is now called the Yellow Van service. It used to be called the OzHarvest food rescue service.

Communities@Work has a very long and proud history in the Tuggeranong Valley region and also in the Woden Valley, going back to 1977, when the Tuggeranong Family Action group was formed and began the
valley’s first childcare centre operating from a house in Kambah. From little things, big things grow and Communities@Work is very big now. Tuggeranong Family Action then merged with the Tuggeranong Community Service to deliver general community services, including services for the elderly, transport for the disadvantaged, referrals and advocacy. It incorporated in 2002 and officially changed its name to Communities@Work.

As I mentioned, one of their very valuable services is the Yellow Van, formally the OzHarvest van. The change of name signals the growth of the work that they do in food rescue operations. It is an integral part of the Canberra community and the social structure of Canberra. Communities@Work is assuming full responsibilities for the Yellow Van and will continue its 35-year history of responding to the needs of Canberrans and helping those when they most need assistance. OzHarvest, which is known throughout Australia for the work they do in rescuing food and then providing it to the needy, is an invaluable program. I want to thank Ronni Kahn, the CEO, and the board and staff of OzHarvest who have been involved in the transition from OzHarvest to Yellow Van.

Here are just a few stats on the Yellow Van rescue mission. In the last 12 months, I think it is, they rescued 18,223 kilograms of food that would otherwise go to waste from regular food donors every month. In June this year the Yellow Van provided 60,744 meals and in total provided over 1½ million meals. They distribute food to around 70 charities and refuges supporting disadvantaged people in the community. They also provide an efficient and effective way to reduce food waste and to assist the most vulnerable in Canberra. By doing that, they also save a lot of landfill.

I have been out on two rescue missions with Yellow Van, one shortly after I was elected. It was very early days then and they were based in a small office in Weston Creek. At that stage they had a number of donors but not many. We went out to women’s refugees, old people’s homes and a range of other centres. We picked up food from businesses around Canberra. Since then they have expanded this network to include after-school programs for kids at high school. The last rescue mission I went on was to Calwell High School. We dropped off some food there so that kids had a bit of protein and food before they went home while they were taking part in after-school activities. As I said, it provides an invaluable service to the people of Canberra and I welcome the new Yellow Van driving around the streets of our city.

I also work closely with mental health NGOs, such as Lifeline, which provide assistance to those at risk of suicide and depression and meet with Indigenous not-for-profit groups, aged-care providers and many church-run organisations which look after the vulnerable, as well as with women’s empowerment organisations such as the Brindabella Women’s Group, which offers support for women with young children. I have spoken about these organisations many times in parliament, which is why it gives me great pleasure to speak on this legislation tonight.

The social benefit of not-for-profit organisations is recognised by government support in the form of direct outlays and tax concessions. As a consequence, not-for-profit organisations and other donors influence where community and government resources are directed. That is why it is essential that the not-for-profit sector is transparent and promotes public confidence so that those resources are directed at the most valuable outcomes and tax concessions
do not distort markets. It is also important that scarce resources are not directed at excessive regulatory requirements.

I would like to begin by addressing the key issues in bill No. 1. In the 2011-12 budget, the Gillard Labor government said that it would establish the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission, known as the ACNC, as a national regulator for the not-for-profit sector. Initially, only tax-endorsed charities will be regulated by the ACNC. However, this bill establishes a regulatory framework that has the potential to be extended to all not-for-profit entities.

In terms of the technical aspects, the ACNC Bill will establish the ACNC; charge the ACNC with registering not-for-profit entities and maintaining a public register; provide for the powers of the ACNC Commissioner in relation to the regulation of registered entities; establish a single national regulatory framework for not-for-profit entities; and establish the obligations and responsibilities of registered entities.

Before initiating this bill, hearings were held by the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee and the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services and their inquiries into the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Bill 2012 and the Tax Laws Amendment (Special Conditions for Not-for-profit Concessions) Bill 2012.

Parliamentary amendments are proposed to address the issues and recommendations raised in the committee hearings. The amendments are minor and non-controversial. They basically address concerns raised by the not-for-profit sector during the committee hearing. I want to return to some of the comments made by some of the organisations which appeared before the committee, made submissions or just responded to the notion of the ACNC.

ACOSS said:

The establishment of a national regulator for community services has long been championed by ACOSS. We welcomed the Government’s commitment to this reform in 2011 and have worked closely with Government and our members towards its establishment.

ACOSS strongly support the ACNC opening on 1 October. The Smith Family, in referring to the bills, said:

The Smith Family would welcome the passing of this legislation and the establishment of the Commission.

The RSPCA, in referring to the bills, said: RSPCA Australia supports of the Government’s reform agenda for the charities and not for profit sector. The Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission—the ACNC—is an integral part of the reforms and provides the enabling mechanism for future regulatory changes that should lead to the reduction of "red tape"—and I will come back to that in a moment—efficiencies and a "level playing field" in the consideration of charitable status and mechanisms that will support charities and financial giving.

Chartered Secretaries Australia said:

CSA strongly supports the establishment of the independent statutory office, the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission … We have long supported the adoption of a new, dedicated regulator and a reduced compliance burden for the NFP sector and the amended bill is a very positive step in achieving the most appropriate reforms for the sector.

We also have testimonials and positive comments from the Community Council for Australia, the National Roundtable of Nonprofit Organisations and Philanthropy Australia. So there is strong support amongst the community sector and, significantly,
peak associations and not-for-profit organisations supporting the ACNC.

The many reviews of the sector have recommended the establishment of a national regulator to simplify regulation. These reforms were an election commitment of the Gillard Labor government. It is recognised that our reform agenda is ambitious. We are implementing the most significant reforms the sector has ever experienced over the last century.

In last year's budget the government promised to establish the ACNC as a one-stop-shop regulator for the not-for-profit sector, to assist in achieving a one-stop-shop regulator. We are committed to negotiations with the states and territories on national regulation because we want to reduce red tape. I do want to touch on this point, because it has come up in my conversations with Catholic Social Services. They are deeply committed to reform in a range of areas in this sector and they are equally deeply committed to a reduction of red tape. I met with them a few weeks ago and they were at pains to underscore their commitment to the reform but also to the reduction of red tape.

I have mentioned in this House many times a fabulous organisation in my electorate, Winnunga in Narrabundah. They provide a vast range of services to the Indigenous community here in Canberra and also to the Indigenous community in the region. They provide, depending on the service, between 30 and 50 per cent of our health services to people in the region. They provide services for diabetes, dental, early childhood, infant welfare and maternity. It is an extraordinary organisation. I always take my hat off to them. Recently, along with the Governor-General and the former member for Canberra, I was visiting their organisation, seeing their renovations and learning about what fabulous work they do. At every meeting they always make a point of raising with me the onerous task that they have of filling out the many, many different forms for the many, many different grants. In fact, they employ someone full time to do it, who essentially works not 365 days but just to do the admin work. So reduction of red tape and also reduction of duplication is incredibly important. As I have mentioned, I have met with NGOs and not-for-profit groups on a regular basis and we have been deeply engaged in consultation with the not-for-profit sector on this bill. I commend these bills as important measures to improve the operations of the not-for-profit sector so that their valuable work is made easier, simpler and more efficient. (Time expired)

Mr EWEN JONES (Herbert) (18:22): I rise to speak on the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Bill 2012 and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (Consequential and Transitional) Bill 2012. In doing so I agree with the basic tenet of the speech of the member opposite when she said that this country would be nowhere if it was not for the not-for-profit and that we owe a great debt to the fantastic work that our volunteers do. She made a number of references to red tape but nowhere in her speech did she come across any form of red tape that she was actually going to reduce. In fact, the establishment of this commission will lead to another layer of bureaucracy without any reduction of red tape at all. It is typical of Labor that once again we have made the announcement that we are going to install this before we have had any discussions with stakeholders, namely the states.

These bills create a whole new statutory office which will regulate all the existing not-for-profit sector's regulations from a federal level. They also draft the regulatory framework that this new office will be
responsible for implementing. This new red-tape system includes a shift to the 'report once, use often' format. It is supposed to include a greater focus on transparency, governance and accountability and greater public access to information on the sector.

The new agency, the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission, or ACNC, hopes to align all of the federal government requirements and services for the not-for-profit sector into one agency. It will commence its operations in October. I find it extraordinary that we are hoping that it will do this and yet it commences next month. As part of its responsibilities, these bills provide the ACNC with the power to issue warning notices, issue directions, enter into enforceable undertakings, apply to the courts for injunctions, suspend or remove responsible entities and appoint acting responsible entities.

Any changes to the not-for-profit sector must be made with the goal of reducing the regulatory burden. These are people and organisations who are just trying to help the community and provide services where nobody else has been able to. They are already struggling to meet the demands and expectations of government—and by that I mean all levels of government, local, state and federal—as well as their own internal requirements. In this sector more than any, we need government to just get out of the way and let them get on with the job. My concern is that this bill just does not do that. For all the talk about making it easier for charities, the organisations in Townsville are telling me that, far from delivering on that promise, it is increasing the regulation weighing them down. Does this suite of bills reduce the overall burden? No, it does not. What rules and regulations do they replace? None yet. Even the bill's explanatory memorandum has to acknowledge transitional compliance costs and that smaller entities may now have to start reporting to the ACNC where they did not have to report to the government previously, and this is, again, on top of what they are currently doing to comply.

As a supporter of my community sector, I do not and cannot support this legislation. Labor's approach to the not-for-profit sector will only hurt it, hindering the activities of charities and discouraging involvement in the sector. There are serious concerns about the scope of the ACNC. This office will have extensive and pervasive power over a highly sensitive sector. They will be able to demand the production of information from an organisation under their coverage, and even to enter premises in certain circumstances. They will be able to conduct investigations on organisations in breach of any law, even one that has no connection to charity legislation. This will leave them at odds with other actual law enforcement agencies. Who is going to have jurisdiction over genuine legal issues: the ACNC or the organisations that exist to deal with the law? I have been asked this question and no-one can tell me the answer.

The ACNC will also have the ability to remove a 'responsible officer' from any charity, and to overrule any laws that would allow that responsible officer to be appointed. While it will begin from within the tax office, ultimately the ACNC will be its own agency, and the scope of its powers is incredible. It will become one of the most powerful Commonwealth regulators. This plays to the Labor-Greens government mantra: load it up with regulation, centralise it, but above all do nothing.

The states are the elephant in the room with this legislation. Much of the interaction between government and not-for-profits comes from the jurisdiction of state governments. This includes incorporated
associations and fundraising regulation, among other areas. They have not agreed to hand over any of these powers. Once again we see Labor make the announcement, plough ahead, not worry about anything and bully the states into doing what they want. Again, as with so many things this government has done, it cuts across the rights and responsibilities of the state government. Again, as with so many things, they have lobbed the legislation into the parliament with absolutely no consultation with the state governments. That this legislation is being put through the parliament before the states have even been brought on board is mind-boggling. It means that this will simply be another level of bureaucratic hoops for charities to jump through.

The primary objective of this new agency is supposed to be to streamline and reduce red tape; less red-tape is what we need. But instead the new agency has been brought in without any of the old system going. There has still been no progress made in negotiating this change of responsibilities with state governments. We are adding a new bureaucracy with new regulations and requirements without removing the elements of the current system. Even independent schools are going to find themselves having to report to the ACNC as well as their current requirements of reporting to the Department of Education and Workplace Relations and the state education departments. We have just added another layer to their mess. It is just making the system more convoluted and adding another layer of complexity. It is understandable that this has left the not-for-profit sector confused and concerned. In an age where volunteerism is dropping and the volunteers are ageing, we are making it harder and harder for not-for-profits to attract and retain people who just want to help.

We have great local charities in Townsville. Several of them have approached me with their concerns about the consequences of these changes. The Catholic Diocese of Townsville have spoken to me about their concerns of the impact of this new layer of red tape not just on their agencies and parishes but even on the 33 Catholic schools that we have in Townsville. I held a forum for charities and community groups in July. We had the shadow minister for families, housing and human services, the member for Menzies, Kevin Andrews, there to hear the issues that are facing these groups in Townsville. Those in attendance kept coming back to us with the same issue, too much red tape, and that is too much of the organisation's money being used in the back office as opposed to front-line services. They were all trying to be compliant, to go by the book and do the right thing, but it is putting more and more of a strain on their organisation as the red-tape burden continues to build.

Many of those present were sick of the reporting requirements of government agencies. Despite obeying all the rules they still have to keep justifying to the government every single change that they have in their figures. They understand why a level of reporting is important, but it needs to be simplified. At the moment, many have to report to multiple government bodies with a different lot of paperwork and expectations for each one, not to mention the excessive auditing obligations. For groups receiving funding through more than one program this is only further magnified. If this government would only listen to the people against whom this legislation is pointed they would not be creating even more reporting requirements with these bills. They would see that this is a huge part of the problem.

I also heard about the difficulties associated with recruiting staff and
volunteers. Again, here are charities looking for people to help out in the community and they are being continually constrained by government regulations. That makes it hard for charities to provide a service. It is baffling for those who just want to help but instead feel like more of a hindrance. The ACNC is only going to further discourage involvement in the voluntary sector. The coalition wants to take an entirely different approach to the not-for-profit sector. We believe we should trust the voluntary sector, trust civil society and trust those working in charitable endeavours.

The Labor government's approach, instead, reverses the cornerstone assumption of trust. It has created legislation that assumes people involved with these organisations who volunteer are untrustworthy and tainted. We do still see the value in a national body of some sort. The opportunity is there for it to have a role to educate, support and train organisations, to help them comply with government expectations. But it should be there to represent these organisations, working with them rather than possessing sweeping powers to work against them. It should be about fostering innovation, making the ground level and fertile so that they, the not for profits, can provide full support for our community. We want to see regulatory powers stay with the organisations that are currently responsible for them. The ACNC is supposed to be a body to support charities, but it is instead been turned into a tough cop, despite the fact that we are dealing with organisations that are just trying to contribute to the community where needed.

More and more, we have seen the government sticking its nose into the not-for-profit sector where it is neither wanted nor needed. Contractual and reporting requirements have become more and more of a burden. Audits are required at multiple levels of a charity's finances. Different quality assurance measures are used within the same agency. Huge amounts of data are required, with no clear reason for the department needing it and no ability for agencies to then retrieve it. Almost every not-for-profit representative to whom I have spoken genuinely believes the reports they provide to government are not read by anyone at all. They are doing reports to provide a job for someone in government to check off and stack into a corner somewhere. This is what we need to be looking at: minimising the role of government and making it easier for charities to get on with their work in the community.

The coalition does support transparency, in all sectors, but there has to be a position of respect and trust when dealing with not for profits. They have a history of responsible management and yet they are being rewarded for this with oppressive regulation to solve problems that do not exist. We believe in working with the sector, not directing the sector and treating it as an extension of the state. When we talk about the not-for-profit sector we need to remember with whom we are dealing. They are organisations trying to do the right thing. They are not always professionals; they are often unpaid. They are just trying to find ways to help the parts of the community that need it. And here we are, putting more barriers in their way.

The coalition trusts the not-for-profit sector and this is the position from which government should approach the sector. This legislation is just another layer of compliance for charities to have to deal with, despite the vast majority having previously done everything right. It is time we made it easier not harder for people who are already trying to do the right thing.

In the time I have left I will talk about charities in Townsville. I would like to give a
final report on what happened over the last week. Seven different charities that offer support in Townsville to people with disabilities have united recently to launch the Chatterbox Challenge. They are the Endeavour Foundation, the Spinal Injuries Association, Centacare, Cerebral Palsy League, UnitingCare Community, Life Without Barriers and Multicap.

As an ambassador for the challenge I spent last Friday not speaking—to raise money for these organisations. It was a big job. I thought, as a chatterbox challenge, no one can speak more than me. I am made for this. It was a challenge to chatterboxes to shut up for a while. From the moment I hit grade 4 I was one of the people talking in class. I was club captain of my rugby club and I was MC at their functions. It was not because I was good, it was because I was cheap and they could hear me at the back. I then became an auctioneer. I am now the member for Herbert and have used my voice for my occupation since about 1983. I was able to assist these charities by raising over $3,000—but in reality I could speak any time I wanted. People living with disability do not have that luxury. I will work to reduce the red tape in these organisations and therefore will not support these bills.

**Ms RISHWORTH** (Kingston) (18:35): I am very pleased to rise today in support of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Bill 2012 and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits (Consequential and Transitional) Bill 2012. Charities and not-for-profit organisations form an important part of our communities. According to statistics the not-for-profit sector is large and diverse, with around 600,000 organisations in operation across Australia. There are hundreds operating in every electorate across the nation, working to make our communities better places to live.

In my electorate I have a great number of well recognised and some lesser known—but no less great—not-for-profit organisations that function to provide key support for people living in Southern Adelaide. I am proud of the great work carried out by these not-for-profit organisations. I was very pleased over the weekend between the two parliamentary sittings to visit Meals on Wheels at Happy Valley and celebrated with their volunteers. I also had great pleasure in hosting a barbeque to raise money for juvenile diabetes—especially for Hannah Gordon, who is the local ambassador, in my electorate, raising awareness of type 1 diabetes. Indeed, on Sunday I ran—'lumbered' is perhaps a more appropriate word!—to raise money for the Sammy D Foundation through the City to Bay run in Adelaide and raised a bit of money there. These are just snapshots of some of the great organisations.

The Sammy D Foundation has come to light lately and I would like to talk about the great work that they do, because they work with young people to raise the issue of youth violence and alcohol fuelled violence. They talk about respect, about safe ways for young people to get together and about how important sport is. They provide really important lessons in life for young people, so I wanted to mention them.

In addition we have the Riding for the Disabled Association and Southern Junction Community Services, who do a great job in providing housing and support services for young people in the electorate as well as support groups for domestic violence and sufferers of illness such as Parkinson's. We have a great Royal Society for the Blind branch in my local electorate that does a great job. The list could on.

There is no denying that these not-for-profit organisations provide wonderful
assistance to my local community and the wider community. These not-for-profit organisations are providing extra assistance through the provision of food and shelter. They connect people with a social network or support group and they even provide people with an opportunity to learn a new skill or maintain a hobby. I should probably do a shout-out for the camera club as well. They do a great job in getting people reinvigorated in taking pictures. These organisations do a wonderful job.

Depending on the size and scale of an organisation the amount of funds they raise per year can be quite modest, or quite a lot. According to the ABS figures, not-for-profit organisations contributed $43 billion to Australia's GDP, and eight per cent of employment in 2006-7. From this figure, it is evident that a significant effort is being put into raising significant amounts of money by the not-for-profit sector.

It is estimated that around 400,000 of these organisations would receive support from the government in the form of tax concessions. In 2010-11, Commonwealth taxation concessions to the not-for-profit sector amounted to almost $3.3 billion. So these organisations are making a big contribution, and government is assisting through issues around taxation.

Not-for-profit organisations could not do the work that they do without their donors. Often it is those who have the least who will give to things like the Red Shield Appeal. The generosity that I see every day, of community members providing their support to fund-raising campaigns, is really impressive.

There is no crisis in public confidence when it comes to the not-for-profit sector. That does not mean that we should not ensure that we continue to make this area transparent, and ensure that there continues to be trust between those in the not-for-profit sector and the local community and government. I think it is really important that we continue to make sure that when people make a donation they have confidence that their donation is going to an organisation that really does make a difference. So it is important that we ensure that there is transparency, and that this transparency will maintain the confidence that people have in the not-for-profit sector.

Some of the changes before us today also simplify the regulatory system that governs charities and not-for-profits. I heard the previous speaker talking about how this bill was not wanted by the not-for-profit sector. That is not really correct. The not-for-profit sector has, for some time, been talking about changes—changes that are in this legislation—which will reduce regulatory requirements, make compliance a lot more simple and reduce the red tape.

The not-for-profit sector does not want to be regulated by the Australian Taxation Office and the Australian Securities and Investment Commission, which is currently the case. They do want an independent body that understands their needs and focuses on their needs.

There have been a number of reviews, and I will just go into the background of why we are here today. There have been six separate reviews of the charitable and not-for-profit sector. The Productivity Commission, in 2010, made a number of recommendations. According to the report they found that the current regulatory framework governing the sector is 'complex, lacks coherence and sufficient transparency, and is costly'.

Other problems identified included a lack of consistency and comparability in financial reporting requirements, and significant differences in fundraising legislation between jurisdictions, which added to the
costs incurred by the sector. The Productivity Commission report made a number of recommendations. One recommended reform was to implement a central body within the Australian government. This echoed the conclusions of earlier reports.

This side of the House listened to the Productivity Commission's report and has acted. Through this legislation we are establishing a new office for the not-for-profit sector supported by the new Not-for-Profit Sector Reform Council made up of representatives from across the sector. This will ensure, as I said, that the regulatory framework—the regulatory body that is looking at the not-for-profit sector—actually understands the sector. I think that is an important point.

Undertaking a scoping study for a national regulator for the not-for-profit sector to remove the complex regulatory arrangements currently in place and streamline reporting arrangements is another important part of the reform. The report also recommended a focus on greater harmonisation and simplification between the federal, state and territory governments on not-for-profit issues, including regulation. It recommended reducing red-tape for government funded not-for-profit organisations. So I am very pleased. I think this bill goes a long way.

It satisfies three important objectives: to maintain, protect and enhance public trust and confidence in the not-for-profit sector; to support and sustain a robust, vibrant, independent and innovative not-for-profit sector; and to underpin the important role the ACNC will have of promoting the reduction of unnecessary regulatory obligations on the not-for-profit sector.

These are sensible changes that the government is making. We have heard a lot from those opposite about how this will not really make it better for the not-for-profit sector. I do wonder why, then, we have heard organisation after organisation welcoming this. A whole range of different organisations—whether it be ACOSS, the Community Council for Australia, the Smith Family or the RSPCA—support the government's agenda. That is because these changes are something that the not-for-profit sector has been calling for, to ensure, as they move forward and become bigger and more successful, that they can continue to reform and to perform their duties with less red tape, and that the regulator meets their needs.

Many not-for-profit groups are welcoming this. They have been calling for this—in fact, they have been pushing for this. So it is disappointing that the opposition are doing what they do best, and that is saying no. They are saying, 'No, we're not going to support this,' even though the stakeholders support it and there is a lot of positivity around it. Of course, they are not taking that into account. They are just saying no, which is very disappointing. I believe that this legislation is important for the not-for-profit sector moving forward. It will maintain transparency and the confidence of the public but also ensure that it is easier for not-for-profit organisations to operate in the future.

I would like to conclude by once again congratulating all the charities and not-for-profit organisations right around this country. Of course, as I am a little biased, I would like to particularly thank those in the electorate of Kingston, who provide so many great services. I have only mentioned a few of them today, and I apologise to all those I have not mentioned. All of them are incredibly valued, and all of them, as previously mentioned, have a significant number of volunteers that work very hard. I think it was estimated in just a small local council area that if all the volunteers packed up and left they would need something like
200 staff to do that work. The volunteers are incredibly important and contribute significantly. I think there would be a big bill for government if they were not doing that work. Their contribution certainly needs to be recognised. On that note, I commend the bills to the House. I thank non-government organisations and volunteers for doing the great work that they do.

Ms O'DWYER (Higgins) (18:48): I rise to speak on the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Bill 2012 and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (Consequential and Transitional) Bill 2012. I join with those who have spoken in this place about the very good work done by charities and not-for-profits in our community, in our country and around the world. I think that, on this, both sides of the chamber would agree.

My own electorate of Higgins is full to the brim with schools that nurture young minds, hospitals that heal bodies, training and employment agencies that invest in skills development and find job opportunities for those who need them, welfare agencies that provide food, shelter, and hope for some of the most disadvantaged in our society, and aged-care facilities that provide care for those who cannot care for themselves. These organisations and more were established, and are run, by various religious denominations and not-for-profits.

We are told that the measures in the bills before the parliament today will make it easier for these organisations to perform good works. We are told that the measures will simplify regulation, reduce compliance costs and reduce the time spent by the directors, staff and volunteers of these organisations in managing the red-tape burden. We are told that the change in the regulatory regime will increase transparency and confidence in the sector. If this were true then of course we on this side of the chamber would support the bills. However, sadly, this is not the case. In fact, these bills are a cruel hoax on the not-for-profit and charitable sector.

In the time available to me today I will highlight four aspects of these bills. First, these bills will increase, not decrease, the regulatory burden on the not-for-profit and charitable sector through a significant amount of duplication. Second, despite the fact that the government say there will be simplification of the regulatory burden between the states and territories and the Commonwealth, there will be no simplification because there has been no agreement with state and territory governments to hand over powers. Third, there are significant concerns about the scope of powers of the new regulator—concerns that the new regulator will be able to interfere and intervene in not-for-profits without good cause. And, fourth, we believe that the significant changes mooted in these bills will actually put off a number of people who would hitherto have looked forward to participating in our local communities in becoming directors of not-for-profits or charitable institutions.

I am a little perplexed as to why this government even has a Minister for Finance and Deregulation. Each time we stand in this place to discuss a new bill, we are faced with more regulation, more administration and more red tape. Be it child care, health care, financial services or industry, this government has added more complexity and more costs to business without requiring or delivering productivity gains. Now it is the not-for-profit sector that the government has in its sights.

As we know, the government puts facts and evidence to one side when making decisions about regulatory intervention and
pursues, in many cases, ill-conceived and unwarranted legislation. This is true in this instance. How do we know? During the consultation process, as short and deficient as it was—nine working days between the release of the exposure draft and the introduction of the legislation—a number of comments were made about how this legislation would increase, not decrease, regulation and compliance requirements. To see that, you only need look at some of the comments made by those that provided submissions. The Australian Baptist Ministries said:

In our view the increase in compliance obligation will make it more difficult to fill volunteer roles within local congregations as well as requiring more time to be spent on compliance matters and therefore less time on matters that will provide a benefit to the community.

The Australian Conservation Foundation warned that rather than remove duplication, the ACNC bills would duplicate reporting obligations. The Australian Council of Social Services stated:

The Bill does not yet contain any provisions that make it explicit that the reduction of unnecessary compliance and regulatory burdens is a core object of the Bill, nor does it identify these kinds of reforms as policy directions or drivers of the ACNC’s purpose or activities. There must be a direct link between the reduction of red tape and the objectives and functions of the ACNC.

Catholic Health Australia confirmed that:

… the effect of the Bills would be to add additional regulation to the operation of most not-for-profit organisations.

Community Employers WA submitted:

A key objective is the reduction of red tape and duplication with regards to compliance, accountability and transparency.

It has not to date, and remains, unclear that the Bill will achieve this. This is a potentially a significant failing, but remains pivotal to the success of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission. This needs to be more prescriptive.

Mission Australia concluded that the bill:

… is not sufficiently well balanced by a commitment to enable the not-for-profit sector, to reduce duplication of reporting and to provide public confidence in the sector …

The list goes on and on. Yet, despite this overwhelming evidence that it does not achieve the objectives, the government simply refuses to acknowledge that this bill is not a good idea for the not-for-profit and charitable sector and that, in fact, it will increase the regulation and red tape on this sector rather than reduce it.

The government say we should simply trust them with the detail. We should simply trust them that, at some point in the future, harmonisation between the states and territories and the Commonwealth will occur. When it comes to matters of trust, of course, with this government they have proved very much wanting in this regard. I go to the comments of Linda Lavarch who heads up the Not-for-profit Sector Reform Council. She said:

Removing the current regulatory duplication and providing a one-stop shop for not-for-profits can only be achieved through a collaboration between the Commonwealth, state and territory governments.

Mr Bill Daniels of the Independent Schools Council of Australia said at the hearing:

There has been no discussion whatsoever with the states or, indeed, with the Commonwealth department that I am aware of that has involved the independent sector on any reduction in reporting requirements.

This, of course, adds up to additional compliance red tape and regulation. The government are asking us to trust them despite the distinct lack of detail. Time and time again, when they have announced policies without the appropriate details, they have been found wanting. We
have seen it with the recent announcement of their dental policy; we have seen it with the response to the Gonski review which lacks any detail whatsoever. The government do not have proven ability to furnish comprehensive policies with details, which means gross uncertainty for stakeholders and it means that we as a parliament would not be doing our job properly if we allowed this legislation to proceed.

Through discussions with stakeholders and throughout the inquiry by the House Standing Committee on Economics it has been made clear that no meaningful progress has been made by the government in its attempts to have the states and territories agree to harmonise their laws. Based on the coalition’s discussions with state governments it seems unlikely that states will hand over their powers and submit to the Commonwealth in the foreseeable future—a gaping hole in the government’s plan. Not only has the government failed to provide the details of harmonisation with the states and territories, it has failed to ensure its own departments are ready to hand over their regulatory powers to the ACNC.

This issue is of particular concern for independent schools which will be required to report much of the information they report to the department of education to the ACNC as well as to state authorities. If an information-sharing agreement is not reached between the ACNC and the department of education, the ACNC will serve as an additional layer of regulation and red tape for independent schools. Not only have the government failed to harmonise the relationship between the states and territories and the Commonwealth, they have failed to harmonise the relationship between their departments and the ACNC. It has been made very clear to the Australian people in recent times that the government cannot be trusted to provide detail with their policies. This is yet another reason why we cannot support the legislation.

The third point I would like to raise today is that it is a concern to us that the government is creating a regulatory superpower and the powers of this regulator certainly exceed its requirements. This bill will establish a new statutory office, the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission which will be a Commonwealth level regulator for the not-for-profit sector. The ACNC commissioner will, in turn, have a wide range of enforcement powers. These powers are similar to those given to other Commonwealth regulators such as ASIC, the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission. Why would a charity, not-for-profit or local community group need to be subjected to the same regulatory powers as some of the largest companies in the nation?

These bills provides the ACNC with the authority to: issue warning notices; issue directions; enter into enforceable undertakings; apply to the courts for injunctions; suspend or remove responsible entities; and appoint acting responsible entities. This overreach of powers was recognised by Community Employers WA who put to the inquiry that:

The level of regulatory powers of the ACNC, such as procedural fairness and sanctions, are concerning and could lead to a misuse of law in dealing with organisations justly and fairly. It is also contrary to the concept of ‘light touch’ regulation.

This was confirmed by Ewen Crouch, Chairman of Mission Australia, who stated:

I do believe that the information-gathering, monitoring and sanctioning powers, including the ability to remove a director, are very heavy-handed. I would think they would be quite problematic from a regulator’s perspective. It is not something that any other regulator in
Australia has any experience with and I do wonder why this regulator would want to have those powers and whether they would know how to use them.

It is simply not appropriate for such unknown powers to be invested with this new regulatory body without any evidence that there is any harm whatsoever that needs to be corrected. We were told a number of times when we were conducting the inquiry with the House Standing Committee on Economics that there needed to be increased confidence in the sector. Yet, it was clear to us in all of the evidence provided that there was significant trust and confidence in the sector. The government was trying to provide a solution where there was, in fact, no serious problem.

The fourth area I would like to raise today is the consequences of introducing such legislation. The consequences of this bill will be felt deeply by the charities and not-for-profit sector, as well as by the entire community. We know this because we have heard a significant amount of evidence from a number of eminent Australians such as John Colvin, who is the CEO and managing director of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, who asked, as David Gonski had already pointed out, 'Why should we have a system in Australia which would make us the laughing stock of the world by having liabilities for volunteers greater than those for not-for-profits?' This would discourage many people from going on to boards for not-for-profit organisations and charities. The government should get out of the way of the good work being done by not-for-profit organisations and let them get on with helping people and helping our community. It is clear that there will be an impact on the operation of charities which will in turn impact on the likelihood of people either willing to get involved or stay involved with these organisations.

When speaking about this bill, David Gonski said it will not assist in 'fostering volunteerism in the sector'. The high level of liability that the bill attaches to individuals will severely restrict the likelihood of attracting community members to the boards of charities and not-for-profit organisations. The bill will not foster volunteerism but may, in fact, restrict it.

Mr Gonski also said directors of such organisations may not want to branch out and make these not-for-profit's do really well because they will be scared that they will not be able to adhere to a black letter law approach. Such a consequence will mean that organisations will be less successful and less likely to expand and grow and increase their services and contribution to the community—a profoundly perverse result of this legislation.

It is interesting that I quote Mr Gonski here because Mr Gonski is well known to the government. Mr Gonski is the author of the review into school funding. The government recently responded in the broadest possible terms to this report and praised Mr Gonski for his work and approach to the inquiry yet here in this instance Mr Gonski is being ignored by this government. I have listened to his concerns as outlined and the coalition has listened to his concerns. Perhaps the government should do so as well.

As such, for all the reasons I have outlined this evening, there is no way that the coalition can support these bills. For the reasons mentioned, we want to see a very vibrant not-for-profit and charitable sector. We want to encourage volunteers to contribute to this sector and to go on contributing to this sector. These bills unfortunately will not allow them to do that in the way that we have come to know. It is most certainly not perfect in the way it is currently regulated but these bills will make
it even worse. As such, we will not support it. We believe there is a better way, which was outlined by the shadow minister that will, in fact, reduce red tape and regulation, and which will reduce administrative and compliance costs. As such, we support the changes we brought forward that will restore hope, reward and opportunity for all Australians.

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (19:03): I am very pleased to speak on this tonight. It is a bill which will do remarkable things for a very vibrant not-for-profit sector. I would like to take the member for Higgins to task a little bit. Sometimes I think members on that side and members on this side can listen to the same evidence and come to two completely different conclusions. I think perhaps that is what has happened in this case. I chaired the committee that the member for Higgins was referring to, so I sat with her through all of the evidence given in those days. The overwhelming impression I got was of overwhelming support for the creation of the Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission. In fact, ACOSS said:

The establishment of a national regulator for the community sector has long been championed by ACOSS, which welcomed the government's commitment to this reform in 2011 and has worked closely with the government and our members towards its establishment. We strongly support the ACNC opening on 1 October.

The Community Council for Australia said:

CCA strongly supports the ACNC bills on the basis they provide for the establishment of an independent and responsive regulator for the charities and not-for-profit sector.

The National Roundtable of Non-Profit Organisations, when referring to the ACNC bills, said:

Once again we are at the altar of the reforms we want and need and we ask for the support of our national parliament and of the states and territories to deliver for us better and smarter regulation. We do not want to be jilted again. The establishment of the ACNC under the terms of the bills represents a very good start down a better and smarter regulatory road.

That was in a submission to the Senate Community Affairs Committee and the Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services in August 2011. Philanthropy Australia supports the principles of the ACNC. They said they support the principles of the ACNC being an independent regulator to deliver smarter regulation, reduce red tape and improve transparency and accountability within the sector. Philanthropy Australia believes that this will foster a strong, growing and accountable not-for-profit sector, which is vital for a vibrant, inclusive and resilient civil society in Australia. The Smith family said, 'The Smith family would welcome the passing of this legislation and the establishment of the commission.' The RSPCA said:

RSPCA Australia supports of the Government’s reform agenda for the charities and not for profit sector. The Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission is an integral part of the reforms and provides the enabling mechanism for future regulatory changes that should lead to the reduction of ‘red tape’, efficiencies and a ‘level playing field’ in the consideration of charitable status and mechanisms that will support charities and financial giving.

There are more but I think that gives an indication there are general statements of support from some of the major peak organisations in the not-for-profit sector.

The member of the Higgins very cleverly and quite selectively quoted some of the criticisms which were made of the draft legislation. We were inquiring into an exposure draft of the legislation, not the legislation in front of us now. There were a number of criticisms made. There were many recommendations made by the committee to address those concerns. I have to say that the government responded incredibly well and
addressed all of the concerns that were raised by the committee. On the release of the report there was incredibly positive feedback from the community that the major issues they were concerned about had been addressed.

When we are talking about the not-for-profit sector, we are talking about a huge part of Australian life and of the Australian economy. It comprises some 600,000 entities that provide services in education, sports, welfare, arts, religion, culture and community wellbeing—really, an extraordinary number. It plays a major role in the Australian dollar economy. Total quantifiable Commonwealth tax expenditures in 2010-11 are estimated at $3.3 billion. Unquantifiable Commonwealth tax expenditures are of a similar size. Direct government funding in 2006-07 was approximately $25.5 billion and total public donations to the sector were approximately $7.2 billion. Therefore, even excluding fees-for-service, it comprises about $40 billion per year, and then when you add revenue for fees-for-services it is about $100 billion per year. It contributes five per cent of Australia's GDP and eight per cent of employment, so it is a sector which is incredibly important not just for what it does for the people it serves but for the extraordinary role it plays in our economy and in job creation.

The rationale for these bills has been around for quite some time. In fact, there have been five major reviews conducted into regulation and taxation of the sector since 2000: the report of the inquiry into the definition of charities and related organisations in 2001, a Senate Economics References Committee inquiry into disclosure regimes for charities and not-for-profit organisations in 2008, Australia's Future Tax System report in 2009, the Productivity Commission report on the contribution of the not-for-profit sector in 2010 and the Senate Economics Legislation Committee inquiry into the Tax Laws Amendment (Public Benefits Trust) Bill 2010. These reviews concluded that the sector's regulatory framework has added to its complexity and cost, and they all recommended that a single national regulator for the sector be established—and that objective has been taken up by the community and prosecuted. They, in general, have thought for quite some time that that would a very good thing for the sector.

I actually worked in the not-for-profit sector for a while. When representatives from the community talk about the burden of regulation, I have some idea of what they are talking about. In fact, I worked on both sides: I worked in a funding body and, for many years, in the not-for-profit sector. It is a sector that is both over-regulated and under-regulated. There are some 600,000 entities in the sector, and about 440,00 of those are unincorporated organisations that fall pretty much outside the regulatory framework. They do not have reporting obligations and cannot be endorsed as charities. So there are 440,000 little organisations, and some large organisations, that do good work in the community that essentially fall outside the regulations.

For many others that provide services across the six states and two territories and may receive funding from six state governments and two territory governments; that may receive federal funding as well; that receive funding from philanthropic organisations in Australia and from overseas; that receive sponsorship; and that receive funding from trusts, where they have to have tax deductible status, what you find is that every time they approach one of those bodies, or when they approach the local council for rate reductions, they have to prove their bona fides. So, you do not do it
once; you do it over and over and over again—in fact, I know that there are some not-for-profits out there that produce their annual reports in glossy formats just for that purpose. Because, quite often, when a state or federal department asks you for your report, they ask you for six copies. So we all had, on the shelves of our cupboards, multiple copies of our annual reports for the last three years, multiple copies of our certificate of incorporation, multiple copies of our proof of insurance, multiple copies of our model rules and our constitutions—and, every time we submitted an application or a report, we got out a giant envelope, went down the road and pulled them all out, if we were organised enough to do that.

The amount of paperwork, if you like, that these organisations create in order to satisfy sometimes 30 or 40 different sources of funds is quite bizarre. Some of the things that the sector was looking for from these bills—and it does actually removes some of that. They were looking, for example, for what they call the Charities Passport, which recognises the charitable status of an organisation and provides it with this stamp of approval, if you like, which is called the Charities Passport. And once you have that Charities Passport it is used instead of all that repeating that proving of the bona fides.

For some of our charities that receive funding from, say, US charitable trusts, without that official government passport they cannot actually get through the door, because in the US it is actually a standard thing—you have your charities number and that is it. So for a lot of our charities it would dramatically improve their access to other sources of funds but it would also significantly wipe out a large part of that burden of proving who they are over and over again.

The sector is also looking for a more transparent mechanism for achieving tax-deductible status. That is currently managed through the tax office. There are obvious concerns within the sector that there are inconsistencies in the way those applications are assessed, that it is overly complex and that there are some organisations that are jumping through hoops and paying quite considerable fees in order to achieve that status. So these bills give the authority to provide tax deductible status to the Charities Commission rather than the tax office—and that, again, is something that the sector has been asking for for quite some time.

The education and training role that the Charities Commission would take on is an incredibly important one. There is not actually a single organisation in the country at the moment that can do that; it is something that is really needed. We would all have had community organisations coming into our offices from time to time saying that they wanted help in negotiating their way the myriad laws regarding fundraising, reporting, governance and all those things—particularly for some of the newer organisations that are involved in overseas aid. I know in my community I quite often get organisations that really are looking for basic information on how they can improve the way they do business. Again, that is an incredibly important part of it.

But perhaps one of the most significant parts is one that will take some time to work through, and that is the reduction of red tape. It is such an issue for the community that they asked that it be included in the objects. It was implied in the objects and was certainly in the explanatory memorandum. But one of the things the community asked when they presented to our committee, over and over again, was that it be explicitly stated in the objects, and that is because it is
perhaps the biggest need for the sector at the moment. Again, you can imagine coming to the end of the year and submitting reports to your 24 different funding bodies. Sometimes it is the same reports over and over again—although not always the same report; in fact, if you are an aged care provider across several states there will be several sets of reporting requirements that you have to meet. But much of the information is actually the same, and yet organisations submit it over and over and over again.

One of the things they were seeking was this dream that they could submit to the ACNC and have other state and federal agencies take that report from the ACNC. It is something that the federal government has been talking to all the states about, and there has been considerable support for the reduction of red tape across the sector. One of the changes that my Catholic and independent schools will be quite pleased with—one of the more recent amendments to the bill—is that essentially reports from MySchool will be taken as reports given to the charities commission. That is, again, one level of red tape that will be removed straight away.

We will see very quickly, once the charities commission is in place, this dramatic reduction in the number of reports that have to be submitted, because it will be possible for one report to become the report for several agencies, particularly with the way new technology is. You should be able to lodge it online and have it flicked across to wherever it needs to be, or have whichever agency wants it get it from that source. So there is potential here for incredible reductions in red tape. Again, I know from working in the sector and from spending time on both sides of the fence that days of work every year—probably weeks of work every year—go into reporting but should actually be going into serving communities. It is literally days of work. People are employed in not-for-profits simply to deal with repetitive report making—probably, in the big ones, whole departments. There are people in the not-for-profits I know whose job is specifically to keep up to date with the regulatory burden—not the doing of the work and not the doing of the first report, but the repetitive reporting requirements as they meet the requirements of many, many funding sources.

So I commend the government for this bill. It is a good bill, and it will have a dramatic effect on the capacity of the not-for-profit sector to serve the community.

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde) (19:18): Before I commence my contribution to this debate on the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Bill 2012, I have a couple of comments on the contribution by the member for Parramatta. It is quite clear from her contribution, when you look at the list of corporate not-for-profit organisations she quoted, that once again we have a government that is pandering to the big end of town, the people who have the capacity to manage this new bureaucratic nightmare. As the member for Higgins quite rightly said, this is another example of this government finding a solution that is looking for a problem in the first place.

There are a number of issues with respect to this legislation that I would like to touch on. The most obvious centres around the duplication of regulation and red tape in a sector that is already struggling with existing regulations and—more importantly—coupled with a tough economic climate. The government has thus far failed to establish how the ACNC would work with existing state and federal government agencies to reduce the additional layers of regulation that will be imposed on this sector. Furthermore, the government has not made any progress
with key agencies like the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations in relation to the duplication of regulation.

It probably should not puzzle me—but it does—why the government would impose additional red tape on the independent school sector. How is this a part of the 'education crusade' to ensure that children get the education they deserve when independent schools will be subject to more reporting requirements and additional paperwork? In the words of the Independent Schools Council of Australia:

It is far from clear that an agreement could be reached with the states, territories and government agencies to remove many of the operational requirements for non-government schools already in existence.

They also said:
The regulatory burden will be increased on individual non-government schools creating costly and confusing duplicative governance and reporting situation.

They went on to say:
Requiring independent schools to report similar but different data to the ACNC is supplicating effort and adding to the red tape.

These are very valid points and I would urge the government to address this issue before placing any unnecessary strain on these schools and ultimately the future of their students.

Another concern is how the not-for-profit sector will continue to enrol the people who drive these organisations under the proposed penalties, which could potentially act as a deterrent for members in the volunteer sector. Of particular concern are the information-gathering, monitoring and sanctioning powers, including the ability of the ACNC commissioner to remove a director. In his submission to the House Economics Committee inquiry, David Gonski, of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, raised the issue that Australia may be the first country in the world to make being a not-for-profit director more onerous than being a director of a company. Whilst I mention the Australian Institute of Company Directors, the member for Parramatta touched on the issue of education and training. It is sometimes instructive to have a look at what is on offer in the marketplace, because the Australian Institute of Company Directors actually has a course specifically designed to train directors of not-for-profit organisations in how to carry out their duties. To make the duties of a director of a not-for-profit organisation more onerous than those for a for-profit organisation is counterintuitive to the whole idea of the not-for-profit sector. Add to these concerns the fact that the sector had as little as nine working days, in some cases, to make a submission and you have to wonder if the government is really listening to the concerns of the not-for-profit sector before making these decisions that will affect how they serve our local communities.

The coalition believes the government should stop this unnecessary interference and let the approximate 600,000 entities in the not-for-profit sector do what they do best for our communities. Under the banner of the charitable sector there are a number of services that include the work of some of Australia's most well-known organisations, such as the Australian Red Cross, World Vision, the Smith Family, the RSPCA, AusAID as well as Australia's religious community.

In my electorate, local community organisations including Nightlight, NAPCAN, Helping out Children, Fishers of Men, the Queensland Youth Housing Coalition, Eagleby Salvation Army, Soroptomist, Lions Clubs, Rotary, the Eagleby Community Association, the
Benevolent Society, St Vincent de Paul, Quota, Junior Quota, Beenleigh PCYC and Tudor Park PCYC, the Probus Club, Neighbourhood Watch, Beenleigh Scouts and the Loganlea Community Centre are just some of the organisations that lift people from within our community, particularly those from low-socioeconomic backgrounds. These organisations represent just a small portion of the community services and charitable organisations in my electorate. If they suffer at the hands of government so will the people who depend on them in my local community.

To stress how important the strength of the not-for-profit sector is, I would like to share with you an article from a week or so ago in one of our local newspapers. The headline reads: 'More families seek help from charities'. The article says:

Cost of living pressures have taken their toll on low income families with an increasing number of people accessing welfare agencies for food and some even stealing items such as frozen vegetables to get by.

The article stated that Foodbank, the country’s largest hunger relief organisation and pantry for many welfare groups, released a report showing that more low-income families are accessing food from welfare agencies than are homeless people.

Our local food welfare services include Lighthouse Calvary Care, the Twin Rivers Centre and, the newest addition, the Soul Centre, Upper Coomera Community Pantry. These organisations are all part of the not-for-profit sector and are dedicated to providing the local community with low-cost alternatives to fresh and packaged foods and other domestic items. These organisations do not just help feed people within the confines of the local community. I have heard that people drive from as far as the Sunshine Coast, the Gold Coast and other areas to access these services.

Outside my electorate, the Tribe of Judah food parcel service in Kingston said they service around 3,000 people per week. Multiply that across the other three organisations in my electorate and it is fair to say that these four food welfare groups could feed up to 9,000 people from in and around the electorate each week. According to the End Hunger report, 70 per cent of welfare agencies were experiencing an increase in the number of people seeking food and 90 per cent report not having enough food to meet total demand. This is a real issue that needs addressing. The establishment of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission will not result in one extra crumb of food for these organisations. All it will result in is additional reporting requirements that will in turn move resources away from frontline service delivery.

Not-for-profit organisations have raised the issue that reporting requirements are inconsistent across the sector, increasingly and excessively complex and burdensome, requiring these agencies to divert resources away from front-line service delivery and towards complying with the needs of government. The best thing we can do for these organisations, as we can for the broader community, is to get out of people's lives and organisations and let them do what they do best.

The sector is also concerned that there is currently no single reference point for the not-for-profit sector to access information, education or guidance—as I touched on earlier, there are some organisations that provide some courses. That is why the coalition supports a small commission to engage in innovation, advocacy and education. The coalition will seek to implement one contact with the department for each agency, instead of multiple contracts; require the department to negotiate the content of the contracts with the
agencies, instead of simply imposing it upon them; simplify the auditing process to require only one financial report from each agency annually; replace the current system of rolling audits with an initial benchmarking audit that has a period of five years, with spot audits to be undertaken if the Commonwealth is made aware of any adverse conduct on behalf of the agency; simplify reporting requirements for governance arrangements, with registration as a company or an unincorporated association sufficing as evidence of appropriate governance arrangements; require all agencies to lodge a one-page annual governance return, by the chairperson of the board or the governing body, indicating the agency is properly governed; replace the current time-consuming and costly system of data collection with a requirement that each agency file a quarterly report indicating the number of clients seen by the agency according to program area and postcode of the client; require each agency to publish on its website its annual financial return and an annual governance statement; replace the current system of data collection with a series of cross-sector evaluations of the efficiency and effectiveness of various programs; and, work with the sector to ensure adequate and known whistleblower provisions are in place. It is envisaged that these changes will enable the agencies to focus their time and resources on delivering vital services to the community. They will also make clear that the government is supporting and empowering the valuable work of these agencies, not directing them as an arm of the state. Importantly, they clarify that the responsibility for the conduct of the services rests with the agencies themselves, not the government. If an agency, or a person associated with it, acts improperly, they are subject to existing laws. In addition, the government may withdraw financial support if the public trust conferred on them is broken.

These changes will save on expenditure for both the department and the not-for-profit agencies involved. In particular, it will remove the need for the costly and time-consuming FRSP Online—the department's data collection system. The measures will reduce reporting requirements by a significant margin. The savings generated by agencies through the implementation of these measures will allow them to provide the services they need to provide.

In conclusion, it is time the government addressed its obsessive-compulsive behaviour on regulations. Since 2008, some 18,000 regulations have been added to the books and only 86 have been repealed. Each day, on average, 11 new regulations are created. What proof is there out there that this is adding value to any of our sectors, including the not-for-profit sector?

I would like to leave you with this statement from a 2009 policy brief from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development:

For many OECD member countries, reducing the burden of government regulations on business and citizens is a large part of their strategy to improve economic performance and productivity. In particular, small companies may spend disproportionately high resources to understand government regulations and to transmit required information to governments. The European Commission estimates that GDP would increase by 1.4% in the European Union, if member countries reduced administrative burdens by a quarter.

The easier it is for businesses and citizens to comply with regulations, the higher the probability that a regulation will achieve its objective.

It is clear that, yet again, it is the coalition who have the clarity and vision to provide
practical legislative outcomes for the community. Therefore, as we have indicated, we will oppose these bills in their current form and encourage the government to go back to the drawing board and have some more detailed conversations with the states, territories and key government departments to finish the job they said they were hoping to achieve and actually reduce red tape for the not-for-profit sector.

**Mrs ELLIOT** (Richmond—Parliamentary Secretary for Trade) (19:32): I am very pleased to be speaking on this bill which establishes the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission, ACNC, as a national regulator for the not-for-profit sector. The Australian community sector—sometimes also labelled 'the not-for-profit sector', 'the non-profit sector', 'the third sector' or 'the social sector'—encompasses a very broad range of social institutions that are neither commercial nor governmental. It can include entities of all different sizes. They can be hospitals, aged-care services, community services, universities, sports clubs, religious groups, day care centres, recreation clubs, environmental groups, job training centres, family counselling agencies and so many more. The list goes on.

In fact, the number of Australian community sector organisations was most recently estimated at around 600,000. That is a huge number. Some 440,000 are smaller unincorporated organisations. The majority of Australian not-for-profits operate below the radar at a very local level. We all have a range of them in our electorates that do outstanding jobs.

Those local community groups play many roles within society. They provide services that are very responsive, relevant and accountable to their communities. They give voice to concerns and advocate for change across a whole range of issues. They also provide a place for people to participate and engage with each other in community life and they often break down isolation and enable people from a diversity of backgrounds to join in. I certainly congratulate them for the remarkable work they do.

This government believes in the importance of a strong and resilient charitable and not-for-profit sector, an important sector that contributes to strengthening communities right across the country. The introduction of this bill represents a significant milestone in delivering reforms that will strengthen and support the sector so it can continue to grow, flourish and improve into the future.

The sector itself has long called for a dedicated national regulator that understands its needs. The Gillard government is committed to establishing the ACNC in order to drive the implementation of a national approach to regulation. We understand how important it is to do that. We want NGOs and charities not weighed down by regulation and red tape but to get on with what they are best at. Having a one-stop shop regulator that strengthens the sector is our focus.

Various reviews have recommended simplifying and harmonising taxation and regulation for the not-for-profit sector with a national regulator and a statutory definition of charity. At the last election, the government committed to introducing the most extensive national reforms the sector has experienced in our nation's history. Following on from this, in the 2011-12 budget, the government announced a series of reforms to strengthen and support the sector. The cornerstone of the government's reform agenda is the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission—the ACNC.
Not-for-profit entities play an important and valuable role in our society. In recognition of this significant role, the sector receives a whole range of funding, including donations from members of the public, tax concessions, grants and also lots of other support from the government. What is important is enhanced transparency and accountability. They are essential to the ongoing growth and sustainability of the sector overall. What it needs is a regulatory system that promotes good governance, accountability and transparency for non-profit entities that will help to maintain, protect and enhance the public trust and confidence that underpins the whole sector.

Equally important is promoting a reduction in unnecessary regulatory obligations on the sector. The sector is in some ways currently subject to overlapping, inconsistent and duplicate regulatory and reporting arrangements, creating unnecessary burden. The lack of an independent national regulator with a dedicated focus on the particular needs of the sector has hindered and held back the implementation of more streamlined regulatory arrangements right across the country, creating many problems. Initially the ACNC will focus on regulating charities only; however, into the future the regulatory framework will be able to be extended to all NFP entities.

The ACNC bill has three objectives. Its first objective is to maintain, protect and enhance public trust and confidence in the not-for-profit sector. Its second objective is to support and sustain a robust, vibrant, independent and innovative not-for-profit sector. The third objective underlines the important role that the ACNC will have to promote the reduction of unnecessary regulatory obligations on the not-for-profit sector.

The bill establishes the statutory office of the Commissioner of the ACNC. The ACNC commissioner will have the general administration of the ACNC legislation. In undertaking this role, the commissioner will have regard to a number of factors, including the diversity and distinctive role of the not-for-profit sector and the importance of providing education and guidance to not-for-profits.

The bill provides the ACNC commissioner with the power to register not-for-profit entities under their specific charitable type or subtype. Registration is voluntary; however, entities will need to be registered to access government support in the form of concessions, exemptions and other benefits. The bill also sets out the processes and grounds for the revocation of registration by the ACNC commissioner. The commissioner will maintain a public register, containing key details about registered entities. Registered entities will assist in their participation in the national regulatory framework. Likewise, the ACNC will play a key role in providing information and education to the public about the sector and how it is being regulated. This educational role of the ACNC will help to improve the public understanding of and engagement with the important work of the sector as a whole.
need to comply with a set of minimum principles based governance standards.

The bill establishes a single reporting framework, which is proportional to the size of the registered entity, based on revenue thresholds. Registered entities will be required to notify the ACNC commissioner of any changes that do occur. The commissioner will have the powers to conduct regulatory oversight in an effective and efficient manner. These powers include information-gathering and monitoring powers, the ability to give entities warning notices or directions, the ability to accept enforceable undertakings, the ability to apply for injunctions and the power to suspend or remove a responsible entity. To ensure the accuracy of information provided to the ACNC, the bill provides a proportional administrative penalty regime and establishes an advisory board to provide advice and make recommendations to the ACNC commissioner in relation to his or her functions under the act.

The bill establishes a framework to ensure appropriate protections for personal or confidential information, whilst ensuring the ACNC is able to fulfil its functions as the not-for-profit sector's central regulatory body. The legislation also imposes certain obligations, liabilities and offences on entities that are responsible for managing the registered entity. This ensures that there is appropriate accountability for complying with regulatory requirements.

Of course, the government has worked in very close consultation with many dedicated people and organisations that make up the sector to develop this legislation. The government has been responsive to issues raised during the extensive consultation process and has taken into consideration issues raised during the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economics inquiry into the draft bills. Recommendations of the committee have been incorporated. Additional detail has also been added to the explanatory memorandum to clarify the ACNC commissioner's discretion regarding the issuing of administrative penalty notices.

Transitional reporting arrangements have been included to allow the ACNC commissioner to treat a statement, report or other document provided to another government agency as meeting the reporting obligations of a particular registered entity under the ACNC reporting framework. This arrangement will apply until the 2014-15 financial year and can be extended by regulation. Consistent with the committee's recommendation, the legislation will be reviewed after five years.

We can see there are so many positive improvements throughout this bill in terms of having this national regulatory system in place. This is quite interesting when we look at some of the points opposition members have been making in their contributions. We have heard many of them selectively quoting a whole variety of different stakeholders in the not-for-profit sector and often they have quoted them out of context. What we hear is really their ongoing, relentless negativity and their refusal to support sensible, future orientated reforms such as this establishment of the ACNC. Indeed, that is often what we hear from them—their negative approach. We are committed to making sure we have improvements of the sector. It is important to get on the record that there is broad and strong support for the ACNC from right across the not-for-profit sector. The opposition's attitude can be described as quite arrogant and/or ignorant—either one or both. They are refusing to recognise how important these contributions by the sector are. ACOSS have said:

ACOSS have said:
The establishment of a national regulator for the community sector has long been championed by ACOSS. We welcomed the Government’s commitment to this reform in 2011 and have worked closely with the Government and our members towards its establishment …

We strongly support the ACNC opening on 1 October.

Philanthropy Australia said:

Philanthropy Australia supports the principles of the ACNC being an independent regulator to deliver smarter regulation, reduce red tape, and improve transparency and accountability within the sector. Philanthropy Australia believes that this will foster a strong, growing and accountable not for profit sector, which is vital for a vibrant, inclusive and resilient civil society in Australia.

Those are strong endorsements. The Smith Family, in their submission to one of the inquiries on the ACNC bills, state:

The Smith Family would welcome the passing of this legislation and the establishment of the Commission.

A whole series of different groups have put forward very positive responses to this legislation. That certainly is in contrast to the negatives from the opposition. I am sure the next speaker will have some more negative comments. Instead, they should be getting on board and supporting these important reforms to have the national regulator in place. The fact is that the work of the not-for-profit sector has a profound impact upon the lives of so many individuals and communities right across the country. The government is committed to working collaboratively with this very vital sector, to implement this series of important regulatory reforms because we want to support and strengthen the sector and ensure that in the future they continue to grow within a robust regulatory framework. The establishment of the ACNC is a key step throughout this process. We are committed to ensuring we can improve the sector now and into the future so they can continue to do the remarkable work they do right throughout our community. I commend the bills to the House.

Ms MARINO (Forrest—Opposition Whip) (19:45): I support the coalition's opposition to this bill and, should we get into government, our commitment to repealing it, to provide a very simplified process for the not-for-profit sector and our volunteers. For the majority of our invaluable volunteers who work in charitable and not-for-profit organisations the government, unfortunately, appears to be giving three direct messages through the legislation. The government is reversing the assumption of trust for volunteers. The government wants to make the job of volunteering even harder and more onerous. It wants to increase regulation, not decrease it, making it more bureaucratic and more costly. That is a critical issue for such organisations. Unfortunately, the government believes it should control everything you do—the Labor government, Big Brother 'always knows best' approach to every issue that we see repeated constantly.

The Productivity Commission identified that there are 600,000 not-for-profit organisations across Australia. The majority, 440,000, are small, unincorporated organisations, which include those who volunteer for our community aged-care facility boards, our local sporting clubs, our bushfire brigades and our local churches.

These are groups run entirely by volunteers. They might be the friends of the local park, the local Landcare group or the local state emergency services organisation. These organisations are mostly run by local community members who know that our small communities in particular cannot survive without volunteers.

