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SITTING DAYS—2014

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FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—THIRD PERIOD

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

House of Representatives Office holders
Speaker—Hon. Bronwyn Kathleen Bishop MP
Deputy Speaker—Hon. Bruce Craig Scott MP
Second Deputy Speaker—Mr Robert George Mitchell
Members of the Speaker's Panel—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>Wicks, Mrs Lucy Elizabeth</td>
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<td>Wood, Mr Jason Peter</td>
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<td>Zappia, Mr Antonio</td>
<td>Makin, SA</td>
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**PARTY ABBREVIATIONS**

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

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- Clerk of the House of Representatives—D Elder
- Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—C Mills
- Parliamentary Budget Officer—P Bowen
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection</td>
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<td><strong>Minister for Finance</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Cabinet Secretary</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jacinta Collins</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Hon Michael Danby MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Dr Jim Chalmers MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Deputy Leader of the Opposition</strong></td>
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<tr>
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The SPEAKER (Hon. Bronwyn Bishop) took the chair at 12:00, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Aviation Safety Regulation Review

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (12:01): by leave—On 14 November last year, I advised the House that the government had commissioned an independent review of Australia's system of aviation safety regulation, to be undertaken by a panel of three eminent and experienced members of the international aviation community. I can now advise the House that I have received the review report from panel chairman, Mr David Forsyth—and I acknowledge his presence in the chamber today.

The report confirms that Australia has an excellent safety record and an advanced aviation regulatory system. It also recognises that there are opportunities for the system to be improved to ensure Australia remains a global aviation leader. The review makes 37 recommendations for the government to consider which collectively would represent the biggest reform in aviation regulation in decades.

The review panel has engaged widely with the industry, the aviation agencies and other stakeholders. Some 269 written submissions were received. The panel also considered international trends in the aviation industry and emerging global practices in aviation safety regulation.

The role of the regulator is pivotal in the safety system, and many of the recommendations relate to the Civil Aviation Safety Authority. They span issues such as the relationship between the regulator and operators, mechanisms for a more collaborative approach to regulatory oversight, the culture and skills required and the role of the board.

Other recommendations are aimed at strengthening the overall system and the arrangements for coordination across the work of the aviation agencies. These cover issues such as sharing of safety data and strategic planning through Australia's State Safety Program.

In relation to the Australian Transport Safety Bureau, the report recommends that an additional commissioner be appointed with operational aviation experience.

An important set of recommendations relate to the finalisation of the longstanding Regulatory Reform Program and guidance on principles for developing future regulatory change proposals. The report highlights the opportunity to improve the approach to regulatory reform, to reduce the volume and improve the clarity of aviation safety regulations.

It is vital that Australia fosters a dynamic aviation sector. Aviation is an essential element in a modern economy. Given the speed with which the global aviation industry is changing and growing, we need to ensure that our regulatory system adapts to keep pace with the industry.

Safety will always remain the government's highest priority.
The government will commence consideration of the report in detail without delay. The report will be open for public comment for the next month. Written submissions received by the review will be made public over the coming days, except for those provided in confidence and a number of others about which the government is seeking legal advice.

I will advise the House of a comprehensive response to the recommendations as soon as possible.

In developing the response, we will be looking to ensure that our safety regulatory system is as good as it can be to support aviation into the future. We will be looking to ensure clear strategic direction and coordination, to support contemporary approaches consistent with global best practice, and to foster effective industry engagement, in particular in regulatory development.

Consistent with the government's broader agenda in deregulation, we will be looking for ways to reduce regulatory costs on the industry without reducing safety.

The government will also take account of the recommendations as we approach a number of important appointments in the aviation agencies. This includes the appointment of two extra members to the CASA board to bolster the aviation experience, in line with a coalition election commitment. I also expect that the CASA board will give full regard to the report in its current process for selection of the next Director of Aviation Safety.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the review panel. Mr David Forsyth, AM, the chairman of the panel, is the former chair of Safeskies Australia and of the Airservices Australia board, and has brought over 30 years of experience in the Australian aviation sector to the review. He was joined on the panel by Mr Don Spruston, former Director-General of Civil Aviation at Transport Canada and former Director-General of the International Business Aviation Council, and Mr Roger Whitefield, former Head of Safety at British Airways, former safety adviser to Qantas and former United Kingdom Civil Aviation Authority board member. The panel was assisted by Mr Philip Reiss, former President of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association of Australia, on issues relating to the general aviation sector and regional operators.

I would like to recognise the substantial contribution by aviation industry participants to the review. I would welcome industry views on the report and on the best options for ensuring effective processes for representation in collaborative processes.

The full report is now available on the department's website.

The independent review of aviation safety regulation was a commitment by the coalition at the 2013 federal election. I welcome the panel's report as the first step towards a stronger and more harmonious aviation industry.

I thank again the panel members, those who made submissions, and officers of my department who assisted the inquiry as it went through its task, and I acknowledge the particular talents and skills that the inquiry members brought to this examination. The aviation sector has endured some troubled and sometimes tumultuous times, and I hope that this report will be the beginning of a more harmonious aviation industry, one that works well together and delivers safe and secure aviation for Australia for decades ahead.

I table a copy of the report, and I ask leave of the House to move a motion to enable the member for Franklin to speak for seven minutes.
Leave granted.

Mr TRUSS: I move:

That so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent Ms Collins speaking in reply to the ministerial statement for a period not exceeding 7 minutes.

Question agreed to.

Ms COLLINS (Franklin) (12:09): Labor welcome the minister's statement, as we did when the minister announced this review into aviation safety. Australia does have an excellent record on aviation safety—something that, I am pleased to say, this report recognises. Before I go any further, I want to make one thing crystal clear: the Australian Labor Party regards aviation safety as a non-political, bipartisan issue.

There are many issues that come before this House upon which we have different views, based on our different political positions and priorities. We can argue about the budget—which we should, given the number of broken promises it features and its attack on average families. We can argue in question time, which we do on a daily basis. But on aviation safety we are on a unity ticket. There are no politics in aviation safety. Indeed, every member of this parliament should see aviation safety as their responsibility. We should all accept that the job is never finished and that our aim must be continuous improvement. This is especially so given the constant technological change in the aviation sector, which contributes about $7 billion a year to the Australian economy. It is a dynamic industry that requires dynamic and well-resourced regulators. Those regulators need to be well-staffed by the best experts available, and they need to be nimble and alive to the constant changes in the industry.

In office, Labor reformed the aviation sector through a properly planned green and white paper process that left the coalition an aviation sector in good shape. Indeed, my colleague the member for Grayndler served as transport minister with distinction. More recently the member for Grayndler, as the shadow minister, and Labor have continued to take a bipartisan approach, backing the production of this report and agreeing to the government's move to add extra directors to the CASA board.

The Aviation Safety Regulation Review is extensive. Its 37 recommendations bear close examination because they literally concern matters of life and death. It is pleasing to hear that there were 269 submissions to the inquiry and that the minister intends to take public comment on the report. Governments are not the font of all wisdom on aviation safety. Experts within the sector have much to contribute to the process of reform, and it is fitting that the minister appears to be going out of his way to consult widely. Labor welcomes the minister's indication that he will expedite detailed government consideration of the report and respond in due course.

We also welcome the minister's commitment to make written submissions public. Transparency in all areas of government is important, but, on aviation safety, people's confidence in this review and the government's considerations related to it will be elevated if the process is transparent.

There is no point rushing to judgement and making declarations about this review. Labor will treat this report with the seriousness that it deserves. Beyond offering our genuine commitment to be a constructive contributor to the process, we will assess the report in full
before commenting in detail about its contents. But our starting point is very simple: any reasonable measure that improves aviation safety in this country deserves our support.

In his contribution, the minister outlined the general thrust of the recommendations, including his intention to include the aviation sector in the government's broader agenda for deregulation. It is important that the minister said that any reduction of regulatory cost to industry should not come at the expense of safety. Labor agrees. The previous Labor government did much to reduce red tape, particularly across a range of sectors through the Council of Australian Governments. We also want to reduce costs for industry. But any changes need, as the minister said, to be carefully considered in the light of whether they affect safety. We just cannot be too careful.

On behalf of the opposition, I would also like to thank the review panel for its work, including chairman David Forsyth and the panel members Don Spruston and Roger Whitefield. The member for Grayndler appointed David to chair Airservices Australia in 2008 and, under his leadership, the board led a major program of investment in critical safety infrastructure, air traffic services and training of skilled personnel. I also thank those who made submissions. This kind of work can actually save lives. The opposition appreciates your efforts, and, as I have made clear, will work with government on the report in a constructive way, putting safety ahead of all other considerations.

Let me end by quoting the minister's earlier contribution. As the minister said:

Safety will always remain the government's highest priority.

That is as it should be. I offer an identical commitment from the opposition.

COMMITTEES

Public Works Committee

Reference

Mr McCORMACK (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance) (12:14): I move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the Public Works Committee Act 1969, the following proposed work be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for consideration and report: Fit-out of new leased premises for the Department of Social Services, Australian Capital Territory.

The Department of Social Services currently leases space in multiple buildings across Woden and Tuggeranong in the Australian Capital Territory. The term of lease at the DSS main building in Tuggeranong will expire on 5 December 2016, with no option available under that lease to extend the term. The department's current accommodation in Tuggeranong also has a range of deficiencies in terms of the occupational density and staff connectivity due to people being spread out over a series of 10 buildings.

The department is committed to maintaining a presence in the area as a high proportion of staff reside in the Tuggeranong Valley. The presence of a large department such as DSS in the area is also important to local small businesses. The department's proposed fit-out of the new leased premises will provide capacity for the co-location of approximately 70 per cent of its ACT based staff and opportunities for significant benefits in relation to functionality, operating efficiencies and reduced administrative overheads.
DSS has estimated that the total cost of the proposed fit-out will be $55.860 million plus GST, including builders’ costs, consultant and client costs, furniture, fittings and equipment and workstations. The 2014-15 budget provided $26.797 million over the forward estimates towards the project, with the remainder of the fit-out costs to be met through a lease incentive.

