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SITTING DAYS—2014

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FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—SECOND PERIOD

Governor-General
Her Excellency the Hon. Quentin Bryce AC, CVO

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

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

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

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

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

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<td>Whiteley, Mr Brett David</td>
<td>Braddon, TAS</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wicks, Mrs Lucy Elizabeth</td>
<td>Robertson, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Members of the House of Representatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wilkie, Mr Andrew Damien</td>
<td>Denison, TAS</td>
<td>IND.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williams, Mr Matthew</td>
<td>Hindmarsh, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilson, Mr Richard James</td>
<td>O'Connor, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood, Mr Jason Peter</td>
<td>La Trobe, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyatt, Mr Kenneth George AM</td>
<td>Hasluck, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zappia, Mr Antonio</td>
<td>Makin, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PARTY ABBREVIATIONS**

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

**Heads of Parliamentary Departments**

Clerk of the Senate—R Laing
Clerk of the House of Representatives—D Elder
Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—C Mills
Parliamentary Budget Officer—P Bowen
# ABBOTT MINISTRY

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Minister</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prime Minister</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Tony Abbott MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Indigenous Affairs</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Nigel Scullion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon. Josh Frydenberg MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon. Alan Tudge MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Warren Truss MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Deputy Prime Minister)</td>
<td>The Hon. Jamie Briggs MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Foreign Affairs</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Julie Bishop MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Trade and Investment</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Andrew Robb AO MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Brett AO MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Employment</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Employment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Deputy Leader of the House)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Attorney-General</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. George Brandis QC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for the Arts</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. George Brandis QC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Vice-President of the Executive Council)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Justice</td>
<td>The Hon. Michael Keenan MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Treasurer</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Joe Hockey MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Small Business</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Bruce Billson MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Arthur Sinodinos AO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon. Steven Ciobo MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Agriculture</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Barnaby Joyce MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Richard Colbeck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Education</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Christopher Pyne MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Leader of the House)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Education</td>
<td>The Hon. Sussan Ley MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Scott Ryan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Industry</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Ian Macfarlane MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry</td>
<td>The Hon. Bob Baldwin MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Social Services</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Kevin Andrews MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Social Services</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Mitch Fifield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Manager of Government Business in the Senate)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Human Services</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Marise Payne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Social Services</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Concetta Fierravanti-Wells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Communications</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Malcolm Turnbull MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Communications</td>
<td>The Hon. Paul Fletcher MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Health</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Peter Dutton MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Sport</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Peter Dutton MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Health</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Fiona Nash</td>
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<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Minister</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Defence</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. David Johnston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Veterans’ Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Michael Ronaldson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC</em></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Michael Ronaldson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Defence</td>
<td>The Hon. Stuart Robert MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence</td>
<td>The Hon. Darren Chester MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for the Environment</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Greg Hunt MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Simon Birmingham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Immigration and Border Protection</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Scott Morrison MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Finance</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Mathias Cormann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Minister of State</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Michael Ronaldson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance</td>
<td>The Hon. Michael McCormack MP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each box represents a portfolio. **Cabinet Ministers are shown in bold type.** As a general rule, there is one department in each portfolio. However, there is a Department of Human Services in the Social Services portfolio and a Department of Veterans’ Affairs in the Defence portfolio. The title of a department does not necessarily reflect the title of a minister in all cases.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Shadow Minister</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leader of the Opposition</strong></td>
<td>Hon Bill Shorten MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister Assisting the Leader for Science</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Kim Carr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister Assisting the Leader for Small Business</td>
<td>Hon Bernie Ripoll MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business</td>
<td>Julie Owens MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Cabinet Secretary</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jacinta Collins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Hon Michael Danby MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Dr Jim Chalmers MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deputy Leader of the Opposition</strong></td>
<td>Hon Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Women</td>
<td>Senator Claire Moore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager of Opposition Business (Senate)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Don Farrell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Penny Wong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Trade and Investment</td>
<td>Dr Jim Chalmers MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Defence</td>
<td>Hon David Feeney MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Veterans’ Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Don Farrell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Defence</td>
<td>Gai Brodtmann MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Infrastructure and Transport</strong></td>
<td>Hon Anthony Albanese MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Tourism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Regional Development and Local Government</td>
<td>Hon Julie Collins MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development and Infrastructure</td>
<td>Allanah MacTiernan MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Western Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for External Territories</td>
<td>Hon Warren Snowdon MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Treasurer</strong></td>
<td>Hon Chris Bowen MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>Hon Dr Andrew Leigh MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Competition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation</td>
<td>Hon Bernie Ripoll MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Shadow Treasurer</td>
<td>Hon Ed Husic MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Finance</strong></td>
<td>Hon Tony Burke MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manager of Opposition Business (House)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water</strong></td>
<td>Hon Mark Butler MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment, Climate Change and Water</td>
<td>Senator Louise Pratt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Industry</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Kim Carr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Vocational Education</td>
<td>Hon Sharon Bird MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Manufacturing</td>
<td>Tony Zappia MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Title</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Communications</td>
<td>Hon Jason Clare MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Michelle Rowland MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Attorney General</td>
<td>Hon Mark Dreyfus QC MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Hon David Feeney MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Manager of Opposition Business (House)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Lisa Singh</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Hon Michael Danby MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Education</td>
<td>Hon Kate Ellis MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Early Childhood</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Education</td>
<td>Julie Owens MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Resources</td>
<td>Hon Gary Gray AO MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Northern Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Special Minister of State</td>
<td>Hon Warren Snowdon MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Northern Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Health</td>
<td>Hon Catherine King MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Health</td>
<td>Stephen Jones MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Mental Health</td>
<td>Senator Hon Jan McLucas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Hon Bernie Ripoll MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Health</td>
<td>Hon Amanda Rishworth MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Families and Payments</td>
<td>Hon Jenny Macklin MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Disability Reform</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Human Services</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Doug Cameron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Housing and Homelessness</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jan McLucas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Carers</td>
<td>Senator Claire Moore</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Families and Payments</td>
<td>Senator Carol Brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Immigration and Border Protection</td>
<td>Hon Richard Marles MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Citizenship and Multiculturalism</td>
<td>Michelle Rowland MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration</td>
<td>Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs</td>
<td>Hon Shayne Neumann MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Ageing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Indigenous Affairs</td>
<td>Hon Warren Snowdon MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Aged Care</td>
<td>Senator Helen Polley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations</td>
<td>Hon Brendan O’Connor MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Employment Services</td>
<td>Hon Julie Collins MP</td>
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CHAMBER
Tuesday, 18 March 2014

The SPEAKER (Hon. Bronwyn Bishop) took the chair at 12:00, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

**BILLS**

**Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013**

**Consideration of Senate Message**

Debate resumed.

*Senate amendments—*

1. Title, page 1 (line 11), omit "student assistance, ".
2. Title, page 1 (line 13), omit "charities".
3. Clause 2, page 2 (table items 2 and 3), omit the table items, substitute:
   2. Schedule 1 The day this Act receives the Royal Assent.
   3. Schedule 2 The 28th day after this Act receives the Royal Assent.
   3A. Schedule 3 1 May 2014.
   3B. Schedule 4 1 July 2014.
4. Clause 2, page 2 (table item 4), omit the table item.
5. Clause 2, page 2 (table item 5), omit the table item, substitute:
   5. Schedules 7 and 8 1 July 2014.
   5A. Schedule 9 The day this Act receives the Royal Assent.
6. Schedule 1, item 6, page 4 (lines 23 and 24), omit "in venues nationally".
7. Schedule 1, item 12, page 5 (line 26), omit "in venues nationally".
8. Schedule 1, item 12, page 6 (line 9), omit "in venues nationally".
9. Schedule 1, item 12, page 6 (after line 15), after paragraph 20(2)(a), insert:
   (aa) to ensure that a venue-based voluntary pre-commitment scheme operating in a State or Territory is capable of connecting to a State or Territory wide voluntary pre-commitment scheme that operates within the State or Territory; and
10. Schedule 1, item 12, page 6 (lines 16 and 17), omit "this capability", substitute "these capabilities".
11. Schedule 1A, page 9 (lines 1 to 5), omit the Schedule.
13. Schedule 3, item 36, page 16 (line 2), omit "1 January 2014", substitute "1 May 2014".
14. Schedule 3, item 36, page 16 (line 6), omit "1 January 2014", substitute "1 May 2014".
15. Schedule 3, item 36, page 16 (lines 9 and 10), omit "1 January 2014", substitute "1 May 2014".
16. Schedule 3, item 36, page 16 (line 15), omit "1 January 2014", substitute "1 May 2014".
17. Schedule 3, item 36, page 16 (line 21), omit "1 January 2014", substitute "1 May 2014".
18. Schedule 4, item 6, page 17 (line 23), omit "1 January 2014", substitute "1 July 2014".
19. Schedule 4, item 6, page 17 (line 24), omit "1 January 2014", substitute "1 July 2014".
20. Schedule 4, item 6, page 18 (line 1), omit "1 January 2014", substitute "1 July 2014".
(21) Schedule 4, item 6, page 18 (line 4), omit "1 January 2014", substitute "1 July 2014".
(22) Schedule 4, item 6, page 18 (line 8), omit "1 January 2014", substitute "1 July 2014".
(23) Schedule 4, item 6, page 18 (line 27), omit "1 January 2014", substitute "1 July 2014".
(24) Schedule 4, item 6, page 18 (line 29), omit "1 January 2014", substitute "1 July 2014".
(25) Schedule 4, item 6, page 18 (line 33), omit "1 January 2014", substitute "1 July 2014".
(26) Schedule 4, item 6, page 19 (line 11), omit "1 January 2014", substitute "1 July 2014".
(27) Schedule 4, item 14, page 20 (line 12), omit "1 January 2014", substitute "1 July 2014".
(28) Schedule 4, item 14, page 20 (line 14), omit "1 January 2014", substitute "1 July 2014".
(29) Schedule 4, item 14, page 20 (line 17), omit "1 January 2014", substitute "1 July 2014".
(30) Schedule 4, item 14, page 20 (line 21), omit "1 January 2014", substitute "1 July 2014".
(31) Schedule 4, item 14, page 21 (line 11), omit "1 January 2014", substitute "1 July 2014".
(32) Schedule 4, item 14, page 21 (line 16), omit "1 January 2014", substitute "1 July 2014".
(33) Schedule 4, item 14, page 21 (line 31), omit "1 January 2014", substitute "1 July 2014".
(34) Schedule 4, item 14, page 22 (line 1), omit "1 January 2014", substitute "1 July 2014".
(35) Schedule 4, item 14, page 22 (line 4), omit "1 January 2014", substitute "1 July 2014".
(36) Schedule 4, item 14, page 22 (line 13), omit "1 January 2014", substitute "1 July 2014".
(37) Schedule 4, item 14, page 22 (line 16), omit "1 January 2014", substitute "1 July 2014".
(38) Schedule 4, item 14, page 22 (line 20), omit "1 January 2014", substitute "1 July 2014".
(39) Schedule 5, page 23 (line 1) to page 38 (line 10), omit the Schedule.
(40) Schedule 6, page 39 (line 1) to page 102 (line 12), omit the Schedule.
(41) Schedule 7, page 103 (line 1) to page 110 (line 24), omit the Schedule, substitute:

Schedule 7—Paid parental leave

Paid Parental Leave Act 2010

1 Section 4 (paragraph relating to Part 3-5)

Repeal the paragraph, substitute:

Part 3-5 is about employer determinations. If an employer determination is in force for an employer and a person, the employer must pay instalments to the person, unless the employer employs less than 20 employees. In that case, the employer may elect to pay instalments to the person. The Secretary must be satisfied that certain conditions have been met before the Secretary can make an employer determination.

2 Section 6 (definition of acceptance notice)

Omit "section 103", substitute "paragraphs 103(1)(a) and (2)(a)".

3 Section 6 (definition of employer determination)

Omit "section 101", substitute "subsections 101(1) and (1A)".

4 Section 6

Insert:

non-acceptance notice: see paragraph 103(2)(b).

5 Section 100 (first paragraph)

Repeal the paragraph, substitute:

This Part is about employer determinations. If an employer determination is in force for an employer
and a person, the employer must pay instalments to the person, unless the employer employs less than 20 employees. In that case, the employer may elect to pay instalments to the person.

6 Section 100 (third paragraph)
Repeal the paragraph, substitute:

If the Secretary makes an employer determination for a person and the person's employer and the employer employs 20 employees or more, the employer must:

(a) give the Secretary certain information to enable the Secretary to pay the employer PPL funding amounts for the person; or

(b) apply for review of the employer determination under Part 5-1 or 5-2.

If the Secretary makes an employer determination for a person and the person's employer and the employer employs fewer than 20 employees, the employer may elect to pay instalments to the person. If the employer does not make an election, the Secretary must pay instalments to the person.

7 Subsection 101(1)
Omit "under this section", substitute "under this subsection".

8 After paragraph 101(1)(a)
Insert:

(aa) the employer employs 20 or more employees; and

9 After subsection 101(1)
Insert:

(1A) The Secretary must make a determination under this subsection (the employer determination) that a person's employer is to pay the person instalments if the Secretary is satisfied, when making the determination, that:

(a) a payability determination that parental leave pay is payable to the person, or an initial eligibility determination for the person, is in force; and

(b) the employer employs fewer than 20 employees; and

(c) the employer has made an election under section 109 to pay instalments and that election applies to the person; and

(d) the person has consented in the claim to the employer paying instalments to the person; and

(e) if paragraphs (b) to (d) are satisfied in relation to more than one employer of the person—the person nominated the employer in the claim as the employer who would be required to pay instalments to the person.

10 Paragraph 101(3)(a)
After "subsection (1)", insert "or (1A)".

11 Paragraph 101(3)(b)
After "paragraph (1)(a)", insert "or (1A)(a)".

12 Subsection 101(4)
Omit "subsection (1)", substitute "subsections (1) and (1A)".

13 Section 103
Repeal the section, substitute:

103 Employer response to notice of employer determination
(1) If an employer is given a notice under section 102 that an employer determination has been made under subsection 101(1), the employer must, within 14 days after the date of the notice, do one of the following:

(a) give the Secretary a written notice (the *acceptance notice*) that complies with section 104;

(b) apply for a review of the employer determination under Part 5-1 or 5-2.

Note: This subsection is a civil penalty provision (see section 146).

(2) If an employer is given a notice under section 102 that an employer determination has been made under subsection 101(1A), the employer may, within the period referred to in subsection (3):

(a) give the Secretary a written notice (the *acceptance notice*) that complies with section 104; or

(b) give the Secretary notice (the *non-acceptance notice*), orally or in writing, declaring that the employer does not accept the employer's obligations to pay instalments to the person.

(3) For the purposes of subsection (2), the period is 14 days, or such longer period allowed by the Secretary, after the date of the notice given under section 102.

14 Paragraph 106(c)
After "subsection 101(1)", insert "or (1A)".

15 Subsection 108(1) (after table item 1)
Insert:

1A The employer has given a non-acceptance notice for the person under paragraph 103(2)(b). The day of the revocation.

16 Subsection 108(1) (table item 2, column 1)
Omit "section 103", substitute "subsection 103(1)".

17 Subsection 108(1) (after table item 2)
Insert:

2A The employer has not given an acceptance notice or a non-acceptance notice for the person in the period referred to in subsection 103(2). The day of the revocation.

18 Section 146 (cell at table item 10, column 1)
Repeal the cell, substitute:

Subsection 103(1)

19 Paragraphs 157(1)(b) and 159(1)(b)
Omit "section 103", substitute "subsection 103(1)".

20 Subsections 203(2) and 207(1)
Omit "section 101", substitute "subsection 101(1)".

21 Subsection 207(5)
Omit "section 103", substitute "subsection 103(1)".

22 Subsection 207(5) (note)
Omit "Section 103", substitute "Subsection 103(1)".

23 Application of amendments
The amendments made by this Schedule apply in relation to an employer determination that is made on or after the commencement of this Schedule in relation to a claim for parental leave pay that is made before, on or after that commencement.

(42) Schedule 8, item 1, page 111 (line 11), omit "1 March 2014", substitute "1 July 2014".
(43) Schedule 8, item 3, page 111 (lines 16 and 17), omit "1 March 2014", substitute "1 July 2014".
(44) Schedule 8, item 7, page 112 (line 12), omit "1 March 2014", substitute "1 July 2014".
(45) Schedule 8, item 9, page 112 (lines 17 and 18), omit "1 March 2014", substitute "1 July 2014".
(46) Schedule 9, items 1 to 5, page 114 (lines 4 to 19), omit the items.
(47) Schedule 9, page 115 (lines 6 and 7), omit the heading.
(48) Schedule 9, item 10, page 115 (lines 8 and 9), omit the item.

Mr ANDREWS (Menzies—Minister for Social Services) (12:01): I move:
That Senate amendments (1) to (4), (6) to (40) and (42) to (48) be agreed to.

These amendments have the effect of omitting from the bill measures to delay the commencement of the Charities Act, measures providing for a general interest charge on student loans, measures to change student start-up scholarships into income-contingent loans and measures to pause the indexation of the childcare rebate. Other amendments make minor changes to language in schedule 1 as well as amending the schedule commencement dates in the bill as a consequence of it not passing the parliament last year.

Question agreed to.

Mr ANDREWS (Menzies—Minister for Social Services) (12:02): I move:
That Senate amendments (5) and (41) be disagreed to and the following two government amendments be made in place of them:

(1) Clause 2, page 2 (table item 5), omit the table item, substitute:

| 5. Schedule 8 | 1 July 2014 |
| 5A. Schedule 9 | The day this Act receives the Royal Assent |

(2) Schedule 7, page 103 (line 1) to page 110 (line 24), omit the Schedule.

These amendments would omit schedule 7 of the bill relating to paid parental leave and make a consequential amendment to the commencement provision in the bill. The original schedule 7 was intended to remove the requirement for all employers to act as the pay clerk for the government's Paid Parental Leave scheme. The Senate's revised schedule 7 would remove that requirement only for employers with fewer than 20 employees.

In passing the original schedule 7, the House demonstrated its commitment to removing this administrative burden for all businesses from 1 July 2014. Accordingly, the government is moving amendments to repeal this component of the bill with a view to reintroducing it in a separate bill at a later date. I commend the amendments to the House.

Question agreed to.

COMMITTEES

Joint Standing Committee on Treaties

Report


Report made a parliamentary paper in accordance with standing order 39(e).
WYATT ROY: by leave—Today I present the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties's Report 137: treaty referred on 15 January 2014, the committee's first report of the 44th Parliament. The report contains the committee's view on the Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the United Arab Emirates on Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy. This proposed treaty was first referred to the committee in the 43rd Parliament, but that lapsed following the proroguing of the parliament. During that inquiry the committee held two public hearings and received nine submissions. The proposed treaty was referred to the current committee on 15 January 2014. As all the relevant issues had been aired in the 43rd Parliament, the committee resolved to report without taking further evidence.

The Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the United Arab Emirates on Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy will enable Australian uranium miners to export uranium to the United Arab Emirates, the first country to implement a civilian nuclear power program in 27 years. The agreement will ensure that Australian uranium, uranium products and related materials are subject to the highest standards of safety and security. For example, the agreement will prohibit the use of Australian nuclear materials in weapons and will enable Australia to impose penalties on the UAE, including stopping the supply of Australian nuclear materials if the UAE fails to comply with the highest international safety standards.

The committee was pleased to note that the UAE's approach to developing a civilian nuclear program is a model of openness and transparency. The UAE is making considerable use of international expertise to construct its reactors to ensure that international standards are met. Further, the UAE accepted an International Atomic Energy Agency regulatory review mission in 2011 which found a number of good practices in the UAE regulatory system while also recommending a number of improvements.

Finally, the UAE has appointed an international advisory board to oversee the regulation of its civilian nuclear program. The board includes a number of eminent international experts in nuclear power and its report will be made public.

The committee is aware of the dangers posed by nuclear power and has made some recommendations to ensure that the safety and security standards applying to exported Australian nuclear material remain the highest in the world. The recommendations are, firstly, that prior to the ratification of the proposed treaty the IAEA undertake physical inspections of the UAE facilities that will handle Australian obligated nuclear materials; secondly, that the government report to the parliament on what actions it has taken to implement the recommendations in the report United Nations system-wide study on the implications of the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant; and, finally, that the government explore and report to the parliament on the mechanisms to strengthen the resourcing of the IAEA.

The committee is of the view that the highest international standards for transparency demonstrated by the UAE in developing its civilian nuclear program ought to be encouraged and replicated elsewhere. The committee considers that, subject to the above recommendations, binding treaty action should be taken. On behalf of the committee I commend the report to the House. I move:

That the House take note of the report.
The SPEAKER: The debate is adjourned. The resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting, and the member will have leave to continue speaking when the debate is resumed.

Reference to Federation Chamber

WYATT ROY (Longman) (12:08): by leave—I move:
That the order of the day be referred to the Federation Chamber for debate.
Question agreed to.

Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit
Standing Committee on Health
Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs
Standing Committee on Tax and Revenue
Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications

Membership

The SPEAKER: I have received advice from the Chief Government Whip and the Chief Opposition Whip that they have nominated members to be members of certain committees.

Mr BRIGGS: by leave—I move that:
Mr Smith be discharged from the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit and that, in his place, Dr Hendy be appointed a member of the committee;
Ms Parke be discharged from the Standing Committee on Health and that, in her place, Mr S. P. Jones be appointed a member of the committee;
Ms Macklin be discharged from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs and that, in her place, Ms T. M. Butler be appointed a member of the committee;
Mr S. P. Jones be discharged from the Standing Committee on Tax and Revenue and that, in his place, Ms T. M. Butler be appointed a member of the committee;
Ms L. M. Chesters be discharged from the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit and that, in her place, Mr Giles be appointed a member of the committee, and
Mr Husic be appointed a supplementary member of the Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications for the purpose of the committee’s inquiry into infrastructure planning and procurement.
Question agreed to.

BILLS

Farm Household Support Bill 2014
Farm Household Support (Consequential and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2014

Second Reading

Cognate debate.

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

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter) (12:11): The Farm Household Support Bill 2014 introduces a new safety payment for struggling farmers in this country. It comes from the
intergovernmental agreement secured by the former Labor government, and on that basis I can report that the opposition will be supporting this bill. I note that the bill has a cost to the budget of $99.4 million over four years and further note that something like $37.6 million of that is allocated as administrative costs to the budget. I invite the minister, when he closes this debate, to provide further detail if he can on that administrative charge. I know some of it relates to ICT resourcing and new systems being put in place to administer this particular program, but it is an extraordinary amount of money as a percentage of the total allocation. I invite him to share the reasons for that with the House.

This is definitely a supportable initiative flowing from the intergovernmental agreement. It is the latest iteration of the safety net we have in place for farming businesses and farming families when they run into financial difficulty, whether it be because of drought or for other reasons. I note that this is not just a drought initiative; it is an initiative that will be available to all farming families, regardless of the cause of the circumstances in which they find themselves. The key to this particular initiative is the means testing of that payment, which would of course be far more generous than the means testing for Newstart allowance, or as some would call it the dole, for other potential recipients. That is of course due to the fact that farmers typically have substantial capital assets on their properties which in most cases would deny them the capacity to be eligible for Newstart allowance—and similarly with income testing. The situation for farmers can be quite different.

Last night, I participated in a discussion at the National Farmers Federation—the topic was drought and the challenges ahead. Senator Richard Colbeck, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, also participated in the debate. Professor Linda Botterill, from the ANU, made the point, as I often have, that farmers in Australia are held in very high regard by the broader community. I see you, Madam Speaker, nodding your head in agreement. As I said to her last night: as I usually put it, farmers are up there with ambos, firemen, policemen and members of the military—unlike politicians, who typically are down there with used car salesmen. And you do not need to do any empirical research to know that, although Professor Botterill was able to back it with some research on this subject last night. So I have no doubt that all Australians will be pleased to hear us debating this particular bill, and to see we are reaching out in acknowledgement of the severity of the current drought and the assistance farming families find themselves in need of. Again, this is not a drought initiative per se, although certainly it has its genesis in the discussion with the states on future drought policy.

As many members of this place would know, we have been struggling with drought policy in this country since Federation, really. Certainly since 1990 there has been a raft of reports on drought policy, each of them voluminous. If you read the latest Productivity Commission report—I think it was from 2008—half of the report reflects on earlier reports on drought. It is a complex and difficult area. I think there is a settled consensus in this country that some sort of safety net is appropriate; I have never seen the matter that is before the House today contested. But there have been many challenges to the various forms of drought policy we have had in the past—whether they are efficient and whether the objectives of drought policy or the programs under that drought policy are consistent with the objectives of the particular drought policy of the day.
Again, this was a matter for debate last night, and I made the point then—and this is always the big challenge with drought policy—that in 2007-08, for example, only 27 per cent of our farmers accessed the old 'exceptional circumstances' regime. That is still a large number, 27 per cent, but it indicates that 'farms ain't farms'. Some farms are more sophisticated than others and bigger than others, and some have made a much greater effort to ready themselves for drought—to drought-proof themselves, if that term is appropriate—and to be well prepared for drought. Others possibly—and often through no fault of their own—have not had the resources to do that and find themselves on marginal land and therefore subject to the vagaries of the weather and certainly more vulnerable to drought than others.

Last night I also made the point that it is quite possibly true that drought policy beyond the safety net will always face that dilemma—that if you assist those who are continually vulnerable to drought you are somehow disadvantaging those who have invested heavily and have innovated and better protected themselves against drought in the future. Those are not my thoughts; they are the thoughts of many who have made submissions to drought policy consideration over many decades. They asked the question, 'Why is it that Joe next door is getting a taxpayer subsidy when I am not getting the subsidy because I have made the effort to drought-proof my farm business?' And it is hard to see any time in the near future when that dilemma will not still be with us. It is a dilemma we should be grappling with in this place on a bipartisan basis, because we cannot be in any way playing politics with this issue, and we need to find innovative ways to help farmers in times of drought. Of course, we cannot necessarily prepare ourselves adequately for some droughts—like one-in-50-year events. In the past we have placed a greater and growing emphasis on drought-proofing rather than on in-drought events, and that is what initiatives like the farm management deposits scheme are all about—providing tax incentives for farmers to put money away in the good times to be used in the bad times, and I suspect that is where much of the focus will be in the future.

There are some academics and others out there who will say that we should not go beyond the farm household support package—that the welfare payment, if I can call it that, is sufficient. I reject that at the same time as I reject some of the old schemes like interest rate subsidies, which I think more often than not encouraged poor behaviour and did nothing to encourage further drought-proofing within farm enterprises. There will be more to be done, and we must do more. But in this place and in the place over the other side we should be working on a bipartisan basis to make sure that we get the right policy—and good policy, not policy that is a compromise between competing political parties seeking to win the hearts and minds of the farming communities, and of course those people in the broader community who are so supportive of farming families.

I hope she will not mind me saying so, but last night Professor Botterill said that politics does play a role here, and sometimes you just cannot secure the best policy—you have to accept the second-best policy because of the nature in which politics does creep into these public policy issues. I rejected that, because she had also mentioned the need to have evidence based policy, and I said, 'I am far more attracted to evidence based policy than I am to second-best policy'. We should never accept second-best policy, and together in this place we should strive to ensure that we have the very best policy, and one that is fiscally responsible but takes into account the special place farmers have in our economy. They are the people who provide
our food security; they are the people who put food on our table. They are the people who export two-thirds of everything they grow and therefore make an enormous contribution to our export earning. But, more particularly than all of that, they are people who are exposed to the vagaries of the weather like no other industry in our broad and very diverse economy.

But it is not just about that. It is about how we have a sustainable farming future, and how this country makes the most of the opportunities presented by the growing demand for food in Asia. We often talk about the Asian food bowl, but it is not a phrase I use. I think it is a misnomer. It implies that somehow Australia will play a substantial role in feeding the growing middle classes of Asia. Of course, that can never be the case. We can never produce the volumes necessary to feed a substantial part of that growing Asian middle class. To provide a mere five per cent of the additional food demand predicted by 2050, Australia would have to double its agricultural output by value.

That is still a lot of food though, which is why I prefer to refer to it as the dining boom. As we move on from the mining boom, we enter the dining boom, because a doubling in our output would still be a boom. A doubling of output would be a welcome achievement in this country, but a tripling of output would be even better, and it is not beyond our capability if we are smart about it. However, a tripling of the output will still not equate to a substantial share of the food demand in Asia. We will still be a small player there, but we would experience a boom here. A tripling in our output would be very nice.

The question then becomes: how do we get there? It is going to be hard. I have acknowledged in here before that I think the member for Hume, in an earlier life, was the key author of a report by ANZ bank and Port Jackson Partners, in which they suggested that to achieve our ambitions out to 2050 we will need something like $500 billion of infrastructure investment in this country. It is axiomatic, and clear to all of us here, that if we are going to get anywhere near that level of investment in this country we will need a great deal of foreign investment. That is why I am so disappointed that the government, so early in its life, has sent all the wrong signals to potential foreign investors by rejecting the ADM takeover of GrainCorp.

The former Labor government was investing heavily in one of the key infrastructure issues in this country, and that is the challenge we face getting our grains to export markets—through our rail lines in particular, and then through our ports. We were investing heavily in some of that rail infrastructure back in New South Wales and Western Australia—the key export state, because Western Australia exports about 90 per cent or more of the grains it grows—and that is something we are not seeing any more under this government.

It is true that fiscal rectitude in government is important. Keeping the budget in balance over the cycle is important. But those opposite, as they sneer, seem to constantly forget that only a few years ago we had the biggest global economic downturn since the great depression. We used that cycle responsively and appropriately. It is all right putting money away in the cookie jar, but if you are under-investing in your critical infrastructure there is no net gain—there is a balance, and I fear this government does not propose to get that balance right. But, we shall see. I may be proven wrong.

Mr Briggs: You will be proven wrong.
Mr FITZGIBBON: Well, I will bet 20 cents I am right. I am not a gambler, so 20 cents will do the job. There is a much bigger issue at hand. The question becomes one of how we can produce twice as much food, or three times as much food, with the same water, land and human resources. How do you do that? Before I attempt to answer that, I will correct what I just asked, and add that it is also a question of how you do it with the same natural resources, when those resources are depleting. There is no doubt that we do face very large challenges in terms of our natural resources, whether it be in relation to salinity, land degradation, or a rapidly changing climate.

This is where it gets very interesting for me, because when I read all of the literature climate change is taken as a given. There does not seem to be any contest out there. There might be arguments about what causes climate change and there might be arguments about what we do about it—whether we should use mitigation or adaptation. But there is no argument that the climate is changing. I told a little story in this place recently about Bruce Tyrrell. I will not repeat it at length, but he pointed out to me that the bees are on his vines much later than usual, and he attributes that to climate change.

So, let us put to one side the debate about whether climate change is induced by human activity, or what we should do to mitigate it. The climate is changing and it is going to continue to change. The science on that is settled, and it is going to be bad news for our agriculture sector. Things are going to get tougher and drier, droughts are going to be more prolonged and will hit us more often. On the other side of the equation we are going to have rain events, and other cyclonic events, that are also going to make life difficult for those who live on our land and produce from it.

This is a serious issue. You cannot run around the country promoting the Asian food bowl concept if you are not serious about action on land resource sustainability. That is why it shocks me that the current government is progressing an agricultural white paper, whose terms of reference make no mention of natural resource sustainability or climate change. They did not have to call it climate change; they could have found another name. I know they do not like admitting that climate change is a problem in this country, but you cannot plan for the country's agricultural future without having a look at the impact of climate change in the future. You cannot plan our output and you cannot even plan infrastructure investment until you know what are the other impacts from changing weather patterns in this country. As I said at the NFF last night—and I know it is not music to the ears of every farmer in this country or every farming representative body—having not been the most enthusiastic supporter of mitigation on this side of the House over my 18 years here, and having not been the most enthusiastic supporter of every initiative taken in the area of climate change, I have always been a signatory to the precautionary principle—that is, if you are in doubt do something about it. Do not wait until it is too late. But that is on the economy more generally.

In this sector it is even more important. It is so clear to me that we will not double output by volume. We will not, certainly, triple output by volume with depleting natural resources—and depleting they are. Again, I have not seen any literature anywhere that contests that idea, and I look forward to hearing members in the other place make a contribution on this bill, because they might like to respond to that and share their thoughts with me.

I am inviting a bipartisan approach to this. Climate change, however you want to interpret it, is a challenge for all of us. I think it is time, like I suggest with the drought policy, we put
the weapons down and work out as a parliament how we are going to deal with these challenges. I remind you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that those who sit opposite have the same greenhouse gas emissions reduction target as the Labor Party, the official opposition. It seems that we only have an argument about how we get there on the mitigation front—but, again, mitigation will only be one issue. Adaptation is going to be of critical importance. There were so many adaptation programs, broadly speaking, that were attached to the former, Labor government's response to climate change which now no longer have a funding source. I challenge, in the friendliest of ways, those sitting opposite to tell me how we are going to take up those opportunities that increasing global food demand is presenting for our country, without dealing with some of those climate issues and some of those adaptation issues that will be necessary.

Likewise, I challenge those opposite to tell me and to tell the House how we are going to get additional wheat to market without a significant initiative taken on the supply chain to our export markets. People talk about our proximity to Asia, and we certainly do have an advantage in terms of our proximity to Asia. But in transport cost terms it is an advantage that can be very quickly eroded and, indeed, is being eroded by our inability to compete on the supply chain to the port rather than after our goods leave port. These are issues that will have to be tackled, not just by this government but, again, by people who are looking for some bipartisanship on these issues by this parliament more generally. We will not agree all of the time and, I am sure, we will often disagree, but Australia has a wonderful opportunity here and we should be grabbing hold of it and doing something about it. An agricultural white paper without any reference to climate change will not get us there; a lack of references to sustaining natural resources will not get us there; and a lazy, myopic approach to what we need in terms of infrastructure in this country will not get us there either.

We have the worst of both worlds here on that front—the government is not going to spend any money on infrastructure and it is not going to let foreign investors in to spend their money on infrastructure. That is very disappointing from my perspective, and I am sure it is disappointing from the perspective of many who live off the land and supply us and our export markets with food.

I want to go back to where I began, and that is on the specifics of drought policy. This is a very important safety net again borne out of the intergovernmental agreement when the Labor Party was in government. But I note it was supported by those who sit opposite and, of course, supported by all states of the day. It was a big thing to get rid of the old exceptional circumstances policies. So many farmers had come to rely on them for such a long time. They were very popular amongst many farmers, but all the literature said they should go. All the states agreed that they should go. But we should not, and cannot, stop here. The safety net is important, but we need to find new and innovative ways, not so much to respond during drought but to ensure all those who run farm businesses have access to incentives that ensure that they are better prepared for drought. The alternative to that, of course, will be to say, 'If you are on marginal land, just get off.' Again, going back to our ambitions in Asia, we cannot afford for anyone to get off. We need all the farmers we can get. We need to do all the farming that we can do. But we will need investment. We will need more policies on adaptation in addition to mitigation. Of course, we will also need more on research and development. No matter what we do on adaptation—and they are the one and the same,
really—and no matter what we do on infrastructure investment, it just will not be possible to very substantially increase output without more innovation.

Australia farmers and the RDCs and others who support them—our universities and our learning institutions—have been at world's best in these initiatives. But we will have to do much better. We have kept our productivity up in the past and we have increased output in the past through both the use of new fertilisers and the use of additional land, but that is plateauing and we need a new phase, a new round, of innovation. There will not be more land; there might be less land. We will rely very, very heavily on innovation. I welcome the government's commitment on that front to its pre-election promise for an additional $100 million in research and development. I understand that promise will be kept. I will be disappointed and the farming community will be disappointed if it is not, but I am confident it will be. I understand it is to be split amongst the RDCs; so, instead of a dollar-for-dollar basis, the government might pay $1.05 or $1.10 to the RDCs. That is a good thing. Dare I say, at the risk of making a commitment in addition to that—I am certainly not doing that stage of the political cycle—we will, sadly, need more to produce the sort of innovation we will need to make the most of those opportunities.

Of course, along the way we will have a debate about genetically modified crops. It is a debate we have to have because, I suspect, we will not realise our ambitions without proper management and taking up of opportunities GM crops present for many reasons, whether it be crop protection, our capacity to lift our output et cetera.

Finally, on that point, the dining boom will come best for us if we do not just chase volumes but, more importantly, chase value. Our limited resources will need to be concentrated on those commodities and agricultural interests which produce the greatest possible return for our country. Our farmers do not need that lecture from me; they know that, as do their peak bodies. In working together in this place I believe that, while not building a capacity to substantially feed Asia, we can position ourselves as a country which produces a lot more food than we do now and which sees a much greater return on our produce than we do now.

But we will have to be very smart about it. We are going to have to be more open to foreign investment. We are going to have to be more willing to invest in infrastructure. We are going to have to be more willing to invest in R&D. And of course we are going to have to be more willing to ensure that those who are on marginal land—those people we want to stay in the sector—have the protection they need when severe drought comes, and that in my view means making sure the appropriate incentives are in place that give them the opportunity to do what so many in the industry are doing: preparing themselves as best they can for future drought events. The opposition supports this bill.

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (12:40): I stand in this place today as the daughter of a farmer and in strong support of the Farm Household Support Bill 2014. I understand the trials and tribulations that go with depending on the land for your living. In fact, I remember when growing up they introduced a board game called Squatter, and my father could never bring himself to play it, because he said it was too realistic. Every round of the board you were faced with a drought, a famine, a fire and a flood; and, if you survived that, usually your stud ram died in the last few squares of the game.
As the drought takes hold, farmers have to watch as their cattle slowly starve and their crops turn to dust. You cannot do anything to help them; there is no water to make the grass grow, and buying food for cattle becomes increasingly expensive. There are many who speak up about the isolated incidents of animal cruelty that happen overseas, yet I question where their voices are now when hundreds of thousands of animals are dying slow, painful deaths in our own country.

Assistance to farmers in times of need is a serious matter. I am proud today to stand on this side of the chamber bringing in legislation that will establish the farm household allowance and give some small hope and assistance to Australia farmers. It is the determination of this government to stand by these Australians in the hard times. We cannot work miracles—there are no magic wands—but we do what we need to offer some small support. This new package will assist drought affected farm businesses and farm families in dealing with the immediate financial pressures and improve their capacity to recover when the current drought breaks. The coalition government is introducing measures that will assist farmers and their families with managing during drought and being in a stronger financial and emotional position to effectively recover when the drought ends.

This package includes measures that offer financial, social and mental health support to our farming communities. The drought assistance package will provide $280 million to hundreds of farmers to access five-year concessional loans at a rate of four per cent up to the value of $1 million. It enables farmers to access a fortnightly farm household allowance which is equivalent to the Newstart allowance even if they have total net farm assets of up to $2.5 million on paper. This package will also provide additional money to the Queensland and New South Wales state governments for water related infrastructure rebates as well as $10 million to help reduce the impacts of wild pigs and other pest animals. Another $10.7 million will be provided to help with the delivery of social support services, including access to mental health support in drought affected areas.

As the Prime Minister has stated, the measures in this bill are largely building on existing programs, but the coalition government is making them more responsive to the particular needs of farmers who are hit by drought. The interim farm household allowance will replace the current transitional farm family payment, and payments to new applicants under the interim farm household allowance started back on 3 March 2014. The coalition recognises that most farmers cannot easily access other forms of assistance compared to others in financial hardship. Having a farmer-specific income support payment ensures that these farmers in hardship can access support when they need it most to put food on the table and pay the bills. The new payment provides a more generous asset test than the previous transitional farm family payment, ensuring more families and farmers can receive support in difficult times. Under the new payment farmers will automatically receive a Health Care Card, and these changes are an interim measure until the farm household allowance commences on 1 July 2014. Funding for this measure is uncapped, meaning it will be available to anyone meeting the eligibility criteria.

We often hear in the media about drought affecting farmers, but rarely do we understand what it actually means. The most immediate consequence of drought is a fall in crop production, due to inadequate and poorly distributed rainfall, and the subsequent loss of income. Farmers are then faced with harvests that are too small to both feed their families and
fulfil their other commitments. Livestock sales act as a buffer in times of hardship, with farmers divesting of these assets to buy food. The first animals to be sold are usually those which make the least contribution to farm production, such as sheep and goats. However, as the period of drought-induced flood deficit lengthens farmers will have to start selling transport and draft animals as well as breeding stock, which constitutes the basis of the household's wealth.

Farming is a very significant part of our economy and will continue to play a crucial role in our economic future, which is why the coalition government is offering this $324 million dollar drought lifeline to our struggling farmers. The future of farming is vital to the future of Australia. I am proud to support these measures and I commend the bill to the House.

Mr BROAD (Mallee) (12:45): Very few times in this House do we see a level of bipartisanship, but this is one issue—standing by people in drought and making sure that they know that the Australian government is listening to them and they are being heard—where this is the case. I thank the member for Hunter for his kind words and also, before me, the member for Ryan for her kind words.

As a farmer myself, one of the things that I used to wonder about was whether anyone in this green chamber in this place called Canberra had an appreciation of what it was to live through a drought. I want to reflect for a little bit as we talk about this issue today about just what it is like. My journey has involved farming through many of the millennium drought years. You think you can make the right choices, and you think you can make wise choices. I know what it is like to have a $90,000 interest bill and to have a wife who is earning $40,000, and because she was earning $40,000 it precluded us from being eligible for drought assistance.

It is pleasing that in this package we have learnt something: we have learnt that you can actually have $80,000 of off-farm income and still receive access to some drought assistance. That is a welcome initiative. It needs to be stated that there are a lot of hardworking partners of farmers who are really battling to put food on the table, and we are really pleased to see that in this initiative they are not precluding themselves from being eligible for farm support.

In a drought, there are times that you always remember. One of those times for us was toward what we thought was going to be the end of a drought. We made a decision that we were going to buy some young stock. It is important at the end of a drought that the stock you have is young because you want to have the best recovery phase. We did; we bought this stock from Tasmania and we brought them over—two days to bring them over on the ship. We had mortgaged ourselves more to afford this. We put the stock on some water—they were quite thirsty; it was hot and it was dry. I went back to my house that night.

That night the stock agent rang up and said, 'I hope that stock arrived safely?' I said, 'Yes, they did'. He said, 'Now you didn't put them on water did you?' And I said, 'Well, they were thirsty, of course I did'. He said, 'No, you know that is the last thing you should do!' As I now know, when they have an empty belly and you put them on some water, they drink the water, they blow up and they die. So here were we at the end of a drought, taking a financial risk only to find out that we may have just blown another $40,000 on stock.

We drove down there that night and there was one dead sheep there and another dead sheep over there. I have to tell you, if you want to see pressure on mental health for a young farmer
with a big mortgage who has just taken a risk and it has blown up in his face, that was one of them. I called up my father to bring over some bales of hay. I called my wife on the UHF to come down and they tried to move those stock around the paddock in order to get them to pass that water by moving. We tried our best and, as irony would have it, a dust storm—I know is sounds like the movies, but it is very real in my mind—rolled in. My wife was at one end of the paddock and I could not physically see her. I had dead sheep. We were trying to move sheep, and we were trying to do the right thing. If you want to see something that brings a person to breaking point, that is drought.

What I want to say to the green chamber is that we have people in this place now who have lived it, and in living it you understand it. We have to have that experience right across the Australian spectrum. We must stand by people through drought. It is easy to have the philosophical argument about whether they are on unviable land? Should we be farming there anyway? Is this corporate welfare? Now is not the time for that argument. The time for that discussion is when we are not in drought, when we can sit back with emotion out of the way and discuss how we create a drought-preparedness model. Something that the Australian parliament, in my opinion, has not done effectively yet, and which is the challenge for us. But the times when people are looking at dry dams, trying to make tough decisions about their own future and looking at their children, knowing that they want to pass on that farm to them—knowing that their father or their mother has worked hard to pass it on—those are the times when we should say, 'We stand by you, we believe in what you do, we recognise your contribution to the Australian economy and we are prepared to release some community funds—some tax payer funds—to ensure you have a viable future.'

This drought package is really about that. We have concessional loans; this is not a gift, this is a loan. It is to buy you time to restructure your business; to buy you time, because we know that this is the land of droughts and flooding rains. As sure as it is dry, it will be wet again. Whenever it is wet, it will be dry again. This is to buy them time for when the good times return—and they will return. They did for me, they will for you.

The one thing that is important when you are talking to people who are in drought is to remind them that it will rain again, you will make money again and there is a future for the Australian agricultural industry. Never, never rob people of hope. When people are going through crisis, the one thing they hold onto is hope. You never rob them of that. This is why we can have the discussion about climate change, but the discussion about drought is recognition of seasonal viability. There is a long-term future for you involved in agriculture; there is a long-term future for the northern cattle industry that is getting hit very hard at the moment. This government understands that there is a long-term future, and we will stand by you.

One of the great things in this package is a recognition of mental health. In a previous life I was president of the Victorian Farmers Federation. I used to say to blokes, 'When was the last time you changed the oil in your tractor?' And they would be able to say, 'Well, actually, it has been three months; it has done 470 hours, it is a 500 hours oil change—it is time to do that'. I then used to ask them when their wedding anniversary was, and they usually did not know that. I also used to ask them when the last time was they went and had a health check-up. Farmers are notorious for not getting health check-ups.
Your mental health is just as important as your physical health. I say to the farmers who are doing it tough: 'Please get up early one morning. Get the jobs done you have to do then go see a doctor. Get your physical health and your mental health checked. You are the most important asset on your farm. You need to look after yourself. The best thing you can do for your family is look after your health. Be a little selfish for a change and look after your mental health.'