That is really obvious in rural and regional communities, which live or die by the community spirit and by volunteers. Without
these people, our kids do not play sport and the local aged-care facilities that are locally run will not function. Lonely people, particularly those in isolated regional areas, will be confined to their homes instead of interacting with others.

It is immensely difficult to quantify the economic and social contribution of the 440,000 separate groups, which volunteer millions of working hours every year. But it is worth billions and billions of dollars. Over 4.6 million Australians volunteered in not-for-profit organisations in 2006-07. ABS data classified those 60,000 not-for-profit entities of 'having an active tax role' on the basis that they employed staff or accessed tax concessions.

Financial data is already available for these organisations. That allows us to examine their contribution in an accurate and quantitative manner. That group employed 889,900 staff, which is around eight per cent of national employment, contributing just under $43 billion to Australia's GDP in 2006-07. That is a significant contribution.

More importantly, it is a major contributor to people's wellbeing and we should not underestimate the impact on people's wellbeing.

On the ground, organisations across Australia are struggling for volunteers, which is why we should not be adding to their workload in a way that prevents them from delivering on the ground the way they want to and need to. Every one of these groups and organisations is being weighed down by the ever-increasing burden of red tape and compliance costs. In spite of its intention, this legislation adds to that compliance and cost burden it adds to it. Whether it be the local junior football club, the local P&C or the local bushfire brigade, in many organisations there are frequently dwindling numbers of volunteers who are being asked to do more and more. Often in small regional communities the same people volunteer in many local organisations, not just one—the P&C president is also a bushfire volunteer and a weekend junior sports coach, and a young mum helping out at the school canteen is probably also your local volunteer ambulance driver.

There are major shortages in that sector and this government is going to load more and more onerous compliance, cost and time burdens on these very generous people. There will be more burnout, particularly for those who are still volunteering. We need to encourage these people; we need to encourage volunteering. We have to make it easier to volunteer, not harder.

We heard today, repeatedly, that we have had 18,000 regulations introduced by this government and only 86 repealed at a rate of 11 a day. It would be a miracle if that is not adding to compliance costs right across the board. As I said, the government is determined to add to the burden of volunteers.

Like so many in this place, I spent a lot of my life volunteering. Whenever I have had a leadership role in one of these organisations and I have had to ask people for help or support, often the first thing they say to me is: how much time will it take? That is a key question. They ask me: 'Will I start off with a small job and end up with a big job that basically takes over my life?' I am afraid that, with these cost and compliance burdens, there will be more 'yes' answers to that question. The thought of taking on office-bearers roles with the responsibilities that go with that and then add these particular requirements to it, more often than not people will just say: 'It's just too hard. You're wanting my time; I want to help on the ground where I actually make a difference, where I can add to someone's wellbeing,
where I can add to the kids playing footy.' We go to events where small community groups fundraise through functions, usually by selling drinks or food. We keep making it difficult with training for volunteer service staff and the need to obtain qualifications. That drives volunteers away. So many of them do not want that. When you talk to them one on one they do not want that. There are those who do actually commit and take on the roles and I have seen this myself. They actually say, 'I'm the only one who has got this qualification, so now the load becomes so heavy.' It is often a small community. We have places like Brunswick and Donnybrook—little communities in my part of the world—and you can end up with just a couple of people with the required qualifications that then have to assume the total load for that organisation. We wonder why they burn out and stop volunteering. We have to make their job easier and not harder.

The financial reporting and compliance is more and more complex. It is harder and harder for volunteers to meet the requirements. They literally do not want that burden. They say: 'I want to make a difference on the ground. I want to see that I am actually being effective with my time with this organisation.' There is everything in this legislation that really would be worrying those in community organisations, people who just want to give their time and a bit of their resources. They would be worried about the powers of the Australian Charities and Not-For-Profit Commission—policing and enforcement powers, the powers to suspend and remove office-bearers of organisations, inspection and record-seizing powers, powers to prosecute individuals and entities, powers to apply penalties, powers to enter premises under a monitoring warrant. It sounds like a police state for a lot of these volunteers. I know about this from going and talking to people—at times almost begging them to come and help because we are desperate for help in a small regional community, when you cannot get the job done without them, when you cannot deliver that service. How can you possibly expect people to volunteer with that hanging over their heads? How do people in small communities take on those roles?

I wonder how non-government school boards and community aged care providers will feel about the government looking over their shoulder even more than now. How many will be wondering what comes next? How many independent school boards might be wondering what is next? I would add that to this discussion.

There are so many small entities without professional staff. How do they manage the compliance and reporting load? How do you physically manage that? How many desperately needed volunteers will walk away from their organisations because they do not want that responsibility imposed by this legislation? And there are those who will literally be intimidated by the powers of the commission and this government. That will happen. I know it will happen, because I know the questions that are asked of me when I go and talk to people when I want them to volunteer. How many small community groups actually understand what the government is intending through this legislation? Many of them will not, but they are going to get a very rude wake-up call with this.

There will be layer upon layer of compliance and costs, more hours and hours of volunteers' time spent on governance and compliance standards, on the requirements for external conduct standards, record keeping, information statements—right down to the government wanting changes of address and names of ceased members. By the time you do all this, as a volunteer, you
would actually have very little time left to do the work of the charity or organisation. It is really just extraordinary.

I look at the Donnybrook District High School P and C, which now spends thousands of dollars a year on bookkeeping, when for decades volunteers were able to perform those duties. That is thousands of dollars that are not returned to students for enhancement of their education. It is no wonder that this and many other P and C organisations around the country are struggling. I look at the Brunswick, Harvey and Australind St John Ambulance groups—wonderful volunteers who save lives in my electorate and right around our country. They save lives. What a great job they do. I just hope this does not add even more to their burden.

The Productivity Commission recognised in their report:

… generic regulation, such as occupational health and safety requirements, are imposing disproportional costs on NFPs—

not-for-profits—

These and more specific qualification requirements are raising the costs of using volunteers. Such … costs come at a time when volunteers are tending to volunteer for fewer hours on average, with younger volunteers preferring episodic and work-based volunteering. Some NFPs have dealt well with the changing environment … but others struggle.

I would say those that struggle are in rural and regional areas like my own. That is the greatest issue facing the not-for-profit sector. I look at some wonderful organisations in my electorate, like the Val Lishman Health Research Foundation. We have so many like this organisation out in our communities doing an extraordinary job. It is a major issue for them. There is a push for greater accountability,' said the Productivity Commission. Business and other major donors increasingly want evidence of the effectiveness of the activities, but it is tough for not-for-profits.

As I said, there are so many groups and organisations that will be affected by this. We see that governments are making it harder and harder for community groups, making them less viable. The government is really adding to that process. It is crucial, at a crucial time, when we need to streamline the regulations imposed on charities and not-for-profit organisations.

I believe we need to demonstrate trust in the voluntary sector, and support those working in charitable endeavours. As we know, Labor's approach reverses that assumption of trust, essentially creating legislation that assumes that people involved and who volunteer are untrustworthy—and I find that really appalling. I know that when I go and talk to people who I want to volunteer or who I need assistance from they need to know we have confidence in them. They will come to the table and give the organisation the best they possibly can.

Yes, we do, on this side, support a small commission to focus on innovation, education and advocacy—not yet another big bureaucracy like we see proposed through this legislation. As I said earlier, there are so many wonderful groups out there, whether they are in education, research, hospitals, social services, culture and recreation, day care centres, diabetes research, mental health or aged care—the list is endless. We are constantly needing more and more volunteers, not fewer and fewer volunteers.

I would hate to see organisations like the City of Bunbury Surf Life Saving Club—all my surf lifesaving clubs I have throughout my electorate—the school boards, the Red Cross or any of my organisations have a burden even greater than what they take on now, that would make them question the passion and the time they give to
volunteering. I think we desperately in this place need to encourage volunteering, not discourage volunteering.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Owens): It being almost 8 pm, the debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 34. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day at the next sitting.

COMMITTEES

Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Joint Committee Report

Dr JENSEN (Tangney) (19:59): On behalf of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade I present the committee's report, incorporating supplementary remarks, entitled Review of the Defence Annual Report 2010-2011. I note that Defence has improved its performance in terms of preparation for questions asked by the committee and has responded more quickly to questions on notice. There are, however, issues that greatly concern me, even more so in this time of funding shortages for Defence.

There are a litany of failed or poorly-performing programs and capabilities within Defence, but there appears little in the way of lessons learnt. Within the Defence organisation there is a culture of circling the wagons when it comes to criticism. Circling the wagons is to be expected in combat, where you would expect members to do all that they can to defend their colleagues. However, it is unhelpful when it comes to engaging expert critics.

In the majority of cases, critics are not 'the enemy' but seek to improve Defence's capabilities. A case in point is the Joint Strike Fighter or JSF project. I have used this as a brief case study in additional comments. The fact is that the JSF has been criticised for about a decade by Air Power Australia. Defence has chosen to play the man, not the ball, with persistent denigration of Air Power Australia. I have heard variously from Defence that APA does not have access to the classified information and hence cannot analyse the JSF, and I wonder how Defence can then analyse the capabilities of Russian, Chinese et cetera aircraft given that they are hardly going to hand Defence classified briefing documents on their capabilities.

I have also heard, from another perspective within the force, that APA are really bright guys who are effectively giving threat nations the heads-up on classified details of the JSF. The irony of these countervailing perspectives is not lost on me. Unfortunately, this undermining of APA's credibility does have an effect on some colleagues who have not compared and contrasted Defence's performance with theirs. Despite thousands of staff within DMO with access to all the classified information, the costing models, development schedules et cetera available from Lockheed Martin, Defence has proved hopeless on, at a minimum, the issues of cost and schedule.

Defence has either misled the parliament while telling the truth to the executive or it has been hopelessly optimistic—for example, if Defence were to have been taken at its word circa 2005 we should already have JSFs in service for about $65 million each. Instead, we will see an IOC of late 2018 at the earliest, with a price of well over $130 million each, despite the strength of our dollar. Mislead or be incompetent—I do not know which is worse. And then we are supposed to believe LockMart's spin on the capabilities, mouthed very often by those in Defence who are acting more as sales people for LockMart than applying the due diligence and caveat emptor required. Cost and schedule are not causes, they are some of
the consequences of a program gone wrong. Think of blow-outs in building a home, for example. The JSF is a symptom of a much bigger problem and there are a litany of other programs similarly afflicted. They are symptoms of a much bigger problem. Think of the Super Seasprite helicopters—over a billion dollars spent and nothing to show for it.

There appears to be an issue of a lack of communication within Defence. Defence said on the tanker project 'everyone viewed it as a much easier program than what it was'. Similar statements have been made on the Wedgetail as a way of excusing the ongoing problems. However, an industry technical risk assessment in 1999 identified all of the risks that have now materialised with Wedgetail, but they were ignored and the contractors were 'shot down'. Why is Air Marshal Brown not aware of this? Take night-vision goggles, something the commandos complained of to this committee in Afghanistan and at Holsworthy. Yet the Chief of Army, when asked about it, was unaware of the problem. Once again, why?

In conclusion, it is critical that Defence not only engages with but also engages in a contractual sense those independent experts who have demonstrated greater competence in capability and risk assessment than Defence has demonstrated. If this does not occur, along with a host of other reforms, Defence is destined to remain the underperforming organisation it is now—risking Australia's security.

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (19:04): Defence gets a bad rap. It seems like every week we read a story about a Defence capability that is overdue or overbudget or allegations of sexual harassment or assault. I applaud the constant questioning and scrutiny of Defence, and have spoken out in this chamber about the deplorable behaviour by a minority of its personnel. Last year or earlier this year I spoke about the regiment that had those disgusting comments about women on its Facebook. When I was in Afghanistan I commented about a sticker that was either of a naked female or of female in a bikini. I commented on it and said I thought it was inappropriate. I was told that it was good for morale. A sticker does not make for good morale. I said it then and I say it now.

Tonight I want to highlight some of the good work that this behemoth of an organisation is doing and it is highlighted in the annual report. Defence's job is to defend Australia and its national interests. It does this with more than 100,000 permanent and reserve ADF members and civilians and a multi-billion dollar budget, at sites scattered throughout Australia and the world. Before this life I spent 10 years consulting Defence. I worked in DMO, I worked with the finance area, I worked with the fairness and resolution branch, I worked in the environment branch, the ICT area, DSTO, the Australian Defence Force Cadets and with the secretary. I got to travel to cadet units in Nhulunbuy, Barnaga and Thursday Island. I got to visit munitions plants and distribution sites throughout Australia and I loved nearly every minute of it.

Tonight I will focus on a number of areas. First, is the Strategic Reform Program. This is Defence's highest priority after the conduct of operations and is designed to deliver savings of $20 billion. It does that through three key elements: improved accountability, improved defence planning and enhanced productivity. It remains Defence's highest priority after the conduct of operations. In the first year of the SRP the savings were of the order of $790 million. In the second year savings were in excess of $1 billion, so the target was achieved. In the year they were reporting on, the target was about $1.2
There is nothing to suggest that the target will not be achieved in this current round. The targets then start to climb and it becomes very difficult, according to what Defence advised during the hearings.

The SRP is divided into seven streams: ICT, smart maintenance, logistics, non-equipment procurement, reserves, workforce and shared services and other cost reduction. The only recommendation we made arising from this annual report was that we had to work our way through the whole annual report to get a sense of what the SRP was achieving and what it was doing. So we advised Defence personnel during the hearings that they should separate it out into another chapter, which they took on board.

ASPI has made the comment that Defence budget papers refer to the SRP in a number of places but very little useful detail was provided. I think that is because it is buried throughout the document. It does deserve closer examination so I welcome the fact that Defence has also taken on board this recommendation to create a separate chapter on the SRP.

In the brief time I have available I want to say that the annual report also highlights what Defence is doing in terms of the Indigenous participation, in terms of multiculturalism in trying to broaden the diversity of Defence's personnel base and in what it is doing in terms of disability. Most importantly, it covers off the area of women. As we know there have been a number of reviews of women in the ADF. Most recently there was the review by the Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Liz Broderick. Defence has been working on women's action plans for a number of years. It has got to a point where they now need to reboot it, in a way, and recast it. That is what they have made a commitment to do.

Finally, having worked on the reconciliation action plan in Defence, I was delighted to see that there appears to be a commitment to engage in welcome to country and acknowledgement of country by Defence personnel whenever they are having a ceremony at bases or sites throughout the ADF.

I enjoyed the hearings into this Defence annual report. I commend it as an interesting read to those who are interested in defence.

Dr JENSEN: I move:
That the House take note of the report.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): The time allotted for statements on this report has expired. Does the member for Tangney wish to move a motion in connection with the report to enable it to be debated on a future occasion?

Dr JENSEN: I move:
That the order of the day be referred to the Federation Chamber for debate.

Question agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Australia's Future Workforce Needs

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (20:14): I move:
That this House:
(1) commends the Australian Government’s:
(a) commitment to meeting Australia’s future workforce needs;
(b) strong investment record in skills and training; and
(c) partnership with industry to meet Australia’s skills challenges;
(2) notes that all Australians should have the opportunity to get the education and skills they need for the jobs on offer, and the importance:
(a) that the TAFE system plays in providing training opportunities; and
(b) of federal, state and local initiatives to provide jobseekers with customised employment and training to meet their individual needs and the demands of the labour market for a skilled workforce; and

(3) calls on governments at all levels to:
(a) provide funding for employment and skills services; and
(b) continue to invest in TAFE and skills training.

This federal Labor government has a strong record of building and managing the economy for working people, creating over 800,000 jobs on its watch, creating and fighting for those jobs, and spreading the benefits of the mining boom to families, businesses and individuals. We have one of the strongest economies in the western world.

Since December 2007 the economy has grown 10.3 per cent. We have one of the lowest unemployment rates; it has hovered at about five per cent for some considerable period of time. This federal Labor government has overhauled the job services network to focus squarely on getting people off welfare into work. We have provided more assistance to people with disabilities, Indigenous people and those with other barriers to employment.

Since coming to office we have introduced the first paid parental leave scheme, which is designed to redress Australia's low participation rate for women aged 25 to 44. We have a learn or earn guarantee for every Australian under 25 years of age—a training place, a place for education, if they are not ready for full employment.

We have provided support for families by providing over $4,000 per child to encourage teenagers 16 to 18 years old to remain in school or TAFE. We have uncapped the Disability Employment Services and changed income support arrangements for people with disabilities to provide incentives to engage in employment. We have trebled the tax-free threshold, creating incentives for low income earners to work.

We have introduced the Investing in Experience (Skills Recognition and Training) program to provide up to $4,000 to mature-age people undertaking skills assessment and training to support upskilling. In the last five years the census data shows a 39.5 per cent increase in students attending university or TAFE. An extra 996 students in my electorate alone are accessing higher education.

In Queensland, my home state, this federal Labor government has provided an extra $356.9 million for an extra 73,637 students to complete TAFE and other courses in the next five years and a MySkills website to give employers and students access to information. We are building Australia's future workforce with $3 billion in skills and training to address the skills shortage experienced by industry.

We understand that the benefits and dignity of work should be extended to more Australians. Many Australians need work, and we are providing it for them. Labor governments are committed to providing a high-skill workforce, high-wage jobs and a more productive and fairer economy. We believe that all eligible Australians should be able to access training and employment no matter where they are from or what is their background.

Too many Australians have been sidelined because they do not have the skills they need to join the workforce. We know there are
challenges. The ABS data shows that around 4.1 million Australians miss out on vital skills and training that could earn them up to $10,000 more a year in today's labour market. That is why we have taken the action I have outlined, and that is why we are taking additional action. Also, we committed to and have abolished up-front fees for 60,000 students a year in vocational education and training, providing interest free deferred loans for all students studying publicly-subsidised diplomas and advanced diplomas. We put $1.75 billion on the table to work with states and territories to deliver these reforms. This is a proud Labor record. It is fair for all Australians.

What do the Liberals do? What do their state governments in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria do? It is in their DNA—they cut TAFE funding, slash jobs and increase student fees. In my home state, Queenslanders feel thoroughly and utterly betrayed by their destructive government. Hillbilly authoritarianism is the order of the day in Queensland now, with savage cuts to services, jobs and funding. It is not just the 14,000 public servants whose jobs have been slashed. There are all the other people who are receiving funding for programs through the Department of Communities, employed in local councils, community groups and not-for-profit organisations—for example, IRASI, the tenancy advocacy service in Ipswich in my electorate. The jobs of great people like Amy Stockwell, who is the Community Development Coordinator in the Somerset Regional Council, have been slashed. Amy was a pillar during the flood last year. Her job has been slashed because the Department of Communities' funds have been cut.

We have seen the Queensland government's savage job cuts. In health, 4,140 jobs are gone, after the promise that only 2,700 jobs would go. Before the election, Campbell Newman said public servants had 'nothing to fear' from him. This is a cruel, mean, vindictive government who is hell-bent not on upskilling and training people but on downsizing the public sector and downsizing employment. It is no surprise the unemployment rate in Queensland is rising faster than that of anywhere else. The people in my community, in the Ipswich and Somerset region in the western corridor, feel betrayed.

And this is just the curtain raiser by those opposite, with the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Treasurer committed to filling a $70 billion black hole. Where would their cuts be? We know they intend to do a commission of audit, à la Peter Costello's disgraceful and disgusting effort in Queensland in relation to these issues, and there is further privatisation on the table. Unnecessary slashing and burning is what an Abbott led Liberal government would do to skills, training and jobs across Australia. Campbell Newman described the budget in Queensland as an 'exciting budget'. Tim Nicholls described it as a 'great budget'. He said, 'We are all in this together.' Tell that to the public servants and the community groups. Tell that to those people who rely on state government funding for skills and training.

This is happening not just in Queensland but in New South Wales and Victoria. In New South Wales, the O'Farrell Liberal government slashed 1,800 jobs, gouging workers and students with an almost 10 per cent rise in TAFE fees and a whopping $1.7 billion in cuts. They are freezing funds to Catholic and independent schools. It is in the fibre, the blood and the bones of these Tories opposite. In Victoria, we see $300 million taken out of TAFE, and we will see it in Queensland.
The Queensland Skills and Training Workforce's interim report to the state government recommends that the number of TAFE campuses across Queensland be cut from 82 to 44. It recommends the number of TAFE campuses in the western corridor in Brisbane be cut from 16 to 11. And Bremer TAFE in my electorate is in the gun. This is what they would do. They would cut services, take away TAFE jobs and slash services. We know how important TAFE is for those who have not finished high school and do not have a senior certificate, for migrants and for other people who need a helping hand in terms of the job market—the poor, the vulnerable and the disadvantaged. The cuts would seriously undermine national training efforts and see hundreds of Queensland teachers lose their jobs. The federal Labor government is putting $1.5 billion into the Queensland training system over the next five years. We have signed an agreement for an additional $357 million to lift the quality and the number of people completing qualifications.

But what do those opposite say? We have not heard a peep, a whisper or a word, not a hint, not a nod or a wink from any of the people opposite who live in cockies corner. We have not had a word from any LNP members in Queensland about what they are doing to our home state. When rural fire services are slashed, when tenancy services are gone, when rail trails—which provide jobs and apprenticeships and contribute to tourism—are gone, there is nothing from those opposite. They go missing in action entirely. There is not a word when it comes to slashing funding for schools and for roads. So many people in the TAFE system work on roads in apprenticeships and get their skills working on roads like the Ipswich Motorway. Oh, I forgot—they opposed all the road funding and construction in Queensland. They also opposed the nation building plan, the flood recovery plan and of course the MRRT funding that we are providing in regional development.

That is the record of those opposite when it comes to investigation in skills, training and jobs. There is a vast difference between those on this side and those on the other side. Those on the other side have an absolute commitment to slashing and burning. That is what they will do to jobs and training in Queensland, New South Wales and across the country if they ever get on this side of the Treasury benches.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke):** Is the motion seconded?

**Mr Cheeseman:** I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

**Ms LEY (Farrer) (20:21):** I am happy to speak on the member for Blair's private members' motion regarding training and workforce development. I thought we might have a contribution that added to the battle of ideas, to the competing philosophies between this side of the House and that side of the House, or something that enabled those listening on the broadcast to think and be inspired and consider aspects of training skills, one of the most exciting parts of the portfolio that I represent in opposition, but all we heard was a speech absolutely dripping with negativity and nastiness. And I am sorry about that.

Demand from China has slowed. We are going to have to recognise this as an indicator that we cannot afford to solely rely on the mining boom for our nation's future prosperity. Not only do we need to look ahead in terms of new industries and services for our economic advancement, but we have to look to our training. We need a nation of graduates who have transferable skills that make them eminently employable in a host of industries, not just confined to one industry with a rigid skills set. We require a
vocational education sector that is truly world class, one that offers students flexibility to study whilst ensuring that employers are getting access to graduates with the skills they need to grow and prosper.

TAFE, which occupies a certain component of this motion, does have a critical role to play in providing this vocational training. As a rural and regional member I know only too well that were it not for TAFE many young country students would not be able to study or would be forced to move to bigger centres. We do have some fabulous TAFEs in this country. I was delighted to address the TAFE Directors Australia conference in Perth recently. The drive and willingness of people like Martin Riordan to see TAFE progress and explore new opportunities is great to see. As a publicly funded body it is important that TAFE funding is well directed. Courses that meet Australia's skills in demand should be front and centre for taxpayer funding. We need to correctly identify where funding priorities lie, and the need for this is even more critical when there are fewer dollars to allocate.

Sourcing new markets is of key importance to our TAFEs and private colleges. There is a wealth of opportunity right on our doorstep in Asia and we must ensure that government policies do not hinder this expansion. Yet, we have seen education related travel drop from our third highest export to fourth as new students struggle with the new visa requirements imposed by this government, or have lingering concerns about dodgy providers. These are both areas where the government must be held to account. Last week I wrote to the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Science and Research to request that he make sure that the national review of VET regulation give appropriate consideration to the issue of poor or unscrupulous providers. Not only does the continued existence of these providers cause huge harm to our reputation overseas, but it permits Australian students to gain qualifications that are not really worth the paper they are printed on.

Contestable funding offers some real opportunities for our TAFEs. For some they may need to be more business savvy, but this is in the best interests of everyone. It provides a real chance to raise the standards and ensure that taxpayer dollars are focused on those areas that will provide the greatest benefit to the community as a whole. I would also like to see industry linkages between TAFE and the wider community better integrated. In some TAFEs and some communities it is done well but in some it just is not.

The Australian Technical Colleges, a coalition policy, saw a real linkage between industry and training. Regrettably, with Labor abolishing these centres, we have actually lost this key focus. These were centres of excellence that ensured we were training our young people to be first-class employees with a real understanding of what business needed from them. Australian Technical Colleges were a place where students could feel proud to be students, knowing that they were on their way to a bright and prosperous future, and they were absolutely linked in with their local industries and linked in with their next future job.

Instead we saw the government roll out Trade Training Centres, a mere shadow of our former Australian Technical Colleges. Initially they promised one for every school—as many ribbon-cutting ceremonies as a marginal seat MP could dream of—however, in the budget before last, the funding was put on hold. In the most recent budget they put Trade Training Cadetships
on hold as a further desperate attempt to realise a budget surplus next financial year.

The disaster that has been this government’s Trade Training Centres program really does indicate a fundamental misunderstanding of where the training dollar should go, and it is not in bricks and mortar. We have seen half-baked facilities pop up all around the country. There are some that are good, there are some that are fit for purpose and there are some that are fulfilling a need in their local communities. I am not going to pretend that that is not the case. It is such an extravagant overallocation of capital dollars, of bricks and mortar, not even completing in many cases the fit-out that is required, not even understanding the type of trade that needs to be trained for in a particular location but just saying, ‘Here we are, one size fits all. One for every school, for almost every trade.’ It has resulted in, as I said, an overallocation of money in bricks and mortar. There is not enough funding for the ongoing actual training effort. If you talk to trainees or apprentices, as I did recently when a group came to the house, of course they want the facilities and they want the best equipment, but what stands out for them is the quality of the training. What should stand out for all of us as members in this place in terms of the approach we bring to vocational education and training is quality. Quality matters most. The government has wasted so much money with pink batts, Trade Training Centres and tuckshops in some of those centres with no space for pie warmers. It is just slapdash—build it and hope it works out.

The coalition understands that every dollar we spend on training must be a dollar well spent. There is no point in training someone if the qualification they receive will not assist them into a job. That is why the coalition has committed to funding four trial sites to train 1,000 Indigenous people in two years. Each person who receives training will be guaranteed a job.

I talked about quality being high and assured and I would envisage that any vocational education system must have that front and centre. We have a body that has not been committed to by every state in terms of regulating quality—ASQA, the Australian Skills Quality Authority, Victoria and WA have not signed up. I have expressed reservations about that body in the past. It does need to get on the case when it comes to dodgy providers and RTOs that are letting us all down. It is simply under-resourced to do that. It has six investigators across the whole country. That is ridiculous. The small examples of providers that do the wrong thing are unfortunately writ large on the national scale and do our national reputation no good at all.

Those opposite talk about the vocational education and training argument in terms of public versus private, which is a huge fundamental mistake to make. In the coalition we support strong public TAFE. We know the role it plays, as I said, especially in regional areas. But we also recognise that an open entitlement system as has been driven by the Prime Minister—not very well, but driven nevertheless in every state and territory—would mean that private operators had an equal place to play on the stage. It is very important that we do not underestimate the role that they can play and that we look at the examples that they can provide. We have leading people in TAFE in this country who are looking to the future, who are excited about those opportunities. Yes, we are in a budgetary environment that is tightening fiscally. That is something we all have to face. That is something we all have to come to terms with. When I look at the skills effort that is duplicated between state governments and the federal government, it makes me cranky. Sometimes
I hear of examples where a particular training program is funded by the federal government and the state government as well, and the two competing bureaucrats bump into each other in some location and say, 'We did not know you were funding this.' And, 'Oh, I hear you are as well.' That is absolutely crazy that the coordination between state and territory skills funding is simply not happening on the ground, not happening at all.

I would like to conclude with apprenticeships because they are so important and everyone in this House knows that. People talk about the completion rates for apprenticeships being poor and many reasons are flagged, including lack of income for the apprentices. But I think we overlook the real problem, which is the commencements. I would like to see a system that focuses much more commencements—that puts the right apprentice in the right job, at the right time of their life and doing the trade that is right for them. That is not happening now with this disconnect between federal and state funding not working out on the ground in a workplace or in an apprenticeship program. More has to be done to make that work better in the interests of apprentices and in the interests of future employers.

Mr CHEESEMAN (Corangamite) (20:31): It is my pleasure to rise today to speak on the member for Blair's motion before this House. I particularly want to focus on the important role that TAFEs play in training our young people and in providing critical skills necessary for industry growth for our region. TAFEs provide people with job-ready skills, which is of course what industry wants.

Down my way we have a huge appetite for well trained people across a broad spectrum of skill sets. We have a very strong tourism sector in my area requiring hospitality skills to support it, particularly in areas like the Great Ocean Road, the Bellarine Peninsula and the fabulous Otway Ranges area. Given that though, it is completely unbelievable that the state governments are attacking TAFE the way they are. The Bailleau government is imposing on the Gordon TAFE—a very proud Geelong institution and one that has served our region for more than 125 years—a 25 per cent funding cut. He is also imposing across the whole TAFE sector across the state of Victoria a $300-million cut to our TAFE institutions. This massive attack on our TAFE colleges will see huge pressure being put on our institutions to simply survive.

One of the most disappointing aspects of the TAFE cuts was revealed on Friday last week in a leaked state government cabinet-in-confidence document which highlighted that the Gordon TAFE would have to, by 2014, cease delivering VET training in our schools. VET training is an important alternative pathway for young people wanting to pursue a career that does not require going to university. Further to that, that leaked cabinet document indicated that the Gordon TAFE would have to close 43 courses providing skills and training to young people.

Those that might be listening to this broadcast would very much be aware that my seat within the Geelong region has a very proud and very strong manufacturing sector. Quite unbelievably, the Gordon TAFE will be forced to close its certificate IV in competitive manufacturing. This is a course designed to provide skills that are critical to our Geelong car industry, a very important and strong employer in our region. This particular course is designed to up-skill our manufacturing workers within our region providing new and expansive skills to
workers to enable them to have a strong presence in their workplaces, particularly around driving productivity and the like. Yet the Bailleau government's attack on this course will create difficulties for our manufacturing sector.

Further to that, our region, as I indicated earlier, also has a very strong tourism sector. It employs many young people and is a new and emerging industry in our region. Yet this leaked cabinet document reveals that the Gordon—

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (20:36): Firstly, I would like to declare an interest in this motion on our TAFE system. My sister-in-law is a TAFE teacher and I would certainly like to see governments at all levels continue to invest in TAFE and skills training. Paragraph 3 of this motion calls on the government at all levels to provide funding and to continue to invest in TAFE. But you cannot walk into this chamber and call on governments to provide funding, as this motion does, unless you are prepared to say where the money is coming from. Already, we have seen this Labor government make unfunded promises of $120 billion—and these are getting bigger by the day. We have had promises of additional billions for disability, defence, education and dental services—all very worthy causes. But this government does not have a clue how it is going to pay for these or where the money is coming from. I know this may be a very novel concept for those on the other side of the House but, if we want to have sustainable funding for our education system, governments cannot spend money they do not have.

The member for Blair, in his contribution, talked about many of Labor's spending programs, which have run up a combined deficit of $174 billion. He also talked about Queensland. I understand the position in Queensland. It is worth having a look at the interim report of the independent Queensland Commission of Audit into Queensland's financial position. I think the member for Blair would do well to read this. It said:

In recent years, the Government of Queensland embarked on an unsustainable level of spending which has jeopardised the financial position of the State.

The deterioration in Queensland's financial position results from a lack of fiscal discipline—
exactly what we see here in this chamber with Labor as well. The report concluded, under paragraph 1.4, entitled 'The Consequences of Ill-Discipline':

Queensland’s financial position is unsustainable. The State is currently locked into a debilitating cycle of over expenditure, ever-increasing levels of debt, and crippling increases in debt servicing costs. A major task of fiscal repair is imperative to prevent further damage to the future prosperity of the State.

Where was the member for Blair when all this mess was being created? I find it amazing that those who came in here and complained the loudest, against those who have the unenviable job of cleaning up the mess that Labor state governments have made, were mysteriously mute and failed to even raise a whimper when this mess was being created in the first place.

Our TAFEs provide a very important part of our education system. We must fund them, but we can only fund them on a sustainable basis with money the government has. (Time expired)

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Throsby) (20:41): Can I start by thanking the member for Blair for bringing this matter before the House. It is, as the member for Hughes has rightly identified, an important debate. It is a debate that goes to the heart of our economic priorities and to the future of our workforce, because nothing could be more important than ensuring that we have skilled, trained workers to meet the needs of the future—and we know that those needs are going to be large indeed. In the future, less than seven per cent of the jobs will be able to be described as unskilled. That means the balance, the 93 per cent, have to be made up of graduates of either the universities, the TAFEs or other vocational education and training colleges in this country. We know that we will need around 1.7 million more workers with a certificate III or higher qualification between now and 2015, so it is a critical area of economic policy.

I have to say that I was absolutely gobsmacked as I sat here and listened to the member for Hughes talk about economic management and economic policy. I do not want to verbal him, but I am quite certain that I heard the member for Hughes say that we cannot afford to be funding our TAFEs adequately. This is coming from a party that says we can afford to give a tax cut to the mining executives of this country, we can afford to give superannuation tax giveaways to some of the wealthiest people in this country, but we cannot afford to fund our schools, our hospitals and our TAFE system. You really have to ask yourself where are the economic priorities of those who sit opposite, and who look longingly across the chamber and want to sit on the Treasury benches of this parliament, when they say it is more important to give a tax cut to the mining companies of this country than it is to educate our kids. You have to ask yourself where their economic priorities lie. We are doing something about the economic priorities.

I am pleased to see the member for Cunningham, the parliamentary secretary, in the chamber, because I know that she, like my father was, is a former TAFE teacher and gave many years of her life providing vocational education and training to people from the Illawarra region, where we have relied for decades on the services of TAFEs to provide not only skilled workers for the businesses of the region but a chance in life for those who may not otherwise have had one.

We are making great headway. In 2011 there were over 200,000 additional students enrolled in vocational education and training courses in this country. There are also record numbers of Australians entering
apprenticeships. Last year we topped the scale, with almost half a million Australians starting an apprenticeship. That is a great thing for those kids. But as anyone knows who has ever tried to get an electrician, a plumber or a carpenter out to their house for a repair or out to their business, we have a skills shortage in this country, and it is fast becoming an economic bottleneck.

We could follow the economic precepts of those on the other side of the chamber, represented by the member for Hughes in this debate, and say: 'We can't afford to train our kids. We can't afford to train the next generation of apprentices in this country. We can't afford to give those kids a second chance.' As the member for Cunningham knows—she has taught in TAFE for many years—it is not only a matter of providing kids with traineeships and apprenticeships. There are many people for whom attending TAFE is a second chance at getting a high school certificate—a second chance at ensuring that they do not fall through the cracks. For whatever reason, they may have dropped out of high school, and attending a TAFE college is their second chance to complete their high school education.

These are the sorts of people who are at threat through the atrocious cuts that were announced last week. I could not believe it when I saw that Barry O'Farrell, the Premier of New South Wales, was putting in place cuts to the education budget that would lead to the axing of over 800 TAFE jobs and an increase in TAFE student fees by around 9.5 per cent. I should have believed it, because the Liberals have form on this. The egregious attacks on the TAFE system in Victoria by Premier Baillieu have been followed by those of his mate in Queensland. You cannot trust the Liberals when it comes to education. (Time expired)

Mr CHESTER (Gippsland) (20:46): It is with pleasure that I join this debate on late notice and take up on the contributions from members on this side of the House in relation to the motion put forward by the member for Blair. And I take up the comments that the member who preceded me, the member for Throsby, just raised in relation to whether members on this side of the House actually care about TAFE funding. I can assure the member that the members on this side of the House are equally as passionate about the skills shortage facing the Australian nation and facing each of our states and are as passionate about TAFEs as are the members on the other side. However, what the member failed to discuss at any stage during his contribution was the simple fact that you have to be able to pay for it, which the member for Hughes raised in his contribution.

Mr Craig Kelly: A novel concept!

Mr CHESTER: It is a novel concept for Labor governments. You can keep on spending—you can spend and you can spend—but one day the Australian people have to pay for it. If the member for Throsby wants to talk about political parties having form on this, then let us talk about the form of the state Labor governments, of the former federal governments and of the current federal Labor government in relation to being able to manage a balanced budget. The simple reason the Victorian government has had to make some very difficult decisions in relation to TAFEs is that it is cleaning up the mess left behind by the Bracks and Brumby governments. The prime reason the Newman LNP government in Queensland is making some tough budgetary decisions right now is that they are cleaning up Anna's mess—an $80 billion mess. It is hard to believe that a state government could achieve an $80
billion mess like that, but Anna Bligh was up to it, ably assisted by Peter Beattie.

And then we look at the New South Wales situation. If you listened to those opposite you would think that members of the Liberal Party and the National Party just want to cause grief for people when it comes to making tough budgetary decisions. The simple fact of the matter, once again, is that the O'Farrell government has had to clean up after—how many years was it? How many years of torture in New South Wales was it?

Mr Craig Kelly: Too many!

Mr CHESTER: The member shakes his head. There were years and years of poor budget performance in New South Wales, and now the O'Farrell government is once again cleaning up the mess. And it is a pattern that the Australian people know so well. Go into any public bar in regional Australia, perhaps even suburban Australia, and ask people about the Australian Labor Party. Ask, 'Can the Australian Labor Party manage money?' and you will not find a single person in that bar who believes that the Australian Labor Party is good with taxpayers' money. It is accepted wisdom throughout Australia that Labor cannot manage money. Every time Labor gets to the Treasury benches they prove themselves incapable of managing balanced budgets.

So we have this motion here from the member for Blair, talking about providing funding for employment and skills services and continuing to invest in TAFEs as if the Labor Party is the only party that cares about investing in skills. Well, here is a news flash for the member for Blair: members on this side are equally as passionate about this issue, but we just have this feeling that you have to be able to pay for it; one day you have to pay the bills. Unfortunately for those in the Labor Party, they never have to pay the bills; they just leave it for the Liberals and Nationals to come into government and clean up the mess. In the last month, as members of the Labor Party walked into this place, you could have sworn they were running for state parliament. You could have sworn that the Prime Minister, the Treasurer and a whole assortment of the gaggling crowd opposite are running for state parliamentary seats, because they do not want to talk about the federal parliament anymore; all they want to talk about is what New South Wales is doing, what Queensland is doing, what Victoria is doing. You would have thought that at least one member opposite actually cared about the state of the Australian budget and what is actually happening in this parliament. Then again, if I were presiding over another budgetary mess, with a $120 billion budget black hole, the last thing I would want to talk about would be the federal parliament. So we have Anna's mess, we have Brumby's and Bracks's mess, we have the mess of whoever was leading New South Wales for about 15 years—all their mess—and now we have Kevin's and Julia's mess to clean up.

The previous speaker was right: there are some people in this place who have form on this, and it is the Labor Party. We cannot afford Labor governments at state level, and we certainly cannot afford Labor governments at federal level.

Debate adjourned and made an order of the day for the next sitting.

MOTIONS

Afghanistan

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this House calls on the Government to set a date for the safe return of Australian troops from Afghanistan.

Mr ROBERT (Fadden) (20:51): by leave—I rise on behalf of the coalition to address the call of the member for Melbourne, the Deputy Leader of the
Greens, that this House calls on the
government to set a date for the safe return
of Australian troops from Afghanistan.
'Troops home by Christmas' is a common
call that we have heard before.

I agree with the member for Melbourne in
his first sentences of his address to this
House. War is hell. It is a battle of wills. It is
the last resort upon the breakdown of
diplomatic efforts to achieve national goals
in the face of tyranny. It leaves destroyed
nations, destroyed souls, broken bodies and
broken families. I can think of few graver
calls that a Prime Minister and an executive
actually make than to send our young men
and women to war. Our combat operations in
Afghanistan since 2001—noting the hiatus
there from 2003 to 2005—have left 38 of our
finest killed in battle and over 250 wounded.
The impact upon the mental condition and
minds of our young soldiers is greater still.

But there is a reason why the prerogative
sits with the executive to commit our men
and women to war. There is a reason why the
government, elected by the people to
represent them and govern them in their
stead, commits our nation to war. There is a
reason why an elected body, which we call
the government and which sits to the right of
the Speaker on the Treasury benches,
commits our nation to war. Only the
government has full access to the full
intelligence suites, to the full information
suites and to the information from our allies
and partners. Only they are
across the full
access of the national intent and the national
interest. Only they are across the full
capability and calibre of our national power,
be it in terms of hard power, in our combat
sense, or soft power, in our diplomatic sense.
Only the elected government is fully across
the relationships at a bilateral and
multilateral level and understands the full
ramifications and the full costs and is
prepared to wear them and be accountable
for committing our forces to war. Only the
executive bears that heavy load.

It is incumbent upon the parliament, as
one of the three separations of powers, to
keep the government accountable, to keep
the executive accountable, in the prosecution
of combat operations. But someone must be
accountable and it is not an amorphous
parliament; it is a government. It is an
elected body of men and women. It is a body
that goes to the people and stands trial by the
people in a capacity called an election. Only
the government wears that policy.

I am surprised, though, that the Greens
have brought this up for debate in the House.
It is instructive to look at the policy of the
Greens when it comes to defence, defence
spending and combat operations in general.
According to the Greens, climate change is
the greatest threat to world peace and
security. The last time I looked I had not
seen climate change slay too many people! I
have not seen climate change run them over
with armoured personnel carriers and tanks!
I have not seen climate change call in
artillery strikes in suburbs in Syria!
I have not seen climate change develop nuclear
arsenals in defiance of the world, as Iran is
doing! Right now, in the Strait of Hormuz,
the US Navy has three Nimitz-class carrier
battle groups. Three. Literally a third of the
US's surface fleet is now within an area 21
nautical miles by 21 nautical miles, in
concert with 23 other nations, on a 12-day
exercise at the same time as the sabre rattling
over Iran's nuclear threat is reaching a level
we have not seen. Three nuclear powered
Nimitz-class carrier battle groups: one of the
greatest concentrations of military armadas
we have seen for quite a while. But, hey,
climate change is the greatest threat to world
peace and security.

Perhaps someone should tell that to the
Africans who are being slaughtered by
dictatorial regimes every single day. Someone should tell that to Mugabe. 'Hey, you are not a threat to Zimbabwe. You have not reduced your people's standard of living to the lowest level of any country on earth. You have not reduced to 37 the average age that someone lives.' Climate change is the greatest threat to world peace and security.

These are the Greens who believe in no US bases, that Australia should not allow any nuclear ships into our harbours and we should dispense with bilateral defence arrangements and rest solely on multilateral arrangements, especially the United Nations! I sit looking across at my good friend and colleague the member for Eden-Monaro. He and I are the only ones to have served overseas on military operations, and we wear ribbons accordingly. We have both served with the United Nations overseas and we have both found them wanting at certain stages of those deployments.

But the Greens believe the United Nations should have a permanent UN peacekeeping budget. The Greens believe Australia should be funding this permanent US peacekeeping budget so that Australia would never have to deploy troops. The UN could solve all the world's problems. The Greens believe that ANZUS, the Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty, one that has been in place for over 60 years, should be dispensed with. The Greens believe that the 41-year-old treaty, the Five Power Defence Arrangements, between Great Britain, New Zealand, Australia, Singapore and Malaysia should be dispensed with—one of the overarching bilateral security treaties, which exists to provide security assistance to Singapore and Malaysia. The Greens believe that should be dispensed with. The Greens, frankly, believe that we should train ourselves in passive resistance, and that will ensure that we never face any egregious behaviour, and only in an event of national invasion should we concern ourselves with dealing with any existential threat.

I do not know what planet the Greens are on when they call for these motions in the parliament. Their policy settings make it very clear that they do not take national security seriously; they do not take defence of the realm seriously; and they do not take defence of Australia's interests, its lives and liberties overseas, seriously. I wonder how the Greens would deal with a terrorist incident such as a hostage incident overseas. I wonder how the Greens would deal with the occupation of an offshore oil and gas hub. How would the Greens deal with five AusAID workers taken captive by overseas Islamic forces? What would the Greens do? I look across at the member for Eden-Monaro and I know pretty well that my government and his would be looking at every option on the table, including bilateral special forces operations in terms of recovery. The Greens would be sitting around singing Kumbaya hoping that the Islamic forces would somehow wake up to themselves, apologise and send our people home. Perhaps the Greens should simply provide 30 pieces of silver to those forces who seek to do us harm and call it quits and leave the field of battle.

The motion is seriously not worth considering because it is wider than simply setting a date for combat troops to come home. What the Greens are saying is that there is no point committing to the use of force if it is necessary in the national interest. The Greens agenda is blown wide open by looking at their Defence policy. It is freely available on the web. I would encourage all Australians to go to the Greens website—it is greens.org.au—and have a look at it. Satisfy yourself as to whether this party seriously understands the true ramifications of national security and what it means to defend a sovereign nation.
This is a party that actually believes we should have an international ban on making guns. That is great in theory. I look forward to that great biblical time when we beat our swords into ploughshares but, until such time as those who would do us harm and who seek nuclear weapons to destroy those who love freedom lay down their arms, may I suggest that we as a nation will keep a very firm grip upon ours. It is fanciful to think we should be looking at international bans on weapons knowing full well that the forces that would do us harm have no intention of laying down theirs at all. The Greens simply need to wake up and face the world of reality. Yes, at times it is not pleasant. Yes, at times the world we live in is dark and dangerous. Yes, at times government makes difficult decisions. But I would rather an executive awake to the implications of their actions than a Greens government asleep at their fanciful wheel.

Dr MIKE KELLY (Eden-Monaro—Parliamentary Secretary for Defence) (21:02): This motion by Mr Bandt, the member for Melbourne, of the Greens that the government set a date for the safe return of our troops from Afghanistan and withdraw precipitately in accordance with such a date does great damage to the credibility of the Greens with respect to security matters. This is the sort of approach to security policy that you might expect in the scribbled writings on a napkin in a cafe but are not serious considerations for those who have to deal with this nation's security.

It always amazes me that some within the Greens—who portray themselves as a progressive party, interested in the rights of women and the right of the developing world to move itself forward and lift itself from poverty, obscurity and ignorance—oftentimes find themselves siding through their misguided approaches with the forces of Islamist extremism and the medieval mindset that often drives these people.

Mr Bandt in his motion refers to the situation of women in Afghanistan. Of course, we do not accept the situation of the women in Afghanistan and want the women in Afghanistan to move forward even further than they have since the international intervention there, but the strides that have been made are enormous. So what is it that the Greens would suggest? Would they suggest that they slide backwards to the position where thousands of Afghan women were used as sex slaves, to the situation where the 70 per cent of teachers in the Afghan education system who were women were thrown out of the education system instantly and overnight, destroying the Afghan education system? Would they seek to send them back to the situation where no Afghan woman was permitted to enter politics, where no Afghan woman was permitted to work? Would they suggest that all of the strides that have been made in relation to the rights of Afghan women be thrown away simply because they have not reached a state of perfection or the advances that we would hope for them to finally achieve?

Let me remind the chamber that even in this country we sometimes are witness to situations in relation to women's rights that mean we have not quite achieved what we would like to have as well. Just recently evidence came to light of a situation in New South Wales of genital mutilations. Just because there are circumstances that may not indicate that women have achieved the state that we would like them to achieve in Afghanistan does not mean that we should abandon the effort and allow them to slide back to a situation which was far worse.

That applies across the board to every aspect of endeavour of our mission in
Afghanistan. If you look at the situation in relation to education and the progress that has been made there, it is enormous. Members of the coalition and I have spent time on the ground in Uruzgan province, for example, and witnessed the efforts of our troops in building a girls school and a boys school, the restoration of the mosque and the like.

We then compare and contrast that with the approach of the Taliban to education. Education is the key enemy of the Taliban. Enlightenment is the key enemy of the Taliban. When they overran the Swat Valley in 2009 and came within 100 kilometres of Islamabad, what was the very first thing that the Taliban did in the Swat Valley? It was to blow up 100 schools. These are the people that the Greens will find themselves in alliance with in taking this sort of disreputable approach to the operation.

Mr Bandt criticises the fact that the government of Afghanistan is in negotiations—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Leigh): I remind the member to refer to other members by their formal titles.

Dr MIKE KELLY: The member for Melbourne has referred in his motion to the negotiations between the Afghanistan government and the Taliban. The Taliban and the people that we confront are a very diverse range of actors. Certainly there are discussions, negotiations and engagements taking place. These are on the three principles of: acceptance of the constitution; a disavowal and renunciation of violence; and a separation from al-Qaeda. Within that, there is scope for discussion. Certainly we can divorce certain elements of the opposition that we have confronted over time from those harder core elements that, I believe, we will probably never be able to come to any agreement with. For them, often there is only one solution—and that is a military or kinetic confrontation which may well and truly end up with their deaths. We have to accept that those are the consequences of operations at times when we confront evil.

But the member for Melbourne and many of the Greens would have us believe that there is no progress being made in Afghanistan. As my responsibilities relate to the transition there, I should report that in the course of this year I have had occasion to monitor closely our efforts and the progress that is being made. We are not focused on an end date in Afghanistan; we are focused on an end state, a conditions based approach to the success of our mission and our withdrawal. Our troops are achieving great success in the competencies that they are attaining for the 4th Brigade. There is a clear program of operations that is setting out to achieve a level of security—as they would put it, cutting the grass to a point at which the Afghan security forces can maintain the lawn. That program of building competency and conducting security operations will intersect at point where the Afghan security forces will be able to conduct operations and maintain security under their own steam, under their own responsibility.

At this point, Australian forces will withdraw more into a ready reaction force overwatch role. For example, there was the situation that occurred in relation to the tragic loss of our troops recently in the so-called green on blue incident at patrol base Wahid. Those sorts of opportunities for the insurgents or for any who seek to do our soldiers harm will not arise because we will no longer be in those patrol bases. That day is fast approaching. So why, at this point, would you seek to withdraw or cut short our program of operations when we are so close to achieving the ultimate success, the
ultimate states and conditions that we have sought to achieve these long years?

We have seen reference by the member for Melbourne to conditions on the ground, of which he knows nothing. Many times I have tried to get the Greens to participate in programs to go to Afghanistan or in the parliamentary exchange program. The only one to participate, to his credit, has been Senator Ludlam. When you talk about the conditions on the ground, there is reference to the Afghans believing us to be a continuation of occupation forces of the Soviet Union and the like; that is simply not the case.

The most detailed study that has yet been done on the attitudes of the Afghans has been done by The Asia Foundation. I was fortunate to be in Washington to hear a briefing by the President of The Asia Foundation, David Arnold. This is the most extensive survey done, involving thousands and thousands of Afghans in face-to-face interviews. It is instructive to understand their attitudes because it relates to the success of our mission. Eighty-two per cent of respondents in Afghanistan support the government's attempts to address the security situation through negotiation and reconciliation. The levels of sympathy with the motivations of armed opposition groups reached its lowest level in 2011. The support statistic has fallen all the way down to 29 per cent. This is a rapidly declining trend in support for any armed resistance to the government.

The majority of respondents report satisfaction with the availability of most basic services, including education for children, 73 per cent; water for drinking, 70 per cent; the ability to move safely in local areas, 70 per cent; and the availability of clinics and hospitals, 57 per cent. There are obviously still issues that they have raised in relation to unemployment, corruption and those sorts of local issues at municipalities, but their satisfaction with central governance is growing and increasing all the time. They view with great positiveness now the delivery of services such as education and health care by central governance.

Importantly, in relation to the Afghan National Army, 93 per cent of respondents agree that the ANA is honest and fair with the Afghan people compared to eight out of 10 who say the same about the ANP. So we are making significant progress with the Afghan National Army. A similarly high proportion agrees that the ANA is helping to improve the security situation in the country: 87 per cent of respondents. The attitudes of the Afghans themselves are the ones we should take most notice of and they are the people we seek to help.

In relation to the rights of women—something the Greens should be very interested in—support for the principles of gender equality remains high, including equal rights under the law regardless of gender, ethnicity or religion, at 82 per cent; equal educational opportunities for women, 85 per cent; and women being allowed to stand up for their individual rights, 79 per cent.

So progress has been made in the attitudes of the Afghans themselves, which ultimately is going to be the source of long-term sustainability of what we have attempted to achieve. We are committed to making the security effort sustainable based on our investment in the social and economic political aspects of the mission, as all counterinsurgency missions must be. Our $260 million a year for the next four years will underpin that in relation to support for elections, road building, education and the like. Certainly our efforts in relation to the provincial reconstruction team, the taking
over command of the combined team in Uruzgan, augurs well for the future in terms of the ability of our forces to see a successful transition. Therefore, this motion bears no relevance to the operation and should be dismissed and not supported.

Mr McCormack (Riverina) (21:12):
The loss of five Australian soldiers within a 24-hour period—the best of the best, the bravest of the brave—and other recent tragic events have brought into question Western military efforts in Afghanistan. The landlocked country is still very much strife-torn but, it must be said, in a far better state and in a far more peaceful shape than it was in soon after the evil of 9/11.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai has condemned the deaths of at least eight civilian women in the country's east in a North Atlantic Treaty Organization air strike. A NATO spokesman said the strikes were targeting 40 insurgents, many of whom were killed, and the deaths of the women was a very regrettable accident. The air strike came just hours after four American soldiers were killed in an attack by suspected Afghan police. The latest incident follows the killing of two British soldiers at a checkpoint on Saturday by a man wearing the uniform of local Afghan police. He claimed to be injured. When soldiers went to his aid he started shooting. This is the type of lawlessness that occurred freely and regularly before our brave troops went into Afghanistan. So far this year 51 NATO troops have died in green on blue killings.

At the NATO International Security Assistance Force summit in May 2012 it was agreed the mission in Afghanistan was on track for a transition by the end of 2014. The coalition has always offered and will continue to offer bipartisan support for our operations in Afghanistan, with the shared resolve that the country never again return to being a safe haven for terrorists. We acknowledge and we honour the sacrifice of the 38 Australians killed in action in Afghanistan and the 240 wounded in action since 2002. Their families, their friends and their comrades are always in our thoughts and in our prayers.

A funeral was held in Perth today to farewell a soldier killed in Afghanistan last month. Lance Corporal Mervyn McDonald was on his sixth tour of Afghanistan, serving with the Special Operations Task Group, when he was killed in a helicopter crash. Today, the 30-year-old was remembered by his commanding officer as a quiet, hardworking, likeable bloke and as one of his regiment's most professional members.

The 2nd Commando Regiment's commanding officer spoke of the energy and enthusiasm Lance Corporal McDonald brought to the regiment.

ISAF is made up of 50 contributing nations, including Australia, with a presence of 1,550 troops in Afghanistan. It was agreed that, by mid-2013, the Afghan National Army would take the lead in security. In Uruzgan province, where Australia has responsibility, transition has already begun and this process is expected to take between 12 to 18 months. At its conclusion the majority of Australian troops will be able to return home.

In Uruzgan province we are training and mentoring the Afghan National Army 4th Brigade to assume responsibility for security; building the capacity of the Afghan National Police to assist with civil policing functions; helping to improve the Afghan government's capacity to deliver core services and generate income-earning opportunities for its people; and undertaking operations to disrupt insurgent operations and supply routes utilising the Special Operations Task Group.
The aim of the post-2014 NATO-led mission is to train, advise and assist the Afghan National Security Forces, and Australia will continue to contribute trainers to this mission with a focus on the Afghan artillery school and the officer training academy.

The Prime Minister has said there may also be an ongoing need for our Special Forces to remain to contribute towards counterterrorism, a role which would be considered under the right mandate.

The coalition always accepts the advice of the Chief of the Defence Force and the Defence secretary as to when they say the time is right to withdraw our troops. And that time is when the job is done—no sooner.

The Prime Minister and the Minister for Defence get better briefings than the member for Melbourne and the Greens. That is how it should be and must be. We must stay the course and do whatever it takes for as long as it takes. There is an exit strategy. To leave anytime sooner than our arranged withdrawal would be an insult to the 38 soldiers who have lost their lives. It would downplay our role in what, to date, has been a worthwhile mission, despite the awful reality that 38 soldiers, our best and bravest, had their lives so tragically cut short.

I know the Commandant of the Army Recruit Training Centre, Colonel David Hay, has seen the benefits that Australia's involvement in Afghanistan has brought. He spent much of 2010, from January to October, in the Middle East campaign and saw the benefits that the Australian Defence Force presence introduced.

Wagga Wagga and, moreover, Blamey Barracks at Kapooka, is the home of the soldier with every recruit—this year there will be 2,500 of the regular Army going through—training there.

The death, on 29 August, of Sapper James Thomas Martin, one of three Australians killed by a rogue Afghan soldier, hit home hard at Kapooka. Sapper Martin enlisted into the Australian Army on 24 January 2011 and completed recruit training at ARTC at Kapooka in April 2011, where he was allocated to the corps of Royal Australian Engineers. His many Kapooka friends were rocked by Sapper Martin's loss. It brought home to them the awful reality of the war, the finality which can be a soldier's career.

But rather than dissuading them from what they train to do, rather than discouraging their resolve to do what their nation asks of them, to do what this parliament asks of them, the recent deaths—five ADF personnel in a 24-hour period just recently—have only determined their resolve to do what they can to bring about peace and stability to a troubled region.

'A lot of us have been there and seen the change,' a Kapooka soldier told me this morning. The change has been positive—in outcomes for women, in the provision of education, in health services and in overall harmony of communities. The Taliban's once feared presence has been pushed out of mainstream society of this landlocked country and deeper and deeper into the mountains. According to the Australian Agency for International Development, AusAID, 'The goal of Australia's development assistance program is to strengthen the capacity of Afghan institutions to govern effectively.'

Since 2001, Australia has provided about $916 million in official development assistance to Afghanistan. A further $201.7 million is provided for in the 2012-13 budget, representing about four per cent of Australia's total official development assistance budget. In May 2012, the Australian government announced it would increase its budget spending to Afghanistan
to $250 million per year from 2015-16. According to the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs: Australia’s aid will help Afghanistan expand basic service delivery in health and education, including for women and girls.

Our assistance will also help improve livelihoods in agriculture, promote rural development and help improve governance and public financial management.

The Prime Minister said it was:

... Important for the international community to provide sustained, reliable support to help Afghanistan meet its development challenges and to protect recent gains in areas like health and education.

International development assistance, together with support for security, will help underpin Afghanistan's stability.

On 8 July 2012, the Minister for Foreign Affairs signed a memorandum of understanding on development cooperation with the Afghan finance minister. This memorandum of understanding sets out mutual 'partnership priorities' for Australia to Afghanistan including security; governance, rule of law and human rights; economic and social development; reduce poverty; ensure sustainable development through a private-sector-led market economy; improve human development indicators; and, make significant progress towards the Millennium Development Goals.

We as a nation are doing all we can to help progress in Afghanistan. It is not helped by the Greens. It is not assisted by motions such as this by the member for Melbourne. The Greens’ defence policy, if you could call it that, was no doubt put together while weaving baskets, while reading tea leaves and singing Kumbaya. It is fanciful, just like everything this obstructionist party does. This parliament does not need such motions being brought into the chamber. The Greens have no veterans policy, yet they speak of bringing our troops home with honour. They have no national security policy and their line-in-the-sand approach will simply make matters worse.