This proposal will enable a reduction of more than $7 million in annual outlays already factored into the forward estimates on leased office space in the ACT from 2017 onwards. Subject to parliamentary approval, the proposed integrated fit-out works are scheduled to commence in January 2016 with practical completion scheduled for 1 October 2016.

I am sure the committee will undertake a rigorous inquiry into the project and I look forward to reading its report in due course. I commend the motion to the House.

Question agreed to.

BILLS

Energy Efficiency Opportunities (Repeal) Bill 2014

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr CONROY (Charlton) (12:17): When speaking last night on this Energy Efficiency Opportunities (Repeal) Bill 2014 I was remarking on how the repeal of this bill marks the end of one of the most significant acts of environmental policy of the Howard government.

The three credible Howard government policies on the environment in this particular bill, which were aimed at curbing climate change, were shifting the economy to a low-carbon future, a commitment to an emissions trading scheme and a renewable energy target—three things that the Labor government, when we came into power in 2007, sought to build on. So the end of this act marks yet another retreat by this government from not only the Labor government’s agenda on decarbonising the economy but even the Howard government’s limited efforts in this area.

It is the repeal of a scheme that an independent review commissioned by the government found was saving companies over $800 million a year in energy costs. It did have a small compliance burden; we do not resile from that fact. But that should be contrasted with energy savings of over $800 million a year. I would submit that that is a very small cost for a very significant payoff.

The stated reasoning for repealing this bill is that large electricity customers, and people in Australia, are responsive to rising power prices—that consumers are responsive to price signals and are reducing their electricity consumption accordingly. That is a reasonable statement; electricity is an elastic good. The unfortunate thing is that it demonstrates the hypocrisy of the government because that contradicts flatly what their so-called Minister for the Environment has been stating for the last four years, that one of the reasons they have opposed the carbon price—a fixed price emissions trading scheme transitioning to a flexible price emissions trading scheme—is that 'electricity is an inelastic good', that you cannot increase the price of electricity and expect demand for electricity to fall. This is a concept that is blatant nonsense and yet again was one of the final nails in the coffin of the economic credibility of the government and, in particular, the Minister for the Environment.
This bill is part of a broader agenda of removing any attempts to decarbonise the economy. This bill is part of removing any attempts to shift Australia's energy structure away from carbon-intensive energy production. The constant attacks on a renewable energy target that we are witnessing now are another part; appointing a self-confessed climate sceptic to review the renewable energy target was a ridiculous and cynical move, a move that jeopardises an industry that employs 24,000 Australians and has $9 billion in sunk investment and another $9 billion of investment in the offing out to 2020. This is a scheme that on independent reports is suppressing energy prices rather than increasing energy prices. So this is another part of their attacks on decarbonising the economy.

Another one is their abolition of the Australian Renewable Energy Agency—ARENA—a body that they voiced support for prior to the election but—surprise, surprise!—have now decided to axe in their latest budget. This is an agency devoted to plugging the commercialisation gap in developing new technologies; it is an agency that those opposite are all too happy to go to unveiling of grants and plaques for but are then happy to kill, destroying $1.3 billion of additional investment in clean energy technology.

It would be remiss of me not to point out that the Parliamentary Secretary for Industry only last month attended the unveiling of a project funded by ARENA that was developing solar thermal technology at the Wallsend Swimming Centre. That is a great project, and the parliamentary secretary was very enthusiastic about it—as he should be. But that was funded by ARENA money that they have now cut from the budget for future projects—a tragic event.

Another attack on any efforts to decarbonise the economy is the stated goal of abolishing the Clean Energy Finance Corporation, a finance corporation that is doing great work. With $600 million worth of investment—half of which is energy efficiency initiatives with companies that are covered by the bill we are debating now—it has managed to leverage that up to $2.4 billion of investment in clean energy technologies. This investment will cut 3.9 million tonnes of carbon dioxide per annum from the environment at an abatement cost of only $2.40—a very low abatement cost—while returning to the taxpayers a return on average of seven per cent, well above the Commonwealth long-term bond rate, which was the stated financing goal.

These are all parts of the last government's efforts to decarbonise the economy, to shift the economy at a relatively low cost into a low-carbon economy where we can compete with the rest of the world, which are all being ripped away by a government intent on returning to the fossil fuel era while the rest of the world moves in a completely different trajectory. For example, overnight, President Obama announced very striking limits on emissions from coal fired power stations. The New York Times stated that it is the single largest climate change initiative of the United States government ever. A 30 per cent cut in fossil fuel emissions from coal fired power stations was his second choice. His preferred choice was an emissions trading scheme but he was unable to get it through congress because of the climate change sceptics in the congress, principally in the Tea Party—we see plenty of people who would line up with the Tea Party sitting opposite me today—so he has had to resort to direct regulation. But that will drive a 30 per cent reduction in carbon emissions from the energy generation sector, which is the most significant emitter of carbon dioxide in the US economy.

The rest of the world is taking action. Over one billion people now live in countries or regions governed by a carbon price. By the end of 2016 that will be three billion people.
Unfortunately, the Australian government is intent on going in another direction of condemning us to being a rustbelt economy while the rest of the world embraces these clean energy opportunities. It is all built on a falsehood that the carbon price is not working, that an emissions trading scheme is not providing appropriate incentives to decarbonise the economy in conjunction with things like the Energy Efficiency Opportunities Act. The facts are already starting to show this is patently false. For example, since the carbon price began in July 2012, emissions in the electricity sector are down over 7.6 per cent or the equivalent of 14.8 million tonnes of carbon dioxide. This is the equivalent of taking three million to four million cars off the road.

A frequent response by those opposite is: ‘Well, emissions in the economy as a whole are broadly flat. They have only fallen slightly by 0.1 per cent.’ That is true but all the growth has been in sectors not covered by the carbon price. So their simplistic mischievous response is actually undermining their argument and supporting the argument of those people who support a market based mechanism to combat climate change complemented by policies such as energy efficiency opportunities.

It contrasts directly with their patently ridiculous Direct Action Scheme, a scheme of command and control, a scheme that they could not find a single reputable economist to support. A recent survey of 35 economists found 33 of the 35 economists opposed the scheme. The only two economists that they could find that supported the scheme were one who supported it because he did not accept the science of climate change, so he thought Direct Action would do least harm in combating climate change, and one who supported his own unique scheme and saw Direct Action as a way of getting there. They could not find a single reputable economist to support their dog of a scheme.

They are still walking away from their scheme despite paying lip service to it. For example, the Minister for the Environment stated only one week before the budget that the forward estimates commitment to the Emissions Reduction Fund—the centrepiece of Direct Action—would be $2.55 billion. Yet, when the budget was released two weeks ago, we only saw $1.1 billion allocated in the budget to be spent over the forward estimates. Yet again, not only is Direct Action a fig leaf but it is a fig leaf that they do not match with any significant amount of dollars.

The Energy Efficiency Opportunities Act was a good act. It was an act implemented by the Howard government. It was an act supported by Labor. It was an act that was delivering over $800 million a year in energy costs. It was an act complementing other strong policies to decarbonise our economy: the Renewable Energy Target, the Emissions Trading Scheme, the Clean Energy Finance Corporation and the Australian Renewable Energy Agency. All of these are being undermined by a government intent on being economic and environmental vandals.

Unfortunately, it will be the Australian population that will pay the price, not just people of voting age now. I have a daughter who is one year old and I want her to grow up in an economy that is decarbonised, not because it means that we have got a chance of saving the Great Barrier Reef, a reef that delivers $9 billion in tourism revenue each year, or saving agriculture in the Murray-Darling Basin, a basin that is at risk of losing 97 per cent of its production if climate change is left unchecked, but because I want her to grow up in an economy where we can take advantage of the opportunities of living in a low-carbon
economy, of developing the technologies that in the future can spark a new industrial revolution and that can be strong manufacturing sectors for our Australian sector—and we need them after the death of the automotive industry under the current government's negligence.

It is very important that we continue attacking a high-carbon economy by supporting energy efficiency, by supporting a market mechanism to combat climate change and by placing a hard cap on pollution. Unfortunately, this repeal bill is a step backwards not only from the Labor government's agenda but from the Howard government's limited agenda on climate change. It represents another step in the Liberal government, the coalition, becoming the Tea Party of Australia, where they reject the science and they reject the reputable economists, all to appease people like Alan Jones and other cranks who have a very poor impact on Australian society and public policy discourse. So the Labor Party will reluctantly wave this bill through but we would like to place on record our deep opposition to the repeal because yet again it demonstrates the hypocrisy and economic illiteracy of the coalition government.

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (12:29): There is some considerable irony in having to argue against the Abbott government's repeal of one of the very few halfway-meaningful initiatives of the Howard government in the area of energy efficiency.

This is a program that has saved the organisations to which it applies—essentially large power users—more than $300 million by encouraging the adoption of energy-saving measures. In so doing, it has of course reduced the emissions that would otherwise have resulted. The Energy Efficiency Opportunities Program was an early step towards requiring large energy users to identify and assess energy-efficiency opportunities, and to report outcomes of those assessments to government and the wider public.

It was a step in the direction of a lower carbon economy, and its removal shows just how total and absolute the Abbott government's abandonment of responsible policy in this area will be. It is a scorched-earth approach to policy—and I use that term advisedly, because it is an approach that is blind, passive, and utterly sanguine in the face of the deadly serious heating and drying of our continent.

The Climate Council released a report yesterday that shows Australia has just experienced its hottest two-year period on record—again highlighting the need for our concerted participation in global action. Council member Professor Will Steffen commented as follows:

'We have just had an abnormally warm autumn off the back of another very hot 'angry summer'. … The past two-year period has delivered the hottest average temperature we have ever recorded in Australia. … Climate change is here. It's happening and Australians are already feeling its impact. This sits in a kind of absurdly bizarro-world contrast to the results of the GLOBE Climate Legislation Study of 66 nations released in February that found Australia to be the only country taking retrograde legislative action in the area of climate policy.

After the incredibly important progress and structural reforms of the previous six years—reforms that were initially a matter of bipartisan policy, and only later became a bitter contest—Australia is now jettisoning everything we have won, everything we have achieved.