When I was talking to farmers in those very lean years I would find that the wives would be carrying the burden. The farmer would be full of bravado but the wife would realise that her husband was under pressure. I do not care what they say; they are under more pressure than they think. It is pleasing to see that we have recognised that as a community now. There is no stigma attached to saying you are under pressure and seeking some help. The $10.7 million in this support package for mental health is a very good thing.

Another great thing I see in this package is some water infrastructure. One of the great revolutions of agriculture that no-one talks about is the poly pipe. Being able to take water to stock enables you to drive productivity through different stocking ratios. It is pleasing that in this package there is continued infrastructure investment in water and some small, on-farm packages to help farmers put poly pipes and tanks in.

Whilst I talked about the young stock on my own farm that I try to get at the end of the drought, I have always had a passion in agriculture to ensure that we have young farmers at the end of the drought because young farmers drive the greatest productivity. Those under 35 are the best productivity drivers for the country. They are the ones we do not want to lose. They usually are the ones who are most in debt. They have taken the financial risk. They have gone out and have grown and endeavoured. They are the ones who lease additional pieces of ground and try something new. We have to make sure we look after them. I hope in this drought package we hit the mark to make sure that young farmers stay there because it is not just for their benefit; this is actually for the country's benefit.

Before the member for Hunter left the chamber he pointed out the dining boom. There are great opportunities in the Asia-Pacific region for the agricultural industry, particularly in mechanised starch products and protein products. When I was in China a number of years ago I talked to a guy who was 30th in charge of China. When you have 1.3 billion people, that is fairly high on the pecking order—Mr Deputy Speaker, even higher than you, relative to the population. I had a discussion with him about the merits of democracy—and I am digressing here—and he told me that if they had democracy they might do what is popular instead of what is right. Maybe he did win the argument in that instance.

In the discussions he made it clear to me that the current consumption of dairy products was 56 grams per child per day. It was the Chinese government's ambition to increase that to 500 grams of dairy product per child per day. In this chamber here people generally have good health. We probably do not have a full appreciation of just what protein in the diet does for the health of children and people. I want to hark back to a little bit of history here. When the Massachusetts colony settled in America, the people who left Britain and first settled in America, within three generations, because they had access to red meat and dairy products, their life expectancy jumped by 20 years. The Chinese know this. They want to give their children protein. We are actually well placed for that. One-third of the world's export milk comes out of Victoria and New Zealand. We are well placed to really hit the Asia-Pacific
region and for a change we actually have a freight advantage over our competitors because of our proximity to the markets.

What I want to drive home is that when we go through a drought we must make sure out the other side we have young farmers, who will drive productivity. That productivity is going to drive our export markets. Even in my small, humble electorate we produce $5.3 billion worth of exports every year. If you multiply that right across Australia, the contribution of the agricultural sector is significant. It is also significant for the secondary workforce in marketing, transport, refining and research and development. We have a good industry to be proud of. I think the $320 million drought package is simply an investment in our future. It is saying to the people in drought: 'We stand by you. We understand what it is like to go through drought. We value you. Your contribution is needed as we continue to grow this great economy.'

Ms O'NEIL (Hotham) (12:58): It is a real privilege to speak today on the Farm Household Support Bill 2014 and the Farm Household Support (Consequential and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2014. We have heard from a lot of members of parliament today who represent rural electorates—and of course they have a special interest in this legislation. But I think it is really important that members of parliament who represent in this place big parts of our cities—and I represent an electorate in Melbourne—come forward and say how supportive we are on behalf of our constituents of putting in place this necessary and important support for farmers who are genuinely struggling in a once-in-a-generation drought in this country.

I want to echo the very good words I heard earlier from our shadow spokesperson on agriculture, Joel Fitzgibbon. He indicated that this is an area where we see strong potential for bipartisanship. Labor has done a lot of good work in the area of drought policy, which I will talk a little bit about. Importantly, today Labor is standing here in partnership with those on the other side to say it is important that we support our farmers, and that is what this legislation is trying to do.

I want to talk to some of the specifics of the legislation. This legislation provides a mechanism to implement the farm household allowance. That is up to three years of income support payments or ancillary benefits for farmers and their partners who can demonstrate financial hardship. The FHA is to commence on 1 July 2014. It is set to replace the exceptional circumstances relief payment, which, as you would know, Mr Deputy Speaker Kelly, was available only to regions declared to be in extreme drought. Importantly, the bill acknowledges that the government has implemented the interim farm household allowance and allows for the transfer of existing support scheme recipients. It makes some other changes to various pieces of legislation that essentially bring those things together.

I will speak in a little more detail on the specifics of this legislation, but I wanted to spend a little bit of time talking about why this issue is so important for Labor. It speaks to our genuine commitment to supporting Australia’s farmers and farming communities, especially in an hour of need such as we have before us today. The member for Hunter talked about the high regard in which farmers are held in the broader community. Speaking from the city perspective, I can echo that. What I hear from many constituents talking to me about economic changes in Australia is that they want to live in a country that continues to make things. That speaks to some of the importance of our manufacturing industry, but it also talks
about primary industries and agriculture. People talk to me about a feeling that comes through of the honesty and integrity of actual production.

We have a very proud history of agriculture in our country. When we look back on our history, we see that this is the foundation stone of Australia's economy. It was where we started to see this exciting spirit of innovation that we have carried right through our economic history in Australia. You can look back to the beginning of the 20th century, to the development of the stump-jump plough, the combine harvester and irrigation. These are all things that have spread and reformed agriculture all over the world. They are things that happened right here in Australia. When people like the member for Chifley and I put our heads together and think about Australia's economic future, what we try to think about is how we can harness that incredible spirit of innovation and bring that to newer sectors on which we will rely more on the future. Innovation has been the watchword.

We have seen an incredible transformation happen to agriculture in this country. Today, farms that would have required hundreds of employees can be run with just a handful of employees. That is great for efficiency, although it does create issues in some of those farming communities. We are well aware of those. The critical point to acknowledge today is that Australia's agricultural industry is one of the most efficient in the entire world, one of the least protected agricultural communities in the entire world. It is really important that Australians understand that this sector has worked through a very difficult transition over the last 20 or 30 years to get to this point. When I talk to the Victorian Farmers Federation and the National Farmers' Federation about reforms like the one that is before us today, what I hear is them saying, 'We have done the hard yards'. They have done the hard yards. The farmers of this country have made some incredibly tough decisions. They have come out the other end with an agriculture sector that we can be incredibly proud of here in our country.

I think there is a consensus that, having done those hard yards, when something really catastrophic happens, particularly like what we see happening in Queensland, city people are happy to support their country cousins with a safety net. The legislation that we are talking about today is putting that into place. When we think about the economic future of our country, it really has yet to seep into the mindset of Australians that agriculture is not an industry of yesterday for us; it is actually an industry of the future. The member for Hunter talked about what he likes to call the 'dining boom'. We know that demand for food in our world is going to double over the next 15 or so years. We cannot double the amount of agricultural land; it is going to mean more efficiency and more productivity on existing agricultural land. Our Australian farmers can really benefit from this. As I said, we have a long history of innovation. We are poised to take this big opportunity in hand.

But what we will need to do is see farmers through some difficult times such as what we are seeing right now, hence the importance of this legislation. We can be part of this very exciting boom that many in this chamber talk about frequently. But we do need to support our farmers to get there, hence this legislation and, of course, Labor's support for it.

I wish to speak a little bit more about the context. I do not know if any the listeners at home or people in the chamber have taken the time to look at the map of Queensland and see the drought affected areas, but it is genuinely terrifying to see, because almost the whole of Queensland has been declared a drought zone. I think what we are seeing now in Queensland is the largest portion of land ever to be declared drought affected. There is just a little thin
strip across the eastern coast of Queensland which is declared not drought affected. Scores of
shires have been added to the list of drought affected areas of Queensland. I think this is a
very specific incident and definitely justifies the legislation before us.

Let me go back to some specifics of the legislation I wanted to touch on. One of the
reasons Labor is so supportive of this is that the bill delivers on what was Labor's
commitment under the Intergovernmental Agreement on National Drought Program Reform.
This was to provide a new nationally agreed approach to drought programs this included time-
limited income support payment for farmers and their partners, based on individual need. We
are very happy to see that come into the legislation. If we were to quibble at the margins on
this one, there is a question here about the timing of the legislation. We have known about
drought conditions in parts of Australia for some months now. There is a little disappointment
that it took so long to get to this point when it was obvious some months ago what was
needed. We would have liked to have seen this bill be introduced much sooner to enable more
timely assistance to struggling farm families who really have been in limbo for quite some
time.

A second point I would make on this one is that it is focused on the short term. What Labor
wants to see is a real, genuine conversation about long-term drought preparations between this
parliament and the farming community in Australia and the bodies that represent them. One
of the things that has been disappointing is to see that in December 2013, the Abbott
government decided to abolish the key COAG vehicle, the Standing Committee on Primary
Industries. That body was established just to consider this question of long-term drought
management. It is something that both sides of the House should be keen to work on. Last
year, the Commonwealth government and the states agreed through that committee to
transition away from the exceptional circumstances program and towards a policy that
promoted greater drought planning and preparedness. Unfortunately, despite some rhetoric
about interest in long-term drought reform from the other side of the House, we have seen a
government that has run for six months now with no real progress on that front. I know the
National Farmers' Federation are talking about things we can do to help our farmers in the
longer term and we are very committed on this side to see that work progress. So we will
continue to hold the government to account and to speak to the other side about how we can
progress long-term drought policy.

I might close with a bit more of a sense of the personal on this one. I am very fortunate to
have married into a family of dairy farmers in northern Victoria. They are a part of a
wonderful dairy community in our little town called Gunbower. Having a city background
and then being exposed to this set of small communities in northern Victoria, I know it is
really hard to understand, unless you experience it day to day, how tough things can be for
farmers in a period of drought. What a lot of Australians who live in our cities do not realise
is that, when a community falls on tough times, it affects not just farming families; everyone
is affected. All small businesses are affected and everyone just goes into a deep struggle.

Something else we probably do not realise, aside from the widespread effect of things like
serious drought, is just how tough things really get for our farmers. Being a part of this big
farming family, I know people genuinely struggle to put food on the table. That is not
hyperbole; it is real. I know that the people of Hotham do not want to live in a country where
we have significant portions of our population who are working doing backbreaking labour
day in, day out and still cannot feed their families. I see this package of legislation as my community standing beside fellow Australians, both in good times and in bad. I am very pleased to join the voices in the parliament who are supporting this package.

Mr McCormack (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance) (13:09): May I at the outset commend the member for Hotham for her generous and heartfelt words and for her support for this very important legislation, the Farm Household Support Bill 2014 and the Farm Household Support (Consequential and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2014. I might add that her predecessor, Simon Crean, was also very interested in regional Australia. I had a lot of time for Simon Crean, as the member for Hotham, for the role he played in regional Australia. I hope that his successor follows in his footsteps by also playing a good productive role in regional Australia. We certainly welcome the points the member for Hotham just made.

However, I must take issue with some of the things said by her colleague Mr Fitzgibbon, the member for Hunter and shadow agriculture minister. He downplayed the ability of Australian farmers to support the Asian century by being a food bowl for the Pacific rim, supplying the growing and burgeoning markets in Asia. By 2050, the world's population will reach nine billion, if not more. Certainly Joel Fitzgibbon mentioned that, but he said he thought that the Asian food bowl was a misnomer. He thought that we would not be able to produce the volume and, in his words, 'double the output' to support the growing protein need of the Asian middle class, but we would if we had the right policy settings.

The coalition are doing everything we can to provide those policy settings. We went to the last election with a plan to develop a strong five-pillar economy of which agriculture was very much one of the most prominent parts. In the last parliament, the 43rd Parliament, we saw an attack on agriculture, an attack on our farmers by the Labor government. We saw the live cattle export fiasco and the slowness to react to the Asian bee incursion, but the very worst was what Labor did, in cahoots with the Greens, with the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

I probably spoke on water more than anyone else in the last parliament. Perhaps I harped on it but it is important. As Samuel McCaughey, the founder of Australian irrigation, certainly the founder of Riverina irrigation, stated, 'Water is a more important and valuable resource than gold.' He recognised the need for water and he pioneered the irrigation channels which now flow throughout the Riverina providing wonderful fresh food and fibre for the growing Asian market and feeding and clothing our own nation. Sir Samuel McCaughey's words should never be forgotten, certainly not in this place where we set policy hopefully to help our farmers and our irrigators. That is what these bills seek to do.

At an international food summit speech, former Prime Minister Julia Gillard raised the question: could Australia become the new food bowl of Asia? She certainly thought the answer was yes. She revealed to the crowd her vision for the country to become a global superpower, to meet the needs of a rapidly emerging Asian population. It would involve building our food processing industries so that they can supply Asia's growing consumer markets and developing research technologies and logistics to strengthen irrigation. I repeat: the former Prime Minister said strengthen irrigation, grow higher yielding crops and improve food safety. Her remarks angered leaders in the agriculture and the food-processing sectors who argued that the federal government's policies did not align with that idea—and they were certainly right.
Victorian Farmers Federation President Peter Tuohey said that the looming carbon tax and the Murray-Darling Basin Authority were expected to have disastrous effects on agricultural people—growers and farmers in Australia—and he was certainly right. He said that the current MDBA plan will remove 30 per cent to 35 per cent of water from irrigators who produce more than 40 per cent of Australia’s food. We know that the carbon tax continues to be a huge impost on our farmers, on the people who grow the food to feed our nation. It certainly rings true today. Julia Gillard was right and her own party should have put in the policy settings to enable what she then perceived to become a reality.

The Murray-Darling Basin Plan was a disaster. Fortunately, New South Wales has just come on board. They held out for a better deal, wisely so, so that they could get the sorts of policy settings from a government that actually cares about irrigation farmers—that is, the coalition—to make sure that New South Wales got the very best deal. The parliamentary secretary, Senator Simon Birmingham, whose portfolio area includes water, came out and allocated an additional 10 gigalitres of environmental flows to the Gwydir Valley for productive use. If there had been bipartisan support—as there is with the Farm Household Support Bill—for irrigation, as Labor claims there now is, why did Senator Birmingham’s idea get attacked in January when he allocated that additional 10 gigalitres of water? It is because Labor says one thing but then does another.

I am very pleased to support this bill today. The Farm Household Support Bill 2014, in conjunction with the Farm Household Support (Consequential and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2014, serves to repeal the existing Farm Support Act 1992. It provides a farm household allowance and transitional farm support payments—the interim FHA—from 3 March 2014 to farming families in need, and there are many of them. The government recognises that the Farm Support Act 1992, which this bill repeals, has been an important mechanism by which successive governments have delivered much-needed assistance to Australian farming families for more than two decades. However, we equally acknowledge that we need to reform the way assistance is delivered to the farming sector if we want farmers to have a viable future. That is what this bill does and that is what Australia needs.

Governments of all persuasions have historically valued Australia’s agricultural sector highly. We accept that the assistance that we give to our farmers is a special type of assistance and is given in recognition of the very unique circumstances in which they live and work. As the famous slogan goes, every family needs a farmer. It is true. Every family, every community and every nation needs a farmer. The agricultural sector delivers significant economic benefits to communities in many parts—I would say all parts—of our country and indeed to the country as a whole. As the Minister for Agriculture pointed out, Australian agricultural exports reached $38 billion last year. That equated to 13.8 per cent of all Australian exports. The gross value add of agricultural production was some $47 billion. In my electorate of Riverina the gross value of agricultural production came to $1.8 billion in 2010, which equated to 16 per cent of the New South Wales total. It is no wonder that people call the Riverina the food bowl of the state. I would say that it is the best food bowl of Australia. Agriculture is our single largest industry, providing 7,900 jobs or 12 per cent of the total employment, which is the highest of all sectors. There are 4.4 million hectares of productive farming in the Riverina region—2.5 million hectares of grazing land, a further 1.5 used for cropping and the rest either in forestry or set aside for conservation. The Riverina has
a diverse variety of agricultural products from wheat to beef, rice, barley, dairy and cotton. The Riverina produces the largest output of potatoes, almonds, oranges and apples of any region in New South Wales. We are also the largest producer of wine grapes and wine in New South Wales. Agriculture is therefore a strategically vital industry not just for the state and for the nation but also for my own electorate. I know that the member for Parkes, who is sitting in the chamber, would certainly agree with the role that the Riverina plays. I know the role that his electorate also plays—it is the biggest electorate in the state and certainly a key player in the agricultural sector. Agriculture is a critical industry in the Riverina and I am committed to supporting it. I know that the member for Parkes is also an avid supporter of everything agriculture based, in both good times and bad.

While we are fortunate that the drought has not yet had the impact in the Riverina that it certainly has had in Mark Coulton’s electorate, there are certainly areas within my electorate that are beginning to feel the effects of drought. Places in the north-west of my electorate—in the Bland Shire, in the Carrathool Shire and in places such as West Wyalong, Ungarie and Rankins Springs—are experiencing drought-like conditions. It is very dry. I am proud to be able to support measures such as this which will directly benefit those in my electorate who need assistance now and may well need it into the future. As the Prime Minister highlighted recently on his national drought tour, Australia is currently in the midst of a severe and prolonged drought—a once-in-a-century drought for some areas. Last year alone, more than 150 temperature records were broken across the country. It was the hottest year on record according to the Bureau of Meteorology’s recent report, State of the climate 2014. Projections from both the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation and the weather bureau suggest we will continue to experience higher temperatures into the future. It would be prudent, given those projections, that we prepare ourselves for a future where we are at higher risk of drought. To that end, I would say we need to be prepared for this—we need to build more dams. I said it in my inaugural speech, I will say it again and I will say it in my valedictory speech—hopefully by then we will have built a few more dams—we certainly need more water storage.

The income support this bill will introduce is part of a comprehensive package of drought assistance measures the Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture announced on 28 February. This bill, and indeed the entire drought assistance package, is the result of significant work by this government to deliver a credible and sustainable support mechanism for farming households and farm businesses facing the impacts of drought. The government’s full suite of policies is appropriately and unashamedly focused on building community resilience and drought preparedness as we move away from the sometimes ad-hoc and crisis-response nature of successive drought policies in years gone by, particularly over the past six years.

The Farm Household Support Bill 2014 provides for up to three years of income support to farmers and their partners affected by drought anywhere in Australia subject to eligibility criteria. Importantly, the income support provided for in this bill is not contingent on a climatic trigger, such as an Exceptional Circumstances drought declaration, which is required to access an Exceptional Circumstances Relief Payment under the existing act. To be eligible for the FHA, applicants must meet a revised means test which provides for a higher asset threshold than normal, taking into account the value of property and other capital which farm
businesses hold but which is not sufficiently illiquid or productive due to the drought. This brings the FHA in line with other forms of social security assistance so that we are supporting individuals and families who are facing similar hardships in earning an income.

Subject to eligibility criteria, and in line with other social security payments, receipt of the FHA confers a range of further ancillary benefits to recipient families including a health care card, a telephone allowance, a remote area allowance, a clean energy supplement—the carbon tax compo—and rent assistance. Receipt of FHA will in some instances also qualify young people, most importantly, to meet the parental means test for youth allowance, which is vital for many of our regional youth who are forced to relocate to pursue higher education and vocational training opportunities. This is a sector of people who were forgotten under Labor. Importantly, it is now a requirement that people undertake a financial improvement agreement and have a farm finance assessment carried out in order to qualify for the FHA. Neither of these processes is intended to be one size fits all, and both are equally important in assisting recipients to determine their own futures.

Implicit in this policy is an acknowledgment that not all farm households will stay involved in farming either during or following periods of drought—that is a reality—but the best thing government can do is to support these households to make the best decision for them in their circumstances. There is provision for a $3,000 payment, known as an activity supplement, to assist people to retrain, seek advice or engage in another approved activity consistent with their financial improvement agreement. Under this approach, there are still obligations placed on allowance recipients. However, more significantly, as a government we want to support recipients in meaningful and practical ways as they transition through this period of uncertainty in their lives.

While the FHA will be demand driven, the cost of this income support measure is expected to be in the order of $99.4 million over three years in both administered and program expenses. Certainly, the farm household allowance is an important component of the government's drought assistance package, but every part of the government's additional $320 million commitment is necessary in assisting communities through periods of drought. Income support alone, no matter how well designed, is not enough to get our communities through the drought. That is why the other measures are so important. These include the $280 million in concessional loans, $12 million for water infrastructure, $10 million for pest management and $10.7 million for social and mental health services. As the member for Mallee pointed out, social and mental health services are so crucial.

I digress for a moment to point out that this Saturday at the Coolamon Sport and Recreation Club there is a family fun day for those people who are suffering the effects of mental pressure. Its purpose is to ease the burden on those people through getting together and talking about all things rural related and having a good time. I certainly would recommend anybody in the vicinity of Coolamon to attend and avail themselves of the opportunities there. In conclusion, I support this bill.

Mr COULTON (Parkes—The Nationals Chief Whip) (13:24): I rise today to speak on the Farm Household Support Bill 2014 and the Farm Household Support (Consequential and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2014. This bill is very close to my heart and it is very important to the people I represent. Indeed, the Parkes electorate has been the epicentre of this current drought. In particular, the three shires along the Queensland border—Bourke, Brewarrina and...
Walgett—and the western end of the Moree Shire and the northern end of the Coonamble Shire have been dry for a very long time. To put it into context, in a normal season the Walgett Shire produces a million tonnes of wheat. Last year, they produced none. The sad reality is that this drought is not over. Indeed, with no subsoil moisture and the window for planting winter crops only a matter of months away, circumstances look incredibly dire for the next 12 months.

I acknowledge the Prime Minister's support for this bill. I also acknowledge the very good work by my colleague the Minister for Agriculture, Barnaby Joyce. While this drought affects a large area, in the overall scheme of things it does not affect a large number of people. However, through the work of Barnaby Joyce, this drought became known right across the nation. I acknowledge the work that he did in bringing the plight of the people I represent onto the national stage. The Prime Minister visited Bourke, stood in a paddock completely denuded of grass and recognised that we were actually witnessing a natural disaster, and I believe that was very beneficial. The fact that he ended up getting 70 millimetres of rain on top of him before he left was an added benefit. While that was a wonderful start for the area around Bourke, I was out there last week and it is still very dry elsewhere—particularly in the Walgett-Collarenebri area, but right across into the slopes back towards Moree and Warialda. So we are in the middle of a very dry time and we have not seen the end of it yet.

This package has several components. Indeed, the interim farm household allowance will give people who are in very desperate circumstances access to funds to pay immediate household bills and put food on the table. So, regardless of whatever else they are battling in their daily lives, they will know that they have money to feed their families and pay essential bills. I also acknowledge that some of the guidelines for receiving that support have been changed in this bill. I very much welcome that. This will allow more people to access these funds, as some of the people who were excluded under the previous system will now be included.

Another component of the package is the concessional loans, with $280 million available to people at a reduced interest rate. That will give farmers access to funds to continue buying fodder for their stock and to pay immediate farm bills. This is not going to cure the ills of the drought and it is certainly not going to completely take the pressure off farmers. As they look forward, with mounting debts and no end in sight, it is, and will remain, a very stressful time. These concessional loans will act as a circuit breaker, allowing farmers to access some funds and maybe offset some of the long-term debt they have with the banks. These concessional loans may allow them to get some interest relief and free up a bit of cash for farm expenditure.

The water related infrastructure fund is also a very crucial part of that. I am rapidly coming to the end of my time to speak now but, hopefully, when I am able to conclude this presentation I will be able to expand on the need for the water infrastructure fund and the fact that water is—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): Order! The debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 43. The debate may be resumed at a later hour. The member will have leave to continue his remarks when the debate is resumed.
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS
Gellibrand Electorate: Rickshaw Run

Mr WATTS (Gellibrand) (13:30): I recently took part in the annual Rickshaw Run, which escorts epicureans through the streets, markets and restaurants of fantastic Footscray in my electorate. The Rickshaw Run is part of the Eat.Drink.Westside program in the Melbourne Food and Wine Festival and gives participants a taste of the flavours of Vietnam in Melbourne's west. The event showcases Footscray as the diverse cultural and culinary mecca which it is today thanks in large part to the many migrants who have made it their home.

The word 'rickshaw' is a transliteration of a Japanese word meaning human powered vehicle. In this way, there was symbolic value to an event where volunteers literally pulled their weight in support of a local community. Special thanks go to those rickshaw pullers from the Footscray Rugby Union Club who pulled even more than their already substantial weight and showed their community spirit by staffing a whole session of the rickshaw pulling. They certainly made pulling a rickshaw look easier than I made it seem to observers!

With the event selling out yet again, the Rickshaw Run showcased fantastic Footscray to hundreds of eager diners from across Melbourne. Thanks must go to the dozens of rickshaw managers, team leaders, marshals, pullers, meeters and greeters—including the effusive Kenny Weir of the Consider The Sauce food blog—musicians, traffic managers and photographers who participated on the day. Thanks also to the Footscray Traders Association and the local traders who plated up a selection of Footscray's finest flavours.

Finally, I extend my deepest appreciation to the event coordinator, Lauren Wambach, the proprietor of the excellent Footscray Food Blog. Lauren is committed to Melbourne's western suburbs and has for some years now run a food blog celebrating the food culture of Footscray. I commend everyone involved in this event.

Camp Cobbold

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (13:31): I rise today in praise of the social development program Camp Cobbold and its many volunteers who provide essential services to families who are geographically disadvantaged in the remote parts of north-west Queensland. Living in Australia's prosperous cities, many are unaware of the hardships occurring in our backyard. Families living in geographical isolation suffer ongoing physical and emotional strain as they work tirelessly to maintain life on the rural properties of Queensland. Over the past five years, Camp Cobbold has aimed to improve the life experiences and outcomes for socially vulnerable members of this community.

Camp Cobbold not only offers these families a week-long oasis away from the plight of the bush, but also assists them to develop a sense of self-worth and affirmation for their daily struggles. Offering a diverse program catered towards varied interest groups from infants to adults, Camp Cobbold connects participants with resources, provides opportunities to try new things and develops skills and knowledge that can be invested back into their community.

Supporting the camp is a dedicated leadership team that provides specialist services such as speech therapy and psychology, and the many volunteers, including a large number from the Toowong Uniting Church in my electorate of Ryan, who help facilitate camp activities. I would also like to acknowledge yet again the $10.7 million in the Farm Household Support Bill that we are debating today in this chamber and the importance of that money.
Chifley Electorate: Students

Mr HUSIC (Chifley) (13:33): One of the most enjoyable aspects of representing an electorate is meeting our future generation of leaders, represented heartily and solidly by the school students who are active in almost 70 schools in the electorate of Chifley. For instance, last week I encountered a great example of leadership while visiting Richard Johnson Anglican School at Oakhurst where I experienced two vigorous rounds of question time with pressing questions delivered by very bright year 5 and year 6 students. And while meeting the year 5 students I had read to me, then handed to me, two typed one-page letters signed by Leanna, Abhishek, Stephanie, Derek, Erica, Josa, Elijah and Jayden, who were writing on behalf of the school and their fellow students. They were calling for the reinstatement of the national solar schools program which ended last year.

In a very precise and well-worded letter, the students called for the installation of solar panels at their school, and they had done their sums, arguing that the panels costing $40,000 would pay for themselves within seven to 10 years. The students made the strong point that restarting the program could help harvest nature's energy rather than us relying on fossil fuels. One of the paragraphs in the letter summed up the situation perfectly. It read: ‘There are lots of benefits of solar panels such as renewable energy, not using fossil fuels, not polluting the environment, and it is good because we will have a better world for future generations.’ Wise words indeed, delivered by students who take their future seriously with a typically unselfish sentiment. I committed to inform the House of their efforts and I also intend to follow this matter up with the relevant minister so that the voice of these students is heard.

Higgins Electorate: Railway Level Crossings

Ms O'DWYER (Higgins) (13:34): I would like to congratulate the Victorian government on their announcement last Thursday that they will invest between $2 billion and $2.5 billion in the Dandenong railway line, including the removal of the level crossings at Koornang Road, Carnegie, and Murrumbeena Road, Murrumbeena, and the preparation for the removal of the crossings at Grange Road, Carnegie, and Poath Road, Murrumbeena.

At peak times, level crossing closures delay all cars, trucks and buses and constrain the rail operator's capacity to increase services along the entire Dandenong railway line. The regular closure of these level crossings is, hands down, the biggest issue that concerns my constituents in Carnegie and Murrumbeena, with delays affecting their key decisions of where to shop, where their children go to school and child care and how to access work.

To highlight the problem I have, firstly, worked with the community in order to present a petition in this place with over 1,151 signatures. I have had a number of meetings with Mr Terry Mulder, the Victorian Minister for Public Transport and Minister for Roads, and Ms Georgie Crozier MLC, member for the Southern Metropolitan region. I have worked with key stakeholders such as the RACV, the Committee for Melbourne and Monash councillor Theo Zographos, regarding the need to invest in the Dandenong railway line.

I would like to thank residents for supporting the petition and for their feedback at my regular mobile office meetings, in my surveys or at my Carnegie community forum. I have also had regular discussions with the Carnegie Traders Association on the issue of level crossings, and their support has been vital in enabling me to represent the community's concerns at every opportunity.
Indi Electorate: Schools

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (13:36): I rise today to acknowledge the wonderful work being done by schools in Indi and to thank the staff, students and parents for all the work they do. Last week I had the pleasure of visiting the Wangaratta District Specialist School. Libby Hosking is the principal and leads a great team of teachers, aides, volunteers, parents, friends and 111 students. This school is an amazing place and I am proud to represent it in this parliament.

One of the highlights of my visit was the warm welcome from the VCAL, Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning, students. A strong VCAL emphasis in the senior school sees many students gaining school based apprenticeships in subjects such as hospitality and agriculture. I thoroughly enjoyed the morning tea of scones and homemade jam, as well as the fresh veggies from the garden—all home grown. These students travel up to two hours a day to attend the school, from Rutherglen in the north to Benalla in the south. Another popular activity in this very special school are the swings donated by the Beechworth Correctional Centre. How wonderful to see these children flying through the air with such obvious enjoyment. Well done to the prisoners who built the swings.

I also want to mention the Wangaratta Primary School and say a big parliamentary hello to the students who visited Parliament House recently. I hope you enjoyed your Canberra experience and I look forward to seeing you soon to present you with your certificates.

Petrie Electorate: Schools

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (13:38): Since the start of the year I have attended several school leadership team inaugurations around my electorate. Schools I have visited include Mango Hill State School, Bracken Ridge State School, Bracken Ridge State High School, North Lakes State College and Scarborough State School, to name a few. It has been a great pleasure to present the school captains and other student leaders with their badges for 2014 and to meet the youths that, in a few years time, may very well be sitting in our seats.

They sang the national anthem with pride and their school songs with such enthusiasm. They spoke with confidence. When I asked some of the younger students at Mango Hill State School what they thought it meant to be a great leader, their answers were intelligent and inspirational. They gave answers like 'A good leader cares for others,' and 'A good leader cares for themselves, cares for the environment and cares for learning.' The school principal at Mango Hill State School, Ms Tracy Egan, and the other staff teach these important principles to the students. This is great to see. Congratulations, Mango Hill State School.

The unity I witnessed in all these schools throughout the Petrie electorate was tremendous. I wish the student leaders and all students at these schools across my electorate all the best for 2014 and for their future as bright and successful members of our society.

National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence

Mr KELVIN THOMSON (Wills) (13:39): Bullying is when people repeatedly and intentionally hurt or cause harm to another person through the use of degrading words or actions which in turn leave the victim feeling worthless and helpless. This Friday, 21 March, is the National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence. The Bully Zero Australia Foundation is marking the day with a major event at the Essendon football club headquarters in Tullamarine, Melbourne, starting at 10 am.
As the foundation's website points out, reports that one in five Australians has been bullied suggest that there is a bullying epidemic. The foundation, established after the suicide of young bullying victims, aims to empower bullying victims, provide support services for victims, ensure that bullies are held accountable for their actions and establish a non-tolerance policy towards bullying in the Australian community.

Every day across Australia thousands of adults, children and young adolescents are suffering the pain and humiliation of being bullied. The internet has made it possible for bullies to hound their targets 24 hours a day, providing no reprieve for the victims. The Bully Zero Australia Foundation suggests that almost 80 per cent of youth suicides are due to mental illness caused by issues related to bullying, especially cyber bullying.

The foundation has given me a supply of these orange lapel pins, and I encourage members and senators to wear them this week in the lead up to the national day of action. I congratulate the Bully Zero Australia Foundation and its Chief Executive Officer, Oscar Yildiz, on this important initiative.

**Macarthur DA Global Swimathon for Cystic Fibrosis**

Mr MATHESON (Macarthur) (13:41): I rise to congratulate the Macarthur community on a fantastic event supporting locals living with cystic fibrosis and their families. The Macarthur DA Global Swimathon for Cystic Fibrosis raised more than $130,000 this year for CF clinics at Sydney's Children's Hospital. The fundraiser includes a launch dinner at the Camden Valley Inn and a swimathon at Wollondilly Leisure Centre. I would like to pay tribute to the organising committee and the sponsors who made this event possible: DA Global, Hennings jewellers, Camden Valley Inn, FDC Construction, Tahmoor Coal Glencore, the Advertiser, Denham Constructions, Byrons Chartered Accountants, Wests Leagues Club, Tahmoor Medical Centre, Illawarra coal, Coca Cola, Framing Beautiful, Hillbrick Bicycles, Macarthur Castles, TRN construction, D. Vitocco Constructions, AGL, Phoenix Transport, Eden day spa, CJD Equipment, Wollondilly Leisure Centre, South West Sydney BEC and C91.3FM.

My hat goes off to Martin and Vanessa Sinclair, from Camden Valley Inn, who donated their venue, food, refreshments and much more to make the launch night such a tremendous success; to Dom and Jo Altobelli from DA Global, who donated $10,000 to be the major sponsor of this year's event and have signed up to do it again next year; and to Team Coshi, who raised more than $18,000 and received the Michael Cotton Memorial Trophy for raising the most money for this year's swim. The team swam in memory of their good friend, Michael, who sadly lost his life to cystic fibrosis last year.

This is a great community event, which grows bigger and better each year. I congratulate all involved. Let us hope that CF one day means 'cure found.'

**Simpson Prize**

Ms BUTLER (Griffith) (13:42): Today I am proud to recognise Ms Emily Leggett, who is a 2014 winner of the prestigious Simpson Prize. Ms Leggett attends Somerville House in Griffith and is a resident of the electorate.

The Simpson Prize is a national competition for year 9 and 10 students, which was entered by 920 students this year. The competition encourages participants to focus on the significance of Anzac Day and to consider what Anzac Day means to them and to the
community. Established in 1998, the Simpson Prize honours John Simpson Kirkpatrick. Simpson is famous for his bravery under fire at Gallipoli in 1915. Ms Leggett attended Parliament House here in Canberra yesterday to receive her prize as one of eight winners nationally. She and her fellow winners will travel to Turkey to visit Istanbul and Gallipoli, where they will mark Anzac Day.

The prize is supported by history teachers associations around the nation. The value of education, including history education, cannot be overstated. That is why a short while ago, I was pleased to go outside Parliament House and meet with teachers and others who have been travelling for weeks in vans across the nation in support of the Gonski reforms. They have been talking to teachers and communities about the importance of education funding.

The Abbott government will provide only $2.8 billion for schools, compared to the $14.65 billion that would have reached our schools under the Gonski plan. I respectfully suggest that the Abbott government reconsider its position and fund schools according to the Gonski plan.

**Herbert Electorate: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder**

Mr EWEN JONES (Herbert) (13:44): Townsville is home to Lavarack Barracks, the largest army base in Australia. We are very proud of having that in our city. We are also a great defence and veterans community.

Having seen 2 RAR, 3 RAR and 1 RAR deploy a lot of people to Afghanistan, we are very aware of the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder. PTSD is a part of our community, and part of our community is a part of the response.

I would like to highlight today the work being done by former 2RAR soldier Ian Bone. 2RAR wear the black ties, they have a black emblem and their motto is 'Second to none'. He has organised a walk for PTSD to raise money for a veterans' martial arts and fitness club, where veterans will also be able to talk one-on-one or in group therapy to get over this issue of PTSD. It is a tunnel through which you go, not a cave in which you dwell. There are 34 walkers who will leave Lavarack Barracks at 4 am this Thursday 20 March to walk 275 kilometres from Townsville to Airlie Beach, which is expected to take three days. One of the 11 veterans who will be walking with them—I will just show you the photo from the *Townsville Sun*—is none other than Paul Warren, who is also missing a leg. Paul suffered terribly from trying to find work after he left; he does suffer from PTSD, and he had a lot of trouble getting— *(Time expired)*

**STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

Blair Electorate: St Thomas' Anglican Church

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (13:45): On Sunday, along with my wife Carolyn, I had the pleasure of joining the parishioners of St Thomas' Anglican Church for their 125th anniversary celebration in North Ipswich. The church was consecrated in 1889 and its first priest was the Reverend John Wheatley. Its mission statement is 'To proclaim the good news of God's reign'. The erection of the church building began in 1887. It was designed by John H. Buckeridge, an English-born Australian architect who built about 60 churches in Queensland. The church was constructed of wood, with an iron roof and timber ceiling, and is located opposite Ipswich North State School. In April 1891 tenders were called to build a new school building for the Sunday school. This building still stands, and it is called 'the big hall'. It was built at a cost of 300 pounds and was completed in nine weeks.
During the early years fundraising activities—from quarterly socials to fancy fairs—were very much a part of the life of the church. In fact, more than 5,000 tickets, at the cost of a shilling each, were sold in an art union draw. In 1969 maintenance of the church building was becoming more difficult because of finances, so cladding with red brick took place on the north, south, east and west walls. A mature persons' fellowship group was started in 1984, and they celebrated their 30th anniversary this year.

The Archbishop of Brisbane, the Most Reverend Phillip Aspinall, officiated at the service on Sunday. The current priest—Father Bill Redman, who has been with the church for 15 years—also assisted. This church has a rich history of service to the Ipswich community, and I congratulate the Anglican community of Ipswich. (Time expired)

**Free Meat Week**

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson—The Nationals Deputy Whip) (13:47): Today I want to make a stand for Aussie farmers, who are once again in the crosshairs of the extreme Greens. Right now we have farming families devastated by circumstances beyond their control—in particular, the cattle men and women of Queensland and New South Wales. These family farms were dealt a savage blow when the previous government—without warning—shut down their live cattle trade, and they are now battling the worst drought in 100 years. On the other hand, we have some alternative lifestylers with green stars in their eyes trying to convert everyone to vegetarianism or veganism with their meat-free week that starts on Monday. If these people make a personal lifestyle choice to not eat meat for whatever reason, I have no problem with that. But to orchestrate a campaign that kicks graziers while they are down is just downright un-Australian.

So in response to their meat-free week, I am launching a counter-campaign called Free Meat Week. I am going to encourage all Australian families to put on a meat-heavy barbecue for their mates—to get some good quality Aussie meat and invite your mates around for some free meat while supporting our mates, our farmers in the bush. In the words of John Cleese: 'If God did not intend for us to eat animals, then why did He make them out of meat?' I encourage all of those who support our Aussie farmers to stand up against the Green machine. Visit www.freemeatweek.com.au, which will be live later this week, and join the campaign for our Aussie farmers.

**Endeavour Research Fellowship**

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (13:48): I rise today to celebrate in the House the awarding of the Endeavour Research Fellowship 2014 to a member of our community, Dr Ferry Jie. Dr Ferry is a graduate of Sydney University and lived in New South Wales while he studied and completed his PhD. He built his home in Tarneit, a growing suburb in my community, in 2010. He is married with four children and is the deputy program director of the master of supply chain and logistics program at RMIT. It was an absolute pleasure to meet with him in my mobile office in Tarneit last week, where I heard about his life and the life of his family and had the opportunity to congratulate him in person.

As I said, his wife and four children live in our fast-growing suburb of Tarneit, and Dr Ferry takes his community very seriously. He is a member of the school council for the Tarneit Senior College his children attend. In that school he has taken on the responsibility of introducing the Premier's Reading Challenge, as well as maths competitions. This is a man...
who takes his commitments very seriously, and what an asset he is to his community. I wish him and his fellow school councillors well in supporting students, staff and parents across the year to deliver a fabulous educational year for Tarneit Senior College.

Campaign Staff

Mr BUCHHOLZ (Wright—Government Whip) (13:50): Whilst during an election campaign it is our face that appears on a billboard, it would be remiss of us as members in this place not to acknowledge the hardworking campaign teams that surround us and ensure that we stay on track during our campaigns. And we must also acknowledge the tireless work they do in our electorates. Whilst we as politicians get a salary, these people work completely for free. They work for a cause because they believe in the political ideologies that we represent. We openly state that we want the carbon tax repealed, we want the mining tax repealed, we no longer want to see wasteful spending in our communities. These are the people who motivate me and each of us—our campaign people.

And it is fair that I acknowledge Rod Venz—none other than our chair—a schoolteacher by trade, traditionally a dairy farmer, and an absolute godsend to me during the last campaign. Deputy chair Alan Fry, secretary Lynne Bell and treasurer Alice Warby—I acknowledge the contribution of each of those people as outgoing members. Our incoming committee chair, Michael Hagan from the Lockyer Valley, a turf grower; deputy chair Matt Enright; secretary Tim Andrews and treasurer Rod Venz—I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to each of them. (Time expired)

Penalty Rates

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (13:51): Today I rise to advise the House of an electronic petition I have been made aware of. More than 750 people have signed a petition started by Vanessa Harmer, a United Voice member and paramedic who is worried about losing her weekend and evening penalty rates due to the government's new individual contracts.

The petition reads:

Tony Abbott: please respect our sacrifice. Please respect the sacrifices of hard-working Australians and withdraw your new laws allowing weekend and evening pay rates to be stripped and traded away. Australians trusted you when you promised that you would not touch our weekend and evening pay rates. These new laws are a betrayal of that commitment.

That is why over 750 people have signed the petition calling on the government to back away from the amendments to the Fair Work Act introduced into this parliament. It is because the government has betrayed the commitment they made to the Australian people prior to the election. United Voice Victoria members like Vanessa are the backbone of our community. They are paramedics, they are cleaners, they are bakers and they are security guards, who all work around the clock to keep our society functioning. They make an extraordinary sacrifice and do an important job, and they deserve to be compensated for these sacrifices.

I call on the government to back away from these radical new laws, which will effect so many. While allowing their employers to trade off penalty rates, and take them away from people, the community knows—just as United Voice Victoria members like Vanessa knows—that this government has once again broken their promise.
Dobell Electorate: Sport

Mrs McNAMARA (Dobell) (13:53): I recently had the privilege of hosting the Dobell Local Sporting Champions awards, to celebrate the achievements of young, local sporting champions. I was impressed with the professionalism and commitment of these outstanding young men and women. The evening offered an opportunity for the Dobell community to acknowledge the achievements of our local sporting champions, including: Lauren Moore, Jordan Moore, Linden Groeneweg, Patrick Carraro, Rhiley Carr, Lain Carr, Jasmine Dillon, Jake Wigham, Ian Lancaster, Kristen Kessler, Jordan Denniss, Zachary Young, Matthew Scarr, and Brendan O'Hagan. Each received $500 towards the cost associated with competing at a national level, while the team award was presented to the Mingara national swim team, who received $3,000.

The costs associated with participating at a national level can be expensive, with some of our recipients travelling as far as Darwin and Western Australia to compete. Dobell is home to a strong sporting community, we have a passion for sport which is evidenced in the many outstanding achievements of these young men and women. We have represented New South Wales in sports, including, swimming, netball, skiing, surf life saving, horse riding, hockey, touch football, BMX riding, softball, and athletics. Thank you to Mingara Recreation Club for supporting the award presentation evening, and thank you to the Australian Sports Commission for making the grants possible. On behalf of the Dobell community, I want to say that we are proud of the achievements of those who have already competed, and we wish those yet to compete all the very best.

Jagajaga Electorate: Women of West Heidelberg

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga) (13:54): Thank you. I rise to congratulate the Women of West Heidelberg in my electorate. On Friday 7 March I had the great pleasure of joining them, and their many supporters, to celebrate International Women's Day. The Women of West Heidelberg was established nearly a decade ago, and it has celebrated and promoted the lives of local women every year. The theme this year was inspiring change, encouraging advocacy for women's advancement everywhere, and challenging the status quo in order to advance women's equality.

Guest speakers were Mary Crooks, the Executive Director of the Victorian Women's Trust, and a wonderful local community member, Sister Francis Baum. Mary spoke about the origins of the Victorian Women's Trust, and the great work that women do in their day-to-day lives. I was honoured to speak with people about the incredibly important role that women play in holding together our local communities. I want to thank: Betty Dodd, Maxine Matthews, Wendy Ogden, Lillian Jelly, Kathy Croft, Margo Carr, Nan Yeomans, Wendy Brain, Betty Willey, and Louise Jaroszczuk, for their hard work and dedication for the Women of West Heidelberg.

Penrith Electorate

Ms SCOTT (Lindsay) (13:56): It gives me great pride to stand today, to talk about a book, *Penrith: The Makings of a City*, which was put together by the Penrith Council over the course of seven years. This is a fabulous book, and it has been an amazing read. As a second edition to *Dharug and Dungaree: The History of Penrith and St. Marys to 1860*, it chronicles Penrith, from its early aboriginal heritage right through to the modern day. It chronicles local
aspirations, regional empowerment, the depression years, the impact of the two world wars, the planning of the city, right through to the arrival of the Olympic spirit.