We need to stay the course for as long as it takes in Afghanistan. There is an exit strategy and I say to the member for Melbourne, forgive me if I treat your motion with disdain because that is what it needs. When you hear something like that coming from the Greens, you just know that it needs to be condemned because the Greens are, as they have shown by this motion, a joke.

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter—Chief Government Whip) (21:22): It seems we are approaching unanimity in this chamber with respect to our opposition to this motion—although it could be that the member for Melbourne might have the support of the member for Denison in this debate. But it is pretty clear to me that that is where the support for this motion ends. While I acknowledge that the timing of this motion was completely outside the control of the member for Melbourne, it is very unfortunate that we are debating this motion at a time when families and members of the ADF are mourning the loss of soldiers in Afghanistan.

It is a rather curious motion because it is not all that specific in its terms. It says we should set a date for bringing our troops home from Afghanistan. The member for Melbourne has not been so audacious as to set the date himself. He wants to make the point that we need to bring our troops home, but he wants us, the collective here, who almost unanimously oppose the motion, to set that date for him.

This motion and supporting speech from the member for Melbourne is full of inconsistencies. He wants to glorify the American alliance but talks against it and says that this is only about the alliance. He wants to back our troops but opposes what
they are doing in Afghanistan and then, in doing so, hides behind the instructions which have been given to them by the parliament. He wants the parliament to decide when our troops go, but he wants the executive to decide when we bring them home. It is full of inconsistencies. I just read the member for Melbourne's speech at the time of the introduction. It talks very little about when we should come home. It talks a lot about Afghanistan more generally—and we should debate Afghanistan on a regular basis. But it is really lacking in substance in terms of his intention with respect to this motion—and that is his belief that they should come home.

This is populism at its worst because the member for Melbourne is tapping into a sentiment which undermines the commitment of our troops in theatre—the people who are volunteers, following government instruction, doing what they believe is the best thing for their country and its people and indeed the international community. We have had countless debates in this place about our involvement in Afghanistan. We all understand in this place why we are there. I think almost all of us believe it was a worthwhile engagement—not just Australia, not just the United States, but the international community seeking to make the world a safer place, seeking to ensure that Afghanistan does not remain a training ground, a safe haven, a launching pad for those terrorist groups prepared to perpetrate their acts of terror on Australians and others all around the world. That is a pretty good reason to be there. But we cannot let all those who have given their lives in Afghanistan to have given them in vain.

We must remain in Afghanistan until we have completed the task, not just for our own safety, not just for the safety of the international community, but for those Afghans who have backed us in Afghanistan. It is not time to desert them now. People often say to me, 'We can't win in Afghanistan.' What does winning mean? We cannot create Switzerland in the Hindu Kush, but we can create a stable democracy. We can create a government capable of imposing its own rule of law. We can build schools and hospitals. We can give women equal rights. All of those things we have been doing in Afghanistan. No, it will never be perfect. It will not be Switzerland. It will not be Australia. But we can leave there safe in the knowledge that we have trained the Afghan security forces to a point where they are able to enforce their own rule of law. If we leave precipitously before they are ready to do so, all of those lives that have been given might have been given in vain. That would be a very sad mistake. I am very confident, having spoken to many of them in the past, that all those families who have lost people in Afghanistan would be very disappointed with that decision and that outcome.

So let's call a spade a spade: this is a populist motion trying to tap into a minority view in society. I am confident the majority of Australians support our troops and what they are doing in Afghanistan, just like their families do. It is very disappointing, in my view, that the member for Melbourne brings forward such a motion. (Time expired)

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (21:27): I rise today to speak on the member for Melbourne's motion which calls on the government to set a date for the safe return of Australian troops from Afghanistan. I welcome the ongoing contribution of all members to the debate about Australia's involvement in Afghanistan, but I do note that the member for Melbourne's motion is fundamentally naive to what the defence community has to say about this issue and naive to Australia's contribution of capacity building and training efforts abroad. No government wants to send their servicemen
and women to war. No decision by government to send our troops is taken lightly. It is the responsibility of all members of government—indeed, all members of this House—to make informed decisions.

I have to question just how informed the member for Melbourne's motion is, because if the member for Melbourne had spoken to the troops at the barracks—like Gallipoli Barracks at Enoggera in Ryan—he would know that they want to continue our effort in Afghanistan. They want to see the job through. They want to see the job through in the memory of those who have died, the 38 soldiers we have lost there, our brave men who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our country. If he had been there himself, like I was privileged to be, with the member for Dickson and our Senate colleagues who went and met with the soldiers in Afghanistan, in Tarin Kot and Kandahar, he would know that our soldiers on the ground believe they are making a difference—and indeed they are making a difference. And they want to see the job through in the true Anzac spirit. They are proud of what they are doing. They are working to achieve a better place for everyone in this world.

As we have heard, one of the big issues there is literacy, with less than 10 per cent of the male population and less than one per cent of the female population who are literate in that country. Literacy is a great enabler, and that is where Australia is doing such a wonderful job in funding schools and education facilities for the Afghans. Even the members of the Afghan national army want us to stay and get on with the job. To conclude, the coalition will continue to work with the government and all members of the Defence community to ensure that Australia's contribution to the International Security Assistance Force and the people of Afghanistan is something that we will look back on with honour. As the member for Eden-Monaro said, we must not set an end date we must set an end state.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): Order! The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke) (21:30): Mr Speaker has asked me to deliver the following statement on his behalf.

Last Thursday, the honourable member for Menzies referred to the practice that had developed on the most recent sitting days that, when leave had been refused for an opposition member to table a document, the Leader of the House had tabled documents which were not necessarily related to the document for which leave had been sought, or to the issue immediately before the House.

In the quest for political advantage that is seen during question time, controversy has sometimes attached to the tabling or attempted tabling of documents at this time.

The technical position is, however, quite clear:

- with very few exceptions, such as when presenting a committee report or when raising a matter of privilege, a private member requires leave to present a document; and
- when other business is not before the House, a minister may present a document as of right. Other business is defined as any question before the House for decision. Accordingly ministers have not required leave to present documents between items of business, during question time, while making a ministerial statement, during discussion of a matter of public importance or during members'
three minute statements in the Federation Chamber.

Under House practice speakers have not been required to consider the subject matter of documents tabled by ministers.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): Order! I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

**Swan Electorate: Aircraft Noise**

Mr IRONS (Swan) (21:31): I rise tonight to update the House on the issue of aircraft noise in my electorate of Swan and our continuing efforts to achieve noise amelioration for affected residents. Members may recall that 11 months ago, on 31 October 2011, I rose in this place to second the Air Services (Aircraft Noise) Amendment Bill 2011, a private members bill put forward by the member for Pearce that was designed to address the situation arising from flight-path changes in 2008. It was made under the Western Australia Route Review Project by Airservices Australia, under the authority of the minister for transport.

These changes were made without adequate consultation, a fact subsequently established by a Senate committee and admitted by Airservices Australia, yet to this day the government refuses to do anything about this. The Airservices bill we introduced last year is still before the parliament today and is an important step in addressing the 2008 changes. It has the support of my constituents in Swan and the member for Pearce's constituents in her electorate. It is supported by the Liberal Party, the National party and the Greens party, but not by the government, which is looking increasingly isolated in its opposition to action on aircraft noise in Perth.

Crucially, the bill triggers the reopening of the planning process for Perth flight paths by asking ASA to propose a flight-path plan. Then would follow a full community-wide consultation, which in turn should trigger a proper referral under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act. This was not conducted in 2008. They are two events that did not occur in 2008. Furthermore, the bill would prevent a repeat of the 2008 Perth flight-path changes fiasco by enshrining consultation into law.

As I have mentioned, this bill was introduced on 4 July 2011 and that it has taken this long to get a vote is shameful in itself. The member for Pearce conducted wide consultations with government agencies and industry and, as a result, 15 small amendments have been made. She should be congratulated on her consultation process. Comprehensive consultation was undertaken with the Greens and the Independents and indeed the Labor Party. While the Labor Party indicated their opposition to the bill from the outset—which they have been consistent in and which is no surprise, given their track record—support has been expressed by the Greens. This means that if the bill passes this place it could go through the Senate and become law, for the benefit of Perth residents.

Cautious support has also been indicated at various stages by the Independents. Consultation was complete and the bill was ready to be voted on months ago. These delays have appeared suspicious and we know that the minister has been frantically trying to 'turn' the Independents behind the scenes. It is clear the Independents will decide the vote in the lower House and I hope, when the chance to vote eventually comes, the Independents will base their vote purely on the legislation and not on other factors. I note the bill remains on the Notice Paper, as it has for the last two sitting weeks,
so we will wait and see if this will be the week the government decides to bring it forward.

While we await the vote on this bill I have been pursuing another matter with the ombudsman and that is in relation to take-off arrangements at Perth Airport. These practices were estimated by aviation reporter Geoffrey Thomas to result in planes being 300 metres lower than they need to be, creating more noise for residents. These practices are put in place for fuel efficiency, engine conservation and scheduling requirements but I feel they need to be investigated further. The problem would be particularly visible on the long runway, runway 3, which affects residents in Queens Park, Cannington, Beckenham and Ferndale. In fact, I had the pleasure of being invited to the Correlli’s household in Queens Park a couple of weeks ago to observe the phenomenon myself. It was interesting to see aircraft, of the same type, at dramatically different heights as they came over—one within a minute of each other, some you could almost touch and others you could hardly see.

When I talk to residents about aircraft noise, it is clear that the thing they most cannot understand is how residents are treated differently in different parts of the country. They cannot understand how residents in Sydney and Adelaide can receive aircraft noise insulation schemes and other amelioration measures but Perth can receive nothing. They cannot understand how the minister for transport can support noise amelioration for Sydney but not for Perth.

I reiterate my call for a review of the ANEF system, which is just a forecast and not an actual measurement. Residents of Swan know that there is no difference in noise between a plane taking off in Perth and a plane taking off in Adelaide. The minister's own department appears to recognise this problem with a position paper on its website calling for a review. The government cannot continue to use this measure as an excuse for blocking an insulation scheme in Perth. I will continue to campaign for my constituents and hope for a good outcome on the bill.

**Nymboida Mine Disaster**

**Electricity Prices**

Darke, Mr Bradley

Ms SAFFIN (Page) (21:36): Last week a group of men received bravery awards from the Governor of New South Wales Professor Bashir, for their courageous actions during the Nymboida mine explosion of 1976. The Governor's group bravery citation was awarded to Ian Carter, Neil McLennan, Trevor McLennan, Frank Smidt and the late John Tapp. The award was for risking their lives to rescue fellow miners during the disaster.

On 12 January 1976, there was an explosion almost 400 metres into the mine, and the miners scrambled to safety, a number of them suffering burns and other injuries. When one minor did not come out, the manager of the union-owned mine, John Tapp, knew the rescue team was hours away and decided to go back into the burning mine himself. The McLennan brothers, Ian Carter and Frank Smidt went with him. They found the young man dead inside the tunnel, and his body was brought out.

An award-winning document, *Last Stand at Nymboida*, has been made about the Nymboida mine workers revolt and the 1976 explosion. The producer of the documentary, Paddy Gorman, told me it was the documentary that prompted the bravery award nomination for these men so many years after the event. The documentary is described in a recent review in the *Weekend Australian*:
THIS is a terrifically well-made documentary about a 1975 landmark industrial case, in which a band of local men, who had laboured in the darkest and most dangerous tunnels of Australia’s most primitive coalmine, staged a daring worker rebellion.

Nymboida is just a dot on the map, a little to the west of Grafton, in northern NSW. Things begin there with a contemporary reunion of the men who forged such a close bond almost 40 years ago. This allows for well-edited interviews to camera before we move back in time to see archival footage and splendid old photographs of a rebellion that ultimately was to have an impact on mining practices worldwide.

Nymboida is in my seat of Page, and that is why I wanted to talk about those brave men, the bravery awards that they got last week and about the industrial action the workers took in 1975.

I want to talk about another issue that arose in my electorate. An email from my constituent says:

Hi Janelle,

At 9-05 this morning I rang Country Energy Bill enquiries to complain about a 20% increase in the kW price on my current bill. The woman I spoke to stated that it was because of the Governments “Carbon Tax”. She made this statement about four times and each time I refuted her claim until she finally confessed that part of the 20% was for infrastructure but would not say what percentage was what. This same lady then informed me that it was a govt charge put on by Ipart. I have now discovered that Ipart only recommends The maximum amount that an increase may be.

I send this Email to make you aware of what is going on with this Company.

Regards, Jim Kean E/Ballina

I then rang Jim and asked him if he wanted me to go ahead and make the representations and sort it out and get it corrected, because it was clear that he was getting absolutely incorrect information when he rang. I took it up through the minister’s office and it went to Origin Energy and they came back to me that call centre operations are currently run by Essential Energy, the part of Country Energy that remained New South Wales government owned. They understand that any representations made along the lines described would not be consistent with correct script on carbon. They have informed us that actions have been taken to ensure that call centre operators remain familiar with correct scripting on carbon.

I thought that that was a rather lame response. Hence I am making it a matter of public record. I thought that they would have at least contacted me and the person who contacted me—they had that information—and follow it through, and detail precisely the action they have taken. This is not the first time I have had this happen. I took it up with another company. They admitted that it was totally incorrect. They corrected it and told me all the things that they did.

I would also like to congratulate Bradley Darke, Coraki resident from my seat of Page. He is in the Big Brother house. He survived yet another eviction. In the Northern Star it says:

The 18-year-old self-described geek with a stutter graduated from Trinity Catholic College, Lismore last year.

He works the checkout at his family’s supermarket at Coraki during his gap year.

One of the persons who got evicted, the Melbourne model Ryan says he’s never met anyone like Bradley in his life. He is just a funny guy. (Time expired)

Obesity

Mr MATHESON (Macarthur) (21:41): I would like to take this opportunity to promote two revolutionary programs in my electorate that are literally saving people’s lives.

The Metabolic Rehabilitation Diabetes program at Camden Hospital is helping
severely obese people to lose weight and manage their diabetes by changing their lifestyle. The rehabilitation program started in mid-2009 at Camden Hospital. In 2011 the Metabolic Rehabilitation Obstructive Sleep Apnoea, Fatty Liver and Arthritis programs also started, thanks to financial support from the University of Western Sydney.

The program involves obesity and diabetes medical specialists; dieticians; diabetes educators to monitor blood sugar levels and provide advice on how to best use medication; psychologists, physiotherapists and exercise physiologists. About 200 severely obese patients with multiple medical problems have taken part in the programs since 2009. There are currently 297 patients on the waiting list and with the current level of staffing the average waiting time to begin the program is 18 months.

The clinic is run by Dr Nick Kormas, and was established to manage complex, severely obese patients with medical problems directly caused or contributed to by their excess weight. The program is based on the fact that the most effective strategy for managing obesity-induced co-morbidities is to achieve a healthier weight and improve fitness levels. Without the metabolic rehabilitation programs, these patients need huge quantities of medications funded by federal government and prolonged hospitalisation in ICU or HDU beds. This can cost the government up to $4,000 per day, representing a huge cost to the health system.

I recently met Curran’s Hill resident Brian Aitken, who is living proof of the fantastic programs run by Dr Kormas and his team of specialists. Mr Aitken is 63 years old and was 207 kilograms when he started the program last year. Brian told me that he was so unwell that his friends and family did not think he would make it to Christmas 2012. But thanks to the rehabilitation clinic he has now lost more than 30 kilograms, no longer has diabetes or sleep apnoea and feels he has a bright and happy future ahead of him. Brian was taking 21 tablets a day; now he takes one. He was on 136 units of insulin per day; now he does not need any. He used to have a problem with an ulcer on his foot; that has been treated and has not come back again.

In addition to his new quality of life Brian is now saving tax payers thousands of dollars each year because he no longer needs the medication, hospital stays and home nursing visits that he previously required.

The metabolic clinic in Camden is also supporting our local medical students from the University of Western Sydney. As part of the program, medical, nursing, physiotherapy, psychology and podiatry students all work at the clinic. This represents invaluable training for all of them with the prevalence of obesity in our community at 25 per cent and continuing to rise.

Also in my electorate is the Southwest Wellness Centre in Narellan, which aims to reduce the burden on the healthcare system by providing a long-lasting change for obesity patients through education and discipline. This program includes regular visits from a team of qualified health professionals, including an exercise physiologist, a psychologist, a physiotherapist, a dietician, a diabetes educator and a general practitioner. I recently met Ben Styles and Rebecca Spain, who run the centre and are very passionate about their Live Longer Obesity and Chronic Illness program to help improve the health of people in Macarthur. They are committed to helping those who are living with obesity related illness to learn new skills and habits that will help them to live longer, healthier lives.
Programs like these are so important in today's society. A study by Monash University earlier this year showed that more than 17 million Australians are overweight or obese and obesity has overtaken smoking as the leading cause of premature death and illness in Australia. It has become the single biggest threat to public health in Australia and the cause of many secondary complications like diabetes, sleep apnoea, heart disease and chronic kidney disease.

This is why I wanted to share the great results these programs are having in my community. If we can teach people living with obesity how to improve their health and quality of life this will in turn mean they are no longer a burden on our health system, and that is good news for both the patient and the government. The amount of money saved each year from reduced medications, hospital admissions and health services would help us fund more of these clinics and subsequently improve the overall health of millions of Australians.

The clinic at Camden Hospital is a unique service in New South Wales, with patients being assessed, treated and supported by a great team of specialists. I have heard from many constituents in Macarthur who have benefited from these programs or have seen family members turn their lives around. I hope to see many more of these public clinics rolled out across New South Wales and increased support for private wellness centres, which are also doing their bit to ease the burden on our health system and save lives.

Fisheries

Mr KELVIN THOMSON (Wills) (21:46): Members opposite wondering how it is that the latest opinion polls show the government and the opposition now neck and neck, when the opposition has been a mile in front for the past two years, could do worse than reflect on the astonishing decision the opposition took last week to allow the supertrawler to trawl in southern Australian waters, from Tasmania to Western Australia. In doing so, they turned on the recreational fishermen they claim to support. I am sure recreational fishermen were astonished by their actions, but it reflects just how far the Liberal Party has swung to the right during this parliament. They are so besotted with the free-market agenda—globalisation, privatisation, deregulation and no fetters on business doing whatever they want to do—that they no longer believe that governments should do anything, anywhere, at any time.

So when the government came into the House with legislation to take the action the community wanted us to take, the opposition cried sovereign risk and voted against it. They displayed contempt for recreational fishermen. They claim to support them, but last week they sold them out. The fact is they never saw a big corporate dollar they didn't like. They treated recreational fishers the same way they treat small business. They claim to be on their side, and they talk the talk all right, but when big business comes along they cast small business aside and sell them out.

Those opposite are so hell-bent on dismissing any role for government in doing anything—in this case protecting our fisheries—that they even put themselves at odds with the Liberal and National parties in Victoria and Tasmania. Yesterday the Victorian government announced that it will be banning supertrawlers from operating within three nautical miles of the Victorian coastline. The Victorian government's Minister for Agriculture and Food Security, Peter Walsh, a National Party member, said it was important to ensure Victorian waters were protected from overfishing. This clear and decisive action stands in stark contrast to
the actions of their counterparts here, who think the supertrawler should go right ahead. I am on the edge of my seat waiting for Liberal and National Party members here to denounce the Baillieu government for giving rise to sovereign risk.

Members opposite are also out of touch with the views of their Tasmanian colleagues and of Tasmanians, 300 of whom protested in Hobart on Saturday against the supertrawler. Liberal Party MPs in the Tasmanian parliament voted in favour of a motion opposing the supertrawler, which achieved the support of all parties in the Tasmanian parliament. But their colleagues here, such as Senator Abetz, thumbed their noses at the Tasmanian Liberals.

The opposition has tried to disguise its genetic opposition to government and to people power by saying this is all about the science and all about the judgment of the Australian Fisheries Management Authority. But on the weekend the Commonwealth Ombudsman exposed that argument by upholding a complaint by the member for Denison about the presence of a Seafish Tasmania director at a meeting of AFMA's South East Management Advisory Committee which recommended the allowable catch of jack mackerel be doubled, from 5,000 to 10,000 tonnes. The Commonwealth Ombudsman found that this advisory committee breached the Fisheries Management Act by allowing the Seafish Tasmania director to participate in the meeting by remaining on the phone while the meeting considered the quota issue.

I note the Seafish Tasmania director has denied any impropriety, saying it was 'absolutely standard' for industry representatives to be present in such committee meetings. I do not know whether it is standard or not, but I share the Ombudsman's concern about this. We are told that AFMA has been making independent, science based decisions which we should all respect, but then we hear that industry representatives are present when the discussions take place and the decisions are made. Procedural fairness would suggest that either industry representatives absent themselves from discussions on decisions about these matters or representatives of recreational fishers and environment groups also be present at these discussions; otherwise we will be left with the impression of undue and inappropriate influence.

It is time for the opposition to edge back towards the political centre from the far right position they have put themselves in under this Leader of the Opposition. It is time to join with their Liberal colleagues in Victoria, time to join with their Liberal colleagues in Tasmania, time to join with recreational fishers, time to join with ordinary Australians, time to come back from the political fringe and into the political mainstream, time to come back from the edge, and time to help Labor block the supertrawler.

Gillard Government

Mrs GASH (Gilmore) (21:51): In the last five years, nothing has been more disastrous for residents of Gilmore and Illawarra than those members sitting on the other side. In the last two years alone, thousands of local skilled manufacturing and production jobs have been lost. Multimillion-dollar business operations have shut down entirely and sovereign risk for investors has increased dramatically due to the populist, on-the-run policy approach of this government.

Nowra, in the centre of my electorate, currently has an unemployment rate exceeding 10 per cent, and in Gilmore the total number of Centrelink customers, as supplied by the Department of Human Services, exceeds 51,800—one of the highest
numbers across the nation. This is all from an electorate of around 100,000 adult residents. The above facts are stark. They go straight to the bad policies of the Gillard Labor government.

Tonight I wish to speak to the House on two core issues. First is the issue of unemployment. A few months ago, along with Senator Fierravanti-Wells, I met with Gina Rinehart's Roy Hill Holdings to discuss local recruitment prospects for their Roy Hill mining project, about to begin construction in the Pilbara. Roy Hill requires 8,500 construction workers starting from early 2013 to help construct massive amounts of infrastructure including roads, airfields and accommodation, which are all required to operate such a huge mining operation. After our meeting Roy Hill quickly agreed to hold a jobs forum in my electorate. The date for this forum has now been set for the 26th of this month. We have chartered a coach from the south of my electorate to take potential jobseekers on the hour drive to Shellharbour in the north free of charge.

Of the 8,500 positions available there are roughly 6,000 skilled and up to 2,000 semi-skilled, which include on-the-job training, on offer. The majority of the construction positions will be available by mid-2013 with Roy Hill engaging the employment firm Skilled to coordinate much of the recruitment process. Those selected by Roy Hill will primarily be placed on a four-week-on, one-week-off, fly-in fly-out roster based in Perth.

If enough interest is garnered it is entirely possible that the Illawarra Regional Airport at Albion Park could become a regional base for the fly-in fly-out operations to the Pilbara. This would be a huge economic boost for the region. The Roy Hill mining jobs forum is a very exciting development for the residents of Gilmore, and I look forward to updating the House in the coming months. The forum will be held in conjunction with a jobs expo. This will offer a further range of jobs to all the unemployed in the region.

The second issue that I rise to speak on is the Gillard Labor government's heartless decision to axe the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme and its subsequent attempts to sweep the axeing under the rug. This program currently offers up to $4,250 in private dental treatment under Medicare to more than one million Australians who have a chronic medical condition and complex care needs and dental problems which are impacting on, or likely to impact on, their general health. The program was introduced by then health minister Tony Abbott and is a program which recognises that it is smarter and cheaper to treat now rather than when health conditions balloon down the track.

This recognised and much appreciated program closed on 8 September leaving patients with chronic health conditions who need urgent dental treatment just 12 weeks to complete their treatment. Any doctor, dentist or nurse will be able to tell you that a patient with complex medical needs requires a lot more than 12 weeks to fully complete a course of treatment. That is not to mention the time for monitoring and follow up from the treating dentist. The scrapping of this scheme leaves a huge hole in Australia's public dental system.

Labor have said 'trust us' and that their new multi-billion dollar dental plan will plug all of the gaps left by the CDDS's demise. But there is a bit of a catch, Labor's scheme does not kick in until at least mid-2014. Mid 2014 is almost an entire year after the next federal election. That leaves more than one million Australians, or around 7,000 Gilmore residents, who are currently receiving treatment under the axed program, with no
urgent dental care for at least the next two years and no details as to how it will work.

And did I mention that Labor are quietly saving $2.5 billion by scrapping Medicare's only dental scheme? It really is disgusting. For the next two years residents of Gilmore with complex medical conditions better hope that their teeth and gums stay fine because Labor changing the rules is forcing them back onto the public waiting list of more than 400,000 people and years of waiting. With every passing day it becomes more and more clear that Labor truly is a divided and dysfunctional government that has lost its way.

But for the sake of the hundreds of thousands of patients across Australia and the thousands of residents in Gilmore with chronic dental conditions I ask the Labor government to at least extend existing funding agreements to early next year. Let existing patients finish their existing courses of treatment. It is the ethnical thing to do.

Book Launch: Glasgow Road to Canberra

Mr GEORGANAS (Hindmarsh) (21:56): On 7 September I was very honoured and privileged to attend the launch of the book Glasgow Road to Canberra, the memoirs of John L Scott. Those of you in this place would know John Scott as the former member for Hindmarsh, who was the member from 1980 to 1993. The book was launched by the former Premier, Lynn Arnold, and it was a very interesting night. The book was spoken about by Lynn and by many other people at the event.

The book is a historical event of, basically, the Labor Party, the union movement in South Australia and John Scott's life—his very early years living in Scotland in tenements during the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s as a child. The book describes the hardships of living in the tenements with five or six families and only one toilet to be used between all of them. For example, washing was done on a shift basis where each family had one day to do their washing. He describes very colourfully in the book how the children would be told off when they went outside to kick a ball because there was always washing on the line.

John, as I said, was the member for the seat of Hindmarsh from 1980 to 1993, and he was a very good member. John migrated to Australia with his family in the sixties. In fact, he came off the ship at Outer Harbour and travelled to Glenelg in my electorate and spent his first few weeks living in Glenelg. His first impressions were of Australia as a paradise. In the book he recalls driving along the seafront of Outer Harbour to Glenelg.

There were many, many letters sent on the night of the launch and John read many of them out. There was one particular letter that I want to speak about. It was a letter from the honourable Bob Brown, not the one that recently retired, but Bob Brown who was a minister in the Hawke—he was Minister for Land, Transport and Shipping. He wrote John a letter to congratulate him on the book. He said:

Dear John,

Two minutes ago I finished reading your 'Glasgow Road to Canberra'. To say I was delighted and impressed by it would be an understatement. I felt inspired by your courage, commitment, integrity and by the successes you have achieved throughout your life. Your love for Michiko—

that is his wife—

has clearly been a great inspiration to you.

Your experiences have closely paralleled many of the major issues in Australia's political and industrial development and your contribution towards those events has been really substantial.

The book is an outstanding presentation of your own growing consciousness and the
development of your trade union and political skills. There are many profound observations about the great issues of the time which imparted on your own experiences and achievements. You have presented much evidence to confirm the great, positive and principled role of the progressive-left elements of the community and of the broad labour movement in pursuing justice and decency.

From your principled and innovative approach to unionism, you initiated and encouraged the development of attitudes, structures and practices which strengthened the trade union movement.

When you were elected to the Commonwealth parliament in the same election as me, you entered that role with a massive background of enlightenment and experience which you continued to draw on during your years in Canberra.

I was especially pleased to have my memories rekindled around many of the issues we confronted—the MX missile trials, uranium to France, racial discrimination, British atom tests, privatisation and many more.

John Scott you can look back on a life well lived. My warmest regards to you and Michiko.

Your colleague and comrade

Bob Brown.

That gives you an example of the regard that the former member for Hindmarsh, John Scott, is held in, even today, in and around the electorate and in South Australia.

His book, as I said, is a description of John Scott’s life, his tribulations and his work in the union movement. He describes when he first started working at General Motors Holden in the garage where there was mainly maintenance on trucks. A fatal accident occurred when someone was killed. He was infuriated by this and also that the factory did not close down for the day out of respect. From there he went into the union movement and made many, many changes.

In the few moments that I have left one of the most classic lines that I read, the line that really moved me was a line by John which says: ‘The working experience cannot be copied— (Time expired)

**Economy**

**WYATT ROY** (Longman) (22:01): Australian society is a society that understands that with hard work, your goals, ambitions and aspirations are always attainable. As Liberals, we understand that hard work should always be rewarded fairly, not penalised. We understand that aspirational Australians would always rather receive a hand up instead of a hand out. And an individual should always be free to determine how they live their own life—a government should not prescribe it for them. And finally we understand that the great equaliser of our society should be equality of opportunity, not of subsidy.

These philosophical commitments that we as Liberals hold dear, are not new ones. I would like to share with the House a quote from a pamphlet in 1916 that was passed on to me by a local small business owner.

You cannot bring about prosperity by discouraging thrift. You cannot strengthen the weak by weakening the strong. You cannot help little men by tearing down big men. You cannot lift the wage earner by pulling down the wage payer. You cannot help the poor by destroying the rich. You cannot establish so und security on borrowed money. You cannot further the brotherhood of man by inciting class hatred. You cannot keep out of trouble by spending more than you earn. You cannot build character and courage by destroying a man’s initiative and independence. And finally, you cannot help men permanently by doing for them what they can and should do for themselves.

These philosophical commitments ring as true today as they did in 1916. And it is here where we see the great philosophical divide in our nation. While the Labor Party is for the division and redistribution of wealth, we on the Liberal side are for the creation of wealth. While the Labor Party is for the
creation of a cycle of dependency, we on the Liberal side are for the empowerment of all Australians.

While the oldest political trick for the Labor Party, practised extensively in this parliament, is the incitement of class hatred—pitting Australian against Australian and suburb against suburb—we on the Liberal side of politics believe that all Australians are truly aspirational. While the Labor Party attacks and penalises initiative and enterprise, we on the Liberal side of politics do everything we can to support and foster Australia's enterprising spirit.

As a nation our path to greater prosperity is greater economic growth, the restoration of sound public finances, lower taxation with less government intervention, increasing productivity and closer engagement with Asia. This is the record of the Liberal Party in this place. And it is the intention of a re-elected coalition government to once again restore hope, reward and opportunity to all Australians. As the great forefather of the Liberal party in this country, Sir Robert Menzies understood, we are a tax reduction party and real tax reductions will always be the best of all incentives to increase effort, earning and production.

Since coming to power, this Labor government has attacked prosperity through the introduction or increasing of 26 new taxes with over 18,000 new regulations. Labor has increased our net debt to $145 billion, with an interest bill of $22 million a day. Our debt ceiling has been increased to over $300 billion. This stands in stark contrast to the previous coalition government which delivered a 20 per cent increase in real wages, a 100 per cent increase in net wealth for each Australian and more than two million new jobs. In fact, on every measure, the coalition's record on economic management stands in stark contrast to the Labor Party. When the previous coalition government left office, net debt as a percentage of GDP was 3.8 per cent in the black; today we are 9.6 per cent in the red. The net government interest on payments was a little over $1 billion in earnings. Today in 2011-12 under Labor, it is $6½ billion in payments. Our unemployment rate was 4½ per cent; today under Labor it is 5.1 per cent.

Across the course of the previous coalition government, the average annual labour productivity growth was 2½ per cent. Under this Labor government, it has averaged just 1.2 per cent. Under the previous coalition government average annual GDP growth was 3.7 per cent; under Labor it has averaged just 2.3 per cent. Under the previous coalition government, average annual growth in private business investment was a significant 8.8 per cent. Under Labor the contrast is stark at a mere 4.6 per cent.

Should the coalition be re-elected, we will once again see a government that will scrap unnecessary taxes, cut wasteful spending and reduce the tax burden on business. We will see higher productivity, job growth, sustainable development and a modern enterprise economy that eradicates barriers to opportunity and engagement. We have done it before and we can, and must, do it again.

Ballieu Government

Ms SMYTH (La Trobe) (22:06): I can think of no more fitting introduction to my remarks than the previous remarks of the member for Longman because, since he has been talking about the tremendous difference in terms of the Liberal Party's push for the creation of wealth versus the Labor Party's redistribution of wealth, he may wish to provide the notes of his speech to the Victorian Liberal government, as it seems they have been doing quite a good job of redistributing wealth from pensioners into Victorian government coffers. And they
My contribution to this evening’s adjournment debate is really focused on what has been happening to the circumstances of pensioners as a result of changes made by the Ballieu government to the annual electricity concession that was previously available to those pensioners. I specifically speak about the circumstances of Mr Alan Richardson, a local constituent in La Trobe and a pensioner—one of around 17,600 pensioners in my electorate who have received a well-deserved and much-needed boost to their pensions through Labor’s Household Assistance Package in addition to the historic increase in the pension delivered by Labor earlier in its period in office.

Over the past few months, as members will know, this package has delivered around $250 in extra cash to single pensioners across Australia and $380 combined to couple pensioners, and from March next year they will receive a permanent boost to their regular payments meaning that, in total, single pensioners will receive an extra $338 a year and couples will receive an extra $510 a year combined. We are providing that extra assistance to pensioners and other low-income families and households to help them make ends meet, in particular with things like utility bills. The increases mean that Labor has more than supported Australia’s pensioners for the impacts of carbon pricing, providing on average $134 above this effect.

And yet, a few weeks ago, Alan Richardson, a constituent of mine, a pensioner, received a letter from his electricity supplier—and he is not alone; it has happened to many pensioners across the state, and certainly in my electorate—Australian Power and Gas, stating that the Victorian Liberal government has decided to reduce his annual electricity concession and the winter energy concession. It quite bluntly states: The federal government is compensating low-income households for the additional cost of electricity and gas through increases in pensions, allowances and income tax cuts. As a result, the Victorian government has decided a concession is unnecessary for the proportion of the bill covered by the federal government's compensation. So we see that, from 1 July 2012, the Baillieu government is no longer making available a concession to the first $172 of a concession-card holder's annual electricity bill. Australian Power and Gas clearly states that the Victorian government is doing this because of the federal government's Household Assistance package. So there we have it. While the federal government is providing much-needed support to pensioners and low-income earners, Ted Baillieu and the Liberals once again seek to claw that back.

Since we are talking this evening about the redistribution of wealth, it is important that people bear that in mind. It follows from a decision made earlier this year, again by the Victorian government, to increase public housing rents, which means that more than 38,000 pensioners living in public housing in Victoria had a portion of their pensions docked for public housing rents. So we see that, under Labor, as a result of the very significant increase in the pension and our Household Assistance Package, amongst other things, pensioners have seen a significant increase in the amount that they receive on average per annum—around $4,000 more under Labor—but we see state Liberals, in my home state of Victoria and in New South Wales and in Queensland, being opportunistic, being cynical and seeking to claw back those pension rises by providing themselves with a windfall, a windfall at the expense of pensioners like Alan Richardson and a windfall at the expense of almost
18,000 pensioners right across my electorate and across the electorates of other Victorian MPs.

It is an extraordinary situation, where the Baillieu government, elected seemingly on the promise of assisting people with the costs of living, are in fact taking money out of the pockets of pensioners and retaining it for their own benefit. I imagine that this is not going to be the last occasion on which we see this. We are certainly seeing it in Queensland. I expect more of it in Victoria. (Time expired)

Wannon Electorate: Landsborough 150th Anniversary

Mr TEHAN (Wannon) (22:11): I rise tonight to congratulate all those people who were involved in helping Landsborough, a town, a community in my electorate, celebrate their 150th birthday on the weekend. In particular, I would like to mention the efforts of the local community committee, which was set up over 12 months ago to make sure that the weekend was such a success: the president, Councillor Robert Vance; the secretary, Shirley Smyth; and the committee members Kevin Free, Beth Hodgetts, Jan Vance, Diane Western, Tim Western, Mary Devitt, Elizabeth Amarant, Amanda Western and Robert Durbridge.

Landsborough put on a terrific show on the weekend. And there are a couple of inspiring things that I would like to mention. Firstly, I would like to congratulate the coordinator, Virginia—commonly known as 'Becky'—Holbrook. For the last 12 months she has been battling cancer, and yet she was determined to not let it beat her and to be there to help organise the festivities on the weekend. It was absolutely inspiring to see her there. She has been dealing with chemo, but she was determined to be there and to make sure that the event went successfully—and full credit to her for that.

Shirley Smyth, the secretary of the celebrations committee, lost her husband of 46 years two weeks ago—and yet she was there, making sure that the celebrations went well. She said to me that, in a way, she was glad it was happening, because it was helping her deal with the loss of her soul mate for all that time.

And what a show they put on. There was the unveiling of the William Landsborough statue, which is now in the main street in the town. As soon as you turn the corner into the main street of the town, it is there for all to see. There is a memorial wall, which commemorates all the families of the past who have made a contribution to Landsborough.

The Historical Society put on quite a show. They had historical memorabilia set out for all to see in the old Barkly school hall, which probably dates back 140 years itself. The school also put on its own show and its own celebration. A lot of the kids and families from the school were dressed in the period dress of 150 years ago. They really entered into the celebration. There was the raising of the Australian flag in the afternoon, followed by 150 balloons being let off by the schoolchildren.

At the football club, you could go down and see all the memorabilia of Landsborough's football premierships, as well as of the netball clubs. There was also information dating back for the tennis club and the bowls club. It was all extremely well put together, including videos of some of the old football games.

In particular, I would like to mention three people who made my trip to Landsborough, to join in the celebrations, so memorable. Shirley Smyth showed me around the school, welcomed me and told me all about what the committee had done and what they had put together. Diane Western took me around the
Historical Society's records and showed me all the history of Landsborough that they had kept over those 150 years. And Graeme Sandlant took me down to the football club rooms and took me through all the sporting memorabilia dating back over the years and showing quite everything that Landsborough has achieved on the sporting field.

It was a great community event. The community was out in force. It showed what country communities are all about: everyone doing their little bit to make sure that the town celebrated this major achievement in style. I was proud and privileged to be part of it, and I congratulate the Landsborough community for all they did in making that 150-year celebration such a wonderful weekend. *(Time expired)*

**Bruce Electorate: Springvale Benevolent Society**

Mr Griffin (Bruce) (22:16): It is with a sense of history that I stand here tonight to acknowledge the contribution of one local resident in particular, but in the context of the commitment that he and others have made to the community in Springvale over the last half a century. The person I speak of is a man by the name of John Beus. John Beus would not be known to people in this place, but he would be known to the many families he touched in the local area in Springvale over more than half a century.

John came from Europe in the aftermath of World War II and saw all of the horror and tragedy of that war, but he came to a new land. He came to Springvale, and there he made a home for his family. But he made more than that. He made a commitment to that community—a commitment that he saw through for the rest of his life, a commitment that involved organisations such as the Springvale Benevolent Society but was also much more than that.

He in fact set up the state's second St Vinnie's shop in Springvale. He helped set up a migrant resource centre. He helped at Forsythe House, a home for young offenders, as well as the Springvale Benevolent Society, as I mentioned, which was so dear to his heart over so much of his life.

John was one of a number of local residents in the Springvale area who have 'been there' as the Springvale community has changed—on the basis of migration, on the basis of development. It is a community that is so very different to the community that they were initially part of. But he put his heart and soul into that community. He worked hard with others in the local area to ensure that services were provided for those who had moved there. He was a man who was dedicated to that service over that time.

Regarding the Benevolent Society, I would particularly like to mention a number of people who played, over that time, a very significant role and were, with John, the very basis of that community organisation, which helped so many. John's very great friend Wes Eggleston passed away in 2009, I think it was. Again, he was someone who dedicated himself to helping the local community. I can recall attending AGMs for the Springvale Benevolent Society, and you got a real sense that these people were dedicated to assisting those less fortunate than themselves. Wes had a local furniture store, in which he spent so much of his time assisting those who needed help by providing second-hand furniture; he helped those who needed help with the very basics of life. He was a great man, and he has been acknowledged and honoured through the Wes Eggleston Community Service Award, which has been established as an annual award to recognise individuals in the community who, through their selfless actions, have given so much to the care and support of those around them.
In that vein, I would also like to acknowledge some other local residents of great significance. Albert and Pat Blashki have been absolute pillars of strength to the local community over so many years. Albert served on the local Springvale Council for many years. In fact, I had the privilege of serving to fill Albert's vacancy when he retired back in the early 1990s for a very short time, before I came to this place. I also acknowledge Brian Pullen, who I saw again just the other day. Unfortunately, it is the case these days that you meet people at funerals. Brian, again, is someone who put a lot of work into the local area over many, many years.

Then there are Teresa and Joe Rechichi. Joe is the current president of the Benevolent Society. Again, they have played a major role in really helping local people. Teresa was a former councillor.

I have to be honest with you: most of these people—not quite all of them, but most of them—would not, I think, have ever voted for me in a pink fit. But they are people I am very proud to call friends. They are people whose commitment to their local community is something I am very proud to honour. They are people who can be very proud of the fact that, beyond politics, they have always been prepared to support those in their community who have had greater needs than their own. They are people who have provided the very best example to those around them about what it means to be a good local person. And they are people who have made an organisation like the Springvale Benevolent Society, which started out in the early days supporting two or three people and now supports 40-plus families on a weekly basis in a way that they really need it—(Time expired)

Cybersafety

Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt—Chief Opposition Whip) (22:21): I rise tonight to speak on the topic of cyberbullying and the disgusting lack of accountability in social media, which has been highlighted nationally in recent weeks. Take the case of Twitter commentator Charlotte Dawson, who ended up in hospital as a direct result of being persecuted. Football player Robbie Farah has very recently urged lawmakers to make a stand after vile comments were made regarding his late mother. And who could forget 19-year-old Olivia Penpraze, who posted a heart-breaking video on Facebook before she committed suicide earlier this year as a result of ongoing cyberbullying. The term ‘trolls’ given to the pathetic individuals who peddle their malice via social media is highly appropriate, and to this growing national campaign against them I add my own condemnation.

In Cairns, public figures have become the target of an American registered website called hillbillywatch.com, which claims to be a satirical pro-Cairns blog but in reality is a forum for trashing reputations and fuelling obscenities. Much of what is posted is too vulgar to mention in this place. The site focuses on a local radio host, describing him as a 'caustic, divisive, destructive, and cancerous plague on Cairns'. A local member is referred to as 'the MP (misogynist prick) for Cairns, the "don't rape me" paid local liar for the LNP'. A council candidate is labelled as a 'bitter old bigot who runs a website known euphemistically as "Residents against Aboriginals?'". And vocal conservationist Colin Riddell, who has just successfully campaigned to have a cruelty provision, particularly in relation to turtles and dugongs, enacted in the state parliament, is advised to 'take it right up the keister from his LNP mates … do you like it this way, Colon?'
Dangerously, this site is not afraid to insinuate sexual misconduct, and the articles generate spiteful remarks with no fear of reprisals, let alone consideration of their target's mental health. One local resident who is frequently targeted heard I was going to tackle this issue. She told me, 'Freedom of speech does not come with a carte blanche licence to ridicule, defame and publish blatant untruths about others under the cowardice of anonymity. The vitriol exhibited is unacceptable to those who try to live by a code of decency and respect for all. Its originator must be made accountable.'

This is a site that targets individuals, and while it may not be physical violence it can easily take the form of these written attacks. I am often vilified, but my policy is to simply ignore it as these people thrive on acknowledgement. In this case, while I do not want to offer it any promotion, I am speaking out because I will not be left with blood on my hands if this harassment gets to be too much for one of its victims.

The major problem with these social forums is that while complaints can be lodged with the relevant authorities, the task of revealing their identities, or prosecuting, is extremely difficult. These people—and I understand that there are a number of contributors to hillbillywatch.com—are hiding behind anonymity. Well, no more. If they want to publish on Twitter, Facebook or online forums, they should be transparent and accountable for the impact their comments may have.

With that in mind, today I rise to name and shame Brian Lawrence McCarty, the main blogger behind hillbillywatch.com. McCarty is a 58-year-old American who lives at 7 Whitehaven Court in Clifton Beach. Information accessible online shows McCarty worked as a sound engineer in Hollywood but moved to Cairns in 1998. He attempted two web ventures, coralseastudios.com and webjazz.com, and I am told both turned out badly. I have received written advice from a former associate that McCarty, desperate to refinance Coral Sea Studios, attempted investment fraud using fake website content and stolen identities. Since 2008, he has been working at the Baskin Robbins ice-cream franchise on Cairns Esplanade, describing himself as guest relations manager. This associate identifies McCarty as having a severe personality disorder, with a dark side driven to, 'defame strangers and damage their businesses'.

Free speech is one thing, and I have nothing against clever satire. But I strongly support any moves by this House to put better processes—(Time expired)

Queensland Government

Mrs D'ATH (Petrie) (22:27): I rise today to raise serious concerns on behalf of the Queensland community and, specifically, my electorate of Petrie, about Campbell Newman's first state government budget. Despite the fact that Mr Newman sought election from the people of Queensland on the premise that he would create jobs, we have only heard about cuts, cuts and more cuts since he took the helm. Mr Newman said the public service had nothing to fear by electing him, but the Queensland state budget, brought down last week, confirmed the sacking of 14,000 workers. That means up to 14,000 families in Queensland are now wondering where their next pay cheque will come from. Of the 14,000 Queensland jobs slashed, over 4,000 are in Queensland Health, up from the 2,700 the health minister told us about.

The Newman government promised to save frontline jobs. Instead, he has changed the definition of frontline and slashed them anyway. And he has been telling the federal
opposition leader all about it: all about sacking nurses, dismantling BreastScreen Queensland, slashing pathology services, scrapping the Tuberculosis Treatment Centre, cutting employment programs, closing TAFEs and cancelling teacher contracts. These are just a few examples of the cruel cuts ripping the heart out of our communities across Queensland. Community groups in my electorate alone tell me they have lost 50 to 70 per cent of their overall funding, and some organisations are not sure how long they can keep their doors open. That comes as no surprise when you start to itemise Campbell Newman's community group cuts: $368 million ripped out of grants to community services; $287 million slashed from Skilling Queenslanders for Work; $60 million gone from local government grants; $50 million less for local sports programs; and $20 million cut from the arts. This is just the start.

Campbell Newman is sacking the rural fire brigade. Even his minister felt bad about it. The Premier says Queensland can no longer afford to give a pair of cheap, clean pyjamas to an elderly person all alone in the world, but he can build himself a fancy new office precinct in the city. And now we hear that he is axing the Queensland Reconstruction Authority, the team established to coordinate and fast track the rebuilding of our state after the devastating 2011 floods and Cyclone Yasi. In the summer of 2010-11 Queensland survived the worst natural disasters in our state's history, and now he wants to take away the crew who had been put in place to rebuild.

He said he could not find $20 million to launch the NDIS site. I say to Campbell Newman, here is an idea, here is something Campbell Newman can do: instead of sacking public servants and spending $800 million in doing that, he should reallocate some of the money and save jobs and fund the launch of an NDIS site in Queensland. That is good value for money, Campbell Newman.

We have heard from the Leader of the Opposition, and Senator Barnaby Joyce, that they support these initiatives 100 per cent. From the member for Longman we have heard the mantra of hope, reward and opportunity, but I am starting to believe that when it comes to the LNP hope, reward and opportunity are something that only a select few deserve.

We need to make sure that we retain our nurses, doctors and teachers. I want to know from the state government how many teachers in my local schools will have their contracts cancelled at the end of this year? Will they be shutting the TAFEs in the electorate of Petrie.

What we have seen unfold in Queensland is just a taste of what the rest of the country could expect under an Abbott Liberal government. On behalf of my community I want answers.

House adjourned at 22:30
NOTICES
The following notices were given:
Ms Rowland to move:
That this House:
(1) condemns the NSW Government’s decision to slash $1.7 billion worth of funding to the NSW education budget;
(2) acknowledges that these funding cuts will:
   (a) have a detrimental impact upon every student in every school—public, catholic and independent;
   (b) lead to an increase in TAFE fees;
   (c) make it more difficult to access vocational education opportunities;
   (d) lead to up to 2,000 job losses in the sector; and
   (e) be particularly damaging in areas of high growth, such as Western Sydney, where
educational outcomes have long lagged behind other regions in the nation; and
(3) rejects the Opposition’s policy position of proposing $2.8 billion in cuts to education programs.

Mr Coulton to move:

That this House:
(1) acknowledges the significant community contribution Meals on Wheels Australia has made to the most vulnerable in our society for nearly 60 years;
(2) values the many Meals on Wheels Australia volunteers that selflessly dedicate their time to ensure that our local communities’ most vulnerable members receive warm and nutritious meals;
(3) recognises that Meals on Wheels Australia allows elderly people to maintain their independence and provides them with regular social contact;
(4) acknowledges that nearly one-third of frail patients admitted to hospital are malnourished and that a further 60 per cent are at risk of malnutrition; and
(5) calls on the Government to:
   (a) support the Meals on Wheels Australia’s initiative to research new ways to improve the nutritional status of elderly Australians; and
   (b) recognise that this initiative to improve nutrition has the potential to change the health, happiness and well-being of elderly Australians.

Mr Coulton to move:

That this House:
(1) acknowledges the sacrifices made by those who have served Australia in past and present wars and conflicts and the importance of Remembrance Day in honouring those who have fallen; and
(2) notes that many Indigenous servicemen and women have also made valuable contributions to the Australian Defence Force, and that:
   (a) in the past these contributions have not been fully acknowledged and recognised;
   (b) historically many people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background experienced difficulties in enlisting due to their race;
   (c) the full extent of the contribution of Indigenous peoples to past wars and conflicts is a subject that is still being researched today;
   (d) more information will only add to the valuable wealth of knowledge that informs Australia’s commemoration ceremonies and enriches the historic record;
   (e) it is estimated that at least 400 Aboriginals or Torres Strait Islanders served in the First World War, and between 3000 and 6000 in the Second World War, and limited historical records indicate that these figures may have been much higher; and
   (f) the maintenance of all war memorials, including those dedicated to the efforts of Indigenous people, should be a national priority.
CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Solomon Electorate: Young Talent

Mrs GRIGGS (Solomon) (10:29): It gives me great pleasure to rise to congratulate talented sports star Ben Barba. Darwin born Ben plays fullback for Canterbury-Bankstown Bulldogs, and many of his fans tell me that he played an integral part in the Bulldogs' minor premiership. A few weeks ago Ben made national headlines at the NRL's annual Dally M awards when he took out NRL's most prestigious award, the Dally M Medal for Player of the Year. Not only was he recognised as the best player in the NRL, but the Canterbury-Bankstown star also took home four other awards. They included being named Fullback of the Year, collecting the Provan-Summons Medal for the people's choice, sharing the award for the most tries with Cowboy winger Ashley Graham, and securing the Peter Frilingos Headline Moment of the Year. Ben is a great ambassador for our youth, not just in the Northern Territory but across Australia, as Ben is the first player to graduate from the Toyota Cup under 20s competition and win the NRL's highest individual accolade. At just 23, he has achieved what most NRL players only dream of, and I look forward to following his career in the future. Well done to Ben.

Another talented Territorian making headlines at the moment is 14-year-old Dripstone High School student Shiane Hawke. Shiane is a finalist on the TV show the X Factor and she has the most amazingly powerful voice and certainly surprised everyone, including all the judges, when she sang Duffy's song 'Mercy' during the audition. She continues to surprise Australians with her talent. I know that every time I hear her voice I get goosebumps. We Territorians know that Shiane does have the X factor, and recently I spoke to Shiane's mother, Mary, who is obviously very proud of Shiane, as we all are. I have it on very good authority that Shiane has the most amazing strength and determination, and, like many Territorians, has an easy-going laid-back attitude. And that is what sets us apart from the rest of Australia. I have to agree with Ronan Keating, who is an expert in this field, when he says Shiane is truly gifted. Nothing gives me greater pleasure than having the opportunity to boast right here in this place about talented young, up-and-coming stars in my electorate.

I am confident that we will see and hear more of Ben Barba and Shiane Hawke in the years to come. After all, it was not that long ago that the fabulous Jessica Mauboy, another Territory talent secret, was discovered. Look at her now. She is a household name and another talented Territorian. (Time expired)

Corangamite Electorate: Cuts to TAFE Funding

Mr CHEESEMAN (Corangamite) (10:33): I rise to condemn the Baillieu government for their savage attacks on the TAFE sector in Victoria. Late last week a highly damaging cabinet document was leaked to the Age and the ABC in Victoria, which highlighted the consequences, TAFE by TAFE, of these very savage cuts. Down in my electorate, the Gordon TAFE has been providing vocational training to people across the vast western district for some 125 years. The Geelong Advertiser reported some of the details of that cabinet...
document in its Saturday edition. What it highlights is that to date some 43 courses are at risk, including the highly competitive manufacturing program, which is about upskilling and innovating and providing skills to people in the manufacturing sector. Of course, Geelong is a very proud historic manufacturing town, and this will have severe consequences for our economy down the track.

This highly damaging Baillieu government cabinet document also reveals that the Gordon TAFE will not be able to provide VET training to our secondary schools across Geelong from 2014. This will again be highly damaging to our economy. The Gordon TAFE provides a very significant program to assist schools in providing students with skills, particularly vocational skills and particularly for those students who do not wish to go to university. This will again create severe consequences for our economy.

Importantly, though, the Gordon submission within the highly damaging cabinet document did indicate that it needed assistance from the Baillieu government to remain viable. I call on Ted Baillieu and the Victorian coalition to withdraw the $300 million TAFE cuts and to ensure that TAFE can continue to provide a strong vocational education role in our area. Gordon has been a very significant institution in the Geelong economy for 125 years and the savage TAFE cuts must stop.

Parkes Electorate: Murray-Darling Plan

Mr COULTON (Parkes—The Nationals Chief Whip) (10:35): I rise this morning to express my concerns as to the current state of play with the Murray-Darling Basin plan. The electorate of Parkes encompasses 24 per cent of the Murray-Darling Basin and indeed my constituents are heavily reliant on the health and viability of the river system. As we are getting to the final stages of negotiation, I am concerned that there are still some key elements that are missing from this proposal. One of them is a clear environmental watering plan. We are seeing the crazy situation recently in the Gwydir valley where thousands of acres of wheat and chickpeas were flooded by misguided environmental flows. In round figures the proposal is somewhere between 3,000 gigalitres and 4,000 gigalitres are to be removed from the basin. At the moment the federal water holder has 1,500 gigs and it appears that this year will not be able to use that amount. There is a clear lack of understanding of the complexity of the Murray-Darling Basin system.

The other thing that is of concern is that there is a shared component that is to come from the northern basin. This shared component can really only come from two rivers, and that is the Border and the Namoi. The others are all terminal streams that go into wetland and only on very rare occasions flow—indeed for the Lachlan it is once in 100 years that the Lachlan flows through to the Darling. I am terribly concerned about the cuts that may be coming towards the Namoi and Border Rivers, considering that these communities have been in water restructure mode now for the last 20 years. This Murray-Darling Basin plan is not something of recent times. In many of the basins this is the fourth lot of reconstruction that we have seen with water users.

The great underlying fear of all this is that, if a plan does eventually become agreed upon and signed off, will it be enough? With the Green elements within our society we have seen with the forest agreements that there is a sign-off and then 18 months later another campaign starts and takes it further. And if you want to know what is underlying the fear and anger in the basin at the moment it is that they do not know if this will be enough. They have done all
this before, they have been doing it for 20 years and the idea that something can be signed off and agreed upon and then stay in place for years to come would be a great relief to these people. They do not trust the Greens; they do not trust the close relationship that the government has with the Greens. The great concern is that when we come up to the next election, Green preferences in marginal urban electorates will overcome the real needs of the Murray-Darling Basin community.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM (Braddon—Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry) (10:39): My electorate is renowned for its waterways—it’s rivers and its lakes and of course the Bass Strait. I want to congratulate a number of our councils on what I call restoring our waterways to the community and to the people. We have been able to work as a government with my local communities and the state government to open up the waterways for social amenity. I would like to congratulate the Wynyard-Waratah Council. For example, at Somerset near the Cam River they have enhanced the foreshore to the surf club plus introduced a shared pathway and recreational fitness equipment. Then at beautiful Wynyard itself the enhancement of the wharf precinct is absolutely superb and now there is a magnificent walking track all the way through the Gutteridge Gardens all the way round to Fossil Bluff.

In Burnie, for example, the Burnie City Council have had a major enhancement of the foreshore area, all the way from the Emu River right through to Cooe. I congratulate them very much. We were able to assist with a new rail bridge, shared pathways all the way through to Coee, the Makers’ Workshop, the West Park recreation centre and the surf club. The whole precinct itself is absolutely beautiful.

On the central coast, Ulverstone now has shared pathways all the way from Turners Beach right the way through to the centre of the town. Now the wharf area itself is being enhanced with a fantastic super community project on the wharf. That is to complement the rec centre, which we contributed $1.8 million to.

Another part of the central coast is the beautiful township of Penguin where they have a magnificent foreshore enhancement program and walkway development as well. Moving down the coast towards the east to Devonport, they have an extensive walkway now—which we contributed to—all the way from East Devonport to the west and into the Don River community and around through Sawdust Bridge back around to the city itself. There has been a major foreshore enhancement at the bluff—about $7 million worth. We contributed $1 million to develop the surf club area and the maritime museum. We also contributed $2 million to the Hornby Road shared pathway and $1.8 million to the Julie Burgess project to develop the maritime theme of the city.

King Island, Latrobe, Circular Head and West Coast have all got water community enhancement access service programs. I congratulate everyone of them. When people have access to water they have access to their livelihoods and their heritage. It is very, very important for the cohesion of a community, particularly in my electorate of Braddon.

Mr ALEXANDER (Bennelong) (10:42): I rise to speak about Graffiti Removal Day, which is on this coming Sunday, 23 September. Graffiti is an issue that generates widespread
community concern and can have a negative impact on community perceptions of safety and public amenity. Typically most graffiti is done under the cover of darkness, and offenders are usually aged between 15 and 25 and are overwhelmingly male. Graffiti on public or private property is a criminal offence; however, much of the crime goes unreported and undetected.

Even though graffiti is considered by some as a petty crime, there is a substantial cost to the community, both socially and economically, and it breeds a criminal culture. Estimations on the cost of graffiti across Australia are of $1.5 billion annually. When communities and local businesses discover they have been the target of graffiti they feel anger, shock and fear. Sadly, each year there is a terrible cost for families and communities when young people are accidentally killed while engaged in the application of graffiti to train carriages or to the rail corridor.

Parents, teachers and, indeed, all adults need to look out for warning signs that a child is involved with graffiti, such as possession of spray paint cans or other types of paint, possession of an excessive number of large permanent marker pens, paint on hands or clothing, photos of graffiti on mobile phones or network internet sites, and practising the same type of scribble or tags on paper continuously. If you suspect a child is participating in graffiti vandalism it is important that it is discussed with the child and explained to them that graffiti is an illegal activity and may result in juvenile detention. There are many organisations that offer assistance in this area, such as the PCYC and Kids Helpline.