The Abbott government is turning away from an emissions trading scheme just as the hard work of getting us to this point is virtually complete. This government is undermining the
creation of large-scale renewable energy production just at the point when Australia is becoming a serious player in one of the most critical and valuable 21st century industries. And it is all so unnecessary.

In the name of sticking to slogans, the coalition could still have taken the responsible path, presiding over the removal—or 'abolition', if it wanted to use that term—of the carbon tax as we made the transition to the emissions trading scheme that the Minister for the Environment himself has previously endorsed. In the name of cooperation the Labor opposition would have happily supported this outcome. Instead we are seeing everything that has been achieved torn away—including the policy gains in this area, however minor, that were established by the Howard government.

The repeal of the Energy Efficiencies Opportunities Program and governing legislation takes away a mechanism that addressed a market failure in relation to the availability and use of energy efficiency data. Putting awareness or ignorance of or even wilful blindness to climate change aside, it is strange that the supposedly small 'I' liberals and free-marketeers opposite are so averse to ensuring that markets operate as they should. Indeed, this applies to the whole area of climate change policy—and it really must be emphasised time and again that the failure of the global and national economies to price carbon emissions, when such emissions have a clear and serious cost, is probably the greatest market failure of all time.

Of course many things change when you change the national government, but the black-and-white flip from Labor to the coalition in relation to climate change and low-carbon energy policy is perhaps the sharpest change of all. Labor's commitment to reducing carbon emissions; to participating in concerted global action on climate change; to increasing renewable energy and energy efficiency; and to transforming the Australian economy for our future social, environmental and economic needs is in the process of being reduced to nothing. It goes to the question of what kind of country Australia wants to be. Are we an innovative nation, a country that stands among the leading nations in exploring the way forward in the face of a growing global population and growing energy needs that are balanced against a finite store of hydrocarbons whose CO₂ emissions are trapping heat at a rate that will bring widespread devastation to life as we know it?

Sadly, in a year when Australia holds unparalleled multilateral leadership positions on the UN Security Council and as Chair of the G20, the GLOBE Climate Legislation Study marks us out as a singular climate change reprobate. As the shadow minister for climate change has noted, China and the US signed a statement in February this year recognising the 'overwhelming scientific consensus on climate change' and the 'urgent need for action'. They believe this year's G20 meeting needs to address the issue of coordinated global action on climate change.

On the basis of our nation's record between 2007 and 2013, no country would be better placed to have the chairing role for such a critical discussion. Alas, since September last year we have gained a government and a Prime Minister whose real position is denial and whose policies are destructive of progress. So now on this issue that is critical for the entire planet, and in relation to a danger which we stand to be affected by more than many other nations, our place as chair of the G20 is a puzzling embarrassment and a liability. And this is at a time when, as my colleague the member for Charlton has just noted, the United States has
announced significant and groundbreaking new measures to sharply reduce carbon emissions from existing new power plants, including a 30 per cent national target by 2030.

The Energy Efficiency Opportunities Program newsletter from late last year is heartening and sad at the same time, heartening because of the progress it reports and sad because the very next communication from the EEO was to announce its own demise. The November newsletter included the following observations on the value of the guided pursuit of energy efficiency:

Savvy corporations can save three times as much power as their less energy-conscious competitors.

... ... ...

The most dramatic energy savings were reported by corporations that regularly collect and analyse their data, include energy policies in their operational guides, and have strong support from senior management.

The newsletter also noted:

The IEA [International Energy Agency] estimates that for 11 member countries, (including Australia), investment in energy efficiency since 2005 resulted in cumulative avoided energy consumption of 570 million tonnes of oil-equivalent over the five years to 2010.

This is the kind of achievement that we need to build upon and take further as part of a comprehensive suite of policies and programs designed to deliver a smarter and more sustainable energy profile, and to give Australia a low-carbon and sustainable climate future. On that basis the repeal of the EEO is yet another backward step by a government whose neglect when it comes to climate change will likely mark its greatest failure.

Mr BALDWIN (Paterson—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry) (12:37): I will start by presenting a correction to the explanatory memorandum for the Energy Efficiency Opportunities (Repeal) Bill 2014. The correction has been provided to rectify two minor transcription errors. These transcription errors occurred during the development of the supporting regulation impact statement when a departmental officer inputted an incorrect figure from the business cost calculator. These errors are minor and have no effect on the overall cost of the Energy Efficiency Opportunities Program to Australian businesses. Repealing this legislation will save businesses $17.7 million per annum.

The Energy Efficiency Opportunities (Repeal) Bill 2014 terminates the Energy Efficiency Opportunities Program through the repeal of the Energy Efficiency Opportunities Act 2006. The bill has a retrospective commencement date of 29 June 2014, in line with the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook, which announced the removal of the funding for the program from 30 June 2014. Repealing the Energy Efficiency Opportunities Act 2006 will save Australian businesses over $17.7 million per year in compliance costs. This is a demonstration of the Australian government's commitment to cut red tape and minimise the regulatory burden on Australian businesses.

Since the introduction of the Energy Efficiency Opportunities Program in 2006 the program has played an important role in improving energy management capabilities across industry, which has strengthened their resilience to rising energy prices. Many of the key elements of the EEO program are now standard business practice for industry, making the program unnecessary.
A good government identifies when there is an issue. A good government engages with industry and stakeholders to put forward a program, legislation or regulation to improve the load. A good government monitors the impact of that legislation. A good government continues the stakeholder engagement and identifies when a piece of legislation or regulation has served its purpose.

On 29 March 2006 I summed up this bill for the government. We accepted amendments that came back from the Senate and which were brought to the House because of the then Howard government's and, in this portfolio, Minister Ian Macfarlane's engagement with industry and their understanding of the impacts on industry and what industry wanted to develop from this, such as the reporting requirements. But the commitment was there and they supported the act. What we are seeing today is a mature government responding to the outcomes of industry where the objective has been achieved.

Those opposite have spoken of the $323 million—a figure taken from the explanatory memorandum to the bill—that is saved every year as a result of the Energy Efficiency Opportunities Program. On this point I will agree with those opposite. The scheme has been a success. When it was introduced in 2006 companies did not think about their energy use. They did not even really know how to make energy savings. We as a government achieved the outcome that we had initially set about to achieve. Now, eight years later, large energy users are acting on their own accord to reduce energy costs and therefore business costs. In fact, if you ask any business, you will probably find out that reducing their energy costs is very, very high on their agenda—and not because the government put it there. Companies are taking comprehensive steps to embed key energy efficiency practices at the very core of their operations. Under such conditions, it is industry and not government that can make the best energy management decisions.

Businesses today will still make $323 million in savings on their electricity bills because of energy efficient activities. But they will make these savings because it makes good commercial sense, not because a government tells them to. As I said earlier, on top of this, businesses will have around $17 million of annual savings as a result of this repeal. That is $17 million that can be funnelled into energy efficiency practices rather than being consumed and wasted in unnecessary red-tape compliance.

Back in 2006 the then Howard government saw a market failure, an information gap, that was stopping companies from taking action to reduce their energy use, and the government introduced what even the member for Brand acknowledged yesterday to be a light-touch, low-cost, fit-for-purpose, successful scheme. But, as I said earlier, being part of a good government, adhering to the practices of good governance, is recognising when the government's job is actually done. In fact, Manufacturing Australia has commended the action taken by this government to repeal the Energy Efficiency Opportunities Act by saying: 'Rather than asking what should government do to help manufacturers, often we should be asking what should our state and federal governments stop doing in order to help Australian manufacturers.' This government is being mature and accepting that a program that was introduced to address a market failure has seen its day and it is no longer needed.

In the contributions by members opposite, statements have been made questioning this government's support for renewable and energy efficiency schemes. I want to make our position clear and give a couple of examples to the House. The coalition government is
investing $1 billion in ARENA funds in nearly 200 renewable energy projects. The member for Charlton criticised me for turning up to open a project at the Wallsend pool. It was a rather unique arrangement with solar energy to heat the pool and create electricity. I think it is a good investment. That is why the government is making sure that that billion dollars is wisely spent, invested and monitored and is delivering the outcomes it was intended to deliver.

There is $288 million to support the development of low-emissions coal and carbon capture and storage technology. There is $2.5 billion to establish the Emissions Reduction Fund. That is a lot of money. It is a lot of Australian taxpayers' money. As we have all found out, the government do not have any money; we have debt but it is not even our debt—it is taxpayers' debt. So it is taxpayers' money and taxpayers' debt, and taxpayers demand that they get a solid return on their investment without any waste or indeed forfeiture. The investment I have spoken about shows the government's resolve to assist businesses to lower their energy costs, to restore competitiveness and to reduce Australia's emissions.

The young boys and girls from Metford school in my electorate who are up there in the gallery today understand the importance of using energy wisely. I am sure each and every one of those children will commit to turning the lights off in their bedrooms and bathrooms at home for their mums and dads to reduce their contributions to the greenhouse gas footprint. I know it is a lesson I have not been able to teach my children but I am hoping the boys and girls from Metford school are able to adhere to that.

Overall, when it comes to the Energy Efficiency Opportunities Program, this government is getting out of the way so that business can do what business does best—make decisions that make commercial sense. The government will continue to support industry capability by providing information on energy efficiency best practices through the Energy Efficiency Exchange website. The government will continue to collaborate with industry to improve Australia's energy productivity through the energy white paper, the Council of Australian Governments energy council and the Emissions Reduction Fund that will support industry to take direct action on emissions and to improve energy productivity.