Today, Penrith is a regional city. It is a hub, and it is part of the fastest growing region in our country. It is still the gateway to the Blue Mountains. Reading through the book, it gave me great enjoyment to find one of my early ancestors was on Mulgoa Council—which got pulled into the Nepean Shire Council early on. What I also found exciting was that the current Mayor, Ross Fowler, had ancestors who were also on that same council.

It is these sorts of wonderful insights that can be found in this book, and I recommend everyone within the Penrith community get on board and buy a copy. The book is available at Penrith City Council. I think as we go forward, with the way that Penrith is due to develop, and considering the growth suburbs around the region, it is important to look to our past to see how we shape our future.

Hunter Electorate: Infrastructure

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter) (13:57): Yesterday in this place, I spoke about the imminent opening of the $1.7 billion Hunter Expressway. I want to talk about it again, because I am excited—and why wouldn't I be excited about the largest land transport infrastructure project in the Hunter's history, fully funded by the Rudd Labor government. It was also fully supported by someone who is present here today, the former Minister for Infrastructure, the member for Grayndler.

This project will be transformational. It will provide a bypass, and traffic relief for Cessnock, Maitland, and many communities in between, ridding us of those heavy transport movements. It will dramatically cut travel times from the Cessnock LGA to Newcastle and from the Upper-Hunter townships to both Newcastle and Sydney. It will bring massive levels of investment to the Hunter region: industrial, commercial, residential, and of course first and foremost—or last and foremost—it will improve road safety in the Hunter. I know the Deputy Prime Minister is coming to open the project on Friday, and we welcome him to the Hunter.

This project will have many fathers, but all those in the Hunter know that this was a Labor initiative, started by Labor, funded by Labor, completed by Labor, and I look forward to the residents of the Hunter region enjoying the benefits of the Hunter Expressway for many years to come. We should remind the Prime Minister, who is present, that infrastructure investment in this country is important.

Brisbane Electorate: Brisbane Riverwalk

Ms GAMBARO (Brisbane) (13:59): I am very pleased to report that work is underway on the Brisbane Riverwalk, which was devastated and washed away in the January 2011 floods. The Riverwalk was an iconic and much loved feature of the Brisbane electorate, connecting the Brisbane suburb of New Farm with the Howard Smith Wharves and the CBD. Earlier in February this year, the first of 30 deck girders were laid for the new Riverwalk. Once they are completed they will feature an 850-metre-long walkway, which has been designed to withstand greater flood events than those experienced in 2011. Unlike its floating predecessor, the new Riverwalk will have an open span, which will allow for the passage of vessels to and from the moorings. It will be a great place for people to view the river, and to rest. Having grown up in New Farm all my life I understand how much the people of New Farm really
enjoyed that walkway, and walking to and from the city. It was an enjoyable pathway for the— (Time expired)

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

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Malaysia: Missing Aircraft

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:00): Madam Speaker, if I may on indulgence, I will just give the House a brief update on the Australian involvement in the search for Malaysia Airlines flight MH370. I wish to inform House that so far the Royal Australian Air Force has conducted two sweeps over the southern search corridor. Another sweep is scheduled to take place later today. Shortly, there will be four Royal Australian Air Force Orion maritime surveillance aircraft active in this search area. A New Zealand Orion and a United States Poseidon aircraft are repositioning to the search and should be available shortly. We owe it to the people on this ill-fated flight, and their families, to do what we can to solve this tragic mystery. They remain in our thoughts and in our prayers at this very difficult time.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Australian Water Holdings

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:01): My question is to the Prime Minister. Does the Prime Minister retain full confidence in the Assistant Treasurer, Senator Sinodinos?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:01): The short answer is 'yes', but, because the Leader of the Opposition has been seeking a statement on this matter, let me satisfy him. It is important to maintain the highest possible standards in our public life. I want to stress to the House and to the Australian community that people should be in public life to serve our country and not themselves. There are important matters being investigated by the New South Wales Independent Commission Against Corruption. In respect of Senator Sinodinos, the matters in question happened prior to his entering parliament and becoming a minister. The senator has been asked to assist an inquiry into a particular company; he is doing so fully and frankly, as you would expect. Senator Sinodinos has served our country long and faithfully as a Treasury official and as the chief of staff to a Prime Minister, as well as a member of this parliament. Quite properly, Senator Sinodinos has kept the Senate updated on this matter, and I refer people to his statements.

Economy

Mr VASTA (Bonner) (14:02): My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister update the House on progress in cutting red and green tape by $1 billion a year? How will the government's deregulation agenda help families and businesses in my electorate of Bonner?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:03): I do thank the member for his question and I wish to assure him and other members of this House that every day the government are purposefully and methodically implementing our plan to build a strong and prosperous economy for a safe and secure Australia. A key element in that plan is cutting
business red-tape costs by at least $1 billion a year every year. This is essential if we are to get our competitiveness and our productivity up.

I regret to say that the World Economic Forum’s global competitiveness ranking shows that Australia has slipped by some six places in the last five years. We are now, regrettably, only 21st in the world on the global competitiveness ranking. When it comes to the burden of government regulation ranking, I regret to say that Australia is 128th in the world. We are behind Romania, but the good news is we are ahead of Angola. On the Economist’s productivity growth ranking, I regret to say that we are second last. We are 51st in the countries ranked, ahead of just Botswana.

So we do need to get our productivity and our competitiveness up, and cutting red tape is an essential part of that. Scrapping the carbon tax will not only remove a $9 billion-a-year handbrake on our economy; it will not only save the households of Bonner $550 a year but save $85 million every year in business red-tape costs. Scrapping the mining tax will not only boost investment but save $11 million every year in business red-tape costs. A one-stop shop when it comes to offshore environmental approvals will not only be good for investment but, according to the Office of Best Practice Regulation, save $120 million a year every year in business red-tape costs.

I can inform the House that tomorrow the government will outline to this House details of the repeal of some 10,000 redundant acts of parliament and regulations. We will scrap all of these in our repeal day—the first repeal day of this government. It will be the biggest bonfire of regulations in our history. I want to thank the parliamentary secretary for his work.

Mr Husic interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Chifley will desist.

Mr ABBOTT: I also wanted to thank the member for Higgins for her work in opposition, which has prepared for the good work that this government is doing now.

Australian Water Holdings

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (14:06): My question is to the Prime Minister. Just six months ago the Prime Minister said:

I want to absolutely scotch any suggestion that there is a cloud over Arthur Sinodinos. There is not. I would not be appointing him to the incoming ministry if I thought there was a cloud over him. Does the Prime Minister stand by this statement?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:06): Yes, I do. I point out to the gentleman opposite that the investigation by the New South Wales commission is relating to a company, not to any particular individual.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There is too much noise on my left.

Economy

Mr SIMPKINS (Cowan) (14:07): My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer update the House on the state of the economy, and what measures is the government taking to improve productivity in my home state of Western Australia?
Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney—The Treasurer) (14:07): I thank the honourable member for his question and I note that, on every indicator that we inherited from the previous government, Australia has been lagging behind many others in the world.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr HOCKEY: Oh, Labor has such a proud record! $123 billion of deficit—that's a great record!

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Treasurer will resume his seat.

Mr Hockey interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Treasurer will resume his seat.

Mr Hockey: I was on a roll!

The SPEAKER: The Treasurer may be on a roll, but so is the noise level in the chamber, and it will kindly desist. Otherwise, some people might find themselves outside. The Treasurer has the call—

Ms Owens interjecting—

The SPEAKER: and the member for Parramatta is warned!

Mr HOCKEY: And, of course, the Labor Party left us over the last five years with economic growth at below trend. What does that mean? It means that 200,000 Australians have lost their jobs.

Mr Swan interjecting—

Mr HOCKEY: I see there is an interjection from the member for Lilley, who has a very nice suntan. He has been spending a lot of time explaining how good he was to the rest of the world.

Dr Chalmers interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Rankin will remove himself under 94(a).

The member for Rankin then left the chamber.

Mr HOCKEY: I am sure that during that explanation, which must have gone on for a lengthy one-week period—

Ms Collins interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Franklin will remove herself under 94(a).

The member for Franklin then left the chamber.

Mr HOCKEY: The member for Lilley, who was the architect of the mining tax, who was the architect of the carbon tax, who oversaw an economy that over five years had four years of below-trend growth—

Mr Watts interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Gellibrand will join the other two and remove himself as well.

The member for Gellibrand then left the chamber.
Mr HOCKEY: The member for Lilley, who said he would deliver a surplus not once, not twice but 321 times, did not deliver one single surplus, but he put a newsletter around his electorate saying he had actually delivered a surplus. I love you, Swannie; come back!

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on two points of order: one under standing order 104(a) and, second, referring to members by their title. The Treasurer is a serial offender.

The SPEAKER: I request the Treasurer refer to members by their proper titles.

Mr HOCKEY: The member for Lilley, former Treasurer—the world's greatest, apparently—

Honourable members interjecting—

Mr HOCKEY: No, no, don't humour him; I'm trying to encourage him! The fact is he was the architect of the mining tax that is now being debated in the Senate.

Ms Owens interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Parramatta will remove herself under 94(a).

The member for Parramatta then left the chamber.

Mr HOCKEY: I say to the member for Lilley, as I say to the Leader of the Opposition: do not go to Perth and tell them how much you hate that mining tax and then come back here and vote against repealing it. I say to the Leader of the Opposition: be consistent from one side of the continent to the other. Come back here, vote against the mining tax and give the people of Western Australia a chance to have more jobs.

Future of Financial Advice

Mr RIPOLL (Oxley) (14:11): My question is to the Prime Minister. Why has the Prime Minister put the Assistant Treasurer in charge of future of financial advice laws which reduce accountability, reduce transparency and reduce consumer protection?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:11): It is the Assistant Treasurer's job to deal with those particular matters. On that point I should say to the member who asked the question that the legislative package which the Assistant Treasurer has before the parliament will actually save the sector and the sector's clients $200 million a year every year.

Employment

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (14:12): My question is to the Prime Minister. Prime Minister, with the mining investment boom coming off the boil and Western Australia's unemployment spiking to a 10-year high, all under a Liberal state government, will the Prime Minister accept Greens Senator Scott Ludlam's challenge for WA Senate candidates to debate their long-term plans for jobs in the economy after the mining boom?

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There is too much noise on my right. There is far too much noise in the chamber. I will not have a wall of noise as we experienced earlier. That question is not in order. Asking for a debate is not part of the standing orders. If you wish to rephrase your question, you may.

Mr BANDT: Thank you. Prime Minister, with the mining investment boom coming off the boil and Western Australia's unemployment spiking to a 10-year high, all under a Liberal
state government, why do the Liberals have no plan for Western Australia's economy after the mining boom comes to an end?

Mr Abbott (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:13): We would like to restart the mining boom by scrapping the mining tax and scrapping the carbon tax. That is our plan for Western Australia. Our plan for Western Australia is to get rid of these anti-Western Australian taxes, the carbon tax and the mining tax. Even the Leader of the Opposition wants to get rid of the mining tax when he is in Western Australia. It is just that he opposes it in Western Australia and supports it here in Canberra, where it counts. I suggest to the member who asked the question—and I am sure he does genuinely want to help the people of Western Australia—that, if he thought about it, if he wanted to help the people of Western Australia in reality as well as just in theory, he would change his position on the mining tax and the carbon tax. He would vote to scrap these anti-Western Australian taxes which are holding back the people of that great state.

Infrastructure

Mr Irons (Swan) (14:14): My question is to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development. Will the minister update the House on road projects in Western Australia, including the Gateway WA project in my electorate of Swan?

Mr Truss (Wide Bay—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (14:15): I thank the member for Swan for asking such an important question about roads in Western Australia. Of course, whereas the other side proposes to fund roads with a mining tax that does not raise any money, we have fully funded and fully budgeted projects that will make a real difference to Western Australia. Included amongst them is a $686 million commitment to the Gateway WA project in Perth. A real welcome to the state of Western Australia which will demonstrate what a significant state this is; a state that is able to contribute mightily to our nation's prosperity.

Mr Albanese: Madam Speaker I rise on a point of order, on relevance. The minister was asked about a new project. This is a project that I turned the sod on, that is under construction and is fully funded.

The Speaker: The member will resume his seat. That is a political debating point, not a point of order. I call the minister.

Mr Truss: The reality is that certainly the minister had some photo opportunities around this project, but he never produced any money. It was going to be funded from the mining tax. The mining tax that could not even build a footpath, let alone the Gateway project in Western Australia! But that is not all: we have a $615 million commitment to the Swan Valley bypass—another project that Labor thought it might fund through the proceeds of its mining tax. But what is more, Labor only promised 50 per cent of the cost of that project. They were determined to short-sheet the Western Australian government and provide only half of the money—

Mr Albanese interjecting—

The Speaker: The member for Grayndler will remove himself under 94(a).

The member for Grayndler then left the chamber.
Mr TRUSS: that was required to get that project underway. We have added $197 million and therefore will guarantee that this project will actually happen.

There is $146 million to the Tonkin Highway, $307 million for the Great Northern Highway, $174 million for the North West Coastal Highway, $59 million for the Leach Highway and $42 million for the Great Eastern Highway, and the list goes on. There are $3.8 billion worth of commitments to Western Australia, all fully funded and fully budgeted.

Labor, of course, also promised a number of projects—plenty of pictures—but over half of the money that they intended to supply for these projects came from the mining tax. A mining tax that has done real damage to the Western Australian economy but not raised real money. Therefore, Labor's promises were empty. They were a vacuum.

Mr Brendan O'Connor interjecting—

The SPEAKER: If the member for Gorton wishes to join the member for Grayndler he will keep it up.

Mr TRUSS: They were essentially picture opportunities, but there was no money there to actually deliver. If the people of Western Australia want these projects delivered, there is only one way for that to happen and that is to make sure that we have a coalition government in Canberra and one that has a majority in the Senate so that these projects can be delivered.

Veterans

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:18): My question is to the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister said to the Legacy clubs of Australia late last year: … it’s not enough simply to care for those who come back; we must also care for the loved ones of those who don’t come back; for the widows and the orphans of those who have paid the highest possible price in the service of our country.

Will the Prime Minister now reverse his callous decision to cut the payments to the children of Australian veterans of war?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:18): I wish to reassure the Legacy organisation, and everyone who has benefited from Legacy, that the Veterans' Children Education Scheme is not ending. The Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act Education and Training Scheme is not ending. These schemes are absolutely supported by the coalition. What is ending—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker I rise on a point of order. A matter of relevance. The question asked about a cut which has been confirmed by the Prime Minister. To simply say that there are other good things that he wants to point to, is not relevant.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The member will resume his seat. The question was wide ranging and dealing with statements made to the RSL. The Prime Minister has the call.

Mr ABBOTT: Every scheme that is directed toward veterans and their families is being supported. Not only that but this government is about to properly index the DFRDB and DFRB pensions—a promise that members opposite made and then reneged on between 2007 and 2013.
What is ending is an income support bonus, because it was funded by the mining tax—which is not raising any money. We were absolutely up-front and clear about this before the election, and what we said we would do before an election we will do after an election. What we are not going to do is what members opposite did repeatedly for six years. That is, try to be generous with money they do not have; try to be compassionate with other people's money—that is not our style. We will do the right thing by everyone in this country, including veterans of this country, and we start doing the right thing by the people of this country by repairing the budget—because, if you do not repair the budget, you cannot repair our economy.

**Carbon Pricing**

Ms PRICE (Durack) (14:21): My question is to Minister for the Environment. I refer to figures released by the Clean Energy Regulator that show that the carbon tax has hit the Karratha Power Station with at least $6.3 million in higher costs in the last financial year. What impact has the carbon tax had on Western Australia, and how will repealing the tax help control unwanted high electricity bills?

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for the Environment) (14:21): The member for Durack is right. The fight goes on to help control unwanted electricity bills. We will not rest until we make an impact on these electricity bills.

*Mr Conroy interjecting—*

The SPEAKER: The member for Charlton will desist!

Mr HUNT: Today is day 106. The filibuster continues in the Senate. Last night Labor senators debated, debated and debated—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

The SPEAKER: There is too much noise on my left!

Mr HUNT: but they did introduce something new. They introduced their own amendments, not to abolish the carbon tax but to change its name. It was a watershed moment. They were going to change the name of the carbon tax, not abolish it. There are those who have said that the Leader of the Opposition might say one thing in Western Australia and another thing here in Canberra about the mining tax. I am sorry to say that that pattern continues with the carbon tax. He is pretending that he and the ALP want to abolish the carbon tax when all they are doing is changing its name. Do not take my word for this.

*Ms Rishworth interjecting—*

The SPEAKER: The member for Kingston will desist or leave the chamber—one or the other.

Mr HUNT: Somebody else spoke in the Senate last night. What was it that Senator Milne, a co-architect of the carbon tax, had to say not about what we were doing but about Labor's own amendments to change the name of the carbon tax? Senator Milne just last night said:

... this ridiculous position where we have the Labor Party pretending that what they want to move for is emissions trading.

In other words, Senator Milne was saying it is a name change. It is nothing more than a name change. Why does that matter to the people of Western Australia? It means that, in the fight
for the Western Australian Senate, it is a fight for the carbon tax, which is what they are arguing for—

Mr Danby: Too convoluted, Napoleon.

The SPEAKER: The member for Melbourne Ports will desist!

Mr HUNT: or against the carbon tax, which is what the people voted for and which is what we are presenting as we go to this Western Australian election. How much is this worth to the people of Western Australia? Western Australia's electricity bill alone is $344 million. That is $191 million for electricity generation, $60 million for Bluewaters, $27 million for Alinta, $17 million for NewGen and $6 million for ATCO. The list is continuous and it is paid for not by members in this House but by Western Australians through their power bills at home, in their small businesses and in their large operations where people are employed. The message is very clear. Do not change the name of the carbon tax. Do what the people of Australia elected this parliament to do.

Mr Champion: God, you're boring.

Mr Perrett interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The members for Wakefield and Moreton will desist!

Mr HUNT: That is, get out of the way and allow the carbon tax to be repealed.

Pensions and Benefits

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:24): My question is to the Prime Minister. Yesterday the President of the New South Wales RSL, Don Rowe, said he was absolutely disgusted with the government's mean-spirited decision that came as news to him. He said:

I think it’s a mean penny-pinching exercise. It is a help to the families and the families need it.

Prime Minister, how can the government defend this callous and unprincipled decision to harm and take away from the children of our veterans, particularly the orphans?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:25): I wish to stress to the Leader of the Opposition that the Veterans' Children Education Scheme stays. The Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act Education and Training Scheme stays. What is not staying is the income support bonus. The income support bonus went to hundreds of thousands of people; it was not something that only went to the children of veterans. It goes to hundreds of thousands of people. We were very up-front before the election that the income support bonus would go. We said this before the election. We are doing it after the election. People expect us to keep our commitments. We were prepared before the election to be up-front about tough decisions—something that gentleman has never been prepared to be.

Mr Shorten: Madam Speaker, is the Prime Minister really saying he cannot find $¼ million for 1,200 orphans?

The SPEAKER: That is not a point of order. I say to the honourable Leader of the Opposition that that is an abuse of the standing orders and will not be tolerated.

Mongolia

Mr GOODENOUGH (Moore) (14:26): My question is to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. I note that the Mongolian foreign minister is visiting Australia to discuss cooperation,
including in the mining sector. How is Australia cooperating with the Mongolian government in promoting economic growth?

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin—Minister for Foreign Affairs) (14:27): I thank the member for Moore for his question. I note his deep interest in economic growth in the state of Western Australia. I will be hosting the Mongolian foreign minister, Bold Luvsanvandan, today. This is the first visit by a Mongolian foreign minister in 20 years. We very much welcome his visit because it is an opportunity for us to discuss the enhanced trade and investment ties between Mongolia and Australia. Indeed, there is an increasing number of Australian mining and resource companies that are investing in Mongolia. In particular I give the example of Rio Tinto, which is now in a joint venture with the Mongolian government in a gold and copper mine. A number of other Australian mining companies are investing. And why wouldn't they? Because, as the foreign minister of Mongolia said today, 'Our new model for foreign direct investment is very much designed for Australian businesses—we're offering stability, openness and lower tax.' That is not something that the Labor government could ever offer Australian businesses. They could not offer them stability, openness or lower taxes. Back in 2009 when the Labor economic dream team of former Prime Minister Rudd and former Treasurer Swan—

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, this was as specific as a question can be.

The SPEAKER: What is the point of order?

Mr Burke: It was about Mongolia. There is no way in the world that this is anything other than the foreign minister taking licence to have a political sledge.

The SPEAKER: The minister will return to the question.

Ms JULIE BISHOP: Back in 2009 when the Labor economic dream team were designing a mining tax—

Mr Dreyfus interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Isaacs will desist!

Ms JULIE BISHOP: to impose on Australian mining companies, Mongolia was rescinding its mining tax. Back in 2009 Mongolia knew that to get foreign investment, to get jobs and to get growth they had to get rid of an unnecessary mining tax. In fact, it was said at the time:

The votes today—

in the Mongolian parliament—

by overwhelming majorities … represent a significant step in Mongolia's commitment to attract foreign investment in the development of the country's mineral resources.

Mr Husic interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Chifley will desist or leave. The choice is his.

Ms JULIE BISHOP: Good on Mongolia! But just months later, 'back to the future' Labor imposes the very mining tax that Mongolia had gotten rid of. So Mongolia understands what the Australian government understands, what internationally competitive economies understand and what the Labor Party refuses to understand, and that is: unnecessary mining taxes are bad for jobs, bad for the Western Australian economy and bad for internationally competitive economies. So I say to the Leader of the Opposition, who has shown his policy
cowardice with his nod, nod, wink, wink in Western Australia, 'We don't oppose the mining tax'—

Mr Champion interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Wakefield is warned!

Ms JULIE BISHOP: But he is such a big-noting hero back here: he is going to stand up to the repeal of the mining tax. The Leader of the Opposition should get with Mongolia, get to the 21st century, and repeal the mining tax.

Veterans

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga) (14:31): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to the Prime Minister's statement to the House yesterday that cutting support to the orphans of war veterans was implementing an election commitment. Precisely where and when did the Prime Minister announce that this specific payment to the widows and orphans of war veterans would be cut under a callous Abbott government?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:31): No specific payment to veterans' families is being cut. This is simply untrue. Now for the—

Mr Burke: If it assists the Prime Minister, there is a specific repeal instrument that deals exactly, exactly with what this question refers to.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The member will resume his seat. The Prime Minister has the call.

Mr ABBOTT: The Veterans' Children Education Scheme continues, the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act Education and Training Scheme continues. Under these schemes, eligible secondary students aged between 16 and 25 and still living at home receive fortnightly non-means tested payments.

Ms Macklin: Madam Speaker, I raise a point of order on relevance.

The SPEAKER: We have already had a relevance.

Ms Macklin: That was not on relevance.

The SPEAKER: In that case, what was it? It was an abuse of standing orders.

Ms MACKLIN: This one is on relevance. I draw the Prime Minister's attention to the question—

The SPEAKER: I am sorry; I took the prior one as relevance. The member will resume her seat. The Prime Minister has the call.

Mr ABBOTT: Under these schemes, eligible secondary students receive non-means tested payments of between $230.70 and $277.40 per fortnight. Students living independently can receive up to $421.40 per fortnight. Payments to orphans are up to $512 per fortnight. In addition to that, a special financial assistance payment of up to $4,000 a year is also payable and up to $2,000 in additional tuition fees can also be funded. We were absolutely up-front that the income support bonus was going.

Opposition members: When?

The SPEAKER: There is too much noise on my left.
Mr Abbott: We were absolutely up-front about the fact that the income support bonus was going. If I may say so, we were quite bold before the election, because we said that we were going to remove a payment that went to 1.2 million people.

Opposition members interjecting—

The Speaker: There is too much noise on my left. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition will desist.

Mr Abbott: Maybe members opposite did not notice but we said that this particular payment that goes to 1.2 million people was going. So we were absolutely—

Mr Champion interjecting—

The Speaker: The member for Wakefield will remove himself under standing order 94(a).

The member for Wakefield then left the chamber—

Mr Abbott: We were absolutely up-front that the income support bonus was going.

Ms Macklin: When did you tell people?

Mr Abbott: Repeatedly. We also told—

Mr Thistlethwaite interjecting—

Mr Abbott: Maybe the Leader for the Opposition was out to lunch, but it was our policy to remove the income support bonus.

The Speaker: The member for Kingsford Smith will desist.

Mr Abbott: What we said we would do before the election we will do after the election.

Ms Macklin: I seek leave to table a statement from the state president of the RSL who did not know about—

The Speaker: I call the Leader of the House. Leave is not granted. The member for Dobell has the call.

Registered Organisations Commission

Mrs McNamara (Dobell) (14:34): My question is to the Minister for Education representing the Minister for Employment. I remind the minister that the former Labor member for Dobell and head of the Health Services Union appears in the Magistrates Court today to make submissions on sentencing for stealing the union dues of health workers. How will the government protect members of a registered organisation like the Health Services Union?

Mr Pyne (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (14:35): I can confirm that the former member for Dobell is in the Magistrates Court today making submissions on sentencing for stealing union members’ funds. He was found guilty of stealing $24,000 from the members of the Health Services Union, amongst the lowest paid workers in Australia. Unfortunately, that was not the only scandal involving the Health Services Union. The former federal president of the Australian Labor Party, Michael Williamson, was also found guilty of defrauding the members of the Health Services Union of their funds.
The government's response has been to introduce a bill to establish a registered organisations commission to protect workers rather than to protect dodgy union bosses. On this side of the House, the coalition is the friend of the workers. We want to protect workers. On that side of the House, the Labor Party wants to protect dodgy union bosses. Can I also add that the opposition's response to this attempt to protect workers has been to block the registered organisations commissions bill in the Senate. Rather than recognising the failures in the past of their policies that led to Craig Thomson stealing money from the Health Services Union workers, or Michael Williamson stealing money, when we made an attempt to fix it, their response has been to block it in the Senate. I should also report to the House that startlingly today the former member for Dobell offered to pay back the $24,000 that he was found guilty of stealing from members of the Health Services Union—

Mr Conroy interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Charlton will remove himself under standing order 94(a).

The member for Charlton then left the chamber.

Mr PYNE: showing up the Leader of the Opposition and the Labor Party because amazingly, while the former member for Dobell, the disgraced Craig Thomson, offered to pay back $24,000 of Health Services Union workers' dues, Labor has refused to pay back the $267,000 that they used to help the former member for Dobell—

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I draw attention to your previous ruling that party administration matters are not appropriate for question time.

The SPEAKER: I am not aware that we are talking about party matters. We are talking about a registered organisation.

Mr PYNE: For the elucidation of the Manager of Opposition Business, the question was about the establishment of the Registered Organisations Commission. In order to explain why it is important, one needs to explain the context, which is that the former member for Dobell has offered to pay back $24,000 today and that $267,000 of Health Services Union members' money was used to elect him in 2007 as a Labor member of parliament.

Mr Mitchell interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for McEwen will either desist or will remove himself.

Mr PYNE: Labor held on to his votes for six years in government. If the Leader of the Opposition had any decency, if he could rise above his background, if he could be Bob Hawke rather than small Bill Shorten, he would be pay back that $267,000 of Health Services Union members' money.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There is no way in the world someone on this side of the chamber would get away with speaking like that at the dispatch box.

The SPEAKER: I think the Manager of Opposition Business has a short memory. The minister has finished.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, in case it was unclear, I am asking the member to withdraw unparliamentary language.

The SPEAKER: Which was?
Mr Burke: No, Madam Speaker. I am not going to play a game where you can make me say in the microphone what should never have been said in the parliament.

Mr Pyne: Madam Speaker, I was referring to his politically small persona rather than to any other persona, but if it assists the House, I withdraw the word 'small'.

Mr Snowdon interjecting—

The SPEAKER: If the member for Lingiari wishes to leave, he is getting a very good hearing. If I can simply say, there is no way in the world that the word 'short' can be unparliamentary. If anybody is saying there are no insults that are traded across this floor, they really have very short memories. So the Manager of Opposition Business is going to tell me about it, is he?

Mr Burke: I am going to raise the point of order under the standing order 86, as I am entitled to.

The SPEAKER: Please do.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, the Leader of the House was not referring to members by their title.

The SPEAKER: Well, he must do that. You are quite right—he must.

Mr Burke: In addition to everything else, he was not doing that and simply to have the ridicule from the chair is unwise.

The SPEAKER: That sounds remarkably like a threat to the chair, to me. Would you like to withdraw that?

Mr Burke: I withdraw.

The SPEAKER: Thank you.

Education Funding

Ms KATE ELLIS (Adelaide) (14:40): My question is to the Prime Minister. Before the election, the government loudly told the Australian people, 'You can vote Liberal or Labor and you will get the same amount of funding for your school.' Why has the Prime Minister broken this promise by denying Australian children $7 billion in federal funding in years five and six of the Gonski reforms?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:41): The question from the shadow minister is simply misleading, it is simply false. We said over the forward estimates period you would get exactly the same amount of money under the coalition or under the Labor Party. We are actually going to do better than that because in the PEFO statement members opposite cut $1.2 billion from schools in Western Australia, in Queensland and in the Northern Territory. I have to say that, to the great benefit of schools in Western Australia, we put the $1.2 billion back. It is interesting that the shadow minister stands up to ask a question today because she was asked a question herself on Sky News by David Lipson—it is not just David Speers who reduces opposition front benchers to bumbling into coherence. She was asked, 'Will you take to the next election a promise to restore funding in years five and six for the Gonski education funding model?’, a very simple question. 'What are you going to do in years five and six?' The shadow minister said, 'Look, what we're focused on is the budget that is in eight weeks time.'
Ms Ryan interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Lalor will remove herself. She is not in her own seat. She is not entitled to interject and has been warned already.

The member for Lalor then left the chamber.

Mr ABBOTT: David Lipson again asked, 'Will Labor commit to take that funding for years five and six to the next election?' This is what the shadow minister said, 'But David, it might not shock you to know this is not our election policy launch.' Really and truly: get real, get real!

Ms Kate Ellis: Madam Speaker, I seek leave to table the document where the government stated, 'You can vote Liberal or Labor—

The SPEAKER: Leave is not granted.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Under the standing orders, members are allowed to ask for a document to be tabled.

The SPEAKER: Correct.

Mr Burke: Repeatedly, the Leader of the House has been given the call to determine that leave, before the parliament has been advised what the document is.

The SPEAKER: Not at all.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I ask you to check the tapes and you will find that the document had not been described at the time the call was withdrawn.

The SPEAKER: I will check.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER (14:44): I announce that we have with us a delegation from Mongolia led by the foreign minister. We do welcome that delegation. We also have with us the Hon. Gary Hardgrave, a former minister in the Howard government and member for Moreton.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Broadband

Dr JENSEN (Tangney) (14:44): My question is to the Minister for Communications. Will the minister update the House on the government's efforts to deliver better telecommunications and broadband services to the people of Western Australia and what challenges must the government deal with to achieve this?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Minister for Communications) (14:45): I thank the honourable member for Tangney for his question. There is no part of Australia where telecommunications are more vital than Western Australia. The vast distances and remote communities demand the most modern and cost-effective telecommunications, and the government is absolutely committed to ensuring that they are available in Western Australia. The biggest challenge we face is the colossal mess left by the Labor Party after six years of catastrophic mismanagement of telecommunications. The National Broadband Network, which was so disappointing right across the country, completely failed in Western Australia. At the time of the election only 4,000 brownfield premises had been passed and only 75 have
been activated. We are getting it back on track and now 32,000 premises have been passed. The interim satellite is so important to Western Australia. The Labor Party told a quarter of a million Australians, many in Western Australia, that they were eligible to access the interim satellite. However, due to shocking mismanagement, NBN Co only bought enough capacity to serve 48,000 people and then it delivered to them a service that was little better than dial-up—again, an epic fail.

The biggest issue in regional Australia is mobile broadband and telecommunications. In the Howard years, $145 million was spent on dealing with mobile black spots. Kevin Rudd was asked what his government was doing about mobile black spots.

Mrs Perrett interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Moreton is warned!

Mr Turnbull: This is what the previous Prime Minister said:

What we are doing, right across the nation, is, region by region, locality by locality, working our way through the black spots as they arise.

That is what he said. He was systematic—he was absolutely systematic, I will give him that—and he was completely even-handed. Every locality was treated the same by the former Prime Minister—everybody got nothing. Not one cent was spent on mobile black spots across Australia. We are spending $100 million and a significant part of that will naturally be spent in Western Australia where there are so many black spots. Of course, when you get to the NBN's own wireless program, which was also a massive underperformer, the previous minister tried to explain away the problems by saying, 'We had not anticipated problems from there being so many tall trees.' Imagine, in regional Australia, tall trees! We must not be too hard on the previous minister, because his comment is understandable. You see, in Conrovia there are no trees—it is a complete wasteland.

Education Funding

Ms Kate Ellis (Adelaide) (14:48): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to the Prime Minister's decision to cut $1 billion from trades training centres and cancel all future centres. Given that the Prime Minister promised no cuts to education before the election, what other cuts is the Prime Minister hiding from voters in Western Australia in its secret Commission of Audit Report?

Mr Abbott (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:48): Labor promised 2,650 trades training centres but delivered less than 10 per cent of them. That is almost as bad as the former Minister for Health's performance when it comes to superclinics. When it comes to incompetence they are all of a piece.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. In the last parliament, the relevance rule was changed to 'direct relevance'. There has to be a meaning given to the insertion of the word 'direct'. The Prime Minister cannot in any way be seen as being directly relevant to the question he was asked.

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister will return to the question.

Mr Abbott: We are putting $1.2 billion back into schools funding that members opposite cut out of it in their pre-election fiscal outlook statement, and we are paying for it by not proceeding with a Labor campaign commitment.
People Trafficking

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson—The Nationals Deputy Whip) (14:50): My question is to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection. Minister, how many days have passed since the last successful people smuggling venture to Australia? How many days passed between successful people smuggling ventures under the previous border protection regime?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (14:50): I thank the member for Dawson for his question and I am sure the people of Western Australia will also be interested in the answer to this question. It has been 89 days since the last successful people smuggling venture. If the Leader of the Opposition does not want to believe me maybe he would like to refer to the ABC website which has kept a log, since the election of this government, on how many boats have arrived and how many successful people smuggling ventures have occurred. They began the log after the election and I table it. I must say, I have not kept them very busy over the last 89 days. If they were performing that task under the previous government it would have been one of the biggest make-work schemes that existed under that government. It has been 89 days without boats, and it is six months since the front bench of this government was sworn in. Under this government, there have been more weeks without boats than with boats. I am sure that those who watched the 7.30 program last night, if they listened to what was said about our Navy, about Australia and about threats and 9-11 and all of that, would be very happy that this government is doing exactly what we said it would do when it comes to our borders.

I was asked about what had happened under previous border protection regimes. It was not always the case that you would have had 89 days without a successful venture. I can tell you that, when Senator Chris Evans was the Minister for Immigration, the longest consecutive period of no boats coming was 61 days—61 days is not bad. It went downhill after that, I have to say. When the now shadow Treasurer was immigration minister, the record was 23 days—not bad, though, according to the standard set by those who followed. Both the member for Gorton and the now Manager of Opposition Business: six days. They could not get through a week without a boat turning up on their watch. They tried everything under their policies except the policies that worked. They did everything but turn boats back where it was safe to do so, which is the policy and practice of this government. They did everything they could do except what actually worked in concert. They did everything possible without doing the things that actually worked.

Mr Marles interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Corio will desist.

Mr MORRISON: They still today in the Senate refuse to support this government's mandate to deny permanent visas to people who come illegally by boat to this country. They still think it is a good idea to honour the people smugglers' promise and give people who have come to this country illegally by boat a permanent visa to this country. No wonder the people of Australia do not know where those opposite stand on these issues. They know where we stand. Those opposite are a complete blank page.

Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (14:53): My question is to the Treasurer. Can the Treasurer confirm that the government did not adhere to longstanding budget conventions in its Mid-
Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook by changing the methodology for forecasting unemployment and the terms of trade?

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney—The Treasurer) (14:53): The methodology for unemployment and the terms of trade was recommended by the Treasury as an improvement on what happened under Labor, and thank God for that. Thank God for that, because Labor managed to get almost every single forecast wrong, including the one about promising to have a surplus.

Ms Julie Bishop: They delivered a surplus—Swanny said they did.

Mr HOCKEY: I know. Maybe I am short-changing them, because they did claim a surplus on numerous occasions, but they never actually delivered one. Of course, the Treasury looked at its own forecasting—

Mr Briggs interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development will desist.

Mr HOCKEY: The fact of the matter is that we want to have the most accurate forecast possible; that is what Treasury recommended, and that is what we accept. The methodology that they have used in MYEFO actually confirms the fact that Labor left the legacy of increasing deficits to $123 billion, of increasing debt to $667 billion and of below-trend growth, and they also left a legacy of higher unemployment: 6¼ per cent. That is their legacy of unemployment. When they came to government they inherited an unemployment rate of around four per cent. When they left government, they handed to us and to the Australian people an unemployment rate approaching 6¼ per cent, with 200,000 more Australians unemployed than when Labor first came into office. Does that cause any embarrassment to you, Bill? Does that cause any embarrassment to the Leader of the Opposition or to the shadow and former Treasurer? There is no sense of shame in Labor.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: He corrected himself.

Mr HOCKEY: There is no sense of shame that they left a slower economy, with bigger deficits, bigger debt and of course rising unemployment. There is no embarrassment, there is no shame, but there should be.

Pearce Electorate: Health

Mr PORTER (Pearce) (14:56): My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, I refer to the Northam GP superclinic in my electorate, which clinic was promised more than three years ago, which clinic is still not open and which clinic is yet to see a single patient. Minister, how have the delays to the Northam clinic affected the delivery of health services in Western Australia?

Mr DUTTON (Dickson—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (14:56): I thank the honourable member for his question. He is a former Treasurer in Western Australia. He was charged with cleaning up Labor's mess. He has come to this parliament as a great champion for the people of Western Australia and he is very passionate about health needs within his electorate.
I have reminded the House before on one or two occasions about what Labor hailed as the greatest success in the Health portfolio under the former minister, who has now turned quickly to her iPhone, playing fishes or birds or something on her iPhone.

Ms Plibersek interjecting—

Mr DUTTON: Really? Is that the priority now?

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker—

The SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat. The minister will return to the question in a more serious manner.

Mr DUTTON: It may have been out of order. The point is that this is a $650 million program—$650 million of Australian taxpayers’ money that was borrowed from overseas because Labor had already run out of money by this stage. They promised 64 superclinics, and we know that not many of them were open by the time they left government in 2013. The Northam GP superclinic is a very interesting study, because they first promised the Northam GP superclinic in July 2010. They repromised it, of course, at the election in 2013. But, do you know, by the time they had left government, it had not even started construction. Not one patient and not one doctor had visited that vacant lot of land, and it was indicative of what was happening in the program elsewhere.

Now, it can be career-limiting to correct your Prime Minister, but, Prime Minister, during question time today you did say that the member for Adelaide, the former education minister, achieved greater things than the former Minister for Health Tanya Plibersek. I can tell you 10 per cent was a success rate—

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I raise a point of order. The minister is clearly veering away from direct relevance now.

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

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, he is the worst of all of them.

The SPEAKER: That is not a point of order. If the Manager of Opposition Business wishes to remain, he will not abuse the standing orders.

Mr DUTTON: It is true that in a moment of overachievement the former minister for education achieved a 10 per cent outcome in her program—well done. But the former health minister achieved 16 per cent, and I can tell you that that was an overachievement in the Rudd-Gillard years but it did not help patients. The problem is that the GP Super Clinics Program in Western Australia, where they promised six clinics, delivered only one. Only one has been delivered.

But there has been a major development. I am very happy to inform and update the House on the major development in Western Australia. After four years, construction has started. Work has commenced on this particular site and under this government we will deliver services. Under Labor, they promised a lot but they delivered nothing.

The SPEAKER: Before I call the honourable member for McMahon, I would remind those members who move from their seats that they are not entitled to interject and, if they do, they will leave the chamber.
Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (15:00): My question is to the Treasurer. I refer the Treasurer to his previous answer and the government's decision to depart from longstanding budget conventions in its Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook by changing the underlying economic assumptions in that document. Can the Treasurer advise the House how much this government decision has added to forecast budget deficits?

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney—The Treasurer) (15:00): The fact of the matter is that the forecasts do obviously have an impact on the budget bottom line.

Mr Perrett: How much, Joe, how much?

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

The member for Moreton then left the chamber.

Mr HOCKEY: He is not the only clown in that circus over there. The fact of the matter is that the forecasts obviously have an impact on the budget bottom line. But the fact is that Labor got every forecast wrong and therefore ended up getting the budget bottom line consistently wrong. You could almost forgive them for getting their numbers wrong, but they are showing no sense of contrition about this.

Mr Bowen: Madam Speaker, on a point of order on direct relevance, it was a very clear question: how much? If the Treasurer does not know, I am prepared for him to seek the advice and report back, if he has forgotten.

The SPEAKER: It is a very wide-ranging question. The Treasurer has the call.

Mr Burke: How can something as specific as that be ruled as a wide-ranging question? How?

The SPEAKER: The question went to the question of the parameters set by Treasury. The Treasurer has the call.

Mr HOCKEY: The forecasts that were presented in MYEFO did not have forecasts presented to us under the alternative scenario presented to Labor. Therefore, you cannot have a number that is the difference, you clown. You cannot work it out, because the numbers that were presented were on the forecasts presented by the Treasury.

I was reading the transcript of the shadow Treasurer in his speech to the Deutsche Bank International Investor Mission, 12 March 2014, when he said:

We believe in returning the budget to surplus over time, and we showed that we have the ability to make the types of decision necessary to bring it about.

You actually did not bring a surplus about. But that is contrary to what the then Treasurer, the member for McMahon, said to Fran Kelly when he said that Labor:

… have returned budget to surplus three years ahead of schedule and ahead of any other major advanced economy—

I am getting questions from someone who not only promised a surplus but claimed to have delivered a surplus when, in fact, nothing of the sort ever happened. Why? Because now we know that the Labor Party's true legacy was to leave us with the burden of the fastest growth in spending of the 17 major IMF economies in the world. That is Labor's legacy. They have left us with the third-highest growth in net debt in the world, and on top of that: $123 billion
of deficits, $667 billion of debt, rising unemployment, falling terms of trade and below trend growth. Labor should be very proud of that legacy—oh, what a feeling!

National Rental Affordability Scheme

Ms GAMBARO (Brisbane) (15:04): My question is to the Minister for Social Services. I refer the minister to a report in the *Australian* on 13 March 2014 that exposed how the National Rental Affordability Scheme has been exploited by developers and has delivered poor outcomes at the expense of low-income workers. How has the government responded to the failure of this scheme?

Mr ANDREWS (Menzies—Minister for Social Services) (15:05): I thank the member for Brisbane for her question and I acknowledge the deep concern that she has for the constituents of her electorate, particularly those constituents who are low-income workers and their families and their concerns for housing in the inner city areas of Brisbane in particular.

Yes, I have seen the report in the *Australian* which the honourable member referred to. This is one of a series of emerging reports about the mismanagement of the previous Labor government of the National Rental Affordability Scheme. Indeed, what this report revealed was that a scheme which is taxpayer subsidised—

Mr Husic interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Chifley has already been warned. If he wishes to leave he will keep it up!

Mr ANDREWS: to provide low-rental dwellings for the low-paid workers of Australia in this particular case has not been used to house low-income workers of Australia but has been used for up to 1,500 international students. So instead of providing for workers, it is providing for the investors and the developers in this case. This is just one of the failings of the National Rental Affordability Scheme. There are many other failings to it, including the fact that the targets for this scheme set by the Labor government have simply not been met.

I was looking around seeing who might be responsible for this mismanagement. Indeed, there are a few candidates, because in six years of Labor government there were not one, not two, not three, not four, not five but six separate ministers responsible for housing. Housing became—

Mr Brendan O'Connor interjecting—

Mr ANDREWS: One of them is making a noise at the moment.

The SPEAKER: The member for Gorton will desist.

Mr ANDREWS: But the reality was that this housing portfolio became a game of musical chairs for the Labor government. But who do you think the prime suspect might be?

Mr Dutton: Does she have form?

Mr ANDREWS: The Minister for Health has an idea. The prime quiet achiever is the previous Minister for Housing, the member for Sydney, because she was warned about this failing and ignored it. The Queensland government was warned about this failing and closed the loophole. The Queensland government closed the loophole, but the member for Sydney, the then Minister for Housing—you rise, obviously, in the opposition the more incompetent you are, because she is now the Deputy Leader of the Opposition—simply neglected to fix
this loophole. So it is not just GP superclinics; it is the National Rental Affordability Scheme as well.

Mr Brendan O'Connor interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Gorton will desist unless he wishes to join his colleagues outside.

Mr ANDREWS: Well, we will fix the mess left by Labor.

Economy

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (15:08): My question is to the Treasurer. I refer the Treasurer to recent comments by respected market journalist Michael Pascoe:

… the evidence keeps mounting that his—
the Treasurer’s—
… (midyear economic and fiscal outlook) forecasts were rubbery.