The aim of Graffiti Removal Day is to highlight the problem of graffiti and encourage people to volunteer their time to get involved in the removal and prevention of graffiti. The day will complement and not replace existing volunteer graffiti removal programs which we are all very grateful for. I am pleased that Rotary Down Under has embraced Graffiti Removal Day and will conduct clean-up sites across the country. Rotary will work with local councils, property owners, government agencies, community groups, businesses and other members of the public to identify, remove and prevent graffiti. People can get involved in Graffiti Removal Day by volunteering to help at a clean-up site promoting Graffiti Removal Day or nominating a site. I will be participating in the clean-up of West Ryde in my electorate of Bennelong this coming Sunday and I trust many of my colleagues will also do the same.

Parliamentary Friends of Science

Mr MARLES (Corio—Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs and Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs) (10:45): When Neil Armstrong took that one small step onto the moon, a flame of wonder was set alight for a generation. The Apollo missions ignited a curiosity for science amongst kids that lasted through the seventies and well into my early childhood. It is a curiosity which, for me, underpinned my own education in science.

I still get a thrill seeing the way science directs our human potential to places that are both surprising and magnificent. And so it will be a great pleasure later today, with my colleague Karen Andrews, the federal member for McPherson, to launch the Parliamentary Friends of Science. Our aim is to strengthen links between the scientific community and parliamentarians and increase engagement between the two. And we are certain other parliamentarians will discover their own fascination for science, when Australia's Nobel Laureate for physics, Professor Brian Schmidt, explains some of the mysteries of the stars to us on the roof of this building tonight.
I think we all understand the importance of science—in theory—but many people continue to see science as something separate to everyday life and that is a worry, especially when children have this attitude. We need kids to see science as relevant to them and their futures. Australia needs more people studying engineering, agricultural science, physics, maths and chemistry.

In Geelong, where science and research are growing industries, we need these skills for our workforce of the future. That is why it was fantastic last week to visit Geelong's specialist science and maths centre, BioLAB. This centre is leading the way in science and maths education, bringing subjects to life in a way that will hopefully encourage kids to see a career path ahead in science. From late primary through to secondary school, students attending BioLAB are using analytical chemistry to better understand how their body works, and learning how research in materials technology is improving performance on the sports field. They are using maths skills to calculate their own milestones on the running track, or while playing footy or netball.

With a big focus on relationships with industry, BioLAB is taking teaching beyond what is possible in the classroom. An exciting initiative is the developing partnership with the Geelong Football Club, which will see students experiencing their favourite football club in a completely unique way, by learning the science and maths behind each footballer's performance and success. Since its launch nearly a year ago, 5,000 students from across Victoria have experienced BioLAB, including many from disadvantaged and rural schools.

Deakin University is BioLAB's lead partner, and science undergraduates are helping mentor students in the lab and out in the field. There are few places in Australia that can match BioLAB in the scope of its teaching, especially its outreach programs to rural and regional areas. And that for me is what science is all about—making the improbable possible. It is a great lesson to learn.

**Manly Dragon Boat Club**

**Mr VASTA** (Bonner) (10:47): It is with pleasure that I rise today to acknowledge the wonderful work of one of the sporting clubs in my electorate of Bonner, the Manly Dragon Boat Club. Previously it was in the member for Griffith's electorate, and I acknowledge him in the chamber today. I would like to pay tribute to those who have put so much time and effort into this club, enabling it to achieve such a profound level of success on the world stage.

The Manly Dragon Boat Club competed at the 8th Club Crew World Championships conducted on Victoria Harbour, Hong Kong in the first week of July this year and was extremely successful in their first ever attempt at international competition. Manly entered into eight separate events, reaching the finals in all the events they entered into, and winning medals in six of them. This amazing achievement was capped off by the master women's 10's crew team who, in the 500 metres category, took gold, becoming world champions!

I wish to take this time to acknowledge the achievements of this amazing club, led by president Jason Ferrari, vice president Lisa Watzek, treasurer Fran White, secretary Danielle Ferrari, development officer Ross Boyce, membership officer Alex Mayes and club coach Maggie Boyce. For a club that was established only five years ago, with only 15 members, without the benefit of experienced paddlers, coaches or equipment, they have shown...
remarkable determination and commitment to develop a community based not-for-profit club for people of all ages. It is this drive that has led to the club's phenomenal success at a worldwide level.

The club now boasts well over 100 members, with many new memberships starting up following their wonderful success on the world stage. I look forward to watching this magnificent community sporting club continue to grow from strength to strength. I am incredibly proud to acknowledge the achievements of the Manly Dragon Boat Club, who have put the wonderful suburb of the Manly community on the world map. I am delighted to have such a talented and driven group of individuals as part of my electorate of Bonner, and it is only fitting that they receive acknowledgement for their outstanding success.

Milosevic, Lance Corporal Stjepan

Mr RUDD (Griffith) (10:50): I rise to pay my condolences, and condolences of behalf of my constituents, to the families and friends of those Australians who recently lost their lives in Afghanistan: Sapper James Martin, Private Robert Poate, Lance Corporal Mervyn McDonald and Private Nathanael Gallagher. Our local community on Brisbane's south side is in a state of shock over the loss of one of our own in Afghanistan as well. Lance Corporal Stjepan 'Rick' Milosevic was the father of two little girls, Sarah and Kate, who attend one of our local schools, Camp Hill State Infants and Primary School. He was a loving husband to Kelly and was an active member of our local community. Just as the whole country has been in a state of shock over the loss of five of our soldiers in one day in Afghanistan in recent weeks, everyone that I have spoken to in our local community feels so deeply about this impact, and it has had a profound impact as well across all the families connected with this important family in our local community.

The war in Afghanistan has become very personal for many Australians. As a former Prime Minister and foreign minister of Australia, I want to place on record the nation's deep gratitude for their service. In those capacities, I have seen on the ground on many occasions what these brave men and women have done in Australia's name in Afghanistan. We went there in the first place to deny al-Qaeda a safe operating base in that country—a base from which they launched the September 11 attacks which brought about such bloodshed in the United States. We are there also to train an entire brigade of the Afghan National Army so that they can look after their own defence—a task we are about to complete. And we are there to make the province that we have been given responsibility for as governable as possible for the local administration once we leave, to make it as hard as possible therefore for al-Qaeda to return. As these missions are completed, our troops will be coming home—most of them during the course of next year.

These brave soldiers have therefore not died in vain. They have been an essential part of this mission and so too has our local hero, Lance Corporal Rick Milosevic. Lest we forget.

Tangney Electorate: Petitions Committee

Dr JENSEN (Tangney) (10:52): A petition to this place offers all Australians the opportunity to directly engage with their parliament. As deputy chair of the House Standing Committee on Petitions I have the opportunity to see this process in action firsthand. Australians from coast to coast, passionate about their issue and who genuinely seek change
for the better, use this mechanism to its full advantage to lobby for change to legislation or simply highlight disadvantage or injustice where they see it in their local community.

It was my great pleasure to host in Tangney the first Western Australian public hearings of the petitions committee. Liberal, Labor and Nationals members placed politics on hold to investigate issues including asylum seekers, health care, conservation, the Australian Constitution and aircraft noise. The passion and commitment of petitioners was clear to see. The addition of this public hearing to their tabled petition added great personal impact to the issues we discussed. Most importantly, we engaged with a great cross-section of the community, including younger Australians.

Our second day of hearing saw us travel to Santa Maria College in Attadale, south of Perth, to discuss asylum seekers with years 11 and 12 politics students. This engagement with younger Western Australians highlighted a discussion of the current asylum seeker debate free of partisan political discourse and with a level of independent thought and healthy scepticism of the way our parliament and the media have chosen to frame the debate. I commend principal petitioner Ashleigh Small and Kelly Hall for their informed and enlightened presentations.

I also offer commendation to their teacher, Sharni Andrews, and to all the students of the politics class for their careful preparation of their petition and hearing materials. Their reasoned discussion of this very sensitive and important issue energised all members of parliament present at the hearing to return to Canberra with a greater resolve to find a solution to an issue troubles many Australians.

Public hearings of the petitions committee are vital to the transfer of local knowledge to our federal parliament. I thank the members for Reid, Gippsland, Holt and Deakin for joining me in Tangney. I also thank the secretariat for their preparation and execution of the successful hearings. Most importantly, I thank those Western Australians that made the presentations to the hearings. Their petitions are presented before this place for us all to take note.

**Ballarat Electorate: National Disability Insurance Scheme**

Ms KING (Ballarat—Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Transport and Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing) (10:55): I wish to record the great desire of people in my electorate for the development of a National Disability Insurance Scheme. My constituency has a strong history of support for people with disabilities. There are many outstanding institutions which provide people with disabilities with access to education, to work opportunities and to independent accommodation. These same institutions, and the strong community of volunteers that supports them, also make it their responsibility to fight for the rights of those they represent and support. People with disabilities in my electorate are very, very strong advocates.

That is why bus loads of people with disabilities and their carers made their way to Melbourne for the National Disability Insurance Scheme rally earlier this year. They came from all parts of my electorate and were delighted when they heard the Prime Minister announce that the government was moving forward with the scheme, beginning with trials in various parts of the nation and in Victoria—in particular, in Geelong and Barwon. Then followed representations to me from various groups anxious to know more and to find out
how they could be part of that process. I welcome those representations and am proud to take them forward to the government on behalf of my community.

Later this month, in September, my colleague the Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Carers, Senator McLucas, will attend a forum in Ballarat to discuss the National Disability Insurance Scheme. I know all those with an interest in learning more and who are keen to move forward in the process will be attending. They know, for instance, that many parents who care for children with disabilities do not have confidence that, when they are too old or too frail to shoulder that responsibility, the system will provide the right kind of care for their children. I know that many of the parents desperately want significant independence for their children and choice about access to services and employment. Some people with disabilities do not have confidence that when they need basic medical aids like a wheelchair or access to services like rehabilitation, which can get them help into training or work or into independent living, they will get the support that they need. Australians who acquire a disability, or whose children or grandchildren might be born with a disability, will have the confidence that the system will be there to support them.

We have a lot of work ahead of us to deliver the kind of care and support for Australians with disabilities that we all expect. We need the states and territories to work with us to ensure that all those worthy Australians can achieve their aim of a National Disability Insurance Scheme. Let us hope that the recent slashing of services in some of our conservative states is not reflected in terms of their support for people with disabilities. The first steps towards the scheme are being made and there are many, many more to come. Disability does not discriminate and can and does affect families every single day. All governments need to play their part in this very important effort. We all deserve to have the confidence to know that, if something did happen to us, to our partner, or to our child, there is a strong system of support in place. I put on record the need for a National Disability Insurance Scheme and certainly support it in my electorate.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): In accordance with standing order 193, the time for members' constituency statements has concluded.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Code of Conduct for Members of Parliament

Debate resumed on motion by Mr Oakeshott:

That this House:

(1) endorses the draft code of conduct at Appendix 5 of the report of the House of Representatives Standing Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests, Draft Code of Conduct for Members of Parliament; and

(2) requests the Leader of the House to bring forward urgently for the House's consideration the proposed changes to standing orders and resolutions of the House necessary to give effect to the Code, procedures for considering complaints under the Code, and for the role of the Standing Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests in oversight of the Code.

Ms SAFFIN (Page) (10:58): I rise to speak to further the debate about a code of conduct for the parliament and for members of parliament. I note the draft code of conduct for members of parliament discussion paper that is the work of the House of Representatives Standing Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests. I thank the committee for the really
detailed and helpful work that they did that can assist members in this debate. This is a debate that has a long history, and I note by referring to the report that, when I look at the background, I see that this was a matter that came before the parliament. I think it was first in 1975. That was a report on declarations for interest. That was a joint committee on pecuniary interests of members of parliament, and that was presented to both houses in September 1975. It recommended that a joint standing committee be established and be given the task of drafting a code, but that recommendation was not implemented. But 1975 was a rather special year in parliamentary and political history, so I can understand why some things did not get taken up at that particular time.

In 1979 there was also an inquiry into public duty and private interest. It reported in July 1979 and recommended a code of conduct be implemented for office holders, including members of parliament. A regime for the registration of interests of members, which we all subscribe to here, was implemented in 1984 following it. It was not until 1991 that the then Prime Minister proposed a working group of parliamentarians be established to develop a seminar on the standards of conduct. Then the presiding officers reconvened a working group in the 37th Parliament and looked at that issue. It was 1996 when, if I remember correctly, Prime Minister John Howard implemented some sort of code for ministers. Then in 2007 Prime Minister Rudd introduced new standards of ministerial ethics. In parliament it was 2008 in the Main Committee where there was an exchange that gave rise to consideration of this issue. Then there was a certain incident, referred to in the report, within the parliamentary precincts that caused the Speaker to refer the incident to the committee. There was then discussion about that. With the 43rd Parliament there were certain agreements around this particular issue, and in November 2010 the House referred to the committee the development of a draft code of conduct for members of parliament. I note that, when the committee considered this, they did not make a finding or express a view on the threshold issue of whether a code of conduct should be adopted or not but they did set out a series of things, and one of them was appendix 5, a draft code of conduct for members of the House of Representatives. That is what the motion of the honourable member for Lyne refers to. So they do have a draft code there.

I was involved in an issue like this when I was in the New South Wales parliament. In the New South Wales parliament there was a lot of work done before we adopted certain codes and had an ethics committee. We had an ethics adviser, and the ethics adviser I found to be very useful because it is sometimes difficult when you need guidance. Who do you go to in this place? I know that the clerks are always very helpful and totally useful, as are the speakers and chairs, but having an ethics adviser who sat a little bit away was extremely useful in that regard.

Mr RANDALL (Canning) (11:04): I am compelled to speak on this motion from the member for Lyne because of its sheer audacious and sanctimonious terms of reference. I find it unbelievable that the member for Lyne, after two years of his so-called agreement with his so-called rural Independents, has decided to raise this again. As I am a member of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Privileges, I can only speak in broad terms of some of the issues that I raise. However, let's be clear on this: the representative of the rural Independents and others in the privileges committee is the member for New England; and, while this matter was being considered in the privileges committee, he never turned up. If you
are able to check the records you will see that he showed no interest in this committee until the issue of Craig Thomson, the member for Dobell, came up. So I find it unbelievable that after this period of time they have decided to give it a run again.

Let us just talk in broad terms. We know the report has been delivered to the parliament. This committee examined a member's code of conduct and they examined it on the basis that the parliament could not deal with members whose behaviour was deemed unacceptable. The British model, on which we base much of our system, gave us evidence. This was done in response to the misuse of entitlements by British MPs. It is quite well known what the British MPs did in terms of misusing their entitlements to houses and all the other things. They went to court. They lost their seats. But a huge bureaucracy was set up—and this is what the member for Lyne, in this motion, wants to do to us—set up a huge bureaucracy attached to this House, which would then go on a fishing expedition for nefarious or otherwise behaviour of MPs. And the evidence given by the British MPs was that many of the complaints of the electorate against MPs was not for behaviour unbecoming but for things like not replying to letters or not giving satisfactory answers, or not being responsive enough. This huge bureaucracy was set up and of course when you set up this bureaucracy it then goes looking for work.

This ingenuous behaviour by the member for Lyne is appalling. Maybe we should include in this motion, 'disingenuous behaviour by members' because the member for Lyne would find himself well and truly encapsulated in that term of reference. For example, he ratted on his own electorate. He allowed the Labor Party to form government even though his electorate is overwhelmingly conservative. He obviously helped deliver the carbon tax. He voted against the means test for private health. He voted against the bill for indexation of veterans after saying he would not. He voted against the youth allowance. His form on sincere behaviour is very ordinary. So I say to the member for Lyne, who comes into this place with a sanctimonious motion like this: you will not be here next time to be able to do anything about it. We will be left with the mess of this bureaucracy that you want to set up. Both the member for Lyne and the member for New England will not be here in the next parliament. That is pretty obvious. As a result, we are going to be left with their legacy. I suspect that is what they want to do.

MPs that misbehave in this place have been dealt with by the courts. Who can remember Keith Wright, or Dr Andrew Theophanous? They went to court; they got dealt with by the courts. If you are so bad your own party will deal with you—you will get dealt with at preselection time.

I have gone to the member for Lyne, for example, and asked for his help. He signed an agreement with the government about accountability, about developing a spatial accounting model which would tell us where the money is spent in each electorate. So I wrote to the member for Lyne recently and asked him what he was doing about it. He could not answer me. He then referred me on to the Prime Minister's office, who then just gave us a vague idea of what they wanted to do. They do not want any spatial accounting because you will actually see where the money is spent. We know that their electorates are being pork barrelled by this Labor Party in a huge way to get re-elected. So this is a disingenuous sanctimonious bill. It has been brought to this place by the member for Lyne, and it should be seen for what it is worth.
Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter—Chief Government Whip) (11:09): I thank all members who have made a contribution to this debate, not only on this occasion but on previous occasions. Those watching will have no doubt come to the conclusion that there is no real enthusiasm for the work of the committee, nor is there necessarily agreement even within the parties, let alone across the parties, about what form a code of conduct should take or indeed whether one should be embraced at all.

As a member of the committee, I am very conscious of the enormous amount of work that went into the task that had been given the committee, and I want to acknowledge the work of Mr David Elder, sitting beside the Deputy Speaker. As the secretary of the committee he bears the brunt, along with his staff, for much of that work. The then chair, and now Deputy Speaker, Anna Burke did a marvellous job in ensuring that we took into consideration not only the views of members of Parliament—and the roundtable was very, very important—but also the broader community. In addition to that there was an insistence that work be done to ensure that we fully understood what happens in other nations, particularly those nations working within the Westminster system; for example, the United Kingdom and Canada and many places, including the States, where codes of conduct exist.

The inquiry came about as a result of the various agreements between the crossbenchers and the Prime Minister in the work-up to the formulation of government following the 2010 election, and I acknowledge that Mr Oakeshott, the member for Lyne, in particular, was particularly keen to ensure that the government and therefore the parliament looked at the idea of the establishment of a code of conduct—and here we are. It is nothing new. I think the record goes back to 1975. Since then parliament has been looking at various options for codes of conduct, and I think the fact that it has been so long should not be seen as an unwillingness by politicians to impose a code of conduct upon themselves but more a reflection of the unusual status of the parliament and the complexity of the issue.

Of course none of us as members of parliament should fear a code of conduct, certainly not. So many in our society now face them, all the way from business professionals right through to sporting professionals, and we often see the results of breaches in the sporting arena—excuse the pun—on a regular basis. So we here should not fear a code of conduct. But what we really need to do as members of parliament is to understand what we hope such a code would or should achieve. I am very pleased to see that the committee ruled out entirely the idea, as have all jurisdictions, that the code should go to the personal life of a member of parliament but should be confined to the work of a member of parliament. I think that is absolute common sense.

But I think it is fair to say that even the committee struggled to determine with any form of unanimity what we are seeking to achieve with this code. As parliamentarians we face more exposure and probably more transparency than any other type of work in this country largely because we have the media holding us to account on a regular basis. I think there is an important potential educational role for a code of conduct, a standard by which members can benchmark themselves, particularly new members of this place who might not understand all the workings of the parliament, and I do not see any harm in that. But if you are going to have a code of conduct you have to start asking yourself what sanctions are going to be available under the code. In this place we already have a substantial capacity for the privileges committee to have sanctions against members of parliament, so it is still unclear in my mind...
what enhancement we would have through the code of conduct and indeed an integrity commissioner.

My view is that, while we should have no fear of this idea, it is not something we should rush into. We should continue to consider the issue and watch international developments but remind ourselves on a daily basis that we face the electors every three years and we face enormous scrutiny, including through the media. I think it is the view of the committee—and I do not really mean to speak for them but having sat in the committee I can say this confidently—that the level of scrutiny we currently face is sufficient and that the processes in place are sufficient but that we should keep looking at this issue. (Time expired)

Mr FLETCHER (Bradfield) (11:14): I am pleased to rise to speak on this motion, which calls on the Leader of the House to bring forward urgently for the House's consideration the proposed changes to standing orders et cetera that would be needed to give effect to the draft code of conduct, which sits at appendix 5 of the recent report of the House of Representatives Standing Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests.

Now, we need to be clear what the question is that we are considering as we debate this motion. The question is not whether it is a good and desirable idea that members of parliament maintain high standards of personal conduct. Of course, that is a highly desirable objective and all members of parliament ought to be seeking to do that whether there is a code in existence or not. The question before the House this morning is not whether there is, at least as a matter of theory, merit in a code of conduct which parliamentarians are required to subscribe to. I think we can all agree with the proposition that at least in theory there could be merit in such a code, although I would note that the particular code or the particular draft code which is attached to the relevant report of the House of Representatives standing committee is not necessarily the code which is the one that should be argued to be supported. But I think we can agree that, at least in theory, there could be merit in the notion of a code.

But the question that is before the House this morning is a very specific question. The question is whether we immediately and urgently ought to bring forward consideration of this proposed code so that the necessary changes can be made to standing orders, so that the code comes into force. There are, in my view, good reasons to be cautious about moving forward with the urgency which is contemplated by this motion. Regrettably, it can sometimes be the case that where this parliament rushes to do something urgently, we miss the opportunity for the more careful and considered reflection that might highlight to us some of the issues which need more careful consideration. A specific issue in my view, which ought to persuade us not to move forward as urgently as this motion proposes, is that as it presently stands there is no analogous draft code under consideration for senators. There is a procedure underway in the other place, where the Committee of Senators' Interests is considering the question of whether a draft code is required and, if so, what it ought to contain.

Therefore, if the motion that is before the House this morning were to be adopted and if the House were to move in accordance with what is urged in this motion, we would end up with the very odd outcome that there would be a code in place which would apply to one class of parliamentarians, but not to another. I think we can all agree that that would lead to undesirable and confusing consequences. In my view that is of itself sufficient reason not to proceed in the terms that the motion proposes because while the relevant senate committee is considering this matter and its applicability to the other place, that report is not due until late
November this year. Therefore, in my view, any consideration of action in the immediate terms proposed in this motion would be ill advised. I think more generally that we do need to weigh up carefully the merits of the particular code which is proposed, and whether this collection of statements of higher principle adds the value which its proponents claim.

I note that one of the specific terms of the draft code is that: 'Members must uphold the laws of Australia and ensure that their conduct does not breach or evade these laws.' I respectfully submit that that particular provision of the code adds very little to the current circumstances, in which all of us as members of parliament and Australian citizens are already subject to the laws of Australia. I have not subjected the rest of the code to similar levels of detailed analysis, but I would suggest that that analysis is required before we can make a decision to adopt it.

Debate adjourned.

**Surf Lifesaving**

Debate resumed on the motion by Mr Chester:

That the House:

(1) notes that with more than 150,000 members and 310 affiliated surf lifesaving clubs, Surf Lifesaving is the largest volunteer movement of its kind in Australia;

(2) recognises the outstanding contribution made to health and safety of beach goers by volunteer and professional surf lifesavers;

(3) highlights that the economic value to the Australian economy of Surf Lifesaving's coastal drowning and injury prevention efforts in 2009-10 was independently assessed to be $3.6 billion;

(4) supports the important role played by surf lifesaving clubs in developing young people's health, fitness and leadership skills through an extensive junior program; and

(5) acknowledges the Coalition's commitment to implement a $10 million fund if elected into government to:

(a) assist clubs to purchase vital rescue equipment, first aid and medical supplies; and

(b) extend the Beach Drowning Black Spot Reduction Program.

**Mr Chester** (Gippsland) (11:19): It is with great pleasure that I speak to the motion I have moved in relation to the outstanding contribution made to our nation by our surf lifesaving movement. In advance, I would like to thank the other speakers who are listed here to speak today. I note they represent many, many surf clubs along the Australian coastline.

There were several reasons for my decision to move this motion beyond my role as a member of the Parliamentary Friends of Surf Life Saving and also my roles as club member and volunteer water safety officer for the junior program at Lakes Entrance Surf Life Saving Club, where my four children are all active participants.

I want to give all members a chance to talk about the importance of surf lifesaving in their own electorates. As we approach the warmer months and many Australians flock to our beaches, I want also to be able to assure our professional and volunteer patrol men and women that they have the complete, bipartisan support of the Australian parliament and to assure each and every one of the more than 44,000 patrolling members and the 160,000 or so total adult membership that their efforts are not being taken for granted. I also want to take the chance to highlight the opportunities for governments to work in partnership with this very successful movement to achieve even better outcomes in the future. We have every reason in
this place and throughout the Australian community to be very proud of the history of the surf lifesaving movement. Any discussion of the surf lifesaving movement should recognise its remarkable history in this nation, because it dates right back to the early days of the 20th century. As Australian bathing laws were relaxed and there was increased activity on our beaches, concerns were raised about safety. So much so that in October 1907 the Surf Bathing Association of New South Wales was formed, and that was the forerunner of the Surf Life Saving Australia movement.

When you walk into any of the larger surf lifesaving clubs along the Australian coastline, there is a sense of real pride in their heritage. My own club, which was formed more than 50 years ago, is a good example. We endeavour to pay respect to life members, the foundation members, and others who have achieved outstanding results over many years in competition or through their service. We do that with our honour boards and with photographs dating back to the 1960s. I think it is really important that these surf clubs recognise their heritage. It gives the younger members a sense of stability and security—that, when they join their clubs, they have actually joined something that really matters. Naturally, the key role of the surf lifesaving movement is to save lives.

Surf Life Saving Australia is Australia's major water safety, drowning intervention and rescue authority. We have 310 affiliated clubs working to create a safe environment on our beaches and coastline through their patrols, education and training, public safety campaigns and the promotion of health and fitness. But there is a lot more to the surf lifesaving movement than just that. While water safety may be at the core of surf life saving—and, during the 2010-11 season, volunteers were involved in more than 12,000 rescues and professional lifeguards were involved in 2,394 rescues—the clubs are also critical from a social and an economic perspective. The economic importance of surf lifesaving was highlighted during last year, with the release of a PricewaterhouseCooper report which highlighted the importance of surf lifesaving to coastal communities and the wider public. The report valued the drowning and injury prevention efforts of Australia's surf lifesaving clubs at $3.6 billion.

The report went on to highlight the key statistics, which estimated that, without surf lifesavers, there would have been an additional 596 drownings and more than 3,000 additional injuries. It also found that for every dollar the government, sponsors and the community have invested in surf lifesaving, the cost-benefit ratio was 29 to one. There is no doubt that surf lifesaving clubs are critical from an economic perspective. But, beyond that economic value, I want to talk about the role that our surf lifesaving clubs have in developing our young leaders of the future. At its core, the vision of the surf lifesaving movement is to save lives, to create great Australians and to build better communities. It is the best example that I can find of any organisation in Australia that actually introduces young people to community service early in their lives. The program that is provided through the surf lifesaving movement for personal development also allows for a whole-of-life involvement in the club movement.

I have no doubt that the program is in a fun based learning environment. They are out there on inflatable rescue boats or on rescue boards, or learning first aid skills. So, whilst I have no doubt that there is a level of enjoyment for the young people, they are also developing skills that will hold them in great stead later in life. There is competition if they want to be involved, and they can compete as an individual or as part of a team, but they must also fulfil
a number of volunteer hours before they are allowed to compete. So they cannot just turn up and be competitors; they have to be making a contribution back to the club. You must be part of something bigger than yourself to be part of the surf lifesaving movement, and the clubs are very good at engendering that team spirit, that pride in the club colours, which is deeply embedded in the culture of the surf lifesaving movement.

As much as I say there are jobs for everyone of all ages in the surf lifesaving movement, there is also a very non-discriminatory environment when it comes to the involvement of men and women. The representation of women in surf lifesaving is very strong: in the 2010-11 key figures there were 70,000 female members and 90,000 male members. In addition to that there were an estimated 60,000 juniors, or nippers as they are commonly known within surf lifesaving. So it does provide a whole-of-family involvement, a whole-of-family activity which provides for sharing for people of all ages. I must say from my own perspective that the young people in my community almost live at the club over the summer months. They are learning new skills, they are developing their leadership abilities, they are overcoming their fear and managing potentially dangerous situations, and at the same time they are making a great contribution to our community. It is a extraordinary opportunity to introduce young people to community service and it also keeps them out of trouble and gives them a real purpose to get involved in health and fitness.

I think the opportunity presents itself for the surf lifesaving movement—and perhaps I issue a bit of a challenge to our clubs here today—to become even more important in the culture of our nation. I think we can play an even great role in building better communities, which is something at the heart of Surf Life Saving Australia's 2020 plan. I think there is a challenge there for us to become even more inclusive into the future, to make sure that we provide an even more non-discriminatory environment that attracts more Indigenous members to our clubs and also people from more diverse cultural backgrounds into our ranks. I am not suggesting for a second that that is something surf lifesaving has ignored in the past—I think we have tried very hard to get Indigenous volunteers and to get people from diverse cultural backgrounds into our clubs—but I do believe it is an area where there are opportunities for us to do it better. I think we can improve as club members in the way that we become more inclusive of those who have perhaps not had a strong background in the surf lifesaving movement.

I think it is at least part of the solution to some of the scenes we saw on the weekend with the racial intolerance and violence in Sydney. Part of that answer is eliminating the cultural gap, and I think the Leader of the Opposition was very accurate—and, incidentally, the Leader of the Opposition is a surf club member—when he said that newcomers to our country must leave their hatred behind. There is no place in Australia for violence. It is not the Australian way to resolve our differences through mob anger or criminal activity, and that is the sort of thing we were exposed to on the weekend. I am not trying to put all the burden on our surf lifesaving club movement but I believe our surf clubs can help to give newcomers to Australia, particularly in urban areas, a sense of belonging to something bigger than themselves. The surf clubs are very good at giving people from all walks of life the opportunity to learn new skills, to improve their health and fitness, to have the responsibility of running a beach properly and to help make a difference by helping others.
So I think we can within the surf lifesaving movement become even more inclusive and attract more young Indigenous members and more members with diverse cultural backgrounds. It will strengthen our clubs, and I have no doubt whatsoever that it will actually strengthen our communities. The people from diverse cultural backgrounds will learn about the culture of the surf lifesaving movement, and our communities will be better off for the experience. So I think there is a win-win opportunity there for us. Perhaps I am an eternal optimist, but I believe that our nation's surf clubs have proven their worth to the nation. I think they are at least part of the solution to more than just surf safety issues in the 21st century. They can continue to bring much more to our nation in terms of linking our communities together.

In the brief amount of time I have left I want to mention that the coalition has committed to providing a $10 million fund, if we win government, to assist surf lifesaving clubs with purchasing vital rescue equipment and first aid and medical supplies and also to extend the beach drowning black spot reduction program. That would partner the already great amount of effort put in by the business community and local supporters and sponsors of our surf lifesaving movement. I think there is a role for government to work with the local communities to improve the infrastructure on clubhouse buildings and associated facilities. I would also like to take the opportunity to wish all members well from my own perspective from the Gippsland region, particularly the three clubs in my electorate at Woodside, Seaspray and Lakes Entrance, as they approach the summer season. I would like to wish all the members well and for a very safe and successful season. As I have said before, perhaps the most important role played by our surf clubs is in helping young Australians to achieve their full potential, and I think the parliament should continue to work with the Surf Life Saving Australia movement to achieve that outcome.

Mrs ELLIOT (Richmond—Parliamentary Secretary for Trade) (11:29): I am very pleased to be speaking on this motion that recognises the outstanding work of our surf lifesavers within the community. Today I would particularly like to highlight some of that work within New South Wales, particularly in my electorate of Richmond on the North Coast, which has the best beaches in Australia, if not the world. We have a very strong surf lifesaving community there, so I am very pleased to be speaking about their great contribution to our area. I am also very pleased that this government has a strong record in our commitment to water safety by allocating approximately $34 million to water safety over the five years from 2011-12 to 2015-16. This funding underpins the continued operation of major water safety organisations around Australia and also establishes many new projects which target areas such as early education and unpatrolled surf beaches, where we know we can improve water safety. The government is committed to working with local organisations, surf lifesaving organisations, businesses and local communities to improve water safety right throughout the country and will certainly continue to make sure we can improve that.

I turn to the North Coast. We are very fortunate to have outstanding beaches and outstanding surf lifesavers, and this was highlighted recently. Earlier this year I was very pleased to open with the Treasurer and Deputy Prime Minister our surfing centre of excellence, which is the world's first. Our federal Labor government committed $2 million to this outstanding project. To have it at Casuarina on the North Coast in my electorate shows what a strong surfing community we have there, and indeed we are very proud to have the
world's first surfing centre of excellence as well. No doubt we will see it continuing the great mentoring and training role that it has shown so far.

Surf lifesaving plays an important role not just in teaching swimming skills but also in developing young people's health, fitness and leadership skills through extensive juniors programs. I often meet young people on the North Coast who gain so much through their involvement in surf lifesaving. I would also like to acknowledge the outstanding number of volunteers who give their time to surf lifesaving. Without them we would not have the remarkable programs that we are all speaking about today, and I am always pleased to have the opportunity to thank them for their great work.

As we know, 'vigilance and service' is the motto of the iconic men and women dressed in their distinctive red and yellow uniforms who patrol our beaches each summer. The motto clearly demonstrates the professionalism and pride in the duties they perform today and ever since the movement's inception in 1907. Of course, at that time, swimming and surfing were growing in popularity and, at the same time, some of the dangers were becoming obvious. In this environment, local groups of experienced surfers began to form themselves into lifesaving bodies to assist those who found themselves in difficult and dangerous situations and required rescuing; thus the formation of local surf lifesaving clubs who performed regular patrols, which was welcomed by the public using those beaches. As these clubs grew in size and numbers, the need for a united front to raise funds and seek assistance from all levels of government resulted in the Surf Bathing Association of New South Wales being formed in October 1907.

When we look at the situation today we see that the New South Wales surf lifesaving mission statement is very clear: 'provide a safe beach and aquatic environment throughout New South Wales'. This mission is understood by the state's major water safety and rescue organisation and its 72,000 members, all of whom are volunteers. The 129 surf lifesaving clubs in New South Wales protect over 1,500 kilometres of coastline, from Fingal Beach in my electorate—the states most northerly club—to Pambula Beach in the south, and of course they all take their primary role of surf lifesaving and saving lives very seriously.

During the 2011-12 summer season New South Wales clubs were responsible for more than eight million beachgoers and performed over 8,000 rescues. Of course, since the late 1970s surf lifesaving's evolution has been very significant. Whilst women have always been associated with the movement, it was not until the 1980s that we saw so many more women involved. It is just fantastic. We also saw the rise of senior and junior Australian iron man championships, which are fantastic events. We saw it change and grow as we saw the volunteer movement grow as well, and this movement has given us so many household names associated with surf lifesaving: Grant Kenny, Trevor Hendy, Guy, Leech, Karla Gilbert, Renee Corbett, the Mercer brothers, Ky Hurst and current superstar Shannon Eckstein. There are certainly a lot of them.

As a local representative in my area of Richmond on the North Coast, we are fortunate to have access to some world-class beaches, and I am proud to be associated with surf lifesaving as an honorary patrol of the Far North Coast branch, which recently celebrated its 75th season. Of course, the Far North Coast branch is made up of 10 local surf lifesaving clubs, seven of which are in the Richmond electorate.
Cudgen Headland Surf Life Saving Club—of which I am also very proudly the patron—is a wonderful example of that great motto, 'Vigilance and service.' I was pleased to be advised that last year's patrol season at Cudgen Headland Surf Life Saving Club was a very successful one, with over 128,000 people visiting their beautiful beach and very few major incidents and, thankfully, no lives lost—a remarkable contribution by those involved with the club. Those volunteers who support the local clubs give up their time on weekends and school holidays during the patrol season, which of course runs from September through to April. Remember that in our area it is not just the locals; we have many, many visitors coming to our beautiful beaches as well, so they are kept extremely busy during that time. Of course, the community receives such an enormous benefit from this contribution that they make.

There are many hardworking volunteers at Cudgen Headland Surf Life Saving Club, and I would like to make particularly mention of one of those volunteers. Gary Cain, who announced his retirement this year, has been president of the club for 10 years. Gary has overseen a great many changes within the club and has been really inspirational in strengthening the competitive teams and the morale amongst his band of volunteers over that long period of time. His personal endeavours are reported to be extraordinary in preparing the club for the two consecutive surf lifesaving titles the club hosted in 2010 and 2011. Both were outstanding successes. Thanks to Gary for that great role. In fact, his efforts were recognised both by his club, when he was awarded their coveted Blue of Blues Award, and when he received the New South Wales Sports Federation award for outstanding volunteer for the year in 2011—a remarkable achievement by Gary. Indeed, I would like to congratulate all volunteers involved in surf lifesaving not just throughout my electorate but through New South Wales and, indeed, right throughout the country. They make a remarkable effort and I would like to commend them for the time that they put in—as I say, weekends and also school holidays.

We are very proud as a government, as I said at the beginning, of the continued work that we do in working with Surf Life Saving Australia and other water safety organisations and also local businesses and business organisations in providing support and funding for a whole host of water safety measures right throughout the country in terms of the coordinated efforts. As I mentioned earlier on, this government has committed approximately $34 million over that period of five years to make sure that we can have in place a whole range of water safety messages that are so important, particularly for those of us that are very fortunate to live in beautiful parts of Australia like mine—Richmond and the North Coast—that have a very strong and active beach culture. We are very much aware of all the safety elements as well. I am sure that we will see it continue to grow in the coming years. As we have many more people visiting our area, we will see people continuing to increase their volunteering capacity in these roles as well.

I would also like to speak a bit more about the surfing centre of excellence that we have at Casuarina and also acknowledge the wonderful role that Surfing Australia play right across the country, but especially in relation to this surfing centre of excellence. They drove this particular project for many years and there was commitment from many people involved. They wanted Australia to have the world's first surfing centre of excellence to showcase the remarkable abilities of our world-class surfers and to provide a training and mentoring base for so many people around the country, particularly, and also from overseas, so that people
could come to one spot to gain expertise in surfing. We have many world champions who come there all the time, and we had a number of them at the opening as well. They will come to the surfing centre of excellence at Casuarina at different times and provide courses and training for a whole range of people. When we had the opening there were some young people there from Western Australia who were there for a couple of weeks and who gained invaluable insight into surfing skills and training. I think Layne Beachley was taking that particular class then. So it is a remarkable opportunity and we are very proud on the North Coast to be home to that surfing centre of excellence. We are very proud of that because of the great beaches that we have.

I would like to finish by congratulating all those volunteers who give their time. We want to keep working closely with them to achieve the great results that we do, particularly because, as I say, it is not just the safety and the skills that our kids learn. The health and fitness side of it and the teamwork that they gain from being involved with surf lifesaving are truly invaluable. They are a real credit to our community and we are very proud of all of them. Congratulations.

Mr WYATT (Hasluck) (11:39): I am pleased to rise and speak on the motion that the member for Gippsland has put forward. This is an area that plays a very crucial and critical role in the educational and awareness-raising of Australians in respect to water safety. I served in the Mullaloo Surf Life Saving Club in Perth, Western Australia, and I saw every aspect of the vigilance and service to the community that used the Mullaloo Beach. The volunteers who contribute every weekend are not only those on patrol but also those who administer the functions of the club and who are part of the wider organisation in terms of Western Australia. And they are only a part of the 150,000 members and 310 affiliated surf life saving clubs around Australia.

The work they do is an incredible challenge. What people do not appreciate is that on a beach you have those who swim competently, understand the flow of water and rips and how to manage themselves in those circumstances through to those who come down under the influence of alcohol and think they can spend some time in the water, but eventually need rescuing, to those who never swim but venture out with the aid of a floating object, only to find themselves separated from the floating object and then having to be rescued.

One of the key things about the surf life saving club that I was involved with, and the many others I was affiliated with, including the Dee Why Surf Life Saving Club in Dee Why, is the passion and commitment that people have to the giving of their time to ensure the safety of our beaches and to enable the public to come and spend leisure time and swim on those particularly hot days. They also accommodate the surfers who are often in areas nearby. One of the things I found most interesting when being a patrol member was the quality of the equipment. Your equipment was certainly valued and respected, but wear and tear has its impact on all the equipment that surf life saving clubs have. When you consider the combination of fine sand and salt water, the need for cleaning and maintenance is slightly higher. So we would fundraise to replace vital equipment that was needed to protect the swimmers and the public using those beaches. This was particularly true in those times when we had a rip, and the IRB would be out in the water much more than normal, and patrols would be stretched. The capacity to fix and do running repairs was an incredible aspect of the
club because it took a range of different people with different skills to be part of all those patrols.

One of the things that was important in all of this was the Nippers and the younger groups that we focused on. Through providing those opportunities a number of things are created. One is the cohesiveness within the community. There is a camaraderie among parents and also a competitiveness. It was tremendous to see the number of people, certainly within the Mullaloo Surf Life Saving Club, who on a Sunday morning or Saturday afternoon would be down there for the various functions and events. When you have a couple of hundred nippers participating then your equipment stands additional pressure in terms of wear and tear. The coalition is committed to providing an additional $10 million to assist surf life saving clubs across Australia purchase much needed equipment and to extend the beach drowning blackspot reduction program.

The other element I was fascinated with when I first joined the surf life saving club, other than getting myself fit to be a surf lifesaver, was the stalwarts of the club. I always remember a woman called Peg. I did not know her last name; I just knew her as Peg. She had been with the surf life saving club movement as a young woman. She was certainly way past retirement age. But she is a stalwart who sits at that club and inducts new members. She takes the registrations. She asks, 'Why do you want to do this? You know it is hard.' But she encourages. It is stalwarts like her and others I have met who have kept the surf life saving movement around Australia both stable but expanding. Their passion has been about getting the resources to make sure the club has the right equipment for the right conditions and that it is in good working order to rescue those when a rescue needs to happen. We never know when an event will occur on a beach that is both dangerous and life threatening. People who body surf certainly take a risk in terms of spinal injuries. The work that the surf lifesavers have done over a period of time has stabilised individuals and ensured that they received the right level of support. I remember the training I undertook, even in first aid and in the use of the equipment, which meant that I was also using the same equipment that we used on a weekend during training. We had a high use of it, but it gave me a knowledge and understanding that was absolutely vital in the rescuing of people on beaches.

Another thing is that if we were to factor in the cost of every volunteer associated with surf lifesaving it would be in excess of $3.5 billion. That is only a conservative measure of the amount of time that is given by so many in our community to ensure that their clubs are vital. The equipment also includes not only the stuff you see on the beach; it is also the radios, the more specialised equipment for the resuscitation of people. And they cost. As time goes by, what you spent three years ago in costs will have escalated because of a number of factors.

Nevertheless, governments and parliaments really need to commit to an organisation that develops not only safety and service to the public, with vigilance, but also the education and awareness aspect that go with it. When they align with other groups, at least we reach a point in which water safety becomes foremost in the minds of people. We will never counter those who are foolish in some of their activities. We only have to watch the program on television featuring Bondi Beach to see where some people take unnecessary and stupid risks that then require surf lifesavers to rescue them in very challenging contexts and situations. On that basis alone it is beholden upon us to ensure that they have the right equipment and that they
have the capacity to replace equipment that is not only well used, well cared for and maintained but the basis for which rescues are often mounted.

Surf lifesaving in this nation, with its 158,000 volunteers, has had a tremendous place in the history of this nation. Certainly, under the member for Bass, the Parliamentary Friends of Surf Life Saving hope to continue the work in highlighting both the importance and the relevance of the work being undertaken by surf lifesaving. They have prevented a number of drownings over a period of time, not to mention the rescues that occur that we never hear about. Often there are rescues which do not reach media coverage. Nevertheless, there is a life or a body plucked from the ocean, brought in on a board or an IRB, resuscitated and the life extended because of unselfish people who, every weekend, are prepared to undertake patrols of the beach, aided by the equipment they have.

Certainly, the coalition will honour its commitment of $10 million that will go to surf lifesaving clubs. If we consider the number of clubs, that will mean about $5,000 per club, which will enable them to replace equipment that is in need of replacement but, again, will also support them in the work that they do.

Let me conclude by saying that often a lot of unmet need is met through donations. Surf lifesavers in their outfits stand on street corners rattling tins, hoping to raise sufficient funds to help them. It is not about the glamour or the competitive nature of the ironmen or ironwomen; it is about a community service based on that vigilance and based on that ethos of service to those who use Australian beaches.

Ms SAFFIN (Page) (11:49): I want to thank the honourable member for Gippsland for providing members with the opportunity to talk about surf lifesaving clubs. It is not the first time I have talked about them in this place and I know it will not be the last, because there is always so much that they are doing in the community and particularly in my local area in the seat of Page. I can attend functions with them, including the far north coast branch and its Surf Life Saving Awards of Excellence. There are just so many other opportunities to extol the wonderful work that they do.

I wholeheartedly support the thrust of the honourable member for Gippsland's private member's motion, which notes that there are over 150,000 members. I noted on their website that there are up to around 156,000 members and 310 affiliated surf lifesaving clubs. The motion states that surf lifesaving is the largest volunteer movement of its kind in Australia. In fact, it is unique. I do not see it replicated around the world. Of course, there are volunteer movements in many countries and neighbouring countries but this one is rather a unique volunteer movement to Australia. I would also like to read into the record another couple of points in the motion. Point (2) states:

(2) recognises the outstanding contribution made to health and safety of beach goers by volunteer and professional surf lifesavers …

It goes on:

(3) highlights that the economic value to the Australian economy of surf lifesaving's coastal drowning and injury prevention efforts in 2009 10 was independently assessed to be $3.6 billion …

That is a huge investment of volunteer time from the Australian community and from surf lifesaving into the drowning and injury prevention efforts. Many volunteers in Australia put in
a big investment into our community, making our community better and safer. It is also an investment of an economic kind.

Point (4) states:

(4) supports the important role played by surf lifesaving clubs in developing young people's health, fitness and leadership skills through an extensive junior program …

What a wonderful program that is. We have all seen the young kids at the beach, out in their colours of surf lifesaving: red and yellow. When you are at the beach it is just wonderful to see them and know that that is a tradition that we have in Australia that will be continued by some really dedicated people.

The honourable member goes on in points (5)(a) and (5)(b) and refers to a coalition commitment. I shall, understandably, refer to commitments and support that has already been given by the government. I want to, firstly, put on record my appreciation to all those Australians who put on the uniform and cap and who go out on weekends and holiday times to help make us safer at the beach. I say this to all involved in surf lifesaving—not just the ones who do put on the uniform and the cap but everybody who is associated with surf lifesaving, including members of the community and all the people, particularly the many parents, carers, grandparents and everybody else who gets involved to make this movement work.

I would like to note here the local clubs in my seat of Page and in my area of the far north coast. The far north coast takes in about 10 clubs but there are five directly in my seat with some spillover into the seat of Richmond. I heard the honourable member for Richmond talking earlier to this motion.

The five surf lifesaving clubs in my electorate are: Yamba; Lennox Head-Alstonville—Lennox Head is actually in the seat of Richmond and Alstonville in the seat of Page, so it is a combined one—Evans Head-Casino; Minnie Water-Wooli, which goes also into the seat of Cowper, but there is some spillover into my seat of Page; Ballina Lighthouse and Lismore, which is based in Ballina. There are two things that I want to say about the Ballina Lighthouse and Lismore Surf Life Saving Club. Just recently, the Ballina Lighthouse and Lismore Surf Life Saving Club won New South Wales Club of the Year. They were absolutely thrilled and very excited, as I was. The club won the title at the annual Surf Life Saving New South Wales Awards in Sydney.

As you can imagine, this received extensive media coverage in coverage locally and also on our local ABC. I will just read a little bit from here; it was prepared by Justine Frasier and Samantha Turnbull. Chris Beavis is the club president and he was talking and said that he was thrilled with the award, particularly as they had been operating out of shipping containers while waiting for the new headquarters to be built. I have been in the shipping containers, so I know the conditions they are working in, but it is not because they do not have something fabulous happening—they do, and I will talk to that—it is while all the planning and the development work is going on so they could get to build the new facilities. Chris Beavis went on to say, 'It was not about the facilities around you; it was about how you use the facilities.' Indeed, surf lifesavers can work anywhere and have done for a long time, but it is incumbent upon all of us at all levels of government—local, state and federal—to try and make the conditions they work under just that bit better. Chris Beavis went on to say, 'My sense is we do that type of stuff very well,' and indeed they do do it very well.
The other exciting thing that I want to talk about that is happening is with the Ballina Lighthouse and Lismore Surf Life Saving club. Just recently—I think it was 4 September—I went with the now retired Mayor of Ballina Shire, Phil Silver, and Chris Beavis, the club president, and we turned a sod of sand where they are going to build the new surf lifesaving club. I was able to secure $2.3 million towards the $5.8 million project. I secured that some time back. It has taken a while to work out the whole development processes, and they have done that extremely well. Not too many clubs will be situated right on the beach, but they are building where the old club was in a shipping container. I was really pleased to be able to deliver on that, and it came through the fund of the Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government, initially under the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure and now the Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government.

It was great to be there to turn that sod, because the project is constructing a new two-storey surf lifesaving clubhouse and car park. The clubhouse will have uninterrupted views of the beach and feature a control room, function rooms, cafe, first aid room and gym. It will replace the old shed and shipping container that has been serving as the club's facilities. The cafe that will operate on the ground floor will be for locals, and that will go back into maintaining the building. That is one of the things Ballina Shire Council are very good at: working with surf lifesaving, making sure that what they do has sustainability built into it, because that is always a key factor when we are building new buildings and building infrastructure. They are particularly good at that. The Ballina Lighthouse and Lismore Surf Life Saving Club is putting in $300,000, and the Ballina Shire Council provided $3.2 million. It will support local jobs during construction. Bennets, a local firm, got the contract, which was great to see, and it will be wonderful for members and the volunteers to continue the work that they do there.

I would like to, in the few seconds I have got left, mention the $34.32 million that has been allocated by the government to water and safety initiatives. That will go to a whole range of activities right across Australia, including saving lives in the water program. Thank you.

Mr Turnbull (Wentworth) (11:59): I congratulate the members who have just spoken, in particular the member for Gippsland, on moving this motion about the surf lifesaving movement.

I am honoured to represent some of the oldest surf clubs in Australia, in the Eastern Suburbs of Sydney, and, indeed, the oldest surf club in Australia. However, it would be a controversial statement for me to say which of the several claimants to be the oldest surf club was indeed the oldest surf club. Bronte surf club has a very good claim to have been founded in 1903, although we note that the first recorded minutes of its meeting are in 1907—although the minutes claim to be the fourth meeting, so presumably it was founded in 1903—and lifesaving training began at Bronte in the late 19th century, in fact, modelled on English lifesaving techniques. Also of course there is my own club, founded in 1906: North Bondi surf club. Bondi surf club, which is the club in the middle of the beach—or Bondi Surf Bathers' Life Saving Club, to give it its full name—also lays claim to being the oldest club, but it was founded in 1907. Tamarama was founded in 1904, and, just south of the electorate, literally just on the other side of the boundary, is the Clovelly club, founded in 1904, and Coogee, founded in 1907. So surf lifesaving began really in the Eastern Suburbs of Sydney in
the early years of the 20th century, but the mists of time, and the tact required to be the local member, requires me not to go any further into resolving the controversy. I can only say that my own club does not claim to be the oldest club, so I am quite impartial about it.

The work the surf lifesavers do in making our beaches safe is of enormous importance to our recreation, to our physical fitness—to our whole Australian way of life. Without diminishing the lifestyles of people who live in the inland, most Australians live on the coast and most Australians have a really symbiotic relationship with the water. This was a big change, of course, because, when the country was settled and certainly when the settlement was established in Sydney, the Aboriginal inhabitants were not keen swimmers. They were terrified of sharks—quite rightly so; that is why you see, in Sydney Harbour, plenty of points and beaches and islands called Shark this and Shark that. A lot of them have had their names changed, presumably to promote tourism, but there are a lot of places named after sharks. And there are a lot of sharks, so there was a fair bit of anxiety. But we have progressed from that and become absolutely connected to the water.

All of my earliest memories of growing up in Sydney involve swimming, surfing, paddling things, sailing on things, riding on boards—constantly in the water. I was inducted into the North Bondi surf club literally as a baby. By the time I could barely walk, my father, Bruce, was taking me down to North Bondi surf club, and it was there that I did my bronze medallion and my instructor's certificate. I even saved someone's life on one occasion, which was a remarkable experience.

They are remarkable institutions, you know, the surf clubs, because they are completely egalitarian. Of course they are now co-ed; they were not in my day, but there are now men and women members. They connect the oldest members. Some of the old members of North Bondi Surf Club were old men when I was a kid—or at least I thought they were they were; they were probably about my age now! Anyway, they are still there, preserved by the salt air. Then of course, you have the nippers, the very young kids.

The interesting thing from a social point of view, I always used to find and I still do, is that, in a surf club, you get people from every single background and, because they are either in their swimming trunks or wearing nothing in the showers, no-one can put on any side. It doesn't matter whether it is a Supreme Court judge or a captain of industry, or a garbo, a teacher, a policeman, or someone in the schmutters business—there is a big Jewish membership in my electorate. So you get a complete diversity, and it was that sort of diversity that I grew up with. If there was one social experience that made me what I am today, it was my involvement with the surf clubs, because I literally met, from being a little boy up to a man, people from every single background. There was nobody—you could not think of a profession or a racial or religious background—that was not represented in an environment where everyone had a common interest. It was what Robert Putnam, the great American sociologist, called bridging social capital, because—instead of reinforcing people's particular groups, like a Catholic group or a Jewish group or lawyers or doctors—you brought everybody in together and we were all mixing together. So the surf lifesaving movement, apart from the lives that are saved and apart from the millions of people that enjoy our beaches and are able to do so safely because of the work of the lifesavers, is one of the key elements in that egalitarianism that is so important for our Australian society. It is that non-deferential culture of Australia that lifesaving really enables. In a way, because of the
environment, because of the common cause and because of the inevitable informality of associating with people in swimming, surfing and so forth, it really breaks down all sorts of barriers. A number of times I have bumped into people that I know from the beach in town. You do not quite recognise each other. A number of times people will say, 'Yes, of course; I didn't recognise you with your clothes on.' A passer-by might read something improper into that, but it is a wonderful thing.

Can I just say a couple of things about a particular matter, on a somewhat more political note. The North Bondi Surf Life Saving Club is the largest surf club in Australia. There are two surf clubs on Bondi Beach, which is obviously the biggest beach in terms of patronage and notoriety, fame or whatever. It is certainly the most visited beach and therefore the most challenging from a management point of view. There are two surf clubs: North Bondi at the north end of the beach, naturally, and Bondi in the middle of the beach next to the pavilion. North Bondi's building has been falling down for quite some years, and the club resolved some time ago that it really needed to replace it. As the discussions and the planning were getting underway, in 2007 John Howard, then Prime Minister, pledged $1.7 million to that rebuilding program, which was a very, very good commitment. I think it would have created a fantastic precedent in terms of strong federal support for surf lifesaving. Regrettably, in what I can only describe as a spiteful decision, that grant was revoked and nothing was put in its place. The club, undaunted by that, has raised $5 million: $750,000 from Waverley Council, $450,000 from the state government and the rest from private donations and fundraising done by the club. I should disclose that Lucy and I have supported the club as donors. The project is going to cost $6.2 million, so there is still more money to be raised. It will be an iconic building. It will be a very elegant building, but on an important location. I might say that the club has over 540 patrolling senior members, 1,000 nippers and an overall membership of over 2,000. This is a big club doing a big job on a big beach, but it is going to be able to do that through the generosity of the community and of its members.

All around Australia, surf clubs are facing these sorts of challenges. It is a matter of great regret, I would say, that at the time the Rudd government was spending money on stimulus and building school halls and so forth, whether they were needed or not, it did not put some substantial funds towards the surf clubs of Australia. (Time expired)

Mr Lyons (Bass) (12:09): I rise to speak on the motion proposed by the member for Gippsland. It is well known in the House that I have a great love for surf lifesaving. I am a proud life member of Surf Life Saving Australia. I am a volunteer and still do patrols. I am absolutely wrapped to be involved in the organisation. I am also the chair and founder of the Parliamentary Friends of Surf Life Saving. Our movement prides itself on offering mateship, education and experience and, in doing so, gives back to the community. I am a proud member and chairman of two clubs: the Bridport Surf Life Saving Club and the Launceston Life Saving Club in Tasmania. I stand here today to recognise the outstanding contribution made to the health and safety of beach-goers by our volunteer and professional surf lifesavers.

Beach and surf lifesaving is a part of the Australian identity. Over the last two centuries, the Australian bush has been central to the way Australians have viewed themselves, yet the images of rolling waves, white beaches, families soaking up the sun and surfers now have the most resonance. These are, without doubt, very much at the heart of how we are and how we
are seen by others. Australia has 11,000 beaches and 37,000 kilometres of coastline. The vast majority of Australia's population lives in cities or towns near or on the coast. The beach is, and always has been, the place where millions of Australians escape to relax, swim and play. Surfing and the beach brings together a diverse range of people—and I agree with the member for Wentworth. Unlike other places around the world, we do not have privately owned beaches. In Australia, the beach is a public place. With a long history and tradition, the surf lifesaver has a unique role in Australia's culture—to save lives and to prevent injuries. For people who visit our beaches their role is essential.

More than 153,000 members spread across over 300 clubs make Surf Life Saving Australia our major water safety and rescue authority. Between 2002 and 2010, growth in membership outstripped the increase in patrolling members, with membership growing at approximately six per cent per annum from 106,000 to 153,000. During the same period, our patrolling members increased by five per cent per annum. This is significant, especially in an age where people are not really joining community groups. The PricewaterhouseCoopers' report, released in 2011, found that surf lifesavers completed almost 12,000 rescues in 2009-10 and, through preventative actions, avoided another 6,000 rescues across Australia. It is estimated that, absent these activities, an additional 596 drowning deaths would have occurred on our beaches and in our coastal waterways and 555 people would have suffered permanent incapacity. These figures show just how important surf lifesaving is. The Pricewaterhouse report also found the cost benefit for every dollar invested in surf lifesaving—in terms of the value of lives saved and injuries avoided—was 29.3 to one for our volunteer surf lifesavers. It concluded that the benefits of surf lifesaving far outweigh the cost, further proving its unique and significant value to the Australian community and economy.

The Australian government has allocated a total of approximately $33.65 million to water safety over four years from 2012-2016. This is significant. This funding underpins the continued operation of our major water safety organisations around Australia, such as Surf Life Saving, Surfing Australia and Royal Life Saving. It establishes new projects in target areas such as early education and unpatrolled beaches where we know we can improve water safety. Through the Minister for Sport, Kate Lundy, the Gillard government has proudly announced the following policies this year alone to help water safety efforts. While it is good that the opposition acknowledge the importance of water safety, it is a shame they are providing false promises to some of our most respected national organisations. The opposition cannot be allowed to make uncosted promises on top of the $70 million black hole. All I ask is that the member who proposed this motion inform the parliament as to where he will find the next $10 million.

We also know that water safety is important. Every parent wants their child to lead a happy, healthy and active life. I believe that there is nothing better than introducing them to Surf Life Saving and the Nippers. Nippers is a junior program that introduces children, aged five to 13, to surf lifesaving. It is all about fun, outdoor activities that grow a child's confidence and that teach valuable lifesaving skills and knowledge. Every surf lifesaving club around Australia, to some degree, offers a Nippers program. There are now over 40,000 junior lifesavers in Australia, which is truly fantastic. The aim of the junior program is to give children surf awareness and surf skills so that they can keep themselves safe at the beach.
They also participate in board riding, paddling, surfing, swimming, running, wading and other activities and games. These are the skills that allow children to compete in club, regional and state surf-lifesaving carnivals. I am proud to assist the Nipper program of my local club.