The repealing of the Energy Efficiency Opportunities Act 2006 shows that the Australian government understands the cost associated with the mandatory compliance reporting programs and is continuing to deliver on its commitment to cut unnecessary red tape.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Mr BALDWIN (Paterson—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry) (12:47): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Australian National Preventive Health Agency (Abolition) Bill 2014

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.
Ms KING (Ballarat) (12:48): The Australian National Preventive Health Agency (Abolition) Bill abolishes the Australian National Preventive Health Agency, which was established by a Labor government in 2010. We built this agency to take a national leadership role in prevention, specifically focusing on smoking cessation, obesity, healthy eating, physical activity and harmful alcohol consumption. The Preventive Health Agency has been driving prevention across the non-government health promotion and primary care sectors, in collaboration with state and territory efforts on prevention. In particular, the agency has been working with Medicare Locals, another piece of Labor's critical health infrastructure, to embed prevention and to enhance the primary care sector to focus on prevention in local communities. The Preventive Health Agency was driving changes in the way we behave and how we look at our health. This bill will abolish that agency and, in essence, its work. At a time when we know that Australia's population is ageing and we know that there are rising levels of chronic disease in the community, and we know that a number of chronic disease risk factors are modifiable or preventable from the start, we built the Preventive Health Agency so that prevention became a central focus for the health system and to address these specific matters. We also established the agency because it was an important reform to build cooperation between the states and territories and the Commonwealth efforts in prevention, something which has been worked on for many years and has eluded many governments. The agency was recommended to the former Labor government by the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission and, in particular, by the National Preventative Health Taskforce, chaired by Professor Rob Moodie and supported by Professor Mike Daube, Professor Paul Zimmet, Kate Carnell, Dr Lyn Roberts and Dr Shaun Larkin, as well as Professor Leoni Segal—renowned experts and leaders in prevention and health promotion in Australia.

In developing their recommendations, the task force held some 40 consultations with almost 1,000 stakeholders across the country. The task force report targets obesity, tobacco and the excessive consumption of alcohol as the key modifiable factors driving a significant proportion of the burden of disease in Australia. In making their recommendations, the task force report sought by 2020 to halt and reverse the rise in overweight and obesity, to reduce the prevalence of daily smoking to 10 per cent or less, to reduce the proportion of Australians who drink at levels which place them at short and longer term harm and to contribute to the Closing the Gap targets for Indigenous Australians. The task force identified a number of strategic directions essential to successful implementation of preventative health initiatives. These were shared responsibility; establishing partnerships across all levels of government, industry, business, unions, the non-government sector, research institutes and local communities; acting early and throughout the course of life; engaging communities actively; and refocusing primary health care towards prevention. The Preventive Health Agency had these strategic directions at its core and worked from these principles in all the work it was doing, supported by the recommendations of the expert task force members. The creation of a Preventive Health Agency was also actually suggested back in 2008 as part of Labor's 2020 summit. Additionally, in 2008 COAG agreed to the need for the establishment of this agency.

In recent studies on global trends in overweight and obesity, Australia was identified as having a high growth rate in this area. I am going now to why in fact it was important that we had this agency to focus on preventative health. Over 14 million Australians are overweight and obese. Our children are suffering, too. On the basis of the current trend in growth, experts
predict that by the time our children reach 20 years of age they will have a shorter life expectancy than previous generations simply due to obesity. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are nearly two times more likely to be overweight or obese compared to non-Indigenous Australians. We are now on par with the US and only slightly behind New Zealand. A number of theories exist as to why obesity levels have been climbing at such a rapid rate, including increases in energy consumption, decreasing physical activity levels and changes in dietary composition. Labor was taking this situation very seriously and giving it the attention it deserved through a range of measures, many of which were being advised, led or overseen by Australia's National Preventive Health Agency. I will go into further details of these in due course.

I have recently spoken in this place about the impact of tobacco smoking. Worldwide, tobacco continues to be the leading preventable cause of death, killing approximately six million people each year, including 600,000 deaths from second-hand smoke. According to current projections, tobacco will kill one billion people this century. In Australia over 15,000 people die each year from smoking related illnesses, and in 2013 tobacco smoking accounted for nearly eight per cent of the total burden of disease. Again, Labor was taking very fierce action to help Australians quit smoking and to reduce the overall number of smoking related deaths and disability affecting Australia.

In Australia nearly 90 per cent of people aged 14 and over have drunk alcohol at some point in their lives. The average age when people first try alcohol is 17. One in five Australians over the age of 14 drink at levels that put them at risk of alcohol related harm over their lifetime. And one in five pregnant women drink alcohol while pregnant, despite the national alcohol guidelines recommendation that it is safest not to drink while pregnant. In 2005 alcohol caused more than twice as many deaths as road accidents and contributed to the three major causes of teen death: injury, homicide and suicide. Collectively, overweight and obesity, tobacco smoking and risky consumption of alcohol are major risk factors for many chronic diseases, including cardiovascular diseases, including coronary heart disease and stroke; diabetes; peripheral vascular disease; numerous cancers; and chronic lung and musculoskeletal conditions.

In 2010 the National Preventative Health Taskforce provided the then Labor government with the National Preventative Health Strategy, which outlined a number of recommendations and interventions aimed at reducing the chronic disease burden associated with obesity, tobacco and alcohol. The strategy was not developed in isolation. The task force released a range of discussion papers and consulted widely with public professionals and consumer groups to form their recommendations. This strategy was the agreed way forward, and the then Labor government undertook our own consultations to develop an action plan in response. This action plan included the world's toughest regime on cutting smoking rates; delivering the most ambitious study in Australia's history, the National Health Survey; providing significant funding for social marketing campaigns; tackling alcohol, tobacco, obesity and illicit drugs; and establishing a national agency to guide investments in prevention.

The agency is the subject of this bill. The experts recommended it, our consultations supported it, Labor listened and Labor acted by establishing Australia's first National Preventive Health Agency. In order to fund the establishment of the agency and to support its
broader efforts through prevention activities on the ground, Labor worked with the states and territories and agreed to the first National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health, the first time you had the states and territories cooperating with the Commonwealth and putting money on the table to work collaboratively on prevention in this country. Prevention is not just the responsibility of the federal government but the responsibility also of states, territories and local councils, together in partnership. We all have a role to play.

In 2008 Labor successfully negotiated this national partnership agreement, focusing on prevention with states and territories. Then Labor extended it through to 2018 in recognition of the long-term commitment needed in prevention to achieve better health outcomes for our country. We invested over $930 million under this agreement, nearly $1 billion in recognition that prevention needs funding and needs the commitment of all levels of government. The partnership agreement, unfortunately, has been another victim of the government's savage attack on health. The coalition government has torn up these agreements and ripped out more than $360 million of prevention through these agreements alone. The agreement was critical to ensuring states and territories co-invested in prevention and embedded prevention in their program delivery priorities. These agreements were funding programs that were helping Australians live healthier lives in a range of settings. It was funding partnership work between the government, the food industry and public health organisations to reformulate the food supply. And it was funding social marketing campaigns to target identifiable, modifiable risk factors and those communities most at risk of lifestyle related disease.

The Healthy Communities Initiative, which was funded under this partnership agreement, was supporting community based healthy lifestyle programs that provided increased access to physical activity, healthy eating and healthy weight activities and delivered them to people who were disadvantaged or not predominantly in the paid workforce. Local government organisations were funded to run these programs and identify who in their communities would benefit most from them. For example, in my own state of Victoria, implementation was taking place within each local government authority. Using the Commonwealth funding allocated to them through the agreement and investing their own state funding, Victoria were providing access to a new prevention workforce and workforce development strategy; significant funding for healthy living programs at the community level; community-level and state-wide health promotion networks; and innovation in community engagement and social marketing.

The Healthy Communities program was also providing funding to national organisations to expand their already successful preventative health initiatives so that more people could access activities like the National Heart Foundation's walking groups; the Australian Diabetes Council's BEAT IT program, providing physical activity and lifestyle modification support; and, for example, Sydney South West GP Link's Healthy Eating Activity and Lifestyle program, targeting adults at risk of lifestyle diseases and providing them with an eight-week physical activity and nutrition program with follow-ups at five months and one year later.

The Healthy Children Initiative, again through this partnership, provided funding to states and territories to run physical activity and healthy eating programs for children in schools, early childhood education and care centres and preschools. The ACT, for example, has used the funding available under this partnership to support its Healthy Children range of programs, which include the Kids at Play—Active Play and Eating Well Project, for children
at preschool and early childhood care; the Active Travel to School Program; Fresh Tastes: healthy food at school; It's Your Move ACT, for children at school; and the Healthy Food@Sport initiative, which is providing healthy food and drink choices at children's sport.

Labor invested so much in funding in the Healthy Children Initiative because of the strong evidence that links overweight and obesity during childhood to overweight and obesity in adulthood. In fact, just last month at the opening of the World Health Assembly, WHO Director-General Dr Margaret Chan voiced her own deep concern about the increase in childhood obesity worldwide and the numbers climbing fastest in developed countries. Dr Chan said:

As the 2014 World Health Statistics report bluntly states, 'Our children are getting fatter' …

Despite the concerns being raised at the World Health Assembly just a few weeks ago, the programs being run in each state and territory to directly improve the health of our children and our future are at risk now because this government has ripped up the national partnership agreement. Because this government is not prioritising prevention, this is the result. These programs, in every single electorate across the country, are being cut.

Healthy Workers is also part of that partnership agreement. This initiative again was providing funding to states and territories to focus on health promotion activities in workplaces on healthy eating, physical activity, smoking cessation and reducing harmful levels of alcohol consumption. This program also provided funding for national awards for employers demonstrating best practice in workplace health programs, which were being awarded by the Australian National Preventive Health Agency.

Also there are reward payments. For all their efforts and activity in each of these areas—Healthy Workers, Healthy Children and Healthy Communities—the agreement outlined that states and territories would receive reward payments. Eligibility was determined by the achievement of agreed performance benchmarks covering children and adults at healthy body weight, children and adults meeting nutritional guidelines for the consumption of fruit and vegetables, children and adults meeting physical activity guidelines, and Australians smoking daily.

The healthy communities, children and workers programs now no longer have any commitment from the Commonwealth government and as such are now reliant upon continued commitment from the states. At a time when the Commonwealth is also ripping money out of public hospitals and other partnership agreements, I am deeply concerned at the capacity of states and territories to continue to provide funding for these initiatives. No consultation has occurred with the states in relation to this decision, and you can be sure that no consideration was given to the broader impacts on the health of people benefiting from these programs.