Does the Treasurer stand by the economic assumptions in the midyear economic forecast which contributed to a $68 billion deterioration in the budget since the election?

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney—The Treasurer) (15:08): Michael Pascoe is so respected that a few days before I put $8.8 billion into the Reserve Bank he wrote that I was going to rip money out of the Reserve Bank. That is how good Michael Pascoe is. So, if you are taking economics lessons from Michael Pascoe, I would suggest you go back to Swanny.

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

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE: ADDITIONAL ANSWERS

Veterans

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (15:09): While I am on my feet, could I add to an answer that I gave earlier today. In an answer earlier today I said that the Leader of the Opposition must have been out to lunch when the coalition said that we would scrap the income support bonus. I did the Leader of the Opposition a disservice. I am sorry about that. I really did do him a disservice, because the Labor Party knew all about our policy to scrap the income support bonus, because they were trying to scare people about it before the election. I am quoting from this document from Australian Labor:

Labor is assisting families and pensioners through measures such as the SchoolKids Bonus, the Income Support Bonus … These are all measures that Tony Abbott … will cut should he be elected.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister has the call. Members will desist.

Mr ABBOTT: Labor’s latest scare campaign is absolutely and utterly fraudulent.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (15:10): Madam Speaker, I seek leave to make a personal explanation.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: We will have some silence. Does the honourable member claim to have been misrepresented?
Ms PLIBERSEK: I do. In question time today, the Prime Minister claimed that I delivered fewer than 10 per cent of announced GP superclinics. This is wrong. When we left office—

Government members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence on my right. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has the call.

Ms PLIBERSEK: When we left office nearly 80 per cent of announced GP superclinics were open, delivering early services or under construction.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has the call, explaining where she has been misrepresented.

Ms PLIBERSEK: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I seek leave to make a further personal explanation.

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

Ms PLIBERSEK: Yes. The Minister for Social Services said that the NRAS properties are not being used to house low-income workers. In fact, that is completely wrong.

Mr Pyne: Nobody said that.

Ms PLIBERSEK: You did say that. Well, he did say that.

Mr Pyne: Madam Speaker, on a point of order: for a personal explanation to be within the standing orders, it needs to accurately reflect what was said. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition is entitled to get the transcript of question time and then quote that if she believes it is false, but she is not allowed to assert that something was said that was not said, and that is not what the Minister for Social Services said.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, on the point of order: if ministers feel that something has been stated that they believe is inaccurate, this exact form of the House is available to them too.

The SPEAKER: The requirement for personal explanations is to bring it to the attention of the House at the earliest possible time. If there is doubt about what was said, perhaps it is better to check and then have the opportunity to come back to the House, and that will be the earliest time.

Ms PLIBERSEK: Madam Speaker, I did listen quite carefully to the words of the minister, and he did say that the NRAS properties are not being used to house low-income workers as intended. In fact, 14,000 new homes have been built, 24,000 are in the pipeline and they are housing low-income workers, sole parents, families, Aboriginal Australians, community housing—

The SPEAKER: We are now getting into argument. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition will resume her seat. This whole area of personal explanations is getting a little untidy. If there is a concern about what has been said where it is inaccurate then I think it is better to wait for the transcript and then to refute it in a neat way. If the minister feels that he has been misquoted by the member seeking a personal explanation then we can have that done as well.
But we do not need tit for tat every question time. So I think it is better if we get the transcript.

**DOCUMENTS**

**Presentation**

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (15:14): Documents are tabled in accordance with the list circulated to honourable members earlier today. Full details of the documents will be recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings*.

**MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

**Education Funding**

The SPEAKER (15:14): I have received a letter from the honourable member for Adelaide proposing that a definite matter of public importance be submitted to the House for discussion, namely:

The Government’s failure to properly invest in Australian skills, training and education, and its impact on Australian jobs.

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

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

Ms KATE ELLIS (Adelaide) (15:14): It is with great disappointment that I rise today to outline to the House the gross failure of this government to properly invest in Australian skills, training and education and to outline the impact that that is already having on jobs across our nation.

I ask: what does it say about a government, when presented with a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to make every school a great school, that they simply turn away? What does it say when instead of stopping state education cuts, which are slashing the quality of education across Australia, and reforming our schools, the government choose to instead to turn a blind eye? And what does it say, when they are looking at rising youth unemployment, that this government decide that all they can do is cut the job programs that do exist for young Australians? Faced with mass job losses and economic changes, they do absolutely nothing to upskill displaced workers. Faced with declining international rankings, they have a minister who is more interested in schoolyard politics than he is in improving our schools. They have the opportunity to make sure that no child is left behind, yet they choose to revert to a broken funding system and a lottery of orders. They are prepared to leave every student and every school worse off. They say one thing and then they do another.

I will tell you exactly what all of those facts say about this government: those facts say that this government is out of touch. It does not understand what is important to Australians—a good job and a secure future. It says that it is lazy, it is too busy with petty politics to follow through on its promise to deliver once-in-a-generation reforms to every Australian school. It says that this is a small-minded government, a government that wants to drag our nation back instead of building the prosperous future that all Australians deserve. It says that it is heartless, that it will rip away the opportunity that education and skills training can deliver to every Australian—particularly to those Australians who might otherwise fall between the cracks.
But most significantly it says that this government are just nasty and deceptive. They made incredibly clear promises to the Australian people before the election, promises that they have wriggled out of, promises that they have thrown away—a betrayal of tens of thousands of students, of parents, of teachers, of educators. It shows that this government just do not get it, and they do not get it because they do not care. By failing to keep these promises and by walking away from Labor's Gonski reforms this government are setting their sights on a smaller future for Australia. They are setting their sights on a system which is not only impacting on jobs right now—we will be looking at the example in Western Australia today in just a moment—but will also impact on jobs for years and years to come. That is the real tragedy of what this government are doing when it comes to education and training.

Let us just refresh our memories: before the election there was a very different picture that was being painted by the now Prime Minister and the now education minister. Before the election they said:

So you can vote Liberal or Labor and you'll get exactly the same amount of funding for your school …

That is what was said on 29 August: 'exactly the same amount of funding for your school'. But what did we hear from the Prime Minister in question time today? 'You've got to look at the small print. You need to look at the asterisk. We mean exactly the same amount just for a few years, just from prep til year 3, but beyond that we don't really mind what's going on in the schools.'

Before the election the now Prime Minister said:

As far as I am concerned, as far as Christopher Pyne is concerned, as far as the Coalition is concerned, we want to end the uncertainty by guaranteeing that no school will be worse off …

Well, isn't that great, before the election guaranteeing no school will be worse off—except that since being elected they have refused to repeat this guarantee. They will not stand up in this parliament and guarantee that no school will be worse off because they know that it is utterly false.

They know that the actions of this government in six months have already ensured that every school is worse off—but that is not what they were saying at the polling booth, this very mean and sneaky government. On 29 August the now education minister said:

We have agreed to the government's … school funding model …

That's funny, isn't it? I recall that after the election he stood in this parliament and said: 'Oh no, we're coming up with a whole new model. That's all been thrown aside; that's all been discarded.' It shows that this government have broken every single promise when it comes to education. They have broken every single promise that they made to teachers, to schools, to parents and to students across Australia. They were proud—there are members sitting opposite today shaking their heads at me who were proud to stand at polling booths saying, 'You will get the same amount of funding if you vote Liberal or Labor'. Well, we have seen those signs but unfortunately we have also seen that this government have torn them up already.

What an absolutely cruel joke this has become: whereas the now Prime Minister used to say, 'I am on a unity ticket with Kevin Rudd when it comes to education', what we can actually see now is that he is on a unity ticket with Colin Barnett when it comes to education, and it is a unity ticket which is aimed at nothing more than slashing school budgets and pulling money out of school services.
Let us have a look at what they promised compared to what they are giving. A unity ticket, where Labor's reforms would have delivered $14.65 billion in additional funding in our schools; just $2.8 billion under this government. Six years of guaranteed funding under Labor—which we are absolutely committed to, which we have always been committed to and which we will fight to ensure that the Australian public gets; just four years under this government. A fraction of the money and none of the reforms.

And there is another side to all of this: not only are they not meeting their own funding commitments, but they are also letting the states off the hook. While those opposite would have us think that it has got nothing to do with Canberra, nothing to do with the Prime Minister and nothing to do with the education minister when states like Western Australia rip money out of their schooling systems, the truth is actually very different. Under the model that they told the Australian people they had signed up to, there were some very clear conditions. There were conditions of three per cent indexation each and every year. There were conditions that a co-contribution of $1 would be made by the states for every $2 that was invested by the federal government. But, importantly, there was another very simple condition: that, if you were to receive Commonwealth funding for your schools, state governments would have to guarantee that they would stop the cuts.

But what have we seen in Western Australia? In Western Australia we have seen over $183 million ripped out of their schools by their state government, by Colin Barnett, with the approval of Prime Minister Abbott and education minister Christopher Pyne. What we have seen in Western Australia is 342 fewer teachers at a time when the entire Western Australian and Australian public were told we were going to build up our education and our school system—342 teachers ripped from the system. We have seen 500 fewer support staff across the education system. This is what we have seen already, in just six months, because those opposite misled the Australian public and are now are too weak to stand up, meet their commitments and fight for education funding and the best future for all of our students.

But we know it is not just about schools. At a time when, on the one hand, over in Western Australia and elsewhere around the country, this government is out saying: 'We have a skills shortage; we have to increase the number of 457 visa holders—we simply have to, in order to meet the requirements for skills in our community,' what are they doing on the other hand? They are cutting the trade training centres—ripping out a billion dollars. They will not build a single additional trade training centre. So, on the one hand, we have skill shortages and, on the other hand, we are cutting a billion dollars so that we cannot train any Australian young people to fill those shortages. Shame on the government!

At a time of rising youth unemployment, we have a program: the Youth Connections program. It is operating in communities right across the nation. It is out there, specifically geared towards disadvantaged youths who are in danger of becoming unemployed in their youth. What is the government doing, at a time when they are watching youth unemployment increasing? They are threatening the funding and refusing to even acknowledge that this program should continue post the budget.

I tell you: we will all be watching—everybody in those communities will be watching—because we can see that this government has massively failed when it comes to the education system, when it comes to building the trade training centres and when it comes to the youth
programs which are required to make sure that we are creating jobs right now and that our population is trained and skilled for the jobs of the future. The other thing we have seen—

Government members interjecting—

Ms KATE ELLIS: Those opposite ask me about job losses. Well, we have seen the job losses announced under this government. But what are you doing to retrain those workers?

Government members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There is too much noise on my right.

Ms KATE ELLIS: Go out to Holden. Go to Qantas. Go to Alcoa. Tell them one plan you are putting in place for those workers. (Time expired)

Ms LEY (Farrer—Assistant Minister for Education) (15:25): I am pleased to respond on the matter of public importance raised by the member for Adelaide. In 10 minutes of invective, nastiness, political jargon and rhetoric, the member for Adelaide has not brought to this parliament the real world experience of the trades and of training; she has not mentioned a single apprentice; she has not talked about a single RTO or the work that TAFE does; she has not understood. It is simply pure political rhetoric.

Mr Dreyfus interjecting—

Ms Kate Ellis interjecting—

Ms LEY: I do want to address this matter of public importance in a sensible manner, in a way that looks at the issues that we are all facing in the country today, but I will start with the trade training centres because this is what is being thrown across the table at me.

In 2007, Labor committed to $2.5 billion for trade training centres in every single one of Australia's 2,650 secondary schools. Who can forget Kevin Rudd standing at this dispatch box saying: 'Every single school will have a trade training centre. There will be trade training, redeveloped, redefined, remade and remodelled in every single school in Australia.'

Ms Macklin interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Jagajaga is not sitting in her seat and may not interject.

Ms LEY: Only $1.4 billion of that funding has been allocated for 511 trade training centres servicing 1,297 schools. So one of the problems with the whole system was not just that it did not work but also that it was so patchwork. And the activities that take place inside these trade training centres today often are not proper vocational educational training; are very rarely linked to industry; do not produce school based apprentices as often as they should, even though admittedly they do at times; and are insufficiently embedded in the training and industry work that is in the school community where these trade training centres exist.

So what Labor did was to borrow money under the stimulus funds, build infrastructure and not care about what happened inside these buildings. Once the trade training centre is there, the issue is: who maintains the infrastructure? Who makes sure that the training is modern and relevant to industry? And who develops the pathway for the young person from school into work?

So we did in fact honour the last round of Labor's trade training centres. We did in fact build 136 new centres. We have committed to the last round of 136 new centres to be known as Trades Skills Centres. The important difference here is that our Trades Skills Centres will
forge closer links with business and industry as the Australian government strengthens its focus on vocational education and training in schools.

We saw a national partnership under Labor. Who can forget Julia Gillard and the April 2012 announcement of over $7 billion in vocational education to support the National Training Entitlement across Australia, signed up to by every single state and territory—except the sign-ups did not happen? The entitlement system is in disarray. It is patchwork across every single state; nobody has consistency; and courses are being pulled left, right and centre.

The shadow minister should be aware that, in her own home state of South Australia, childcare has now been pulled from the national entitlement system in South Australia, which means that a profession so much in demand and often emphasised by the member for Adelaide cannot be achieved at certificate III level under Labor's national entitlement system.

I want to briefly talk about Labor's record on employment, because they mentioned that many times. There are 200,000 more unemployed Australians than there were in November 2007 when the coalition was last in government. The number of Australians unemployed went from 492,000 in November 2007 to 694,000 in September 2013—an increase of close on 200,000 Australians unemployed.

From 2008 an average of 67 Australian manufacturing jobs were lost every single day under Labor. A manufacturing job was lost every 19 minutes while Labor was in government. In May 2011 Labor Treasurer Wayne Swan promised to create 500,000 new jobs over the following two years. Labor missed their own target by well over 200,000 jobs. The Labor legacy is 700,000 unemployed Australians, the highest number in 15 years. Under Labor the number of long-term unemployed nearly doubled. It went from 69,800 in November 2007 to 135,400 in September 2013.

All of us in this place are right to be concerned about youth unemployment, but the most critical time in a young person's life is the pathway from school to trades training, an apprenticeship or higher education. The 18 months between leaving school and possibly finding work are the most risky for a young person. We know that that person is at the highest risk of falling out of employment and a pathway into a meaningful life and a real place in the real economy. We should all be absolutely concerned about this. To this end, I convened a roundtable on vocational education in schools with state and territory senior officials in Melbourne a few weeks ago. There was no politics in the room and nor should there have been. What was really encouraging was the level of goodwill; the level of participation that states, regardless of their political persuasion, wanted to contribute; and the understanding that we do need to get a national system.

We have got a national qualifications framework that we all operate to, so we should have a national system of vocational training in schools. When you look at the fact that 40 per cent of our students are doing vocational education in schools but only nine per cent are actually in school based apprenticeships, we realise that that figure absolutely has to increase. While we recognise that there is a learning-for-life component in vocational education and it is good for students to do that, there very much needs to be an emphasis on a school based apprenticeship—the employer needs to find the student and vice versa and the job pathway needs to be articulated.
What employers tell us is that because Labor never invited industry to sit at the table with them, whether it be in the schools—

Ms Bird: Rubbish!

Ms LEY: Whether it be in the schools or in the apprenticeship centres, Labor never invited industry to sit at the table. The problem was that the graduates that came out of the training systems under Labor were not sufficiently linked to industry and were not useful for industry. So what we have said—and the entire focus of our policy in this area around apprenticeships and training, including vocational education in schools—is make sure that industry has that buy-in and that industry participates. In some school communities around Australia you do see that and it is done extremely well. You see school principals achieving in spite of the obstacles put in the way. The most important thing, again, is that the interests of the young person are front and centre of those considerations.

So when it comes to youth unemployment we are determined to do something. We do recognise that, with the streaming of students into two different pathways, we unfortunately see too often the recognition that, 'Oh well, if you are not going to university, you are going to the trades and training,' almost as if it is a secondary pathway—and that has got to stop. We have to recognise that it is an equally valid pathway for a student to take a job in trades training or an apprenticeship or go on to higher education. When you look at the figures for the first job for students that come out of universities and you see that huge numbers actually do not leave their university degree and find employment, you realise that, perhaps if they had considered something that maybe they were more suited to in the first place, they would actually have that job. It is not an either/or proposition, Deputy Speaker Scott, as you well know with your rural electorate and as I do in mine. Many people combine a vocational pathway and a higher education pathway over the course of their lifetime. What matters is that people participate in the real economy and that they find the right start and it leads wherever it may.

This MPI is not reasonable. It makes no sense for the opposition to bring this to the parliament today. The failures that the member for Adelaide points to are Labor failures. We are absolutely committed to a skills training and education system that links to a job. We are not interested in distinguishing between students who are good at higher education and not so good at training. We are absolutely committed to making sure that each and every young person has a pathway and a future.

Ms BIRD (Cunningham) (15:34): I would like to give points for effort, but I am not going to. One of the most significant issues facing the restructuring of our economy is the matching of skills to the emerging demands and the transformations of the economy. We have two senior ministers who are supposed to have direct responsibility for skills and education. Neither of them can even be bothered to be here. That is the reality of the significance that this government gives to the skills development that is needed in this nation to face the challenges that so many of our communities across the country, but in particular in Western Australia, face.

Previously as a member of some of the standing committees of this parliament when those opposite were last in government, the former Treasurer, Mr Costello, asked the committee to travel around the country and look at the pressures that would be on the economy post the mining boom. One of those that came out loud and clear from all of the visits that we did to

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Western Australian towns and into Perth itself was the lack of match between skills and emerging demands for training and where the new economy would create opportunities. It is a critically important factor.

The former speaker, the minister, made the point that it is important to have industry on board. Throughout the Labor government, industry—ACCI, the AiG—consistently stood side by side with the government to give priority to skills development in this nation. We put in place the Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency; we put in place the Australian skills quality assurance framework to make sure that training was not available but was also quality and that it matched the needs of industry. We put in place a program, as the shadow minister outlined, through our school system. We were building trades training centres in schools and we were linking that to the pathways through things like the—

Mr Nikolic: Small numbers.

Ms Collins: It is a 10-year program!

Ms BIRD: It is not small numbers! I challenge members opposite. I cannot believe that the minister had actually ever visited a trades training centre. Look at them across electorates. They were being built. Schools were keen to have them. They were great success stories and local businesses were working with them. And if those opposite are seriously complaining that there were not enough of them, take it up with your own minister because you have just cut a billion dollars out of the program. Every school that was waiting to get on to that program has now—

Mr Nikolic: They have been waiting six years.

Ms BIRD: You claim that under us they have been waiting six years? They are never getting them under you. They are not getting them at all. So for all of the talk, all of the concern and all of the crocodile tears about youth unemployment and creating pathways for young people, you are cutting the program that provided those opportunities for schools across the entire region.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): Order! The member for Cunningham might resist using the word 'you' because I will not have any authority on the subject.

Ms BIRD: I understand. I would never cast that aspersion on you. The reality is, for those on the other side, there actually is a real skills challenge facing this nation. When we look at what those in government said in their policy papers leading up to the election about skills, it is deafening in its silence. You took one policy to the election: to provide some income loan support to apprentices. That was it; that was your whole skills plan. So it would not surprise you that we are extraordinarily anxious about what cuts to this sector are hiding in those 900 pages of the Commission of Audit. I know some of the junior ministers have not seen it, and I am only presuming that the ministers in the cabinet who are directly relevant for this area have seen it. I would say go and grab them and have a quick talk to them.

In government we put in place programs—working in co-investment models with business—like the National Workforce Development Fund and the Workplace English Language and Literacy Program to raise the skills of existing workers, to match the needs of emerging industries and to make sure that we lifted the productivity of our population. Those programs had better not be on the table for cuts. Those skills that industries need in areas where we are seeing the transformation of industry—for example, in the mining industry in
WA—and those skills in affected industries moving to a production model and relying on a new set of skills for workers along the supply chain had better not be on the cutting board under the Commission of Audit. *(Time expired)*

**Dr HENDY** (Eden-Monaro) (15:39): I must admit, with no disrespect to the speaker who just finished and who I think talked very coherently and measuredly, that the gall of the Labor Party to put this MPI forward beggars belief. It never surprises me what they are up to. Look at this matter of public importance: the government's failure to properly invest in Australian skills training and education and its impact on Australian jobs. I did not hear a fact or a figure from the other side. I heard a lot of empty rhetoric. I am going to give you a few facts and figures.

You were talking about the impact of unemployment on Australians jobs. What happened over the last six years? When you guys came into office, the unemployment rate was four per cent. It is now six per cent. The fact is that Treasury forecast that at the end of your term it would go to 6.25 per cent—that is a 200,000 jobs net increase over what it was. Two hundred thousand jobs have been lost under Labor over the last six years. That is your record. The Leader of the Opposition was an employment minister in the last government. During his watch, the unemployment rate, the number of jobs that were lost, went up 80,000. That is his record.

You guys talked about manufacturing. How many jobs were lost in manufacturing under your watch? A discrete 129,000 jobs were lost under you. So the fact is that you guys have decimated the small business community and the manufacturing community. In small business, it is lucky that some jobs were created in other parts of the economy because 412,000 jobs were lost in small business under the Labor government in six years. That is shameful. Small business, which is the engine of our economy, has been hit. Rather than the 53 per cent of the employed workforce it was employing in 2007 when you got in, it is now 43 per cent—a 10 per cent drop. There are 3,000 fewer small businesses employing people. That is the employment record of you guys. It is just disgraceful when you consider a couple more statistics.

The number of long-term unemployed—that is, unemployed for more than 52 weeks or a year—nearly doubled and went from 69,800 in November 2007 to 135,400 in September 2013. That happened under you guys. The youth unemployment rate—that is, persons aged 15 to 19 and looking for full-time work—went from 19.6 per cent in November 2007 to 27.3 per cent in September 2013. That is an extraordinary result.

You should be ashamed to put a motion into the parliament today to talk about the government and its jobs program. We are fixing the problem you guys created. As a former CEO of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, I spent a lot of my time on skills and training. In 2007 we produced a report, a blueprint in fact, called *Skills for a nation: a blueprint for improving education and training*. I think the coalition has picked up a lot of the points that the ACCI put forward in that comprehensive blueprint and is now starting to implement that.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**Dr HENDY:** I will give you an example. The fact is that Labor made $2.8 billion of cuts to universities, which they announced last April. *(Time expired)*
Mr GRAY (Brand) (15:44): I would like to thank the shadow minister for putting this matter forward as a matter of public importance today. I do that because it is not simply important that we debate Australia's skills, training and education, it is vital. And it is vital that we engage with this issue in a way that takes responsibility in this place for the decisions that we make that influence the communities we represent.

Over the course of the last two years, we have seen some very significant changes in the economy of Western Australia. From being the investment powerhouse not just of our nation but of the world, Western Australia has seen significant reductions in capital expenditure, new mine construction and new project construction. We have seen, in every community, our economy change. I do not say that from the point of view that that is terrible. Western Australia happens to be a blessed community. We have not suffered two consecutive quarters of negative economic growth—a technical recession—in Western Australia since 1969. We are a good part of the world. However, let's be real about the obligations that we have as a parliament to support our state governments and our communities in trades training.

The communities I represent—Rockingham, Kwinana and Mandurah—are communities where students go to school, get good grades and then go and get trades. As the member for Eden-Monaro would know, it costs about a million dollars to train a good trades technician in electrical skills to get them up onto a mine site. It was a pleasure to be with the shadow minister, Brendan O'Connor, at Southern Cross Electrical Engineering last week talking to apprentices being supported in their training by the training enterprise structure put in place by the Kwinana Industries Council. That structure provides practical job training for young men and women, for Aboriginal men and women, to work in our resources sector. As I said earlier, the resources sector is changing; investment is in decline and we are now moving to production jobs. We need to have people job ready for those production jobs on the mine sites and in the production facilities, for the sophisticated value adding that we now do to our minerals not just in Western Australia but around the entire country.

What Canberra really does not understand is that a lead mine does not mine lumps of lead; that a copper mine does not mine copper pipes; that in a nickel mine you do not pull out nickel by the tonne; that minerals processing in our modern minerals economy is sophisticated value adding, which requires people with high levels of technical expertise and skill. It requires people with the skills to deliver their particular service in a mine site in a remote location in a production train that keeps that productivity happening for the benefit of all Australians.

I am pleased that in the course of the last month the federal government has announced funding for the trades training centre of the Peron Alliance, the local alliance of schools in my electorate, in partnership with the Kwinana Industries Council, the CCI and Apprenticeships Australia. In a number of the high schools I represent, that will broaden the number of trades training centres that will cover hospitality, health, electrical, automotive—the jobs that the young people in my electorate want to do. It will cover the skills needs of the Kwinana industrial strip. It will cover the production needs of our nickel mines, our gold mines, our magnetite facilities and our iron ore mines. It will also cover the diesel fitting needs of the transport infrastructure in Western Australia to bring our grain crop harvest to a port.

These investments are not simply lost money and dead money. They are investments in people's lives, they are investments in skills, they are investments in the future that allow
young people to take control of their lives. They allow our community to be what it aspires to be—that is, productive, wealthy and able to provide good jobs for future generations.

**Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson)** (15:49): I am delighted to be speaking in this debate today because, quite frankly, if this is the worst gripe that those members opposite can come up with today then our government is clearly doing a lot of things right. Seriously, this MPI beggars belief, coming from those opposite who have spent the last six years in government. For the member for Adelaide to be suggesting that a lack of investment in skills and training is now impacting on jobs is surely a much greater reflection on the poor policies of the former Rudd-Gillard-Rudd governments. In simple and very practical terms, most trade training courses have a duration of much longer than six months. So the reality is that it will take some years to repair the damage that the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd governments did to the trade training sector. It will certainly take much more than six months to address the skills shortage that our nation does indeed face as a result of Labor's totally ineffective policies in this area.

Those policies included the spectacularly forgettable Productivity Places Program, which, like many of Labor's thought bubbles, was an expensive and astronomical failure. It was designed to train over 711,000 people. This $2.1 billion program was so badly administered that, according to documents obtained through FOI, evaluators could not even determine who had received training. The program failed to provide tangible employment outcomes, with more than half of the participants not finding a job and only 20 per cent finding a job in the area they had received training for. Then, in 2007, Labor committed $2.5 billion to build trade training centres in every single one of Australia's 2,650 secondary schools but, once again, they failed to deliver. Through the course of their term, only $1.4 billion of that funding was allocated for 511 trade training centres, and just 320 of these centres have actually commenced operation. This is Labor's track record. This is how they approached the need to train and upskill Australia's workforce when they were in office.

On top of bad policy, they also inflicted increased costs on registered training organisations, with some fees rising by 400 per cent. In the 12 months leading up to the last election, Labor stripped $600 million of employer incentives for many vocational education programs. They piled more red tape and regulation on the sector, which acted as a disincentive.

When it comes to talking about an impact on Australian jobs, Labor introduced the job-destroying carbon tax that added to the cost of all businesses through increased energy prices. I am quite gobsmacked that the member for Adelaide has the gall to put forward such a—quite frankly—lame MPI, given her party's track record.

When it comes to skills shortages, traditional trades and engineering are the most serious areas of concern in this country. As an engineer by profession, I take every opportunity I can to encourage young people into engineering and to study maths and science at school. Sadly, these two disciplines have faltered under the Labor government and their national curriculum. I hope that the review that we are currently conducting can help reverse the trend and restore the value of maths and science in order that we have more students going into science and also into engineering. I note that this week many members of this House have met with scientists as part of the Science meets Parliament program, which is just terrific. There certainly should be much greater engagement between individual MPs and senators, scientists and the scientific community.
When it comes to traditional trades, it is a sad fact that completion rates for apprenticeships in this country fell to just 48 per cent under the Labor government. In contrast, the coalition has announced positive plans to boost apprenticeships. As promised during the last election, we will introduce a trade support loan initiative. It is a practical plan to help young people who are completing an apprenticeship in much the same way our higher education loans system helps young people who go to university. I am happy to note that we are on track to implement those loans from July this year. Additionally, the government is engaging with the vocational education industry and the community through a specially formed VET review task force that is seeking stakeholder input through workshops around the country. The government is committed to a strong and robust Australian apprenticeship system that meets the needs of employers whilst delivering skilled workers.

Unlike Labor, the coalition government is committed to consulting stakeholders and ensuring that the money we invest in the trade training sector achieves results. This will, of course, take some time, but it is important to make the time to get it right.

Ms MacTIERNAN (Perth) (15:55): The government asked us to recite some facts. I will give you a very salient fact. Today, there are 84,000 people in Western Australia that are unemployed—that is 5.9 per cent. That is the highest rate of unemployment in Western Australia since the days of the Howard government, when it peaked at that height in December 2003. So we have a very significant problem in Western Australia that we need to deal with.

I will mention a few more facts. The Assistant Minister for Education came to Western Australia recently. She was being interviewed about apprenticeships. John McGlue, the journalist, asked her: 'Why are apprenticeships now just not as popular as they used to be …'. Do you know what she did? She blamed the schools. She said: Look, there's lots of reasons and to some extent I blame careers advisors in schools ... there's not enough "try a trade" for those kids in school so they can see what it is they want to do. There is not enough 'try a trade'—that is the fundamental problem, she says. She has blamed the school teachers, she has blamed the advisers and she has blamed the lack of the opportunity for students to try a trade. It is really important to have a try-a-trade capacity within our schools to give children, students and young people the opportunity to have a go at these trade skills, to see whether they are suited to them. Indeed, that was absolutely what this program was all about. Today, we have seen her saying, 'This has been a failure. You have only delivered 320 across Australia.' I actually think that is a great achievement. To say that we are going to cut the money because you have only delivered 320 of these seems to me to be absolute madness.

We have 49 trade training centres operational in Western Australia, and they are affecting around 150 schools that are involved in clusters. They are absolutely delivering. The sorts of nonsense that I heard coming from the government today really are not borne out by our experience in Western Australia. I want to talk about two centres that I know well, one in my old electorate of Armadale, which has been operational for around three years. They have got programs being delivered by Polytechnic West, and there is absolutely no doubt that it is attracting far more kids into the trade. I am also talking about Morley Senior High School, which is in a cluster of five schools and is delivering through its trade training centres. It has become very competitive to get a place at Morley Senior High School. We even have parents
who have taken their children out of private schools in the area and put them into some of the
cluster schools so they can gain entry to the automotive program, so highly sought after is it.
Private enterprise is represented on the panel that selects the students. Industry is deeply
involved in these programs. This has been an excellent program and it is absolutely bizarre
that we are cutting it.

At the same time that we are cutting down our base of skilled people we are loosening the
reins on 457 visa class. We have already seen the start of that. We have 21 per cent of people
on 457 visas in Western Australia. They have played an important part. We did recognise last
year that this scheme was getting a little bit out of control and that there were many people
coming into Western Australia when there was growing unemployment. We need to ensure
the 457 visa class has community support, and we are not going to do that if we are
systematically loosening the reins on it, as is underway now with the government, and
allowing people of very modest skill levels coming in when we have got 84,000 people in
Western Australia that are unemployed. Here we have a government that is saying we have to
unleash the 457 visas, that we are going to take off the restrictions so we can bring in more
skills from overseas, and at the same time dumbing down our education system and taking out
that very, very successful plan. (Time expired)

Mr HOGAN (Page) (16:00): In addressing this MPI we cannot look at the last six months
in isolation. Certainly we can talk about—and I will talk about—what we have done in the
last six months and what we are going to do over the next 2½ years. But I think everyone in
this chamber should be a little sobered by the report from the Programme for International
Student Assessment, or PISA, which shows that Australian academic standards have been
slipping since 2009. They say that the latest results are a serious wake-up call for Australian
education, showing a downwards trend since 2009 to late 2012 in Australia's student
performance relative to other countries across mathematics, reading and scientific literacy.
Surely if we are going to discuss this, we—and the previous government, with all due
respect—need to acknowledge that academic standards slipped for four years of their six-year
rule in this country, and they slipped in the three areas that are obviously very important to
every student in this country.

Another salient fact that we need to acknowledge—because we cannot look at the last six
months in isolation—is that the number of 15- to 19-year-olds commencing apprenticeships
or traineeships fell by four per cent between 2011 and 2012. So from 2009 to 2012 we had
falling educational standards and falling traineeship and apprenticeship take-up in this
country. That is the context that we took over. We took over an education system where we
were falling down the ranks. We took over an education system where apprenticeships were
being taken up less and less. So let us look at what we are going to do about that. As the
assistant minister very eloquently stated earlier on, we are opening 136 trade skill centres, and
I have visited some of those that are going to open in my electorate. We have five. The
Alstonville High School will be building a million-dollar primary industry centre—an
agricultural centre. I went and had a look at that the other day. That is going to be built. We
announced that funding recently. There will also be a million-dollar hospitality centre at the
Evans River School and centres at Grafton High School, South Grafton High School and
Trinity Catholic College.

CHAMBER
So we are not abandoning that—we are running out 136 of those centres. But nothing stays still, so if we are going to be training and educating our high school students to join the vocational educational part of the workforce, we have to look at other ways as well. The assistant minister also mentioned that. For a period of time I was a high school teacher, and I was also involved in giving career advice to high school students and saw different methods work in different ways. One way that worked very well—and one we will certainly be encouraging—is school based apprenticeships and traineeships. Certainly there is a space within a high school where you can be taught different vocational education, but there is a big push for—and a lot of room for—students being at high school but also spending a period outside that high school at a school based traineeship or apprenticeship where they get on-the-job training. We certainly will not be abandoning that system; we will be encouraging it. As was previously said, we have established the VET reform task force, because we want to design a system that is flexible and will create results. So we have planned that as well.

We say this a lot, and I almost always get derision from the other side when I mention it, but we are going to cut red tape and all the compliance costs and everything else that those training providers and employers have to do. That is important. We are also talking about higher education as well. We know that the previous government cut $2.8 billion from education, so we have seen falling results in most measures—(Time expired)

Mr GILES (Scullin) (16:05): I rise in support of the matter of public importance brought before the House by the member for Adelaide. Before commencing my remarks, I think I should acknowledge the previous speaker, the member for Page, because he did something quite extraordinary in this parliament: he talked about some things the government is actually doing. So I congratulate the member for Page in taking about two minutes of his contribution to talk about the responsibility of this government. At least he believes in no excuses.

It is disappointing that we have to have this debate, because before the election—as everyone in this place knows—the core of the challenge that the member for Adelaide is putting forward today and which is at the core of Labor's agenda. It is very disappointing that we have to have this debate, because while it relates to many cuts and many broken promises, at the core there is one: the unity ticket on schools funding. But this is a government that said one thing before the election and quite another after. Yesterday I spoke about the government's neglect in the area of skills in the legislation that is presently before this House. We have a very, very thin agenda that goes nowhere near creating the high-skilled high-wage jobs of the future, whereas skills, training and education and their impact on people's ability to secure meaningful employment is of vital concern to the people I represent in the Scullin electorate and indeed Australians everywhere. This goes to the heart of meeting our productivity challenge. But opposite us we have a policy-free zone.

Today I was proud to walk out the front of parliament with many of my colleagues on this side of the House and stand with the Gonski vans, which have conducted a road trip around Australia. I did not see members opposite, but I am proud to stand up with advocates for public education in support of needs based education funding. From there I came into the parliament to meet with children from St John's Primary School in Thomastown. They were thrilled to see Bill Shorten, Australia's next Prime Minister, and they were very excited to hear from him. They were also very interested to hear that we would be debating education
and skills, and I think their teachers were interested too, to see if this parliament can chart a pathway to better productivity, and to the high-wage, high-skill jobs of the future.

The urgency and importance of this debate is heightened for me and for many of my colleagues by the recent major job announcements, which impact on many people in the northern suburbs of Melbourne—most recently at La Trobe University, building on from Golden Circle, Ford, Holden, and all the other auto-related jobs. The government still does not have a jobs plan, but it is much worse than that. The failure to invest in education and skills will cause profound damage to our future prospects. This challenge is about productivity, but it is also about equity. That is why Labor took the Better Schools Plan to the last election. We acknowledge the critical role education plays in giving children the best possible chance of getting good jobs. Labor's plan, of course, was not the no-strings, bucket of money approach. It was a targeted, equitable allocation of funds based on individual student needs. It provided certainty to schools, something they never had under the SES model of the Howard government.

I heard yesterday from representatives of the Catholic Education Office, who are keen to emphasise these very points. They discussed their noble aim, and tradition, of assisting students in need, but they highlighted the massive financial disincentives the Howard era funding model created. For example, it costs about $13,000 to educate a child, but $64,000 to educate a child with special needs. Under the coalition's funding model, schools had a perverse incentive to turn away children who cost more to educate—this was needs based funding in reverse.

All schools and school communities desire certainty, and Labor gave it to them. That this government saw fit to walk away from that certainty, or perhaps to weasel out of existing arrangements, shows the contempt that the coalition has, not only for students and staff but for schools themselves, for Australia's future and for the job prospects of the kids at St John's Primary School in Thomastown, and many kids like them.

The coalition liked to engage in motherhood statements about education. We have heard some of them today, but their instinct is to cut it. As the member for Isaacs knows, one of the first acts of the Baillieu government in Victoria was to slash funding for TAFE. One of the first actions of this government was to break its core promise of a unity ticket for education funding.

As the member for Adelaide put it, at the core of the government's agenda is a smaller future—an end to needs based school funding, cuts to trade training, cuts to Youth Connection, and no skills agenda. It is neglect that must come to an end.

Mr EWEN JONES (Herbert) (16:10): Like a number of other speakers on this side, when I saw the MPI I thought we must have put it up. It is about the 'government's failure to properly invest in Australian skills training and education, and its impact on Australian jobs'. In 2007, the then Labor Prime Minister Kevin Rudd declared a war on skills shortages. He announced $2.5 billion for Trades Training Centres in all of Australia's 2,650 secondary schools. The problem is they only spent $1.4 billion of that money, which is over half, and they started the allocations for 511 of these Trades Training Centres—servicing 1,297 schools—but only 320 of these are actually up and running. So they have spent over half the money for 25 per cent of the actual number of Trades Training Centres, but only 12 per cent of them have actually been operating. So where will the rest of the money come from?
When we are talking about properly investing in education and training in this country, and allocating the right amount of funds, they have fallen at the first level, in the same way they have with so many things, whether it is the Early Childhood Learning Centres or the GP Super Clinics, which we have been hearing so much about. At every level the previous Labor government came out and made these grand promises about delivering all these magnificent things, yet when it came to implementation they have fallen at the very first hurdle.

The problem with the previous Labor government is that they think that writing something on paper actually delivers it. It does not. You have to actually employ the tradespeople to do it. When Labor came to office in 2007 Australia had a perfectly good technical college system. We had a fantastic one in Townsville for instance. The best part about what this government did to it—and it shows you what their commitment to education is—is that they made the Townsville technical college change their name from the Australian Technical College North Queensland to Tec-NQ, at a cost of $50,000. And then they just pulled their funding. That was their commitment to school based education. Tec-NQ is still providing these quality services; they are still working as an RTO. Those are the sorts of things the previous government did. They just pulled the funding out, proving they just do not get education when it comes to these things.

We are shifting the VET sector out of education and into industry, because we believe that is where the focus should be. The focus should be on outcomes and on jobs. All the way through we have seen the previous government get up and talk about what their commitment has been. Last week I heard an absolute cracker about how the former government was working on bettering education and on job placements. During a Certificate II in Active Volunteering, you did not have to volunteer. Part of the course on active volunteering was that you did not have to volunteer. All the way through a Certificate II course on active volunteering you did not have to volunteer. Only Labor could do that.

The Education and Employment Committee is going to actually finish off the work of the 43rd Parliament, because we want to make sure that TAFEs in particular are not being hurt. TAFEs have to do a very big job when it comes to the capital work, and to the big trades. We want to make sure all the other RTOs are not just taking the cream off and making TAFE a stand-alone facility where the capital cost is high, making them a target for cuts. This is because we believe in the TAFE sector, and we believe in the VET sector.

We have real challenges in youth unemployment, and they are not all related to training, skills and education. The member for Brand spoke earlier about refining. One of the key things to making sure that refining works is to make sure that your input costs are low. The one thing you do if you want to make sure that you keep jobs in manufacturing and refining is keep your electricity costs low, and you do not introduce a carbon tax. That makes people shift refining, and other energy intensive occupations and practices, overseas. The Abbott government is committed to real job growth; the Abbott government will deliver on jobs and education. We are a good government.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Scott): Order! The discussion is now concluded.
BILLS

Customs Tariff Amendment (Tobacco) Bill 2014
Excise Tariff Amendment (Tobacco) Bill 2014
Primary Industries (Excise) Levies Amendment (Dairy Produce) Bill 2014
Tax and Superannuation Laws Amendment (2014 Measures No. 1) Bill 2014

Assent

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

Farm Household Support Bill 2014
Second Reading

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

Mr COULTON (Parkes—The Nationals Chief Whip) (16:16): Picking up from where I left off before question time on the drought support package, I would like to now talk about the additional funding for water related infrastructure in New South Wales and Queensland. As you would know, Mr Deputy Speaker Scott, from your seat of Maranoa, reliable water is vital and, indeed, the farmers that are on the capped and piped bore schemes are the ones that are managing this drought now better than most. A lot of the surface water has dried up, so having that reliable water is important.

What has shown up in this drought is the environmental damage that can be done by having concentrated water points. So the idea of this additional funding is for farmers to be able to expand the network of their water infrastructure across their properties to enable the livestock to be spread out, to give them access to clean, fresh water and also to have access to all sections of their property. I believe that this part of the package will be roundly welcomed by the farmers. I would also like to mention at this point that we need to continue on with the GABSI, the Great Artesian Basin Sustainability Initiative, which has enabled many of these bores already to be capped and piped. In New South Wales and Queensland, there are still about 500 bores to go. The fact that the water pressure has increased in those areas, from the piping and capping, and despite what some of the green mischief makers might say about the Great Artesian Basin, shows that this has been a great initiative. Indeed, many bores are now flowing that were not before because of the piping and capping under GABSI. There is also social support assistance that will help communities, mental health workers and service providers in drought affected areas. That is also very important—that those people have the support on the ground.

Finally, there is also the issue of pest management. As much as we admire our coat of arms, at the moment the emus and kangaroos are in plague proportions. They are actually dying from starvation in many areas. There needs to be a program in place to control not only those but also wild dogs and wild pigs that are impacting on those areas and making it difficult to support and feed those livestock. Having spoken to a farmer in my electorate who is trying to feed his sheep where the emus are chasing the sheep away from the feed, I can tell you it has been a very, very frustrating exercise. I might note that the green groups that protest about animal rights, PETA and groups such as that, have been remarkably absent in this
drought. I have not seen any of those green activists offering to help a farmer support and feed their livestock.

In closing, I would like to say that the farmers that need this assistance need this assistance because there has been no rain. Don't anyone in this place and outside think that the farmers are in financial difficulty because of management decisions or lack of expertise. The farmers in the Parkes electorate and the farmers in these drought affected areas in the northern and western part of the Parkes electorate are some of the most efficient in the world. It should be known that they are producing more kilograms of grain, fibre and meat per millimetre of rain and litre of diesel than anywhere else in the world. Indeed, if they were using the farming methods that their fathers and grandfathers used, they would have been out of business some years ago. The problem is that it has not rained for approximately two years in some places. Many of these farmers have stored fodder, they have put away what cash reserves they have and they have done an absolute sterling job in keeping their properties running for the last 18 months to two years without any rainfall. But what we are looking at now is going into the next winter, which means the next 12 months without sufficient income, and quite frankly I do not believe there is any enterprise that can be prepared to carry itself through that level of drought and disadvantage.

As a nation and as a government we have a responsibility to keep those people on those farms in a position where, when it does rain, they can get back into production. When it does rain, these areas are immensely productive. We should understand that our farmers are the most efficient anywhere in the world but they are in drought. This is not a handout for inefficient farmers; this is a hand up for farmers who are dealing with a climatic condition that is disastrous for them.

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (16:23): I rise today to speak on the Farm Household Support Bill 2014 and the Farm Household Support (Consequential and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2014. Obviously, as an inner-city MP I do not have the direct constituents who will be asking for this support, but I come from St George in rural Queensland and know well that 80 per cent of the Queensland landmass is in drought. That is about 1.5 million square kilometres, a bigger area than the Northern Territory and about the same area as Mongolia, for the sake of reference in terms we have been discussing today.

I commend the previous speaker, the member for Parkes, for his insightful words. As a Labor member of parliament I do all that I can, and I was grateful to hear his comments about how efficient our farmers are. I was also reminded, when he talked about the emus, that after World War I, when there were emu plagues in Western Australia, they apparently sent in a former machine-gun corps to clean up some of the emus. I am not advocating that, but I do understand how, when the drought is on, animals will do anything for grain or green pick.

These bills will provide financial assistance to farmers and to their partners who contribute significant labour and capital to a farm enterprise that has significant commercial purpose or character. Both sides of this chamber are in support of any extra assistance that we can provide our farmers, although I am a bit disappointed to see that the coalition government failed to follow through on the significant drought policy developed by the former Labor government. I do believe that, as climate change rolls out more and more, there will be more and more challenges like this that we face. That will be the reality. The member for Parkes spoke about the practices of our grandparents on the land; the reality is that, with climate
change, we will have to rethink. It is not just going to be a market distortion to support those who are least prepared with the consequences that come. I know there are significant suicide issues in rural areas as we experience this drought.