The youth of today are the future of surf lifesaving and the Nippers' pathway teaches lessons and skills, allowing them to continue in lifesaving and sport as they grow older. Australia's beaches remain the country's largest playground, with more than 100 million visitations every year. We all need to play our part in ensuring our beaches are safe.

With rising coastal populations and international visitor numbers, keeping people safe in the water is an increasingly difficult challenge. It is a tribute to the dedicated skill of surf-lifesaving volunteers, who are able to save so many lives, prevent so many injuries and make such an important contribution to our nation.

Volunteering delivers a number of benefits to individuals, including personal satisfaction, helping others and the feeling of fulfilment from doing something worthwhile for the community.

Take Josh Barnett, a member of the Bridport Surf Life Saving Club. He joined the Bridport club about a year ago. It is a new club, which only started two years ago. He learned some skills and he actually performed CPR on a child whilst on patrol for the Bridport club last season. Subsequent to that, he resuscitated an infant, away from the beach, also saving that child's life.

There are significant benefits for young people volunteering, as there are opportunities for self-development alongside valuable perceptions of community citizenship. In addition to these personal benefits, volunteering provides positive aspects, specifically relating to surf lifesaving, to our society and the local community. There are non-quantifiable benefits, from creating a more cohesive community to quantifiable economic benefits from improving beach safety awareness and the prevention of drowning and other injuries.

Over 70 per cent of surf lifesavers volunteer more than three hours a week during the summer. Fifty per cent patrol between three and 10 hours per week. Almost 25 per cent donate in excess of 10 hours. This shows their tremendous commitment to the movement. I do about 80 hours of patrols during the year and I get more out of it than I put in.

Volunteering is a perfect vehicle to discover something you are really good at and to develop a new skill. As Mahatma Gandhi said, 'Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever.' I believe that it is never too late to learn new skills and there is no reason why you should stop adding to your knowledge just because you are in employment or have finished your chosen training or education.

With the summer fast approaching, the first patrols of the season are about to commence. Surf Life Saving Australia is now recruiting new members. Contact your local club for details. You could help save a life. Someone close to you might need your assistance. I encourage you to stay safe on the beach, donate, or participate in surf lifesaving around the country.

Every Australian should be a swimmer and every swimmer could be a lifesaver. Every Australian can help save a life. So whilst I support the sentiment of the motion, I do not support the motion in its current form, specifically point (5).
Mr NEVILLE (Hinkler—The Nationals Deputy Whip) (12:19): It gives me great pleasure today to acknowledge this motion, moved by the member for Gippsland, and the outstanding contribution made to the health and safety of beach goers of Australia by volunteer and professional surf lifesavers. As the member for Gippsland has noted, there are more than 150,000 members in 310 clubs across Australia, making it the largest volunteer movement of its kind in the country. It goes without saying that the image of the bronzed surf lifesavers patrolling hundreds of beaches around our coastline is one of our iconic symbols of Australian lifestyle.

However, the surf lifesaving movement is worth much more than that. As the official website of Surf Life Saving Australia states:

When Australians decided to embrace the ocean as a site of active recreation in the early part of the 20th century, our love of the beach emerged. The need for a lifesaving movement—to protect and save lives—grew, and from that day onwards, Surf Life Saving became part of the fabric of our country. Australia's first volunteer surf lifesaving clubs appeared on Sydney beaches in 1907, after laws banning bathing in daylight hours were gradually repealed; although, as the member for Wentworth said, clubs were forming up earlier than that in the period from 1904 to 1906.

As the beach culture began to develop, beachgoers entered into the surf, rapidly escalating the numbers, but many of those who took to the surf could not swim. Sadly, there were drownings, and consequently rescue attempts escalated. By the summer of 1906-07 the population of Sydney was obsessed with the question of safety in the surf. It was in this environment that surf lifesaving clubs emerged, their regular patrols a welcome relief to local authorities and nervous bathers alike. On 18 October 1907, representatives of these Sydney clubs, with members from other interested groups, met to form the Surf Bathing Association of New South Wales, the organisation now known as Surf Life Saving Australia.

In my home state of Queensland, the 'sunshine state', home of some of the most beautiful beaches in the world, the surf lifesaving movement began in 1908 when an old line and belt was brought to Tweed Heads by Sydney dentist Harold Bennett for the purpose of forming a lifesaving club. Not long after that, the first qualified surf lifesavers practised at Greenmount Beach, a little to the north. On 21 February 1909, the first recorded rescue using a lifesaving reel was performed in the surf off Greenmount. Lifesavers rescued four young women and a young man who had been swept out in a rip. Surf Life Saving Queensland was formally established in 1930 and is now the governing body for surf lifesaving in that state.

Some of the major milestones within surf lifesaving in Queensland include the introduction of red-and-yellow flags in 1935, the adoption of expired air resuscitation—otherwise known as mouth-to-mouth—in 1960 and the beginning of the Westpac helicopter in 1976. Perhaps one of the more momentous occasions in the association's history was in 1980, when all surf lifesaving clubs welcomed female members. A century of achievements within the surf lifesaving movement of Australia was celebrated in 2007 with the national Year of the Surf Lifesaver.

Membership of Surf Life Saving Queensland during the 2010-11 season was a very creditable 33,364 people, 11,261 of whom were nippers. Rescues during that season totalled 3,610, including 10 resuscitations, six defibrillation cases and 262 people receiving oxygen treatment. Incredibly, Surf Life Saving Queensland carried out 289,391 preventative actions in the 2010-11 season.
While the primary job of saving lives is the major focus of Surf Life Saving Queensland, the organisation concentrates heavily on community awareness programs, which are aimed at educating all members of the community. Many of these programs have been developed to target high-risk groups, including 18- to 25-year-old males, the rural population, international tourists, domestic tourists and especially those with no English skills.

These programs are set to be enhanced with an announcement earlier this year that a coalition government will commit an additional $10 million to assist surf-lifesaving clubs across Australia purchase much needed equipment and will extend the beach drowning black spot reduction program. In my electorate of Hinkler there are three surf clubs, including the Bundaberg Surf-Lifesaving Club formed in 1921, the Elliot Heads Surf-Lifesaving Club formed in 1965 and the Harvey Bay Surf-Lifesaving Club, which was originally formed in the 50s and relaunched in 1986. In the nearby electorate of Flynn patrolled, dare I say, by my colleague Ken O'Dowd, very close to Bundaberg we have a fourth club, Moore Park Surf-Lifesaving Club, formed in 1954. Although I was never a member of a surf-life-saving club, my father was a member of the old Royal Life-saving Association back in the 20s and was awarded his bronze medallion. My wife was a member of the Neptune club, an all female club at Tallebudgera on the Gold Coast, years before women were accepted into surf-life-saving. Some of the girls did their own thing. My daughter Gay was a member of the Elliot Head Surf Club, while my sons Gavin and Peter were members of Bundaberg club. Peter also was a contestant in national titles for the rubber ducky.

As with most surf-lifesaving clubs in Australia, the beginnings of these clubs were humble and clubhouses consisted of one-room weatherboard sheds or, in the case of the Moore Park Beach club for many years, just a tent. Rusty shark towers and wind-up sirens completed the inventory of equipment and training and rescues were carried out from fishing boats. I might add that the Moore Park Club, sadly, of recent times lost part of its club to beach erosion and part of the building became uninhabitable. Now each club can boast a much wider range of equipment, including rescue boards and tubes, inflatable rescue boats—as I said, the rubber duckies—spinal boards, extrication collars, Australian-standard flags and symbols, first-aid kits, bag valve mask oxygen resuscitators, and automated external defibrillators as well as hand-held radios. The movement has come a long way.

I am delighted to report that the Harvey Bay Club, which had a chequered career in earlier times, is now in expansionary mode and I understand going into new additions. Councillor Darren Everard, a new councillor of the Fraser Coast Regional Council, has been keeping me abreast of these developments. I am a patron of the Bundaberg Surf Club, the oldest club in my electorate. It is steeped in history and has hosted state championships at its Nielsen Park beach site in 1939 and 1938 and the championships returned to Bundaberg in 1951 and 1960. During the 1938 championships the home club won its first state march-past championship. The win must have laid the foundation because between 1959 and 1989 the Bundaberg Surf Club won 17 march-pasts at the national titles and seven silver medals, so you can see that they pretty well dominated it.

In the remaining minutes I would like acknowledge a great sportsman, Noel Bullpitt. Noel and Bundaberg surf-lifesaving are synonymous. He was president of the club for the 41 years and joined it in 1934. Noel will turn 100 in November and that will mark 78 years
Ms HALL (Shortland—Government Whip) (12:29): I would like to congratulate the member for Gippsland on bringing this very important motion to the House. I would also like to acknowledge the role that the member for Bass has played over many years within surf life saving, being the executive of both Surf Life Saving Australia and Surf Lifesaving Tasmania. In addition, he is a life member of both those organisations. Since he came to this parliament we have a parliamentary friends group—Parliamentary Friends of Surf Life Saving. I thank the member for Bass for his role along with the member for Gippsland in raising awareness of surf life saving and the valuable service that it provides to our community.

Surf Life Saving Australia is the largest volunteer organisation in the country. There are countless people throughout Australia that give of their time because they believe in the philosophy of surf life saving and also because they love the beach and the culture that exists around surf life saving. Today I am going to spend my contribution talking about the Hunter branch of Surf Life Saving Australia. But I would also like to acknowledge the role that Central Coast Surf Life Saving plays and the fact that many people within the Shortland electorate are very closely linked to both Soldiers Beach and Lakes Entrance Surf Life Saving Club, which are fantastic organisations. The member for Dobell is here and I know that he will concentrate on those areas.

Hunter Surf Life Saving Club was established 105 years ago. There are 7,500 members in the Hunter and 4,000 junior members. In fact, my grandson is a member of Caves Beach, but I think he might be changing to Belmont Swansea next year because some of his friends from school go there. Surf life saving clubs play a very important role in promoting water safety and educating the community about water safety. Hunter branch runs very strong programs for rookie and youth development. In addition to that there are programs for area managers, and an age managers course, so that those volunteers who are involved with the Nippers program can look after them and provide the appropriate training and management of the teams. There are programs for trainers and assessors, a spinal management program, Surf Life Saving New South Wales applied first aid, which is a very advanced certificate, and certificate 2 aquatic safety, which is actually the Bronze. I see the member for Bass has taken the chair so I reiterate and thank him for the role he has played in surf life saving during his time.

The Hunter branch had 62,233.25 patrol hours in the 2011-12 season, 512 rescues, 15,886 incidents and 798 first aid interventions. The clubs in the Hunter branch that are in the Shortland electorate are Redhead, Caves Beach, Belmont Swansea and Catherine Hill Bay. Redhead is the oldest of the clubs. It has 750 senior members and about 400 juniors. It was established in 1908. It was the second club established in the Hunter branch. Caves Beach has 720 senior members and in excess of 300 juniors. Caves Beach is one of those clubs that is a real family club. It has a very strong commitment to safety and to promoting a consistent safe environment in the surf. Belmont Swanse was established in 1927. It has 700 members and 350 juniors. And Catherine Hill Bay has 480 members and in excess of 200 juniors.

One aspect I would like to concentrate on is that in Shortland electorate there has been some deaths where rock fishermen have been washed off the rocks. Surf lifesavers are trained to patrol the beach. Surf lifesavers do that brilliantly. Surf lifesavers enjoy competition. But
one of the things that they do not expect to be involved in is body retrieval. Members of Catherine Hill Bay in particular, supported by members of Caves Beach, have been involved in body retrieval more than they should be when rock fishermen have been washed from the rocks. It was only three months ago that three people lost their lives. Three years ago, five people lost their lives when they were washed from the rocks. Those brave, brave members of Catherine Hill Bay and Caves Beach went out there and they retrieved those bodies.

I was talking to the CEO of the Hunter Surf Life Saving, Rhonda Scruton, who has been there for 15 years and does an absolutely fantastic job. I would like to pay credit to her. She said that these guys have got hearts like elephants. They do not question; they get in there and they do the work that they are not actually trained and expecting to do. In Australia we have a very low rate of deaths in our surf. That is really because of the work that is put in by surf lifesavers around the country. I was looking at some figures for Asia. In Asia 350 people lose their lives each day in the surf. The fact that we do not have those sort of figures in Australia is a tribute to the work that is done by Surf Life Saving Australia. I am proud to be a member of the parliamentary friends group that was established by the member for Bass.

Surf lifesaving is part of the culture of Shortland electorate. Each and every year, I go to the presentation days and hear about the feats of bravery, the total commitment to ensuring that the beach is patrolled each and every day. It always surprises me, although it should not, how many members of the various patrols have 100 per cent attendance. This shows that it is a commitment that is beyond just doing your duty and being involved in the organisation. It is really believing in what surf lifesaving is about. Surf lifesaving has grown. Actually, my grandfather was the first person in my family that was a member of surf lifesaving. He was a member of surf lifesaving at Cronulla. I think he was one of the first members down there. My sister is very involved with North Coast Surf Life Saving up there and so are her two boys. To them it is about making a commitment to the community. To them it is about keeping the beaches safe. To them it is about a way of life.

I think our Australian culture is so intertwined with the surf and the beach culture. Everybody sees themselves as being associated with that, with the surf. That is where the surf lifesaving comes in: makes the beaches safe. They are supported by councils throughout the country, and in Shortland electorate Lake Macquarie Council provides a lot of support to the surf lifesaving clubs there. I thank them for the commitment and the way that they support them. Similarly, Wyong Shire Council supports the surf lifesaving clubs on the central coast. I thank each and every member of surf lifesaving, not only within Shortland electorate but throughout Australia. I know that they will continue to keep our beaches safe and educate our community about surf and beach safety.

Ms MARINO (Forrest—Opposition Whip) (12:39): Mr Deputy Speaker, I support this motion and I am sure that you would as well. I agree with the motion:

That this House:

(1) notes that with more than 150,000 members and 310 affiliated surf lifesaving clubs, surf lifesaving is the largest volunteer movement of its kind in Australia;

(2) recognises the outstanding contribution made to health and safety of beach goers by volunteer and professional surf lifesavers;

(3) highlights that the economic value to the Australian economy of surf lifesaving's coastal drowning and injury prevention efforts in 2009-10 was independently assessed to be $3.6 billion;
(4) supports the important role played by surf lifesaving clubs in developing young people's health, fitness and leadership skills through an extensive junior program—which is a great strength of what the surf lifesaving clubs offer—and

(5) acknowledges the Coalition's commitment to implement a $10 million fund if elected into government to:

(a) assist clubs to purchase vital rescue equipment, first aid and medical supplies; and
(b) extend the Beach Drowning Black Spot Reduction Program.

I am sure everyone in this House would agree that that is a worthy goal.

The other issue that we often ignore as well is the amount of knowledge that is held within all of those surf lifesaving clubs and their members about the coastal communities, about local water, about the local area and about the coastal waters and beaches. The knowledge that is within those clubs is almost second to none and it is often overlooked as a resource at any time. Whether it is in the time of a crisis or just in managing those local environments, they are a wonderful source of knowledge and information.

In my part of the world—all the members here are talking about their local clubs—I have the surf lifesaving clubs of Bunbury, Binningup, Busselton, Dalyellup and Margaret River. I know that they would appreciate it if they were able to secure on average an extra $5,000 a year, I am sure that all of the 310 clubs in Australia would use that in the way that we would want them to.

Of course, part of the plan is reducing drownings—a very important method that we could use to assist in what they do for us. We all know that every time we go out and about in our electorates—those of us whose electorates have a coastline—it is pretty unlikely that you would not see someone out on the water for some purpose, whether they are windsurfing, swimming, in a boat or fishing. Australians around this nation love to live on the coast, and part of that is a love of the water and a need and a want to interact. That is why our surf lifesavers are so important. It is estimated that 100 million visitors visit the beach. Eighty per cent of us visit the beach at some point every year, for some purpose. By the smiles around this chamber right now, I would say it involves all pretty well of us who sit here today. You can see it even in my part of the world. I have Margaret River, which is known internationally for its surfing, amongst the wine and the food.

Of course, with those volunteers I do not think any of us in this place would underestimate the work of Surf Life Saving Australia, the Royal Life Saving Society and AUSTSWIM in making sure that as many Australians as possible have access to world-class water safety programs—and they are world class; because of the nature of our coastline we do have world class water safety programs. I think that something else that we underestimate as a nation is how good our surf lifesaving clubs are and how much they have done for us in that regard to bring us up to be a world leader. There is a lot that is learned by other countries about what we do here in Australia. Yes, we do have a lot of coastline to deal with. Every day that you see the surf lifesavers out there you realise that the majority are volunteers. We do not underestimate the work of our volunteers in any sense.

I just wanted to touch on the clubs in my electorate. The Bunbury club was the second in Western Australia to be formed. It was founded in 1915. When you look at that club, they...
have been around such a long time and done a fantastic job. Last year was an absolutely incredible achievement because the City of Bunbury Surf Life Saving Club made history. It became the first ever Western Australian regional surf lifesaving club to be awarded the Surf Life Saving Australia Club of the Year title.

That is a massive achievement for a relatively small community to be named the Surf Life Saving Club of the year. They were just so excited. When I went to the function that they had, they were just beside themselves. This year they held the national board meeting in Bunbury. I think that was a pretty fitting result for the club that had done so well. It was a fantastic event. Peter and Denise Duncan have worked tirelessly. Their engagement with families is something that not only other surf lifesaving clubs ought to look at but also other clubs that want to learn more about how better to engage people ought to have a good look at.

They do a fantastic job, to the extent that Denise Duncan was named the DHL Volunteer of the Year. She is of course an integral part of the City of Bunbury Surf Life Saving Club. Denise epitomises what so many of our volunteers do around Australia. She does the patrol hours. She is the director of surf sports on the board of management. She is the under-eight age group manager on Sunday mornings. She is the board, swim and iron man coach and conducts eight to 10 sessions a week, and is head coach for all disciplines. She has administration duties. She is responsible for writing fortnightly e-news, surf sports entries and Sunday morning senior activities. She is a mentor for age group managers. She is responsible for regional coaching and athlete development for all five regional clubs. She is a level zero coaching course presenter and has brought 12 new coaches into the club. She is an event coordinator. She is part of the centenary committee. This is the sort of work that we see all around Australia through our surf lifesaving clubs. They are often not seen, but they are very active. They also conduct a major fun-run and the ocean classic paddle—some fantastic events.

We have the Busselton Junior Life Saving Club. It currently comprises of 165 junior and 30 social members. Their members are aged from five to 15. They do a great job as well with their surf lifesaving club. Binningup, as I mentioned, is a really small beachfront settlement. It is about 22 kilometres long. They have a great group. The Binningup Surf Life Saving Club was founded in 2002 and they patrol the beach on Sundays between November and March. I also mentioned Margaret River. You would know that Kelly Slater has surfed there. And there is a local Busselton boy that we all know, Taj Burrow. He has done a lot of surfing at Margaret River. Margaret River has a very effective group at Surfers Point. Not only do they have the Margaret River Pro every year; they have a challenging part of the coast line to patrol.

There are basically 75 top class surf breaks spread over 130 kilometres from Cape Naturaliste to Cape Leeuwin. Yes, we know the surfers are spoilt for choice, but you would also understand that that brings a great level of effort and work by the volunteer surf lifesaving members, and they discharge their responsibilities very effectively in my part of the world.

I go back to the opportunity that is offered to young people. You see the young people on the beaches on a Sunday or training during the week, out there in a healthy environment. They have great mentors in the members of the surf lifesaving clubs. It is a great family environment. It is a healthy occupation for them. It is competitive in a sense, but I have never
seen so many happy young people and so many happy mature-age people who take great pleasure not only in providing such a wonderful service on our beaches and in the water but also in creating the next generation of young people to take on these roles that are so greatly needed in a continent like Australia. I commend all of them for their volunteer work.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I thank the member and congratulate the club in her area for the awards they have achieved. I now call on the surf lifesaver from Dobell.

Mr CRAIG THOMSON (Dobell) (12:49): I acknowledge your contribution, Mr Deputy Speaker, to surf lifesaving not just here in the parliament by founding Parliamentary Friends of Surf Life Saving but by being a life member in Tasmania and by committing a large, very important part of your life to the Australian surf lifesaving movement, which is something that should be put on record and acknowledged.

Surf lifesaving on the Central Coast, as in many parts of the country, is part of the way of life. Everyone goes to the beach on the Central Coast. We have 15 surf lifesaving clubs there; they are part of the culture. People get married at surf lifesaving clubs, people have their christenings at surf lifesaving clubs. Surf lifesaving clubs are what the Central Coast is about, and I am sure that that is a similar experience to that of many other MPs who are able to talk here today in relation to this motion.

This Saturday, of course, is the starting of patrols again on the Central Coast and in many places around the country. We will have the annual raising of the flag ceremony at Shelly Beach at 10 o'clock this Saturday and once again we will have the red and yellow army of volunteers making sure that beaches across the Central Coast are safe for people to swim at.

Last year 895 lives were saved on the Central Coast by volunteer lifesavers, and almost 40,000 bathers were prevented from getting into difficulties by surf lifesavers on the Central Coast. We can just imagine what would be the case without them. It is important that we take the time to acknowledge not just the great work I am talking about on the Central Coast but also the great work that surf lifesavers do throughout Australia.

The President of Surf Life Saving Central Coast, Stuart Harvey, has pointed out to me, knowing that I would be speaking on this matter today, that, of the 2,400 patrolling members, they provided some 87,129 man hours in terms of volunteer time that they had put aside to make sure that our beaches were safe. I know that the motion talks about the economic costs and savings that we have because of volunteer surf lifesaving. If one could imagine having to pay for professional lifesavers for an additional 87,000 hours just on the Central Coast, one can see quite easily where the $3.6 billion of economic value we get from our surf lifesaving volunteers comes about.

The Director of Surf Life Saving Central Coast, Brett Beswick, has asked me to put on record, and make sure that people know, that they have been busy over winter as well. One of the things we often do not realise with surf lifesaving is that, while patrols may not have been going, they have been very busy this winter in making sure that plans are in place, that training is up to date and that they are going to be ready from this Saturday to provide the service that is there. While we have so many members who are active patrol members, there are also a considerable number of volunteers who assist behind the scenes to make sure that surf lifesaving is conducted in the professional manner in which it is and is able to achieve what it does by making sure that people's lives are saved.
I would also like to put on record my thanks and the thanks of the community to Chad Griffith, who was for many years the CEO of Surf Life Saving Central Coast. Chad left in the last six months, but he is not lost to surf lifesaving. He is with Westpac Rescue, which patrols my part of the world, and will continue to be very much a friend of surf lifesaving on the Central Coast. In putting this on the record and acknowledging the work he has done, I would also like to welcome Chris Parker, who was a very active surf lifesaver and part of the Nutri-grain Surf Ironman Series. He has now taken on the role of the CEO, Surf Life Saving Central Coast.

We have, as I said, 15 clubs on the Central Coast. Seven of them are in my electorate, those being the Wamberal Surf Life Saving Club, Shelly Beach Surf Life Saving Club, Toowoon Bay Surf Life Saving Club, the Entrance and the North Entrance surf life saving clubs, Soldiers Beach Surf Life Saving Club and the Lakes Surf Life Saving Club. We have many clubs there. It is interesting that when I was talking to the President of the Wamberal Surf Life Saving Club he reminded me that in fact it was a Labor Premier, Neville Wran, that made a small donation and turned the first sod to make sure that the Wamberal Surf Life Saving Club was actually built. The club then got a loan from Westpac and that was the birth of Westpac's involvement in surf lifesaving, because Westpac then had further discussions with the club and they reached an arrangement that the loan would become a sponsorship, and things have moved on from there in terms of the role that Westpac have played with surf lifesaving. But it is worth noting that it was a Labor Premier who put in the initial $5,000 to make sure that that particular club got up and going.

In recent times, only two weeks ago, I had a meeting with the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Mr Albanese, with the executive of Surf Life Saving Central Coast. We met to talk about specific issues in relation to training and resources. We did so at the Shelly Beach Surf Life Saving Club, a club completely rebuilt with federal government funding. It opened last year, and the cost of $2.5 million was entirely paid for by the federal government. Just up the road is the Soldiers Beach club, again, an old club with a grand history. It has always been very innovative, particularly in relation to rubber duckies—it was probably the first club in Australia in that regard. The club was falling down and this government again came to the party and put in another $2.5 million to see it rebuilt. So this government has had a long history with surf lifesaving on the Central Coast and has made some very significant contributions to those two clubs in having them completely rebuilt.

The effect has been something that I am sure you, Deputy Speaker, would be very aware of, and that is that we have seen an immediate increase of over 30 per cent in people joining those two clubs. If you have the proper facilities and the proper accommodation for surf lifesaving then people do want to come and join, they do want to help and they want to give up their time to do so. That is certainly what has occurred both at Shelly Beach and at Soldiers Beach.

The other eight clubs on the Central Coast are not in my electorate, they are in the electorate of Robertson. They are also in the Gosford City Council area. I raise that because Councillor McFadden, a Labor member, many years ago made sure the council put a small levy on ratepayers, and so what we have seen is that all nine surf lifesaving clubs in the Gosford City Council area have been completely rebuilt. So a Labor council initiative made sure that surf lifesaving was looked after in that particular council area. Unfortunately, in the
Wyong Shire area that was not the case, but the Labor government stepped in and made sure they provided the much-needed funding to rebuild completely the Shelly Beach club and the great surf lifesaving facility we now have at Soldiers Beach.

Surf lifesaving throughout Australia plays a vital role in making sure that our beaches are safe. On the Central Coast it plays a greater role: it is part of our community; it is part of what we do every day. Everyone on the Central Coast has some connection to a surf lifesaving club—it is that important. We should acknowledge and give some thanks to the member for Gippsland for putting up this motion as it gives us the opportunity to talk about the great role that the surf lifesaving clubs do in the community. I would like to wish the best of luck to all our volunteer surf lifesavers, who from this Saturday will be out patrolling the beaches again, making sure that they are safe places for our families to swim at and for visitors to come there, and say, 'Well done, Surf Life Saving Australia.'

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

BUSINESS

Orders of the Day

Mr BYRNE (Holt) (13:00): I move;
I move:
That further proceedings on orders of the day Nos 2 and 3, government business, be conducted in the House.

Question agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

National Police Remembrance Day

Mr HAYES (Fowler) (13:01): Today, I seek to remind the House that National Police Remembrance Day is coming up on 29 September. Police remembrance is observed annually on St Michael's Day—St Michael being the patron saint of law enforcement. It is one of the most significant days in the national police calendar. It is a day that we join with our police throughout the country in remembering and honouring those whose lives were tragically cut
short in the line of duty. This year, sadly, we remember Senior Constable David James Rixon, who was tragically shot and killed in Tamworth on 2 March this year while conducting a routine traffic stop. Senior Constable Rixon was the only officer killed on duty this year, but his death is one too many. Today, I am wearing a blue and white tie that was struck in honour of Senior Constable Rixon by the Oxley Highway Patrol and the Tamworth Local Area Command. Senior Constable Rixon joined the New South Wales Police at aged 19. During his course of service, he was awarded the Police Medal, the National Medal and the first and second clasps. Only days after his tragic death, Commissioner Scipione presented his wife, Fiona Rixon, with three posthumous awards: the Commissioner's Valour Award for conspicuous merit and exceptional bravery while under fire, the Commissioner's Sesquicentenary Citation and the National Police Service Medal.

The bravery of our police men and women and their dedication to serving and protecting our community should never be taken for granted. We are forever in their debt. We also remember the loved ones left behind, those whose lives have been affected forever with the passing of a partner, a father, mother, brother or sister. We owe it to the fallen to look after their families and, in that respect, I pay particular regard to the efforts and commitment of Police Legacy.

Senior Constable Rixon left behind a loving wife, Fiona, and six children, Ranae, Jemma, Scott, Matthew, Hayley and Patrick, and his mother, on that tragic day, lost her only son. We cannot forget these families. Last weekend, I participated in the Wall to Wall Motorcycle Ride in honour of fallen officers. The ride also raises funds for the important work of Police Legacy. The theme of the ride was 'Remembering our mates'. This year, over 1,200 police officers, their friends and supporters from all over Australia, took part in the ride, which culminated in an assembly in King's Park at the National Police Memorial in Canberra. This year, apart from Senior Constable Rixon, three other names were added to the police memorial in honour of officers killed but who were previously omitted. As my father was a New South Wales police officer, and having grown up in a police family—like the Member for Cook—I have always greatly valued the difficult and all-too-often dangerous work that police can be called upon to undertake. Their selfless commitment to protecting the community was again clearly on display during the inexplicable violence of last weekend.

The Wall to Wall ride left the Domain in Sydney at 8.30 in the morning on a very pleasant Saturday morning; who could have predicted the violence that erupted later that day and in which a number of police officers were seriously injured? This demonstrates the unpredictability of police work but also emphasises that police must always be prepared to do what is necessary to protect our community, and that often includes putting themselves in harm's way. By its very nature, policing comes with a degree of risk that most of us, thankfully, will never have to face. We, as a community and as a nation, must stand behind our police. We must support the brave men and women who risk their lives on a daily basis in order to protect and serve our community. On behalf of a grateful community and nation, I would like to express my deep appreciation for the commitment and the dedication of those men and women who have the courage to wear the police uniform.

Mr MORRISON (Cook) (13:06): I rise to speak in favour of the motion moved by the member for Fowler, and I commend the member for Fowler who is, as he mentioned, also the son of a police officer who has dedicated his entire working life to serving our community in
New South Wales. So I support the motion and I thank the member for Fowler for bringing this motion into this place. In doing so, I acknowledge the many other members in this place who have a connection not only to our police force, as it is now gladly known in New South Wales, but also to those who have an association with police forces around the country, including the member for Solomon, whose husband is a serving member of the Northern Territory Police Force. Of course, the member for Macarthur was a serving member of the New South Wales Police Force before coming to this place. He continues to serve his community in this place in the same way.

I was privileged to have the honour earlier this year to speak in this place on the 150th anniversary of the New South Wales Police Force. On 1 March a sea of blue marched from the Marine Area Command up George Street to Town Hall in Sydney to pay tribute to the longstanding service and commitment of our police force. Our police do vital work that often goes unnoticed, but not unappreciated, in our communities. It is one of those jobs where it is a good day if you have not been called upon by them.

Sadly, as the member for Fowler mentioned in his words today, what we saw in Sydney on the weekend was a bad day. It was a day when New South Wales police had to go and do a very important job, and that was to enforce the law. Laws were broken on the weekend. There is one rule, there is one law, for all Australians in this country, and all Australians, regardless of our heritage, must respect those laws. Where those rules and laws are broken, the good men and women of the New South Wales Police Force and forces in other places will be called upon by us to go and enforce those laws, as they did on the weekend—at great risk of injury to themselves. I am sure I speak for all members of this place in condemning what we saw on the weekend—not just the violence, not just the nature of the protest, but the tone of that protest and the unspeakable things that children were holding up as signs. It is our police who we ask to go and stand up for us on these occasions, as they have in so many difficult situations in the past.

Policing is a distinguished job, and I know well the pride felt by those who wear the uniform, men and women who daily risk their own safety to protect our communities. In this place I particularly recognise the work of our local officers in the shire, Superintendent Julian Griffiths of the Sutherland Local Area Command, and Superintendent Greg Antonjuk of the Miranda Local Area Command who lead a sterling team. The Sutherland LAC numbers 143 officers, and 126 officers work out of the Miranda LAC.

As the member for Fowler has mentioned, I also pay my respects and give honour to those who have lost their lives in the service of our community in New South Wales. Police Commissioner Andrew Scipione, I think the finest commissioner to ever wear the hat, said at the weekend that in New South Wales alone we have lost 251 officers over the last 150 years.

Senior Constable Rixon was the last to have been tragically lost to us, in that incident in Tamworth in March this year when he was shot by an offender who had a weapon that they had been able to purchase. It had found its way into their hand and, on that fateful day, was fired into Senior Constable Rixon, whose family must live with the consequences of that fateful day for the rest of their lives. As a member of a police family, my heart goes out to them and the too many officers who have fallen in the line of duty on our behalf over all of these years. The families are protected by those who served in uniform. They try to keep their stories away from their families, as I know in my own case, but we respect them. We love...
them and thank them for what they do, and the honour they give to the names of our own families when they go and do this: not just in the name of the New South Wales Police Force but also as our fathers, our brothers, our sisters, our uncles, our aunts, our nephews, our nieces, our sons and our daughters. They do an extraordinary job on behalf of all of us.

I really do thank the member for Fowler for once again, as he has done on so many occasions, bringing motions such as this one into this place to ensure that we recognise them in the way that we do. We will have to call on them many, many more times in the future, as we all know. I am just very thankful that there are men and women in our community who are still, despite the risk, prepared to stand up and serve our community as police officers in New South Wales.

Mrs D'ATH (Petrie) (13:11): It is an honour to stand and support this motion about the National Police Remembrance Day. I also thank the member for Fowler for the motions he brings before this House, but importantly the work he continues to do advocating on behalf of our men and women who serve as police officers across this country. We all need to remember the sacrifice that these men and women make and the risks that they take. It was only last week that my 12-year-old daughter said to me, 'Mummy, do you ever worry about dad not coming home?' He is a police officer. It is the first time she has ever asked this question. I responded: 'No, because I know he is well trained and daddy knows what he is doing. He is also supported by his fellow police men and women who work with him, and he is doing a very, very important job for our community.'

I just want to acknowledge, as we lead up to the National Police Remembrance Day on 29 September, all those men and women who serve. I know personally, whether it is simply pulling over a car on the highway or whether it is knocking on someone's door, the police are well aware of the risks that they face on what might seem like a pretty simple task to the broader community. What we saw on the weekend was that our police service is there to serve in so many ways, including where protests get out of hand and are violent.

The violent riots and protests that we saw on the weekend are just inexcusable in a free democratic society like ours. Of course we should have free speech. Of course we should have the right to protest. But that should be done in a respectful way and never, ever should we condone violence. Eight police officers were injured on the weekend because of those protests and that should never be condoned by any community, any religion. I know that the broader Islamic community do not support that action either.

In the short time I have today, I want to acknowledge the most recent tragic losses of life: Senior Constable David James Rixon from Tamworth in March this year and Senior Constable Damian Leeding, who we lost just over a year ago in Queensland. I know it has been over a year since his passing, but I want to assure his family, his wife and his children, that they remain in our thoughts always. I thank Police Legacy for the work they do in supporting families when there is a tragic loss. I know they do a lot of work to support those families. On 28 September this year, the National Police Remembrance Day will be recognised at the Canberra National Police Memorial. On that day there will be 754 names on that memorial. We need to stop and remember our fallen colleagues on that day.

I want to thank the 1,200 police officers who participated in the wall-to-wall ride last weekend. It is fantastic that so many people went out and supported them. I know it was not just police officers; the member for Fowler has commented that he participated. That is
fantastic that so many people came out to recognise not just our fallen police officers but, of course, the great work that our serving police officers do every single day in our community.

On 29 September the Queensland Police Service will be holding services. There will be a Brisbane National Police Remembrance Day candlelight vigil. This will be held at the Police Memorial in George Street, Brisbane, on Thursday, 27 September, commencing at 7 pm and also the Brisbane National Police Remembrance Day Memorial Service will be held at Albert Street Uniting Church in Anne Street, Brisbane, on Friday, 28 September, commencing at 10 am. The church service will be preceded by a march from police headquarters to Albert Street Uniting Church at 9.15 am and I encourage Queenslanders to go out and support that march and that service and to recognise the great service of the men and women.

On behalf of all the families—I know it is not just the serving police officers; it is their wives, their husbands, their family members and their children—we do recognise the great work they do. Our broader community recognises the great work they do. We need to recognise that they are our protectors, they are our heroes in our local communities and they do an amazing job. On 29 September we should all stop and remember those who have given the ultimate sacrifice in protecting our communities.

Mr EWEN JONES (Herbert) (13:16): I also rise to speak to the motion proposed by the member for Fowler on National Police Remembrance Day. We are a tolerant society and we are an understanding society. We are that way due to, in no small part, the work done in our communities by each state and territory police service. We saw, only over the weekend, how police officers were attacked by a bunch of thugs reacting to something which happened overseas and flouting the laws of this land in protest. That our police were there and held the line and did not retaliate in the way many people in this country may have wished speaks volumes about the integrity of the men and women who form our police services. It is a very dangerous job and one where the people, in taking on the career, were made very aware of the dangers. But they are fine with that, because they have the training and the equipment and the partners to deal with each moment. It is the families of police officers who are left to worry. It is the children of police officers, as we have just heard from the member for Petrie, and it is the children of our ADF personnel, who have, on too many occasions, been forced to go without a loving dad or mum.

In Townsville we have the North Queensland Police Academy, and I am pleased to hear that the LNP government of Queensland is producing more cops for the beats in Queensland. The Queensland Police Service takes the safety of its members very seriously and works towards the day when there will be no lives lost at all. That is the goal. My city has a very good relationship with the Queensland Police Service. In fact, the Townsville Bulletin awards a special copper every year with its Townsville Bulletin North Queensland Police Officer of the Year Award. This year it was won by Detective Sergeant Mark Hogenelst from Charters Towers. I only met him briefly to congratulate him, but he must be a super bloke and a great copper. He beat Senior Sergeant John Tantalo from Halifax Police Station and Brad Gough from Deeralgun and Rollingstone police stations. I know Brad mainly by reputation. If he is not having his head shaved for a cure, he is running raffles at the Rollingstone pub, raising money for some community and, in particular, the Rollingstone and Mutarnee state schools. All this is done on his days off. He, like so many of our police men and women, has been in the service for a long time. Brad has over 30 years of service. The previous winner of this...
award was from Palm Island. So being a policeman is not just a big city job; it is a regional and rural job as well and they take their job all over the place.

We want our police to hold the values of our society at their core. We want our police to hold the attributes of integrity, fairness, equity, professionalism and confidence as a mirror to how we want our own communities to be viewed. Too often we hear of police officers being spat on and worse. To meet with the men and women of our police service is to meet mums and dads from our schools and our sporting and community clubs. But they have to go into places where we never have to venture. They have to deal with people who take, without thought of consequences.

I am an auctioneer by trade and I always say that auctions are you meet the best of people and the worst of people. In the police service you could probably say the same. They are the first in when there is any sort of trouble and we expect them to hold a higher account of themselves than others would. To retiring Queensland Police Commissioner Bob Atkinson I say thank you for a job well done. To his successor, Ian Stewart, I wish you well and I know that the welfare of your officers is at your call. So whether it is standing on the side of the road making sure that we are not killing each other on the highways, whether it is patrolling up and down Flinders Street East in the middle of the night making sure two drunks do not kill themselves as they go around punching walls, our police are out there to help us—and that should be remembered.

I pay tribute to the hardworking men and women of Queensland and Australia's police services. I look forward to 29 September when we can show our respects, in two weeks. I pay great respect to those people who have lost their lives while carrying out their duty. I extend my heartfelt condolences to the families who have lost someone in the line of duty.

Mrs ELLIOT (Richmond—Parliamentary Secretary for Trade) (13:20): I rise to speak on this very important motion which observes and acknowledges National Police Remembrance Day. Each year across Australia National Police Remembrance Day is observed at services held on 29 September. It is on this day that we gather to remember those sacrifices made by so many police officers over the years. It is a very significant day of commemoration when people can reflect on each individual police force and remember those officers who have been killed very tragically whilst on duty.

As a former police officer, I was very pleased to be able to speak on this motion to acknowledge the outstanding work of our police forces right across the country and the challenges faced by a police. Whilst we often hear people talk about policing and that when working in the police you often see the worst of people, that often is true. I was in general duties where you are often in situations where you do see the worst of people. I think it is important to remember you also see the very best of people at times—individual members of our communities as well as your mates and other police officers—because you are relying on someone 100 per cent. It is fair to say you do see the worst and the best of people when you are in police work.

On National Police Remembrance Day we pause to ponder the lives and memories of those fine men and women who in serving and protecting our community had their lives tragically cut short. Whilst the day is a very significant day for police and police families, it is also a very important time for the community to gather and to reflect upon the invaluable service rendered by all of our police members. The community also feels the massive devastation and
loss when a police officer's life is taken, so it is an important occasion for them to express their condolences and their thanks to our police services. We must not forget the everyday sacrifices these men and women make to ensure that our families and our lives are kept safe day after day. That is why we are indebted to them and why the National Police Remembrance Day is so very important for our communities.

It is also important that on that day we acknowledge the pivotal role that police play in our community. It is not only the great sacrifice and risk that comes with the job but what an integral part of the community police are. That is true of police right across the country. I would like to reflect on the very special role police play in rural and regional areas where they are a very integrated part of their communities and have family linkages with so many groups, as do their families. Indeed, their families become a part of the wider community wherever they are stationed.

It is important to reflect on the history of the day. National Police Remembrance Day was instigated in April 1989, during the Conference of Commissioners of Police of Australasia and the South West Pacific Region. It was unanimously agreed that the service would be held on 29 September which is the day of Saint Michael, the patron saint of police. The National Police Memorial was opened in 2006 with the names of fallen officers inscribed in brass touchstones, including the respective officer's rank, name, jurisdiction and place and date of death. Of course, these names date back to the 1803 death of Constable Joseph Luker in Sydney. Last year, on the 29 September 2011, two names were added. Those two names are Sergeant Daniel Stiller and Detective Senior Constable Damian Leeding, both from Queensland. As a former Queensland police officer, I again express my condolences. Being located very close to the Gold Coast and as a former Gold Coast police officer, we share in our thoughts and prayers all of Damian Leeding's family and the great tragedy that occurred.

This year we take the time to remember Senior Constable David James Rixon who was shot and tragically killed in Tamworth on 2 March this year. David Rixon was a highway patrol officer who joined the New South Wales Police Force in 1990. He is survived by his wife, Fiona, and their six children. It is important to note that he spent more than half his life protecting the community. On this day our thoughts are also with those family members who have lost their loved ones and we certainly have them in our thoughts as well. We also acknowledge and thank the great work of Police Legacy, which many people have spoken about today. I note the member for Fowler spoke about the wall-to-wall motor cycle ride to raise valuable funds for Legacy. It was wonderful to have 1,200 people involved in such an outstanding community event, and we must always remember the great work that Legacy does.

In closing I would like to thank all of those wonderful police officers in my electorate of Richmond on the North Coast of New South Wales. They do an incredible job, often under very difficult circumstances, just by the very nature of our community and the large number of holiday-makers there. It is a very busy time for them most of the year, but they do a great job and I would certainly like to pass on my congratulations to them. I also look forward to meeting up with them on National Police Remembrance Day. I will join with them in remembering the dedication of all of our police officers when we have a joint commemoration service between Queensland and New South Wales.
Mr TUDGE (Aston) (13:26): I rise also to support this motion which supports National Police Remembrance Day, which in Victoria we commemorate as Blue Ribbon Day. This day was instigated in 1989 and is held on 29 September which is the feast day of Saint Michael, who is the patron saint of police. The Christian tradition recognises Saint Michael as a representative of many virtues and a spiritual warrior in conflict with evil. This motion and the day it observes provides an opportunity for us to honour all police who live their lives in service of our community and especially those who have given their lives serving the Australian and south-west Pacific communities.

Across Australia over 56,000 men and women daily put their lives in jeopardy, in the course of duty, to create a safe and peaceful nation where we can live our lives, raise our children, conduct our businesses and seek peace and justice in a well-ordered society. On National Police Remembrance Day, or Blue Ribbon Day, we particularly remember the 750 Australia police officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty—157 of whom were from Victoria. We pay tribute to them and their loved ones. Each member killed in the line of duty has meant that someone has lost a father, or a mother, or a husband, or a wife, or a son, or a daughter, or a brother, or a sister or a friend. We stop and we reflect and we remember each one of those people and we offer our condolences to those family members and friends who are left behind and who will still be grieving for their lost loved one.

Tragically three more police officers have been killed in the line of duty since 29 September last year: Senior Constable David James Rixon from Tamworth and Queensland police officers, Sergeant Daniel Stiller and Detective Senior Constable Damian Leeding. We pay particular tribute for the service of those three police officers and acknowledge the families of those police officers also. Could I also during this motion pay a particular tribute to Senior Constable Tony Clarke, who was from my electorate and tragically died in 2005. He was a member of the Knox Regional Traffic Task Unit that was on patrol on the Warburton Highway. It is alleged that he intercepted a vehicle and was about to administer a breath test when at some point the driver of the vehicle managed to take possession of his weapon and shot Constable Clarke in the process. That occurred back on 24 April 2005 and, being the representative for that area, I would like to pay tribute to his family on this day.

As well as remembering those fallen police officers through this motion, and on 29 September, we give thanks to all of the police men and women from across this country, all 56,000 of them—and 12,500 from Victoria. I particularly give thanks to police officers in my electorate, and I acknowledge the work of the Knox Police Station officers, which are ably led by Senior Sergeant John Hess and Senior Sergeant Phil Edmunds. I also acknowledge the work of the Rowville Police Station and the Boronia Police Station, led by Senior Sergeant Peter Trichias and Senior Sergeant Cliff Sunderland respectively. I give my personal thanks to the work of those men and women in those police stations. I have got to know many of them personally. I see them around the community regularly. They act with great professionalism and with great dignity, and they have a very visible presence in my electorate of Aston. I would like to pay tribute to them as well through this motion.

In conclusion, I refer back to the Blue Ribbon Foundation and note what they say on their website, which I would like to conclude with. They say:

157 … Police Officers have paid the ultimate sacrifice for their community.
We can do nothing to bring them back but as a grateful community we can take steps to honour their memory and ensure their sacrifice is acknowledged …

I hope that this motion of the federal parliament contributes to this aim.

Debate adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 13:31 to 16:00

BILLS

Privacy Amendment (Enhancing Privacy Protection) Bill 2012

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (16:01): The reforms in the Privacy Amendment (Enhancing Privacy Protection) Bill 2012 will improve responsible lending and reduce levels of indebtedness and defaults. In another significant amendment, the bill will provide new powers for the Australian Privacy Commissioner to handle complaints and to provide a wider range of enforceable remedies to consumers and direct government agencies to perform privacy impact assessments.

The bill implements key aspects of the Gillard government's first stage response to the report by the Australian Law Reform Commission. Let me briefly run through the main components of this bill. First, it will improve and update Australia's privacy law framework. Through these measures, it will create a single set of privacy principles that will be technology neutral for both the private sector and Australian government agencies. It will introduce a new, more comprehensive consumer-credit-reporting system. It will clarify and enhance the powers of the Privacy Commissioner, to advance the commissioner's ability to resolve complaints and to undertake investigations. It will also promote privacy compliance.

In terms of what this bill will mean for consumers, it will uphold transparency in the handling of personal information by requiring organisations to develop and publish more comprehensive privacy policies. It will make it easier for people to access and correct their credit-reporting information, which is particularly important. The Privacy Commissioner's powers to enforce compliance with the act will also be enhanced. Most importantly, this bill will protect victims of identity theft and fraud by providing them with the ability to prohibit for a specified period the disclosure of credit-reporting information about them without their consent. It will protect minors by prohibiting the collection of credit-reporting information about individuals under the age of 18.

Something I am sure will be very welcome is that this bill will clearly and tightly regulate the use of personal information for direct marketing by introducing a specific privacy principle directed at direct-marketing activity. It will prohibit the use of credit information for direct marketing. I know that this will be widely welcomed. I know that I get many complaints in my electorate from people who are being harassed through direct-marketing phone calls. Just on the weekend, I was clearing a whole lot of messages that had been left on my machine and noticed that there were a whole lot of overseas calls. I just wondered how many direct-marketing messages or calls have been made while I have been at work or out at night in the electorate. I was quite alarmed by the number and thought to myself, 'I must get
on that list.' The bill will strengthen the protection for an individual's information where it is disclosed outside Australia.

What this bill means for business is this—because it has an impact on business as well as on consumers. It makes certain that new privacy principles are technology neutral. It makes certain that the privacy principles are relevant to a technology driven environment, and it makes certain that they have the flexibility to adapt to new technology as it develops. It updates the credit-reporting provisions to take in hand the major changes that have taken place since they were first enacted in 1990. Furthermore, it makes the credit-reporting regime more flexible and less prescriptive by emphasising industry led complaint resolution. It also introduces a much more comprehensive credit-reporting system.

The specifics of this comprehensive reporting system will now include correct and timely information to enable improved risk assessment, increased competition and efficiency in credit markets, decreased levels of over indebtedness in default, and more responsible lending.

Let me briefly touch on the credit reporting aspects contained in this bill because they will permit some extra information about individuals to be included in the credit reporting system, including some repayment history information. The more inclusive credit reporting will ensure that the credit assessment process operates more effectively by providing sufficient information to credit providers so as to allow them to more accurately assess the risk of lending. Importantly, the bill includes safeguards to protect against the misuse of credit information, which is incredibly important. The example that has been used is that credit providers will now be obliged to help consumers correct their credit information if there is an error on their credit report. As I have noted, this bill will prohibit the collection of credit reporting information about individuals reasonably known to be under 18. This bill is the result of an extensive consultation process that began several years ago and the credit reporting industries in particular want to see this bill introduced. I commend this bill to the House.

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (16:06): I am also pleased to rise to speak to this Privacy Amendment (Enhancing Privacy Protection) Bill 2012. This bill, in many ways, has been a long time coming. It deals with a number of issues which I know my constituents care about greatly. It is amazing how much the world has changed. Back maybe 15 or 20 years ago, I 'accidentally'—I did it on purpose—went into one of those competitions where you could win a two-week holiday somewhere just by filling in the form. For the next three years, I was inundated with every time share proposal and holiday you could imagine because I had accidentally, as it turns out, got myself on a mailing list which was clearly for sale quite broadly.

Now, of course, the world is very much connected. Nowadays, we provide our details online all the time. I think that for the young, they probably do it several times a day, and we all know how quickly and easily that information can be shared. A lot of us suspect that it is shared much more than we would like and in ways that we would not expect.

In this online world, there is a need for privacy laws to be updated, and these amendments do just that. They will bring immense benefits to working families, and that is why we are tightening the rules around how companies and organisations can collect, use and disclose personal information. We are introducing a new privacy principle for direct marketing and
stronger protections for consumers when companies disclose personal information overseas. Again, this is an issue that all of us hear about from our constituents: this concern that large databases that contain their personal information, their financial information, important identifying information, are moved overseas for business purposes—there is a lot of concern about that. The new direct marketing privacy principle also will more tightly regulate the use of personal information for direct marketing.

The privacy principles will also require a higher standard of protection to be afforded for sensitive information, which includes health related information, such as DNA and biometric data; again, some of the newer kinds of information that we see now. There is also an incredibly important area which is in the national consumer credit area: we are making it easier for consumers to access and correct their personal credit information. Again, we all hear stories of people who have, for one reason or another, ended up with some bad credit information—sometimes it is not even accurate, sometimes it is not even theirs—and the difficulty that they have in correcting that information. This is the first major reform since Labor introduced credit reporting way back in 1990. This bill well and truly modernises the provisions that will make the credit reporting regime more flexible and less proscriptive by emphasising industry-led complaint resolution, which the industry has been asking for.

It will also see the introduction of positive credit information for the first time so that not only will a credit report show when a payment was late but when payments were made on time line. Again, this is something that people in my community and in the community generally have been asking for for some time, as have banks and financial institutions.

There are three key reforms in the bill. The new unified Australian Privacy Principles will apply equally to both the private and the public sectors for the first time. The principles will deal with the handling of personal information, including the collection, storage, security, use, disclosure and accuracy of information. A new principle will be introduced to specifically deal with direct marketing. There will also be more comprehensive credit reporting which will for the first time include the positive information that I referred to before in consumers' credit reports, supported by strong privacy protections for the information. There will be new powers for the Australian Privacy Commissioner to handle complaints and give remedies to consumers. The new powers will include the ability to accept enforceable undertakings and the ability to pursue civil penalties for serious breaches of privacy.

The key elements of the reform include a new privacy principle which more tightly regulates the use of personal information for direct marketing. It is more power to consumers to opt out of receiving those incredibly annoying direct marketing materials. The companies will have to provide a clear and simple way of opting out. The statement from the company must be prominent. We are all inundated with direct marketing materials and I, like many others, would welcome the opportunity to be able to opt out of that. It will also extend the privacy protections to unsolicited information and provide stronger and clearer rules around data quality and data correction. It will make it easier for consumers to access and correct credit information held about them. It will tighten the rules on sending personal information outside of Australia. Before an agency or private sector organisation discloses personal information to an overseas recipient, it will have to take reasonable steps to make sure the overseas recipient does not breach the Australian Privacy Principles. The agency or organisation will still remain responsible for the personal information even when it is in the
hands of the overseas recipient. It is only possible for responsibility to be passed on to the overseas recipient on extremely limited circumstances. That is incredibly important for those of us who give our information to an Australian company to understand that that company remains responsible for the information and has to conform to really quite strict rules if they pass that information to an overseas company.

The bill will also reform the consumer credit reporting system. Along with responsible lending reforms in the National Consumer Credit Protection Act 2009, these changes will mean that banks see more accurate information about the types of accounts families have and when they were opened and closed, current credit limits of accounts—but not the day-to-day balance, to protect privacy—and positive information about repayment history, for example when a credit card was paid off in time and not just information about overdue payments.

For consumers, the bill will promote transparency in the handling of personal information by requiring organisations to develop and publish more comprehensive privacy policies. It will make it easier for individuals to access and correct their credit reporting information and it will bolster the Privacy Commissioner's powers to enforce compliance with the act. It will protect victims of identity theft and fraud by providing them with the ability to prohibit for a specific period the disclosure of credit reporting information about them without their consent. It will protect minors by prohibiting the collection of credit reporting information about individuals under the age of 18. It will more clearly and tightly regulate the use of personal information for direct marketing by introducing a specific privacy principle directed at direct marketing activity. It will prohibit the use of credit information for direct marketing and strengthen the protection for an individual's information where it is disclosed outside of Australia. These are comprehensive reforms and with this bill the Gillard government has implemented more than half of the Australian Law Reform Commission's recommendations in the 2008 For your information report.

It is also good for business. It will ensure that the new privacy principles are technology neutral, relevant to a technology driven environment and have the flexibility to adapt to new technology as it develops. It will modernise the credit reporting provisions to address the significant changes which have taken place since they were first enacted in 1990 and it will make the credit reporting regime more flexible and less prescriptive by emphasising industry led complaint resolution.

The changes to comprehensive credit reporting are very good for business. They will ensure that the credit reporting system includes accurate and up-to-date information to enable improved risk assessment, increased competition and efficiency in credit markets, decreased levels of overindebtedness and default, and more responsible lending.

These are very good reforms. They are reforms which reflect the changing use of technology and the changing way we provide and share information, particularly in the online environment. They recognise the speed of change—that whatever technology is around now will probably be quite different in a very short period of time—and they recognise concerns consumers have had about the way their information moves through the business world and around the world. They are very good reforms and I commend the bill to the House.

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (16:16): I am very pleased to speak on the Privacy Amendment (Enhancing Privacy Protection) Bill 2012. From the outset, it is important to note that our information is out there in a lot of places, reflecting the way the world has changed.
People do not think twice about putting their details online when signing up to loyalty cards or to gym memberships. There are a whole range of different places you hand over your information these days.

While I think the convenience of being able to do these sorts of thing on the internet is great, we need to ensure that our privacy legislation keeps up with it. We need to ensure that people can be confident about handing over their information through these new media. That is important both for the private sector and the public sector. People in my electorate often express concern to me not only about how their information might be used by private organisations—giving it to third parties, for example—but also about how government departments might use it.

One of the key reforms in this bill is to provide for new, unified Australian privacy principles which will apply equally to the private sector and the public sector. These principles will deal with the handling of personal information, including the collection, storage, security, use, disclosure and accuracy of information. Importantly, a new principle will be introduced specifically to deal with direct marketing.

I am very pleased that the bill also provides and extends stronger protections for consumers in regard to disclosure of their information to overseas companies and organisations. While many members of the Australian public probably do not mind being exposed to direct marketing from time to time, this sharing of information is of concern to a lot of people that I speak with. I think it is very important the privacy principles keep in step with those concerns.

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Sitting suspended from 16:19 to 16:32

Ms RISHWORTH: As I was saying before the division, it is very important that we keep in step with the expectations of the public. I think one of the other important parts of the bill, as I was saying before about direct marketing materials, is that the bill also provides for a new privacy principle which will more tightly regulate the use of personal information for direct marketing. It will give more powers to consumers to opt out of receiving direct marketing materials, companies will have to have clear and simple ways of opting out and the statement from the company must be prominent. I think that is something a lot of consumers in my electorate will welcome. I also think extending privacy protections to unsolicited information is important, as are clearer rules around data quality and data correction.

I am not going to speak on every part of this legislation, but one of the important parts of it is that it provides for more comprehensive credit reporting which will for the first time include positive information in consumers' credit reports and be supported by strong privacy protections for this information. We know that people do use credit reports—companies use credit reports, as do banks, to look at whether or not there is a risk to providing a loan or product to a consumer—but often I have had constituents frustrated by the fact that this information has a black mark against their name and is not up to date, is not correct, is not transparent, leaves them unable to get a look at it and does not have positive information. They may have had a difficulty some time ago but have paid all their bills on time for, say, the last five years, and that information is not provided. So making sure the accurate information is provided in people's credit histories is really important for companies to ensure that they make accurate decisions but is also important for individuals. It is important that
these individual consumers who may get rejected for loans because of their credit rating actually be allowed to get that information, and I think this is a win-win situation that allows for responsible lending but also allows for individuals to get that information. I think that is a very important part.

The third key reform is new powers for the Australian Privacy Commissioner to handle complaints and give remedies to consumers. These new powers will include the ability to accept enforceable undertakings as well as the ability to pursue civil penalties for serious breaches of privacy. This gives the commissioner some teeth in order to pursue issues where there have been serious breaches of privacy. We know that from time to time that does happen. Now there will be an ability to use these new powers to ensure that there are ramifications when privacy is breached.

This builds on what the government has been doing in the area of privacy. I think the News of the World scandal really shone a light on how people's privacy can be breached. Of course, that was for prominent people. We need to ensure that it is not just famous people or people who are high profile who have their privacy protected but ordinary citizens as well. I think that is very, very important, and it is a very important reform. It builds on a whole range of things that we have been doing in this area. I certainly believe that we must continue to be vigilant to ensure that our privacy laws are in step with the community's views—as well as, of course, respecting the right of freedom of speech. That is obviously a very important right, but we need to ensure that privacy is maintained, especially as new technologies, new environments and new ways of marketing come to light, and that our laws and the ramifications for breaching those keep in step. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM (Braddon—Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry) (16:37): Good afternoon, colleagues. It gives me great pleasure to represent the Attorney-General, the Hon. Nicola Roxon, in discussing and summing up the Privacy Amendment (Enhancing Privacy Protection) Bill 2012. The Attorney-General would like to thank honourable members for their contribution to this important debate, particularly the members for Canberra, Parramatta, Kingston, Flinders and Stirling. She would also like to thank the House Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs for its advisory report and its detailed work in considering the bill.

The committee has recommended that the House pass this bill. It has also recommended that comprehensive educational material on the new privacy protections be made available. The House committee has asked that a number of issues, such as the Australia link issue, be reviewed 12 months after commencement. Today the government can commit to fulfilling these recommendations. The government may make further amendments in the Senate in response to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee's report.