Incentive payments were critical if we were to achieve behavioural change, which is why we incentivised the states complementing the work of the national partnership agreement with their own activities. Once they reached performance benchmarks, they were rewarded with additional funding. These incentives have been removed, terminated, on top of the direct program funding. There will be no Commonwealth lever driving national efforts in these vital areas, and there is no Commonwealth leadership guiding the way for these investments.
Also part of this funding was the Australian Health Survey. The national partnership agreement also gave rise to the most comprehensive study of Australia's health ever, through the biomedical data collection of the Australian Health Survey. Labor had heard from researchers and experts that the collection of biomedical information was essential if we were truly to get a snapshot of the health of our country. The Australian Health Survey collected essential population health data on dietary intake, nutritional status, physical activity levels and the prevalence of chronic disease risk factors.

Labor also established under these funding arrangements the Food and Health Dialogue—this was part of the industry partnership—to work in collaboration with the food industry and public health organisations in recognising the role that these sectors play in contributing to the health of all Australians. Through this initiative alone, some 220 tonnes of salt was removed from the food supply each year. Major grocery manufacturers and suppliers and the fast-food sector were participating to improve the health profile of their products and menus.

The 'health by stealth' approach, as I like to call it, enables people to make healthier food choices without even knowing it. Every day, food items were being made healthier, with little or no effect on their taste, their texture or their shelf life, and, in doing their everyday shopping, people were eating less salt and saturated fat as a convenient consequence of this work. The partnership could not have been possible without the expertise of scientists from the CSIRO, who I would like to acknowledge and provide my support to at the time of the cuts to their very important programs.

Not only did we work to have the Food and Health Dialogue but there was also the Australian National Preventive Health Agency's Preventive Health Research Fund. It provided very important funding, a dedicated pool of funding, for preventative health research. It allowed the Preventive Health Agency to partner with the National Health and Medical Research Council, the NSW Ministry of Health, ACT Health, HCF and the HCF Research Foundation, the Sax Institute and the Centre of Excellence in Intervention and Prevention Science to establish the Australian Prevention Partnership Centre. The centre is conducting essential research to identify what works in helping people make lifestyle changes to prevent chronic disease. We know in public health and prevention that one of the hardest issues is to build the evidence base of what actually works. It is a very, very difficult part of the preventative health pathway.

Additionally, the Preventive Health Research Fund supported a stream of translational research grants and a fellowship grant program and supported the translational research symposium in 2013. Without the Australian National Preventive Health Agency and the Preventive Health Research Fund, it is not clear what the future of translational research and behavioural interventions research will be in the field of prevention. The government have made it very clear that the Medical Research Future Fund is a medical research fund only and are clearly not listening to the research and public health community, who say that all health research is not only medical research.

Another area I want to talk briefly about is food labelling. Labor commissioned a very broad review of food labelling in Australia, and one of the results of this process was a combined broad and extensive consultation with industry and public health professionals and a pretty substantial period of two years of work, led by the Secretary of the Department of Health, to establish the Health Star Rating System, a voluntary front-of-pack labelling system
to give consumers, at a glance, information to help them make healthier choices in a much quicker way. This system had been agreed to and had received the support of all ministers responsible for food, the public health sector, consumer groups and the food industry itself. We have seen the government's efforts in this area to undermine the work of the Health Star Rating System, unfortunately. I hope that, in the upcoming Food Regulation Ministerial Council in June, it is revived and that the government's pretty clumsy attempts, frankly, to scuttle the Health Star Rating System are not upheld at all and that we start to see, as we have with one food producer already, the Health Star Rating System on food packaging.

I also want to raise some of the other things that Labor did in the space of prevention that were very important parts of the overall prevention landscape: a review of dietary guidelines and, for the first time, the development of dietary guidelines for pregnant and breastfeeding women; updating and releasing physical activity guidelines to inform Australians of their physical activity needs for good health right throughout life; and recognising the devastating impacts of tobacco consumption, through our investments in antismoking social marketing campaigns, particularly in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities—some of which, unfortunately, have been cut as part of the cuts to Indigenous health programs that sit within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. We certainly recognised in government the importance of investing in preventative health, and we put the funding and the infrastructure behind it to back up this commitment.

We have seen, across the entirety of the health portfolio, some of the most substantial cuts, including the cuts to public hospital funding which are to start in a very short period of time. We have also seen the imposition of a GP tax which impacts directly on people's capacity to access a GP, particularly when they might be feeling well but want some advice about prevention, perhaps some assistance to give up smoking or to find out how they might stay healthy when they have cancer or chronic heart disease in their family, for example. Someone might actually accesses a general practitioner on that basis. That is one of the stories that has not been told very strongly about the GP tax—the critical role of primary care in prevention. It does seem to me to be a very retrograde step within the health portfolio to be putting a substantial barrier in the way of someone accessing a doctor.

I want to speak a bit more about some of the work that has been critical to understanding prevention and why this agency has played a critical role. I am pretty sure I know where the government speakers are going to go in this debate, so I want to counter some of that in my contribution. A healthy community is a very productive community. It is important that, in health, we invest not only in front-line services that directly provide care when people are unwell; we know that it is a smart investment to try and keep people well and make sure that they do not end up sick and suffering from chronic disease. Funding prevention is critical to doing that. Investing in the health of the country and its population makes good economic sense and improves productivity and community participation. I have spoken of the experts Labor co-opted to advise us on the Preventative Health Strategy. Just last month Professor Rob Moodie was on Radio National discussing preventative health, and he stated: Governments really do need to continue to invest in this and if they don't then you just get this huge demand on the healthcare services and obviously a huge increase in costs as well.

It is a shame that this government seems so willing to ignore experts as well as healthcare professionals and the public.
One of the important things that the Preventive Health Agency was doing was investing in areas of prevention where we needed to trial some initiatives to see what was going to work with population cohorts that have been very, very difficult to access before and where you would struggle to be able to get any movement in terms of smoking, alcohol or obesity rates. I particularly want to refer to the Minister for Health attacking important efforts in preventative health, particularly the My QuitBuddy app that was promoted here at Summernats. I am pretty sure not too many people who are not from Canberra know what Summernats is, but the member across the table, the member for Gippsland, who I reckon is a bit of a revhead, probably does know what Summernats is. You are a country member, so you know exactly where I am going with this. Summernats is an event that attracts over 100,000 people. It is huge. People come from right the way across the country. They are principally 25- to 40-year-old men, and they are exactly the core target audience for the National Tobacco Campaign, a campaign that has suffered a cut of just under $3 million in this budget. The campaign clearly had a very significant effect during that time, with 55,000 downloads of the app in January, when the Summernats were held, compared to only 19,000 in the month prior, a threefold increase in one month.

The Australian Labor Party certainly recognises the value of ensuring that you not only invest in prevention but also target those particular populations that in fact—

Ms KING: Thank you for the interjection. I am sure you will get an opportunity to have a go in a minute. Can I just say that, as part of the preventative health debate, it is important to actually ensure that you are investing in those sorts of initiatives that will see those core and very difficult populations, which do not necessarily have access to the sorts of messages that other parts of the population have, being able to access those messages. My Quitbuddy was one of those initiatives.

We know that these sorts of investments create not only benefits to health outcomes but also savings in the health system overall. They are important investments and that is why we chose to invest close to $1 billion in direct action on prevention. The disappointing thing that we have seen under this government is that not only is it not committed to prevention but it seems absolutely determined to withdraw the Commonwealth's role entirely in prevention.

That is what we see with this bill, with the abolition of the national partnership agreement, the cuts to tobacco funding and its efforts in relation to things like the food star rating system. That is why Labor cannot support the abolition of the Australian National Preventive Health Agency and we will be opposing this bill. We will not stand by and let the government rip apart universal health care, while it leaves disadvantaged Australians behind, creating an even bigger divide between them and those most advantaged. We will not stand by and let the words of public health experts go unheard. I have been speaking to public health experts around the country working in various institutions, care delivery settings and communities and they are all horrified that the government is proposing to abolish the Australian National Preventive Health Agency and that it has ripped up the national partnership agreement. They tell me how healthy communities, healthy children and the Healthy Workers initiative were making a difference to people's lives in their communities. They also tell me that the food and health dialogue was facilitating the right approach to partner with industry and to improve the nutrition profile of foods without people even knowing that that was occurring.
I have heard their deep concerns about continued commitments to preventative health and, in particular, how the Commonwealth has completely reneged on its responsibility. We also, unfortunately, have state governments ripping that funding out—for example, Queensland, which has taken the axe to the alcohol and drug sector and sexual health services as well as cutting jobs, services and access to other essential preventive health programs.

For the Commonwealth to simply abandon preventive health at a time when Australians are ageing and our chronic disease rates are growing is simply untenable. As I have already stated, obesity, tobacco and the excessive consumption of alcohol are the key modifiable risk factors driving a significant proportion of the burden of disease in Australia. It seems a poor health policy decision to be abolishing the first National Preventive Health Agency, which is focusing and garnering state and territory efforts on prevention, at the same time as cutting millions of dollars out of preventive programs that are working in our communities. Labor will oppose this bill.

Mr HAWKE (Mitchell) (13:18): When listening to the shadow minister in this debate on the Australian National Preventive Health Agency (Abolition) Bill 2014 you get this melodramatic set of assertions about the federal government's approach to preventative health. Of course, it is nonsense to say that this government is not committed to preventative health. Anybody who examines the health system and looks into modern health practices understands preventative health is a good way to go.

However, I think the shadow minister bell the cat in equating her approach to preventative health to health by stealth. This is really what is wrong with the modern Labor Party and the previous government's approach to preventative health, particularly that of the former member for Gellibrand and Minister for Health and Ageing, Nicola Roxon. Their approach is always the nanny state first: more government equals better health. That is not a correlation which makes sense.

Health by stealth implies that individuals and their families cannot ever understand what is good for their own health and what they need to do to prevent bad health outcomes for themselves and that somehow we in Canberra and our national agencies know better than all of you out there what you should be eating, drinking and doing with your own life. We understand that is the Labor Party's approach to health: 'We know better than you and we will have a government funded agency to tell you what is best for you.' The best way that we as a society can make an impact on health and the health of individuals is to tackle individuals. We as a government recognise that individuals need to take responsibility for their lifestyle actions that affect their health. This is the cheapest and most cost-effective way that we can improve health outcomes. More government spending is simply not the answer.