I know of my home town in your seat of Maranoa, Mr Deputy Speaker Scott. Almost the last time I was there it was with Prime Minister Gillard looking at the results of the flood flowing over the top of the bridge at St George. Now they are crying out for rain. I am hopeful that there are some clouds on the horizon this week. I believe there is some better weather heading Queensland's way. But I fear the income support packages mentioned in this legislation have been rushed and the scheme will only provide marginal assistance for drought affected producers.

Obviously, Australia is that unique continent and country with a variable and mostly arid climate and settled by people who brought European animals used to grazing on crops and grasslands where water comes regularly. Our cattle and sheep have that tendency, but obviously our grasslands are different. They are used to being completely dry, almost going into hibernation and then blooming when the rain comes. Historically, the observed trends every scientist can tell you about towards increased warming come with increased rainfall in many tropical areas and decreased rainfall in many temperate areas. Everyone understands that these will continue. For South Australians out there it will be like redrawing Goyder’s Line annually. That is the reality of the globe that we are left with. That is why we need to act on climate change wherever we can. Government assistance for Australian farmers will only increase, and a plan needs to be established that addresses drought affected areas and goes beyond a wage to help farmers in the short term, although obviously we do support this bit of the legislation.

I am also standing here as the member for Moreton, because the Brisbane Markets are in my electorate. Unfortunately, they were flooded a few years back as well. Seventy-seven hectares of land at Rocklea, a business that turns over $1 billion a year, 54 primary wholesalers and 90 additional support businesses are all located in this Rocklea business. It employs up to 4,000 people on a daily basis. There are 7,000 growers putting produce through the Brisbane Markets, so the produce from a lot of those drought affected areas will end up in my electorate of Moreton.

I went to their prize-giving event there last week, and again they raised with me the issue of the horticulture code of conduct, something that was introduced by the then agriculture minister, Minister McGauran, back in the 41st parliament, as I understand it. This is an issue for the way the industry is broken up. The horticulture code of conduct does not apply to the retail chains like Coles and Woolies. Because Coles and Woolies get their produce direct from the growers, they arrive at a price. I will introduce two bananas here—B1 and B2—to make a comparison. If B1 came from Woolies, the price would be agreed by Woolies. If B2 here came from North Queensland—I will put the props away now—supposedly the price would be agreed to before the banana was put in the case and shipped from the tablelands, Babinda or wherever, all the way down to the Brisbane Markets. Theoretically, the stakeholders at Rocklea would have to agree on the price and know the quality of the banana. That is not how it really works. Rocklea works based on trust between the grower and the people at Rocklea who actually retail it. Sixty to 65 per cent of the total product produced by fruit and vegetable growers is outside the scope of this mandatory horticulture code. Coles
and Woolies have a voluntary code, but the independent retailers have this extra regulatory burden where they need to understand the fruit they are about to sell. Mr Deputy Speaker, as you would know—because you eat so much fresh fruit—the quality of the tomato or the banana or whatever you are going to buy can vary significantly.

Much of the Rocklea market is based on trust. Now we are talking about third generations who are providing fresh fruit and vegetables to Rocklea that are then sold on to the greengrocers and the restaurants. Many restaurants go direct to the markets and get their product from the market wholesalers. Because these market wholesalers have been going for generations and dealing with the same farmer or the farmer's son or daughter or grandchildren, they know that they can rely on each other. If the farmer said, 'These bananas are top quality,' and they turned up and they were not, then that trust would break down immediately.

It is impossible under the Horticulture Code of Conduct to actually agree on a price, because the bananas will vary slightly. So despite the millions of transactions that take place around Australia—because the Brisbane market is just one of 430 market-wholesaling businesses throughout Australia that turnover in excess of $7 billion—these market wholesalers and the Horticulture Code of Conduct are competitors with Coles and Woolies. The retail chain has a voluntary code of conduct but the market wholesalers have this mandatory Horticulture Code of Conduct that is effectively just red tape. And I call on the Minister for Small Business, Minister Billson, to look at the businesses that are affected. They are mainly small- to medium-size businesses—not Coles and Woolies, but the small- to medium-size businesses—that have to put up with this red tape.

The horticulture code prescribes methods of operations which are completely inconsistent with the way the growers and wholesalers do business. Can you imagine a wholesaler getting on the phone to the farmer down in the Lockyer Valley at the time the truck is packed, and agreeing on a price at 2 o’clock in the morning? Do you think that the farmers down in Gatton, or wherever they are, want to be phoned at 2 o’clock in the morning when the truck is being packed to agree on a price? That is not how it works; that is not the reality.

There are millions of transactions going on every year. But I am happy to say that despite those millions of transactions, in the last three financial years the horticulture mediation advisory reports indicate that there have been only 28 inquiries about infringements and only six formal requests for mediation under the code. In fact, in the last financial year there were no mediations. So, we have all of this red tape—or we can call it green tape because it is around fruit and veggies! It affects small businesses, the farmers and the retailers—it does not affect Coles and Woolies—the people who are trying to have a go under this code, and the reality is that no-one has anything to complain about.

It is an impost that I would ask Minister Joyce to reconsider. It is something that I will take up on behalf of the Brisbane markets, because they are in my electorate, to see if we can get rid of this red tape. I notice there is going to be an attempt to get rid of some unnecessary regulations tomorrow, and this is a classic example. A code that does nothing except put a tax on everyone's banana—every banana that is bought outside of Coles and Woolies. It is a red tape that adds to the price of every potato bought at a small retailer or any fruit market.

The growers and wholesalers do business in a trusted way. They have been doing that for years. Anyone who goes to the Rocklea markets would know that people have these long,
continuing relationships where they know how to trust each other. It is grandchildren dealing with the grandchildren of farmers, growers and producers. The ACCC report indicates that in the last three years they have only taken action against two businesses for breaches of the code—and I know one of them. One was a business that was a grower acting as a wholesaler.

This was put in place by Minister McGauran to protect—misguidedly, I think—some people who thought there was an issue. The reality is, there is unnecessary red tape and unnecessary cost. All households are paying for this red tape in the fruit and veggie area. Anyone who understands the sale of fruit and veggies knows that the code is basically irrelevant. They just ignore it, because the relationship is based on trust. There is a cost to taxpayers, because they are administering the code. I would like the government to take that up and get rid of it.

When we are talking about the Farm Household Support Bill 2014 it does come back to that underlying concern that every sensible science-believing person understands, and that is that we need to act on climate change. It is not enough to stand up every question time and say, 'The carbon tax, the carbon tax, the carbon tax.' The reality is that we believe in using a market mechanism to achieve the best possible outcome for a horrible set of circumstances. That is, if we do not act to combat human-induced climate change our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren will not have a planet—will not have a planet where they are able to have a decent lifestyle. There is that other fact, of course, which is that it will cost more to act later. We almost have to be able to look our children in the eye and say, 'That's your problem, not ours.' I am not prepared to do that. The Labor Party has always been a party devoted to doing the best thing by the collective—the best thing by the nation. It is not just a group—

Mr Brough interjecting—

Mr PERRETT: I can hear comments coming from the arc of mediocrity!

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mitchell): The member for Fisher will have a chance to talk later.

Mr PERRETT: There is a disembodied voice coming through. The reality is there is a market mechanism and putting a price on carbon is the best way to achieve the lowest possible—

Mr Brough: Mr Deputy Speaker, I invite the member to take a question.

Mr PERRETT: Mr Deputy Speaker, I am on the home straight now.

Mr Brough: Quit while you're ahead.

Mr PERRETT: I am happy to quit while I am ahead. The reality is that the Liberal Party used to believe in markets. The carbon price we introduced was all about achieving a market mechanism. That is what we need to do. We need to make sure we change behaviours. The best possible way to do that is by putting a price on the businesses that emit the most. Having bureaucrats in Canberra pick the best possible mechanism is a very risky game. Putting all your faith in that magic dirt that scientists have said will not produce the offsets that we need is a very risky game. I ask those opposite to understand our principal position in terms of pricing carbon.

We have just had I think 12 minutes on every other subject but the bills. These are important bills and I think we should be addressing them here in the House at this time and leaving other issues to better forums.

These bills are about addressing drought. The people currently experiencing drought are going through what can only be described as a natural disaster. As the Prime Minister has said, the determination of the Abbott government is to stand by Australians in good times and in bad times. We cannot work miracles and there are no magic wands, but we will do what we can to help in difficult times, and, plainly, for quite a large number of farmers now these are difficult times.

I remember growing up on a farm as a boy and experiencing the 1982-83 drought and the difficulties faced then on our farm and across the nation as it was hit by one of the worst droughts that we had seen. The situation in many parts of Queensland and New South Wales is worse than that drought. My empathy and sympathy go to those farmers who are currently battling drought. To see the impact that drought has on your livelihood, on the animals and crops you are relying on for your annual income, can be absolutely destroying. The farmers and their families have to deal with this. They have to deal with both the physical and mental strains of this.

It was very pleasing to see the Prime Minister understand this and in a very considered manner deal with it. I say that because there has been talk from the other side that this policy was rushed. It was nothing of the sort. The Prime Minister consulted. He consulted with relevant MPs from regional and rural Australia in the Liberal and National parties who have a real understanding of the impact of drought on the ground. He then visited key electorates suffering from drought. With the Minister for Agriculture and other relevant MPs he brought together a package to deal with the current circumstances.

It is worth mentioning that we were left in this situation because the previous government had singularly failed to put forward a long-term drought policy for this nation. They had abolished the previous approach but had done nothing to put in place a policy we could use in these circumstances. So this government was beholden once again to clean up the previous government's mess. That is what we have done. We have done that through this program.

In the first instance we have done it through the Interim Farm Household Allowance package, which came into effect on 3 March, so we can give immediate help and immediate support to those farmers who are being impacted by drought. Come 1 July the interim package will no longer exist and the package we see here today will come into effect. It means farmers will be able to access the farm household assistance package as they need to. They will be able to access it not only in New South Wales and Queensland but also in other areas if they, unfortunately, are also impacted by drought. This will provide immediate assistance for them.

The farm household allowances are not the only part of the package that the government has put together. There are also the drought concessional loans. We are providing $280 million for concessional loans to assist drought affected farm businesses recover from drought and return to profitability. A key aspect of the concessional loans is helping farmers return to profitability. If you cannot make a profit then it is very hard for you to continue to run a business, or in this instance a farm.
There are two key components in what we have put together. In the first instance there is immediate support for those farming households and in the second instance there are concessional loans to help them return to profitability. Farmers will potentially be able to change the way their overdraft facilities are working and be able to go to their bank and say: 'I have the ability to access these concessional loans. What can you do for me?'

The drought concessional loans of up to $1 million or up to 50 per cent of eligible debt, whichever is lower, will be provided to eligible farm businesses at an initial rate of four per cent for a five year period. This will enable those farmers to be able to make sure that they can restructure their businesses after the impact of this drought. It will ensure that they can continue to trade and continue to run the business and turn it into a profitable business once again. We need to do that because the farm sector is a sector which will, in a large part, ensure that our economy continues to grow into the future. We have all seen the surveys, the studies and the reports which have been done. These reports say how important our agriculture sector is going to be to the future economic success of this nation. What we as a government have to do, is to make sure that we are there to support our farmers when the difficulties of natural disaster hit. This is what our government is doing.

As part of the package, we are providing $10 million to help on the social side. One of the sad things about drought is that it has a real impact on the social side of farming families. It can put pressure on the farm, the farmer, the spouse and the children. The impact can be incredibly detrimental. Many farming operations take place in a very isolated environment. In times of hardship, there is a need for people to get the advice and the assistance that they need to make sure that they can deal with the real stresses of dealing with financial pressures and what they are seeing happen to their livelihood. This can have a real impact on farm family life. The government understands that. That is why a key component has been to provide $10 million to assist in this vital area. These are vital services. They are services which are provided to many people in communities across the nation. Because of their isolation, these services are not readily available to those people who are on farms out in regional and rural parts of Australia. This $10 million will ensure that in times of real need these people can get the assistance that they need. This is an important part of this package. Vitaly, it also shows that the government has listened. It is all very well addressing short-term and then long-term financial need, but you also have to have an understanding of the real social impact that drought can have. The package has recognised that. It is a comprehensive package in that regard.

Once again, I would like to make mention of the roles the Prime Minister and the agriculture minister have played in pulling this together. It has been done with proper consultation. It has been done with thought. It has been done in a considered way. It is not one of these packages which has been put together over the weekend to try to get the headline to try to deal with the issue in a way which will deal with the 24-hour news cycle. This is a package which was put together through proper consultation, through proper consideration and through having a real understanding of the needs of those people out on those communities. At the same time it has been done understanding that sadly, given the reckless spending which has occurred in the last six years, whatever we do in the current circumstances we have to understand that our children and their children cannot be left with an increasing financial burden. We have to lead the way in showing that this generation can
live within its means. So we have had to balance that with making sure that we have done what needed to be done for these people who are suffering drought.

In summing up on this piece of legislation, what we have is three key components to this drought package. We have the first part of it, which is the farm household allowance. We have the interim farm household allowance, which came in on 3 March, which will be replaced on 1 July. In this instance, it will help farmers immediately. There are also the drought concessional loans. These are there to help with the profitability of farmers, to enable them to restructure out of drought. Hopefully, very soon we will get the much-needed rain. Then they can turn their attention to, 'Okay, how can I restructure my finances, get some concessional loans at four per cent and ensure that I can return profitability back to my business?’ Then there is also the social support assistance, that $10 million which will enable much-needed assistance and help to go into those households who are facing the real stress, both financially and emotionally, that drought can put on farming families. The future of farming in this nation is a bright one.

I have absolute confidence in the future of Australian agriculture and Australian farming. All we have to do is to make sure that, when natural disasters hit the sector, the government is there to help farmers and that we have policies in place to ensure that the sector is profitable, so that this fantastic sector can go on feeding this nation and the world. We should not listen to the pessimists in this regard. We should listen to those who have confidence in this sector, who know that it is a provider of export income to this nation, who are out there working hard and efficiently to ensure they follow world's best practice. This nation should be very proud of our farmers, who continue to provide an income for this nation, to feed it and to feed the world.

Debate interrupted.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (16:53): I wish to make a personal explanation.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mitchell): Does the member claim to have been misrepresented?

Mr ALBANESE: I do indeed.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please proceed.

Mr ALBANESE: Today in question time, the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development suggested that I had argued that the Gateway WA project was underway and indeed he suggested that it was a new coalition initiative. That is not true. The Gateway WA project was fully funded—a one billion dollar project, the largest road project ever in Western Australia. The sod turning at the beginning of construction occurred on Friday, 1 February 2013. It is a joint project between the federal government, which is providing $686 million fully in the budget, and the state government. I seek leave to table the joint release from the WA Minister for Transport, Troy Buswell, and the government of the time on 1 February.

Leave granted.
BILLS

Farm Household Support Bill 2014
Farm Household Support (Consequential and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2014

Second Reading

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

Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (16:54): I must address the final comments by the previous speaker, the member for Wannon, who spoke on the Farm Household Support Bill 2014 and the Farm Household Support (Consequential and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2014. He said that the outlook for agriculture in Australia is wonderful and that he has every faith and confidence in it. I do not think anyone in agriculture, listening to his speech, would have any confidence in him. If you come in here and make stupid statements, you should be made to pay for it somewhere. Let me just narrate to you the ridiculous nature of his statement. I do not know where he comes from in Australia. But if he comes from Victoria—

Mr Dreyfus: The Western District of Victoria.

Mr KATTER: Western District of Victoria—well, that makes it quite extraordinary!

Ms Ley: You come so infrequently, you do not know where anybody comes from.

Mr KATTER: The lady government representative at the dispatch box—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mitchell): That would be Minister Ley.

Mr KATTER: just made a comment that I do not know where anybody comes from.

Ms Ley: You do know where I come from!

Mr KATTER: Well I hope that I do not because I do not want to be personal in my comments. I do not direct personal attacks where I can avoid them, unless I am really provoked, but I do want to address what the former speaker said. The member for Wannon said the output for agriculture in this country is good. The honourable minister at the dispatch box, the Assistant Minister for Education, represents a country area in Australia. I would like to throw to Minister Ley the challenge that she will answer what I am going to say about agriculture in Australia. This is not an opinion of a member of parliament; these are the actual ABS statistics.

The Weekly Times published a major article saying just that, and I hope that the minister at the dispatch box reads the Weekly Times—probably the only agricultural paper in the country worth reading, most certainly in Queensland. The Weekly Times said that Australia is going to be a net importer of fruit and vegetables. I think this is quite extraordinary. Australia is already a net importer—not going to be, but is a net importer of fruit and vegetables. I got five separate sets of statistics out from the Library and there was no doubt whatsoever that Australia is a net importer of fruit and vegetables.

We have people in this parliament who come in here and make stupid statements that outrage and anger the farming community of Australia—not anger or enrage them to the point where they change their vote, but anger and enrage them and make them very cynical towards all politicians, which they are entitled to be. They say, 'We are going to be the food bowl of Asia.' How ridiculous—how utterly ridiculous! We will be a net importer of food from Asia.
and there is no doubt about that. Let me return to fruit and vegetables. We are a net importer of fruit and vegetables, we are a net importer of pork and we are a very big net importer of seafood. Five or six years ago, we were big exporters in all of those items. To give you some sort of perspective, if you draw a growth line on prawn farming in China and extrapolate it out to 2050, then it is a fair call that almost all of the protein on earth will be coming from prawn and fish farms in China. I am not saying that China will increase its present production levels but it can. It does not need any area of land, not that China is short of land covering maybe a fifth of the surface area of the world. Even if it was short of land, prawns and fish can be produced in the ocean in nets. So those are the three items where we are already importers. That fruit and vegetable figure is prior to SPC Ardmona, Golden Circle, Simplot and McCain all getting into serious trouble. I predicted in this place on many occasions that unless something was done about the car industry we would have no car industry within seven years. Well, I was dead wrong—it was seven months after I made that statement that all three of them announced their closure. I find it very difficult to see how fruit and vegetable processing in Australia will be able to remain viable. It is no fault of the workers in those plants and it is no fault of the management in those plants. Rather, it is the problem we have in agriculture.

Let me switch from fruit and vegetables and pork and seafood to the major players in agriculture in Australia, starting with the beef industry. Our figures show, before this drought and before the wicked decision by the ALP government to ban live cattle exports, we were down to 23 million head of cattle from a herd level of 33 million head—and it should be more than that today. The wool industry was the biggest exporter in this country before Mr Keating, as Treasurer of Australia, wrecked it completely. Until that point, wool was a bigger export item than coal. This country was still riding on the sheep's back in 1990 before that person destroyed the industry. The sheep herd has fallen 63 per cent. Sixty-three per cent of that great industry which kept this nation going for nearly two centuries has all but vanished—wool is not up there as one of the serious export items anymore. The third item I want to talk about is dairying. No-one in this place needs to be told about dairying. We told, we pleaded, we howled and we cajoled, saying 'Do not deregulate the dairy industry! Look at what has happened in Victoria, where they deregulated it into the Melbourne markets. Do you want that all over Australia?' They would not listen so they deregulated the dairy industry. The dairy herd is down 31 per cent. The export of dairy products is down very significantly, though I do not have the figure with me at the present moment.

When a person gets up in this place and says the outlook for agriculture is bright I would like to know where it is bright. I would like to know where this brightness is coming from. I went to a meeting in Meridan where 1,200 wheat farmers turned up. I have attended three or four meetings in Victoria and there would have been over 1,000 people at each of those meetings. They tell me over 6,000 people attended those meetings. Near the area of the honourable minister at the dispatch box, the member for Farrer, 14,000 people came to the meeting in Griffith. So, we have all of these happy farmers who are doing so well and can look forward to a bright future! I want a member of the government or the opposition to stand up and tell me where this brightness is coming from. Maybe they are referring to the grape industry or the citrus industry—or what is left of those industries. And you ask what is left of those industries. It has got nothing to do with the drought.
We praise the minister and the government for improving this proposal which came forward from the Labor government. We thank the Labor government and the former Treasurer and Deputy Prime Minister, Wayne Swan, for introducing this concept. But, I want to put on record the people from whom this concept originated. This concept originated with the Mareeba Rural Action Council. I have never seen such a band of tenacious and unrelenting fighters. The honourable member for Mallee spoke in this debate earlier; he was head of the Victorian Farmers Federation. I would like to know what our farming organisations have done for us over the last 30 years. I would like to know one thing that they have done for us in the last 30 years. Almost every single initiative that has been worth two bob has come from spontaneous, people-on-the-ground, grassroots movements. I speak with great anger because my industry, the cattle industry, was nigh on destroyed by the inaction of the MLA, the NFF and all of the other bodies associated with the cattle industry who knew what was going on in Indonesia and chose to do nothing about it. When we saw what we saw on *Four Corners*—we criticised them for it—nothing was done by any of those organisations, including the Victorian Farmers Federation, including New South Wales Farmers Association and including AgForce in Queensland. None of those organisations moved to do anything about sending stun-guns and knocking boxes up to Indonesia and acting on what needed to be acted upon immediately.

The people who have led this fight that has culminated in a great decision by the previous Labor government and an excellent enhancement of that decision by the existing government are: Johnny Gambino—no-one can underestimate the importance of this person to rural action throughout Australia; he was one of the founders of the serious mango industry that we have in Australia today; Bernie O’Shea, who many times appeared on television to the great benefit of every single farmer in this country even though he does not come from a farming background; Max Srhoj, the person who pushed me to get out of the party system in this country as it existed so I could stand up and fight properly for the people I am supposed to be paid to represent, and one of the most successful farmers and one of the very few successful farmers that we have up on the Atherton Tableland area, which produces about five or six per cent of the fruit and vegetables we are still producing in Australia; Ned Bruschetto, who spent some years on the council up there as an excellent councillor; Vince Mete; Johnny Myrteza; Peter Henderson; Kevin McGrath who, again, served many years on the council; Joe Moro, who has been a great leader up there for many years; Lidio Nicolosi; and Scotty Dixon, who will fight till the day that he is pushing up daisies—what a great asset he has been to the team up there.

Why are we in this situation? We are in this situation because our RBA interest rates have been set at 3.2 per cent, on average, for the past two or three years. The rest of the world averages 0.27 per cent. That is a 1,000 per cent difference. It is not a 10 per cent or a 50 per cent difference; it is a 1,000 per cent difference! Every farming organisation and farming representative in this place should be screaming it from the rooftops on a daily basis—heaven only knows I tried to. If you have interest rates that are 1,000 per cent out of step with the rest of the world then clearly you are going to have a currency which is wildly overvalued. That value should be at US$50c. That is not my opinion; that is the opinion of the international monetary markets.
Mr Keating did something very good: he allowed the dollar to free float, and it went down to US49c. When Mr Costello came in he did a very good thing: he allowed the dollar to free float. These people advocate free markets. They both did the right thing. They were as good as their word; they came in and they allowed the dollar to free float. And it went to US52c. So, when the dollar was allowed to free float, it went to US49c and US52c, and then our terms of trade deteriorated disastrously from that point. We were running current account deficits of $10,000 million; we are now running a current account deficit of $60,000 million. That is creeping up to a significant percentage of the entire budget of the Australian government.

Worldwide, the level of support for agriculture subsidies and tariffs is 41 per cent—you can get this information from the library or from the OECD website. Australia's was 4.5 per cent the last time the OECD released international figures. We have the Coles/Woolworth situation. No other country on earth has a situation like that. In America, the big two have a 23 per cent market share and the Americans are squealing blue murder. The big two here have somewhere over 85 per cent of the marketplace. We need collective bargaining. When it was taken away from us in the milk industry, in the sugar industry and in other industries, we were crucified. under collective bargaining in the year 2000 we were getting 59c for fresh milk in North Queensland. Our farmers are now being paid 48½c.

Moving to ethanol, ethanol fixes up the cattle industry, the sugar industry and the beef industry. We would not need drought support if we had an ethanol— (Time expired)

Mr Hogan (Page) (17:10): I will eventually bring the discussion back to the Farm Household Support Bill 2014, which I have not heard a lot about in the last 15 minutes. I do want to take up what the member for Kennedy just said. He has raised some interesting points. He made reference to the contribution by the member for Wannon, who spoke earlier. Some of the statistics that the member for Kennedy just cited are true. Our agricultural sector certainly faces some serious challenges, and they are issues that we need to get right.

The member for Kennedy challenged any member of parliament to give him a positive or an optimistic agricultural scenario. My electorate shares the challenges that he describes in the sector. One of the biggest private employers in my electorate is an abattoir. They certainly were very much harmed, as the industry was, by the live export ban. We saw cattle prices decrease significantly because of that.

Mr Katter: That helps the abattoirs.

Mr Hogan: Well, it did not help them, because all the cattle that were supposed to be sold offshore moved south and, as they moved south, our market was inundated with cattle, which completely depressed our prices.

Mr Katter interjecting—

Mr Hogan: It does, but it certainly did not help industry. I think that harmed the industry, and the drought certainly has not helped either. The positive story I have to share with the member is that they have been actively searching and finding new markets for their product. There have always been an exporter of their product. Almost 70 per cent of their product gets exported. For example, 18 months or two years ago China bought hardly any of their frozen boxed beef; it is now a significant buyer of their product. They are optimistic about their future. They are a cooperative. The cooperative is positive about their future. With
rain—which I will get to in a minute in relation to this bill—they are very positive about what can happen when the restockers come back into that market.

The member for Kennedy mentioned the dairy industry. I have a dairy cooperative in my electorate, and they too are very optimistic. They have certainly faced challenges with the supermarket duopoly, which the member spoke about. But they too are positive, because just this month they accessed a new market in Asia, not just for dairy but for fresh milk. This is because of what is happening with some of the export protocols that we are dealing with, one of which relates to Korea, where tariffs on our agricultural products have been reduced. So, I say to the member: I hear you on some of the challenges faced by the agricultural industry, but there are positive stories out there. I certainly share the member for Wannon's optimism on agriculture.

I do want to talk about the bill that we are supposed to be debating. I would like to share with the House a letter written by a dairy farmer in my electorate. It refers to the drought, an issue which makes this bill so important. It was written by Leigh Shearman, who is a member of the Far North Coast Dairy Industry Group, DIG, and I have Leigh's permission to share it with you. In writing to the manager of North Coast Local Land Services in Kempsey, Leigh states:

Dear Nicole

I am writing on behalf of the Far North Coast Dairy Industry Group, our group represents 145 dairy farmers from Murwillumbah through to Grafton. The situation is deteriorating with every week that passes and no rain in sight. With pasture growth now non-existent and with only very limited dairy farmers able to irrigate under their water sharing agreements.

The cost of conserved fodder, which a majority of farmers are now totally reliant on, is escalating and very hard to locate. Corn crops that a lot of dairy farmers rely on for supplementary feeding when times are tight are only yielding very minimal returns, as is with a lot of silage crops. Dairy farmers are high grain purchasers and with the failed crops now really starting to push already high grain prices even higher the cost of production is rising beyond milk returns.

We cannot impress strongly enough that you keep dairy farmers in mind and act as quickly as possible to implement any support that is available. As most are aware dairy farmers are struggling financially under the cost of production and the climatic conditions are placing an enormous financial burden once again on an industry that is an important industry to our region.

If you would like further information I would be very happy to be of assistance.

That is a letter from a farmer who is obviously being affected by these climatic conditions.

Before going to the bill specifically, I would like to share a conversation that I had just recently with a person in my community, Anne Thomson from Eltham, who has supported drought appeals for 20 years and encouraged people to support people in drought, wherever the drought seems to be or where the money is needed. Obviously, there are times when there is no drought. She focuses on sending money, food and Christmas presents. She has no idea of how much, but she has raised tens of thousands of dollars over many years for drought affected people. An important point is that she often comments that the people giving that support are often pensioners, old people or people with very little income. They come along and see her every fortnight after they have received their fortnightly payment to give her a bit of money or a bit of food to share with people in drought. She has sent assistance in previous years to areas like the Riverina. This year she sending a lot to Brewarrina and Walgett and as
far away as Lightning Ridge. One of her distributors, Betty, who lives between Moree and Mungindi, has been nominated for a senior citizen of the year award for distributing those gift parcels.

I wanted to start with those examples because they show two things for me: the real financial consequences of drought, as the letter from the dairy farmer showed, and the help that we see from everyday mums and dads trying to help people who need assistance. I think they are a good introduction to the fact that we as a government should also be providing some of that type of assistance.

One thing that I think we need to stress—and there have been a lot of conversations about this in relation to other industries—is the point that was made by the member for Parkes that this is not a handout; this is a hand up. This is not a structural problem for farmers. Our farmers, as was said, are some of the most efficient farmers in the world, and they have to be because we as a country give them very few subsidies. If you look at other countries around the world, they give huge subsidies to their agricultural producers—we have read about them and they have been well articulated in this place. We do not do that. We have made sure that our farmers are the best in the world because they have to be to survive. So this is not about a handout; this is about a hand up.

Climatic conditions are deteriorating as we speak. This bill, which introduces the farm household allowance, is a once-in-a-generation reform of government support. The timing is appropriate not just because of the drought but also because it is the International Year of Family Farming. We are also proposing this bill now because this cannot wait until 1 July when it was originally due to come in. It will replace the Farm Household Support Act, including provisions relating to the exceptional circumstances relief payment, and makes support much more responsive to farmers' financial hardship. It will provide time limited three-year payments and support for those eligible to improve their situation without the need for a climate trigger. The three-year support will provide farmers with time to plan for the future and to achieve financial security and self-reliance.

It includes a $2.55 million net farm assets test, which will be indexed, and off-farm and liquid asset threshold aligned with Newstart allowance, which excludes the principal home. This is higher than the mainstream assets limit in recognition that farm assets are relatively illiquid, especially—as you would appreciate, Deputy Speaker Mitchell—when these payments are needed and cannot be relatively drawn on for self-support. There is an income test consistent with Newstart allowance, but with a provision that means that off-farm income will not be regarded as income when it is used to pay interest to a bank or commercial lender. There are also provisions for automatic entitlement to a Health Care Card and waiting periods the same as social security payments.

There is support for the Department of Human Services to assess farmers and help them develop a financial improvement plan. I want to go into this in a little bit more detail later, but this is a really important part of this bill. It provides counselling, financial or otherwise. Farmers tend to be a fairly proud lot. They are obviously not employees; they are running their own business and are usually fiercely independent. So to ask for help, whether it be financial or otherwise, when they need it can sometimes be difficult. So part of this is to encourage that and to make access to that easier. It will also support farm families to educate
their children. Parents receiving the allowance automatically meet income test provisions for the child's youth allowance.

Before I go into some of the details of the bill more in depth, I want to make a point because I was somewhat taken aback by the pessimism of the member for Kennedy's views on agriculture. I think we need to look at the positive contribution that it is making and the fact that, to my mind, it has great potential to grow. It generates now over $47 billion in gross value of production, so it is one of the main five pillars of our economy. Agricultural exports just last year were worth $38 billion. This is real money. This is money produced by the private sector, the agricultural sector. They are paying taxes. They are generating real wealth for this country, and I am very confident they will continue to do so.

Just in my region, the agricultural sector generates more than half a billion dollars, or about five per cent of our gross regional product, and employs directly over five per cent of the workforce. Most of these are small family-owned operations. I alluded to it before; there are some very positive stories out there in my community and I know they are replicated across the country. I have a dairy cooperative and a meat cooperative that have a positive story to sell. They are gaining access to new markets. They have new buyers who, come good weather, are going to push up prices, I believe, for many agricultural products. I have a blueberry farmer who is building quite an operation in my electorate who is very excited about his prospects of gaining access to markets in Asia and will employ—

Ms MacTiernan interjecting—

Mr HOGAN: We love blueberries. We realise that blueberries are a wonderful anti-oxidant and we encourage all agricultural products. We have some of the most efficient farmers in the world. We need to help them in this short-term period, while climatic conditions warrant it.

I will put on record some of the specifics of this bill. The interest rates on the new drought concessional loans will be set lower—that is 0.5 per cent below the interest rate for the farm concessional loans. The previous speaker was talking about interest rates; the interest rates under this will certainly be lower than they otherwise would be. There are things in there for counselling, both financial and otherwise. There is a review, as part of this, that looks at drought preparedness, because while you can not necessarily prepare for all droughts—especially one that, in some cases, has gone on for so long—there are certainly ways that we can improve what we do. This bill will help with that. The drought concessional loans are going to be available to drought affected farm businesses that have already taken steps to prepare for the effects of drought, but which with some financial assistance can do more.

I will finish on the topic of my optimism for this industry. Fifteen or twenty years ago, people were very critical of the mining industry in the sense that it did not negotiate hard enough. It was not getting good enough prices for its product. Back then there were the BHPs and, I think, it was Western Mining then, not Rio Tinto. Their main buyer back then—their sole buyer, really—was Japan. What happened was that we had a new buyer who came into the market and greatly increased the prices and the viability of that industry. I am very positive about the agricultural sector and I support this bill to help them over their short-term climatic conditions.
Mr Katter: Mr Deputy Speaker, I raise a point of order. I claim to have been misrepresented.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mitchell): Does the member claim to be misrepresented?

Mr Katter: Yes, I do, Mr Deputy Speaker. The previous speaker said that I had attributed this to the current federal government. That is not entirely true. I attributed it to this government and the previous government, but most of all to the Rural Action Council of North Queensland. They have developed the proposal and brought it forward and carried it by themselves for 10 years.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Speaker made it clear today that if we are going to have these, you should check the record and then come back and do it. That would be good.

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson—The Nationals Deputy Whip) (17:25): I rise to support wholeheartedly the Farm Household Support Bill 2014. In doing so, I pay tribute to the Minister for Agriculture and my good friend the member for New England. He is a man who is extremely passionate about Australian agriculture, particularly passionate about family farms, and about ensuring that farming families can continue on into the future. We have heard some talk in the public sphere—notably Paul Howes, the head of the Australian Workers Union—that farming families are no longer needed in Australia, that the ma and pa families are something of the past. I am glad we have a Minister for Agriculture that does not subscribe to that view. Because the many farming families throughout my electorate of Dawson—farming families who are engaged in enterprises such as sugar, tomatoes, capsicums, fruits, vegetables and cattle—want to continue, and they want their farms to be handed down through the generations. This is something that is in the blood. I could not grow a lettuce actually, I have to tell you, Mr Deputy Speaker, but I come from a generation of cane farmers. Every time I see a stalk of sugar, I want to hug it. It is something that is in the blood. I salute our Minister for Agriculture, who recognises this and wants to protect farming families in Australia, and I look forward to seeing a lot more positive policies from the Abbott Liberal-National government and the Minister for Agriculture to help this sector and farming families.

The bill before us seeks to implement an income support payment for farmers and their partners who are in financial hardship. It is called the Farm Household Allowance. Australian history has been a rich narrative of tough people battling tough conditions. Our reputation as one of the best agricultural producers in the world is counterbalanced with bouts of droughts and floods. While the harsh conditions are nothing new to our farming families, they operate in a different environment to that of their forefathers. The great wealth that was once produced by family farms during good times helped tide families over during the bad times. The boom times are no longer the boom times of old, in some respects. Increased competition, more regulation and a cost base, escalating due to things such as the carbon tax, make farms much more vulnerable. It certainly does not help when governments decide to shut down things such as the live cattle trade overnight and without warning. It does not help, as I said, when the government imposes a carbon tax that actually impacts on trade exposed industries such as agriculture.

Right now, though, our farmers—especially those in western Queensland and western New South Wales—are battling what is quite clearly the worst drought in a century. And in response to these tough times the Abbott Liberal-National government is delivering a range of...
measures to assist these drought impacted farmers. The measures outlined in this bill provide for up to three years of income support for farming families without the need for a weather related trigger, and that is very important. The means test will provide more equitable treatment for people who lack sufficient means to support themselves. The assets test will be higher than mainstream limits, recognising that family farms—the actual farm asset itself—cannot be drawn upon for self-support as easily as can other types of assets.

I note that we are a signatory to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and that article 9 of the covenant talks about the right to social security. This is a case in point in relation to this government acting for a segment of the population: when everything goes to hell, there is not adequate support for them. Through these measures, we are making sure that the safety net is indeed there.

So the government stands ready to support those in our community who are most vulnerable through no choice or fault of their own—they are simply subject to the vagaries of the weather and, unfortunately, to government policy of the day, which can sometimes be deleterious on their enterprise as well. But our goal is to ensure long-term self-sufficiency in the agricultural sector, and to this end the legislation that is before us includes provisions for a farm financial assessment and requires allowance recipients to enter into a financial improvement agreement. That means that recipients of government funds through this measure will undertake education or training or even off-farm employment that will increase their capacity and ability to deal with the situation that is before them and, frankly, to keep the family farming tradition alive in this country. When applicants meet those eligibility requirements they can gain access to further benefits, such as the health care card, the telephone allowance, remote area allowance, the clean energy supplement, pharmaceutical allowance and rent assistance. So, there is a range of different benefits that derive from this legislation.

The Farm Household Support Bill provides an income support payment for farmers that aligns with social security laws that exist in other areas, where that is possible. As a Liberal-National coalition government we want to ensure that farming families are treated fairly and that they have access to the same benefits and services that other families facing difficult circumstances have access to. For families who are living outside of the city, access to a whole range of services becomes something of a problem. Isolated families do not have things like regular waste collection services. They do not have access to community libraries. They do not have access to community libraries. They do not have access to community libraries. They do not have access to community libraries.

And I hope that we go further than just that. I hope that we are able to go further very soon in this parliament, and remove other impediments to the agricultural sector, such as the carbon tax, which I know equates to about $20,000 per farmer in the sugar industry. I hope we can
actually pass reforms that get rid of all the red tape and regulation surrounding the process of registering agricultural chemicals. Here I must commend the parliamentary secretary, the member for Kooyong, for the work he has done in this field, because it will be of tremendous value to farmers right across the nation. The red tape introduced by the last government was completely unnecessary and did absolutely nothing, and the repeal of that red tape will put useful tools and agricultural chemicals on the farms quicker and at a cheaper cost. If there is one thing we want to do, it is to make life easier for these people on the land who are going through such terribly trying circumstances right now. We need to let these farming families know they are not forgotten. We need to let them know that we are going to help them through their darkest times. We need to let them know that we are going to help them to build a brighter future.

My electorate is a narrow strip of coastal North Queensland. It is about 400 kilometres that stretches from Mackay through to Townsville. It is a very agricultural electorate, taking in the largest sugar-producing region in the country. But it also has other agricultural, pastoral and horticultural industries; in fact, would you believe that Bowen—so famous for its mangoes—also produces two-thirds of Australia’s winter tomato crop? That is the kind of electorate I come from—a very, very strong agricultural electorate. I have to say that, being on the coastline, my electorate enjoys a higher and more consistent rainfall—particularly after a cyclone comes along. But we have been in drought before. Coastal areas also suffer drought, but not for long, and not as harsh as those who are out in western Queensland and north-western New South Wales have had to go through. Our hearts go out to people who battle those dry conditions, day in and day out, sometimes for years on end. Australia has always held very romantic notions of the bush and the battler, despite the fact that most of us now live in urban area, probably just a few minutes walk from a local cafe, or a hairdresser, or a hardware store. However, the strong connection and affection for farmers and rural communities comes to the fore whenever our sunburnt country is in the grip of droughts, flooding rains, or bushfires.

When times are tough, people stretch out their hand and offer help. We like to think we all do—but in some cases we see situations where people are kicked when they are down. I have to note once more my disbelief that the green movement is coming together next week—in the middle of the harshest drought we have seen in a long time, while farmers are reeling from it, and from government policies—to promote vegetarianism and veganism to the entire nation with Meat Free Week. They want to encourage people not to eat meat for a week. That is why I have launched my counter proposal, the ‘free meat week’, where I am encouraging Aussies—and the member for Wright might get into it—to support Aussie farmers by putting on a barbie and shouting some free meat to their neighbours and mates. We need to stand up to this green movement, which kicks our farmers while they are down. When times are tough, people who are real, genuine and compassionate stretch out their hand. Right now, times are very tough for our farmers. It is time for this government, in a bipartisan manner, to reach out a hand and deliver fairness, equity and a fair go to the people who put food on our tables. With those words I commend the bill to the House.

Mr PASIN (Barker) (17:39): I rise today to speak on the Farm Household Support Bill 2014 and the Farm Household Support (Consequential and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2014. I do so as a proud representative of the farming communities in Barker. I was privileged to
have a rural upbringing, and I continue to take an active interest in my family's farming enterprise around Mount Gambier. That is a part of the south-east of South Australia that, thankfully, enjoys some of the most reliable seasons of any agricultural district in the nation—although, as we saw cruelly in years like 2006, we are far from immune to drought.

Barker, however, is a diverse electorate—64,000 square kilometres of diversity. Today in my electorate we are experiencing extremely dry conditions throughout the Mallee. So, while, thankfully, the current situation seems confined, tragically, the spectre of drought for those in Northern Queensland and New South Wales—just as it is in areas such as my electorate.

When financial hardship can strike more assured farm communities such as those in my electorate, as it has done in recent years—especially among local dairy farmers—we are reminded of the threat of more widespread drought in other areas of Australia. I have always believed that it is the responsibility of a good government to strike the right balance when it comes to exceptional circumstances. I think it is important to have a system in place to support those farmers who are experiencing extraordinary hardship, and provides them with the assistance they require for their livelihoods to be sustained with dignity and into the future.

I am proud to represent an electorate that makes a significant contribution to Australia's agricultural industry each year. It is a sector that, as other speakers have pointed out, generates over $47 billion of revenue nationally, in terms of gross value of production. Farmers throughout Barker contribute disproportionately to the nation's farm exports, amounting to total sales of approximately $38 billion in the last year alone. This income is absolutely vital to our entire economy, but particularly in regional communities such as those throughout Barker. When those sales literally dry up, due to tough seasonal conditions, our farmers need the support of the Australian government to ensure they survive the bad times, so that they can quickly thrive and capitalise when seasonal and market conditions improve.

Like others in this House, I have a bullish view of the future of the agricultural sector in Australia, and particularly for the agricultural sector in Barker. But one of the greats risks is the concept of generational farming. We need to ensure that farming is both profitable and attractive for the next generation of farmers that I hope, as I am sure the member for Mallee hopes, will come along with us on the extraordinary journey we are on in this place. I am very pleased that the Coalition, through these measures, are doing everything that they can to encourage and assist farmers to adopt best practice farm management techniques and smarter business management strategies, so they can grow and adapt in the face of uncertain seasons and ongoing economic challenges.

We must also acknowledge that periods of extreme difficulty can be caused by a number of different factors and, importantly, this bill confirms the Coalition's commitment to introducing a new Farm Household Support Payment to those in need of financial assistance. That is an important point. This is a needs-based system. In the absence of the member for Grey, I must say as a regional representative from South Australia that, contrary to some of the media speculation early in this debate, this is a measure that will address the hardship being experienced by those farmers in northern South Australia. The member for Grey represents South Australia's pastoralists, in particular the ones who produce livestock in those areas, and this measure is available to them. That was done in response to approaches to myself, the member for Grey, and the Minister of Agriculture, by organisations including Livestock SA.
It is important to acknowledge the bipartisan way in which these changes have been supported thus far. I commend the members on the other side of the chamber for working with the government to implement these important changes. Nonetheless, I know there are those that have been critical of the coalition’s commitment to provide this kind of assistance to farming families in need. To be honest, I think anyone who does not support this kind of package either is trying to play politics with this very important issue or has a shameful lack of appreciation for the agricultural sector and food production in particular.

I think it is clear that these measures will address many issues faced by farmers in drought, including rising debt levels, the capacity to make household payments, limited water for livestock, personal stress and the management of pest animals. This is reflected in the way that industry has welcomed these changes since they were announced in February.

In looking for a moment at the bill in more detail, I note that the farm household allowance provides: three cumulative years of income support for farmers and their partners in hardship without the need for a climatic trigger; a $2.55 million net farm assets test where the principal home is excluded; an income test consistent with Newstart allowance but with a provision that will allow off-farm income to be disregarded as income where it is used to pay interest to a commercial lender; automatic entitlement to a healthcare card; waiting periods consistent with social security payments; support from a Department of Human Services case manager to help assess a recipient’s situation, develop financial improvement agreements and then fund activities set out in the agreement; and a compliance framework to ensure obligations are met to address fraudulent activity. Of course, it is important not to lose in this debate the very significant stress placed on farmers in drought conditions. As someone who has worked with a disproportionate number of people in my previous professional life who suffered mental health conditions, can I say we must never forget that at these times of high stress.

I know that the relief package was a major topic for discussion when I hosted the Minister for Agriculture in my electorate of Barker on 18 and 19 February in advance of this announcement. We met with a number of livestock producers and mixed with farmers from throughout the south-east and even parts of western Victoria, represented so well by the member for Wannon. The late Tuesday afternoon at the Mt Gambier saleyards, where preparations were being made for the following morning’s weekly prime cattle, sheep and lamb market, was a very suitable backdrop for a discussion about the relief package, which had only just come to significant media attention. We know that the physical markets are nearly always still the best barometer for how the livestock industry is travelling during these tough times of drought. Even though the seasonal conditions that we speak of are far away in northern New South Wales and Queensland, they still impact on the markets in the south. It is a consistent reminder of how all Australian farmers are so closely linked together within this industry, no matter how many thousands of kilometres separate us.