It was Labor that introduced the Privacy Act in 1988, and once again Labor is reforming privacy law. This bill implements more than half of the Australian Law Reform Commission's 295 recommendations. It has been consulted on extensively, with the Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee considering exposure draft legislation in mid 2010 and inquiries occurring in the relevant committees of both the House and the Senate this year.

The bill protects consumers' privacy, particularly in this fast-changing, global, digital and internet accessible world. For example, it puts extra obligations on big companies which send
personal information overseas. The bill makes it easier for consumers to opt out of receiving unwanted direct-marketing material. Companies will also have to develop detailed privacy policies which are clear and easily accessible to consumers.

Stricter rules will apply to sensitive information, including health, DNA and biometric data, and credit-reporting agencies will be banned from collecting data about children. Consumers will have a right to access and correct their credit reports, and comprehensive credit reforms will enhance responsible lending obligations, reduce the cost of credit and lower default rates.

The bill gives the Commonwealth Privacy Commissioner the power to get an enforceable outcome—for example, an apology, a retraction, a take-down notice or, indeed, compensation from a court. The commissioner will be able to direct companies to complete a privacy impact assessment, encourage parties to use conciliation to resolve disputes, and apply to the courts for a civil penalty order. New civil penalties range from $2,200 for an individual through to $1.1 million for a company. For serious and repeated breaches of privacy, companies may be liable for more than $1 million.

The Gillard Labor government—this government—has acted to protect privacy in an increasingly online and digital world, which a number of the members, including the member for Kingston, have pointed out. Once again, it is the Labor Party which is looking after families and individuals as they apply for a loan or credit card online, buy footy tickets on their iPhones and pay the weekly bills online. Labor is making sure that families and individuals can get a practical remedy if their privacy is breached.

The member for Flinders has noted that in the age of communication we must weigh and balance competing principles, particularly between privacy, national security, commercial information and social engagement. The Attorney-General would like to thank the member for Flinders for his support for stopping unwanted and pestering direct marketing, establishing new Australian Privacy Principles, and introducing comprehensive credit reporting. The member for Stirling, in his contribution, raised four concerns. They were about Australian Privacy Principle 8, de-identified data, commencement of the bill and complaints mechanisms. A number of these concerns will in fact be addressed in the review that the House committee has recommended. Also, these issues were all raised in the Senate committee process, and the government will respond to any recommendations from this committee. Both the member for Flinders and the member for Stirling were disappointed when this bill was debated on 23 August 2012 that the House committee had not reported on the bill. The House committee has now reported, and the government has accepted the three recommendations in full. The Attorney-General would like to thank the Liberals for their support of this bill.

This bill is one of the most significant reforms to privacy law since Labor introduced the act in 1988. The measures in this bill have been carefully considered and extensively consulted on. The Attorney-General particularly wishes to acknowledge Senator Trish Crossin and Mr Graham Perrett MP, member for Moreton, for their detailed analysis of this bill in their respective committees. She would also like to thank the numerous stakeholders, from the industry associations to the law reform and privacy advocates, for their detailed discussions, arguments and feedback into this parliamentary process. She is confident that the
government has struck the right balance in the privacy law in this bill. I, as the member for Braddon and parliamentary secretary, commend this bill to the House.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Ordered that this bill be reported to the House without amendment.

STATEMENTS ON INDULGENCE

London Paralympic Games

Debate resumed.

Mr HARTSUYKER (Cowper) (16:44): I welcome the opportunity to speak on the Paralympic Games, because last Thursday I had the extraordinary privilege to be in Sydney to welcome home our Paralympians from London. The mass of cameras and VIPs, including the Acting Prime Minister and the opposition leader, was a fitting welcome home for these amazing athletes. One hundred and sixty-one Australian athletes competed in the 14th summer Paralympic Games in London. These athletes brought home some 85 medals, including 32 gold medals, in our most successful Paralympics since Sydney. The Australian team finished fifth on the medal table, notably ahead of the United States, Germany and France.

I was able to attend the Paralympics for three days towards the end of competition. London is to be commended on fanatically supporting the Paralympics. The stadiums and arenas were full. The crowds were huge. The atmosphere at the aquatic centre was electric, and the main stadium was filled to capacity for the athletics, where the racing was exceptional. As a spectacle, the final of the men's 5,000 metre wheelchair race was up there with anything in the Olympics, with Australian legend Kurt Fearnley just missing out on a gold medal. I had the privilege of being involved in two medal ceremonies at the aquatic centre, including one of the gold medal ceremonies for Australian golden girl of the pool, Jacquie Freney. Jacquie won eight gold medals at the games, making her the most successful athlete at a single Paralympics. Not only did she demonstrate extraordinary stamina and determination to win so many events; Jacquie has consistently maintained a positive, approachable attitude. She is a wonderful role model for any young person seeking to make their way in the world.

Another athlete to make his mark on the record books at the London games was swimmer Matt Cowdrey. At the London Paralympics Matt became Australia's most successful Paralympic athlete ever, with a tally of 13 gold medals and 23 medals in total.

I would also like to mention Bill Latham, a Paralympian from my electorate. Bill attended John Paul College in Coffs Harbour and now is a forward in the Australian wheelchair basketball team, the Rollers. The Rollers made it all the way to the gold-medal match, along the way beating the United States. They narrowly lost the final to Canada, but the team and Bill can be immensely proud having won a silver medal. Unfortunately not every Australian athlete could bring home a medal, but in my mind, every Australian Paralympian is a champion, regardless of their result in London. Each of these athletes has overcome extraordinary adversity to reach the highest levels of elite sport. Baron de Coubertin's Olympic Creed is a timely reminder that sport is not always about winning, and he said:
The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win, but to take part, just as the most important thing in life is not to triumph but to struggle. The essential thing is not to have conquered but to have fought well.

Sport tests character and perseverance. It is a challenge to run faster, throw further, jump higher or perform better than ever before. Sport is about pushing through mental barriers, overcoming physical limitations and growing as an individual.

Perhaps the most inspirational athlete at the games, among the thousands of inspirational stories, was Ahmed Kelly. Ahmed was born in Iraq, with severe limb deformities, and spent the first seven years of his life in a Baghdad orphanage. He was brought to Australia for medical treatment in 1998, eventually losing both his arms and legs. Ahmed learnt to walk and run on prosthetic legs. After years of playing Aussie rules with his local team Kilmore in Victoria, he turned his attention to swimming in 2008. Ahmed narrowly missed out on a bronze in the 50 metre breaststroke. Every athlete on Australia's Paralympic team has an amazing story to tell of persistence and determination. Unfortunately time does not permit me to talk about every athlete.

Channel 4 in the UK aired an inspirational advertising campaign in the lead-up to the Paralympics, encouraging people to meet the superhumans. I witnessed the games and met our athletes. Without doubt, they are indeed superhumans. The Paralympic Games certainly embody the very spirit of sportsmanship, the very way in which we believe sport should be undertaken. The roar of the crowd was for the winners but also for those who might be coming last. It would seem that no matter where you finished the roar of the crowd was deafening.

I would also like to commend the Australian Paralympic Committee, who put a team into the field as prepared as they could possibly be. I would like to particularly commend Greg Hartung as the chairman of the Australian Paralympic Committee, and Jason Hellwig our Chef de Mission. Our Australian team, and the support staff and administrators, did Australia proud. They were highly professional in everything they did, and I am sure we will be a force to be reckoned with in Rio de Janeiro, when again our Paralympic team will certainly be gracing the gold medals and the medal dais on many occasions.

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (16:49): I am very pleased to rise to add my voice to congratulate the more than 160 of our best athletes that competed, representing Australia, in London at the 2012 Paralympic Games. I think it is really important that, for many, the pinnacle of one's sporting career is to represent your country at an Olympic Games. I watched a number of the events, and I have to say the dedication, the toil and the focus these elite athletes put into their sports is really amazing, and many of them were able to achieve great success.

I wish to briefly mention two Olympians who are from my electorate of Kingston and who were very successful at this games. The first is Stephanie Morton. Stephanie is a 21-year-old resident of Moana Heights who was awarded a gold medal in cycling at the 2012 London Paralympic Games. Pilot rider Stephanie and her cycling partner Felicity Johnson set a Paralympic record by winning the tandem one-kilometre time trial. Stephanie has achieved significant success as an individual cyclist but she decided to ride and support her partner Felicity Johnson, who is legally blind, at the recent Paralympic Games. Stephanie and her
partner went into the race as world champions, and they have said that winning their first Paralympic gold medal was the last box to tick off their list of goals.

Stephanie has been cycling for five years after giving up badminton, which she played for 15 years, and I understand that Stephanie was only six years old when she announced to her school class that she was going to compete at the Olympics. Indeed, she now has. Stephanie is now looking to focus on her individual cycling, and perhaps we will see her competing as an individual cyclist at the Olympics sometime soon. I say congratulations to Stephanie and her partner Felicity for their gold medal at this Olympics.

The second Paralympian I would like to recognise is Kieran Modra. Kieran is a resident of Hallet Cove and is legally blind. Kieran broke the world record to claim his fifth gold medal in cycling at the 2012 London Paralympic Games in the four-kilometre individual pursuit. Kieran made his debut in Seoul in 1988 in athletics. He then switched to swimming at Barcelona in 1992 and first competed in cycling in 1996. London was his seventh games. I have to say I have chatted to Kieran before and he is certainly an incredibly dedicated sportsman who has real focus and real commitment.

Kieran and his pilot rider were on the tandem bike. His pilot rider was Scott McPhee. They also qualified for the men's one-kilometre track and the men's time trial and men's road race in London. This is all the more remarkable as late last year Kieran broke a collarbone in a training run and shortly after was lucky to survive a car accident while riding to work. Kieran broke his neck and back but his recovery was much quicker than any of his doctors expected. Kieran said the support he received from the Australian and South Australian institutes of sport was critical to his recovery. Despite these significant setbacks, Kieran literally got back on his bike, and we have seen a stellar performance from him in London 2012.

Kieran started out competing in mixed competitions, and that is where he met his wife and went on to win the gold medal in Atlanta in 1996, but he is now specialising in endurance events such as the four-kilometre individual pursuit. When my office asked Kieran how he was taking in this win, he said he is still letting it all sink in.

I wanted to specifically mention those two athletes from my local electorate, but all around Australia we have seen some wonderfully stunning performances in the Paralympics. As the previous speaker mentioned, some have managed to bring home a medal; for some it was just competing that was should be very proud of. I think the Paralympics shows us the strength of what can be achieved with focus, endurance, commitment and drive. To all the Olympians and all the Paralympians, especially the Australian team: congratulations. I look forward to seeing a similar level of spirit and competition in four years time.

Mr IRONS (Swan) (16:54): I rise to join the supporters of this motion and congratulate our paralympic team that represented this country so well in London. They represented the country well not only in terms of the results they achieved but also in their overall attitude, sense of sportsmanship and fair play, which was a credit to themselves and to the nation. The motto for the games was 'Inspire a generation', and Australia's paralympians certainly have inspired us all with their representation of themselves and Australia in London. The sense of pride that the country feels was recognised at the homecoming last week, at the joyous celebration in Sydney. It was a genuine celebration of achievement, but more than that, the celebration of an event that has put disability sport on the map. As the London organising committee chairman, Sebastian Coe, said at the closing ceremony, it has changed the way we
look at disability sport. Our athletes for the first time competed at packed venues in every sport; 2.7 million tickets were sold and the event was given widespread coverage across the world, with the exception, maybe, of NBC in America. The Paralympics are no longer a sideshow and have become part of the main event, and we hope that this will act as a fantastic inspiration for Australians with a disability to get involved and to participate in sport wherever they can.

I was able to attend the paralympic launch event in parliament before the team set off for London, and it was a particularly exciting moment knowing that Colin Harrison from Victoria Park in my electorate of Swan would be representing Australia in the three person keel boat sonar class. Colin finished sixth with his team mates Jonathon Harris and Stephen Churm, not as good as their performance in Beijing, but nonetheless a magnificent achievement of which they can be proud. Sailing had been a long held passion for Colin but after he lost his right arm to cancer he momentarily gave up the sport before deciding to continue. He went on to compete for his nation. We are all glad he made that decision. Well done, Colin.

Our paralympians were fortunate enough to compete at some terrific venues across London, not least the Olympic Park in Stratford, a site that was formerly an industrial wasteland as recently as 2005. Before venues could even begin to be constructed, the soil had to be decontaminated, a fridge mountain cleared, and other industrial remnants removed. In the process of creating the Olympic Park, waterways were cleared, vegetation planted, and now wildlife has been returned to this area of East London in a major practical environment effort of real action on the ground. The result is 2.5 hectares of new parkland. It reminds me of the development that we hope is soon to become part of the new WA multipurpose stadium which will be in the suburb of Burswood in my electorate of Swan. The site for the stadium is actually a former rubbish dump, so we can relate that to the fridge mountain that was in the UK. It is another example of how land use can change over time.

On this subject, it was disappointing to hear the WA Labor Party announce last week that if they win the next state election, due to be held early next year, they will scrap the decision to build the new stadium at Burswood and instead build it at Subiaco. This would be a terrible decision for Victoria Park in the electorate of Swan. The jobs the new stadium would create, the increased business for restaurants and shops in Victoria Park, Burswood and Lathlain and the construction of a brand new train station would all be scrapped. It is disappointing that the local member for Victoria Park, who has been happy to jump into all the photos whenever possible, has not supported this particular issue. The people in my electorate will judge him harshly but that is his decision.

We have a duty to provide the best facilities, not just for paralympians but for all participants in disabled sport in Australia, and facilitate the growth in interest that is bound to come after such a successful performance from our paralympic team. As we have seen in London, the power of sport is as potent as ever as a means of inclusion and as a means of breaking down boundaries in society, and we need policies to reflect this.

In conclusion, I would like to finish with the words of Tony Abbott at the homecoming in Sydney last week, which we have just heard the member for Cowper attended, which I thought were particularly relevant. He said:

Everyone who represents his or her country has achieved something extraordinary. But for paralympians it is invariably a triumph of the human spirit as well.
I have to say that whenever I mix with paralympians it seems to me they are the happiest athletes of all. Long may that continue. Congratulations to our paralympians of 2012, and I hope you go on to represent Australia again in 2016.

Mr RUDD (Griffith) (17:00): Congratulations to the Australian Paralympic team on a remarkable effort at this year's Paralympics. The Australian team came home with an impressive 85 medals: 32 gold, 23 silver and 30 bronze. Not only did this see our team come fifth on the medal tally, but they bettered their haul of 79 medals in Beijing. There are many, many stories of success, of resilience and of determination. There is Liesl Tesch, who, after the passing of her mother on the first day of competition, went on to win gold in the Skud 18 with her team mate, Daniel Fitzgibbon. There are the Steelers, the Australian men's wheelchair rugby team, who won Australia's first-ever gold in that event. There is Kurt Fearnley's epic marathon that, after having raced the four-loop course around London, resulted in just a second separating the top three—a photo finish saw Kurt earn the bronze. Kurt, it is also worth noting, after competing in the Paralympic marathon showed up last Sunday to compete in his eighth Sydney marathon.

I would like to make mention of two particularly courageous athletes. Rachael Dodds, a student at Cannon Hill Anglican College in my electorate in Brisbane, was born with cerebral palsy. She developed a love of running, encouraged by her physiotherapist. Her parents say that Rachael has always worked hard at whatever she does. When asked by a local paper how she was going to manage the year-12 study workload and training for the Paralympics, Rachel replied, 'I have been able to hone my time management skills and I am a pretty good planner.' Rachael is one determined young woman. In London, Rachael competed in the women's 100-metre T35 and the women's 200-metre T35. Rachael did not come home with a medal, but I have no doubt that this is just the beginning for her.

A second talented young woman I want to pay tribute to is Ellie Cole. Ellie was diagnosed with sarcoma when she was two years old and had her leg amputated as a result of the cancer when she was just three years old. Ellie began to swim as part of her rehabilitation and it quickly became apparent that she was very good at it. She returned from London with four gold and two bronze from seven events. I met Ellie earlier this year when she was announced as patron of Kick Sarcoma, a charity both Ellie and I are quite passionate about. Ellie's passion, generosity and determination mean that the sky is the limit for her and the Kick Sarcoma campaign is very lucky to have her on board.

Sarcoma is a dreadful cancer that accounts for 15 to 20 per cent of childhood cancer diagnoses and about one per cent of adult cancer diagnoses. The vision of Kick Sarcoma is: raising funds for research fellows with grants; through community awareness, improving early diagnosis; aiming to improve sarcoma prognosis by 25 per cent in 25 years; improving outcomes in sarcoma therapy, with a dedication to curing all types of sarcoma; and, through research and medical trials, aiming to find therapies to improve the sarcoma prognosis more generally. I look forward to working with Ellie in her effort to 'kick sarcoma' and I wish her the very best for the next steps of her Paralympic career.

The Paralympics have always been particularly special for my wife, Therese, and I. Therese's father, John Rein, was an RAAF veteran. He became wheelchair bound after a plane crash during World War 2. He was sent to Stoke Mandeville Hospital in England as part of his rehabilitation. It was at that hospital where the Stoke Mandeville games—regarded as the
forerunner to the Paralympics—began back in 1948. And it was John Rein, my wife's Dad, who carried the flag for Australia at the 1956 games when he competed in archery and wheelchair basketball. Therese's lived experience with her father has inspired her throughout her life as she is dedicated to assisting marginalised and disadvantaged people to achieve the means for an optimal quality of life. Today Therese is an honorary board member of the International Paralympic Committee.

Many have said the 2012 Paralympics will be recognised as a turning point for how disability is seen by the Australian community and the world. For 11 days we watched Paralympic athletes competed in a myriad of sports and very quickly our minds turned from seeing their disability to recognising and celebrating their ability. It is fitting that this happened in England, the first country to give wheelchair athletes a platform to compete and to display their abilities.

From its humble beginnings of 16 injured service men and women who took part in archery back in 1948, the Paralympic movement has grown to what it is today. It is no longer the younger sibling of the juggernaut that is the Olympic Games; it is a professional competition of elite athletes. It is well and truly living up to its name, as these two movements now exist side by side as equals. So congratulations to the athletes, the coaches, the friends and extended community for a remarkable effort at the Paralympics, but also for opening all of Australia's eyes to the incredible abilities of our Paralympians and those who suffer disabilities more generally in our community, our society, Australia.

Mr MATHESON (Macarthur) (17:05): As with the members for Griffiths, Cowper and Swan, it is a great honour to stand here today to congratulate all members of the Australian Paralympic team. The team arrived home from London last week with a total of 85 medals, 32 of them gold. Their hard work and commitment to their sports certainly paid off, with the Australian team winning medals in nine of the 13 sports it competed in. This placed our team fifth overall in the medal tally, making it the most successful Paralympic team since the 2000 games. This is a fantastic achievement by all our athletes, who put on a great deal of training and made huge sacrifices to compete for their country at an international level.

I would like to give a special mention to swimmer Jacqueline Freney, who won eight gold medals at the games. This was the most individual golds won by any athlete at the games, a fantastic achievement that I am sure she is very proud of. I also want to mention swimmer Matt Cowdrey, who became Australia's most successful Paralympian by winning five events in London, taking the number of Paralympic gold medals won throughout his career to 13. I am also pleased to say that our wheelchair rugby team won its first Paralympic gold medal ever, a great achievement by all players on the team and their coaches.

The success of our Paralympic team in London is a great sign of the support available to our athletes here in Australia and a promising sign of things to come in the years ahead. I know there are many programs run across New South Wales to support young athletes living with a disability to help them develop into elite sporting champions. In my electorate the South West Sydney Academy of Sport supports the development of athletes living with a disability through its AWD program. The academy develops specialised programs for each athlete according to their individual requirements. These programs are also developed in conjunction with the New South Wales Department of Sport and Recreation, the Paralympic Committee and Macarthur Disability Services.
We are very lucky in Macarthur to have a local resident, Gerry Knights, working hard as Executive Director of the South West Sydney Academy of Sport. Gerry is also a sports ambassador for athletes with a disability for all New South Wales regional academies of sport. This means he has strong links with the Paralympic Committee, the New South Wales Institute of Sport and the Department of Sport and Recreation, all great organisations which give so much support to our developing athletes. As part of the academy's AWD program, coaching and support staff members are welcome to take part in the program to continue supporting their athlete and to help enhance the athlete's current training program. Coaches can also join the academy through the coaching education program, which gives them many opportunities for ongoing personal development. The AWD program is open to both individual and team athletes and their coaches. Once an individual program is set up, the athlete is given up-to-date coaching resources, sports education programs, expert coaching advice and the opportunity to participate in all South West Sydney Academy of Sport functions. The academy is currently looking for its next intake of athletes with a disability for the 2012-13 program.

Also in my electorate, Macarthur Disability Services run a variety of programs to encourage children and adults living with a disability to develop their skills on the sporting field. MDS currently run a wheelchair sports track program in partnership with Wheelchair Sports New South Wales. This program is open to junior and senior athletes as a pathway for long-term wheelchair sports participation. The program provides coaching by accredited coaches to all wheelchair athletes, with a focus on classifications T51 to T54 and F51 to F58. MDS also run a track and field program for people with a disability who are aged seven to 25. Participants receive professional coaching in sprinting, discus, shot-put, endurance and wheelchair athletics.

I am very proud to see these services running in my electorate and the great support that Macarthur's athletes living in with disability can receive by signing up for these programs. I am sure that with the help of these programs in my electorate we will see some Macarthur athletes on the 2016 Australian Paralympic team in Rio. I am sure that the great success of our London Paralympics team will inspire many young athletes across Macarthur to continue trying their best to achieve their goals. Australia's Paralympians are proof that no dream is too big. They should all be very proud of their achievements in London.

Ms KING (Ballarat—Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Transport and Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing) (17:09): I want to start my contribution on the motion to support the London 2012 Paralympic Games by commending the organisers and the athletes, particularly those athletes from Australia, for doing something that I think has challenged many of us for a long period of time—that is, really putting the issue about the abilities of people who happen to have a disability, however acquired, well and truly at the forefront of our thinking.

I do not know if many other people saw probably one of the best advertising campaigns ever seen, which was run by the UK's Channel 4—the ad is on YouTube, and I encourage people to have a look at it—and is called 'Meet the superhumans'. It is run to the soundtrack of Public Enemy's 'Harder than You Think', which I understand has now hit No. 4, which is higher than when it was originally released some time ago in the UK. The ad starts with the very moving images of athletes with disabilities coming from all the way across the country.
ready to compete in those games. They are beautifully shot images, some very hard images of some incredible athletes. Halfway through the ad, you suddenly get very quick flashes of a car accident, a bomb in possibly Afghanistan, of a foetus in a womb—all highlighting really easily just how some of these disabilities have been acquired, and highlighting for people who see the ad that this could be anybody. The ad finishes, if anybody has not seen it, with these amazing scenes of athletes competing, and literally says, 'Meet the superhumans'. It challenges every one of us to think very differently about people with disabilities.

I also want to mention the fantastic billboards that I understand were around London, and the beautiful cheek of them as they had 'Thanks for the warm-up'. It really sent a very clear signal that Paralympics are well and truly on the agenda. The fact that you had huge crowds at the Paralympics really is a testament to the fact that these were the best Paralympic Games, and we are going to see a very different level of interest in these athletes. I did want to start with acknowledging just how fantastic the entire campaign was around that.

The Australian Paralympic team deserves our absolute congratulations here. Certainly the results speak for themselves. They finished fifth overall with 86 medals in total: 32 gold, 23 silver and 30 bronze—amazing efforts. But, again, it is not only the efforts of the athletes that these games have really shown, it is absolutely that we also need to think very differently about people with disabilities and challenge our perceptions around them. These people really were, and are, superhumans.

I particularly want to acknowledge those athletes who come from my electorate—particularly Greg Smith, who was in the Australian wheelchair rugby team, the Steelers. He is a local athlete who is from Buninyong in my electorate. He was part of the team who won 66-51 against Canada to take gold. The Steelers well and truly dominated the match to see Australia when its first-ever gold medal in wheelchair rugby. The Canadian team put up a good fight, but the Steelers were too strong and they won every quarter. Greg Smith even finished the game with the last point on the buzzer. Greg was the Australian flag-bearer at the opening ceremony, and he previously won three gold medals in the 2000 games in the 800 metres, the 1,500 metres and the 5,000 metres. He has now won a fourth gold medal in his fifth and final Paralympics. He acquired a disability at the age of 19 in a fairly terrible car crash and, for me, he is not only someone who shows incredible toughness but he is also someone who has championed the cause for people with disabilities.

I am very much looking forward to the civic reception that will be held in Ballarat on 27 September for Ballarat Olympians, but also for our Paralympic competitors. I know a number of the athletes who are attending, including Jared Tallent, race walking; Collis Birmingham, athletics; James Marsburg, rowing; Anthony Edwards, also rowing; Tamsin Hinchley, beach volleyball; and of course, Greg Smith. I am very excited to be able to be part of that civic reception to welcome them home. I know that the people of Ballarat are very, very proud of those athletes.

The government has committed quite a bit of money of late to funding for elite athletes and particularly for the Paralympics. It is my hope, certainly, that that strong commitment continues and also continues to highlight the real importance of the role that these people are going to play within our community as great advocates for people with disabilities.

I again want to commend the motion and also commend the organisers, all of the athletes and all of those wonderful volunteers at the London 2012 Paralympics for really putting
disability on the map and highlighting that, in these Olympic games, we well and truly did meet the superhumans.

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Manager of Opposition Business) (17:15): I am delighted to get an opportunity to speak on the Paralympic team. I think that the Paralympians are a tremendous asset to Australia, but they are also an extraordinarily important example to all Australians with any disability at all of the opportunity to overcome hurdles in their lives and achieve great things for themselves, for their communities, for their country. While I am a great fan and supporter of Olympians and the great work they do as tremendous sportspeople, I think it takes a very special kind of person to have a setback either through injury or from birth and be able to gather the wherewithal to make themselves into the kind of sportsperson who can represent their country and either win medals or compete in the Paralympics.

Australia has a very proud record at the Paralympics. Governments of all persuasion—Liberal, coalition and Labor—have supported Paralympic teams. I want to take this opportunity to place on record some of the achievements of people from my own electorate of Sturt, and one in particular, who competed in these games in London. There were three Paralympians from my electorate: Felicity Johnson, Libby Kosmala and Esther Overton.

Felicity Johnson is a 22-year-old from Kensington Park. She became one of South Australia's golden girls of the velodrome along with Stephanie Morton, who is not from my electorate, winning gold in their first event, the women's individual B one-kilometre time trial. She came ninth in the women's individual B pursuit. She is impaired visually, from macular degeneration which she acquired at birth. She is a great example to all South Australians and all of those with a visual impairment.

I would also like to recognise Esther Overton. Esther Overton is also 22. She is a swimmer from the Enfield club. She was placed fifth in the final of the women's 50-metre backstroke S2 final. She has a joint fusion acquired at birth. It is a congenital disease called arthrogryposis multiplex. She has gone on to represent her country as well and achieve great things for us as a nation.

There were many other South Australians who competed in the Paralympics, but one of those I would particularly like to note, and that is Libby Kosmala. Libby Kosmala would be very well known to all South Australians because in London she competed in her 12th Paralympic Games. Libby Kosmala has spina bifida, acquired at birth. She is now 70 years old, and she has been competing in shooting over the course of 12 Paralympic Games. She is a mother and, with this birth defect, she has raised her children. In these games she placed eighth in the finals of the women's R1 10-metre air rifle standing SH1 and 24th in the mixed R3 10-metre air rifle prone qualifications.

Not only has Libby Kosmala been a great competitor but she has been a very outspoken advocate in South Australia and nationally for people with a disability, people in a wheelchair and people with spina bifida. I have known her for a very long time. Her children went to my school, Saint Ignatius, in South Australia. I have always regarded her as something of an inspiration. I believe this is her last Paralympic Games, so I want to place on record to Libby Kosmala and her family our gratitude as South Australians for the tremendous example she has shown.
Mr McCormack (Riverina) (17:19): As the member for Sturt has just said, Paralympians from Australia and all over the world have provided great inspiration to able-bodied people, to able-bodied athletes and to those people with a disability, the fact that great things can be achieved despite either birth defects or unfortunate accidents which might have occurred. They provide great inspiration and their feats are to be admired by one and all.

As top-level athletes from all over the world began to head home following the 2012 London Olympic Games, top-level athletes whose only difference was having a disability were starting to descend on the Olympic Village for the 2012 London Paralympic Games, which took place from 29 August to 9 September. A total of 4,294 athletes from 164 countries took part in 503 events in 20 sports during these games, with Australia sending a total of 304 athletes. This was the largest team we have ever fielded and our representatives did us proud by achieving excellent results. Australia finished fifth on the final medal tally board with 32 gold, 23 silver and 28 bronze medals. Of the 13 sports Australian athletes contested in London, medals were won in nine. This included Australia's first ever medal in hand cycling and the swimming team won more than half the gold medals on offer. The president of the Australian Paralympic Committee, Greg Hartung, was full of praise, saying that the performance of the Australian Paralympic team at the London 2012 Paralympic Games had exceeded all expectations.

Scott Reardon, one of our Paralympic athletes, grew up in the Riverina town of Temora with sports playing a prominent role in his life. On 10 July 2002 Scott's shoelaces caught in the power takeoff shaft of a tractor, with devastating consequences. His right leg was severed through the knee. Scott, just 12 years of age at the time, was desperately unlucky but he was also remarkably plucky. He spent nearly a month in hospital recovering and being rehabilitated, learning to walk again in just one week and amazing doctors in the process. Scott Reardon is one gutsy individual.

I read now from Scott's own website as he poignantly recalls 10 years on his life-changing accident and his deep love of family, which bears repeating here as an inspiration to others. He wrote:

Everyone has an idol when growing up, I was no different. There were a few people on this list but one stood out, that person was my brother Phil. There was something with the way that he conducted himself in training and competition that was inspiring! There was never an excuse.

I must have been around ten maybe even younger when Phil would invite me down the paddock with a football under one arm. We would kick and pass all the way down to a stretch of dirt where we would do some sprint training. He would handicap me so that he had something to chase and I would do my best to stay in front. Once we were done we would grab the footy and head home. This is probably what ignited my competitiveness and the realisation that if you want to achieve something you have to be willing to work for it.

On the 10th of July 2002 he became more than an idol of mine, he became a life saver. The day that I lost my leg could have ended very differently if not for him and my family. When faced with a difficult situation their decisions and actions ensured that I am still here. I will give you an idea of this situation. The family farm is located 35 kilometres from the closest town, no mobile phone service, roads that are not clearly named which makes it a nightmare when trying to tell emergency support where you are. So if an accident was to happen in our area the odds aren’t really in your favour. So when my leg was severed down a paddock 2km from our house, there was always going to be a battle to survive.
I remember regaining consciousness on the ground, looking down to discover that the lower part of my leg was no longer attached and realising that I was in a bit of trouble. Instinctively I got up and hopped to the ute, where Phil, 16 at the time, drove the fastest trip back to the house I had ever experienced. The decision was made by mum and dad not to call the ambulance and wait, but begin the trip and meet them on the way. Dad wrapped a belt around my leg and Phil grabbed my leg in attempt to slow the bleeding. Dad was faced with a situation that would have had to do one of the hardest things that I could imagine, drive with his 12 year old son in agony in the back seat knowing that time was short. Somehow he was able to compose himself and keep the car on the road. We had driven around 25km before we met the ambulance, I can only guess times but it would have been around 35 minutes since the accident and I was now in the care of trained professionals, although I was still not out of trouble. Temora hospital is not equipped in severe cases of trauma, so it was vital to obtain external support and that came when Snowy Hydro south care were tasked to stabilise and airlift me to Canberra where I would have more chances of survival.

Over the following 3.5 weeks I underwent around 12 operations where the doctors had to amputate my leg higher, then put me back together. Being an amputee is something that I had to come to terms with, but I was soon to realise the amazing support network that I had always had around me but never appreciated. This support not only came from my family who were amazing but from the entire district. The support that they gave Mum, Dad, brother and sisters, enabled them to keep me in good spirits and get me back home as fast as possible.

Today marks the tenth anniversary since I lost my leg. It is one of mixed emotions, and although the accident took away some of my hopes and dreams, it has enabled me to be a part of something amazing, three water-ski world championships and now the biggest sporting event for athletes with disability, the London Paralympics. So I think today should be a celebration of what I have rather than what I have lost, which at the end of the day was only a leg! Phil is still someone that I idolise, but this day made him more than an idol, he became someone that I owe my life to. The word hero gets thrown around regularly; to me my family are my heroes, without them I may not be alive. I am grateful that I have such wonderful people in my life!

Stirring words indeed—love of family and love of district. Young Scott—he is 22 years old now—comes from a great sporting district. Paleface Adios came from Temora, and there is a great statue of Paleface Adios in the main street, Hoskins Street. They celebrate Paleface Adios all the time. The local Australian Rules football team on Saturday won the Farrer League first grade premiership. It was the first premiership team for that club, the Kangaroos, since the late 1950s, and I know that they are still celebrating that great achievement. The Governor-General was in town on the weekend for an event, but I think her being there, whilst it was celebrated, was probably drowned out in the din that the local Aussie Rules team made over winning that wonderful flag.

Scott Reardon learned how to continue to play the sports he loved with only one leg, and in 2005 he was named the Temora and District Sportsperson of the Year, a wonderful achievement. In 2006 he attended a Paralympic talent search day and was immediately identified as having the potential to perform on the track at the London Paralympic Games. Scott has also represented Australia three times at the waterskiing world championships and won the world title in 2007 and 2009.

Watching the 2008 Beijing Paralympic Games gave Scott the further desire to pursue his talent of running and, after juggling waterskiing and athletics for a while, he relocated to Canberra in 2009 to train at the Australian Institute of Sport. At the London 2012 games Scott was part of the athletics team, competing in the T42 100 metres and the T42 200 metres, and
in the T42 four by 100 metres relay team. He placed fourth in his 200 metres final, just missing out on getting a podium finish. This gave him all the drive he needed, and he came out for his 100 metres final with everything he had and finished a close second behind German Heinrich Popow, earning the brave Riverina boy a well-deserved silver medal.

I congratulate Scott on all of his hard work and dedication and, indeed, his success at the 2012 Paralympic Games. Temora's popular deputy mayor, Councillor Rick Firman, was lavish in his praise for Scott. 'He embodies all that an outstanding young sportsman can and should be,' Councillor Firman told me this afternoon. 'Scott is genuine, he is passionate and he has turned adversity into triumph. Like everyone in the Temora district, I have the utmost respect for him and what he has done.'

Congratulations are extended to all athletes who partook in the games and to those whose efforts saw them place on the podium and take home a medal. It is an outstanding honour to represent your country at the Olympic or Paralympic games, and with it comes the pressure of the expectations of your fellow countrymen. Australia's Paralympians can hold their heads high with their outstanding results which were achieved as individuals and collectively. They have inspired Australians to have a go and indeed represent what can be achieved with commitment and perseverance. I look forward to seeing what Scott Reardon will achieve in the future, because quite frankly his powers are limitless. I am sure that we are going to hear much more from him and about him in the years ahead.

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (17:29): I rise today to join my colleagues in congratulating the 2012 Australian Paralympic team for its spectacular success at the recent 2012 London Paralympic Games. This year we sent our biggest team to date to the Paralympics—161 athletes—who brought home 32 gold medals, 23 silver medals and 30 bronze medals. Our athletes put on a magnificent performance in London. The Australian team was placed fifth on the overall medal tally, with 85 medals in total and a raft of world records to their name. There was a large contingent of athletes from my state of Queensland and they can make claim to 20 medals in the final tally—seven gold, seven silver and six bronze. But even more impressive than those figures were the incredible sporting moments and inspirational performances that we saw during the competition, which were cheered on by all Queenslanders.

We saw world records smashed when Brenden Hall took gold in the 400-metre freestyle, gold in the four-by-100 metre freestyle relay and bronze in the four-by-100 metre medley relay, while fellow swimmer Blake Cochrane broke his own world record with gold in the 100-metre breaststroke. Queensland's Chris Bond, Cody Meakin, Ben Newton, Cameron Carr and Ryan Scott were also instrumental in securing gold for the men's wheelchair rugby team. We also had 18 Queensland athletes make their Paralympics debut in London alongside champions like Rich Pendleton, Tige Simmons, Carlee Beattie and Simon Patmore. I would also make to special mention of Nicole Esdaile, an athlete from The Gap in my electorate of Ryan. Nicole represented our country in goal ball, a sport designed for athletes with vision impairment. Nicole was a member of the first Australian team to qualify in the sport at the Paralympics since 1996.

The performance of all of our athletes was exception and the people of Ryan in Queensland are extremely proud of the team's efforts and achievements. In honour of their success Brisbane City Council's Lord Mayor Graham Quirk presented the Australian Paralympians
with the keys to the city. I would also like to acknowledge the success of the Paralympic movement in fostering a unique spirit of competition and friendship among people with disability over the past six decades. Our Paralympians are truly inspirational people both on and off the sporting field. The Australian Paralympians are outstanding ambassadors for Australia and continue to be so after the Paralympic Games. I congratulate them for inspiring a new generation of Australians with a disability to reach their full potential.

Ms O'DWYER (Higgins) (17:32): I am delighted to be able to stand here on behalf of the Higgins electorate to congratulate those who competed at the Paralympic Games in London. In particular, I would like to congratulate two residents of Higgins—Shelley Chaplin and Cobi Crispin, both of Ashburton—as well as South Yarra's Katy Parrish, who all represented Australia with great pride. Close friends Shelley and Cobi represented Australia in wheelchair basketball and were able to achieve the wonderful feat of a silver medal—a great testament to all the years of hard work and dedication that they have put into their sport. Twenty-one-year-old Katy Parrish first competed at the Paralympics in Beijing, when she was just 17, an experience that she described then as one of her greatest moments. Katy was born with cerebral palsy but she has never let it hold her back. At the London games, she competed in the 100-metre sprint, the 200-metre sprint, the four-by-100 metre relay and the long jump—an incredible achievement, especially for one so young.

Russell Short has competed in an amazing seven Paralympic Games, dating back to Seoul in 1988, winning six gold, two silver and three bronze medals in discus, shot-put and javelin for the vision impaired. In this most recent games in London, he won a bronze in the shot-put, a most extraordinary achievement. At the Beijing Paralympics, Russell was awarded the great honour of being the flag-bearer. He has competed at an international level in multiple world championships and is a real inspiration to those who look to try and match his incredible record of seven Paralympic Games. Russell has been recognised for his achievements by being awarded an OAM for his contribution to sport and was the first athlete with a disability to be accepted into the Australian Institute of Sport. I was delighted to be able to personally send him off on his way with an Australian flag and to wish him all the very, very best when he competed in the games.

Of course, all of those who compete do so with a great deal of support. They do it with the support, love and care of their families, who sacrifice so very much so that their loved ones can compete at this elite level. They compete with the support of a team around them of coaches, of doctors and of so many people, who ensure that they can make their training on time so that they can be at their very best and represent Australia at our very best.

Australia did incredibly well in the Paralympic Games, ranking five on the medal tally. I join with all Australians in saying that it exceeded our wildest expectations. Those of us who watched the Paralympic Games were absolutely thrilled and delighted with the athleticism on display and with the incredible courage, hard work and dedication that clearly it took for every single one of our athletes to be there to represent our great nation.

While he is not a Higgins resident, I would like to also congratulate Matthew Cowdrey, who achieved an incredible five gold medals this Paralympic Games for swimming. He has, over his Paralympic athletic career, achieved a record of 13 gold medals over three Olympics in Athens, Beijing and London.
Each of the Paralympians who represented Australia did so with incredible pride, and we in turn have huge pride in them representing us. We thank them for their wonderful achievements, we congratulate them and we wish all of those who will go on to the next Paralympic Games in Rio all the very best.

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde) (17:37): I would like to join all who have spoken today to congratulate the Australian Paralympic team on their outstanding efforts in the 2012 Paralympic Games in London. I would like to congratulate them on their dedication to their sport and thank them for being for such great role models, not only to others in our community with disabilities but to our community as a whole. It is through adversity that these athletes have found the courage to be the best they could be. As a result they have brought back 85 medals and an impressive 32 gold. Through their combined efforts, the Australian team finished fifth out of 74 nations on the medal tally, behind the United States.

Locally, I would like to place on the record some of the efforts of two Paralympians from my electorate of Forde. The first is an Indigenous Marsden State High School student, Torita Isaac, and the other is Bill Latham. Torita is only 17 years old and suffers from cerebral palsy and vision impairment. She was part of our Paralympic athletics squad, placing seventh in the 100-metre sprint and also in the 200-metre sprint, and she finished fourth as a member of the four-by-four 100-metre relay team. Torita first tried athletics at school, where she competed in cross-country competitions with her friends. Torita looks up to the famous Olympians like Cathy Freeman and Sally Pearson.

My congratulations go to Torita as a very brave young woman, who, despite severe pain in her legs, pushed herself to compete in the 2012 national championships in Melbourne to qualify for the Olympic team. In that event she ran 100 metres in 14.93 seconds and was set to run the 200 metres when scans uncovered that she had 11 fractures in her legs. To recover from that and to compete so successfully at the Paralympic Games is an amazing story of courage and dedication, and her family and friends must be very proud of her achievements.

Bill Latham lost his leg after an accident with a tractor slasher in 1995 and has recently moved to the Logan area to train at one of our local sports centres, in Cornubia. He hails from a sporting family. His grandfather, Tedda Courtney, was a former rugby league player for Australia and the first coach of the Canterbury Bulldogs. Bill was part of the Australian team that won the wheelchair basketball at the 2010 world championships in Birmingham, England, and was part of the Australian wheelchair basketball team in London. They went on to win the silver medal, missing out on the gold medal by only six points to Canada.

They are just two examples of many others in our Paralympic team, who brought great pride to this country and to this nation. I would just like to pass on my congratulations to the whole team, not only the athletes but all the coaches, the trainers, and the families of all the athletes as well, because there is enormous time, effort and support from the families. I wish them every success for the future and thank them for their outstanding efforts in the Paralympics.

Proceedings suspended from 17:42 to 18:30
Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (18:30): I move:
That this bill be now read a second time.

It has become apparent in recent times that there are a number of problems with the industrial relations system in this country. In the context of the amendments to the Fair Work Act, which will hopefully flow when the government responds to the independent review, it will provide us with a great opportunity to fix some of those problems. That is what this bill will do. Firstly, one of the problems that we noticed, especially in my home state of Victoria, is that we have disputes in the public sector that are being unnecessarily prolonged by powerful employers who—certainly, according to leaked cabinet documents—when it came to the nurses in Victoria, said that their strategy was to hold out in the negotiations, provoke the nurses into taking industrial action and then hope that, when the matter went to Fair Work Australia, it would be resolved on favourable terms because, under the laws as they currently stand, there are some matters, like nurse-patient ratios, that cannot be arbitrated by the independent umpire.

So you have this arrangement where one party—in this case the employer, the state public sector employer—has a head start, knowing that if they hold out long enough and if a matter goes to Fair Work, it is almost certainly going to be determined on terms favourable to them. This bill would close that loophole by saying to an employer, 'You can't come here and seek our assistance to get the matter to arbitration unless you can convince us that all matters are going to be settled.' In other words, this bill will promote full settlement of these disputes and remove the incentive that some have, particularly public sector employers, to string out disputes, hoping that they get to Fair Work Australia, where for legal reasons there are some matters that simply cannot be determined, even though they might be genuine matters that the workers are genuinely claiming and entitled to.

Another thing that we have seen in recent times is tactical actions taken by powerful employers in an aim to get themselves a step further in the legal process in Fair Work Australia. I have in mind here the actions taken by Qantas, where they grounded the whole fleet, essentially held a gun to the travelling public, and said to the government and to the public, 'Now, look at this amazing chaos that has resulted. The only thing that can solve this is if we go to Fair Work Australia and have it arbitrated.' Then, of course, when it went to Fair Work Australia and it was arbitrated, because of the threat that was posed from shutting down a nation's airline, Qantas well knew that they were going to get a more favourable outcome, because—as any industrial lawyer will tell you—the issue of job security, which the workers were bargaining about, is one that the industrial tribunal was never going to grant them. So Qantas always wanted to get to a workplace determination in Fair Work Australia and knew that the only way they could get there was by grounding the fleet themselves, because the employees and the workers were not going to do it. Then, of course, the government obliged and stepped in, and finished off the last bit of Qantas's plan for them.

This bill will give Fair Work Australia the power to say to employers like that, 'Look, if we think that part of the reason you are taking these extreme actions is for tactical reasons, to
give yourself a leg up in the process, we are going to send you back for more bargaining. We are going to stop the industrial action, the planes will get back in the sky, but you will go back for more bargaining. Don't you ground the fleet and then come running here complaining about the consequences of it, in the hope that you will get a favourable outcome.' It will do a number of other things too that will enhance job security and also require the greater giving of notice before industrial action is taken. Some of these issues were canvassed in the Fair Work review. I note that it has been some time since the review's report was handed down, and the government is yet to respond. There are a very wide range of recommendations in that review, some of which will take away the rights and protections that workers currently enjoy.

I note in this context that Senator Abetz, representing the coalition, has said, 'We're happy to implement the review holus-bolus, bar one recommendation, so the government should get on and legislate now.' What I would say is what I have saying for some months—and we are yet to receive a response from the government—which is that the government have to decide, in implementing the review's recommendations and responding to it, whether they are going to work with the coalition or the Greens. We have made the offer to work with them. The coalition have put their cards on the table. The government just need to decide whom they want to work with.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Windsor):** Order! The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned, and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next meeting.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

**Dementia Awareness Week**

Debate resumed on the motion by **Ms Grierson:**

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) dementia is the greatest cause of disability in Australians aged 65 and over;

(b) there are almost 280,000 Australians living with dementia and 1.2 million who provide support and care; and

(c) every week an estimated 1,600 new cases of dementia occur, with the number expected to grow to 7,400 new cases per week by 2050, resulting in 1 million Australians living with dementia by 2050;

(2) recognises the significance of Dementia Awareness Week (21 to 28 September) in promoting and advocating the needs of those living with dementia, their families and carers;

(3) welcomes the Health Minister's designation of dementia as the ninth National Health Priority Area; and

(4) acknowledges the ongoing contributions of Alzheimer's Australia and its State and Territory associations in supporting and advocating for those affected and leading the charge in the fight against dementia.

**Ms GRIERSON** (Newcastle) (18:35): I rise to speak on the motion on Dementia Awareness Week that appears on the Notice Paper under my name and I thank those colleagues who are speaking in support of this motion. Dementia is the greatest cause of disability in Australians aged 65 and over. Almost 280,000 Australians live with dementia today, and 1.2 million provide them with support and care. Every week, an estimated 1,600 new cases of dementia occur, with that expected to grow to 7,400 new cases per week by
2050, resulting in one million Australians living with dementia by 2050. This week, Dementia Awareness Week, and World Alzheimer’s Day, on 21 September, both support advocacy for the needs of those living with dementia, their families and their carers. The theme this year is 'Brain health: making the connections.'

Dementia demands our collective attention as a nation and as a government. Many challenges come with improved health and life expectancy outcomes, including rising health and care costs and declining workforce participation. The IMF indicates the life expectancy of Australians aged 60 is increasing at the rate of nine years every half-century. The life expectancy of 80-year-olds has risen by three years since the 1970s. As our population ages, so too grows the number of people in our nation living with dementia.

Dementia is not just one specific disease. It is a group of symptoms caused by disorders impacting the brain, affecting thinking, behaviour and an individual’s ability to perform tasks and interactions that the rest of us take for granted. Brain function is affected enough to interfere with a person's normal functions, which may impact their family, social and working life. Dementia typically affects the elderly, with one in four people over 85 affected. However, as we all know, it is not exclusive to older people; dementia can affect people in their 40s or in their 50s, and we have met many such people here at Parliament House. If signs and symptoms are noticed, early diagnosis can mean early access to support, information and medication, if available. Signs of dementia can include progressive and frequent memory loss, confusion, personality change, apathy and withdrawal, and loss of ability to perform everyday tasks. Early diagnosis and the awareness of general practitioners are absolutely vital. While medication is available to alleviate associated symptoms, there is currently no cure.

In Newcastle and the Hunter Region, dementia rates are above average. An Access Economics report for Alzheimer’s Australia states that dementia will affect over three per cent of the Hunter-New England and North Coast population by 2050. The number is expected to increase in the Hunter New England Health area from almost 12,000 in 2010 to over 32,000 in 2050.

Earlier this year, I welcomed to Parliament House Dr Maggie Haertsch and Jean-Paul Bell of the Arts Health Institute, based in Newcastle. Their work focuses on stimulating the brain of dementia patients through social interaction—specifically, with humour and laughter. The parliamentary screening of their documentary The Smile Within, which featured on Compass, followed the delivery of humour intervention to a number of residents in aged-care facilities, part of their federally funded SMILE Study, which was highly successful.

I was very pleased when federal, state and territory health ministers announced this year that dementia would be made the ninth national health priority. Alzheimer’s Australia President Ita Buttrose said:

This decision marks a seismic shift in the attitudes of our policy makers …

It has always been front and centre, but it is good to have it designated as a national health priority. It will greatly assist in raising awareness, reducing stigma and creating a coordinated approach to dementia across the country. I congratulate Alzheimer’s Australia and their CEO, Glenn Rees, on their tireless campaigning and on their determined and reasoned voice in the national conversation.
Also I note that the *Sunday Telegraph* reported yesterday on new research indicating that exercise, music and socialising, activities that keep the brain active, can decrease the risk of developing dementia. That is the message behind the Your Brain Matters campaign, launched this week by Alzheimer's Australia, which encourages people to participate in activities that continue to stimulate the mind to prevent dementia. I am really pleased to say that this program was the first in the world to gain public funding: funding from the federal government of $4 million over three years. Evidence states that, if we can reduce physical inactivity by five per cent every five years, we can reduce the prevalence of dementia by 11 per cent by 2051, or by around 100,000 people.

This week, the Parliamentary Friends of Dementia look forward to welcoming internationally renowned Alzheimer's expert Dr Serge Gauthier, of McGill University, Canada, who is visiting Australia as part of Dementia Awareness Week. As we continue the public discussion and shine a light on dementia, we are helping to reduce the stigma and moving towards increased rates of early intervention and improved care and support for those that need it most in our communities.

Ms GAMBARO (Brisbane) (18:40): I rise to second the motion moved by the member for Newcastle. I am delighted to acknowledge the contribution that she has made to this issue. I have also worked with her on the parliamentary friendship group on dementia, which she chairs.

As the motion states, dementia is the greatest cause of disability in older Australians aged 65 and over. According to statistics provided by Alzheimer's Australia, almost 280,000 Australians currently live with dementia. Without a significant medical breakthrough, that is expected to soar to almost one million people by 2050. Each week there are 1,600 new cases of dementia in Australia, and that is expected to grow to 7,400 new diagnoses each week by 2050. Dementia is the third leading cause of death in Australia after heart disease and stroke. The total estimated worldwide cost of dementia is US$604 billion in 2010, and this cost accounts for about one per cent of the world's gross domestic product. Australia faces a shortage of more than 150,000 paid and unpaid carers for people with dementia by 2029. The cost of replacing all family carers with paid carers is estimated to be $5.5 billion per annum.

Dementia is one of the forgotten diseases in our society. We almost accept it, to the extent that it is one of those things that is part of life. It is time, however, that we started to treat dementia as a core health issue in this nation from both a research and prevention point of view and a reactive or carer aspect. Most of us tend to think of Alzheimer's disease when we think of dementia. However, there are actually many types of dementia. The effects of different types of dementia are similar but not identical, as each one tends to affect different parts of the brain, and there are more than 100 diseases that cause dementia. Alzheimer's disease, however, is the most common form of dementia, accounting for between 50 and 70 per cent of all dementias.

As we know, Alzheimer's disease is a physical disease which attacks the brain, resulting in impaired memory, thinking and behaviour. The observation of a loved one suffering from dementia and Alzheimer's disease can be truly tragic. To see someone's mind deteriorate to the point of not being able to remember or comprehend those that they love is heartbreaking, and to see sufferers not being able to remember a lifetime of experiences with their families is absolutely devastating.
The other side to this terrible disease is the level of care that is required for sufferers of dementia. This is particularly hard on family members who spend their days caring for dementia sufferers. As I mentioned before, Australia is going to have a huge shortage of carers, particularly when we go into the future, and if we allocated a cost to family care it would exceed $5 billion.

This motion recognises Dementia Awareness Week, which runs from 21 to 28 September. It raises awareness in promoting and advocating for the needs of those living with dementia, their families and their carers. I want to acknowledge the great work that is being done by Alzheimer's Australia, Glenn Rees and all of his team there and particularly acknowledge Ita Buttrose as President of Alzheimer's Australia for the key role that they all play in advocating for a new funding model for the research of this disease so that one day we will be able to truly find a cure.

I know that the designation of dementia as the ninth national health priority is very, very pleasing to Alzheimer's Australia. They have been working on this campaign for many, many years. I know that the work of the member for Newcastle in starting this parliamentary friendship group has certainly advocated for and put this disease higher on the priority list than it has been in the past, and I want to thank her. I have enjoyed working with her. I know that we have a very long way to go. In the past much of the work that has been done on dementia has clearly been focused on the care of dementia patients, and not in the research aspect of it, so it will be very pleasing to know that there is going to be much more funding for research to ensure that we find the answer to unlocking one of the most devastating illnesses that affects so many sufferers and their families in Australia.

It is an important week. I look forward to the guest speakers who will be coming along in a few days to talk to us. I want to acknowledge again that it is a pleasure to rise and support this very worthy cause. I will continue to advocate for more funding for research, and particularly, for the care of dementia patients in the electorate of Brisbane and I look forward to seeing a cure one day that will make a real impact on the lives of so many people who suffer from this devastating illness.

Ms BIRD (Cunningham—Parliamentary Secretary for Higher Education and Skills) (18:45): I rise to support the motion before this chamber tonight put by the member for Newcastle, and commend her for bringing this motion to the attention of the House. In particular, I acknowledge that it came as no surprise to me that she would do so, because she has a long history of advocacy for people in many circumstances where they suffer from disadvantage or disability, but this is an important one too. I also want to endorse the comments of the member for Brisbane. And I am sure that in regard to my colleagues the members for Shortland and Ryan, who are in the chamber to speak on it, I will be able to endorse their comments in advance, because I know that both of them are people well committed to the issues that confront those dealing with dementia as well.

The motion that has been put before us from the member for Newcastle, starts by noting the extent of the problem as it confronts us as a nation, and it is true that dementia is a significant chronic disease. It is the third leading cause of death in Australia—that is, after heart disease and stroke. There are one in four people over the age of 85 who have dementia, and the number of people living with dementia is expected to grow from 269,000 people
today to almost one million by 2050. It is important to realise that around 52 per cent of all aged care recipients have some form of dementia.

For many people it can take more than three years from the time when they are first noticing symptoms to actually receiving a diagnosis of dementia, and it is important that we get better support and training in place, particularly for health professionals, to assist them in caring for individuals when behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia are apparent. Earlier intervention will enable us to ensure individuals with dementia can live in their home environment for a longer period of time.

The member for Newcastle's motion acknowledges the size of this particular problem. I think the member herself made the point—as she does in the motion—that there are 1,600 new cases of dementia occurring every week, and that number is expected to grow to 7,400 new cases per week by 2050. It is a significant health problem for the nation, but each and every one of those cases is a significant health problem for the family involved. It is not an easy disease for people to deal with, and it is important, I believe, that it is prioritised by all governments so that we can intervene earlier and more effectively and provide better support, not only to the sufferer but to their family and carers as well.

Part of that is the second point of the member's motion, which recognises the importance of Dementia Awareness Week, which starts this Friday, 21 September, and will provide the opportunity to raise awareness and promote the needs of dementia sufferers, their families and carers. It is a very important activity to undertake. I just want to take the opportunity in regard to that to acknowledge some work by a group in my own area, a support network that I have met with on a number of occasions, and the local Alzheimer's Australia group of people who have been working to put together a free public seminar for Dementia Awareness Week, entitled 'Unravelling the myths about dementia'. It will be on next Wednesday, 26 September, and they have secured a special guest speaker, Sue Pieters-Hawke, who, as many people would be aware, has written the book Hazel's Journey, dealing with many of the issues that families are struggling with around dementia.

I want to acknowledge and commend Val Fell and her team for putting that seminar together. It will be followed by a community expo, where a lot of service providers will engage with and talk to families about what services they can provide. There will be a welcome to country by Aunty Bev Almah, and also they will be hearing from Miss Danielle Wright, the manager of education for Alzheimer's Australia and the 'Your brain matters' campaign, which the member for Newcastle referred to. Also Dr Clair Langford, a geriatrician at Illawarra health, will be talking about the facts and the myths, and there will also be some local providers there. Kelly Andrews from the University of Wollongong is talking about a pilot program that they are running, which is very good, on dementia services.

It will be an excellent activity all around. I think Val and her team should be commended for organising that as overall it is an important issue. The government has made it one of its nine health priorities, as the member for Newcastle indicated, and I think it is well worth all of those in this House participating in such activities in Dementia Awareness Week.

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (18:51): I rise today to support this motion and comments made by previous speakers in this chamber in raising awareness of those living with dementia in our community and their carers. As many Australians would know, and the member for Newcastle stated in moving this motion, dementia is the greatest cause of disability in
Australians aged 65 and over. Although most people with dementia are older, it is important to remember that not all older people get dementia; it is not a normal part of ageing. Dementia can happen to anybody—people in their 40s and 50s can also have dementia.

Dementia is an umbrella term used to describe various conditions which damage brain cells and lead to a gradual loss of brain function. There are many different types of dementia, but Alzheimer's disease and vascular dementia are the most common forms. The symptoms of dementia worsen over time. How quickly dementia progresses depends entirely on the individual and each person will have their own unique experience with dementia.

Dementia is usually characterised by a gradual deterioration in memory and in the person's ability to carry out everyday activities, make decisions, understand information and express themselves. Dementia may also have an effect on a person's mood, personality and behaviour. There are almost 280,000 Australians living with dementia, and 1.2 million who will provide support and care. An estimated 1,600 new cases of dementia occur every week, as we have heard, and without a significant medical breakthrough this is expected to soar to almost one million by 2050.

Dementia is Australia's third leading cause of death after heart disease and stroke, and to date there is no cure. When in government, the coalition committed $320 million in the 2005 budget to help fund the dementia initiative, making dementia a national health priority. Despite this initiative proving of invaluable assistance to dementia sufferers, and a government evaluation of October 2009 finding the initiative successful, Labor have deliberately dropped funding for this program. I was pleased to see that at a recent meeting of health ministers this Labor government backed down on a disastrous decision and again named dementia as a national health priority area, as it was under the Howard government. I note that this designation is expected to enhance the development of a new National Framework for Action on Dementia, which will contribute to current and future work being undertaken to tackle dementia, including the national research effort. As always with these Labor government announcements the devil is in the detail, and sadly we are no wiser as to how important research into dementia and its effects will be funded.

My electorate of Ryan is home to the University of Queensland, and situated within its campus is an outstanding team of researchers based at the Queensland Brain Institute Centre for Ageing Dementia Research. The researchers at CADR aim to develop both novel pharmaceutical and non-pharmaceutical strategies to prevent or delay the onset of ageing dementia, as well as working to develop more sensitive and accurate diagnostic tools. The CADR is the only centre in Australia dedicated to age and dementia research.