But of course, if the Labor Party see two agencies, that is great, but they never look for efficiencies within agencies. We have a Department of Health and we have thousands of health bureaucrats here in Canberra already focused on preventative health and policies in relation to the health scheme, including chronic illness. The creation of this second agency made no sense at the time and continues to make no sense, especially in the light of some of the expenditure that this agency has been responsible for.

It is also disturbing to note that, when the government came to office, it asked the question of federal bureaucracies: 'How many government agencies and departments do we actually have?' It is very unclear what the answer is. Nobody can put a figure on it. It is estimated to
be over 900, but we do not have a certain figure on how many federal government agencies and departments we have. The Labor Party never says: 'What can we do better? What can we do more efficiently? How can we streamline these arrangements?' There is no doubt that this agency has been responsible for wasting some taxpayers' money and for operating inefficiently. While the shadow minister tried to mount this Alamo-style defence of some of the expenditure of this agency, it could certainly be spent better directly on preventative health measures and on things that would make a difference to people's health. What am I referring to? The shadow minister, the member for Ballarat, referred to the Summernats, 49,500, and the world's biggest burnout attempt at Summernats 2013. She glossed over the health impact of inhaling burning rubber, clouds of smoke of burning rubber, from burnouts. She did not really think about that, did she, Deputy Speaker. It was $129,500 on burning rubber over two years. On a serious side, she said it is okay to experiment. It is certainly okay to experiment when you are not paying the bill. When you are using tax dollars of hardworking small businesses, families, mums and dads all around the country, you can really spend away. She did not really raise any more examples she was prepared to defend and I think the shadow minister is not prepared to defend other expenditure of this agency, because it is indefensible. Let us continue.

The Australian National Preventive Health Agency wasted $463,000, almost half a million dollars, to fund a study into the fat tax on junk food. This is in spite of her own party in government ruling out a fat tax. It is in spite of the evidence, and the shadow minister refers to evidence: we should be evidence based in our policy. The evidence in *The Economist* here on 17 November 2012 said of the experience in Denmark that 'in practice the world's first fat tax proved to be a cumbersome chore with undesirable side effects and meant higher prices for lean sirloin steak as well as for fatty burgers'. Evidence: it says a fat tax does not work. It is a big government approach with only cost impact and little health benefit. That is half a million dollars of taxpayers' money.

The shadow minister did not refer to the Australian National Preventive Health Agency spending $236,000 on a fake music festival—not a real music festival but a fake one. That is experimental. As the shadow minister said, 'We are experimenting.' When you do not have to earn the money and you do not have to pay the money back, you can experiment with other people's money all you like. That is just a lazy $236,000 of taxpayers' money to put up a fake music festival on a Facebook page. The Facebook page received a grand total of 244 likes around the country. There were at least 244 people that found this fake music festival a great idea. I am not sure who they were. That is about $1,000 per like that the Australian National Preventive Health Agency felt was an appropriate use of taxpayer dollars to prevent chronic serious disease and its other mission. I think the responses from visitors to the site, the target audience, showed that you do not really need a preventive health agency to tell you that this was a stupid idea. You do not really need to be an expert in marketing or social media to realise that this is not going to go very well. The comments posted on this Facebook site include things like: 'You played the people for idiots. That's never going to be a good marketing campaign.' Another quote: 'This is the lamest thing I have ever seen. What an absolute fail.' A further quote: 'Wow, you Mushroom guys pocketed some serious funding for this cheap, ineffective stunt.' And of course common sense from another ordinary punter: 'What the hell is this? I know, a complete waste of money.' Amen to that—a complete waste of taxpayers' money. This is what we employ a national preventive health agency to be doing:
a thousand dollars a like on Facebook? Is this really what we use taxpayers' money for? It is the crisis that the Labor Party keeps pointing to on which we have to do something for people from a socially disadvantaged background? How is any of this expenditure helping people with their health? Of course it is not; it is not helping them at all, and it is a serious issue.

The shadow minister more seriously made some points about state funding, but I do not think she read the second reading speech of the minister and I do not think she understands that since the inception of the Australian National Preventive Health Agency there has been no direct funding to the agency provided by any jurisdiction. You would have got the impression from the shadow minister for health that with the abolition of this ineffective agency, this duplication of the Department of Health's functions, somehow a whole range of cuts to state programs would ensue. It would be impossible for that to occur because since its inception—I want to repeat this so that members opposite understand this—no jurisdiction has provided direct funding to the agency for its work on prevention. That means that, even though it was established with the capacity to be directed by state, territory and local governments to provide preventive health advice, no preventive health advice was provided to the states because no state felt it was worth while enough in the entire existence of this agency to send any money to it to get any advice. So what is the shadow minister referring to? The states are not going to be unhappy because they never bothered to send any money to this agency. They did not want any advice from the National Preventive Health Agency. The poor suckers who had to pay the bill for this agency were the Commonwealth; it was run up on the Commonwealth credit card.

When you look into this agency the claims of the shadow minister clearly do not stack up. It does reveal the agenda of the Labor Party of health by stealth, the 'we know better than you' program of the Labor Party: 'We know better in Canberra than what you might do out in your community and you can never know what is better for your health and your family's health. We will just make your food healthier without telling you and that is our approach to health.' That is what the shadow minister said: health by stealth, we know better than you. There is no clearer communication of that concept that Nicola Roxon made so profound in the last administration of the nanny state.

Clearly we do not need two agencies in Canberra to do the functions of one. We have a good Department of Health. We have plenty of people here working on preventive health in a serious fashion, treating chronic illness with the seriousness it deserves, tackling those issues that arise from a national health level through the Department of Health. And we have clearly put in this bill transitional arrangements which will enable the smooth, transparent and appropriate wind-down of the National Preventive Health Agency in any functions that it does fulfil. Certainly not the Summernats funding but those functions which it does fulfil will be integrated back into the Department of Health in an appropriate time frame. We certainly will not be continuing sponsorship of Summernats for the rubber burning contest, which was probably harming people's health. We certainly will not be sponsoring a half-a-million-dollar study into a fat tax which has already been ruled out by all major political parties in this country. We certainly will not be continuing the social media campaign which received 244 likes at a cost of $1,000 a like of taxpayers' money by this agency.

Clearly the Labor Party has a lot to learn about government and the administration of government. We can do things more efficiently; we can do more with less; we can ensure that
the Department of Health is primarily focused on preventive health and those things it should be concentrating on and that we do not have so many federal government agencies that nobody can tell this government how many government agencies we have exactly. There is no exact figure and that is because we have allowed government to get out of hand in this country. So it is a great privilege to rise to support this bill and ensure that we do streamline these functions, that these important functions are maintained and that this agency is abolished.

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.

Before I call on the first constituency statement, I remind members of the language they use in this chamber. I had to pull someone up yesterday. I remind members that the use of some words will be offensive and you will lose speaking time if you use them. They are ones like 'deceit' and 'lie', and there are others.

Mrs Griggs interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Solomon! It occurs on both sides of the chamber.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Budget

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (13:30): I rise today to speak in opposition to the GP co-payment—the GP tax of $7. It is not just me who is speaking against it in my electorate; thousands and thousands of people who live in the electorate are speaking up. On the front page of the Bendigo Advertiser on Saturday there was a letter from a 10-year-old girl, Rachael. In her letter, she wrote: 'Dear Mr Prime Minister, the GP tax is unfair and it is a disgrace.' This is from a 10-year-old girl, saying she is disgraced by the actions of this government. There was also the article in yesterday's Midland Express, with comments from the Rural Doctors Association and a local GP, Dr Richard Bills, from the Woodend clinic in Brooke Street, saying he is seriously concerned about the impacts that the GP tax will have not only on his surgery but on the local community. He believes that the GP tax will be a deterrent to those most in need of seeking help. He is also concerned about the effects it will have on rural communities, and I share his concern. In rural communities GPs do not just open their surgery from nine to five; they go out to nursing homes. He asked the questions: 'Will I have to take my accountant with me to these services? Will I have to take a cash register to these services?' How will the government manage the $7 GP tax in nursing homes?

Lyne Electorate: Prostate Cancer

Dr GILLESPIE (Lyne) (13:32): I rise to congratulate some gentlemen from the fine city of Port Macquarie for their fundraising efforts on the weekend. They held a fundraiser for prostate cancer. As we know, one in eight who bear the Y-chromosome will suffer from this disease in their lifetime. One of their friends struck by this disease piqued their interest and the call went out, and almost 100 other gentlemen from Port Macquarie got together over a barbeque, some beverages and simultaneous card games, and had an information session from a leading urologist. They raised $17½ thousand for the Jim Bruce Urology and Prostate Cancer Trust, which was established in 2009 by the Bruce family for urological care and treatment in the fight against prostate cancer on the mid-North Coast. To date, this trust has funded 14 nursing scholarships between 2010 and 2013 that provide nurses with educational
opportunities in urological care; two health forums locally; a bladder scanner for use in the community; green-light laser equipment at the local hospital which provides cutting-edge technology for prostate surgery; and a stepper/stabiliser for use at the Port Macquarie hospital. I congratulate all those involved in the fundraising efforts.

**Budget**

Mr HUSIC (Chifley) (13:33): I rise to talk about the terrible impact that the Abbott government's GP tax is having on the people of Chifley and the absolute deceit that ushered it in. There was no warning about—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): Order, Member for Chifley. I did give a warning about the use of the word 'deceit'. It has an imputation—

Mr HUSIC: How is it unparliamentary?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I have ruled that I find it offensive, and you could find a better way to express yourself.

Mr HUSIC: I am happy to withdraw but the other side know the heat in the community from the fact that they were not upfront at the election. They refuse to acknowledge that they were actually seriously looking at this back in February when the Commission of Audit was looking at it and then leaked that it was going to be $56 and it ended up being $7. And we all know this is a path to a $15 GP tax, as flagged by the Commission of Audit. Doctors in our area are telling us that they are having to send out SMSs to patients to urge them to come back to surgeries. Other doctors are actually saying that their practices across Mount Druitt, Glendenning and Woodcroft are seeing huge drops in the numbers of people going to surgeries. And there are other doctors contemplating whether they will stay in practice because of the drop in numbers. They are slugging us on two counts. Firstly, the GP tax will cost families in our area $10.2 million. Secondly, the government have ripped out $6 million by taking the MRI from Mount Druitt hospital. It is shameful that they have done this to the people of Western Sydney.