At that gathering we had members of a number of significant primary industry organisations, including Mr Andrew Ogilvie, who is President of the Cattle Council of Australia and a local beef producer. We also had in attendance the President of Livestock SA, Mr Richard Halliday, and the Vice President, Mr Jack England—both of whom are also south-east farmers. I was also pleased to welcome the Mackillop Farm Management Group Chairman, Mr Duan Williams, and his deputy, Mr David Farley. The Mackillop group is an exceptional regional-based producer network that is independent and proactive, and develops
innovative and sustainable farming practices through research and extension for the benefit of primary producers in the south-east. They are very much a can-do organisation.

The relief package was also of interest the following day when the minister and I travelled to Renmark in the northern parts of my electorate. There we met with the Riverland wine grape and citrus growers, who know, unfortunately all too well, about drought. It was an interesting discussion regarding the government's relief package. With such informed groups, I know the minister enjoyed the positive feedback he received during his time in Barker. I was very pleased to help facilitate these discussions because I think it is important that primary producers in my electorate know that Australia has a federal agriculture minister who knows his way around a set of cattle yards and is at ease surrounded by farmers. What a welcome change it is to those of us in rural Australia with an interest in farming that we have a minister who is actually passionate about agriculture. The feedback we received on our tour was positive. Just as encouraging has been the ongoing discussion that I have been having with primary producers in Barker about the government relief package.

Farming families and industry groups are grateful that the federal government is genuinely committed to ensuring regional communities are not abandoned at this time of crisis. I, too, am grateful that our Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture have put a suite of measures on the table which offer an updated financial, social and mental health support framework for those in greatest need. I echo the sentiments of the National Farmers' Federation President, Brett Finlay, who I understand was in the building earlier today. He has said that the government's relief package announced demonstrates that the coalition government is listening to the farming community. I think Mr Finlay was spot-on when he described the package as being both fiscally responsible and considerate of circumstances suffered by rural communities in many parts of Australia. I also concur with Mr Finlay's commendation of the minister for his continued efforts as a champion for Australian agriculture.

I believe this bill is the cornerstone of the coalition's commitment to supporting family families through difficult times and investing in the growth of a profitable and globally competitive agricultural sector. This is important because, as others have said in this place, it will rain again; and, when it does, we need to be ready to take advantage of that situation.

That is why I am proud to be a member of the coalition government and proud that we have introduced this bill into the parliament. This bill reinforces the federal government's support for the Australian food and fibre producers and, more broadly, for our nation's rural and regional economies. As such, I commend it to the House.

Mr BUCHHOLZ (Wright—Government Whip) (17:52): It is with great pleasure that I rise to speak on the Farm Household Support Bill 2014 and Farm Household Support (Consequential and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2014 this evening in the chamber. Before I speak directly to the bill, it would be remiss of me not to take charge of some of the comments that came from the other side of the House during this debate.

Members opposite took the opportunity to burnish their credentials, claiming that pricing carbon was a good thing for our farming sector. I was speaking with an irrigator only last Saturday, and when he opened his power bill he was physically sick as he looked at the escalating cost of him doing business in the agriculture sector. Can you imagine what stress that has on a family's mindset? Can you imagine what pressure it puts on the family budget? I challenge anyone in this place to think of the last time they opened a bill and their immediate
response was to be violently ill. To come to this place and claim that pricing carbon is a wonderful aspiration for the agriculture sector is fundamentally flawed. It is playing a crippling role.

We heard comments from the crossbench that it was ridiculous that Australia could be the food bowl for Asia. Members from the crossbench, who have spent more than 27 years in parliament, whether it be in state parliament or in this place, are part of the problem. It is those who sit on the crossbench who decide. Go back and look at their years of experience. When they came to the parliament, state or federal, farm input costs were up to six times lower. When those members of the crossbench came in here and said there was not a future in agriculture and scoffed at the coalition when we said that there was, the average cattle property in his electorate would have had 10 full-time workers on it. Today in his electorate, the average workforce on a property would be mum, dad and the odd contractor that would come in on an annual basis.

Input costs are crippling our sector, whether it be through petroleum costs, labour costs or seed costs. We say that we are a smart nation, but a John Deere harvester in America is $400,000. We were at parity with the US dollar not too long ago, and the exact same machine here was $800,000. Why? It is the crossbenchers who have overseen that and then dared to come in and criticise the coalition when we came in and put up packages to assist this sector.

I am proud of the sector in my electorate. We have the Lockyer Valley with Gatton, Laidley and Forest Hill. In addition we have Beaudesert, the Fassifern Valley with Boonah, Harrisville and Peak Crossing, and, to the south-east, Canungra and Beechmont. Each one of those communities relies heavily on the success of the agriculture sector, whether it be beef, dairy or horticulture. When one of my farmers is doing well, they are in town buying new stock or product.

A typical farming business in my electorate is a family business by the name of Dovers and Son. They are third generation and openly saying it is as tough as they have ever seen. And it is tough. We were affected by the live cattle export trade debacle that we saw introduced by the other side of the House and supported by the Greens; but, as a result, when those northern cattle no longer had an export market, they were forced into our southern markets, so our traditional prices that we would have got took a beating.

Our dairy industry is on its knees at the hands of the duopolies of the processors that they sell their milk to. When you go to the processors and put them under the pump, they will make it absolutely clear that the pressure is being screwed on them on the back of dollar-milk processing. In Queensland I now have less than 500 dairy farmers when 10 years ago there were 2,500. It is a bleak future. I have stood in this place and spoken about the dairy industry many times before, saying that I cannot fix this industry with a single piece of legislation for a mandatory code of conduct. There needs to be in the dairy sector in my electorate a muscling up on the processors and demanding a better price for the product at the farm gate. The retailers understand the value of the price of milk; they strategically place it at the back of the store so that you have to walk past all their other product lines to go and get it. They understand the value of milk. They use it as a cost leader to get people in the door so they can take advantage of the market.

I have the seventh-most-fertile valley in the world in the Lockyer Valley, which is situated right next door to the Fassifern Valley. The Lockyer Valley produce is sent to vegetable
markets in all major cities and contributes around $250 million worth of product each year just from that area. Next-door, still within my electorate, the Scenic Rim is dominated by agriculture, contributing about $196 million and $13.6 million of the gross regional product of the Scenic Rim. Agriculture is also the largest employer within the Scenic Rim, employing a total of about 1,400 people, or 13.7 per cent of the region's workforce.

The thing that unites my agricultural sector, whether it be dairy, beef or horticulture, is rising debt. A quick synopsis: roughly, if you bought a place in the electorate about 10 years ago you would have paid around $5 million for it. Your debt ratio would have always been skewed at around 50 per cent. Over the last 10 years, the value of your property would have gone from $5 million to $10,000,000. So as a result, your debt ratio at 50 per cent went from $2½ million to $5 million as the price escalated. You have a debt of $5 million on a valuation of $10 million.

In recent years, on the back of the drought and the poor policy decisions by the previous government, the value of land has come back. We have properties now that were worth $10 million but, if pushed for a fire sale, today they would be worth around $6 million—but they are still carrying a $5 million debt. So they are way outside their 50 per cent loan ratio and that is why we as a government are here today introducing the Farm Household Support Bill 2014. We are doing our share in lifting up and trying to help this sector back to prosperity.

There is a responsibility for our banks, who rode the wave of prosperity, who saw the opportunity to lend to the market, who saw the opportunity with rising valuations and who saw that it was a safe bet with security if things went sour, that their money would be secure. So I say that there is a role for our major banks in being part of the solution. There is a future in the agricultural sector in Australia; there is a future in the dairy industry, there is a future in the beef industry and there is a future in the horticulture industry. If you listen to the crossbenchers they will tell you that there is not. Evidence to support my case, that there is a future in this sector, is that when a place worth over $200 million wants to get sold there is a kilometre-long line of international buyers standing and waiting to come to Australia to invest into this sector because they see the future benefit. Why do they see the future benefit and why do they see Australia as a safe bet to invest in? Because we are the smartest in the world. We are the most efficient farmers in the world. We have the most initiative, and we are the most intuitive farmers in the world. We will continue to be because we have to be.

I have a local family in the dairy industry, the Dennis family. They said, 'No more, I am not accepting the processors price.' They pulled a couple of million dollars and did a partnership deal with some friends, some family and some banks. They set up their own bottling plant and they are now distributing their milk, Scenic Rim 4Real Milk brand, to over 200 outlets in the south-east corner. That is the initiative. That is the intuition that inspires us as a nation—that singular type of operator.

As a government, the producers are not looking to us for a handout. They just want us to get out of their way. These are our people; the agriculture sector are our people. Just as the unions are linked at the hip to the Australian Labor Party, the agriculture sector are our people. When we cut ourselves they bleed. The agricultural sector believes in the same political ideologies of freedom, of free market, the values of family and the values of Christianity. These people are the true quintessentials who have made Australia what it is. They need to be looked after—they are our future.
At lunch on Saturday, again, I was disappointed when I heard a grown man tell me that he is spending nearly $20,000 a week on feed to keep his stock alive at his property west of Longreach. He has three kids coming through and I said, 'Do you want the kids to take over the place?' He said, 'Not a chance. This is killing me. There is no way I want my kids to do that.' And he said, 'Do you know what? However tough it is, I will get out of this. I will be better for it.' Then he said, 'I know it is not the right thing. I do not want to push my kids into it. But I know that they will live here. My parents lived here. I lived here. My kids will live on this place.'

There is a sense of pride in the bush. There is a sense of achievement. As a coalition government we need to lock arms with this sector and ride with them for the next 10 years, in conjunction with the banks; by writing good policy and by making sure that we do everything in our power to reduce these horrific input costs. Every day that we have breath in ourselves, we should remember that there are people out there at the moment opening their energy bills and who are being physically sick—ill—because they have no idea how they are going to meet those costs. I thank you for your indulgence, and I commend the bill.

Mr TAYLOR (Hume) (18:06): It is a great privilege to speak on the Farm Household Support (Consequential and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2014 today. Almost 10 per cent of my electorate work directly in agriculture, and many more work indirectly in the sector, so any legislation impacting on agriculture is of great interest to me. It is also of interest to me as a fifth-generation farmer myself.

A traditional feature of agriculture, and indeed small business more generally, is that the household and the business are often one and the same. To understand how we might best help farm households we need to talk first about farm businesses and how we might support them in the coming years.

It is unfortunate that the last government never understood agriculture, the opportunities it presents and the policy framework we need to put in place to make it succeed. We saw a raft of policy failures, and more about that in a moment. On this side of the House we understand—and many other speakers who have come before me have said the same thing—that agriculture stands on the edge of the greatest opportunity we have seen in decades and perhaps even centuries. Many seem to not understand this point. Yes, this opportunity is not getting through to the bottom line for many farmers for reasons that I will explain, but some other members, like the member for Kennedy, need to get out a bit more into our export markets to see what is really happening out there. These are strong words, but let me explain.

In 2005 I began work on a project in Western Australia. I was working with the largest iron ore producer in Australia trying to understand the impact that Asian demand was having and was going to have on its business. The results of the work were absolutely staggering. China had suddenly realised that self-sufficiency in iron ore was no longer realistic. Its thirst for our exports that followed was growing by the day and prices began their extraordinary journey from $20 a tonne to $200 a tonne. We talk now about how terrible it is that the iron ore price has got to $100 a tonne, but it is still five times higher than it was before the Chinese surge began. Meanwhile it became clear in this case that a business producing just over 100 million tonnes a year could be producing over 300 million tonnes in 10 years time. Most of the management team of this organisation fell over laughing, but the prediction proved correct.
Then in 2008 many, including me, began to apply the same approach to understand agricultural demand. The results were similarly staggering. Not only would population drive growth in demand for our food and fibre but far more importantly rising income would change diets in the most fundamental ways. As people get wealthier their calorie consumption rises—sometimes to their great regret—and, more importantly, the make-up of those calories changes too. As we get wealthier we eat fewer carbohydrates and more proteins, fruit, vegetables, oils and sugars. That in itself is interesting, but the story gets better for our farmers.

The land and water required for those calories is increasing at a remarkable pace as more and more people enter the global middle class and as the land and water requirements for more intensive proteins increase. To put this in perspective: two-thirds of the growth in the world is now in poorer, developing countries, as against just one-third a decade ago. So where is that land and water coming from to meet this need? The clear answer is: nowhere. For all practical purposes there is no new land and water to access and we will probably lose a lot of it to agriculture in the coming years. So the problem can be solved only by producing more with less—higher productivity—and not just more of anything but more of the right foods and the right fibre. Oilseeds, fresh fruit and veg, proteins and even sugar are the foods that will see the greatest gains.

Already this is having a big impact on global prices for many products. In the summer season just passed we saw extraordinary prices for fresh fruit and veg in countries to our north. They are prices that we are not yet accessing but they are extraordinary prices and markets nonetheless. Global dairy prices, not local ones, have reached new highs in recent years and oilseeds are being imported into China at unprecedented rates. The global markets for lamb and even beef have never looked so good, despite what is happening locally. Despite all this good news, only last week I hosted a forum for farmers in Goulburn and heard about the continuing cost-price squeeze that our farmers face.

So with all this good news why aren’t we seeing greater farm profitability and greater farm prosperity? The answer is sobering. For a start, our competitiveness has suffered badly from a high dollar that has been exacerbated by extraordinary public spending in recent years. Any resource economist will tell you that the first thing you should do when you have a resources boom is save government money to take pressure off interest rates and take pressure off the currency, but our Treasurer at the time, the member for Lilley, decided to run a grand experiment by doing the exact opposite and spending money as fast as he could. At the end of the day who can stand between the Labor Party and a wasteful public spending agenda?

But the problem was worse. When a great opportunity in the marketplace presents itself, the key is to get access to new markets. So the government did the opposite again. They started shutting down export markets. The most successful agricultural market in the last 20 years was the live export market. The former government, in its infinite wisdom, decided to shut the market down. We have to remember that, despite what the member for Kennedy would have us believe, the bulk of our agricultural sectors are export focused and have been for almost 200 years. To make matters worse the last government made no progress on accessing new valuable markets. While the Kiwis managed to get a free trade agreement with China, which is now powering their economy through dairy exports, we got nothing. That is
why we announced within months of getting into government an agreement with Korea and why we will continue to work hard on Japan and, perhaps most importantly, China.

But agriculture needs more than just markets; it needs secure access to water and land. The Labor Party got to work on this one with its appalling Murray-Darling Basin Plan. Instead of looking at innovations to save water and use it better for environmental purposes, the ALP went for the lazy answer of taking water from agriculture. Meanwhile, agricultural education and R&D have suffered badly. We saw a reallocation of money to green research and education. The focus was taken away from productivity. But I guess when you are married to the Greens that is what you do. Farm extension services, the lifeblood of farm productivity, have gone the same way, with a shift from a productivity focus to an environmental focus. All farmers understand sustainability and understand that profitability is a prerequisite for sustainability. Throughout all of this, our supply chains had suffered from a policy vacuum. We stepped in to deal with the proposed Archer Daniels Midland purchase because there is limited competition in our grain ports and an ineffective regulatory framework. Grain is not the only industry where this is true. We know there are problems to solve in the sugar industry and in parts of the meat and dairy industries.

Farm finance has also suffered from a policy vacuum. As farm debt levels climbed from $30 billion to over $70 billion, there was no debate in this country about how we would finance the next generation of farmers into this wonderful industry. These younger farmers should not just be the sons and daughters of current landowners. Instead, we want to follow the New Zealand example of finding ways to bring new blood into our industries. At the end of the day, the owner-operator, the family farm, will remain the heart of our farming industries; but that owner-operator will need to have its business partners to succeed.

Into this context, the coalition is determined to take advantage of the extraordinary opportunities we currently face in agriculture, opportunities that others dismiss. We are re-establishing the live export trade. We are opening up new markets in Asia, both through increased market access and also through enhanced biosecurity. We are focusing on delivering more water in the Murray-Darling Basin for both agriculture and the environment. We are putting more money into R&D. We are focused on helping farmers to reduce their costs through reduced energy prices, reduced red tape and less government borrowings to take pressure off interest rates and our currency. Our agricultural white paper is the first serious look at the broader policy framework for agriculture for many years. The paper will look hard at many of the issues I have already talked about, including agricultural finance, education, R&D and supply chains.

But we also need to support those suffering from the ravages of years of poor policy combined with harsh seasons. Coalition policy will never focus on propping up failing businesses, but it will focus on helping out households facing impossible circumstances. My first significant memories of drought were in the early 1980s. When lying on the ground, I could shoot rabbits hundreds of metres away without a blade of grass between me and the rabbit. That was bad news for the rabbit but worse news for us as farmers. The stress on families in these periods of drought is enormous, and I saw it in my own family. I prayed for rain constantly, if only to relieve those family pressures, let alone the business pressures.

I am pleased that both sides of the House support this legislation. I acknowledge the commitment of the member for Hunter for supporting many of our agricultural policies. He
understands the flaws of past policies, and the serious need to move away from the mistakes of recent years. There are many aspects of this legislation before the House that show a deep insight into modern agriculture, farming businesses and farm households. We understand that the asset threshold that would trigger this assistance needs to be relatively high, and exclude the family home. That is why we have set the asset trigger at over $2.5 million and rising with the CPI. Selling down a farm business in a drought is a disastrous financial outcome, and a policy that forces such a sale would be poor policy indeed. We also recognise that off-farm income is often used to keep farm businesses going, but we should not discriminate against those who are earning that off-farm income. The legislation recognises this.

While my electorate is not suffering from drought in the way that many other regions are, there are areas of great hardship. This legislation recognises that farmers can face this hardship, even in areas that are not in what we might traditionally call drought-declared. Our agricultural policy is focused on helping farmers to be self-reliant, including in drought. Farmers want their businesses to succeed without government support. That is our focus, and the focus of this legislation. Only when self-reliance is impossible should the government step in. That is also the focus of this legislation.

This is an extraordinary time for agriculture. In 1788, when Europeans first arrived in Australia, they could not have known that in a few short decades this new country would become an agricultural powerhouse, building enormous prosperity on the back of exports to England. We currently face an opportunity of similar magnitude. We will not get there unless we provide the right policy framework and the right support to our farmers, in their times of greatest need. I commend this legislation to the House.

Mr JOYCE (New England—Minister for Agriculture and Deputy Leader of The Nationals) (18:19): Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak on the Farm Household Support (Consequential and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2014. This becomes the second iteration of a drought policy. I too took the first part through the cabinet and the parliament at the end of last year. That allowed the movement of tens of millions of dollars into drought affected areas and also allocated $10 million towards water infrastructure. At that point, we hoped and prayed that we would get rain and the issues would be alleviated. Of course, that was not the case. This brought us to the position where we had the second iteration, of which this is a crucial part.

Prior to this, we had the transitional farm family payment. The trouble with that transitional farm family payment was that it was not accessible to enough people to deal with their financial trauma. In many instances we had people who had no access to money whatsoever, none. They were actually ruled out from having access to social security by reason of the asset test. When the asset test comes to a position of $1.5 million and you have a property worth $3 million, which is not unusual nowadays, with debts of $1 million without any real desire for the bank to go any further than that—they actually were outside the assets test. What does this mean? The differentiation for them is that we had houses with no money going into them at all. They did not get Newstart; they were not allowed to get Newstart. They had no access to income from the farm because they were in drought. They could not just close the gate and walk out the door because you are actually bound by law for the maintenance of your stock and other vital components of the farm.
No matter which side of the chamber you are on and who you are, there is something inside you that says something has to happen, that this is not right; that our fellow Australians and fellow Australian families should not be put in this sort of condition. When you get to an area you can see that sort of pall of depression and darkness that falls over people as they say: 'Well I cannot see a way out. I cannot even clean up the accounts in town. I cannot go to town because I am a bad debt. If I go to town, how do I pay for my fuel? How do I clear the chemist account? How do I deal with all these other things about which people say, 'That doesn't happen in Australia'. Well it does. There is no more vital sign of misery in our nation that we refuse to see than rural misery, where people live in a diminished condition. Not only that, these people live in a diminished condition miles away from the benevolence of the government that is apparent in the multiple hospitals and schools that you would see in larger urban settings.

I said that at the start because it is very important that people clearly identify the difference between doing it tough in the country and doing it tough in other parts. I am not saying for one moment that there are not people in the western suburbs of the major cities, or in other areas, who are doing it tough as well. This is a particularly cruel form where not only are you without your regular income stream, which is tenuous on many occasions by reason of the fact that is it related to the vagaries of the weather, but also you are taken away from any social security settings. It is vitally important that we immediately change this.

I commend the support of the coalition and the Prime Minister and the support of the opposition in saying that, on this occasion, people on either side of the political divide are not going to let this human misery continue. So what this legislation allows people to take the limit from 1.5 to 2.55 million and their house is exempt as well. Exempting your house, your primary domicile, probably gets you close to a $3 million net asset limit. If you go away contract harvesting, if you go away working on the road or if you go doing some work in one of the mines, it allows you to earn up to $80,000, provided that your interest bill is bigger than that because we know that, when the money turns up, the banks will just hoover it up and send it straight off to fix them up. At least, it allows you some sort of mechanism to earn some external income. This allows off-farm assets for a couple, for partners, of about $280,000 as well. All in all, it is a good outcome.

I have had some people say it was rushed. The member for Moreton said it was rushed. It was not actually. He should be aware of his own government's position. The first time we started reviewing this was in 2008. On this issue, we are bringing forward and adjusting the settings, but the overall scheme is something that we have been looking at for some time. It is part of a process of dealing with the issues of drought into the future. We will have other settings in other parts, to which we wish to ensure people will get access. We will make sure that people will get access to $280 million at four per cent, or a million dollars or 50 per cent of the facility, whichever is the lesser, so that people can have access to money. It is not part of these bills but, in similar settings, is part of the drought package. That gives people access to money to replant, to restock, to try to get cash flows moving again.

I will be happy to say the interim farm household allowance is currently working under executive orders. What we are talking about is the settings as of 1 July. I suppose people are wondering, if we are talking about this legislation now, how on earth are people are getting access to it? It is happening under executive orders. I want to remind people that we already
have about 83 claims that are true. So 83 families now have access to this scheme, which is uncapped. Whoever is out there in need and is listening, this scheme is uncapped. You will get access to it if you fit the criteria. We are seeing right now that people are doing precisely that—they are fitting the criteria. Before with the interim farm family payment, when I went to some towns only one person in the whole town it. It was not really ticking the box.

We have also had some other discussions. With the greatest respect, there was one where the member for Hunter asked for clarification about the costs associated with the farm household allowance and the $99.4 million that was agreed to by the Labor government in 20013-14 as the cost of the allowance over the forward estimates. This included $37.3 million for the Department of Human Services to administer the allowance. Of this 30 million was set aside in 2013-14 to build a dedicated IT system to support the payment and for case management of the allowance. Again, this was the setting put in place by the former Labor government. The member for Hotham brought up that her husband's family was associated with the dairy industry and noted that the scoping meetings—they are not happening anymore—would bring an end to civilisation as we know it. We will still have as required—

Mr Albanese: Move on, Senator!

Mr Joyce: It is good to see the member for Grayndler, from the large rural seat of Grayndler! I noticed that St Mary's Cathedral is right next to Hyde Park.

Mr Albanese: Libya Hill—say thank you and move on, Senator!

Mr Joyce: Lucky we got the money back for that.

Mr Albanese: Just say thank you and move on.

Mr Joyce: I would say thank you if you had left any money in the bank, but you did not; we had to go and find it.

Mr Albanese: That is nonsense and you know.

Mr Joyce: You should ask me more questions. Why don't you ask me some more questions? It was very important that we recognised that we can actually have meetings, if people want them. We will be having meetings from time to time and I envisage that we will be having a meeting in the very near future to deal with, among other things, working out a national approach for fruit fly.

Agriculture in Australia is vitally important. There is no better example than what happened in January. This nation thought we were going to have a $100 million loss for the month but we ended up with a $1.4 billion surplus. The member for Hunter, who is sitting beside the member for Grayndler, will be able to tell him exactly where that came from. Predominantly it was driven by agriculture. This goes to show that agriculture puts money on the table to pay its way. How did we get that money on the table? We harvested $17.2 million worth of wheat in Western Australia—we got in excess of six million tonnes of wheat onto boats—and we had the live cattle trade, with those terrible people in the live cattle trade putting all that cattle onto boats, getting paid for it and helping our nation get back into profit. We also had all those terrible people in the live sheep trade, getting paid for putting sheep on boats and bringing money back into the country. It is great when we get these trades going again because that is how we turn a buck. When you are making a buck you do not need the Farm Household Support Bill, because you are making money. But, if you have got a drought and you are doing it tough, these are the sorts of policy settings you need. Our minds are
always directed towards how we can turn a profit and how we can take the agricultural future of our nation forward. That is why I am also very encouraged by the support we are getting for the white paper.

The white paper is going to be a seminal document. It is going to increase the capacity of all those people throughout the agricultural sector to have their say in where our nation is going. It will make sure those people will be able to make their contribution on how we get a fair return back to the farm gate; how we can get a better return back to the mums and dads, back to the kitchen table, back to the people who are putting the cattle on the boats and paying their way in our nation, back to the people putting the wheat on the boats and paying their way in our nation, back to the people who are working under the belief that, even with the vagaries of the weather, they are doing the right and proper thing by creating the food and creating the fibre which feeds people and which clothes people—I cannot think of a more honourable life; that would have to be one of the best. These people deserve our support and I hope that will stem from the white paper. I think that this hope is not in vain. There will be a good sense of bipartisanship as we try to make sure that we create settings ensuring that long after I have gone, the member for Hunter has gone and other people have left there is a document that can be taken forward—

Mr Albanese: Who do you reckon will be here the longest?

Mr Joyce: I do not know. The way I am going, probably you. We will have a document that can be taken forward. It is something similar to a defence policy, so people know roughly where you are coming from and how it is going to work. I know that this is basically non-contro apart from the expected couple of jibes that you always get on an issue like this. We have something later on that is going to be slightly more contro—we will see how it goes—and that concerns the re-registration of chemicals. Maybe that will liven the place up a bit. I thank those in the chamber for their attention.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Message from the Governor-General recommending appropriation announced.

Third Reading

Mr Joyce (New England—Minister for Agriculture and Deputy Leader of The Nationals) (18:34): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Farm Household Support (Consequential and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2014

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr FitzGibbon (Hunter) (18:35): Like with Farm Household Support Bill, I can indicate that the opposition will be supporting the Farm Household Support (Consequential and Transitional Provisions) Bill and, again like the previous bill, we will be taking a
bipartisan approach to this debate as best we can. I do resent my very good friend the member for Grayndler provoking the Minister for Agriculture throughout his summation speech. Until then it had been pretty tidy. Of course people like me, with my 30-minute contribution to that last debate, did point out a few flaws in the government’s approach to agricultural policy—not the least being that the minister, who spruiked his agricultural white paper, has not included in its terms of reference any reference to climate change or natural resource sustainability. I think this is a huge omission and I think, in his more private moments, he would concede it is an enormous omission. I suppose, given that there are so many climate change deniers on that side of this place, it was going to be a little embarrassing if not uncomfortable to be discussing the impacts of our changing climate on the agricultural sector.

I suppose the situation is somewhat difficult for the minister. When I was a minister, I had an infrastructure minister who was interested in infrastructure within the agricultural sector, including our grain supply chain. This is something I know the minister must be struggling with and I give him my sympathies on that matter. I am very pleased to help him in anyway that I can as he lobbies his own side for some investment in infrastructure in this country. One of his own on the other side, the member for Hume, suggested through the ANZ Port Jackson Partners report that, to fully capitalise on the food production opportunities afforded to us in Asia, we will need something like $500 billion to $600 billion worth of investment in this country. Obviously, much of that will come through foreign investment, but we will need a government in this country which is interested in investing in our economic future.

I do resent my good friend the member for Grayndler provoking the minister, because it causes me to travel a little bit off course. I promised those on my side that I would be very brief in speaking on this bill, unlike on the last one. I will be moving the second reading amendment as circulated in my name. I am sure that Mr Butler, the member for Port Adelaide, will be happy to second that amendment. I will be moving that amendment with some reluctance, because I am not keen to muddy the waters on what is a non-controversial and important bill, which of course had its beginnings in the BERL report under the former Labor government.

Mr Joyce: Mr Deputy Speaker, with greatest deference, is that an amendment to this consequential amendment bill?

Mr FITZGIBBON: Yes, it is a second reading amendment to this bill. I have circulated it. It criticises you, Minister, for cutting quarantine resources to your department, which is something you would almost expect me to do given the likely impact—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Vasta): I think the member might have the wrong bill.

Mr FITZGIBBON: Okay, I am on the wrong bill.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: We are dealing with the Farm Household Support (Consequential and Transitional Provisions) Bill.

Mr JOYCE (New England—Minister for Agriculture and Deputy Leader of The Nationals) (18:39): A person who was not a gentleman would take great advantage of that, but I will not. I will let that one pass. However, I will take you up on a couple of other points. The member for Grayndler, with his 50 acres of farm at Hyde Park, who grew up tough in the suburbs of Sydney, should understand that one of the reasons we are not dealing with climate change in the white paper is that, whatever your position is, I do not believe we can change it
back—not from Australia and not single-handedly. We certainly cannot change it back with a carbon tax, because we have actually got a carbon tax. We have got one—so everything now should be better; it should be fixed. If we look out there at the great vault of heaven, it is around about where we left it before the carbon tax was introduced. But what I do know is that we are all poorer; I notice that. If a tax fixes the climate, let us just jack up the GST—that should fix it; that could do it as well.

The other thing I noted was that the absolute spear-chuckers on this—the Australian Greens—did not go so well down in Tasmania the other day. It is quite clear that, if this is your calling card, you have not got much of a political future. That is because the Australian people are now focused on other things such as getting some money on the table, keeping their job, getting the price of power down and basically trying to cut the cloth to fit the wearer. You are just not going to win a trick with a carbon tax. If I were to give my meagre advice, I would say that it would make life a lot tougher for us, and a lot easier for the Labor Party, if they ditched the carbon tax, because it just gives us spruiking capacity on every issue. Anyway, as long as you keep it, we will keep knocking you down over it.

There are a couple of other issues here. Infrastructure is a good point. That is why we have allocated $300 million in the forward estimates for inland rail. I was deputy chair of the dams committee and I hope at some stage to pursue that agenda in a greater way. I know that if we do and we try to build some dams there will be a battle. When that piece of infrastructure comes up it will be interesting to see who stands in the way, because we know the Greens will. They will be out there fighting for the frogs and fighting for the moths; there is no doubt about that. They will be out there making sure that every toad is sacred while we will be trying to make sure that we actually build something and have a mechanism that creates commerce, that creates a future and that gives the nation a greater place to go. One of the greatest deliveries of infrastructure was obviously the Snowy Mountains scheme. There were some political giants that stood behind that process. In the future, when we try to build the next lot of dams, we will see whether those giants still exist or whether we will have people who will just stymie the process, who will drag it down, who will try to belittle it and who will try to make sure that the boggomoss snail has more rights than people. I note the member for Grayndler has returned to the chamber. He is like moth to a flame—he cannot stay away.

The member for Grayndler might be the person who stands up to the Greens. He will understand, because he is the actual people's choice. The other guy is just a usurper. He is sitting there, but he is not there for long, because the people's choice is just over there. The people's choice is going to move up and he is going to move back; that is basically what happens. He moves up and the other guy moves back. And the lady behind, the member for Sydney, keeps on focusing on sections that would fit neatly between the ribs. Anyway, I digress.

Mr Porter: She has been one of the most incompetent, so that puts her up the pecking order.

Mr Joyce: Do not knock Senator Conroy. Senator Conroy has been exceptionally good in the incompetence stakes. Anyway—

Mr Fitzgibbon: Mr Deputy Speaker, I raise a point of order: this has been a broad-ranging debate and I have been one of the culprits, but we are really straying well beyond relevance now.
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Vasta): I call the minister back and I call him to order.

Mr Albanese interjecting—

Mr JOYLE: I think it is vitally important that we get this through tonight, so we have to stop the interjections. I thank the chamber for its attention.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Mr JOYLE (New England—Minister for Agriculture and Deputy Leader of The Nationals) (18:44): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Quarantine Charges (Imposition—General) Bill 2014

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter) (18:45): I begin by apologising to the House, particularly to the member for Grayndler, because it was my mistake that gave the minister an opportunity to have another crack. It was a little long and a little boring, although exciting and unpredictable in parts, but certainly well wide of the matter that was before the House. This time, in this debate, I move my second reading amendment to the quarantine charges bill:

That all the words after "That" be omitted with a view to substituting the following words:

"While not declining the bill a second reading, the House condemns the Government for quarantine funding cuts."

This is, of course, a condemnation of the government's decision to cut funding for our quarantine services in this country—our front-line defence against pests and other diseases that might creep into this country and that, in turn, would undermine our clean and green image, one of our great natural advantages in international agricultural markets. It would be remiss of me not to raise that in the context of this bill, because it is extremely relevant to the bill. I know that there will be others keen to talk on this issue. It is an issue that no less than the National Farmers' Federation has been critical of, and I look forward to the minister responding to it in his summation on this bill.

The Quarantine Charges (Collection) Bill 2014 and associated bills form part of a legislative package which is designed purely as a cost recovery mechanism. It will realign Australia's biosecurity and quarantine import systems in an efficient and effective cost recovery model, which is consistent with the Australian government cost recovery guidelines and, as I indicated earlier, had its beginnings in the Beale report under the former Labor government. It also provides authority to collect charges imposed under the Quarantine Charges (Imposition—General) Bill 2014, the Quarantine Charges (Imposition—Excise) Bill 2014 and the Quarantine Charges (Imposition—Customs) Bill 2014. As I indicated earlier, the opposition will be supporting the bill and I commend it to the House.
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Vasta): Is the amendment seconded?

Mr Albanese: I second the amendment.

Debate adjourned.

BUSINESS

Rearrangement

Mr TUDGE (Aston—Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister) (18:48): by leave—I move:

That government orders of the day Nos 5 to 7, Quarantine Charges (Imposition—Customs) Bills 2014, Quarantine Charges (Imposition—Excise) Bill 2014 and Quarantine Charges (Collection) Bill 2014, be postponed until the next sitting.

Question agreed to.

BILLS

Civil Aviation Amendment (CASA Board) Bill 2014

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (18:49): Australia has a second-to-none record of aviation safety of which we as a nation should be proud. That record is the envy of the rest of the world. It is mainly due to the diligence of the nation's airlines and the professionalism of the men and women who are responsible for aviation safety in all sections of the aviation industry, including our engineers, our air traffic controllers and all those who work in the aviation sector in Australia. This record also says something about the mature approach taken by both sides of politics to aviation safety and regulations.

Governments of either political persuasion have always taken a non-partisan approach to aviation safety, and that is entirely appropriate. In fact, it is something that we should be proud of. We will have our arguments over many issues in this chamber, but when it comes to regulatory standards in the aviation sector—which injects about $7 billion into the national economy and is a critical part of the success of our tourism industry—it is important that we engage in mature debate on those issues. Hence, Labor will support this legislation on the basis that the government is essentially putting forward an expansion of the CASA board by two members. The opposition does not necessarily see the need to increase the size of the CASA board; however, given the minister has asked for this to happen, because it is an issue related to aviation safety it is something that we will give the minister the benefit of the doubt on.

The Minister for Transport says that he wishes to increase the breadth of expertise on the board, and I would certainly encourage him to ensure that the appointments to the board are made on that basis rather than on any political considerations. The Minister for Transport says that this will allow the government to implement its vision for CASA. It is important that the opposition of the day supports the government wherever it can in areas of aviation safety, and I certainly intend to do so, as does the Australian Labor Party in this parliament.
We live on an island continent. We rely upon aviation to connect Australians with each other and to connect us with the world. We need to make sure that we continue to have a strong aviation safety record, and the previous government certainly put the highest priority on aviation safety. In 2009, we embarked on a process of developing a green paper and a white paper on aviation that were directed towards how we would see aviation not just a year in advance but for decades ahead. We strengthened CASA's independence by establishing the board in its current form. We did so to ensure that high-level-expert oversight of the authority's operations was in place. That was a part of the first national aviation policy statement in December 2009. There was extensive consultation with over 530 submissions from the industry, state and local governments and the community. The white paper process laid out a clear course for addressing the economic, security and environmental challenges facing aviation safety. That paper confirmed that safety and security was the number one concern. That should be the case for all governments of whatever political persuasion and I certainly believe that that will continue to be something that has bipartisan support in this parliament.

As a result of the aviation white paper, Labor strengthened baggage- and passenger-screening requirements. We tightened the Aviation Security Identification Card scheme. We improved security-screening standards and training programs. We modernised air traffic management, including the use of satellite technology. Importantly, we boosted CASA funding by $90 million. This additional funding over four years from 2010 provided it with certainty. I would say to the government, as it undertakes its budget deliberations, that it needs to ensure that that funding certainty continues into the future, because it provides organisation with the security to able to undertake its tasks in a manner that is appropriate, since aviation safety and security is the No. 1 priority. I acknowledge that the reforms arising from the aviation white paper were supported by the coalition.

The thing about aviation safety, though, is that the job is never finished. There is always something changing, whether it is due to technology, the international security environment or changing travel patterns. Indeed, it is vital that legislators and regulators keep abreast of the changes and act where necessary. You get a sense of the scale of the challenge when you consider the changes that have happened in this sector in the last couple of decades. As a result of aviation deregulation, airfares are now five times more affordable than they were 20 years ago and the number of Australians who fly has tripled. The emergence of low-cost carriers has opened the skies to many people who previously would not have travelled by air. Whereas decades ago air travel was a luxury, many Australians can now afford to fly interstate for the weekend to see a football match or a concert. So passenger volume is a challenge. The industry predicts that over the next two decades, passenger numbers will double to 72.9 million trips a year.

Then there is security. It is not so long ago that people could board aircraft without consideration to measures that had been put in place, such as going through a body scanner. When the government received the recommendations about the introduction of body scanners, it was seen, in some circles, as a controversial decision. It is a good example of bipartisan support securing the introduction of body scanners in a way that ensures civil liberties concerns were taken into account. The bipartisan support also ensured that the type of body scanner introduced was one that took into account health concerns relating to new technology.
that had been used in other parts of the world. Body scanners are now operating at our international gateway airports. They are operating efficiently. They are improving the security at those gateway airports. I acknowledge the fact that parliamentarians here did not play politics with the issue. We had a trial of the scanners up on the second floor of Parliament House so that members of parliament could go through a scanner themselves to experience it and see that there was no threat to people's dignity, no threat to safety and no threat to their health. Indeed, it is much safer than the time we spend on mobile phones in terms of the risk factors involved, with the analysis that had been undertaken by health experts.

The September 11 attacks in the United States changed the aviation landscape forever. They added a new layer of complexity to aircraft regulation. Another challenge is the extraordinary growth that we have seen of fly-in fly-out employment, particularly in the resources sector. Tourism, which employs half a million Australians and is the sector most reliant upon aviation, is also in a state of constant change. Because of international competition and the fact that tourism destinations go in and out of fashion frequently, we need our carriers to be nimble enough to be flexible while also maintaining the highest levels of passenger safety. Change is the only constant in aviation. CASA's emphasis on constant vigilance and continuous improvement has allowed it to meet the emerging challenges of the past, and I am confident that it will continue to do so in the future.

As I mentioned earlier, Labor supports a bipartisan approach to aviation safety. It is too important to be a political battleground. However, there is a role for an opposition to raise concerns about the direction of some government policy, and earlier this month there were reports that the government was considering staff cuts of up to 20 per cent in the Australian Transport Safety Bureau. The ATSB employs 110 people. They investigate accidents, safety concerns and near misses in air, sea and rail transport.

These cuts should not be considered by government. There is a need to quarantine ATSB—just like CASA and other safety organisations, like the Australian Maritime Safety Authority. Their task is simply too important to cut corners by cutting costs and cutting staff, and I would hope that the government maintains at least the support that is there for these agencies.

Of course, the financial implications of this legislation—appointing two extra board members—will be $160,000 per year or thereabouts. If the government can find $160,000 per year to appoint two new board members, it should also find the resources to make sure that our transport safety authorities are quarantined from cuts for their own sake. I would urge the minister for transport, who is also the Deputy Prime Minister, to make sure that these agencies are not subject to budget cuts.

In making these changes, the government says it is part of their policy. We are supporting it. However, when it comes to the potential for cuts in this area, there is a very simple, old-fashioned saying: it is better to be safe than sorry. And when considering the aviation sector, you cannot afford to be in the situation whereby you look back with regret at decisions made that may have been short-sighted. So I am confident that the government will reject the suggestion of making cuts to the agency's staff.

In conclusion, CASA has always done an excellent job over the years, including in its current configuration with its board, a product of the former Labor government's 2009 reforms. This bill does not change that structure; it simply increases the size of the board. In that context the bill is a continuation of the parliament's bipartisan approach to aviation
safety—an approach that has served us well over the years—and I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Quarantine Charges (Imposition—General) Bill 2014
Quarantine Charges (Imposition—Customs) Bill 2014
Quarantine Charges (Imposition—Excise) Bill 2014
Quarantine Charges (Collection) Bill 2014
Civil Aviation Amendment (CASA Board) Bill 2014

Reference to Federation Chamber

Mr RUDDOCK (Berowra—Chief Government Whip) (19:03): I declare that these bills are referred to the Federation Chamber for further consideration.

Social Security Legislation Amendment (Increased Employment Participation) Bill 2014

Second Reading

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

to which the following amendment was moved:
That all the words after 'That' be omitted with a view to substituting the following words:
'whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading, the House:
(1) notes that if the Government was serious about addressing youth unemployment it would be providing more support for the more than 60,000 workers who have recently lost their jobs and be providing more support and training for young people; and
(2) calls on the Government to publicly review, by 30 June 2015, the impact of the extension of the non-payment period for recipients of the Relocation Assistance to Take Up a Job if the person is unable to work for the required six months.'

Ms HENDERSON (Corangamite) (19:04): I rise to speak on the Social Security Amendment (Increased Employment Participation) Bill 2014, in continuation. Before I pick up from where I left off last night, I want to note that this is a bill about jobs and the initiatives our government is taking in relation to jobs and in developing long-term jobs. We have just heard from the member for Grayndler, and it is with considerable disappointment that I reflect on the decision by the member for Grayndler back in 2008, to decline permission for AirAsia X to fly into Avalon Airport. This is a wonderful regional airport—an airport that has great potential and is a home base for Jetstar. We heard the member for Grayndler talking about looking back with regret about decisions that were short-sighted. And let me say that that was a regrettable and incredibly short-sighted decision, and it has set Avalon back by a number of years. As a government we are now working very hard to support Avalon Airport as it looks to transition into a strong regional and international airport.

The relocation assistance to take up a job program, which I was referring to, gives people a great opportunity to go where the work is. It is one thing to say, 'Look, there's a great job there', but it is quite another thing to get there; often it involves considerable costs. So I am
very proud that this particular program is an important part of our plank to promote workforce participation. It encourages job seekers to move to areas where jobs are available, and there is a particular focus in the regions, which is wonderful to see. In my region of Corangamite and across the Geelong region we have many great opportunities. Yes, we do have some challenges, but as a government we are working very hard to create new opportunities to bring new and emerging industries into our region. And I am really hoping that, if this bill is passed, many people will take up this opportunity to come and live in the great electorate of Corangamite and the great city of Geelong. The program will offer some very important financial support, including up to $6,000 available to support eligible job seekers who relocate to a regional area. Another $3,000 will be available to support eligible job seekers who relocate to a metropolitan area from a regional area to take up a job.

This is all part of a very strong plan for jobs, of our pursuit of building a strong and prosperous economy. What we are doing is scrapping the job-destroying carbon tax and we are scrapping the mining tax. Members on the other side are opposing that of course, which is very destructive in terms of jobs and our economy. We are working on re-establishing the rule of law by reintroducing the Australian Building and Construction Commission. We are building the roads of the 21st Century, the infrastructure of the 21st Century, and we are fighting night and day for jobs.

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (19:08): It was very interesting listening to the previous speaker talk about the government's plan for jobs. The only plan that I have noticed from the government is to watch more and more jobs disappear on a regular basis—I think about 63,000 jobs have disappeared in six months. That is quite a record, and I think if the government puts its mind to it there could be an enormous number of people unemployed. The fact is, they do not have a plan. There is no plan whatsoever to address the issue of new jobs, or new technology. All this government does is leave it to market forces.

I will not oppose the particular legislation before us today. The legislation has two initiatives in it. One of them is the Job Commitment Bonus and the other is the Relocation Assistance to Take Up a Job program, a program that was introduced by Labor when we were in power. This bill extends it and makes it more generous. It will provide financial assistance to the long-term unemployed—people who are looking for jobs. But there will be participation requirements associated with it. It will be available to people who are receiving Newstart and Youth Allowance, though that does not count if you are an apprentice or in full-time study as a student. Also, it will be available to people who have been on the Parenting Payment for at least the preceding 12 months to relocate for the purposes of commencing ongoing employment.

The program is going to be demand driven, and will provide $6,000 to support eligible job seekers who relocate to a regional area, from either a metropolitan area or another regional area, or up to $3,000 to support eligible job seekers who relocate to a metropolitan area. It is quite generous. Families with dependent children will receive an extra $3,000. But the catch to this is that a participant who leaves their employment, without good reason, within six months of receiving the relocation payment, will be excluded from receiving any payment for 26 weeks.

There can be a plethora of reasons why a person may choose to leave a job, and whether or not their explanation is acceptable will determine whether they are excluded from receiving
any sort of financial assistance from Centrelink. I think that is a little draconian. The government could be a little bit more generous around that particular component of this legislation.