The CADR was launched earlier this year, and I was fortunate to be given a tour a few months ago of its state-of-the-art facilities. The CADR is expected to grow to five independent research groups within the next three years to expand their groundbreaking work. This is critical research, and I certainly hope that this government recognises the benefits of this work for all Australians by allocating direct R&D funding to the CADR so that they can continue to expand their research areas and outcomes.

Dementia Awareness Week, which occurs this year from 21 September to 28 September, will play a significant role in promoting and advocating the needs of those living with dementia, their families and carers. I also acknowledge the ongoing contributions of Alzheimer's Australia in its outstanding advocacy and support for those affected by dementia.
With no known cure for dementia, support is vital for people with dementia, and the help of families, friends and carers can make a positive difference to managing the condition. On 27 September, as part of Dementia Awareness Week, Alzheimer's Australia and the Queensland branch, in conjunction with the Queensland Brain Institute, is hosting a public seminar with Dr Serge Gauthier at the University of Queensland. Dr Gauthier will speak about a number of topics relating to dementia, including the possible causes of dementia and the prospects of new treatments. I would encourage everyone who is available to attend. I thank the member for Newcastle for raising this important issue in this parliament.

Ms HALL (Shortland—Government Whip) (18:55): I would like to congratulate the member for Newcastle on bringing this motion to the House. In doing so I would like to say that I had been really inspired by the spirit of this debate until the last speaker, who sought to politicise the debate. I think all members of this parliament are here to look at the issue of dementia. All those who are speaking in the debate really recognise the impact that dementia is having in our community and have a mind to work together to try to resolve it and come up with some answers.

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health and Ageing is currently conducting an inquiry into dementia, and I note that a number of members of that committee, the member for Parkes, the member for Hindmarsh and the member for Swan, will be speaking in the debate. In our approach to this very, very important issue we have looked at this problem and have all worked together to try to come up with some recommendations that will work for the future of our nation. Dementia is such a big problem. It is an enormous problem and, unless we get some answers, unless the research takes place and more programs are put in place, it will have a devastating effect on our society.

The terms of reference of the inquiry are looking at improving the quality of life and assisting people with dementia to remain independent for as long as possible; increasing opportunities for continued social engagement and community participation; helping people with dementia and their carers to plan for their future and looking at things such as their financial and legal affairs; and how best to deliver awareness and communication on dementia and dementia based services.

One of the issues that came across right from the beginning is the need for early diagnosis and developing a plan for early intervention, because that is the way that people have the best prognosis. I would like to refer to the submission from the national office of Alzheimer's Australia, who appeared before the committee last week. They structured their submission in five parts. They talked about the benefits of early diagnosis of dementia and intervention for the person suffering from dementia and the broader social and economic benefits of early diagnosis, because the earlier that a person is diagnosed the longer they can continue to enjoy a normal life; barriers to better diagnosis and management of the person's need and the care provided; strategies to achieve early diagnosis; strategies to improve post diagnosis intervention and management; and factors that need to be considered in providing for the development, assessment and treatment of dementia.

I will not go into the facts and figures that other people have already highlighted and that are included in the motion by the member for Newcastle. Rather, I want to spend a bit of time on the theme of this week, which is to keep the brain active with physical exercise, music, card games and socialising as these can decrease your risk of developing Alzheimer's. That is
the message of Alzheimer's Australia's new campaign, encouraging all Australians to learn new skills and participate in activities that stimulate the mind and body, challenging your brain with new activities, staying engaged. Staying engaged is so important to keeping your mind healthy. Exercise is also an important part of keeping your mind healthy and putting the brakes on dementia.

Dementia is something that we are confronted with as a society. I congratulate the minister on lifting its status to the level that he has. I know that my fellow members of the Health and Ageing Committee are committed to coming up with recommendations to improve the future for people suffering from dementia, and strategies that are going to make their lives better.

**Mr COULTON** (Parkes—The Nationals Chief Whip) (19:01): Deputy Speaker Windsor, I recognise your elevation to the chair.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Windsor):** I have been elevated for some time!

**Mr COULTON:** That is the random nature of this place. I would like to acknowledge the member for Newcastle for bringing this very important motion into the House. Dementia Awareness Week is a very important part of the process to bring dementia to the forefront for the Australian population. I think awareness of dementia is one of the issues that are creating a lot of the difficulties for dementia sufferers and their families, because early diagnosis is clearly one of the better ways to get on top of the treatment and control it. Indeed, the sooner that someone is diagnosed with dementia, the better their chance of living independently, living in their own home and prolonging the elevation of the disease over time.

There are a number of measures that we can all take to try and prevent dementia grabbing hold of us sooner than it needs to. One of those is regular exercise. What is fascinating for those of us who are members of the Health and Ageing Committee is that we are finding that exercise and a healthy lifestyle can help decrease the risk of not only dementia but a lot of other diseases later on. The increased blood flow through the brain evidently is just as important as keeping mentally active by whatever means that might be.

I would like to focus on the difficulty of caring for someone with dementia in a rural and regional area. There are a couple of examples I would like to give. In one of my towns, Lake Cargelligo—that is in the Riverina, the central west area of New South Wales—there is no high-care facility for people who have dementia. I know a couple of men in that town whose wives have dementia. They cared for them as long as they possibly could in their own homes, but finally they had to go into higher care. Lake Cargelligo is a bit over 100 kilometres from Condobolin, the nearest care centre. That amounts to a 200-kilometre round trip to see their wives. These people who have been together for 60-plus years are now separated. It is almost like a premature death. There is no public transport, and these men are in their 80s. At best, they can manage one visit a week. We know that it makes a difference if people can be cared for close to home and that one of the important things is for family members to be in there on a daily basis to help with the feeding, to keep stimulating their brains and all those things. If you are separated from your spouse by a 200-kilometre round trip and you are in your 80s, that is a tragedy. In this day and age, it is a real shame that we still have that situation in Australia.

Another example I would like to give is of a lady who is caring for her husband and is determined that, while ever she has the strength in her body, she is going to care for him.
They live 70 kilometres from town on a rural property. She has had to convert her home, including putting locks on all the cupboards and putting in a fence so her husband cannot wander. She has dedicated her life to caring for him because she does not want him to have to go to a care centre that would be 70 kilometres away. She is having a lot of difficulty getting the home care to help her with that task that someone who lived in a larger centre or in the city would take for granted.

Ageing in general is the freight train that is coming to Australia. Dementia is very much a part of that. By 2050 a million people in Australia will be suffering from dementia. It is important that we are prepared for that event.

Mrs D'ATH (Petrie) (19:06): I rise today to support the motion on dementia moved by the member for Newcastle and thank her not only for bringing it forward but for the great work she does with the Parliamentary Friends of Dementia. This motion outlines that there are almost 280,000 Australians living with dementia and 1.2 million people who provide support and care and that dementia is the greatest cause of disability in Australians aged 65 and over.

What is dementia? It is described as a collection of symptoms caused by disorders affecting the brain. It is a significant chronic disease and is the third leading cause of death in Australia after heart disease and stroke. It affects thinking, behaviour and the ability to perform everyday tasks. Brain function is affected enough to interfere with a person's normal social or working life. Eventually, dementia leaves a person unable to carry out everyday activities as a consequence of diminished cognitive ability. Today, one in four people over the age of 85 has dementia and around 52 per cent of all aged-care recipients have some form of dementia.

This Friday, 21 September, is World Alzheimer's Day and also marks the beginning of Dementia Awareness Week. It is therefore timely for us to recognise that where fighting dementia is concerned there is always more work to be done. Individuals suffering from dementia and their family and friends deserve our recognition and support. I have to thank the member for Newcastle because it was an event she was at in 2009 that got me talking about the issue, and it was a hard issue to talk about. But it is important to talk about Alzheimer's and the effect it has and that unfortunately it does not discriminate in relation to age: at that Alzheimer's event I indicated that my mum was diagnosed with Alzheimer's at the age of 56, and she has since passed away. We need to provide support, we need to invest in research and we need to keep the work going. We need support to help loved ones to stay at home and continue to integrate with their community where possible and support within hospital and aged-care facilities where that is the necessary next step. We need to provide better support and training for health professionals and we need to assist them in dealing with the behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia.

As I said, if you think dementia is only related to ageing then think again. In 2012 there are approximately 16,000 people who have younger onset dementia, which I spoke about in parliament on 23 May 2011, and the number of people with dementia is expected to rise to a million by 2050. These numbers provide a challenge to families all over Australia every day. Our government is committed to taking up the challenge to help. The designation of dementia as the ninth national health priority area will enhance the development of the new National Framework for Action on Dementia, contributing to current and future work being undertaken to tackle dementia, including the national research effort.
I am proud to say the Gillard government's Living Longer, Living Better aged-care reform package, announced on 20 April, commits $268.4 million in funding over five years to tackle dementia. This funding will help to support our seniors from when they first approach their GP with the early signs of dementia through to when they need a very high level of aged care. The government's Living Longer, Living Better reforms consist of improving diagnosis of dementia and allowing greater opportunity for early medical and social interventions; expanding the scope of dementia behaviour management advisory services; additional assistance for people at home and in aged-care homes; and more funding to provide better care for people with severe behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia.

Up to 50 per cent of all patients in hospitals have cognitive impairment. Many of these people may not be identified as having dementia and therefore do not receive the appropriate care. In fact, for many people it can take more than three years from the time they first notice symptoms to when they receive a diagnosis of dementia. Let us recognise the great work of our local providers. Let us recognise the great work of Alzheimer's Australia, whose Queensland branch recently attended my aged-care forums. I look forward to continuing work with them. I want to recognise the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health and Ageing for the inquiry that they are conducting on early intervention for dementia, and I want to tell everyone that during Dementia Awareness Week they can find out information. The number is 1800100500. They should seek support for themselves and their loved ones.

Mr O'DOWD ( Flynn) (19:11): I rise today to speak in support of the motion from the member for Newcastle. As the motion outlines:

(a) dementia is the greatest cause of disability in Australians aged 65 and over;

(b) there are almost 280,000 Australians living with dementia and 1.2 million who provide support and care; and

(c) every week an estimated 1,600 new cases of dementia occur, with the number expected to grow to 7,400 new cases per week by 2050, resulting in 1 million Australians living with dementia by 2050;

Another key point on the disease is that the most common types of dementia are Alzheimer's disease, vascular dementia, Parkinson's disease, dementia with Lewy bodies, FTLD, Huntington's disease, alcohol related dementia and Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease.

The CSIRO have stated that historically the success of reducing the impact of this chronic disorder on individuals rests on two fundamental pillars: early diagnosis and intervention. There are great gains being made, but a lot more has to be done, as we are all aware. Dementia is the third leading cause of death in Australia, after heart attack and stroke. Dementia is therefore fatal, and as yet there is no cure as such. One in four people over the age of 85 have dementia. Dementia is not a normal part of ageing. Dementia has an impact on every part of the health and care system that we have today.

I would like to recognise the significance of Dementia Awareness Week, from the 21st to the 28th of this month. I acknowledge the ongoing contributions of Alzheimer's Australia and the state and territory associations in supporting and advocating for all people affected by this disease. I myself had a family member who was affected by dementia: my Aunty Dorothy, who is now no longer with us. She lived in a home for the last two or three years of her life. When I took my mother to visit her sister-in-law in this home, she insisted that we stop overnight because there were plenty of beds. She said: 'Look, there are hundreds of beds here. You're all very welcome to stop.' When her two daughters arrived later that afternoon, she
said to her elder daughter, ‘Who are you?’ Her daughter replied, ‘I’m Yvonne, your daughter.’ She said: ‘I didn’t know I had one. Who’s the other lady with you?’ Her daughter said, ‘That’s your other daughter, Stephanie.’ She said: ‘Good Lord! I’ve got two daughters. How come?’ She lived another couple of years after that, but it finally got the better of her and she passed on. That was my Aunty Dorothy, but she was just one of the one in four over the age of 85 who has it. She was about 88 when she died.

Dementia is a disease which affects many people right across the country, including in regional areas such as in my electorate of Flynn. I fully support all efforts being made to undertake research into this disease and the work being done to find improvements in treatment and care for sufferers right across the country. I applaud all those who work in support of those suffering from this disease for their tireless efforts in helping to improve the quality of life for sufferers and their families.

Mr GRIFFIN (Bruce) (19:15): I rise to support the member for Newcastle’s motion on dementia and to highlight the significance of Dementia Awareness Week. It is important to improve awareness and understanding within the Australian community of the significance of dementia and its impact on many families. We need to support more research into how to deal with the terrifying—it is terrifying for the families involved—results of dementia and to ensure that the community as whole becomes more aware, and so understanding, of the sorts of problems that dementia produces.

Dementia Awareness Week has a theme this year: ‘Worried about your memory?’. It is all about encouraging people to look after their brain health by leading a brain healthy lifestyle. It is important to be physically active, maintain an active social life and keep mentally stimulated. Those are among the best things you can do to reduce your risk of developing dementia.

As has been said by other speakers, dementia is the third leading cause of death in Australia after heart disease and stroke. One in four people over the age of 85 have dementia and the number of people living with dementia is expected to grow from around 270,000 people today to almost one million by 2050. That is, if you like, a natural symptom of an ageing society, but it is all the more reason why, as a society, we need to be aware of it. We need to do all we can to deal with it and minimise its impact on the future of our nation.

Although it is not a normal part of ageing, it is something which can happen to anybody. It is more common for those over the age of 65, but there are some 16,000 people who have younger onset dementia. Members of parliament—either through their dealings with aged-care facilities in their local community or through their own families—generally have experience of people suffering from dementia. I have been lucky that, in my immediate family, it has not been an issue for some years, although my grandmother on my mother’s side did suffer from Alzheimer’s. I know, though, from visiting my father in an aged-care facility that many people in such facilities have been touched by it. The strugglings of those who have this terrible affliction are tragic to watch.

I mentioned earlier the importance of understanding and awareness. I would like to commend to the House a booklet by Alzheimer’s Australia, entitled Worried about your memory, which is all about improving understanding of the signs and symptoms of dementia. If we know what to look out for, the potential to do something about it is much greater. The ten signs of dementia, the signs that people should be looking out for, are (1) memory loss
that disrupts daily life; (2) challenges in planning or solving problems; (3) difficulty completing familiar tasks at home, at work or at leisure; (4) confusion with time or place; (5) trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships; (6) new problems with words in speaking or writing; (7) misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps; (8) decreased or poor judgement; (9) withdrawal from work or social activities; and (10) changes in mood and personality. These are the factors that people need to look out for in their loved ones, in their families, in order to ensure that, should those signs exhibit themselves, they look to try and give those people the help that they will need. There are tests that can be done and I certainly urge anyone who feels that someone close to them is facing those circumstances to take action.

I would like to commend all those involved in Dementia Awareness Week for their efforts in ensuring that this is better understood, and I would like to say to all those who are out there dealing with people in these circumstances as carers that the support you give is worth while and should be acknowledged.

Mrs GRIGGS (Solomon) (19:20): I rise to speak on the motion brought to the House by the member for Newcastle, and I commend her for raising this very important issue. As we have heard, it is Dementia Awareness Week. It is important that as parliamentarians we show our support and advocacy for those in the community affected by dementia—not just those diagnosed with dementia but the families and friends who are also impacted by this terrible disease.

I take my role as Alzheimer's Australia champion very seriously and I will continue to advocate and fight for appropriate funding to tackle this terrible disease which affects not just the elderly in our community, which is the perception. There are currently around 280,000 Australians—and 1,600 new cases diagnosed each week—living with dementia who are cared for by 1.2 million dedicated carers. The number of sufferers is expected to dramatically increase to 465,000 by 2031 and to 980,000 Australians by 2050. That equates to around 7,400 new cases each week.

A report commissioned by Access Economics in 2009 found that there are approximately 740 dementia sufferers in the Northern Territory, with 460 of those living in Darwin. By 2015 the number of sufferers across the Northern Territory is projected to rise to 6,400, an increase of 8.6 per cent, with 4,700 of those living in Darwin, an increase of 10.2 per cent. It is concerning for me as the federal member that the Northern Territory is predicted to have the highest growth numbers for dementia sufferers of all the states and territories.

It will come as no surprise that the coalition has always been committed to supporting those affected by dementia. In the 2005 budget the Howard government committed $320 million to fund a dementia initiative, making dementia a national health priority. In 2009 a Labor government evaluation found the initiative successful but they deliberately at this point closed the funding program down. After another Labor backflip the funding has recently been reinstated—and I think we all agree it should never have been removed in the first place.

Dementia Awareness Week is an important annual national initiative which, as I said earlier, is occurring this week along with World Dementia Day which is being observed globally on Friday, 21 September. The theme for Dementia Awareness Week is 'Brain health: making the connections', with a focus on raising awareness of this disease and the need for
everyone to keep their brain active. This week is aimed at informing people who believe that they may have memory problems to seek information and help.

The stigma around dementia today is as widespread as it ever was, with more than half of Australians mistakenly attributing the symptoms of dementia as a normal part of ageing. Education is the only way to dispel this myth. As an Alzheimer's Australia dementia champion I am calling on all Territorians to support Dementia Awareness Week by getting involved and by encouraging those who they are worried about with memory loss to seek help, because early diagnosis is absolutely crucial. In support of Dementia Awareness Week, there are various activities occurring in my electorate. These include the annual tea dance at the Greek Orthodox school hall in Nightcliff on Tuesday, 25 September. From all accounts, this event is a highlight for Darwin seniors. It features a range of activities, including performances by the Groovy Grans, the Essington Songsters and musician Jim Harte and a display by belly dancers.

For health professionals, there will be presentations in Darwin on Monday, 24 September, by the renowned Dr Serge Gauthier, who is also going to be here talking to us parliamentarians later this week. Back in my electorate on Friday, 21 September, I will be supporting the gathering of champions on World Alzheimer's Day at Raintree Park in Darwin. I will be supporting the fabulous team of dedicated people at Alzheimer's Australia NT in supporting those people with Alzheimer's and dementia in the Northern Territory.

Mr GEORGANAS (Hindmarsh) (19:26): I first of all congratulate the member for Newcastle for bringing such an important motion to the House. Dementia is the greatest cause of disability in Australians aged 65 and over. It is very important that we recognise the significance of Dementia Awareness Week, which is 21 September to 28 September, in promoting and advocating the needs of those living with dementia, and let us not forget their families and their carers. I am very glad that tonight we are here to address this issue, which affects more people in my electorate than anywhere else in the country. You might ask why so. Access Economics recently published a report showing the electorate of Hindmarsh as having the highest rate of dementia in the nation. That is a huge concern. One in four people in my electorate are over the age of 65. This is a problem that will only get bigger, not just in my electorate but across Australia. But the problem at the moment in my electorate is a problem that needs immediate solutions.

The behavioural changes that take place can be very, very dramatic for people who have dementia. It can be very distressing for the person involved and very confronting for the family members who take care of them. Things like hoarding, repetitive behaviour and, unfortunately, aggression, can be really upsetting, and no-one wants to see their mum or their dad or their grandparents or other relatives in that state of distress. We know that more Australians than ever are being diagnosed with dementia and having to come to terms with the challenges that a diagnosis presents. It is great today, as I said, that we can take a few moments to focus on this issue and think about how we can best try and help the nation to cope with the prospect of 7,400 new cases every week. There is a lot of work being done currently on dementia. I would like to also acknowledge the members of my House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health and Ageing who are here: the deputy chair, the member for Swan, and the member for Shortland, Jill Hall. They have both been involved
in the inquiry that we are currently conducting. There will be more said about that as the report comes out later in the year.

It does not matter whether you are 40, 50 or 70 years old. We all need to be aware of the possibility that one day we might get dementia or someone in our family might be affected. How will we cope? What services are available? How can we ensure that we have the very best medical knowledge to promote early diagnosis and effective management of dementia? These are all the things that we are currently looking into in the health and ageing committee. Since March this year, we have been conducting this inquiry into the early diagnosis and treatment of dementia. We are going to be looking at a number of things, but in particular at how early diagnosis can improve the quality of life and assist people with dementia to remain independent for as long as possible, to increase the opportunities for continued social engagement and community participation for people with dementia, and to help people with dementia and their carers to plan for their futures, including organising financial and legal affairs and preparing for the longer term or more intensive care requirements and, of course, how best to deliver awareness and communication on dementia and dementia related services into the community. We know that the earlier it is diagnosed the better it is for the person who has the illness. They can put their affairs into place and prepare for the future. It also prepares those around them for the future.

We have had many hearings. We have had a hearing in my electorate in Adelaide where we had a fantastic organisation, MAC or Multicultural Aged Care, come and brief us on the particular challenges of dementia for people from non-English-speaking backgrounds—things that you would not even necessarily think of: for example, how some aged-care workers took one old man to be talking gibberish, but it turned out that he was asking in Italian for his favourite brand of bottled mineral water and life was made much easier for that person once someone could communicate with him. Most recently, we were up in the electorate of the member for Parkes, visiting Moree, where we heard from some of the local organisations about the challenges of dementia care in rural settings.

It is very important to be able to provide services for the people who we need to look after in their old age and those suffering from this debilitating disease of dementia.

Mr IRONS (Swan) (19:31): It is timely that we are debating the motion moved by the member for Newcastle on dementia awareness, for a couple of reasons, and I congratulate the member for moving the motion. Next week, Dementia Awareness Week is being marked across the country with a series of events. But the motion is also timely due to the work we are currently undertaking in the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health and Ageing. We have just heard the member for Hindmarsh talk about that. He mentioned our recent trip to Moree; on that trip he forgot his tie, and I see he is wearing the tie he bought in the main street of Moree—he is not listening, but it is a beautiful tie and I was glad to share a cup of coffee with him afterwards.

The disease that touches many families across Australia is Alzheimer's. It is always distressing for relatives to see the decline, sometimes gradual and sometimes rapid, of their loved ones, and we know that there are many tough decisions to be made in terms of arranging care. This situation has touched my own family recently with my mother being placed in a dementia ward in Victoria, down in Melbourne. To see the degradation in her mental faculties, in her mind, has been concerning to the whole family. But we know she is in
a place which is very caring and that is looking after her. Whenever I get the chance I take the opportunity to visit her. It has been lucky that the health and ageing committee has had quite a few hearings in Melbourne, so I have been able to pop down and see her. But, as I said, this disease does touch many people.

In my role as the Deputy Chair of the House of Representative Standing Committee on Health and Ageing, which is currently inquiring into 'Dementia: early diagnosis and intervention', it is pleasing to see that we have had so many speakers here today and that there is a genuine will in the parliament to do what it takes to get to grips with the condition.

The headline on the Alzheimer's Australia website is, 'Fight Alzheimer's; save Australia', and it is true that, with our ageing population, cases of dementia are only going to grow and grow. They will double in the next 20 years. We must do all we can to assist organisations to conduct the research that might make a cure possible someday. We must promote early intervention programs, because if you can catch dementia early it makes a massive difference in the long term as to the quality of life of both the patient and the carers involved.

Our committee's terms of reference are to:

… inquire into and report on the dementia early diagnosis and intervention practices in Australia, with a particular focus on how early diagnosis and intervention can:

- improve quality of life and assist people with dementia to remain independent for as long as possible;
- increase opportunities for continued social engagement and community participation for people with dementia;
- help people with dementia and their carers to plan for their futures, including organising financial and legal affairs and preparing for longer-term or more intensive care requirements; and
- how best to deliver awareness and communication on dementia and dementia-related services into the community.

There have been a fair number of public hearings so far and there are more to come. We just heard the chair of the committee talk about some of our experiences. In Moree we heard about the lack of services in regional areas, and that is a real issue. That is probably why the member for Newcastle has brought this up, and if there is something that we can do to improve services and improve things for people who need care, hopefully that is what the result of our inquiry and our recommendations to the government will be.

I am particularly looking forward to the Perth public hearing, which is due to be held soon. We are fortunate in my electorate of Swan to have Southcare, which offers aged care services including dementia respite services at their Bickley Club facility. As we heard during the inquiry, respite is important particularly for carers as theirs is a thankless job. That is one of the areas where the committee will have some good recommendations.

As the member for Newcastle's motion notes, dementia is the greatest cause of disability in Australians aged 65 years and over, and we need services that can cater for this across the community. I have had a great relationship with Southcare over the years, and I have been to a couple of openings of new buildings in the last few years. There will be further opportunity to debate the findings and I am sure that we all hope the member for Newcastle will be able to make a contribution to the debate during our committee hearing.
Part two of the motion recognises the significance of Dementia Awareness Week in promoting and advocating the needs of those suffering with dementia, their families and their carers. I am pleased to note that as part of this week Perth will be hosting an event called Brain Health—Making the Connections.

I again congratulate the member for Newcastle for bringing this motion before the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. DGH Adams): The time allotted for the debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next meeting.

National Stroke Week

Debate resumed on the motion by Ms Hall:

That this House:

(1) notes that:
   (a) Stroke Awareness Week is 10 to 16 September 2012; and
   (b) the focus of National Stroke Week in 2012 is to encourage people to understand their stroke risk;

(2) notes with concern that:
   (a) stroke remains the second biggest killer and a leading cause of disability in Australia;
   (b) one in six people will suffer a stroke in their lifetime; and
   (c) around 60,000 people will suffer new or recurrent strokes this year;

(3) recognises that:
   (a) the risk of stroke is influenced by a number of factors beyond our control, including age, gender and family history;
   (b) there are many lifestyle risk factors that are within our control and with this knowledge we can act to reduce our risk of stroke; and
   (c) lifestyle risk factors which can be controlled include:
      (i) high blood pressure;
      (ii) high cholesterol;
      (iii) smoking cigarettes;
      (iv) poor diet and lack of exercise;
      (v) being overweight; and
      (vi) drinking too much alcohol;

(4) understands:
   (a) that every Australian needs to know their stroke risk; and
   (b) lifestyle changes can have a significant impact in reducing a person's risk of stroke;

(5) acknowledges the:
   (a) important role of families and carers of stroke victims; and
   (b) valuable work of the National Stroke Foundation;

(6) asks all Members to raise awareness of stroke risk and the preventative actions that people can take to help reduce their risk of stroke.

Ms HALL (Shortland—Government Whip) (19:36): Last week was National Stroke Week, and the message for this year's Stroke Week was know your stroke risk. The Stroke
Foundation held a breakfast at Parliament House last Wednesday, and the member for Hasluck and I, as joint conveners, sponsored the breakfast along with the Stroke Foundation. Speakers at the breakfast highlighted the risk factors associated with stroke.

People ask what a stroke is. It is not a heart attack—it is a condition that affects the brain. It is the second biggest killer in Australia. A stroke happens when the supply of blood to the brain is suddenly interrupted. Blood is carried to the brain through blood vessels, called arteries, and if one of those blood vessels gets blocked the blood does not flow to the brain. It could be through a clot or plaque, or it could happen if the artery bursts. A stroke can be very debilitating, and strokes affect one in six people. It is important that people know about stroke, understand the risk factors and know who it affects.

Stroke does not discriminate on the ground of age. People tend to think of stroke as a disease of old age but in fact young children suffer strokes. The youngest constituent I have had dealings with who has had a stroke was a five-year-old girl. From being a very bright, vibrant, sporty little girl she became confined to a wheelchair, losing her ability to function as a normal child and having to rely on her parents for the most basic of tasks. Over the years I have worked in an acquired brain injury team and I have worked with people who have had strokes, and there have been people of varying ages. This year my mother-in-law had a stroke, and I have seen the impact it has had on her. She is very disabled as a result of that stroke.

We will go to what the risk factors are. That was the message of this year's Stroke Week. The risk factors are varied. If you smoke you or if you have high blood pressure you increase your risk, as you do if you drink or have ischemic heart disease, TIA or an irregular heartbeat. There are a number of factors such as those. There can be congenital issues associated with stroke as well. So it is really important for people to keep a check on their blood pressure and their cholesterol levels and know that they have a healthy heart and a healthy body. Exercise is important; it is important not to smoke; it is important not to drink too much. We have just been talking about dementia. In this parliament we have talked about many different diseases and illnesses and there are some very strong messages. If you eat properly and exercise you will reduce your chance of having a stroke or developing those illnesses.

I would like to thank the member for Hasluck for the work that he has done in this area. He is very committed to this issue. He and I encourage people to know their personal risk, be physically active, avoid obesity, limit alcohol consumption, avoid cigarette smoking and learn to recognise the warning signs—FAST: face, arms, speech and time.

Mr WYATT (Hasluck) (19:41): I commend the member for Shortland on this motion. In 2008 the leading underlying cause of death for all Australians was ischemic heart disease. All of us know that, but very few really give thought to cerebrovascular disease, or stroke, which remains the second-leading underlying cause of death. Strokes cause haemorrhages, infarctions and blocked arteries of the brain.

Whilst we have been reducing the prevalence rates of strokes, it nevertheless remains a key issue that the public neither talk about nor discuss until there is an impact upon them, either personally or through a family member. A stroke can happen in two ways: either there is a blood clot or plaque that blocks a blood vessel in the brain, or an aneurysm—that is, a blood vessel in the brain that breaks or ruptures. They create a starvation of the arteries that feed the brain the blood and the oxygen it requires.
What was interesting at the launch of this week of stroke awareness was the new ad appearing on television that shows brains under containers. It was graphic, and it was shown to us at a breakfast, so while we were eating breakfast we were looking at this ad that shows the brains, and then someone inserting a scalpel, indicating that if the damage was in that area you would lose speech, you would lose facets of your five senses and you would lose bladder control. People do not think of that until stroke occurs. But I suppose the graphic ending was when he used a hammer to demonstrate that it is permanent—it is not a temporary thing.

There was a young woman who gave her story of the things that had happened to her—the event as it occurred, and what transpired after that. She was fortunate. She was near a specialised unit that deals with strokes, so she has made an incredible recovery. But we need to be aware of what the symptoms of stroke are, and what the risk factors are. Sometimes there is a temporary stroke that happens for a very short period of time—a transient ischaemic attack. Sometimes it is called a minor stroke or a mini stroke, when the signs of stroke are present but go away within 24 hours, so the term TIA is used. When people have TIA, they think that is the end of the health problem, but evidence shows that, if you ignore those warning signs—and that is a warning sign no different from the pain in the chest, for which you go to the doctor—it is often the next stage that is permanent in terms of a stroke because the damage is much more significant.

One of our challenges in the way we deliver services is the inequity in many senses between a capital city, where you can get to a stroke unit that gives you specialised support, and those in rural areas that are unlikely to have that level. But I encourage all Australians to visit www.signsofstroke.com.au because it is in visiting that site that you are asked to do a couple of things. One is to take the time to look at lifestyle and medical risks. If you have two or more within each category then it suggests that you go visit your doctor in order to ensure that you are not a high-risk factor for a stroke.

The other side of it that I have seen are the carers who look after somebody who has a stroke, particularly if it is debilitating and reduces your capacity to be the free-moving person that you were prior to a stroke. What you do is lock your partner into this 24-hour, seven-days-a-week caring role. So it is important for quality of life and it is important in terms of your health, and yet it is something that Australians do not know a great deal about. We hear that somebody has a stroke and think of it as just a small element. What we do not fully grasp is the permanency of it.

The other thing that really astounds me is the age range. It is not just an adult; it is also a child. So it is important that you become familiar. I strongly support the work of the Stroke Foundation in their endeavours to have people join with them in creating a broader awareness within Australian society.

Ms VAMVAKINOU (Calwell) (19:46): It is a great pleasure to rise this evening to speak to the motion of the member for Shortland regarding National Stroke Week and the campaign that was run to encourage people to understand their stroke risk. The motion follows on from the very excellent presentation last Wednesday that was organised by the parliamentary friends of heart and stroke, co-chaired by the member for Hasluck and the member for Shortland. It was a function that involved the National Stroke Foundation launching their public awareness campaign, aptly named Know Your Numbers, and I want to thank them for coming to Canberra and setting up the Know Your Numbers health check stations, which
gave members and their staff an opportunity to stop for a minute and take a bit of a health check. I was one of those members.

The fact is that one in every six people in Australia will suffer a stroke. It now has become Australia's second-biggest killer and a leading cause of disability amongst adults but also amongst young people. Despite this, most people prefer to believe that stroke is something that happens to other people and, alarmingly, are unaware of potentially life-saving warning signs. If we stop to think about the number of people we know personally or know of who have had a stroke—anyone from members of our family to friends and the broader neighbourhood or, indeed, to our own constituencies—I think we would realise just how vulnerable we all are, especially given the odds that I have just mentioned.

That is why motions such as this are very important: they give us an opportunity to help raise awareness both within this chamber and in our respective electorates. Simple things like making healthier lifestyle choices, improving our diet and exercising regularly will go a long way towards improving the odds of not having a stroke, and the national stroke awareness campaign does encourage people to monitor. Some of the leading indicators are high blood pressure and diabetes. So it is very important to be aware of these indicators and very important for us to assist in raising that awareness, especially in our constituents and in this country generally, where our population is ageing and there will be a greater need for awareness about all sorts of disease.

In my electorate of Calwell, I have a large ageing population which I have learnt is pretty much in the high risk category. Many of my constituents, a large number of them, are of non-English-speaking backgrounds, so I am very mindful that we need to be aware that whatever programs we are promoting and helping promote are also programs that are available to people who do not speak English, who speak other languages. There is no point in having an awareness program if it is not reaching a large number of our constituencies. For many years I personally have advocated awareness in relation to health issues in the multicultural communities and I often translate a lot of material myself, or have it translated, to ensure that my constituents get the full benefit. I would encourage us all to be conscious of the fact that we are dealing with people in our constituencies for whom English is not their first language.

I have had a look at some of the statistics in my electorate and, as I said, many of my constituents are probably candidates for a stroke. According to the National Stroke Foundation and the Victorian Department of Health, in my local government areas of Hume and Brimbank the residents are at a high risk of having not only a stroke but also contracting type 2 diabetes. Statistically, 48.6 per cent of Victorians are deemed to be overweight or obese, but in Brimbank, statistics are 52.2 per cent and in Hume that figure is 53.5 per cent. Smoking rates are also higher in my two local government areas, as is a tendency not to be involved in exercise and physical inactivity. The City of Brimbank has the seventh-highest rate of type 2 diabetes in Victoria and Hume, the other city in my electorate, has the second-highest, so raising awareness is important. I commend the member for Shortland, and I commend all other members who would speak in this debate.

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde) (19:52): I too wish to pass on my congratulations to the member for Shortland for bringing this motion to the House. As has been mentioned already, last week was National Stroke Week, and the purpose of this motion is to not only raise
awareness of the risk of stroke, but also the preventive actions that people can take to help reduce the risk.

A stroke can happen in two main ways: either there is a blood clot or plaque that blocks the blood vessel in the brain, or a blood vessel in the brain breaks or ruptures. The focus of National Stroke Week is to encourage people to understand their stroke risk. I note that the member for Shortland's motion states:

(a) stroke remains the second biggest killer and a leading cause of disability in Australia;
(b) one in six people will suffer a stroke in their lifetime; and
(c) around 60,000 people will suffer new or recurrent strokes this year …

Many factors, some beyond our control, can lead to a stroke. However, there are some lifestyle factors which we can all act upon to reduce our risk. The factors we cannot control are age, gender and family history. However, we can improve our blood pressure, our cholesterol, our diet, our physical activity, our body weight and our alcohol consumption. Furthermore, smokers can reduce their risk by giving up the habit altogether.

Australians should all understand the signs of stroke to ensure victims receive immediate medical assistance, and these signs can best be recognised by the following acronym—FAST. F stands for face: has the mouth drooped? A stands for arms: can they move both of them? S stands for speech: is their speech slurred and can they speak? T stands for time: time is critical and you need to seek medical help as soon as possible. Stroke is one of the No. 1 killers alongside heart disease in Australia.

In the Forde electorate we have a local support group, the Beenleigh Stroke Survivors Group, which is part of the National Stroke Foundation. Some time ago this group ceased to exist, but a local constituent fresh out of university volunteered to re-establish the group, which continues to increase in size. Natalie Davis, 24, has been working with the group's membership along with the foundation to provide a place where local stroke survivors can meet to make friends with other survivors and share their stories. They meet every month, ironically at the Beenleigh McDonald's. Since they started meeting there, numbers have increased to a level where they will soon have to find a larger venue. I have been invited along to their next meeting to speak and to hear about Natalie's plans to make the group an official charity.

Over the past weekend I attended the Beenleigh show, and the Beenleigh stroke group also had a stall there. It was the first time they had set up a stall at the show and Natalie said she was surprised at the number of people who came up to the stall to share their stories of stroke survival. Natalie said that the one thing that stood out for her were the stories where the survivors had experienced stroke with children. She said there are some 20 members currently in the group but, after the weekend promotion at the show, she is expecting this number to rise. On Wednesday this week they will be holding a luncheon at the Beenleigh RSL as part of the official National Stroke Week activity. Early indications from the response they received at the show are that around 30 people may attend, along with their carers.

I want to congratulate Natalie and the people involved with the Beenleigh stroke group for the work they are doing in my local community to make the community more aware of issues to do with stroke and in providing support and assistance for those people who have suffered a stroke and for their carers. I look forward to going along to the group's next meeting. I will
continue to play my part in ensuring the community understands the risk factors and the signs of stroke to ensure early medical intervention, and, equally importantly, I will seek to ensure that we educate the community in the lifestyle factors that create this issue in the first place and how we as a community can prevent those risks and stop people suffering this debilitating illness.

Ms SAFFIN (Page) (19:57): I would like to begin my contribution by thanking the honourable member for Shortland for bringing this motion before the House so that all members could have an opportunity to talk about an issue that affects so many Australians. It has been brought forward just at the tail end of National Stroke Week as well, so it is most appropriate that we are discussing it.

The Stroke Foundation has produced some useful and informative resources. They tell us that one in six people will have a stroke in their lifetime—that is a lot of Australians—and they say that, every six seconds, someone will die from stroke, but there are a lot of people who survive strokes, a lot of people who get a lot of support to survive strokes and go on to lead very useful lives. They also tell us about six steps we can take to reduce our risk of stroke, which I will read. They are to do with lifestyle. We can do these six things to help ourselves and, in terms of public health policy, we can assist.

Of course, as with any illness, there are other factors at play but we can give ourselves a helping hand. The six steps you can take to reduce your stroke risk are: know your personal risk factors; be physically active and exercise regularly; avoid obesity by keeping to a healthy diet; limit alcohol consumption; avoid cigarette smoke, and if you smoke seek help to stop now; and learn to recognise the warning signs of a stroke and act fast. They say that we should visit www.signsofstroke.com.au.

Some of those things are easier said than done and, even though some are lifestyle factors, some of them carry some sort of genetic marker. The foundation then has a checklist entitled 'What is your stroke risk? It lists lifestyle risks: 'I am a smoker, I have more than two standard alcoholic drinks per day, I don't exercise regularly, I don't maintain a healthy diet and I am overweight'.

Then it lists medical risks, and these are some of the ones that are really challenging: 'I have a family history of stroke,' 'I have a personal history of stroke or heart disease,' 'I have high blood pressure,' 'I have high blood cholesterol,' 'I have diabetes,' and, 'I have atrial fibrillation—irregular heartbeat.' 'If you have ticked one or more boxes or do not know how to answer any of these questions,' it says, 'visit your doctor and ask for a stroke and cardiovascular risk assessment.' And there is the stroke line—1800STROKE, or 1800787653. You should speak to a health professional. Like all things to do with your health, it is important to have a relationship with your GP and talk to your GP.

In New South Wales there is also the Stroke Recovery Association, and I have to say that they are very helpful in working with local groups and individuals. They were established in 1997 and they play a major role in giving support for the recovery of stroke survivors, and there are many. There are an estimated 52 stroke recovery clubs in New South Wales. There is one in Lismore, where I live, and some on the Northern Rivers. Stroke does not just strike older people, though; it also can and does afflict the young.
I remember some time back there was an announcement from our local health service that they were looking at establishing a stroke recovery unit. I am pleased to say that this will be happening. A stroke coordinator will start work in October. Their first task is to scope out the most suitable model of care. As always in a regional or rural area, you have to look at where you place the stroke recovery unit and factor in outreach support and professional development for the medical staff, but presumably it will be through Lismore Base Hospital. I am told the service will be up and running this financial year, being the financial year for health. I also know that over a year there have been about 200 admissions to Lismore Base Hospital and 60 to Ballina and Grafton hospitals. I actually have a friend in Lismore Base Hospital now who is recovering from a stroke.

**Mrs PRENTICE** (Ryan) (20:02): I rise to support the member for Shortland's motion regarding National Stroke Week, which this year was held from 10 to 16 September. Stroke is a major cause of death and disability in Australia and, as the motion notes, is the second biggest killer in the nation, affecting more than one in six Australians during their lifetime.

It is important to understand the risk factors associated with cardiovascular disease and the risk of having a stroke. While there are lifestyle risk factors we can control, including our level of exercise, our weight and whether we drink alcohol or smoke cigarettes, we cannot control our age, our gender or our family history. Importantly, many thousands of Australians suffer from transient ischaemic attacks known as minor strokes or ministrokes, after which the symptoms generally subside within 24 hours. These transient symptoms are often ignored, although we know that one in five people who have a TIA can suffer a major stroke within three months. These figures highlight the very pressing need for all Australians to check with their GP about their heart health and to assess their risk factors for cardiovascular disease and stroke.

Last week I took the opportunity to visit the Stroke Foundation's 'Know your numbers' campaign in Parliament House, to measure my blood pressure and other risk factors. I acknowledge the important work they and their chief executive officer, Dr Erin Lalor, do in all areas of cardiovascular health to promote community awareness, improve access to treatment and services and identify gaps in stroke research.

Many thousands of Australians know the very real consequences of strokes and transient ischaemic attacks, which reduce the supply of oxygen to the brain, thereby causing neuronal cell death. Depending on the size and location of the stroke, the consequences can be very wide ranging, from barely noticeable consequences such as slight dizziness or difficulty speaking or understanding, to paralysis, coma and even death.

For centuries the accepted assumption was that the human brain was concrete and unchangeable and that brain related injuries through stroke were irreversible. Fortunately, we now know that the brain displays plasticity and that in so many areas there are ways of not just adapting to brain injuries but also in reversing the consequences. The University of Queensland in my electorate of Ryan is undertaking very important work in the areas of cardiovascular disease and stroke not only at the Queensland Brain Institute but also for the Centre for Neurogenic Communication Disorders Research at the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences and the Centre for Medical Diagnostic Technologies in Queensland at the University of Queensland. Professor Bruce Murdoch in particular is undertaking novel research into the potential of transcranial magnetic stimulation, TMS, as a non-invasive
therapeutic method of dealing with the consequences of stroke. Professor Murdoch's research has so far indicated positive results for patients and their quality of life. TMS could revolutionise the way we treat neurodegenerative disorders.

Dr Elisabeth Coulson at the Queensland Brain Institute has uncovered a cell death signalling pathway, P75 neurotrophin receptor protein, which is active in dying neurons, and is contributing to world-class research into how to prevent this process from occurring. Professor Perry Bartlett, director of the Queensland Brain Institute, has been a world leader with research into brain derived neurotrophic factor and other important neurotrophic factors and how they relate to the survival, proliferation and differentiation of neuronal cells.

Researchers at the university School of Biomedical Sciences have a particular focus on understanding the cellular and molecular mechanisms involved in strokes and developing subsequent therapeutic methods to address the consequences of strokes. To that end the school has received a grant worth $700,000 from the Australian Research Council to investigate novel pharmacological agents to target stroke induced brain injury. I look forward to the outcome of that work come 2014.

The research currently happening at the University of Queensland will have important consequences for not just stroke sufferers and their families but potentially for all brain related disorders, including people with speech and language disorders, dementia and Alzheimer's, and also for people with auditory-visual processing issues among many other conditions.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the member for Hasluck's ongoing dedication to stroke awareness through his contribution as co-convenor of the Parliamentary Heart Foundation and Stroke Foundation Friendship Group and his parliamentary walking group. I know his support for the Go Red for Women campaign earlier this year made a real impact and encouraged thousands of women to check their blood pressure and check their heart health.

Debate adjourned.

Sudan

Debate resumed on motion by Ms Rowland:

That this House:

(1) calls on the Sudanese Government and the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement—North, to:

   (a) promptly implement the Memorandum of Understanding signed with the United Nations, African Union and Arab League on allowing unrestricted humanitarian access to all areas of the Blue Nile and South Kordofan states in Sudan; and

   (b) immediately conclude a ceasefire agreement;

(2) supports the involvement of an international mediation team to assist in negotiations for a ceasefire agreement;

(3) calls on:

   (a) the Sudanese and South Sudanese governments to cease any support for armed rebel militias in each other's territories; and

   (b) both sides to urgently work towards a final, negotiated agreement on outstanding issues arising from separation, including Abyei;
(4) notes that the International Criminal Court has issued a warrant for the arrest of Sudan's President, Omar Hassan al-Bashir, on five counts of crimes against humanity (murder, extermination, forcible transfer, torture and rape), two counts of war crimes (attacking civilians and pillaging), and three counts of genocide; and
(5) acknowledges the:
   (a) contribution of the Sudanese and South Sudanese Diaspora in Australia to our economic and cultural diversity; and
   (b) excellent work being undertaken by the international community in assisting the 170,000 refugees who have been displaced from Sudan's Blue Nile and South Kordofan states since late 2011.

Ms ROWLAND (Greenway) (20:07): This motion before us is extremely important to the over 800 Sudanese Australians living in my electorate and I know it is extremely important to many members in this place. It has attracted a huge amount of interest in the community, as evidenced by the attendance in the gallery tonight. I want to acknowledge some people who have helped to drive this motion, namely Mr Sascha Nanlohy, president of A Billion Little Stones, an organisation dedicated to preventing genocide and mass atrocities around the world; Father Peter Confeggi, the parish priest at St Patrick's Parish in Blacktown; and Father Martin Ochaya Lino, secretary-general of the Catholic Archdiocese of Juba, South Sudan. These people and many others have worked with me in my local community to shape this motion and I would like to personally thank them for their respective contributions.

Since South Sudan's independence last year we have seen continued conflict around the newly crafted border regions, with hundreds of thousands now displaced from Sudan's Blue Nile and South Kordofan states since the Sudanese army's offensive began in May 2011. Something must be done to stop the bloodshed, to stop the displacement and work towards a long-lasting, sustainable peace. I strongly believe that the international community has a responsibility to foster peace in the region. I believe that Australia as a good international citizen has a responsibility to do all we can to empower the peacemakers and help to end this suffering. We in this House all have a responsibility to drive political will, not just token support but hard political will, for effective policy and tangible results. With knowledge comes responsibility.

When American journalist Nicholas Kristof visited the Nuba Mountains in June he told the story of Katum Tutu, a 28-year-old woman who had lost her two-year-old daughter to starvation and had no food for her four remaining children. Her children, like many of those who remain in the Nuba Mountains, try to live by eating mice, leaves and roots. They do not have the strength to reach the refugee camp and believe 'it is much better to stay and die here'.

With the humanitarian crisis now resulting in child mortality four times above emergency levels, Australia must be ready to contribute rapid humanitarian efforts in delivering food to internally displaced persons and refugees in South Sudan and Ethiopia. We must lobby for the creation of humanitarian corridors and safe havens.

While few may have heard of the conflict in Sudan, many more struggle to see any interest that Australia might have. But I point to the decision of the government of South Sudan in January this year to shut down oil production in part of a long-running stand-off with the north over the sharing of oil revenues accrued in the pipeline. As a result of that shutdown, the price of oil rose and the price of petrol hit the hip pockets of Australian families. In the words of Kofi Annan, 'Ours is a world in which no individual, and no country, exists in
isolation.’ Quite apart from the economic consequences, these conflicts do not exist in a vacuum, and we have an interest in peace beyond the simple moral compulsion to act.

I would like to highlight in this motion:

That this House … notes that the International Criminal Court has issued a warrant for the arrest of Sudan’s President, Omar Hassan al-Bashir, on five counts of crimes against humanity (murder, extermination, forcible transfer, torture and rape), two counts of war crimes (attacking civilians and pillaging), and three counts of genocide.

I feel it is extremely important to note that, despite this warrant from the ICC, there are countries that continue to harbour al-Bashir and allow him safe passage throughout the world. Prior to the genocide in Darfur, for which he is charged, al-Bashir and his inner circle were responsible for the genocidal campaign in the Nuba Mountains in the early 1990s, where the tactics later used in Darfur were honed.

It is not too much to say, even as we see the devastation wrought by Bashar al-Assad in Syria, that President al-Bashir's 23-year reign has been the most deadly and brutal of any head of state in the world today. Currently Australian sanctions only cover those who have been active in the Darfur region of Sudan. Given the horror and calculated destruction that is clear in the intentions of the Sudanese government in the Nuba Mountains, Australia must work with the international community and broaden individual travel sanctions and asset freezes and push for an International Criminal Court investigation into the conflict. It is also appropriate for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to strongly lobby its counterparts in Africa and the Middle East to commit to their responsibilities under the Rome statute and arrest President al-Bashir and other indicted war criminals should they set foot in a signatory country.

In my electorate of Greenway, there are some 826 people who identify as Sudanese or South Sudanese, and in the wider Blacktown LGA, also represented by my colleague the member for Chifley, who is here this evening, there are over 2,000 people. The Sudanese community I represent in this place are active participants in Australian society and contribute greatly to the vibrant multicultural nature of the Greenway electorate.

In closing, I believe it is appropriate to reflect on the question asked by General Romeo Dallaire, who led the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Rwanda as the world turned its back and 800,000 people were slaughtered in 100 days. He asked: ‘Are all humans human or are some more human than others?’ When we hear of these conscience-shocking acts, we must all ask ourselves this question. We must recognise we are all human and we are all endowed with indivisible and inalienable rights. We in this House have a responsibility to shine light on places where people are forced to flee from their homes and live in caves, their fields burnt and their lives destroyed, all because of the colour of their skin.

Mr McCORMACK (Riverina) (20:13): On 9 July 2011 South Sudan became the newest country in the world. The Republic of South Sudan was the result of a six-year peace process which began with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005. An agreement reached between the government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement ended more than two decades of war. The agreement called for a referendum to determine the status of South Sudan, and this was held in July 2011, with 98.83 per cent of participants voting for independence. That is a remarkable statistic.
The outbreak of violence in Sudan in the lead-up to the 2011 referendum was of great concern to the coalition, as it was to the whole Australian parliament. We joined with the United States of America and other members of the international community in urging all parties to remain committed to the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement. In April this year, the Minister for Foreign Affairs announced that the government is providing up to 25 Australian Defence Force personnel and 10 Australian Federal Police to the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan, to provide ongoing humanitarian and development assistance to South Sudan.

UNMISS has three key mandates: (1) support for peace consolidation and thereby fostering longer term state building and economic development, (2) support the government of the Republic of South Sudan in exercising its responsibilities for conflict prevention, mitigation and resolution and protect civilians and (3) support the government of South Sudan in developing its capacity to provide security to establish rule of law and to strengthen the security and justice sectors.

The coalition welcomes the government's additional assistance to the people of Sudan during this period. This has built on Australia's humanitarian program in Darfur initiated by the Howard government. Australians are concerned about reports of ongoing violence in regions such as Southern Kordotan and the Nuba Mountains which are deeply troubling. UN Mission in South Sudan Chief Hilde Johnson said on 5 July this year:

The tensions and the crisis between Sudan and South Sudan have impeded state and nation building efforts. In many ways, these unresolved issues have been like chains on our feet of the new and independent country. They have also constituted significant problems for Sudan.

There are a number of key issues which are yet to be resolved between Sudan and South Sudan, concerning disputed territory particularly the Abyei administrative regions and resources as well as the problems which arise in granting nationality and citizenship to people. These issues have already caused conflict in the region and have led to more than 110,000 people being forced south and into Ethiopia.

South Sudan needs to develop a constructive relationship with Sudan on such important matters, and to work on ways of controlling the border and the need for legal frameworks for refugee returns. Refugees returning to South Sudan from the north is a difficult matter and there is no easy way to measure South Sudanese presence in Sudan. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reports violence affected various part of the south in 2011 and by the end of August it was believed that more than 3,070 people had been killed in intercommunal and militia related violence. It is expected refugees, people at risk of statelessness, returnees and internally displaced persons will continue to increase in South Sudan should the conflict in Southern Kordofan and Darfur worsen. The people of Sudan have already suffered immensely and it is pivotal both Sudan and South Sudan protect their citizens and comply with international law.

In my electorate of Riverina there is a vibrant Sudanese and South Sudanese community who celebrated the first anniversary of South Sudan with a traditional lunch and dances on July 14. Mr Deng Jot organised the festivities and said that the day recognised the freedom for which the South Sudanese people had fought long and hard. He also said the day was 'a way for us to remember those who have died'.

FEDERATION CHAMBER
I am really pleased so many Sudanese Australians are here in the Federation Chamber tonight and I welcome them. The coalition has always been and will always be committed to fundamental human rights, as has the government, including freedom of worship. We call on the Sudanese authorities to ensure members of all faiths are able to practice their religion free from fear. I commend the member for Greenway for this motion. She, like me, has a presence of Sudanese and South Sudanese, all wonderful people, in her electorate in western Sydney and I know how committed she is to those people. Again, I commend her for this motion.

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (20:17): I too commend the member for Greenway for this incredibly important motion. It is important in general terms but also particularly important to a large number of people in my electorate of Parramatta. I also have a large community mainly from South Sudan and some members from Sudan. In fact, I celebrated last July with the South Sudanese community on the day that independence was declared. I was at the University of Western Sydney and was due to make a speech and I should have been two speeches away but the crowd kept breaking out into revolutionary song so it took quite a while to get to my speech. It was a day of joy and hope. It is incredibly sad to note the recent appalling escalation in violence. So much of that hope if not shattered has certainly been severely damaged. The member for Greenway is right in that governments in the region and governments around the world must condemn this violence on both sides and call for both sides to adhere to the memorandum of understanding.

The people of South Sudan that I know are extraordinary people, in fact some of the most extraordinary people that I have met. I had not even begun to understand the lives that some of them had led when I was talking to one young man who was telling me of some advice his mother gave him. When I was young my mum gave me advice when I ate too much, that if I got a tummy ache and stuck my finger in my bellybutton it would make the tummy ache go away. That is what she told me. Well, this young man's mum had told him if he did not eat for five days he would grow really tall. Can you imagine in an Australian context a mum being in the position where she had to make up a story like that, to make it acceptable for her son that he was not going to eat for five days? It is a world that most of us in Australia simply could not imagine. He still believed it, by the way. His mum told him and he still believed it. He was in his 30s, I think, and he still believed what his mum told him. He thought that was why he was so tall. So that was a sign of great love from a mum. I still believe sticking my finger in my bellybutton makes my tummy ache go away as well. Again, what a—

Honourable members interjecting—

Ms OWENS: I know. I only found out recently it is not true, so it is a bit sad. But they are exceptional people. They are people of great resilience who have arrived in this country with appalling stories in their lives who have knuckled down to build a life here with such incredible commitment. They are people who give back to their own community in the most extraordinary ways. A young man I know who arrived at 18 with four younger brothers and sisters put himself through law school and his four younger brothers and sisters through high school and university. All that time, from the first year, he set up community organisations to work with other youth, as if he did not have enough of his own to do. Right from the beginning, he had this incredible commitment to making life work in this new country. These are extraordinary people from both South Sudan and Sudan—people that a country should be proud of; people capable of building great countries if they have peace; people capable of
making real contributions not only to their own country but to the world. For this reason as well, we really should argue very, very strongly as a government for an end to this conflict.

The member for Greenway has talked about some of the dreadful things that have happened there and the International Criminal Court issuing a warrant for the arrest of Sudan's President, Omar Hassan al-Bashir. I agree also with the member for Greenway that people who are guilty of such crimes should not find refuge anywhere. They should not find refuge when they cross a border. They should not find refuge anywhere, nor should anybody who perpetrates the kind of crimes that have been perpetrated against the Sudanese people, both north and south, or the people who perpetuate the violence that has led to, essentially, the destruction of a nation and the displacement of a people.

We are incredibly lucky to have people of this calibre in this nation. Again, as I said earlier, some of the most extraordinary people I have met have come from that part of the world, and I know they will make extraordinary contributions here. But I look forward to the Sudanese people being able to make those extraordinary contributions in their homeland.

Ms SAFFIN (Page) (20:22): I too rise to support the private member's motion of the honourable member for Greenway. Obviously the member for Greenway has quite a significant population in her seat who are people from Sudan and South Sudan. I have just a few—not too many, because I live in Lismore in northern New South Wales. It is nowhere near like the population you have but, as you said, that helps make the cultural and economic life. It is in the emotion, which is much richer and more diverse.

The reason that I am speaking in support of the motion is that it is something that of itself deserves to be supported. In the lead-up to the creation of the world's newest state, South Sudan, I had a fair bit to do with the diaspora in Australia. I had a friend who worked with the government of South Sudan's liaison office in Australia. They asked me for some assistance, and I worked with them by helping them with access to meetings with various departments and agencies, such as the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and AusAID. I helped them with contact with the Australian Electoral Commission and the then Minister for Foreign Affairs and the like in the lead-up to the new state coming into being. In addition, to formalise things, they had to set up a bank account. We might think that is easy, but it was not straightforward. There were a whole lot of formalities that had to happen around that because they are receiving public moneys and the like. I was able to assist them with that in a small way. I have an email here that I will read out:

Dear Janelle

On behalf of myself and the GOSS Liaison Mission Office in Australia and Oceania, I would like to take this opportunity to express our profound and heartfelt gratitude to you for your very active support that has ensured that the GOSS Liaison Mission Office in Australia establishes the first formal bank account in the Western world. We were also very thankful for your presence and the ongoing support that Barry Hanson has continued to offer us as he guides our steps during the process of establishing the account. Your commitment has enabled this mission to successfully achieve its first goal towards its main objective. Once again, please accept our sincere gratitude and appreciation.

Yours truly

Mariano Deng Ngor
Principal Liaison Officer
GOSS Liaison Mission Office Australia and New Zealand
It is something that I have never talked about, but tonight seemed the appropriate time to read that into the public record.

What has been going on in the Sudan is an absolute tragedy. I listened to the member for Parramatta talking about the humanitarian situation, which the members for Riverina and Greenway also talked about, and it is just really awful. I know the extent to which the Australian government has been helping to try and address the human rights situation. I have looked at the reports on the actions that we have taken and at how we are working with the United Nations to address the human rights situation in the Sudan. I know that the government supports the call of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for ‘an independent, thorough and objective inquiry’ and for unhindered access for human rights monitors and humanitarian actors in Southern Kordofan, including the Nuba mountains.

We also know that the International Criminal Court has issued two warrants for the arrest of the head of state of the Sudan, President Omar Hassan al-Bashir, for the following crimes, as stated in the text of this motion:

… five counts of crimes against humanity (murder, extermination, forcible transfer, torture and rape),
two counts of war crimes (attacking civilians and pillaging), and three counts of genocide …

As the member for Parramatta said, nobody should be able—(Time expired)

Mr HUSIC (Chifley—Government Whip) (20:27): It is not often in this day and age that we are able to celebrate the birth of a nation. Most of the time, histories are well entrenched and nations have been in existence for quite some time, and we do not get to experience what it is like to see new boundaries drawn within which people can set up their own government. But we got to see it last year with the creation of South Sudan. People might not be aware of its impact—the joy and, importantly, what this does for identity. It is truly a miracle to see and a blessing to be there and be able to be a part of it.