Robertson Electorate: Roads

Mrs WICKS (Robertson) (13:35): There are over 900 kilometres of local roads and more than 150 kilometres of regional roads in my electorate. People in my electorate depend on roads to get around, so I am proud of the fact that in this budget we are investing in safer local roads, including fixing a notorious accident-prone intersection at Langford Drive and Woy Woy Road in Kariong. We have worked with the Gosford Council and the Kariong Progress Association, and I am pleased to say this budget confirms our funding commitment of $675,000 to help deliver a safer intersection.

The Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, Jamie Briggs, joined me in Kariong recently to inspect why we need this funding. Association president Peter Pauling, local resident Fiona Lloyd and Tom Wilson, president of the Kariong Neighbourhood Centre, have been tireless advocates for this funding for more than two years. Fiona told me that a new high school, playground and childcare centre in the area have meant an increase in traffic and pedestrian activity, resulting in several accidents. So I am pleased to confirm that as part of this budget, which is a 'contribute and build' budget, this project is now on track.
It is another great example of how our government are investing in the Central Coast. We are also bringing 600 jobs to Gosford as part of a purpose-built Commonwealth agency, with 300 of those from the Australian Taxation Office. I am proud of this government and this budget. In just nine months, the government have delivered on our positive growth plan for the Central Coast which in turn will help to build and realise so much of the hope— (Time expired)

Budget

Mr GILES (Scullin) (13:36): I rise, not for the first time, to express my grave concerns at the impact of this cruel budget on the health and wellbeing of people in the Scullin electorate.

Before I go directly to that, it is appropriate that, today being Mabo Day, I also draw the attention of the House to the precarious position in which this budget leaves the Bubup Wilam Aboriginal Children and Family Centre in Thomastown. While this wonderful community-controlled facility is mainly concerned with early childhood education, it also plays an important role in supporting primary health care for Aboriginal people in Melbourne's north. It is simply unconscionable that this wonderful and important work is under threat—as are health outcomes across the electorate.

While we are still trying to appreciate the full impact of the Commonwealth's massive cuts to the state, we know enough now to appreciate the pressure that will be brought to bear on the Northern Hospital in Epping. On 1 July—that is 1 July of this year—the Northern will have $4.7 million cut from it. The full effect of this budget is to make the Northern $36 million worse off. That would pay for 7,000 surgeries. Beds will close. Staff will be sacked. People with illnesses will remain sick. Local GPs amplify my concerns that hard-won gains in boosting primary care—and I pay tribute to our Medicare Local in that regard; it is another body that is in this budget's sights—will be lost through the impact of the GP tax.

As the member for the electorate with the highest rate of bulk-billing in Victoria, I say to this government: keep your promises, and junk this budget of broken promises. And I say to Victorians: you have got a chance in November to put part of this right by electing an Andrews Labor government that will stand up and fight for your health care.

Barton Electorate: Egyptian Community

Mr VARVARIS (Barton) (13:38): I rise to inform the chamber that recently I had the great privilege of attending the Australian Egyptian Council Forum in my electorate, representing the Prime Minister, Tony Abbott. The event was an amalgamation of the Australian Egyptian HSC high achievers awards, the Australian Egyptian of the year award and the inaugural award for Friend of the Egyptian Community. I was joined by my state colleagues and distinguished guests of the community, including Mr and Mrs Arhmad Farid of the Consulate-General of the Arab Republic of Egypt in Sydney; Reverend Father Tadros Samaan, representing His Grace Bishop Daniel, Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Sydney; and leaders of the Australian Egyptian community.

It is important to celebrate the achievements and distinctions of those who have demonstrated ambition and fortitude. The Australian Egyptian Council Forum are to be commended for their efforts in recognising those who contribute positively within Australian and Egyptian communities that enable a robust and multicultural society.
The high school graduates who finished year 12 topping their classes, and, in some situations, the state, have an exciting journey ahead. They demonstrate the ethos that, if you have a go, you can surpass your goals.

I was also delighted to have met the Australian Egyptian of the year, Dr Eman Sharobeem, who has contributed enormously to the Sydney community through her humanitarian efforts. She is an excellent role model for all Australians.

Barton is one of Sydney's most culturally diverse electorates. I am proud of those from Australian Egyptian communities who contribute so much. It was clear from the council's gala dinner that Australia is a nation of opportunity and reward.

Budget

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (13:39): In defending their unconscionable $80 billion cuts to health and education, those opposite have said, 'Nobody is losing money now,' and, 'The cuts only come into effect beyond the forward estimates.' The fact is that those excuses are absolute nonsense. Those opposite are cutting $47 million from the ACT's health budget from 1 July—$47 million is being ripped out of ACT hospitals in just 25 days' time. That equates to staffing for 135 acute hospital beds, or employment for 390 nurses, or funding for 2,850 elective surgery operations.

I hope the members for Eden-Monaro and Hume are listening, because they know that Canberra's hospital system services their electorates as much as it does mine. Their constituents will be hurt by these massive cuts.

Today the ACT government will hand down their 2014-15 budget. Like all governments, they have been preparing this budget for months; however, just three weeks ago they found out that they will have to plug a $47 million gap in their health budget for the next year and a $240 million gap in the next four years, thanks to the cruel cuts of those opposite. I would like to commend the ACT government for absorbing these cuts for the next year so that our hospital systems will not have to lose 390 nurses.

Those opposite have broken their promises that there would be 'no cuts to health,' and that no state or territory would be worse off, and the people from this region who rely on the Canberra Hospital will pay the price.

Borg, Mrs Lana and Mr Roger

Ms SCOTT (Lindsay) (13:41): It is with huge pride that I rise today to commend the amazing, fabulous and incredible work of Lana and Roger Borg. Last night, under the Trade Secret bridge, surrounded by their team of supporters and volunteers, Mama Lana and Roger prepared and distributed 87 hot home-cooked meals to some of the most disadvantaged in our community. After the meals were served, everyone went home with a doggie bag of devilled sausages, mash and a fresh muffin for breakfast.

There is nothing exceptional about last night, because in fact you can find Mama Lana's every Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday night under the Trade Secret bridge, armed with an amazing array of hot home-cooked meals, toiletries, clothes and personal effects, procured mostly out of dipping into their own pockets. Knowing Lana and seeing her in action, this is so much more than just a hot meal; it is also her warmth in providing a friend and a family to people who are so disconnected, a safe place to talk, and sometimes a hug. She has the ability to connect with all sectors of our community, whether it be to find sofa
beds or TVs, microwaves or toasters which she then recycles on to the residents at Torton Place.

I am very humbled to be able to speak on behalf of Mama Lana and Roger today, and I am truly honoured to have a community that has such amazing patrons in it. Thank you, Lana.

**Budget**

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter) (13:43): He is not here today, I note, but I sat here yesterday and watched the member for Braddon as he took a 90-second statement and desperately tried to defend this budget. And he told a few porkies along the way, in my view, Mr Deputy Speaker Scott—if that is parliamentary; I hope it passes your test! Well, it will take more than that from the member for Braddon to save him in his electorate, and that includes his mates in Lyons and Bass, his friends in Eden-Monaro, Page, Capricornia, Gippsland—

*Government members interjecting—*

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): Order, those on my right.

Mr FITZGIBBON: all those people representing rural Australia who will know that this budget falls disproportionately on rural and regional Australia. When you cut $80 billion out of health and education, it is axiomatic that those cuts will fall hardest on rural and regional Australia. Think of those small, struggling rural hospitals—that is where the state governments will look for savings first. Think of those small, rural schools that struggle to secure the critical mass of students required to keep those rural schools viable—they are the schools the state governments will go after first as a result of this tearing up of the agreements between the Commonwealth and the states. This budget is a fundamental breach of trust and faith. It is a bad budget. It is going to hit all Australians but, in particular, it is going to hit health and education services in rural Australia.

**Deakin Electorate: St Thomas the Apostle Parish**

Mr SUKKAR (Deakin) (13:44): Earlier this year I had the great privilege of joining in a special celebration in my electorate of Deakin—the 60th anniversary of St Thomas the Apostle Parish in Blackburn. The parish held a special service in March to acknowledge the priests, parishioners, school community and all of those who have contributed to the life of the parish. It was a very memorable occasion for me, as I was struck by the important role that the parish has played in the life of so many local people over the past 60 years—and, of course, the role it continues to play.

The parish is ably led by Father Chris Murphy and his assistant, Father Frank Dineen. St Thomas the Apostle has been served by 23 parish priests, some of whom were able to join us at the anniversary event. The late Father Paul Ryan formed the parish in 1954, the year after the St Thomas the Apostle Primary School opened. The parish has an active youth ministry, runs numerous activities for the parish and wider community, and raises significant funds each year to help those in need in the electorate.

I therefore wish to extend my congratulations to the St Thomas the Apostle Parish—Blackburn community during this 60th anniversary year, and, of course, my best wishes for the years ahead.
National Rural Women's Coalition

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (13:45): It gives me great pleasure to welcome to this place today members of the National Rural Women's Coalition's E-Leaders Program and, in particular, to acknowledge the skill, dedication and persistence of the women who made the program possible. You know who you are.

The National Rural Women's Coalition, established in 2002, seeks to ensure better social and economic outcomes for women in our rural townships and on our farms. Its purpose is to support and grow vibrant rural, remote and regional communities throughout all Australia.

Member organisations include the Australian Local Government Women's Association, Australian Women in Agriculture, the Country Women's Association of Australia, the Indigenous Rural Women's Representatives, the National Rural Health Alliance and the Women's Industry Network Seafood Community.

Today I acknowledge participants in the Women Towards Sustainability E-Leaders Program. This is an online collaboration of learning and capacity building in environmental sustainability and natural resource management. A group of 25 women from around Australia have participated, and these participants nominate an on-ground project which they will work on during the program.