The other component of this legislation is the Job Commitment Bonus. As all of us in this place know, youth unemployment is an issue in most electorates. Young Australians aged from 18-30, who have been receiving Newstart or Youth Allowance—other than if they are an apprentice or a full-time student—will be eligible for a tax-free bonus of $2,500 if they gain employment and maintain that employment for 12 months. That is a tax-free payment. If they manage to stay in full-time employment for another 12 months, they will receive a further tax-free bonus of $4,000. For a period of continuous employment of 24 months, that is quite a significant payment. It will work as an incentive for people to look for work.

However, I do feel it is missing some salient issues when it comes to youth unemployment. The fact is that employers have to make a commitment to train young people. There needs to be jobs there for young people to undertake. I would hate to think that these payments were being used instead of wage subsidies, or support for employers to hire young people, or investing in training and education for young people seeking work.

In my electorate, particularly the southern part of it on the northern part of the Central Coast, youth unemployment is very high. The initiatives in this legislation will only touch the surface of the problem. They will not result in young people finding employment. There are problems like the availability of work, there are the actual issues around transport and getting to work, and there is the fact that young people need training. It is interesting to note that we need to have more money invested in TAFE and in apprenticeships. If this government is truly serious about reducing the number of young people who are unemployed, they really need to invest in training. They need to make sure that young people have the skills necessary to obtain the jobs that are available now and to also obtain the skills so that they will be able to obtain the jobs of the future.

Under this government we have seen, as I mentioned at the start of my contribution to this debate, jobs going one way. They are being lost and none are being created. We have a deficit in jobs yet we are putting in place incentives for people to gain jobs. It is very nice to have incentives there. That works on the assumption that people are only unemployed because they do not want to work and, if you give them an incentive, they will run out and find a job. But, if the jobs do not exist or if they do not have the necessary training for jobs, then their situation is not going to change.

On the Central Coast in my electorate there was a proposal to build a training hub for young people that were unemployed to help them gain the skills they needed. The Gulgul Barang training centre was approved under RDA prior to the last election, but in its wisdom this government have moved away from that commitment. They have deemed that it was an election promise even though the money was put aside in the 2013-14 budget for it. They have denied young people in the northern part of the Central Coast the opportunity to engage in training and the opportunity to have the support they need.

There were a number of employment agencies involved in it. The Darkinjung Aboriginal people gave land for the project. They have already spent a lot of money on getting to the DA stage, a DA that will not be submitted because the funding is not there. The wonderful San Remo Neighbourhood Centre supports a number of programs. One is the LEAP program,
which is providing training for people to help them enter the workforce, and there is Youth Connections and ET Australia as well. It was one of those projects that I think members dream about, a project that involved the whole community, a project that was creating a hub in an area where there are very few resources. It was creating opportunity for people that were unemployed, young people in particular. Now that has been snatched away from them. Their opportunity to undertake training and to actually obtain jobs that they would like to have has been taken away from them.

Without training and without skills, you can give young people as much money as the deepest government pockets allow, but it is not going to make a difference. If an employer takes on a young person who does not have the skills, who is not an effective or efficient employee, who does not have the support they need to develop those skills, then that person will only hold the job for a very short period of time and the $2,500 will never be paid.

It makes me really sad. I am talking quite a bit here about the Central Coast part of my electorate, I know, but in that part of my electorate we have seen Kellogg's move to Thailand and we have seen Bluetongue close its doors. I know that Wyong Shire Council is looking at an initiative to undertake a project to bottle water. That will be good because maybe that may maintain the jobs of some of the people that were working there.

But we do not need support for people that lose their jobs; we need jobs for people. We need to put in place the right sorts of programs and incentives for employers to create jobs. It is very easy for member after member in this parliament to stand up and talk about the carbon tax. Job losses in this country have more to do with government policy, government vision, a need for the government to have a plan rather than just act like an opposition, which is all this government has done in trying to blame the previous government for the fact that jobs are going faster than you can blink your eyes. It is a disgrace.

We have lost 5,000 jobs at Qantas and 2,500 jobs at Toyota—and they are direct jobs—along with 2,900 direct jobs at Holden. At Rio Tinto at the Gove refinery, 1,100 jobs have gone; at Electrolux in Orange—a regional area where jobs are really hard to come by—544 jobs have been lost. At Simplot 110 jobs have gone, at Peabody 200 jobs have gone, and at Caterpillar another 200 jobs are no more. Sixty-three jobs at Bluetongue on the Central Coast have been lost. For those direct jobs that have been lost, there is the flow-on effect to the industries associated with them and then there is the flow-on effect to all those businesses that provide lunches and other services to the workers in industry. This government has a very sad record when it comes to employment and initiatives in the area of employment.

Whilst there is no problem with the initiatives that are highlighted in this legislation, except that I think that they are just window-dressing—they are carrots; they are ways of trying to encourage people to look for work, and then there is the undertone that the only reason that people are not in employment is that they do not want to be, and that is where you come in with the tax-free bonus—the punitive nature of the requirements that are attached to the relocation assistance program do worry me a little bit. If this government wants to be real about jobs, it needs to put in place proper training, to support apprentices and employers, to have a vision, to plan for the future and to make sure that it has a job plan that looks at the future of this country and is about the success of business, the success of the economy and the success of workers.
Mrs WICKS (Robertson) (19:23): The Social Security Legislation Amendment (Increased Employment Participation) Bill 2014 is about providing real incentives to help more young people into work. The bill provides practical assistance to help our long-term unemployed find and keep a job. Importantly, it focuses on our young people, who deserve a fair go, real opportunity and real optimism for their future. As a Liberal, I believe that every Australian who is capable of working should be working, preferably for a wage but, if not, for the dole. Young Australians in particular need to be able to find and keep job opportunities that can enhance their skills, develop their knowledge base and provide a strong foundation for their future careers, experience and perspectives.

The coalition government is committed to encouraging and increasing workforce participation, particularly for our young people. There are two measures in this bill that will help to deliver what the government said it would do. Both will commence on 1 July 2014. The first measure is the job commitment bonus. This helps by paying eligible job seekers $2,500 if they get a job and remain in continuous work and off income support for 12 months. This new payment will be available for young Australians aged 18 to 30 who were unemployed for a year or more, receiving a Newstart allowance or youth allowance, and who go on to keep and stay in a job. It rewards young people who demonstrate a commitment to working. A further $4,000 will be paid if they remain in continuous work and off income support for another 12 months. This means that young people on the Central Coast who are long-term unemployed can receive up to $6,500 over the two-year program. Bonus payments will go directly to the employee at the end of the 12- and 24-month periods.

The second measure, the Relocation Assistance to Take Up a Job program, is a targeted measure to help young people who are unemployed for at least a year to be able move to where there is a job available. Under this program, should an eligible job seeker from the Central Coast choose to move to Sydney to take up a job, that would be considered a regional-to-metropolitan move and the eligible job seeker could receive up to $3,000. Should an eligible job seeker move from the Central Coast to take up a job in Newcastle, for instance, this would be considered a regional-to-regional move and they could receive up to $6,000. In addition, families with dependent children will be provided with up to an extra $3,000 in recognition of the additional costs that can accrue when moving a family.

This is common-sense legislation. It is appropriate that we have strong measures to increase workforce participation. The coalition is committed to building a strong and prosperous economy, which in turn will help generate more jobs for people on the Central Coast and, indeed, across Australia. I am proud to be part of a coalition government that is determined to see a million new jobs created over the next five years and two million over the next decade by creating conditions where businesses can thrive and prosper in growing regions like my own, the Central Coast.

But full-time unemployment, particularly for young people, is a major concern for families and businesses in my electorate. Labour force figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics show that across the Gosford local government area there was an average of 7,100 young people aged 15 to 24 who were without work. Nationally, the figures got worse under Labor. Between November 2007 and September last year, the national youth unemployment rate for people aged 15 to 19 and looking for full-time work went from 19.6 per cent to 27.4 per cent.
Worse still, the number of long-term unemployed—people who were unemployed for 52 weeks or more—nearly doubled, going from 69,000 to 133,000.

I will never forget the experience of talking to a young man near East Gosford when I doorknocked his family home about 12 months ago. His story put a stark face to these statistics and reflects those of many others I have spoken with over the last six months. Only 19 years old at the time, this young man told me of his passion for cars and photography. Despite months and months of trying he could not find a job, but he was keen and willing to do anything. Four of his own young mates could not find work locally either, even though, he said, they were also qualified mechanics and welders. There is nothing that saps the aspirations of young people more than the lack of opportunity to fulfil them. Currently, the level of youth unemployment in my electorate is far too high. It is a major challenge. We need to prevent young job seekers from sliding into this long-term welfare dependency.

That is why I am proud to be part of a government that is delivering real solutions to real challenges. After all, that is what the Australian people, including people on the Central Coast, elected us to do after six long years of Labor waste. We need a strong, stable economy where government can get out of the way and let business, particularly local businesses in my electorate, grow, prosper, thrive, succeed and create more jobs and even more opportunities for our young Australians and, importantly in my electorate, for our young coasties.

That is why we are determined to scrap the carbon tax to deliver much-needed relief not only for local families, who will save an average of $550 a year when this toxic tax is gone, but also for businesses. Since Labor's carbon tax was introduced, 120,000 more Australians are now unemployed. I spoke with Alison Vidler, president of the Gosford City Chamber of Commerce and Industry, earlier today. She commended the government on this bill, saying that the chamber supports measures that will change the cycle of welfare dependency and give young people on the Central Coast a positive outlook for their futures. She also said that abolishing the carbon tax was an important part of helping businesses reduce their costs and reduce the confusion businesses are facing because Labor is holding up the bill to scrap the carbon tax—holding it hostage in the Senate.

Red tape is also a burden on productivity and job creation. That is why, for the first time, the national parliament will be holding a red tape repeal day to cut $1 billion in red and green tape costs. The Rudd and Gillard Labor governments introduced 975 new or amending pieces of legislation and more than 21,000 additional regulations. It has been left to the coalition government to clean up this mess because it is having a real impact on business and, in turn, employment opportunities, particularly on the Central Coast. Tomorrow the government will start to announce details of more than 9,000 pieces of spent and redundant legislation and regulation. Some of this regulation is more than 100 years old. Getting rid of the more than 9,000 regulations will benefit business, schools, homes, hospitals and community groups in my electorate, and I am really looking forward to the red tape repeal day.

Building the roads of the 21st century is another key element in our plan to build a stronger economy and deliver growth and more jobs. The Prime Minister's announcement this week about NorthConnex will boost the productive capacity of people living on the Central Coast, not only by creating around 2,000 new jobs but also by getting people to and from work sooner. The Australian government is investing $405 million into this $3 billion project. Unlike when Labor was in charge, when it was announced and nothing happened, this vital
piece of infrastructure is moving into the planning approval phase. NorthConnex will see the missing link between the M1 and M2 motorways built, with a nine-kilometre tunnel to reduce congestion and shorten travel times. It will help commuters and freight trucks to bypass up to 21 traffic lights and reduce travel time by up to 15 minutes each way. Construction on NorthConnex will start next year and the tunnel is expected to open in 2019. I commend the Prime Minister for his determination to see NorthConnex built, and to leave a lasting infrastructure legacy for our nation.

We also want to see young job seekers equipped with the tools required to get a job and to keep it. That is why in a couple of weeks I will be hosting a workshop on vocational education and training. By consulting with key stakeholders on the coast, we can clarify what is working well, what can be improved and where there needs to be major change. Getting more unemployed young Australians into work is not going to be easy. Labor's shameful legacy to Australians is 200,000 more unemployed. The unemployment rate went from 4.4 per cent in November 2007 to 5.7 per cent in September 2013. But it does not end there. Unfortunately Labor's legacy has delivered gross debt projected to rise to $667 billion, with $123 billion in cumulative deficits. People in my electorate know that it is the coalition that has a track record of growing the economy, reducing debt and getting people off the unemployment queue. Businesses and local residents in my electorate of Robertson understand that it is important for the Central Coast that we have as many people as possible in the workforce. In a growing region, we need to meet the economic and social challenges ahead.

One of the barriers to young people being able to find meaningful employment is education. As a former teacher on the coast, I know how important education is to the future prospects of our young people on the coast. I benefitted personally from great schooling at my former high school in Narara and from studying at Sydney University, and that why I am now proud to be part of a government that is putting students first. Under the Students First framework, the Australian government will work with the states and territories on four policies we all know will make the biggest difference to students—teacher quality, school autonomy, parental engagement and a robust curriculum. At the heart of our approach is lifting the quality, professionalism and status of our teaching profession, which, in turn, will help deliver better outcomes for our students.

The coalition also understands the crucial role that universities and vocational education and training plays in driving development on the Central Coast through job creation and educating the community, especially our young people. In our strong growth plan for the Central Coast, we underlined our commitment to boosting skills and education training, including by working in partnership with the Central Coast community to identify further training and education opportunities for the region. As part of this, we will work with local governments on the coast to progress necessary approvals to facilitate universities developing campuses on local government owned land, and I acknowledge the work of Gosford City Council, in particular the mayor, Lawrie McKinna, and the general manager, Paul Anderson, in relation to a university presence right in the heart of the Gosford CBD.

Our growth plan also outlined our commitment to deliver $2.7 million to develop a new local skills and jobs centre on the Central Coast. This funding will enable Central Coast Group Training to build stage 2 of the local skills and jobs incubator, including individual
trade business models. It will give more young people on the Central Coast the skills and professional connections they need to expand their job and career potential and ensure they will have better opportunities to be mentored by experienced tradespeople.

People living and working on the Central Coast share a passion to see our region thrive and grow. There is a determination among businesses and community leaders and right across my electorate to tackle the challenge of the lack of local employment opportunities. We see it every day, with over 30,000 commuters leaving early in the morning to Sydney or Newcastle and returning home late at night because their jobs take them away from their families. I believe this does not have to be a permanent marker of life on the Central Coast. I look forward to the day when people in our community no longer have to go to Sydney or to Newcastle or anywhere else for employment, education or other opportunities because they will find them right there: in Gosford, in Umina, in Woy Woy, in West Gosford, in Erina, in Avoca, in Terrigal and in Somersby.

May I acknowledge the presence earlier in the gallery of my family: Oscar, who is five years old, and Mollie-Joy, who is just three, who came down to listen to their mother deliver a speech. It is a speech about something I am particularly passionate about, for the sake of not only my family—and their future, when they have grown to reach the age where they might want to see local employment opportunities on the Central Coast—but also the families of so many other people in my electorate.

I am pleased to support this bill as an important piece of legislation that will help deliver, to more young people, more work in my electorate and deliver real hope, real reward and real opportunity for our young people who most need it.

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (19:38): In making comments on the Social Security Legislation Amendment (Increased Employment Participation) Bill 2014, I just wanted to put on the record that, whilst Labor is supporting this bill, it is a light bill. There are a few amendments that are not really going to tackle the issues that we are all debating today. Those issues are about youth unemployment.

The reality, which we have to accept, is: the whole community has a shared responsibility to ensure that all young Australians reach their full social and economic potential. This should be the primary goal of any society and any government. Educating our young Australians and preparing them for life beyond school is a responsibility shared between schools, businesses, governments and the broader community. It is an important role and a complex role, because we are involving a number of constituents and organisations. So it is not something that we can dismiss with rhetoric. It is not something that we can tinker at the edges of. It is something on which we need a broad and complex plan.

There is now overwhelming evidence to suggest that an individual's level of education is the single biggest determinant of securing meaningful and life-long employment, meaning that this bill, which focuses on payment, does not actually address the core reason that people do find long-term employment. There are many complex and interrelated barriers confronting young people who are disengaged or at risk of becoming disengaged from school or employment. This bill attempts to support people in finding a long-term job. However, in my opinion, it does not go far enough.
Like many of the previous speakers, I agree that youth unemployment is a big issue for Australians—particularly young Australians. In my electorate of Bendigo it is no different. According to the figures from the Brotherhood of St Laurence, which so many speakers in this debate have referred to, Bendigo actually has one of the worst unemployment rates in regional Victoria. It is equal to Geelong and is sitting at 13.3 per cent, and is behind Warrnambool and the Hume regions. This is something that Bendigo and the Bendigo community has been working to tackle for quite some time, knowing this figure and what was ahead for us to face. It is not something that just happens overnight. It is through policy changes and cuts that we have seen from previous governments that we find ourselves in this situation.

These amendments alone will not solve the current youth unemployment crisis in this country and, in particular, in regions like my region of Bendigo. Whilst Labor supports this legislation and the principle of encouraging young people to find work, Labor does not want to see these payments to job seekers be instead of assistance and support in the areas of education, skills and training. It is important that these payments do not come at the cost of investing in education.

Labor in government focused on supporting young people to finish school and get the training and higher education they needed for well-paying jobs. Under the former Labor government, we provided training and employment services for young people. Governments cannot expect young people to find well-paying jobs without providing them with the skills, education and training to get those jobs.

We are not alone in this belief. When the data was released by the Brotherhood of St Laurence, Principal Dale Pearce of Bendigo Senior Secondary College in my electorate said he was very concerned by the figures. He said: 'I think it highlights the need for the government to make sure it's well and truly focused on education and training. What concerns me in this respect is generational unemployment. It's really important for those people to find ongoing sustainable employment, and the foundation for that is education and training. If the rates of youth unemployment continue, it sends a pretty strong signal that the government needs to invest in both education and training.' I agree with the principal—and with the other principals in my electorate who share their concerns about the government's commitment to funding Gonski for the full six years, as promised prior to the election.

Governments cannot expect young people to find work as unemployment continues to increase. That is the reality. When you get to a country area, when you get to a regional area, there is a growing list of job applications for every job. In Castlemaine, in my electorate, KR Castlemaine Bacon received 400 applications for 10 jobs. It is simply not good enough to say that you will reward the young person when they get a job. We need to help create the jobs that they can apply for.

This is a complex area that the government cannot simply dismiss with slogans or rhetoric as we heard from the previous speaker, or with small amendments that tinker at the edges. What we need is the right formula that includes proper funding for education and training, confidence for young people, the economic means and readiness for work and, of course, the key issue: jobs young people can actually apply for.

If I can address the last point first: young people need jobs that they can count on, particularly in the regions. I am very concerned at the job losses that we have seen since this
new government has come to office. The government has so far failed to secure and create jobs that Australians can count on, particularly in the regions. We have seen, already, over 60,000 full-time jobs lost since this government came to office, and some of these are in my electorate. Nationally, we have seen job losses announced at Qantas, 5,000 jobs; Toyota, 2,500 direct jobs; Holden, almost 3,000 direct jobs; Rio Tinto at the Gove refinery, 1,100 jobs; and the list continues.

In my own electorate we have seen the loss of full-time jobs, but I think the greatest disappointment is that we have seen the loss of full-time jobs in federally funded areas, such as the Bendigo ATO facing closure; the Australia Post Mail sorting centre, where we have seen up to 6 full-time jobs go; at Centrelink, 21 jobs go; and anywhere from 50 to 350 jobs at La Trobe University. These are jobs the government could step in tomorrow and secure by funding their agencies and education providers properly. To keep the Bendigo economy strong, we need a strong public sector. To do that the government can help by ruling out further job cuts and further funding cuts to organisations in my electorate. It is one way the government can help support jobs. If we are serious about getting young people into jobs, then the government needs to be serious about job creation and be serious about creating jobs that Australians can count on.

The question also needs to be asked: what impact will the government's proposed changes to the Fair Work Act have on securing and creating jobs for young people—jobs that they can count on? There is growing concern about the affects these amendments will have on jobs and in particular the kinds of jobs young people have. This bill is designed to cut the pay of Australians. According to Essential Research polling, 80 per cent of Australians believe that people who work nights and weekends should be paid more. Nationally, more than 4.5 million Australians work in sectors where these rates apply. Many of these people working in these sectors are young people, and these young workers rely on overtime and weekend pay rates to survive. This includes paramedics, security guards, bakers, cleaners, bakers and hospitality workers.

For many young people these pay rates make up a quarter of their income. These are not people on six-figure salaries; these are people earning the minimum wage. For example, Jenny works as a cleaner. She works from 6 pm to 10 pm and her base wage is $17.50 per hour. With night rates and other loadings, she earns $22.70 an hour. Jenny would lose $100 per week if these penalty rates were removed, which is about $5,500 a year. For anybody to cop that pay cut it would be tough, but it is particularly tough on people already on low incomes.

Dave is a security officer. About a third of his income is overtime and weekend penalty rates. Right now he will earn a little bit over $50,000—not $500,000; $50,000—but that could drop by about $12,000 a year if these changes were to go through. Vanessa is a paramedic and works 10- to 14-hour shifts, day and night. In Victoria, paramedics receive a 26 per cent shift loading to lift their pay above $50,000, which is well short of the full-time average Australian wage of over $70,000 per year. She says that she could not afford to buy the basics, yet she is a professional with skills. This is the problem with the proposal that is before the House, the Fair Work Amendment bill. It is another example of how the government is not serious about securing and creating jobs that young people can count on.
The second point that I referred to is around skills, education and training. Whilst the measures to support young people in work are to be welcomed, it cannot be at the expense of funding for skills and training. Labor has always supported a high-quality VET system, and that is why we support TAFE. Yet funding for our TAFEs continues to be under attack from Liberal-National governments. In Victoria, the Liberal-National government has cut over $1.2 billion from our TAFEs. Bendigo TAFE has had cuts of over $9 million a year, about a quarter of its income. These cuts have had a crushing effect on the Bendigo TAFE in my electorate. Bendigo TAFE has been forced to scrap courses, cut jobs, hike fees and drop community service obligations. About 100 people have lost their jobs at the TAFE. Our Kyneton campus has closed and they are talking about further closures.

Again, if you want to get young people into work they need the skills, but, if you do not have a functioning TAFE, they cannot get the skills to get the jobs. This is another example of how this measure does not go far enough. Further focus needs to be on education. Since these changes introduced by the state Liberal-National Party government, Bendigo has seen a drop in student numbers of 3,400 fewer students in the last 12 months, a 20 per cent decrease. These are young people. How are they going to get a job, a job they can count on, if they do not have the skills? This is another example of how Liberal-National Party governments are not serious about supporting young people into work.

Another area which is of concern is the support that the government has for transition from schools to training using programs such as the Australia's network of partnership brokers, which is a national program that provides support for schools, businesses and young people to ensure that we get the right network, we get the jobs. Currently it is under threat from this government. The chair of the Partnership Brokers National Network recently wrote to the Prime Minister and said:

It is only by working together that schools, businesses and the broader community can improve student outcomes, create a more agile and responsive education and training sector, and develop young people who are qualified and work ready. This is another example of how this government is not serious about getting young people into work. It is more than just money and the cash bonus at the end of working. People need to have the skills to get that job.

Another example of the Bendigo community acting to tackle this issue seriously is by providing targeted individual case management support demonstrated through the innovative Connect Central Youth Services project, which is provided by our local St Luke's Anglicare. This is another program under attack and threat from this government through the Youth Connections funding model. This program makes a significant difference to individuals and communities. It recognises the importance of connecting young people, providing them with the confidence and ensuring that the ones at risk do not fall through the net and they do actually have a future.

The final point that I have already touched on and wish to highlight a bit more is the need for confidence and readiness for work. Young people at risk, young people that this bill aims to target, need the confidence and readiness for work. This is a complex area. It requires skill, commitment and integrated planning. It also requires commitment over the long term. Any effort to encourage young people to stay in employment must be supported. Providing an incentive does help but there needs to be more done at the education level. This is a complex
area that cannot be dismissed with small changes to social security. It needs to have a commitment from the government to create jobs that young people can count on, a commitment to ensure that we are investing in education so that young people have the skills and a commitment to ensure that those young people remain connected. Whilst we support the bill, I strongly believe it does not go far enough to tackle the issue of youth unemployment in our community.

Mr COLEMAN (Banks) (19:53): I rise this evening to speak in favour of the Social Security Legislation Amendment (Increased Employment Participation) Bill 2014. I am very pleased to be able to do so because this bill is about jobs. There is nothing more important for families in my electorate and no doubt in electorates right across the country than jobs. In our lives we all learn so much from jobs and we all progress through our careers. The dignity of work is such an important aspect of life. It is critical that governments focus on the right policies to create jobs, because what is an economy other than a job-creating engine? That is what economic growth is all about.

In terms of the specifics of this bill, there are some terrific initiatives to assist people who have been unemployed for some time. The job commitment bonus will provide for young people between the ages of 18 and 30 who have been on Newstart or youth allowance for 12 months the financial incentive—a reward—for staying employed for 12 months, and it is $2,500, which, for a young person, is a very significant incentive. It is important to note that the person must stay in employment for that 12-month period. So this is not a simple handout; this is about a reward for consistent effort and for consistent application in the workforce. I think that is a commendable structure for the legislation because it ensures that we are focusing on those people who really knuckle down, who do the hard work and who commit to employment for at least 12 months.

In addition, for people who stick at it for another 12 months—two years in total—there is the opportunity for an additional $4,000. That is a total of $6,500 under the job commitment bonus. It is a terrific initiative. It says to people who have been unemployed for some time that if you make the effort, if you stick at it, if you get a job and if you keep persevering for two years then in addition to your salary and all the other benefits that come through work, we will acknowledge that hard work you have done by providing this additional incentive. That is a terrific and important initiative.

The other initiative which is the subject of this bill is the relocation assistance initiative. For many people it is not always straightforward to find a job next door. We would all love to find a job that is just around the corner or down the road but that is not always possible. There are significant costs involved in relocating to another town or perhaps to a different part of a capital city. The relocation assistance provided for under this bill says that, should you make that sometimes difficult decision to pull up stumps and relocate for the purpose of a job, you will receive assistance from $3,000 all the way up to potentially $9,000 for a family relocating to regional area. That is another tremendous initiative.

These initiatives really show the resolve of the government in the area of jobs. As I said before, jobs are at the essence of economic management, because if you do not manage the economy well, you do not create jobs. If you manage the economy well and you create the conditions in which business can prosper, what follows? Jobs follow. Government cannot create jobs out of thin air. Government cannot create jobs through make-work schemes or
through central planning, although those opposite may disagree. Jobs are created by the industry of private enterprise. They are created when people see an opportunity, often at substantial risk, and say, 'Let's go for it.' It does not always work out and there are substantial risks involved. But it is the pursuit of opportunity that creates jobs, and that is what we as a government so strongly believe in and support. It is a very significant contrast, as a matter of fact, to the approach of the previous government.

The facts on the previous government's record on employment are, of course, manifestly clear. The former government started with 4.4 per cent unemployment in 2007. Then we travel along to 2013 and unemployment had gone up by then to 5.7 per cent. Youth unemployment, when the former government came to office, was at 19.6 per cent. Six years went by and at the end of those six years youth unemployment was over 27 per cent. Imagine that increase from 20 per cent to 27 per cent in human terms. That was a very substantial increase. The total number of people unemployed under Labor increased by 200,000. We get this pious rhetoric from those opposite about jobs and about fighting for jobs and so on but, if they were so flash at fighting for jobs, you would think that might be reflected perhaps in their six years of government. If those opposite had the panacea for unemployment problems, we would see some evidence of that. That would be logical. But the evidence actually points completely in the opposite direction.

Of course, there has been much discussion in this House and in other places in recent times about manufacturing. But we need to be very clear about what happened in the manufacturing sector under Labor—the so-called champions of manufacturing jobs; the champions of government industry assistance, with the government intervening to supposedly save jobs. We know that they have claimed to have secured jobs—that is their claim—in, frankly, a misleading fashion in the past. What actually happened in manufacturing is that one in 10 jobs in the entire nation in manufacturing was lost in six years. If that rate of decline were to continue, imagine how enormous that reduction in the number of jobs in the manufacturing sector would be. It is a really quite appalling record and it is something that people need to be reminded of, because, as in all things in life, what matters is results. It does not matter so much what you say and what you might excitedly shout out across a parliamentary chamber; what matters is what you actually do—what do you deliver? It is not about flowery expressions; it is not about simply professing empathy with people in a particular situation. We all feel for people that have lost jobs. The question is: what is the best solution to create more jobs? That what it is all about.

The government has a very clear agenda to create the economic conditions in which business can create jobs. That agenda is wide-ranging. One of the really important things, though, I would say, is confidence. Confidence, of course, is a hard thing to define. People such as those at the National Australia Bank do measure it, but it is always a difficult thing to define. But confidence is critical because, if you are facing a decision in business of whether you put that extra $500,000 into a project, or whatever the amount might be, large or small, the confidence you have in the future of the economy is critical. If you are worried that the economy is facing a downturn or if you are worried that things are looking on the worse side rather than the better side, you will tend to hold back from investment. That is obviously a problem because then fewer jobs are created.
Getting confidence back in the business sector is so important, and there are so many different ways that this government is working to do that. We know we have to get rid of the carbon tax. We know it is a massive impost on more than 75,000 businesses around Australia. We know it has smashed the aviation industry, with Qantas paying more $100 million in carbon tax. We know that small businesses all around the nation are struggling under the burden. Clean Brite Dry Cleaners in Mortdale in my electorate has suffered very significant costs from the carbon tax, as has been discussed previously in this chamber. So we have to get rid of the carbon tax. It is so self-evident that you really do wonder why anyone would oppose such an obvious job-creating measure as getting rid of the carbon tax. I guess the answer is the only people that would oppose it would be someone who was foolish enough to bring it in in the first place. That is, of course, what we confront on the other side of the chamber. We have to get rid of the carbon tax, but there is so much more that we need to do as well.

Deregulation is really important. The last thing that you want to do in business is spend your time filling out forms. People in business have clients to worry about, they have product development, they have marketing and they have sales—they have all these matters on their minds every day. After finishing their day job at seven or eight o'clock at night, the last thing that we want to be imposing on small business and, indeed, large business as well is the need to fill out a whole lot of forms and go through a whole lot of administrative process when those processes do not actually add any substantive value. Of course, some regulation is appropriate, but there is a vast amount of regulation in this economy which is unnecessary, which is duplicative in nature and which simply ties people up in knots for no net benefit to the economy. Getting rid of a whole lot of regulation is critical and, obviously, the government will have a lot more to say on that in the coming days.

On environmental approvals, we had a situation where so many big environmental projects—projects requiring environmental approvals—were in logjam. They were held up and sitting there with nothing happening; there was no development and no employment because promoters of those projects did not know whether they were going to be allowed to do them or not. It is self-evident: if you do not have the approval to get on with your project, you cannot do it; if you cannot get on with your project, you do not hire people to do it. The Minister for the Environment, and the government more generally, has given environmental approvals in recent months for projects totalling more than $400 billion of investment. That is an extraordinary amount of investment. Getting these projects up and running is a fantastic way to create jobs.

Similarly, one of the parts of the economy where government can most sensibly get involved is infrastructure, because most infrastructure projects require some form of government involvement. It is great to see the very strong commitment to infrastructure projects right across the nation that we are seeing. WestConnex—and, Mr Deputy Speaker Kelly, you would be familiar with this project—is very important to my electorate of Banks in south-western Sydney. The duplication of the M5 East, which will be occurring as part of that WestConnex project, will save at least 20 minutes for someone travelling from Beverly Hills, in my electorate, to the city. Anyone who has sat in the M5 East tunnel for minutes or hours—or however long it might have been on that particular day—knows that this is a very, very important initiative. This is important because it goes to productivity. If you are spending less time stuck in your car, you have more time to get around, you have more time to attend your
sales meeting and you have more time to get to work—and that means you get more things done. It also means you spend more time with your family, which is, of course, a very important benefit.

Infrastructure is critical, and of course the overarching thing we must have for economic confidence to get employment growing again is confidence in the administration of the economy, and that means getting the budget under control. The budget under the previous government was an absolute basket case. We know that time and time again they promised they would get the budget back to surplus. They failed to do so. Things got worse on a consistent basis. The Australian people look at that and say: 'Hang on. How can we consistently spend more money than we take in?' They know that you cannot do that. You cannot do that in a household, you cannot do that in a business and you cannot do that in government either. So getting the budget back under control will go a long way to getting confidence back in the economy. Confidence helps to build jobs, as do the provisions we discussed this evening.

**Mr LAMING (Bowman) (20:08):** I am proud to live in a nation where one can find a job, train for a job and receive assistance to secure and keep that job. Chances of finding work in this nation are probably better than virtually anywhere else in the world. Of course, we are a big, sparsely populated country, and our great challenge is mismatch—in many cases those employment opportunities are not where we reside.

But I am also aware that in this great nation we are failing. We are failing at two key points in life. We are failing the two- to five-year-old age group and we are failing those who are aged 15 to 24 who are transitioning out of school and into employment. We can do so much better, but history will record six years of Labor government where virtually nothing happened. I am not talking about superficial metrics like unemployment rates. I am talking about a Labor government that never showed the will or the heart to engage the issue of labour and workforce distribution.

I am not going to begin to attribute tonight why that could be, but it has become increasingly obvious that, if you are not a unionised workforce or a potentially unionisable workforce, it is a Labor government that does not care much about your future. I want to see a situation where this nation can recognise across both sides of the chamber that it is business that generates prosperity and creates jobs. That is a simple precept upon which all policy can be overlaid, and the Social Security (Administration) Act 1999 is going to face a whole lot more amendment than it will tonight over the coming years under an Abbott government.

That is for one very simple reason: our understanding and appreciation of welfare as an entitlement has changed, and the era of 'How little can I do to get the payment?' will be, must be and has been replaced by: 'What incentives are available so that I can work my hardest? I want a fair go and I want to be able to give it a fair go.' Under those simple liberal principles we do have 360,000 Australians between the ages of 15 and 24 who are receiving income replacement of various forms. Many of them are not engaged in full-time work or education. I appreciate that there is a proportion of those who have mental and other physical illnesses. I appreciate that a small number are primary care givers and fully occupied, often with closely spaced children, and that can certainly fill a day, as both my wife and I appreciate. But there is no excuse for 360,000 Australians lost in the never-never, doing nothing more than filling
in a logbook in order to meet their activity requirements and basically being lost to Australia's economic engine.

Let's step back just for a moment. What are we? We are massively growing, the 12th largest economy in the world with one of the lowest populations in the OECD. There is nothing more valuable than our labour. Ask any boss and they will tell you there is nothing more important than the people they employ. So why do we have literally thousands of people in every electorate represented here with no connection to education, training or work? That is a failure of all previous governments, not just the one I am criticising tonight.

We have tried relocation bonuses before. I accept that they have been evaluated and many times come up short. A lot of it is not about the money; a lot of it is the support that comes with the money. I appreciate, when I talk with young people in my electorate, that the propensity to uproot and leave all of your support, your family and your loved ones to move to another city is just not something one can imagine would be easy to do. In fact, it can be quite frightening. If I had never been through school and graduated or never had a good training experience in my life, I think I would be petrified to move towns or cities, let alone to a regional area to take up a job I know so little about. I also acknowledge that, if taking up that job brings detriments like lack of access to public housing or the possibility of suspended payments if that job does not work out, I would be extremely frightened about making that move. The evidence shows that very few young people are prepared to take that risk despite the thousands of dollars on offer.

Tonight, in supporting the Social Security Legislation Amendment (Increased Employment Participation) Bill 2014—and I know the opposition is showing support for the bill as well—I say that it is not about the money as much as it will be the support that is offered with that financial incentive. We have large numbers of public servants working in Centrelink and employment network providers who work very hard in the most complex of cases, helping young people connect to and remain in a job. It is so easy for us here in this chamber to be flippant about how easy that should be, but let every one of us here understand that, if you have grown up not enjoying and never completing school or you have never had a shot at a traineeship or apprenticeship, taking up a job and keeping it can be probably the greatest challenge you have faced in your life so far. Many young people, many of whom I have not had the chance to know, have had tough childhoods that I cannot even begin to appreciate. I know how hard this is for those who are working for job service agencies and Centrelink.

But we must not give up. We know from actuarial analysis in New Zealand that there is no better investment than in the long-term unemployed. If we can reconnect them with the real economy, there is no greater public investment. Let's step back for a moment. We are not here to create jobs for public servants; we are here to most efficiently connect people with a suitable job. As I stressed before, as the second or third most sparsely populated nation on earth, odds are that job will not be close. In a country like Australia, where public transport is not as good as in more densely populated countries, getting to that job will not be easy either.

With furnace-like intent we have to focus not just on the financial transaction but also on the services we can give these young people to build confidence. Part of that will be working for the dole. Part of that will be restituting and initiating some form of work-like habit among people who simply have never learnt it or witnessed it in their own family units. Australia cannot be proud of the fact that, among the OECD, we, New Zealand and the UK have the
highest proportions of families who are utterly reliant on welfare. This is of enormous concern.

There is no fundamental difference between Australians and other members of the OECD except that we have a welfare system that has made it too easy to get on, and stay on, welfare for life. That nexus must be broken. It starts with job commitment bonuses and augmenting that effort are the relocation allowances for taking up a job. I do not need to reiterate today what those payments are; they have been well ventilated already in both the second reading speech and by the other speakers. I accept this will not be easy. I accept that initially, potentially, only small numbers might take up those bonuses, but I commend the coalition for proposing two or three amendments as opposed to what the opposition did when they were in government.

Firstly, there is the recognition of the additional costs faced by families having to relocate and move to a place of work. That extra $3,000 will go a long way. Secondly, I acknowledge that there are incentives for both one and for two years retention at work, with the larger payment coming after two years. That is an excellent reason to stay and to give it your all. Finally, we have the proposition that you will be paid more if you move to an area of higher unemployment or to regional Australia than coming the other way. That is perfectly sensible.

While supporting the legislation, I note that the opposition has made a big thing of the cessation, or temporary cessation, of payment for people who leave these work opportunities without a valid excuse. Of course, when we include conditions like this, the only thing the Labor opposition hears is that we are suspending a payment. They really could not care why that is occurring. But I trust Centrelink, and I trust the job service providers to work out whether a person is giving it a real shot.

In Australia, we have a fairly acute sense of whether a person is giving it a fair go or not. We have adequate Fair Work legislation which oversees that. And it may come as some surprise to the Labor opposition, but I trust employers in Australia to do the right thing. Overwhelmingly, I trust them to supervise well because they love their businesses. They will supervise, they will train, they will give the opportunities, they will wear the on-costs, and they will wear the risks of staff turnover to give a young Australian a go in an overwhelming proportion of cases. They should be liberated to do that as only a Liberal government can.

I have had enough of tolerating areas of high youth unemployment scattered around this country with just a one-size-fits-all approach. That will not be good enough in the seat of Blaxland, the seat of Port Adelaide or the seat of Gilmore—places where youth unemployment is in excess of 30 per cent. This is a national emergency. It is not enough for any government to sit back and say, 'We have a $3,000 location bonus. That's what we have done for the problem.'

I hope our government will commit to getting those figures down. I know that nobody on this side of the parliament can rest easily at night while we know that we have those double-digit unemployment rates, and we have figures in the high 20s and low 30s for youth unemployment. Between the ages of 15 and 19, the teen full-time unemployment figure that we have is in excess of 30 per cent and rising in some areas. Between 15 and 24 years—what we refer to as youth unemployment—is 13.2 per cent in Queensland, a per cent higher than the national average.
My electorate of Bowman cannot claim to be either the best or the worst. We have around average unemployment in my area, but pockets of extraordinarily high need—I have talked about the Moreton Bay islands before, and I do not need to go into detail again. These are young people separated from services, separated from opportunities, living across a watercourse and facing enormous expense just to get to the mainland, and having that trip slugged by a carbon tax only then to be told to do it twice a day if they want to hold a job, and make sure they are on time. Many of them move to the islands for the cheaper rent and many of them move there for the solace and the isolation, but connecting with the real economy is a genuine challenge. Some people want to live on islands, and I respect that choice. Seven thousand citizens in my electorate do just that. We must not rest until they have opportunities, be that green army, be it work for the dole, be it traineeships or be it assistance to get onto the mainland, connect up with work and stay there.

We have talked in depth in this chamber about the importance of young people, and I do not think we need another waxing speech about how much we care about young people without seeing some kind of material change. I do not think it is adequate that we wait 12 months to initiate some job support options for the long-term unemployed. There is no excuse to wait that long for both skills and confidence to wane. We must move that forward.

Secondly, we have to stop relying purely on public servants, in the role of managers of complex cases, in many cases where people could work but are persistent evaders. A government must take stronger action on those who do not support the system, and we must free up those who are absolutely giving their best. They deserve the support, whereas the former deserve sharper and way more immediate sanctions than currently happen. If there was a characteristic from the Labor period in office it was an unwillingness to suspend payments, and an unwillingness to take a strong-armed approach to those whom I refer to as being 'persistent evaders' of an activity requirement or genuine work.

We pay billions of dollars every year to young people who are not engaged in study, training or work—and they should be. They are not, for a variety of reasons. But I do not see why we should be paying completely unconditional cash transfers to those individuals if they are using that public money in an inappropriate way. I hope that this is the first step of a series of amendments that will see that youth allowance is more carefully targeted and is not abused. I referred to it before as 'cash for couches'. We should not have a system that makes large cash payments as an incentive for someone to leave home. Public money is there for basic essentials: protection, shelter, food, public transport, getting to work and getting employed. It is that simple transition that is not an unreasonable case to make in liberal democracy to every young person who is capable.

We should not be paying unconditional payments that are spent instead on alcohol, gambling, illicit drugs, vehicle modifications or whatever. That is not what public money is there to be spent on, no matter how people may think these public payments are an entitlement. The public will no longer tolerate that. If you want to get support from the government there is an obligation to adhere to basic and fundamental social norms in return.

In conclusion, I commend the initiation of relocation bonuses that are higher for those who move into areas of higher unemployment and regional areas and I commend the assistance that is offered to families. That is absolutely vital. I also commend the end of the Rudd era of going soft on persistent evaders. I found absolutely appalling the notion that you could wake
up in the morning and decide whether you were going to turn up to work for the dole and if you did not feel like it you would be docked a day of your welfare. No, sir, that is not how the world works. There is the expectation that you will contribute to society as best you possibly can. The great challenge is that payments in many cases squeeze that out. They make it way more attractive to simply live with other people who are on income replacement and pool resources and do just enough to keep getting your payments.

I know that Centrelink and job service staff do everything they can, but they have literally millions of clients. In my electorate there are 2,000 young people disconnected from education, training and work. One of the genuinely great failures of our wonderful democracy is that we have not been able to make those connections as effectively as we could. These relocation incentives and these rewards for committing to a job are the first step. There are many more amendments to come and I will support each of those.

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (20:23): Last Christmas I was sitting at home by the television waiting to watch the Boxing Day test at the MCG in Melbourne. Australia was to play England and the crowd was pouring in. The camera was in the centre of the ground and it panned around the grandstands of the MCG. You could see in the vast grandstands that go up to the sky a wave of humanity. That day we had a world record crowd—91,000 people filled the MCG that day. While we think that is an enormous amount of people, if we filled the MCG twice it still would not be the number of people who joined the unemployment queues in the last six years of Labor government.

We saw over the last six years the unemployment queues of this country increase by 200,000 people. So we could take the MCG ground with all those seats in the massive stands and fill it once and fill it again and still have to find space for the other 20,000 people who joined the ranks of the full-time unemployed over the last six years. That was despite the previous Labor government running up deficit after deficit. When they left they had combined deficits of over $300 billion, yet we still had this massive blow-out in unemployment. This was also during a mining boom. A boom like that had not been seen in this nation's history since the gold rush and still we had this massive increase in unemployment.

Contrast that to the previous time the coalition was in government. During the Howard and Costello years we saw the number of full-time unemployed decrease by 300,000. The policies of the previous coalition government took 300,000 full-time unemployed people from the job queues and got them into full-time work. Yet, in six years of Labor we saw the exact opposite, with the queues growing by 200,000 people.

The previous coalition government were amazing. The previous coalition government allowed the economy to create all those additional jobs while at the same time paid back the $96 billion of debt they inherited, plus the $54 billion of interest payments along the way, and put another $45 billion in the bank. That was all money that came out of the economy, yet they were still able to shorten the unemployment queues by 300,000 people. In contrast, in six years of Labor we saw those queues increase by 200,000 people.

One only has to look at the states. Last weekend we had state elections in South Australia and Tasmania. They were the only two states where Labor held government. In South Australia they held government for 12 years and in Tasmania they held it for 16 years. Just perhaps by coincidence the two states where Labor still held government are the states that have the highest rates of unemployment in the country.
I believe many good people sit on the opposition benches and they would like to see the unemployment queues go down, but the problem is that their policies simply do not work. They simply do not understand job creation. It is not governments that create jobs. This is perhaps the most fundamental difference between the two sides of politics in this country. The opposition believe that it is governments that create jobs. I have heard that from speaker after speaker in this debate on the Social Security Legislation Amendment (Increased Employment Participation) Bill 2014. We in the government understand that the job creators of this country are private small- and medium-sized businesses. It is our entrepreneurs who create the jobs in this country. Those are the people we need to encourage. We need to encourage those small business people. We need to encourage our entrepreneurs. That is the only way we are going to get our unemployment rates down.

Perhaps we saw such an increase under the previous Labor government, despite all their concerns about job creation, because they did not understand that every time they introduced more regulation, every time they introduced more red tape for small business, every time they slugged them with additional taxes, such as the carbon tax, and every time they took moves to make our banking sector further concentrated all they did was create disincentives for our entrepreneurs and our small business people to create jobs. Was it any wonder that we saw our small business sector during the previous six years decline by 400,000 people? Unless we can free the hands of our entrepreneurs and our small businesses we are going to be stuck with these high levels of unemployment.