While we recognise and celebrate this event, with this motion the member for Greenway has pointed out that there are, at its edges, concerns about the future of this new fledgeling nation, to ensure that we lend our support to ensure that the birth of this nation does not remain a concept but something viable and lasting that provides opportunity for the people of South Sudan. Political independence is one thing, but it needs to be matched by economic independence—the provision of opportunity and the ability to fully prosper in peace.

In our part of Western Sydney, the member for Greenway and I have been able to see for ourselves the growth of a vibrant Sudanese community. I certainly saw it firsthand as the chairperson of the Blacktown Migrant Resource Centre, where we did quite a lot and were able to tap into assistance from the Australian government to aid in the settlement process. What I saw was that Sudanese who were settling into Blacktown were overcoming major obstacles. They fought to get education for their children, they worked hard to get housing and they also worked hard to get jobs and ensure their families had adequate opportunities. It cannot be stressed enough that these challenges are still present today, but there is a determination in the Sudanese community to overcome them.

I want to highlight in particular some of the achievements of this new community in this country. In the AFL, Majak Daw is playing for North Melbourne, the first Sudanese player in the AFL and a great one, as the member for Riverina points out. Another person born in Sudan who came to Australia and went on to play for the University of Connecticut as well as
for the Perth Wildcats and the Gold Coast Blaze in the game I love, basketball, is Ater Majok. He played in the NBL and trained with and was elected with the Lakers. He is someone who started in Sudan, came to Australia and is now doing us all proud. Again, you can see the migrant experience shining through. So many Sudanese, as many migrants do, welcomed the chance to rebuild their lives. They also have high aspirations for friends and family back in South Sudan.

This highlights the point in the motion by the member for Greenway that we should look to see whatever we can do to help ensure those people who breached human rights and treated life so cheaply are pursued and held to account. That is critical for the process of reconciliation. But, importantly, we need to do whatever we can through development assistance to ensure when we celebrate a new nation that it is not just a concept but will continue and will not wither. If I have seen anything with my own eyes about the Sudanese people I have had the pleasure and honour of knowing, it is that if you give them a chance they will seize that chance, they will work on it and they will prosper. That is how it should be for South Sudan.

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (20:33): I will speak briefly to place on record my gratitude to the member for Greenway for this very important motion and to all those who have spoken in this debate. I also want to welcome the members of the Australian Sudanese and South Sudanese community who are present in the parliament tonight. It is wonderful to see you here. As a former lawyer with the United Nations I feel a great deal of affinity with the work of the International Criminal Court, which will celebrate what I believe is the 10th anniversary of its Rome Statute on 10 December this year, which is also International Human Rights Day. I know that members of the Australian Sudanese community are very interested in that.

One of my staff members, Ronald Mizen, who is an aspiring journalist, visited South Sudan on the occasion of its first anniversary just a few months ago and had a wonderful experience there. He has put it all on film, which is great for those of us who have not yet had the pleasure of visiting. I am pleased to be the secretary of the newly established Australia-Africa Parliamentary Friendship Group and I hope that this will lead to many future occasions when the African diaspora, parliamentarians and diplomats can engage with Australian parliamentarians to improve our people-to-people links.

Debate adjourned.

Polio Eradication

Debate resumed on the motion by Ms Parke:

That this House:

(1) commends the Government for its four year commitment to provide $50 million to support the global eradication of polio;

(2) notes:

(a) that in February 2012, India was removed from the list of countries where polio remains endemic, proving that eradication strategies are effective when they are fully implemented and that polio can be eradicated even in the toughest circumstances, and there has not been a single reported case of polio in India since January 2011;
(b) that polio eradication should, wherever possible, be part of routine immunisation efforts to improve population immunity for all priority, vaccine preventable childhood illnesses;

(c) that there are now only three countries in the world where polio has never been stopped, namely Afghanistan, Pakistan and Nigeria, and unless the polio program is fully funded and emergency plans are implemented as planned, polio could make a comeback in countries that are currently polio-free;

(d) estimates show that global re-infection over time could result in as many as 200,000 children per year being paralysed;

(e) that the Global Polio Eradication Initiative currently faces a funding shortfall of US$945 million for the full implementation of its 2012-13 Emergency Action Plan, and this has caused immunisation campaigns to be cancelled or scaled back in 33 countries in Africa and Asia, leaving more children vulnerable to the disease and increasing the risk of the international spread of polio; and

(f) the recent landmark resolution by the Sixty-fifth World Health Assembly declaring the completion of polio eradication, a programmatic emergency for global public health, with member states highlighting the feasibility of eradication in the near-term, while expressing concern at the ongoing funding gap threatening success; and

(3) encourages the Government to continue to support efforts to deliver a polio-free world and to encourage other countries to do likewise.

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (20:35): I am sure there are some members who can recall the impact polio had on Australia. This debilitating disease swept through Australian communities during the 1930s to 1960s, causing widespread fear and panic. Schools were shut down, public spaces closed and families barricaded themselves in their homes to protect children against the rapid spread of this potentially fatal disease. Hospital wards filled with iron lungs and manufacturers struggled to keep up with demand for crutches as previously healthy children lost their mobility and were paralysed, all as a result of this incurable disease. I am told that there were as many as 40,000 cases of paralytic polio recorded in Australia during the epidemics, although the real numbers for polio infection could have been much higher. Now, thanks to decades of investment in vaccination programs, Australia and many other countries are polio free.

There have been many coordinated efforts against this disease over the years and I want to draw members' attention to another important collaboration happening in New York next week, one the government is proud to support. It is a demonstration of the incredible things which are possible when citizens in the global community work together. Next week, the Prime Minister will address fellow leaders at a special event convened by the UN Secretary-General to spark renewed commitment to ending polio within the international community. This is yet another instance of Australians showing leadership on this issue.

In fact, the movement to eradicate polio from the world began with an Australian Rotarian, Sir Clem Renouf. The first seeds of the idea came to Sir Clem in 1979 while reading an article about how the World Health Organization had successfully eradicated smallpox. Rotary's initial successes against polio in Asia and South America soon convinced the rest of the world that polio eradication was possible. In 1988, health ministers from around the world agreed to work together to combat polio and the Global Polio Eradication Initiative was formed. This global partnership, involving Rotary International, the World Health Organization, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and UNICEF, has successfully reduced polio cases worldwide by 99 per cent—from an estimated 350,000 cases a year in 1988 to just 650 in 2011.
This year has seen further progress, with India achieving more than 18 months now without polio and with global case numbers dropping to their lowest ever level. Last month produced another success story when Angola, a previously polio-free country which had been struggling with the disease since it was reintroduced in 2005, also passed a year without a single case.

Despite this success, polio eradication stands at a tipping point. The Global Polio Eradication Initiative faces a funding gap of US$949 million, a shortfall which has caused vaccination campaigns in 33 countries to be scaled back or cancelled. Each cancelled campaign means thousands, sometimes even millions, of children miss out on the vaccine, creating the potential for mass outbreaks. While success would mean every child everywhere having a polio-free future, failure at this very last stage would mean potentially explosive polio outbreaks in polio-free areas. Recent outbreaks in polio-free countries, such as China, the Congo and Tajikistan, have seen large numbers of adult cases and fatality rates of up to 50 per cent.

Public support for polio eradication is strong, with Rotarians and supporters of the Global Poverty Project's End of Polio campaign being particularly vocal advocates in Australia. In May, I met with the campaign's director, Michael Sheldrick, as well as with Samah Hadid, the incoming Australian director of the Global Poverty Project. They told me about the impact of this campaign. Since July 2011, the End of Polio campaign has shown Australians not only the incredible progress being made against a potentially fatal disease but also the incredible opportunity we have as a country and as a government to contribute to one of the greatest human achievements of our time—only the second ever eradication of a human disease in history.

In just over a year, the End of Polio campaign has grown to include almost 30,000 ordinary people, as well as the likes of international superstar John Legend, Australian Living Treasure Sir Gustav Nossal, movie star Hugh Jackman, Microsoft founder Bill Gates, former Australian of the Year Simon McKeon and WA Governor Malcolm McCusker. I am delighted to hear that the Pratt Foundation has also recently added its support to this important campaign.

Meanwhile, Rotary, a service organisation with over 1.2 million members worldwide, has raised more than $1 billion in support of global polio eradication efforts. Together, Rotary International and the Global Poverty Project have brought together Australians from all walks of life in support of the vision of a polio-free world. Australian Rotarians and other members of the community have given both financial and non-financial support, joining citizens in many other countries of the world. This month, Prime Minister Gillard will join other world leaders in New York for the UN General Assembly to discuss the importance of supporting global efforts to end polio and to demonstrate that polio eradication is an issue that transcends the health sector to be a win for all of society.

Australia is a leader in polio eradication in the Southern Hemisphere. Our aid program helped eradicate polio in the Western Pacific during the 1990s. Last year at the Commonwealth Heads Of Government Meeting held in Perth, the Prime Minister pledged an additional $50 million in support of eradication efforts. That is why the Prime Minister has been invited to speak at this event in New York, alongside Ban Ki-moon, Bill Gates and the presidents of the only three remaining countries with polio—Nigeria, Afghanistan and
Pakistan. This is a rare opportunity for the entire global community to rally behind a cause that will improve the lives of children for all future generations.

While world leaders are in New York for the General Assembly, another important advocacy event led by Australians will shine a spotlight on ending polio and extreme poverty, the Global Citizen Festival. This event will bring 60,000 change makers to Central Park for a concert designed to showcase the movement to end extreme poverty and to demonstrate the public support for the cause. The event has drawn audience members from the group taking action on extreme poverty and will shine a light on their passion for change and call on world leaders to do more, including supporting efforts to end polio. This is a powerful reminder of the amount of public support for action on extreme poverty issues and the key role Australia can play in the global community.

Australia's investments are having a life-saving impact. They have eliminated polio in the Pacific, invested in critical infrastructure, provided assistance in emergencies and helped educate a new generation. Funding programs like the global polio eradication initiative ensures that children can grow up healthy and strong, contributing to their economies and the wellbeing of their families. Research published in the *Lancet* has shown the financial benefits of ending polio to be between US$40 billion to US$50 billion by 2035.

It is important to remember that people in developing countries are working hard to improve their own lives. India's and Angola's recent success against polio would not have been possible without the efforts of the millions of local health workers and volunteers who travel from house to house, round after round, vaccinating children while calmly addressing the fears of concerned parents. Our aid ensures that these polio heroes have the resources needed to reach every last child with the polio vaccine. In the process we are helping to strengthen health systems more broadly because the tools and tactics being developed to reach children with the polio vaccine are enabling health workers to reach children with other life-saving health measures. The success of polio eradication efforts is a demonstration of what our foreign aid dollars can achieve.

I thank the government for its commitment to polio eradication and emphasise the importance of continuing to invest in polio eradication efforts and other foreign aid projects that assist the world's most vulnerable communities. I also thank members of the opposition for lending their support to this important cause. Our leadership on this issue will help encourage every country that has benefited from becoming polio free to contribute even nominal amounts to this historic global effort. Ultimately, all countries share the responsibility for and the benefits of polio eradication.

Today I had a visit from a number of brilliant young people from the Micah challenge who were talking to me about making poverty history. This evening, the Parliamentary Association for UNICEF hosted the annual Robert Nestdale event with guest speaker Dr Karen Allen, UNICEF's deputy representative in Pakistan. Among other things, Dr Allen talked about the great efforts under way in that country to end polio. The End of Polio campaign is an incredible effort by a great many people, organisations and countries. In closing, I want to pay particular tribute to the campaign director Michael Sheldrick, a young man from Perth with an unmatched passion, drive and single-minded focus to see the end of polio. His actions have triggered important processes of change. As Nelson Mandela said:
What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead.

**Mr McCormack** (Riverina) (20:44): I firstly want to commend the member for Fremantle for bringing this motion to the House. I know how committed she is on these humanitarian issues and I commend her for it. Polio is a highly infectious viral disease which may attack the central nervous system and is characterised by symptoms which range from a mild, non-paralytic infection to total paralysis in just a matter of hours. If polio is not eradicated, the world will always live with the potential to see the disease rise up again—and no-one wants that. If the United States $9 billion global investment towards eradication is not capitalised upon, 10 million children will be paralysed in the next 40 years.

Throughout history polio has been one of the greatest causes of disability and still today there is no cure. Major polio epidemics first began to occur in Europe in the 1880s and soon spread to the United States of America. By 1910, epidemics were becoming regular across the developed world, typically during the summer months. At its peak in the 1940s and 1950s, polio was paralysing or killing more than half a million people worldwide every year. Over the past 30 years global collaboration has reduced cases by 99 per cent. In 1988 there were more than 350,000 cases of polio throughout the world. In 2011 there were just 650 and the number of polio endemic countries had been reduced from 125 to three. The Global Polio Eradication Initiative advises that, in the past six months, there have been 92 cases of polio throughout the world—63 cases in Nigeria, 15 in Pakistan, 12 in Afghanistan and two in Chad.

Australia has been declared polio free. As the World Health Organization announced on 29 October 2000, the Western Pacific region has stopped the circulation of the indigenous wild polio virus. In 1985 Rotary International launched PolioPlus, a program which helps Rotary fund operational costs such as transportation, vaccine delivery, social mobilisation, and training of health workers in support surveillance activities. To date, Rotary, a wonderful organisation, has contributed more than US$1 billion.

PolioPlus promotes four key strategies for stopping the transmission of the polio virus—firstly, routine immunisations. This is essential as it is the primary way polio-free countries protect their children from the threat of imported polio. Four doses of oral polio vaccine in the first year of life are critical. Secondly, there are national immunisation days. Rotarians are the driving force of these days and provide funds for millions of drops of vaccine, promote campaigns in communities, distribute vaccines to health centres and serve as monitors working with local officials to reach every child possible. Thirdly, there is surveillance. Rotarians help health workers, paediatricians and others to find, report and investigate cases of acute flaccid paralysis, ideally within 48 hours of onset. PolioPlus has also helped fund containers which preserve during transport to a laboratory the integrity of samples taken from a patient. Lastly, Rotary supports mop-up campaigns, which are similar to national immunisation days but on a smaller and often house-to-house scale.

Districts 9700 and 9710, Rotary clubs in my electorate of Riverina, work hard to contribute to the PolioPlus program, holding movie nights and other fund-raising events to help rid the world of this scourge. It is also Rotary which has led the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, along with the World Health Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund and the US Centers for Disease Control. Since 1985 more than two billion children have been immunised.
through this great initiative. The Global Polio Eradication Initiative objectives are to interrupt transmission of the wild polio virus as soon as possible; to achieve certification of global polio eradication; and to contribute to health systems development and strengthening routine immunisation and surveillance for communicable diseases in a systemic way.

Thanks to the vaccinations offered through the Global Polio Eradication Initiative there are more than five million people walking today who would be paralysed had they not been immunised. Whilst polio remains endemic in only three countries, it has re-established transmission in Angola, Chad and the Democratic Republic of Congo, all of which were previously polio free. There are also several more countries which experienced outbreaks in 2011 due to the importation of the polio virus. This highlights the importance of immunisation even in countries which are thought to be polio free.

For the World Health Organization to certify a region to be polio free, it must meet the following conditions: there are at least three years of zero polio cases due to wild poliovirus; disease surveillance in countries meet international standards; and each country must illustrate the capacity to detect, report and respond to imported polio cases. In an address to the regional committee for South-East Asia on 5 September this year, Dr Margaret Chan, Director-General of the World Health Organization, stated:

On present trends, this region is set to be declared polio-free in January 2014.

You have provided definitive proof that eradication is technically feasible, and you have done so in what was arguably the most challenging of all the remaining strongholds of this virus.

This is what your experience tells the world. The poliovirus is not permanently entrenched. It is not destined to remain a perpetual threat to each new generation of children. It can indeed be driven out of existence.

That was wonderful news, fantastic, about moving towards helping the world become polio free. However, there is still a way to go.

For the world to be declared polio free, laboratory stocks must be contained and the safe management of the wild virus in activated polio vaccine manufacturing sites must be assured. Prevention of polio not only stops a person developing a debilitating disease, but also helps reduce poverty as it allows children and their families a greater chance of leading healthier and more productive lives. The global polio eradication initiative is expanded in most countries to also address other infectious diseases, such as avian influenza and Ebola, by building effective disease reporting and surveillance systems, training local doctors in establishing a worldwide laboratory network. This capacity is being utilised in health emergencies, including the 2010 floods in Pakistan and the 2011 drought in the Horn of Africa. It is important we do anything and everything we can to eradicate polio, helping Rotary and stopping this disease from spreading, including ensuring immunisation takes place early to prevent children and adults becoming infected in the future.

Finally, I would like to pay particular tribute to John Winterbottom, a good friend of mine, a fellow from Wagga Wagga who suffered the effects of polio early in his life. John is regarded as Wagga Wagga's most authoritative historian. He has not been well of late, battling a number of health complications. Despite his lifelong struggles, John has contributed marvellously to his community, such that he is a past recipient of Wagga Wagga's Citizen of the Year. His achievements show what can be done despite having such a debilitating disease.
John's cheerful disposition, good humour, willingness to share his knowledge and courage against adversity have been an inspiration to me. I wish him well.

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (20:52): When I was at primary school, I Can Jump Puddles by Alan Marshall was compulsory reading for us all. I remember how I used to go home and talk about it with my mum, and she used to recount the stories of her time at primary school when polio was running rife through Australia. We are talking in the 1940s here. She talked about the fact that when she was at primary school her school was quite often closed because of polio running through the community. To use her words, the picture theatres and the baths were regularly closed because of what was taking place with polio running through the community.

I was talking to her tonight to let her know that I was going to be speaking on this motion—I commend the member for Fremantle for putting this forward—and my mum was joking about the fact that there were only some schools in Melbourne who used to be closed as a result of these epidemics that were running through the community. She joked about the fact that it was always the poor schools, which was where she went. She said, 'Our school was regularly shut down as a result of the epidemic that was running through the Australian and Melbourne communities at that time.' She also spoke about the many schoolmates who did not come back to school as a result of contracting polio, and of hearing stories about the children or their parents having to be in iron lungs as a result of it.

This is only a recent past for Australia, and yet how easily people forget how dreadful this disease is and how debilitating it is? It is really important that we still remember the impact of polio. We still see people who have suffered from polio. I have relatives who have suffered from it; I have cousins-in-law who have suffered from it. They are still suffering as a result of contracting the disease, usually at a very young age, and have lived with it throughout their life. We cannot forget the impact of polio, which is why I rise to support this motion tonight.

The attempts to eradicate polio around the world are ongoing and need continual support. The Labor government is committed to providing $50 million to support the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, and I proudly support this measure. As I said, it was only a few generations ago that polio was a critical health issue in Australia and throughout the world. During the 1950s, polio epidemics spread through this country and the Northern Hemisphere. I remember when I was growing up seeing images of iron lungs, kids immobilised by polio and children in callipers only a generation or two ago. There was also a degree of panic, particularly when my mother was small child, about polio that we can only imagine today. Back then, parents were rightly overwrought with fear about a disease that left their children paralysed and in need of specialist care. Only 60 years ago, some thought polio was a modern plague such was its spread and impact throughout the world. I recently read a quote from a documentary on polio that said that 'apart from the atomic bomb, America's greatest fear was polio'. Polio has certainly left a major legacy both in Australia and around the world, and I understand that polio survivors form the largest single disability group in the country.

Polio was and remains a very real threat in many countries and, even though it has been eliminated through a very rigorous process of vaccination, it remains a serious issue on which we must be constantly vigilant. Since the 1980s, through the efforts of the global health organisations and NGOs, polio cases have been reduced in the order of 99 per cent—an
extraordinary achievement, particularly from where we were in the 1950s. Yet, as we have noted today, in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Nigeria polio is still an active health problem.

I want to briefly touch on the incredible history of the discovery of the vaccine for polio by Jonas Salk. Before that, the disease had stumped the medical researchers. It took about 120 years to find a vaccine from when the first-ever reported polio case was recorded in 1835. Jonas Salk, who was the American-born son of Russian-Jewish emigres to New York, was the scientist who made one of the most important medical breakthroughs of all time.

The success of polio eradication is recognised in this motion, with the acknowledgement that, in February this year, India was finally removed from the list of countries where it had remained endemic. For India, this historic milestone was reached when no new polio cases were reported for a whole year. The World Health Organization has rightly noted that India faces serious challenges in the future before it can finally declare the country polio free, but I know it will be dogged about it and I support the continued efforts of the government to support the global efforts to eliminate polio.

Mr SECKER (Barker—Opposition Whip) (20:58): Madam Deputy Speaker, I believe I could actually do my 90-second statement here at an unusual time. I want to make the point that I went to a primary school that had 32 children, and one of those children had had polio. We all know that a former Leader of the Opposition, Kim Beazley, suffered from polio as a young person, and this guy actually had a very similar build, which was fairly light in the bottom half and reasonably big in the top half. After his treatment, he was able to live quite a normal life. He played AFL football. He was not the fastest person on the field but he was certainly one of the cleverest. He also played cricket quite successfully as a spin bowler and a reasonable batsman. So there were some good news stories, but I think we can say without any doubt that no-one would have wanted to contract polio.

Like the member for Riverina, I would also like to pay homage to the Rotary organisation for its PolioPlus program. There is no doubt in my mind that we have some great service organisations in this world, but the Rotary organisation, I believe, is the only organisation in the world that could actually have achieved the PolioPlus program.

Debate adjourned.

GRIEVANCE DEBATE

Question proposed:
That grievances be noted.

Gillard Government

Mr SECKER (Barker—Opposition Whip) (21:00): When we get up to speak on the grievance debate we obviously have a grievance. My grievance is that Australia has, in my opinion, a most incompetent, untrustworthy, directionless Labor government that seems to make things up as it goes along. For example, there have been seven changes to the carbon tax that it promised would never happen. There have been five versions of the mining tax, along with flip-flops on anything from live cattle exports to fishing trawlers, which I will speak about later.

Labor has a $120 billion budget black hole, and it is getting bigger by the day. Australians are paying $20 million every single day just on Labor's interest repayments on its net $145
billion of debt—which only grows as Labor racks up more deficit. The idea that somehow they will deliver a surplus this year is laughable. I know many people find it hard to recognise the difference between a million and a billion and what effect it has. I like to say to people, look at it this way: a million seconds is about 12 days but a billion seconds is 34 years. I think we all realise there is a lot of difference between 12 days and 34 years. We have a government that seems to be addicted to debt and that is continually running up that debt. We have no expectation of a surplus in this financial year, and I think MYEFO will prove that later in the year.

Labor is busy scrambling to find ways of putting off dealing with this budget black hole until after the next election. I find it quite interesting that this federal government attacks state governments for trying to get back into surplus when it is trying to get back into surplus, even though it is not going to be successful, and the reason the state governments are having to make cuts is that we have had Labor governments in charge for too long at state level and they have just run up the debts. Frankly, these are all signs of a government that is divided and directionless and that is all about politics—it really has no plan for the future except to spend more money.

Here is another example of how bad this government is. For four years Australia's borders have been weak and lives have been lost at sea—at least 700 people have died trying to come to Australia by boat. Australia's reputation with its neighbours has been tarnished, costs have blown out and people smuggling has flourished, all because Julia Gillard and the Labor Party were too stubborn to admit that they got it wrong. The same stubbornness that rejected Nauru for years and that rejected Manus Island for years is still rejecting other proven policies such as temporary protection visas and turning the boats around when it is safe to do so.

When we left government at the end of 2007 there were four people in detention and no children. We had deterred this horrible trade. Now there are more children in detention than ever in Australia's history. The problem will not be fixed by the present policy, because the government is sitting on this one-legged stool with only one of the three important policies that will deter boat people from coming to Australia and risking their lives. They have to use TPVs, as we did, and they have to have the threat of turning those boats around. We have been consistent on border protection policy as a coalition; in contrast, Labor has held just a bout every position under the sun on border protection. The simple fact is that the Australian people cannot trust them.

I was very disturbed last week when it came to the declared fishing activities and the so-called supertrawler. My first thought on this, like many other people, was, 'Well, I would be a bit concerned if we had this supertrawler that didn't have controls on it and was going to outfish fisheries and basically ruin our objective of sustainable fisheries around Australia.' I can understand people being concerned, especially when there was a Greenpeace campaign and a GetUp! Campaign to say, 'We should stop this supertrawler.' What happened is that we have now bungled the whole decision. We completely bungled this bill, or the government did, over four days, and they had four different amendments. How do you expect to run a government when you have that sort of situation—where the government just does not know what it is doing.

I actually think the first ruling that the Environment minister made on the Monday, I think it was, of last week, when he said, 'We're going to put some extra controls in to make sure that
it's not going to be overfished, that we are not going to affect seals and dolphins,' was a rational decision. It is a bit like the live cattle dispute, where the minister actually got up and said, 'Look, we're not going to allow four or five of the abattoirs in Indonesia to be used, but let's look at leaving the rest as they are pending an investigation.' But, in both cases, the government panicked. They panicked on a Greens campaign.

This company had been in negotiations with the government for seven years. They had ticked all the boxes. They had even said they were prepared to accept the extra conditions put on them by the minister last Monday. Now, they have spent a lot of money investing. They were actually encouraged by the government to have this efficient way of doing things. What a lot of people do not realise is that not one fish will be saved. The quota is still there. There will not be an efficient trawler doing the job and processing on board instead of coming backwards and forwards. Of course, if you have six or seven boats doing that, that is going to produce a lot more CO2 out in the atmosphere than if you one that could stay out there to do the processing and be part of the quota. The quota is still there. It has not changed. The same 18,000 tonnes will be fished, whether it is done by one big boat or several boats. It really does have a lot of similarities to the live cattle debacle. This is a government that is folding under the pressure of public relations and not sticking to the science.

I have just been to a science dinner, which I have had to leave. I know—I think we all know—how important science is, but in this case the science has been rejected for political reasons. We actually set up the Australian Fisheries Management Authority, AFMA, to use the science to make sure that we have sustainable fisheries. In fact, they even used the precautionary principle. Instead of saying, 'We're using the normal 20 per cent figure of the total catch'—in fact, not that long ago it was 30 per cent of the total catch—they came down to 10 per cent just to make sure that they were not doing the wrong thing.

This is a failed government with failed policies. There is not just one failed policy; there are a multitude of failed policies. Who can forget pink batts resulting in four deaths and hundreds of houses catching fire, not to mention the rorts that resulted from that program? There was the so-called Building the Education Revolution program, where $7 billion was wasted, GroceryWatch, Fuelwatch—all these things that never turned out to be genuine policies. The list goes on. But of course we have the biggie, the carbon tax, a broken promise that does not work. (Time expired)

**New South Wales Government**

Ms ROWLAND (Greenway) (21:10): I rise tonight to grieve for the people of New South Wales and, in particular, the residents I represent in Greenway who are the victims of the New South Wales Liberal government's attacks on crucial services, including cuts to the New South Wales education system and cuts to the New South Wales health system. I would also like to highlight the threat that exists from the New South Wales Liberal government's passionate advocacy for a GST broadening and hike on families in my electorate.

In Greenway there are over 50 schools—indeed, Catholic and government. I have visited all of them and they do a fantastic job of educating the young people of the west and north-west of Sydney. I have probably mentioned in this place nearly every BER opening that has occurred. It has been widely welcomed as a project across the entire electorate. I am yet to meet a principal, educator, parent or student who has not welcomed the enormous investments
made in these capital upgrades. For some schools these are the first capital upgrades in 50 years. For some it is the first time an upgrade has occurred in their entire history.

My electorate is one of the youngest in the entire country. I often refer to it as Australia's nursery, with the zero to 14 age group one of the fastest growing. One of the most crucial issues, if not the biggest issue, is that of education and educational opportunities for all. Education in western Sydney is everything. It is the greatest enabler. It is the most powerful tool we have. When you speak to the multitude of people in my electorate who have come from migrant backgrounds, in particular those from the subcontinent and the Philippines, you note that education rates the highest of their policy concerns, because they know, as I know and as we on this side of the House know, that education means actually having a future in the first place.

Last week the O'Farrell Liberal government in New South Wales declared war on education in my home state, with $1.7 billion in unprecedented funding and staffing cuts to public schools, Catholic schools, independent schools and TAFE institutions. Ever since the New South Wales government's admission that it would cut $1.7 billion from New South Wales education, sack some 1,800 teachers, increase TAFE fees by 9.5 per cent and stop subsidising some TAFE courses, my office has received hundreds of calls or emails from my constituents who will be directly affected by these savage cuts. These are real stories from parents, from schools and from P&Cs, and this is what Tory governments do. The contrast could not be clearer: we on this side of the House choose to lift up education, to put forward some of the greatest policies to ensure that everyone has equality of opportunity in the new century.

These cuts, as I have said, will affect every school and every student, with larger class sizes, fewer teachers and increased fees. This is at a time when federal Labor is investing more in our schools. It is simply inexcusable. Let us not delude ourselves: these cuts are a curtain raiser to Australia under the Tories. They have already said that they planned to cut $2.8 billion from schools if they manage to get the reins after the next election. The Leader of the Opposition himself has basically said public schools are overfunded because the 'injustice in funding is the other way'. I again contrast that with the role of this government and the actions that we have taken to build up education, to act on the recommendations of the Gonski review and to ensure equality of opportunity for all.

I have in my possession a standard response dated 17 September that the New South Wales Premier has been sending around to people who have contacted his office in protest against these cuts. I would like to highlight just a couple of comments. One of the comments that is made is about the cuts and about what will be cut. There is a sentence stating that only nurses, schoolteachers and police were 'quarantined'—that is, quarantined from an announcement of cuts. What does that mean? That means everything else in New South Wales is up for grabs.

I also want to highlight a one-liner that has been given to vocational education and training. The words read as follows: 'In addition, changes are also being implemented across TAFE New South Wales.' That one-liner is totally inadequate to explain the situation to the people of western Sydney, who in many cases rely on vocational education and training to get an apprenticeship, to get a skill and to get a meaningful job. The trend of state Liberal governments cutting TAFE funding is simply being replicated in New South Wales.
In New South Wales, TAFE students will pay an extra $44 for certificate I and II courses and an extra $150 for advanced diplomas, at the very time we need to grow our skills base. How many times in this place have we talked about growing our skills base? The New South Wales Liberal state government is implementing policies to see a reduction in training opportunities. In contrast, our government is putting approximately $2.3 billion into the New South Wales training system, and TAFE in New South Wales has already received some $158 million in capital funding from this federal government.

I also want to highlight some of the cuts that are occurring in the area of health. When something good happens in health, be it by the state government or federal government, I welcome it, and I welcomed the announcement, after the Liberals came into government in New South Wales, that they were going to proceed with a long overdue upgrade of Blacktown Hospital. I welcomed it. I did not condemn it at all, because I think it is the responsibility of all of us in this place to work together to make a better health system. But I am very disappointed, because I am reliably informed that at Blacktown Hospital, ever since this announcement, there has actually been no movement in these works. People voted in Liberal MPs—for the first time in many cases—across western Sydney, and they have sorely let western Sydney down. It is plain for everyone to see that they are not standing up for western Sydney.

Again, the contrast could not be clearer. In Greenway, the federal government have come good on our election commitment to fund a $15 million GP superclinic in Blacktown. We have ensured investment in Primary Care Infrastructure Grants so that people can have access to a GP when they need it, including after hours. Most recently, I was pleased to announce half a million dollars in Primary Care Infrastructure Grants for the Bridgeview medical centre in Toongabbie. There is a clear contrast between ensuring health investment is made where it is needed most and the cutting of the health budget by the New South Wales government.

The latest reports—and I am referring to the Telegraph—are that Mr O'Farrell is going to slash $3 billion from health. That is on top of the $1.7 billion cuts to education. When the Minister for Health was asked about where the money would go, she claimed that as much as two-thirds of the money would be redirected to so-called front-line services but could not actually say what those front-line services would be. This is clearly simply cost-cutting from health that is going to result in people who need our assistance the most getting slugged.

As the Leader of the Opposition in New South Wales, John Robertson, has noted, the health minister, Jillian Skinner, has also confirmed that patients could be sent home early from New South Wales hospitals. That is going to save a lot of money! 'Let's send patients home early so that we can cut $3 billion.' When asked about how the cuts would be made, the minister said: 'Through, for example, not keeping patients in hospital as long as they should be.' As the shadow health minister, Dr Andrew McDonald, pointed out, the only people who should be deciding when a patient is discharged from hospital are the doctors and nurses treating them. Slashing $3 billion from New South Wales hospitals will mean—not might mean; will mean—fewer beds, longer waiting times and compromised health care.

On top of that, I want to point to more recent announcements. Again, I refer to reports in the Daily Telegraph, but also in other places. Premier Barry O'Farrell has raised the spectre of the GST being increased to cover food. That could add another $20 a week to the average Sydney family's grocery bill. I will put my money on it that the first thing Premier O'Farrell
will seek to do is to broaden the base of the GST and slug us with increased taxes on our grocery bills. Let us not forget that it was the shadow Treasurer in this place who said earlier this year that, if there is going to be a discussion about increasing the GST, it is going to need to be led by the states. We know that there are people on the other side of the House who call themselves ‘modest members’. They are the most immodest people that you have seen, running around advocating these policies. They actually want this. This is true to form. This is straight from the tory playbook.

It is letting Western Sydney down, it is letting New South Wales down and I grieve for the victims of Western Sydney in this. (Time expired)

Bonner Electorate: Rochedale Community Garden

Mr VASTA (Bonner) (21:20): It is with pleasure that I rise tonight to acknowledge a wonderful community initiative within my electorate of Bonner called the Rochedale Community Garden. I know that a lot of us in this chamber would be very familiar with this concept of community gardens, but you might not know the history behind their inception. Community gardens have been a traditional land use in Europe and the UK since the early 19th century. As early as 1819 in the UK and in the 1830s in Western Europe, allotments were there to assist the urban working class. These provided a breathing space in the crowded industrial cities, and their produce supplemented the food supply of families. The concept was adopted by American President Hoover following the stock market crash of 1929 in America, when up to 30 per cent of the workforce was unemployed. Hoover introduced the relief garden program, which turned vacant land into viable community gardens that soon became a vehicle for self-respect and also had the practical benefits of providing sustenance to families and communities often in dire straits.

Fast forward nearly a century to the suburb of Rochedale on the southern outskirts of my electorate of Bonner. Rochedale was for many years an important salad bowl district supplying the Rocklea Markets with fresh fruit and vegetables. During the Second World War years, Rochedale farmers supplied their produce to the large Army encampment at Coopers Plains. Until the 1990s small farmers on 10-acre blocks could make a reasonable living, but with the growth in Brisbane's population and the rise in land values and farming costs these smallholdings have sometimes become untenable. Bigger farms in regional areas can produce large amounts of food on an economy-of-scale basis. The Rochedale Urban Village residential development, an initiative of the Brisbane City Council, has resulted in many such farms being sold, and the suburb is now undergoing rapid change from small farms to small allotments. As a result, many of the old farmers are moving on and the new homeowners are moving in. The demographic is changing.

Enter the Rochedale Community Garden, an idea that began as a seed in the minds of two local residents, Steve Griffin and Carolyn Collins—who I will talk about in more detail later—and has quickly grown into a thriving community project. It was my very great honour to officially open this wonderful not-for-profit community garden on 9 September 2012. It was a truly wonderful event where I was able to speak about the importance of community gardens. I was fortunate enough to plant a finger lime tree and unveil a plaque to commemorate the official opening. It was great to see such large-scale community support, with the opening attended by over 80 local community members.

But what really surprised me the most was the sheer scale of work that had been achieved in the garden in only 10 weeks. It was truly tremendous progress in only a few short months.
As well as infrastructure work such as site levelling, shed assembly and water tank installation, significant progress has been made on garden bed construction. It is also amazing to see that some of the communal and rental garden beds are already productive, and the herb spiral construction was particularly impressive. I am told that even more communal beds and compost bays and a greenhouse are under construction. The chicken hutch, with its four young chickens, was a key attraction for the children that attended. In fact, it was hard to see it with so many of them crowded around it. The garden is planted with an array of organically grown fruits, herbs and vegetables and will offer options for informative workshops and community events.

With the motto of 'Growing together', the Rochedale members are keen to be inclusive and are offering activities to welcome as many people as possible. On weekdays, gardeners can come and go at their leisure, and do a spot of planting, harvesting or watering, or just have a chat. Each Sunday, it is on for young and old, often accompanied by a dog or two, as the group meets for the gardening bee. I am told that there is always work to be done and the sounds of shovelling are only drowned out by the sounds of laughter, and that the willing workers are more than happy to share their experiences and ideas with those who seek guidance.

As the suburb transforms, it is crucial to the newcomers to Rochedale that they will be able to engage with others who have lived in the district for many years or decades. People from the wider community are also welcomed. What better way is there to bring like-minded people together? There is no doubt that community gardens are here to stay, and they are springing up all over Australia. They can offer healthy, interesting and stimulating activities to people from all walks of life, of all ages, from all cultures—people with abilities and also with disabilities.

I personally greatly value these community initiatives in our ever-changing world, and recognise the immense contribution of such projects. However, these types of projects would not be possible without the amazing people behind them. Above all, I wish to acknowledge the tireless and inspirational work of two people without whom this wonderful community initiative would not have been made possible: Steve Griffin, the owner of the land in Rochedale that the community garden is actually built upon, and Carolyn Collins, proprietor of Turner's nursery in Miles Platting Road, Rochedale. Steve has generously provided much of the infrastructure and Carolyn has donated garden products and fruit trees, and together they provided the materials for the initial garden construction. These two individuals have been extraordinarily generous with their resources, invaluable expertise and priceless personal time. As the president and vice president of the garden respectively, they are amazing community ambassadors, and I salute them for their hard work and meaningful contribution to our society.

I also note that a number of local sponsors have supported this very worthy community initiative, and I thank them today on behalf of the rest of the community. Because the Rochedale Community Garden initiative keeps their mutual membership low—it is a bargain at $40 for an annual family membership—they do not have the resources for several more of the big-ticket items that they need, such as a composting toilet, covered-in work area, solar power, crucial water pump, and a container that could be converted into a meeting room. I
encourage the local community and businesses to get behind this worthy project and discuss further sponsorship options.

I will most certainly be working with my colleagues Ian Walker, the state member for Mansfield, and Councillor Adrian Schrinner, councillor for Chandler, to see what types of governmental sponsorship opportunities may be available. I know that my colleagues and I will do whatever it takes to make sure that we support the Rochedale Community Garden. Adrian and I have no doubt that the Rochedale Community Garden will grow to become a most valuable community asset—a garden that will provide an environment where people of all ages and cultures can share their passion for gardening and sustainability.

**Energy Drinks**

Mr Lyons (Bass) (21:28): I rise in the House tonight to speak and to grieve about energy drinks and their use in Australia. Many parents have raised concerns with my office about energy drinks and their worrying health effects. I am not proposing a ban on energy drinks but what I do suggest is that we encourage people to make better choices and to know the health risks associated with high-caffeine, high-sugar drinks. Mixing these drinks with alcohol is a recipe for disaster. The high sugar content of drinks has been linked to tooth erosion. A recent study, conducted by the Australian Dental Association with consumer group Choice, found that energy drinks had a higher acid level than most other fizzy drinks. Unlike tooth decay, that is caused by bacteria, acid can directly damage the enamel surface of teeth, causing dental erosion.

It is claimed that energy drinks help boost energy levels substantially and keep individuals alert and active for longer periods than usual. The drinks are targeted largely at teenagers and young adults, and are readily available in grocery stores, local shops, vending machines, pubs and clubs. What is most worrying to me, however, is that they are being sold in cans or large bottles, up to 1.25 litres, and marketed towards young people. While the products are often promoted as relatively harmless drinks, in reality energy drinks can be quite harmful when consumed regularly. Studies have shown that consumption of energy drinks over an extended period can result in problems such as elevated blood pressure, increasing anxiety levels, insomnia and heart palpitations.

Energy drinks often contain very large amounts of caffeine. Caffeine is not only addictive; it is also a diuretic when consumed in excessive amounts. It can trigger severe dehydration. We know that this becomes even more of a problem when energy drinks are combined with alcohol. In pubs and clubs across Australia drinks made with energy drinks are commonplace on hotel cocktail menus. A report of comments by Professor Chris Semsarian, a prominent Sydney cardiologist based at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, states:

The high caffeine content in popular beverages such as Red Bull, Mother and V, combined with additives such as Guarana or Taurine, is known to speed up the heart and raise blood pressure.

For someone with an underlying heart condition, this combination of ingredients could have a potentially lethal effect, Prof. Semsarian said. Deaths are known to have occurred following consumption of these drinks, including, recently, a 19-year-old Victorian woman. I feel that the manufacturers of these drinks need to demonstrate a sense of responsibility by ensuring that risks associated with this category of drinks are minimised and discouraging or restricting their consumption by those below a certain age.
In 2010 the USA prohibited the sale of premixed alcohol energy drinks. Manufacturers were notified that they were engaged in potentially illegal marketing of unsafe alcoholic drinks. It is important to know that the health issues with energy drinks are not always life-threatening but they should not be overlooked, either. Until further research becomes available, consumers should be wary of energy drinks, according to doctors and researchers. University of Tasmania PhD student Amy Peacock recently released the results of an Australian first survey that found that young Australians who mix alcohol and energy drinks experience significant physical and psychological effects. Ms Peacock reported that some drinkers are having up to 10 energy/alcohol mixed drinks per night. This is of serious concern. I thank Amy Peacock for conducting this online research, and I hope the study has raised awareness of the issue.

Researchers have studied 56 college students, splitting them into four groups. They drank either an alcoholic beverage, an energy drink, a drink that combined both alcohol and an energy drink, and a drink that did not include either one. They reported that the students who drank the alcohol showed impaired impulse control. Those who drank the alcohol-energy drink, however, thought of themselves as less impaired than those who drank the same amount of alcohol alone. The researchers say this could make people who drink alcohol and energy drinks together more likely to do something like risky driving while drunk. The combination of energy and alcohol drinks is especially dangerous as the energy drinks have about three times as much caffeine as cola, making them extremely stimulating. It is noted that the danger of combining the caffeine and alcohol is that caffeine may make a person less aware of the alcohol's effect. The energy drinks do not change the level of a person's impairment from alcohol, just their perception of it.

Energy drinks in Australia are one of the most stringently regulated categories of all world markets—and rightly so. Energy drinks must comply with the labelling provisions of the code with regard to content disclosure and recommended daily usage and advisory statements that the product is not suitable for children or pregnant or lactating women. Health experts are concerned about the trend of combining energy drinks with alcohol. According to an April 2006 study in the medical journal *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*, the addition of caffeine can make alcohol users feel less drunk, but motor coordination and visual reaction time are just as impaired as when alcohol is drunk by itself. The Australian Medical Association said that mixing energy drinks with alcohol could lead to an increase in drunken night violence—which is the last thing our community needs. Given the potential catastrophic consequences of energy drink consumption among susceptible young individuals greater communication and awareness needs to be promoted to avoid a catastrophe amongst our youth.

**Gillard Government**

**Dr JENSEN** (Tangney) (21:37): In 2007 Labor won government on promises for the future—so many promises. Promises of fiscal conservatism, promises of fairness, promises of a better future for all Australians—how this government has fallen short! And the wheels started coming off even before the excuse of the GFC reared its ugly head. How many people remember rising interest rates to combat rising inflation and a Treasurer clearly out of his depth? How long ago and how many government stuff ups ago was this? But Labor's broken promises continued. The GFC hit and the government almost had an excuse for economic
ineptitude. The fact is that some stimulus was required at the time to maintain Australia's confidence in the economy. This is why the coalition agreed to and supported the first tranche of the stimulus package.

However, after that first reaction a competent government, a government that lived by its own falsely adopted motto of fiscal conservatism, would have let the Reserve Bank work on interest rates. Almost uniquely in the developed world at the time, Australia had a relatively high interest rate. We were fortunate enough to have the working room for reductions in interest rates—reductions that would have had a similar effect to additional stimulus—and Australians paying less interest on their home loans would have been left more money to spend boosting our economy. This would have obviated the necessity for massive borrowings, massive debt and massive, massive repayments. But the intellects opposite, those who campaigned as fiscal conservatives in both the 2007 and 2010 elections, decided on more and more stimulus, resulting in God knows how many botched projects and programs, and government borrowing crowding the market and putting upward pressure on interest rates—and those projects and programs!

Another day, another Labor stuff-up—these have not only continued but even increased in frequency of late. School halls and canteens—a blow-out—were supplied at the cost of an average family home and built to a single design, regardless of the need or desire of the individual schools. Pink batts—a blow-out—were put in roofs by incompetent, untrained installers. This resulted in deaths; a lack of confidence in the industry; removal of batts, costing more billions; and the destruction of an industry and of reputable businesses which, in some cases, had been around for decades. Solar homes—another blow-out—had rebate arrangements that the average pure maths professor would struggle to comprehend, leaving room for rorts, cons and, again, shoddy workmanship.

Then came a new Prime Minister and the light of the Gillard government—or so it was thought. Instead came promises not only broken but reversed. People will accept sometimes that an assurance of government cannot be kept. But Australians will not wear, after a promise that something would not be done, being forced to stomach a cynical backflip. Enter the carbon tax, the one the PM and the Treasurer promised they would not implement. Indeed, suggestions that the tax would be introduced were dismissed as hysterical. This sort of treatment of the electorate cannot be excused. What a shameful lack of ethics and morality! This is Labor's legacy—waste and reckless spending. Add the mining tax, the carbon tax, the cancellation of the cut to the company tax rate and my myriad other hits on business to redistribute income. In the business world—the real world, that is—few of this government's policies, programs, subsidies and handouts would pass an honest cost-benefit analysis.

Julia Gillard broke her solemn promise, set out in the 2009 defence white paper, to increase defence spending by three per cent in real terms until 2017-18. This ludicrous compromise of Australia's national defence and security is an affront to our national sovereignty for the sake of a paper stimulus which will likely never see the stamp of the Governor-General. It is a tough argument to make—that spending priorities the Prime Minister is determined to protect are really so critical.

A wealth redistribution bent is being manifested in all Gillard government policies—quick-fix tax grabs to plug budget black holes and pay for ideological policies. To the detriment of all Australians, it is now only political reality which matters to the Gillard government. At the
moment we are seeing an influx of more Labor policies driven by myopia—short-term electoral gain for long-term national pain. Look no further than last week's pitch to GetUp! and the Greens in the legislation changing our approach to the management of our fisheries.

With the recent announcements of a national dental initiative, increased foreign aid, border protection blow-outs and an unabashed commitment to a portly public service, there is little chance that this balloon of debt has yet to reach its summit. Forecast commodity prices do little to allay the fears of the coalition. Labor squanders all that it is afforded—hard-earned tax revenue is wasted and record terms of trade are turned to red. The terms of trade rose by 20.6 per cent in 2010-11, yet Labor ran a deficit of almost $48 billion that year and followed in 2011-12 with a $44.4 billion deficit, despite the terms of trade rising even further over the year. This outlook leaves our budget with no coherent economic strategy to drive growth in the economy, to lift productivity or to create jobs. With falling revenue growth, sharp falls in key commodity prices—iron ore prices, for example, are hovering below $100 a tonne, down from their highs of around $150 a tonne—and a sharp increase in Labor's social spending agenda, surely the budget forecast the Treasury is shopping around the press gallery is a pipedream at best.

Border protection tops the list of spending disasters this month, with spending four times the amount budgeted for this policy—an immigration and humanitarian disaster. A prudent, fiscally responsible government would see the unsustainability of this growing black hole of debt and act to fix the problem by addressing revenue growth and, more importantly, taking an axe to spending. Instead, this government has thrown caution to the wind and is announcing grand social policies without a thought to who will pay for them. Their new dental scheme and a rushed announcement on Gonski followed the NDIS announcements—all unfunded. The National Disability Insurance Scheme is estimated to need an extra $10.5 billion annually within six years and nearly $50 billion in total by the end of the decade. There is the $4 billion for the dental care system and the $5 billion annually for education that was recommended by Gonski. The government has run out of its own money or has borrowed money to spend, so it is now pushing to spend the money of state governments. In the weeks and months to come, the Treasurer will give another ironclad guarantee on the surplus. MYEFO will see another bevy of figures sold as gospel to the electorate but, while funding vacuums like the NBN remain off-budget and $120 billion of policies remain on the table without revenue streams to match, any figures presented by this government, let alone surpluses, are manipulated at best. What a disaster.

No wonder the spending fantasies of the current media cycle are a much more convenient focus. Labor's weakness at fiscal rectitude and budgetary constraint is costing Australia. To the detriment of our nation, Labor has a philosophical downfall with regard to budget deficits. Hawke, Keating, Gillard and co were all happy to charge into government with coalition coffers brimming with surpluses only to spend with ignorance and abandon, not until all the money has gone but until we are servicing structural debt that is immobilising Australia.

Before the 2010 election, Labor told us that the 2011-12 deficit would be $10 billion. By May 2011, the Treasurer admitted that the forecast had blown out to $22.6 billion and by November 2011, cursed by the shadow Treasurer, they reluctantly confirmed that the blow-out had reached $37.1 billion. Just four months ago, Labor trumpeted without missing a note that the deficit would actually be $44.4 billion—a cumulative debt of $174 billion.
Building a stronger economy is the foundation of the coalition's positive agenda for building a better Australia. All we know is how to expand the economic opportunity for all. When I speak to my constituents they say to me, 'If only this government were as good as us.' They mean it. They know we can do better, and we can. The coalition and I reject this government's broken politics. Australians want a government that can deliver an economic strategy to build a stronger Australia, reduce cost-of-living pressures and create secure jobs. The coalition offers this choice.

New South Wales Government: School Funding

Ms O'NEILL (Robertson) (21:47): I rise in this grievance debate to put on the record my absolute disgust and despair for the young people of the state of New South Wales in light of the O'Farrell slashing of $1.7 billion from the New South Wales school and TAFE sector. I cannot believe we have actually hit this situation. It is very clear to me as a mother, as a former teacher, as a former lecturer of teachers in training and as a person who understands that our economy is built on the back of a very strong education sector and on the training that it so desperately needs right now to meet the requirements of our economy that, to have a Liberal government in New South Wales slashing $1.7 billion from the sector that drives our future and drives our economy, is penny-pinching and making sure that we take out of our whole sector the most important element. Even Barry O'Farrell's New South Wales Liberal colleagues think he has gone too far. I do know that people who care about the Central Coast, even the Liberal members up there, must be absolutely disgusted at the implications of what this will mean for my local community.

I understand that Minister Garrett has spoken to the New South Wales minister in the last day to express our concern as the federal government over these unnecessary cuts, and I understand he will be meeting him early next week. What is happening here is really not about making savings. This is part of the discourse problem that we have from those opposite all the time: it is about an adoration of money as an artefact, of surplus as an artefact in its own right. What we really need is sensible expenditure and careful management of our economy—and we do need savings, but they should be savings for the purposes of spending that money for the benefit of our country. Barry O'Farrell has made it extremely clear with this $1.7 billion cut that he has chosen to put school and TAFE students last. Their voices are not loud enough. Their needs are not great enough. Their capacity to build the future is not seductive enough for him to want to invest in our young people. That message is completely different from what we stand for on the Labor side.

What is of particular concern is that these state government cuts to schools have been made in Victoria by a Liberal government, in New South Wales by a Liberal government and in Queensland by a Liberal government. These are just curtain-raisers for what Tony Abbott has in store for Australia should he ever end up on the government benches. Whenever a Liberal premier picks up an axe, we know that schools are the first to face the chop. We know that if Tony Abbott gets the opportunity he will do exactly the same thing. It is on the record now that he wants to sack one in seven teachers. We also know that he wants to cut trade-training centres.

In my electorate, we have trade-training centres that are preparing young people for careers involving horticulture. We have invested $700,000 in that. The school and the students have been enlivened by their engagement with that training in preparing for their future. We have
put a similar amount, $700,000, into construction at Erina High School. At St Edward's college, in concert with St Joseph's college, just across the playground, we have invested in a trade-training centre for metalwork and for hospitality. I know that one of the young men there, Justin Zwan, is now going to school four days a week and working for Baltimore Aircoil on the fifth day, making sure that his training is aligned with workplace practice and getting the benefit of still being connected to school and learning across a broad range of disciplines in a community where he already feels safe as a learner. When you cut trade-training centres, you disconnect young Australians from their future. You disconnect them from the opportunities that a sound education can provide.

With a Liberal government now in charge at the state level, every child in every single local school across the state of New South Wales and sadly, right down the eastern seaboard, will feel the pain of the Liberals' savage cuts. The Liberals' cuts in New South Wales mean almost 1,800 jobs slashed. Think about that—not just the affected individuals but their families and how they spend in their local economy. In regional areas such as mine, if you take jobs out of the local economy, you feel that pain very, very quickly. The Liberals are gouging workers and students with an almost 10 per cent increase in TAFE fees and a whopping $1.7 billion in cuts. They are freezing funding to Catholic and independent schools in New South Wales, and my electorate will feel that pain. Sadly, this is a glimpse into the future that a Liberal federal government would provide—slashing and burning education.

There is a bit of a double whammy for school funding. Commonwealth funding for schools is tied to state government spending on government schools; so, when states spend less on their schools, federal funding goes down. This is an automatic process that is part of the school funding system that was introduced by the Howard government. Because states have reduced the amount of money they spent on schools in the last year, the Commonwealth has had to cut its indexation for school funding from 5.9 per cent to 3.9 per cent. So the actions of the New South Wales government mean that every school in the country will lose out. If Liberal state governments continue to make these deep cuts to school funding then, under the current system, it is only going to get worse.

That is why we have an alternative plan—because we believe in education. We understand its power for the individual and our society, and our economic future. We are determined to push ahead with our school improvement plan because we know that our economic security depends on our great education system. Claims by Liberal state governments that extra funding for schools is not needed are just desperate excuses for what can only be described as inexcusable cuts.

OECD data released this week confirms that Australia still underinvests in schools compared to other high-performing countries. We know, from our programs on literacy and numeracy and teacher quality, that targeted funding is already making a real difference in students' results.

I have been privileged to teach with so many wonderful people who have given their lives to education, determined to make a difference to our local community and to enable every child to have access to a great education. Sadly, over too many years teachers have had the resources that they need stripped from them and are unable to get the money that they need to purchase materials, additional assistance or particular programs for students. I have had teachers bemoan with great sadness the fact that one child could not get a reading recovery
program and another one could because there was simply a line that was drawn. It was not that the need was any less; it was just that the funding was not there.

If we ask people to do the job, we need to resource them. We need to resource our teachers, who are making great professional decisions and assessments every day. But, to be able to do their work, they need adequate funding. That is why our plan is about making sure that any investment in schools is spent on things that we know work, like enabling teachers to really reach their professional capacity, enabling teachers to undertake high-quality professional development throughout their entire career—not just new teachers, although that is a critical pressure point for the profession. We need to be able to engage teachers early on, providing them with adequate support and the opportunity for experienced teachers to come in and mentor them in context and ensure that they are embedded and successful. We need to ensure that, when classes are being doled out at the beginning of the year, new teachers are not saddled with the burden of classes with high needs but rather are given classes where success for the teacher and the students is enhanced. Teachers with incredible experience should be given the opportunity to work most significantly with those who have higher needs, because they have that greater experience. Simple things like that need to be a part of plans as we move forward.

But how can you plan and implement for change if your funding is constantly cut and if you do not have the capacity to be a professional and respond to the challenges in the workplace because of funding cuts? Budgets are about making choices. This government has chosen to put education front and centre and we have made the necessary budget decisions to do that. There is no reason why state governments cannot do the same.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): Order! There being no further grievances, the debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Federation Chamber adjourned at 21:58.
QUESTIONS IN WRITING

Infrastructure and Transport: Overseas Travel for Departmental Staff
(Question No. 1090)

Mr Briggs asked the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, in writing, on 20 June 2012:

For (a) 2008-09, (b) 2009-10, (c) 2010-11, and (d) 2011-12, what was the total cost of overseas travel for departmental staff.

Mr Albanese: The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

Refer to the annual report.

Centrelink
(Question No. 1138)

Mr Craig Kelly asked the Minister representing the Minister for Human Services, in writing, on 15 August 2012:

(1) In respect of the Centrelink Office located at 1-3 Macarthur Avenue Revesby, in (a) 2011-12, (b) 2010-11, (c) 2009-10, and (d) 2008-09, how many front counter enquiries were made, and of these, how many were referred to the Bankstown Centrelink office.

(2) Is the premises owned, or leased, by the Commonwealth; if leased, (a) on what date will it expire, (b) what is the annual cost of the lease, and (c) what further lease options are available.

(3) What is the size (in square metres) of the premises, and what proportion of the space is used for public enquiries and front counter service.

(4) How many on-site parking spots exist and of these, how many are available to the public.

(5) Has the premises undergone any refurbishments (including new signage, carpeting, furniture, etc) since 24 November 2007; if so, (a) what was the cost of each refurbishment, and (b) on what date was each refurbishment completed.

(6) On what date was the carpet last steam cleaned.

(7) How many full time equivalent staff will be employed as at (a) 18 August 2012, and (b) 27 August 2012.

(8) As at the current date, what proportion of staff offer front counter service.

Mr Brendan O’Connor: The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

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<th>2011-12</th>
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Note: Figures provided in the above table are indicative and do not capture all customer demand. These figures represent those customers that had a more complex interaction with a customer service officer. It should be noted that over this period the sites queuing strategies and recording practices have changed several times. In particular, for the 2010-11 financial year, changes to front-of-house practices led to the number of contacts not being recorded for part of the year and the results are not accurate. The recording of contact numbers resumed in 2011-12. Therefore the yearly figures are not comparable and are a guide only.

The Department is unable to provide the number of referrals of customers between the Revesby and Bankstown sites as this information is not collected.

(2) The premises are leased by the Commonwealth.

QUESTIONS IN WRITING
(a) The lease expires on 2 December 2013.
(b) The annual cost of the lease, including rent and outgoings, is $282,846 GST exclusive.
(c) There are no further lease options available.
(3) The size of the tenancy is 1,012 square metres and approximately 20% of space is used for public enquiries and front counter services.
(4) There are 10 car parking spots included in the lease and these are not available to the public. They are primarily used for Commonwealth fleet vehicles.
(5) Revesby Service Centre has recently had old Centrelink external signage decommissioned and replaced with signage for the Department of Human Services. Works were completed at this service centre on 21 June 2012 at a cost of $5,214 GST exclusive.
(6) The carpet was last steam cleaned on 24 February 2012.
(7) As at 18 August 2012, at the Revesby Service Centre there were two staff providing face to face services and one Team Leader, plus 52 non-customer facing Smart Centre staff providing processing services. The staff providing face to face services at Revesby will relocate to nearby sites; the two customer service staff have opted to move to the Bankstown site and the Team Leader is considering options on where they would like to move to. The 52 Smart Centre staff providing processing services will remain at the Revesby site.
(8) As per the answer to part 7, as at 18 August 2012, there were two staff providing face to face services with one Team Leader at the Revesby Service Centre.

**Australian Conservation Foundation**

(Question No. 1167)

Mr Briggs asked the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, in writing, on 21 August 2012:

For (a) 2007-08, (b) 2008-09, (c) 2009-10, (d) 2010-11, and (e) 2011-12, what grants were provided to the Australian Conservation Foundation, including the amount, purpose, and program each was delivered under.

Mr Albanese: the answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

A list of grants is available on the Department of Infrastructure and Transport website.