The other mistake we have seen the previous government make is trying to protect jobs with subsidies. What we have to appreciate is that one company's subsidy is another company's tax increase. When the government steps in to tax a company to get the money to provide subsidies for another company, all they are doing is weakening the ability of those efficient and prosperous companies to create jobs. We should have learned by now, after the mistakes of the past, that central planning simply does not work. Central planning simply does not work because it does not allow for innovation, creation, experimentation, and for failure and therefore further experimentation. That is what creates jobs.

To start with, we have to look at our education system. In this nation, we need to build an entrepreneurial culture because that is the way we are going to create jobs. It all starts with our education system. Our education system should teach our kids about innovation and enterprise, but instead we have the concept of sustainability embedded across every subject of our education system. Of course, it all depends on how you define sustainability. This is how it is defined in our education system. I quote directly from the national curriculum, 'Sustainability education is futures-oriented,'—whatever that means—'focusing on protecting environments and creating a more ecologically and socially just world through informed action.' This sounds very nice, this political correctness. But this teaches low growth, social conformity and constraint. We need to teach our kids about entrepreneurship. We need to be teaching them that they can go out and they can create jobs, that they can create businesses and that they can succeed. Instead, what is taught in our schools is this negative green ideology that our resources are running out. What we need to do is inspire our kids. We need to be reminding them that the greatest resource is their own human ingenuity. That is a resource that is unlimited.
Getting onto the specifics of this bill, which I commend to the House, there are two measures that help achieve those objectives to get those unemployment numbers down and to create incentives. The first is a job commitment bonus for young Australians. This will be a new payment. It will be available to any Australian aged between 18 and 30 who has been unemployed for 12 months or more and who has been in receipt of Newstart allowance or youth allowance. If they get a job and hold that job for 12 months, they will get a $2,500 cash bonus. If they go on to hold that job for a further 12 months—that is, for two years—they get another $4,000. This is a great incentive. That is what we need to do; we need to incentivise our young people. If they can get a job, this cash bonus is available to them.

The second part of this job commitment bonus is the additional relocation assistance bonus. This helps people who might have to relocate from one part of the country to another, from a metropolitan area to a regional area or vice versa, or from one city to another city. It provides them with a relocation bonus. If a jobseeker has been on Newstart allowance, youth allowance or a parenting payment for at least 12 months and they need to relocate to take up a job, they can get a payment of up to $6,000. In addition, families with dependent children will be provided an extra $3,000 in recognition of the additional costs that can accrue for moving families.

This is just the start of the coalition's plans to get that unemployment down, to get more Australians into work. But we must remember, at the end of the day, it is not government that creates jobs. All government does is provide the landscape, the incentives and the systems. These enable private enterprise to get on, to start up new companies and new businesses, to innovate, to invest and to take risks. That is what creates jobs. We must never, ever forget that in this place. For the government to create jobs, it is taxing those companies and taking the opportunity, destroying the opportunity and weakening the opportunity for those businesses to create jobs.

We saw a great example of that recently with SPC. We heard horror stories from the opposition that, unless the government gave SPC subsidies, all these jobs would be lost. They said we should throw this company, a multinational company owned by Coca-Cola, another $25 million of taxpayers' money to save all these jobs. We know members of the opposition who were espousing those thoughts were left with egg all over their faces. What actually happened was that the public saw an Australian company making Australian produce, a good product, and they rushed to our major supermarkets and purchased those products. If we had listened to what the opposition encouraged us to do and borrowed another $25 million to give to that company, there would not have been an incentive for the Australian consumer to go out there and support that company. This is because they would knew they would have been doing it through their taxpayers' dollars.

We also must realise the delusion that we have heard about the creation of green jobs. Our natural competitive advantage as a nation has been our low-cost electricity prices. Because we have had those low-cost electricity prices, we have been able to afford to pay workers high wages. But policies such as the carbon tax and the renewable energy scheme—where we subsidise the building of inefficient windmills and inefficient forms of electricity generation, which feed through to higher prices for business—will destroy jobs. Such policies act as a reverse tariff to make industries in Australia less competitive—that is, they shift jobs offshore. Of course this is what we have seen. When we were in opposition, we warned that,
if you bring in policies which raise electricity prices, jobs will be lost and jobs will go offshore. We warned about this time after time and that is exactly what we have seen happen. During this debate, it has been good to hear comments from many in the opposition about the importance of job creation. But if they were really and truly concerned about job creation in this nation, they could do one very simple thing—they could contact their friends over in the Senate and ask them to pass the bill to repeal the carbon tax.

Mr HARTSUYKER (Cowper—Deputy Leader of the House and Assistant Minister for Employment) (20:38): I would like to thank those members who have spoken on the Social Security Legislation Amendment (Increased Employment Participation) Bill 2014. It demonstrates the passion in this place for helping Australians, especially young Australians, to move from the world of welfare to the world of work. The bill delivers on two of the government's election commitments to promote workforce participation—namely, the job commitment bonus and relocation assistance to take up a job.

As members have noted, these two measures provide significant financial support to job seekers. Under the job commitment bonus, young, unemployed Australians who meet the eligibility criteria can receive $2,500 if they get a job, stay in work and off income support for 12 months. Then should they stay in continuous work for another 12 months, a further $4,000 is available to them, making it a total of $6,500 if they get a job, stay in work and off income support for a total period of 24 months. This is a new payment and the coalition makes no apology for targeting this bonus to young Australians. The coalition understands how important it is for young people to get a job and keep it. It is at the start of our working lives that we learn the skills, attitudes and behaviours that employers value the most. That is why we are keen to reward those young Australians who make the effort to move from welfare to work. Being in work and drawing a wage is always better than being on the dole—both financially and emotionally.

The government also understands the importance of encouraging a flexible and responsive labour market. The relocation assistance to take up a job measure provides targeted assistance to help people move to where the jobs are located. This measure will ensure that the costs of moving do not prevent a person from taking up a job in a different area, especially for those who are moving to a regional area and those with families.

The amount of financial assistance available is up to $3,000 for those moving to a metropolitan area, up to $6,000 for those moving to a regional area and up to an additional $3,000 for those with dependant children. I welcome the opposition's support for this legislation. This is a step in the right direction to help job seekers. I just wish that they would support more of the government's reforms which will generate jobs, such as the abolition of the job-destroying carbon and mining taxes, and the re-establishment of the Australian Building and Construction Commission. If Labor were serious about reducing unemployment in this country, this is where they should start.

I note the amendment proposed by the member for Franklin and would like to address the misconceptions raised by those members opposite. The shadow minister has been extremely quiet since the election and has barely said a word in this House or elsewhere on employment services and support for job seekers. So I welcome the opportunity to hear the member for Franklin's contribution to this debate, however, misguided it may be.
Let me speak about the two amendments proposed. Youth unemployment: firstly, it is claimed that the government is not serious about addressing the issue of youth unemployment. I would like to remind the House that it was under Labor's watch that youth unemployment rose from 9.9 per cent to 12.7 per cent. As a result of their economic mismanagement and policy failings, an additional 55,000 young Australians were left looking for work. But it was not just youth unemployment that increased. During Labor's time in office, the overall unemployment rate went from 4.4 per cent in November 2007 to 5.7 per cent in September 2013.

Indeed, it was the former Treasurer, the member for McMahon—and who can forget the member for McMahon?—who, in August last year, delivered Labor's final economic statement where it was revealed that unemployment was projected to head towards 6.25 per cent. Yet the members opposite did nothing practical. The member for Franklin reminded the House yesterday how Labor's election plan would have created more bureaucracies and red tape but no real jobs. I have heard from Job Services Australia providers that they spend up to 50 per cent of their time on administration and red tape—that is, time that should be spent assisting job seekers, especially young jobseekers, to get a job. This is Labor's legacy to young people—higher unemployment and employment service providers mired in red tape.

The job commitment bonus, on the other hand, is a tangible and significant investment by the coalition to help young, long-term unemployed Australians make a positive change in their lives. The job commitment bonus is a real incentive to young Australians to persist with work rather than welfare. The bonus is in addition to the support already available to young job seekers through Job Services Australia, Disability Employment Services and the Remote Jobs and Communities Program. The job commitment bonus is a great kick-start for a young person wanting to move off welfare and take the opportunity to build a more positive future for themselves. The bill is evidence of our commitment to young job seekers.

As to the opposition's request for a public review into the impact of the extension of the non-payment period under the relocation assistance measure, I would like to put some facts on the table. The bill will amend the Social Security (Administration) Act 1999 so that the participants who leave employment without a reasonable excuse within six months of receiving a relocation payment will incur a 26-week non-payment period before becoming eligible to receive unemployment benefits again. The increase in the non-payment period reflects the level of assistance available under the relocation assistance measure. The coalition recognises the need for a safety net and so the reasonable excuse and hardship provisions will continue to apply. However, it is only fair that those people who take up the assistance and then throw in a job without a reasonable excuse should be prevented from returning to income support immediately. To keep this in perspective, I advise the House that of the 333 participants who took up assistance under the previous Move 2 Work program only four people were subject to a nonpayment period and, due to the hardship provisions, only two were ultimately required to serve a nonpayment period. Moving house is a big decision and most people can be relied on to do the right thing. However, the coalition believes it is important that a nonpayment period in keeping with the value of the benefit and that the community would expect should apply to those few job seekers who do not do the right thing.

As part of our election commitment, we promised to increase the nonpayment period to 26 weeks. This bill is consistent with our election commitment and there are no surprises here—
we are doing what we said we would do. Last September, the Australian people voted for the coalition's plan to grow a strong economy that will create jobs and opportunities for all Australians. The measures in this bill will support the long-term unemployed, particularly unemployed young people, by providing incentives to stay in a job and helping to address some of the barriers they may face when trying to find work. The bill is further evidence of the coalition delivering on its election commitment to increase workforce participation and help people move from welfare to work. I welcome the support for this bill and the positive impact it will have on the lives of many young jobseekers.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mitchell): The original question was that this bill be now read a second time. To this the honourable member for Franklin has moved as an amendment that all words after 'That' be omitted with a view to substituting other words. The immediate question is that the amendment be agreed to.

Question negatived.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question now is that the bill be read a second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Message from the Governor-General recommending appropriation announced.

Third Reading

Mr HARTSUYKER (Cowper—Deputy Leader of the House and Assistant Minister for Employment) (20:46): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Export Market Development Grants Amendment Bill 2014

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (20:47): Labor supports the passage of the Export Market Development Grants Amendment Bill 2014. The Export Market Development Grants Scheme encourages small and medium Australian businesses to develop export markets, supports small and medium export businesses by reimbursing up to 50 per cent of expenses related to export promotion and provides up to seven grants to each eligible applicant. In this current period of economic transition, it is critical we continue to develop and support measures that open up export opportunities for new and existing export businesses. Labor has a proud record of supporting trade as a way of boosting economic growth and supporting our local industries. In fact, the Export Market Development Grants Scheme was originally a Labor initiative, established by the Whitlam government in 1974. The Export Market Development Grants Bill 1974 was introduced by the then Minister for Overseas Trade, Dr Jim Cairns, on 28 November 1974. In introducing the bill, Dr Cairns noted that existing export incentives provided the bulk of benefits to large companies. The then government wanted to provide more support to small exporting firms and decided ‘the
emphasis in a new export incentive scheme should be on market development.' Like many initiatives of the Whitlam government, the Export Market Development Grants Scheme, with its emphasis on small business and new markets, has endured.

The bill before the House aligns the Export Market Development Grants Scheme rules to a revised level of scheme funding, and implements some technical and simplification changes. The bill will also: increase the number of grants available to be received by an applicant from seven to eight; reduce the minimum expenses threshold required to be incurred by an applicant from $20,000 to $15,000; reduce the current $5,000 deduction from the applicant's provisional grant amount to $2,500; prevent the payments of grants to applicants engaging an export market development grant consultant assessed to be not a fit and proper person; and enable some grants to be paid more quickly. Some of the measures in the bill are similar to measures contained in an amendment bill introduced by the former Labor government but not passed prior to the dissolution of the last parliament. In particular, we note that the new 'fit and proper person' provisions in the bill largely adopt the provisions in the lapsed amendment bill previously proposed by Labor. These provisions add to an important quality check on those seeking to access government funding and obtain a fee for doing so. The accompanying guidelines will provide useful information to consultants on the level of conduct that is expected. The guidelines will also guide the assessment of the Austrade CEO, whose decision will also be subject to administrative review.

While affirming Labor's support for the bill, I also want to express our disappointment with some aspects of the reform proposed by the current government. Labor recognises that Australia's future prosperity will be underpinned by our engagement with our region. By the end of this decade, our region is expected to overtake the combined economic output of North America and Europe. Businesses will have access to expanded and emerging markets, with Asia set to become the world's largest consumption zone by 2030. That is why Labor implemented a policy agenda which supported Australia making the most of the emerging opportunities of the Asian century. The Labor amendment bill introduced in the last parliament sought to realign the Export Market Development Grants Scheme to support small businesses exporting to East Asian and frontier and emerging markets. It is disappointing to see that the Abbott government has walked away from these proposed changes. I certainly believe that it must be possible to find a way to leverage this public investment to further the nation's strategic objective of a much deeper engagement with our region. Not only has the realignment of the scheme been abandoned; the government has scrapped the Australia in the Asian Century white paper engagement process as a whole—the whole thing has basically been sent to the National Archives.

Labor recognises that Australia is already deeply invested in global affairs. We also recognise that taxpayer dollars should be allocated in a way which provides our businesses with even better access to markets which are expanding at a very considerable rate and which gives those business every opportunity to compete in the region.

The Abbott government's failure to embrace Labor's realignment says much about its lack of understanding of our region and the tremendous opportunities that we have. Jettisoning a policy agenda which sought to deepen and strengthen our relationships with our neighbours in Asia is not just short-sighted—it is reckless.
While concerned that the bill fails to focus the scheme on emerging markets in our own region, we recognise the important financial support these grants provide, and the bill will act to provide certainty for business ahead of the new financial year. Accordingly, Labor supports the bill.

Mr HUTCHINSON (Lyons) (20:53): It gives me enormous pleasure to rise this evening to speak about what is indeed an important bill. Having been involved in the export area for many years of my working life, I am very pleased to speak on the Export Market Development Grants Amendment Bill 2014, particularly given that this falls under the purview of the Minister for Trade and Investment, Minister Robb. In the short time that the government has been in office he has been doing fine work to deliver the white paper, contrary to what the Deputy Leader of the Opposition suggested. Talking about engagement is indeed one thing. Talking is fine, and, while planning was not a hallmark of the previous government, talking about engagement is indeed important. I suggest that realigning is also important. But doing is actually far more important. Delivering on free trade agreements with countries like South Korea is the sort of thing that will get this country going again.

I want to dwell for a short period of time on the free trade agreement with South Korea. Over a period of time, it will eliminate tariffs on many of our main exports to that very important market. It will also open up new opportunities for Australian services as well as support our more traditional industries, including agriculture. Critically, it also puts us back on a level playing field with our competitors in the United States, the European Union and Chile, which already have free trade agreements with South Korea.

The modelling that has been done around this program suggests that, between 2015 and 2030, it will be worth $5 billion per year to Australia. Beyond 2030 it really kicks in, and the modelling shows that the benefits that will flow to the Australian economy—both in cities, in terms of the services that can be provided, but also in regional Australia, which is particularly important to my state and my electorate—will amount to around $650 million a year. This is so important. Indeed, Korea is our fourth-largest trading partner. Korea is Asia's fourth-largest economy. Having visited South Korea many times over the years, trying to sell Tasmanian wool and Australian wool, I understand what an important and sophisticated market South Korea is.

In my home state of Tasmania, particularly in my electorate of Lyons, exports are a huge contributor to a healthy economy in our state. Last year alone food exports were worth in excess of $520 million. Non-food products—a variety of machinery, transport, equipment, mining ores and concentrates, wood and paper products, processed metal and metal products—returned more than $2.5 billion. A $3 billion injection every year into the economy of Tasmania is indeed critical.

I have spoken in this place in the past about the importance of the seafood industry and the aquaculture industry in my state. Be it live or processed abalone; fresh, chilled or frozen Atlantic salmon; ocean trout, the best in the world, some would say; rock lobster; or mussels off the east coast—our exports are increasingly enjoying a growing reputation around the world as high-end food experiences not to be missed. It has been suggested in recent years that the value of the salmon and aquaculture industries to the state of Tasmania is growing by $1 million a week. When it comes to food, and indeed high-quality food, my state, Tasmania, punches above its weight.
I note that prior to Christmas the Minister for Trade and Investment, who I have a great deal of admiration for, and also the Prime Minister made particular mention of an abattoir based in Cressy in my electorate—Tasmanian Quality Meats—a family owned business which was successful in winning the regional exporter of the year award at the Business Council of Australia's export awards night prior to Christmas. Tasmanian Quality Meats is a business owned by Mr Brian Oliver and Mr John Talbot. They rightly deserve that award because of the growing quality and success that they have achieved in exporting lamb, mutton and veal. The export business has grown in a very short space of time, in 15 years, from almost nothing in terms of export income, not to mention domestic sales, to in excess of $12 million worth of exports—all with absolutely no government support. They have done it all on their own, but it is fair to say that as an exporter it is not easy. There are challenges. The deregulation agenda that this government has embarked on will no doubt help exporters.

The export market development grants that we are talking about here tonight are also another practical measure that will provide benefits to the many exporters in my state of Tasmania, including in my electorate. There have indeed been challenges. The global financial crisis was a challenge. The strength of the Australia dollar has been a challenge to exporters, be they miners, agriculturists or manufacturers and the like. We have the double whammy, though, in my home state in that we live on an island—a small island at that. That body of water across Bass Strait is an enormous burden; it is an increased cost that exporters in my state have to struggle with. I applaud and welcome the Productivity Commission-ACCC draft report into the Bass Strait that has been circulated for comment within my state. My colleagues from Tasmania, the member for Bass and the member for Braddon—Debate interrupted

ADJOURNMENT

The SPEAKER (21:00): It being nine o'clock, I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

Western Australia Senate Election

Mr PALMER (Fairfax) (21:00): The Senate election in Western Australia is of prime importance not just to the nation but to Western Australia. Over the years, successive Australian governments have relied on the wealth generation capacity of Western Australia to carry the nation on its back. There has always been the assumption that Western Australia can manage, that 'they'll be right'. But things in Western Australia are not right. The mining tax has destroyed the investment and prosperity that Western Australia once enjoyed, and the carbon tax has pushed the cost of electricity up to the stage where the average family in Perth cannot manage their household budget. Despite all of that, Western Australia still does not receive the GST receipts it should be entitled to. How long will it be until Western Australians get a fair share? How long will it be until the state governments and the Australian government correct the injustice and allow Western Australians to receive their fair share of GST? Unemployment is increasing, living standards are declining and people's lives are getting worse, not better.

It has now been six months since the government was sworn in and it has still not been able to get the mining tax and the carbon tax repealed in the Senate. These taxes should have been repealed from the day the government was elected—from the day the Australian people voted
overwhelmingly for them to be abolished. Labor and the Greens have blocked the repeal in the Senate, and the government remains impotent to do anything about it. The government cannot do it; they cannot remove the carbon and mining taxes. The Greens and Labor will not allow them to do it—they are the nay-sayers who gave us the mining tax and the carbon tax and brought to Australia a government that wreaked havoc on our economy.

The fact of the matter is that only the senators who control the balance of power in the Senate after the next Senate election and their alliance can remove the mining and carbon taxes and set Australia on the right path. The Senate election will not change anything in Western Australia. We know who the Prime Minister is; we know who the Leader of the Opposition is. But the Western Australian election is an opportunity for Western Australians to join the balance of power in the Senate. If Senate candidates elected at that election are elected in Western Australia they will be able to join the balance of power in the Senate and make sure the mining tax and the carbon tax are repealed.

The Western Australian economy needs more jobs and investment. Now is not the time for the government to fail to follow through on its commitment to Western Australia. All Australians, wherever they live, owe a debt of gratitude to the people of Western Australia for all they have done for this country. I have a strong personal commitment to Western Australia, having worked and lived in the Pilbara for many years. I was successful in capturing billions of dollars that have now been invested in Western Australia creating many thousands of jobs in the state—investment which created a new port at Cape Preston and one of Australia's largest industrial enterprises.

Western Australians are not afraid of hard work or a challenge but, if the government fails to act, they cannot accept that they should be forever sentenced to a lesser role because their politicians do not live in Sydney or Melbourne. What about them? It is just not fair that Western Australia is not treated fairly and that it is burdened with the carbon and mining taxes; that Western Australia is taken for granted in the good times and forgotten when the times get tough. Western Australia deserves to be in the balance of power in the Senate. Only then can Western Australia make the politicians who rule this country from Sydney and Melbourne take notice of their fair demands.

Sugar Industry

Mr PITT (Hinkler) (21:03): I rise to speak on an issue of great concern in my electorate of Hinkler. The situation confronting canegrowers is dire. The region has endured two major floods in three years and is now in the midst of the worst drought in more than two decades. The impact of these natural disasters on the local economy is significant. There are 600 cane farms across the region which employ about 800 people and generate $230 million a year for the local economy. This does not include the thousands of people indirectly employed by the sector and those working in sugar mills.

I recently met with Isis canegrowers and local chamber of commerce representatives at Childers who told me that farms and businesses are on the brink of collapse. One grower at the meeting described his predicament as a 'death spiral'. Growers are actively discouraging their children from pursuing careers in agriculture. Banks are threatening to foreclose, and people in the sugar industry have no money to spend, which means other Childers businesses are also feeling the pinch.
This has been the Isis region’s highest water usage season since 1991. They are currently 100 per cent reliant on irrigation. The cost and the man-hours required to irrigate and keep their crop alive is taking its toll. Remaining viable would require, at the very least, an immediate 33 per cent reduction in electricity and water costs. This year alone, electricity will make up a third of their operational costs.

Growers are operating as efficiently as they possibly can. Previously, they irrigated at night to utilise cheaper tariffs while minimising evaporation. The night tariff has increased to such an extent that it is no longer financially beneficial to irrigate at night. We need to give them an incentive to irrigate at night so that we are maximising the utilisation of our generating assets. Despite using only centre-pivot low-pressure irrigation, which is one of the most efficient methods of irrigation known, one grower said his electricity bill for the last quarter was $135,000, plus $44,000 in water charges. There are not too many canegrowers who make $200,000 in a year, let alone almost $200,000 in a quarter.

Isis growers expect to produce just 840,000 tonnes of cane in the 2014 season, compared to 1.5 million tonnes in 2012. Some have chosen to simply turn the tap off altogether and call it quits. They say they simply cannot afford to absorb the annual prices set by the Queensland Competition Authority and Australian Energy Regulator. If the Newman government accepts the QCA’s recommended 16.3 per cent increase in 2014-15, tariffs 62, 65 and 66 will have increased by 96 per cent since 2009. The Network or N-component, which is set by the AER and passed on by the QCA, represents about half of the current electricity price.

Over the decades we have invested billions of dollars in water infrastructure in a bid to improve industry viability. What was the point if we are now charging growers so much for electricity they cannot afford to use any of it? You should not have to rely on your prayers to be successful in agriculture. What are we doing about it? Repealing the carbon tax will wipe about 10 per cent off their electricity bill. The growers argue that such a reduction will not be nearly enough and they fear the 10 per cent will simply be eaten up by future tariff increases. Unfortunately, Labor in the Senate is standing in the way of the growers getting some relief.

In February, we announced that we would review the Renewable Energy Target to determine its impact on carbon emissions, energy markets, prices, businesses and Australian households. When Labor was in government, its RET of 20 per cent created an excess of solar users across the country without any consideration of need, market conditions or existing generation capacity. What people do not realise is that it is not the government subsidising solar users, it is electricity users. In other words, the people who cannot afford to install solar are subsidising those who can. There is not enough time today to detail all of these factors, but basically electricity users are paying between $30 million and $40 million per productive megawatt plus a further 40c to 65c per kilowatt hour for other people to have solar. My constituents installed this in good faith and we should honour those contracts.

Repealing the carbon tax and reviewing the RET is a good start, but it is not enough. We are working with the Council of Australian Governments for reforms to place downward pressure on energy prices. An energy white paper will look at regulatory reform and set out a coherent and integrated approach to energy policy.

To the cane growers in my electorate, I know you are exhausted. I know you feel your concerns have gone unheard for too long, but, please, make a submission to that white paper, because no Aussie farms means no Aussie food. As a former cane farmer, and a registered
professional electrical engineer in Queensland, I am not sure that is an Australia I want to live in.

Malaysia

Malaysia: Missing Aircraft

Mr DANBY (Melbourne Ports) (21:08): The smooth transition by Indonesia from the Suharto dictatorship to a functioning democracy is something all observant Australians recognise. Nothing highlights this more than the raucous nature of the Indonesian media. My friend Bambang Harymurti, who is the editor of Tempo and now runs his own TV station, is constantly chasing corrupt politicians, institutions and bureaucrats. Good on him!

Indonesia has achieved what Malaysia has yet to achieve—that is, a real and functioning democracy. Prior to last year's Malaysian election the leader of the opposition, Anwar Ibrahim, and opposition parties enjoyed no access to the Malaysian media. They were severely disadvantaged by the electoral system.

If the events of the last 10 days have highlighted anything, it is that democrats everywhere are now aware of the consequences of the effects of lack of democracy in Malaysia. We have not seen the Malaysian government demonstrating the leadership required following the disappearance of flight MH370. It is seen, as The Australian editorial noted today, as 'chaotic and confused'. The effects of what the New York Times described as the dysfunctional leadership in Malaysia have been made clear to the rest of the world by the poor investigation of the missing flight, which has been marked by suppression of information, obfuscation and contradiction. The mishandling of the investigation began with confusion regarding stolen passports and false claims of baggage not being put on the aircraft. Several days later, the authorities were found to have withheld vital information regarding the aircraft's appearance on Malaysian air force radar and confirmation that the plane had suddenly changed its route. The authorities held this information for four days, despite the terrible frustration of family members—not to mention the millions of dollars spent by the international community, including Australia, on these increasingly desperate rescue efforts. A quote in The Australian rightly described the Malaysian leadership as:

A ruling elite in power since independence in 1957 that has long regarded itself as above scrutiny has shown itself incompetent in dealing with a major crisis that involves something other than simply cracking down on political opponents…

We have now heard allegations about the captain having attended court on behalf of the opposition leader, Anwar Ibrahim, which is somehow being related to the disappearance of the plane and claims in the London Daily Mail that Anwar Ibrahim is an Islamic fundamentalist. With all the authority I can summon I say that this is baseless. Anwar Ibrahim is a democrat and is seeking to bring his country to full democratic modernity.

The mishandling of this investigation and the grief that it has caused, alongside Malaysia’s suppression of the opposition, have to be seen in a context. Charging the Anwar with sodomy every time he looks like he will win an election is a sad reflection of a problem that faces the Malaysian democratic and legal process. Anwar has been harassed for the past 15 years on these charges and on 7 March had his high court acquittal reversed, a decision that resulted in a further five-year jail sentence.
I have explained before that Anwar was Deputy Prime Minister in 1998 when he fell out with the then Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad—no friend of Australia. Anwar was beaten up, arrested, tried on faked evidence and coerced testimony and jailed for four years, before his conviction was finally overturned in 2004. The same kind of fate awaits him again.

The reason the ruling party, UMNO, fears Anwar is simply that he is the first Malay politician to challenge successfully its monopoly of the Malay vote, which is the basis of its longstanding hold on power. His party have taken more than 60 seats away from UMNO at successive elections and together with younger educated Malays and Indian and Chinese minorities might form a future democratic majority in Malaysia.

The families of the missing people on board the flight MH370 want to see a Malaysian government acting transparently, openly and democratically. I am afraid there is a lot more to this issue than simply the disappearance of the flight that has led to the terrible fate that has befallen all of those people on that Malaysia Airlines plane.

**Beef Industry**

Ms PRICE (Durack) (21:13): Building Australia's bilateral ties and maximising the value of our exports with our closest neighbour, Indonesia, was the key focus of an agricultural forum held in Broome on 28 February. This was the first time the Northern Beef Producer Forum had been held in Western Australia, so I was delighted that it could take place in my electorate of Durack, particularly with so many key representatives from the Australian and Indonesian governments and from industry. These included my federal colleague the Minister for Agriculture and the relevant agricultural ministers from Western Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory. Of particular note, however, was the key guest speaker and attendees who were representing the Indonesian government at the forum. During the course of the conference, we heard about the current beef situation in Indonesia, including Indonesia's perspective of Australian investment and how we can seize on the many market opportunities that are available. This was particularly timely, given last year's removal of Indonesia's cattle import quota, with the level of imports now determined by price alone. The new set benchmark is 76,000 rupiah per kilogram. The Indonesian government has previously expressed disappointment at the level of direct Australian investment in Indonesia, and in particular its cattle industry, with the country being our closest export market.

As those in the House would be aware, Indonesia is the largest economy in South-East Asia and is projected to be the world's seventh largest economy by 2030. This is why Australia cannot afford to sit back and wait for these investment opportunities to pass us by. We need to seize on our market opportunities with Indonesia and focus on what Australia is good at to create a prosperous and sustainable economy and industry for our future generations. The key message to come out of this forum was that Indonesia remains a very willing and valuable trading partner, and the opportunities for our agricultural sector—in particular, our cattle producers—are immense. This is despite the former Labor government's attempts not only to fracture Australia's cattle industry but to significantly strain our relationship with Indonesia by banning live exports without first mounting its own investigation into claims of animal cruelty.

It is a credit to the Australian cattle industry and to the coalition government that we have been able to rebuild these relationships. I have previously shown my support for Australian cattle producers and their fight against anti-live-export campaigners who have resorted to
threats and intimidation tactics to send their message. I believe it is important for all Australians to fight for those whose human welfare has been targeted—to fight for our farmers and to fight for Australia's key export industries. There are those on the other side of the chamber who would be quick to criticise such a statement and say that if I support Australia's live export industry then this must go hand in hand with not caring about the welfare of our animals. But I would like my message to once again be clear: nobody, including cattle producers and me, wants to see cruelty to animals.

My vision for Australia is one where a balance between regulations to protect the welfare of animals are in place, without hindering our cattle industry's ability to flourish and take advantage of market opportunities that countries such as Indonesia present. I believe the Abbott-led government is striking this balance and will continue to work with all parties involved to achieve this vision.

Although the Broome forum's focus was on the cattle industry, it has acted as an outlet for Australian government and industry to start—or perhaps to continue—looking at ways to increase our exports to Indonesia by seizing on other investment opportunities. Increasing Australia's irrigated agriculture across the north, and in particular in my electorate of Durack, is just one example of how we could take advantage of investment opportunities with our Asian neighbours. I welcomed the release of CSIRO's report *Mosaic irrigation for the Northern Australian beef industry*, dated 6 March, which assessed the water and agricultural potential for the Northern Australian beef industry. This assessment found that there is sufficient groundwater to sustain almost twice the area of land currently irrigated in Northern Australia, which at optimum efficiency could boost beef production by up to six per cent, or $200 million per year. Needless to say, the potential of Australia's agriculture industry is immense, but this potential will be achieved only if we work now to capitalise on our market opportunities both domestically and internationally with our Asian neighbours.

**Deregulation**

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (21:18): For some time now we have been subjected to a numbing barrage of platitudes on deregulation from the Prime Minister and the member for Kooyong. In opposition, their trite slogans were more like those of an overenthusiastic Young Liberals branch meeting or an American Tea Party rally than of a party with pretensions to become the government of the Commonwealth of Australia. And of course, most of this sloganeering has been based on nonsense suppositions of a kind that were the stock-in-trade of the Abbott opposition and that, very sadly for our nation, continue to be the stock-in-trade of the Abbott government. The truth of the matter, demonstrated by numerous independent reviews and studies, is that Labor governments are not in any sense prone to overregulation.

Time after time, the Liberals have bandied around the notion that the last Labor government was responsible for some 21,000 new regulations. It seems that the coalition is not capable of any analysis more nuanced than a self-serving scratch tally of the legislative instruments enacted between 2007 and 2013. Had they bothered themselves with the content of these instruments, they would have found that 4,200 of these regulations were in fact tariff concession orders—regulations that reduce costs for businesses and that were requested by businesses. And more than 3,400 of those regulations were airworthiness directives, which
address safety issues. Are these the kinds of regulations the Abbott government thinks are holding back our nation?

The coalition might be forgiven for overlooking the at least 6,000 redundant or obsolete regulations repealed by the last Labor government. We did not feel the need to confect a media stunt like a 'repeal day' to celebrate this achievement. This is a task that we consider routine statute book clean-up but that the coalition apparently consider brave deregulatory reform. Labor knows what brave deregulatory reform is, and it is not the routine repeal of redundant regulations that are no longer enforced. Labor has achieved real deregulatory reform like banking sector liberalisation, sweeping competition reform, the floating of the dollar and the slashing of tariffs.

A real commitment to light-touch regulation might see the coalition, as their own 'red tape reduction manual' counsels them, adopt a market based climate change policy rather than a half-baked command-and-control scheme that even after four years they cannot explain. A real commitment to light-touch regulation might see the coalition support a fiscally responsible paid parental leave scheme rather than an inequitable, bloated program funded by a levy on business.

But this is all apparently too complex for a government addicted to slogans in place of policy. This is a government that seeks to hide from the fact that even by their own simplistic measures, the all-time record year for added pages of regulation was not under Labor Prime Ministers Gillard or Rudd but, in 2006, under Liberal Prime Minister John Howard. And if the one-dimensional rhetoric of the Abbott coalition is actually carried into effect, they will reveal just how out of touch their wild-eyed libertarian views are with the reality of Australian life. Australians do not believe that regulation by its nature is a bad thing. They know that the foundations of our safe, peaceful and prosperous society rest on reasonable and appropriate legislation put in place in the national interest by its democratically elected government.

Australians know that it is a strength our society that it exists under the rule of law, not a weakness. Australians know that criminal laws keep our streets safe, they know that health regulations keep our air clean and our water safe to drink. They know that economic regulation keeps our workplaces fair, our marketplaces competitive, and our retirement savings secure from the worst impact of events like the global financial crisis. Australians know that what the Abbott government derides as 'green tape' needing to be cut is in fact the environmental protection that generations of Australians campaigned for, that saved the Franklin wilderness, that ended the slaughter of whales by Australian ships, and that continues to require that companies do not destroy the precious environmental heritage of our nation's children and grandchildren for the short-term profits of today.

Australians should be concerned as to what Repeal Day is really about, beneath the glib rhetoric and populist grandstanding of the Prime Minister and his acolytes, because what Repeal Day is really about is the tearing away of many good and responsible protections that Australians rely on and trust their governments to enact and enforce.

The SPEAKER: The question is:
That the House do now adjourn.
Question agreed to.

House adjourned at 21:23
NOTICES

The following notices were given:

Mr Frydenberg: To present a Bill for an Act to repeal certain Acts and provisions of Acts and to make various amendments of the statute law of the Commonwealth, and for related purposes.

Mr Frydenberg: To present a Bill for an Act to repeal certain Acts, and for related purposes.

Mr Frydenberg: To present a Bill for an Act to make various amendments of the statute law of the Commonwealth, to repeal certain obsolete Acts, and for related purposes.

Mr Ciobo: To present a Bill for an Act to amend the law in relation to financial products and financial advice, and for related purposes.

Mr Joyce: To present a Bill for an Act to amend laws relating to agricultural and veterinary chemicals, and for other purposes.

Mr Pyne: To present a Bill for an Act to amend the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988, and for other purposes.

Mr Keenan: To present a Bill for an Act to amend the Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995, and for related purposes.

Mr K. J. Andrews: To present a Bill for an Act to repeal the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012, and for related purposes.

Mr Billson: To present a Bill for an Act to amend the Paid Parental Leave Act 2010, and for related purposes.

Mr Baldwin: To present a Bill for an Act to amend legislation relating to intellectual property, and for related purposes.

Mr Frydenberg: To present a Bill for an Act to repeal the Independent National Security Legislation Monitor Act 2010, and for related purposes.

Mr Frydenberg: To present a Bill for an Act to amend the Personal Property Securities Act 2009, and for related purposes.

Mr Pyne: To move:

That standing order 131 paragraph (b) and 207 paragraph (b) be amended to read as follows:

131 Successive divisions

(b) If there is a successive division, Members who wish to vote in the same way as in the previous division must remain seated until the result of the division is announced. The tellers shall take each Member's vote as being the same as it was in the previous division unless a Member reports to them. A Member must report to the tellers if he or she:

(i) wishes to vote differently to his or her vote in the previous division; or
(ii) voted in the previous division and does not wish to vote in the current division; or
(iii) did not vote in the previous division and wishes to vote in the current division.

207 Presenting a petition

(b) A Member may present a petition during:

(i) the period of Members’ statements in the House or in the Federation Chamber, in accordance with standing order 43;
(ii) the period of Members’ constituency statements in the Federation Chamber, in accordance with standing order 193;

(iii) adjournment debate in the House in accordance with standing order 31, and in the Federation Chamber in accordance with standing order 191; and

(iv) grievance debate in accordance with standing order 192B.

Mr Pyne: To move:
That standing order 1 be amended to read as follows:

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

| Suspension of standing or other orders on notice relating to the programming of government business | 25 mins |
| Whole debate | 15 mins |
| Mover | 10 mins |
| Member next speaking | 5 mins |
| Any other Member | |

(standing order 47)

Mr Pyne: Contingent on the second reading of a bill being agreed to and the Speaker having announced any message from the Governor General under standing order 147: Minister To move:
That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent the motion for the third reading being moved without delay.

Ms Owens: To move:
That this House:
(1) acknowledges that 22 April 2014 marks 60 years since the Refugee Convention came into effect, and as the sixth nation to sign the Convention, it was Australia’s assent that brought the Convention into effect; and

(2) notes that:
   (a) since the signing of the Convention, Australia has accepted over 620,000 refugees and since Federation, Australia has provided a safe haven to more than 800,000 refugees; and

   (b) Australia is fundamentally a migrant nation whose strength and diversity is derived from the many peoples and cultures that have enriched its distinctive multicultural polity, building from the foundation of Indigenous civilization which is the oldest continuous culture on earth, and including the extraordinary contribution of hundreds of thousands of people who have come to Australia seeking refuge.

Ms Rowland: To move:
That this House:
(1) notes:
   (a) Australia’s co-sponsorship of the 2012 United Nations General Assembly Human Rights Council resolution calling on the Government of Sri Lanka to implement the recommendations of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission of Sri Lanka and to take credible and independent actions to ensure justice, equity, accountability and reconciliation for all Sri Lankans;
(b) Australia’s co-sponsorship of the 2013 United Nations General Assembly Human Rights Council resolution expressing concern at continuing reports of violations of human rights in Sri Lanka, and reiterating the call upon the Government of Sri Lanka to implement the Commission’s recommendations and to fulfil its commitment to conduct an independent and credible investigation into allegations of violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law;

(c) reports of continuing violations of human rights in Sri Lanka, intimidation of and reprisals against human rights defenders, members of civil society and journalists, threats to judicial independence and the rule of law, and a rapid rise in violence and discrimination on the basis of religion or belief in Sri Lanka; and

(d) the conclusion of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights that national mechanisms have consistently failed to establish the truth and achieve justice in Sri Lanka, and her recommendation that the Human Rights Council establish an international inquiry mechanism to further investigate the alleged violations of human rights law and international humanitarian law and monitor any domestic accountability processes; and

(2) calls on the Australian Government to:

(a) maintain Australia’s strong record of support for human rights at the 25th session of the Human Rights Council; and

(b) join with the United Kingdom, United States of America and other co-sponsoring nations and commit the Australian Government to the strongest possible support for draft Human Rights Council resolution A/HRC/25/L.1.

Ms Gambaro: To move:

That this House applauds the Government for its resolute commitment to supporting the men and women of the Australian Defence Force (ADF), past and present, by:

(1) honouring its election promise to:

(a) introduce from 1 January 2014, free basic health care to all eligible dependents of full-time ADF members and Reservists undertaking continuous full time service; and

(b) provide ‘fair indexation’ for military superannuants by amending the indexation arrangements for more than 57,000 Defence Forces Retirement Benefits and Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits scheme pensioners from 1 July 2014;

(2) officially launching Project Suakin, which introduces a range of full-time, part time and casual employment categories within the ADF that will offer members increased flexibility to match their changing personal circumstances and enable the ADF to respond to current and future workforce challenges; and

(3) directing Defence Housing Australia to upgrade housing stock available to Defence personnel and reduce pressure on local community housing markets through programs such as the Top End Defence housing strategy which will deliver over 2,300 additional homes in Darwin.

Ms M. L. Landry: To move:

That this House:

(1) recognises that 100 per cent fly-in fly-out company workforce agreements in Central Queensland’s coal mining belt are causing concern amongst residents and small business owners in small local mining towns; and

(2) encourages Parliament to discuss some of the recommendations in the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia’s report Cancer of the bush or salvation of our cities (13 February 2013) to determine if they are relevant to the ongoing issue now faced in mining towns in the electoral divisions of Capricornia, Dawson and Flynn.
Ms Owens: To move:
That this House:
(1) notes:
   (a) the devastating effects of atypical Haemolytic Uraemic Syndrome (HUS) and its long term impact on the lives of the sufferer, as well as their friends and family;
   (b) that atypical HUS is a genetic disease of excessive immune dysfunction that affects people of all ages, with symptoms including heart failure, pulmonary edema, clotting in the lungs, blurred vision and kidney failure; and
   (c) that the current treatment regimen of plasma exchange and/or dialysis has significant risks and can result in a further reduction in the quality of life for the patient;
(2) acknowledges the community advocacy work that has brought this condition to the attention of the House, such as the work by Ms Jeanette Daher who seeks a listing of the drug under the Government’s Life Saving Drugs Program;
(3) notes that the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) is due to make a recommendation on the use of the drug Soliris (Eculizumab), which has shown to put the disease into remission; and
(4) urges the Minister for Health to carefully consider any favourable recommendation of the PBAC as a matter of urgency.

Mr Giles: To move:
That this House:
(1) recognises the one year anniversary of the Rana Plaza building collapsed in Bangladesh, which killed more than 1,130 people in 2013;
(2) notes the:
   (a) existence of the Bangladesh Accord, an independent agreement designed to make all garment factories in Bangladesh safe workplaces; and
   (b) Accord has been signed by over 150 apparel corporations from 20 countries in Europe, North America, Asia and Australia, two global trade unions, IndustriALL and UNI Global Union, and numerous Bangladeshi unions; and
(3) calls on the remaining companies in Australia and abroad to sign and adhere to the spirit of the Accord.

Ms Sudmalis: To move:
That this House:
(1) notes that the recent Strategic Review of the National Broadband Network (NBN) revealed that the:
   (a) Government’s broadband plan can be completed using a mix of technologies to save $32 billion, keep monthly bills lower and deliver the NBN to all Australians four years sooner than under Labor’s plan; and
   (b) NBN is in a fundamentally worse position than Labor ever disclosed to Parliament or the Australian public;
(2) notes with concern that the review found that:
   (a) if Labor’s policies are left in place, Australian households could pay up to 80 per cent more for broadband each month; and
   (b) the cost of completing the NBN under Labor’s plan has blown out to $73 billion; and
(3) acknowledges that the Government is delivering on its election commitment to complete the NBN sooner, cheaper to consumers and more affordably for the Australian taxpayer.
QUESTIONS IN WRITING
Supporting Leave for Living Organ Donors Scheme
(Question No. 47)

Ms Parke asked the Minister for Health, in writing, on 12 February 2014:
Since its introduction on 1 July 2013, how many people have accessed the 'leave for living organ donors' pilot program.

Mr Dutton: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
Living organ donors are encouraged to register for the Supporting Leave for Living Organ Donors Scheme (the Scheme) prior to surgery and submit a claim for payment after they return from leave. Payment under the Scheme is a one-off payment that is made to the employer retrospectively, on the condition that they have paid the donor employee and leave has been taken.

In the first seven months of the Scheme from 1 July 2013 to 31 January 2014, the Department of Human Services has received registrations from 76 individual donors under the Scheme and has so far made 32 payments.

National Broadband Network
(Question No. 51)

Mrs Elliot asked the Minister for Communications, in writing, on 12 February 2014:
Given that the National Broadband Network Interim Satellite Service is no longer accepting new customers due to capacity limits and the new satellites are not scheduled to be launched until 2015, (a) will he direct NBN Co Limited to upgrade the capacity of the existing system; if not, what infrastructure will be provided to remote residents in the electoral division of Richmond to enable them to access broadband internet; and (b) can he guarantee that remote residents will be provided with broadband internet of equivalent standard to those in fixed wireless areas upon the launch of the new satellites in 2015.

Mr Turnbull: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
The Australian Government and NBN Co Limited (NBN Co) are examining options for addressing the current lack of affordable broadband services in regional, rural and remote Australia.

NBN Co is currently undertaking a review into its fixed wireless and satellite programs. This review is considering strategic options available to NBN Co to cost-effectively provide coverage to areas outside the fixed-line footprint, as well as considering the optimal model to provide this coverage. I am unable to provide further information at this stage.

It is important to note that high-level estimates from NBN Co indicate that around 100,000 premises that were to be serviced by the National Broadband Network's fixed-wireless and satellite networks may be serviced by FTTN, under the revised rollout that assumes an optimised multi-technology mix.