This program was made possible by funding from the Australian government's Caring for Our Country National Landcare Program from the Department of Agriculture. Thank you! It is a great example of Landcare money being used to assist rural women to be innovators in their communities.

Solomon Electorate: SIDS and Kids Campaign

Mrs GRIGGS (Solomon) (13:47): Just in case you did not know, Mr Deputy Speaker, it is June, which means that SIDS and Kids volunteers and supporters will be out selling red nose products right across the country. As the patron of SIDS and Kids NT I am delighted that there are so many volunteers offering to help us with this year's red nose campaign. I am advised that the Northern Territory Fire and Rescue trucks now have red noses on them. It is fantastic to see that they are out supporting our red nose campaign.

It is not just red noses that we have for sale during our red nose campaign. We have soft toys, pens, pins—such as the one I am wearing—magnets and even portable speakers. Throughout June in my electorate red nose stalls can be found in the Darwin Mall, the Mitchell Centre and the Nightcliff, Casuarina, Karama, Hibiscus, Oasis and Palmerston shopping centres.

I encourage everyone to drop by a stall and say a 'g'day the red nose way' by buying a red nose product or two. I will be manning a number of red nose stalls over the coming weeks and encourage people to visit me, particularly this weekend. I will be at Casuarina shopping centre on Saturday and Palmerston shopping centre on Sunday. I would really appreciate it if people would come past and show their support for this worthwhile cause that is very dear to my heart.

Diabetes

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Throsby) (13:48): Last week in this place I asked the Prime Minister a question about the one million Australians who suffer from diabetes. I pointed out
that someone diagnosed with the disease must visit the GP every week for a number of months and then at least four times a year. I asked the Prime Minister whether he could confirm that this patient would be billed using the GP consultation item B23 and whether the GP tax would apply. Of course, I received no answer.

This was quite some surprise to those on this side of the House because in the last 12 months alone almost 100,000 people were newly registered on the National Diabetes Services Scheme. Diabetes is one of the top 10 causes of death in Australia. It has a mass of complications that affect the patient's feet, their eyes, their kidneys and cardiovascular health. Nerve damage affects 13 per cent of diabetics; eye damage another 15 per cent. It is now the leading cause of end-stage kidney disease. Any one of these complications would drive a diabetic to their GP and pathologist multiple times each year, if not once or twice a month.

In my electorate alone almost two per cent above the national average suffer from diabetes. It is not a wealthy electorate—over 92 per cent of population are bulk billed. These are the people who can least afford the tax. The government has turned its back on them. (Time expired)

Australia's Biggest Morning Tea

Mrs McNAMARA (Dobell) (13:50): One in two Australians will be diagnosed with cancer before the age of 85. Most of us have been touched by the effects of cancer, be it personal or that of family, friends or coworkers. Australia's Biggest Morning Tea offers an opportunity to come together, share a cuppa and help those who have been affected by cancer. Across Australia, most people host morning teas in their kitchens, living rooms, community centres, office lunch rooms and in our parks and gardens. For as little as $5, people can help provide a newly diagnosed cancer patient with important support, information and resources. In 2013 there were some 32,000 Biggest Morning Teas held across Australia, which raised $12.6 million. This year, the target is to raise over $13 million. While it spans May and June, Australia's Biggest Morning Tea officially fell on 22 May. This year I had the pleasure of joining Wyong community at Wyong Neighbourhood Centre, where over $3,000 was raised for the Cancer Council's vital research, prevention and support service programs. I would like to thank everyone involved at the Wyong Neighbourhood Centre for their efforts in organising a successful morning. Special congratulations must go to the neighbourhood centre's Sharon Burgess, who received a special commendation from the Cancer Council for her outstanding contribution towards cancer research, prevention and support programs. I look forward to continuing to support the Cancer Council in their endeavours in making next year's Biggest Morning Tea even bigger and better than this year's.

Fraser Electorate: Health

Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (13:52): The ACT will be hard hit by the federal budget. From July, these cuts will see ACT health funding drained of a much-needed $47 million. Over the next four years, Canberrans will see more than $240 million cut from health funding. As Chief Minister Katy Gallagher has stated, the cuts to health funding equate to the staffing of 135 acute hospital beds, 390 nurses or 2,850 elective surgery operations.

ACT hospitals and their dedicated staff do a tremendous job in caring for the health of Canberrans. The loss of more than $240 million would place a strain on the provision of health care in the ACT. The decision of this government to cut more than $3 billion from
Australian public hospitals will shift the burden to already stretched states and territories. And it makes a mockery of the Prime Minister's repeated promises that there would be no cuts to health.

Along with my federal Labor parliamentary and ACT Labor Assembly colleagues, I will do all that I can to sustain hospital and health services in the ACT. Today's ACT budget will be a difficult one, made harder by the federal government's broken promises. Hospital workers at Canberra Hospital, Calvary Hospital and Calvary John James Hospital deserve better than this government's willingness to rip out the heart of our hospital system.

**Capricornia Electorate: Flying Fortress Memorial**

Ms LANDRY (Capricornia) (13:53): I rise to acknowledge a ceremony that took place at the weekend at Bakers Creek near Mackay in my electorate of Capricornia. The ceremony marks a plane crash on 14 June 1943, which was, at the time, Australia's worst air disaster. On board the *Flying Fortress* war plane were 41 American servicemen who were enjoying recreational activities. There was only one survivor.

Mackay RSL historian Col Benson organises an annual ceremony at what is known as the Bakers Creek memorial, erected to mark the crash. The cause of the tragedy is still unknown. Due to the war and sensitivity at the time, there was a blackout on reports about the incident.

On Sunday, 1 June, members of the Air Force and Navy cadets were among those to mark the 71st anniversary of the crash. Mr Benson will head to the Meyer-Henderson-Hall military base, the US Army headquarters base, adjacent to Arlington National Cemetery, in the United States for a parallel ceremony on 13 June.

**Chisholm Electorate: Medicare Locals**

Ms BURKE (Chisholm) (13:54): Before the election, we had many promises from the Prime Minister and the shadow minister for health, now the Minister for Health. They claimed that there would be no reductions in Medicare Locals, there would be no cuts, there would be no changes. What a sorry state after the election and after the budget.

What we see now is that all Medicare Locals are going to face the axe and that they are going to take them from 61 Medicare Locals down to what we think will be between 15 and 20 primary healthcare networks. There is no understanding about what is happening in this space but we do know the Medicare Locals will cease to exist on 1 July 2015.

I recently met with my local Medicare Local, the Inner East Melbourne Medicare Local, and I understand the member for Deakin has also taken the opportunity to be in touch with this great organisation. I am very concerned about what will happen to this fantastic health provider in my electorate, which recently put out a press release stating quite clearly:

Evidence shows that primary health care is significantly more cost effective than hospital-based care. This change increases the risk that people won't tackle health issues proactively and will require increased care through hospitals.

That is the point. Reducing the functions of Medicare Locals will put pressure back on hospitals. We now know that Medicare Locals will go out to tender and they could go to private health providers. We are going down the track very rapidly of a two-tiered American system of health if we allow this to happen.
Higgins Electorate: Little St Margaret's Kindergarten

Ms O'DWYER (Higgins) (13:56): Last Friday was a very good demonstration of just how varied this job of being a federal parliamentarian can be. In the morning, I chaired the first public hearing of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economics Inquiry into Foreign Investment in Residential Real Estate. As soon as the committee heard from the final witness, I was on a plane back to Melbourne and straight to Little St Margaret's Kindergarten to celebrate their 85th anniversary.

After negotiating the Friday afternoon Melbourne traffic, I arrived at the small kindergarten in the back streets of Malvern to be greeted by a welcoming committee that included teachers, parents, directors, past students, and of course, current children. I had the great privilege of joining former pupil Jan Dimmick in unveiling a plaque celebrating 85 years of Little St Margaret's shaping our nation's young.

I would like to congratulate the entire board, including Andrew Gaffney, Bianca Smith, Julia Stanford, Raj Heenetigala, and Lyndal McVie; and a special mention to Nicole Morgan for organising such a wonderful event. I would like to congratulate them for the tireless work that they do, often volunteering their time while working full time and juggling family life. These volunteers, and other people like them, manage to fit 25 hours into every day.

I would also like to acknowledge and congratulate the educational team headed by Caroline Bargent, with Loretta Sepe and Hayley Pallister. The work they do, educating our young people, is very important and gives them the very best start, as they should.

Fairfax Electorate: Paid Parental Leave

Mr PALMER (Fairfax) (13:57): I am concerned that women who work on our rural properties, who support their husbands and families on rural properties and who work hard for this nation to help produce our exports are considered ineligible for the Prime Minister's Paid Parental Leave scheme. Why is it the case that the Nationals do not stand up, get some guts and support the rural women of this country? Why is it that women who stay home and look after their children are regarded as lesser citizens in this country? Why don't they get the Prime Minister's paid parental leave? Why is it that working women get less than rich women? Why is it that people get paid a government benefit not based on a fair regime or as a citizen but based on how much money they have? What sort of message does that send to our children? The more you earn, the more you get from the government; government is there to hand out more and more money. How hopeless is the Liberal Party, giving away more and more of the people's money and raising taxes? What a disgrace. Bob Menzies would roll in his grave. The high-taxing party of Australia: the Liberal Party.

Barker Electorate: Early Learning and Community Centre

Mr PASIN (Barker) (13:58): Last Sunday I had the privilege of attending the official opening of the early learning and community centre at Tenison Woods College in Mt Gambier. The opening was conducted by the most Reverend Philip Wilson, Archbishop of Adelaide, and attended by other representatives of the Archdiocese, education representatives and principals from all sectors, my state colleague Mr Troy Bell, parents, community members and others responsible for the building's construction.
As an old scholar, this was a particularly special occasion for me. The new $2 million facility had its first little learners walk through the doors in late April following a 33-week construction period.

This is a wonderful facility for the people of Mount Gambier and for the south-east of South Australia and will complete Tenison Woods College's whole-of-family approach from early childhood to year 12 and beyond. I congratulate the principal, David Mezinec, and all members of the Tenison Woods community: may your light continue to shine.

The SPEAKER: It being 2 pm, the time for members' statements has concluded.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Budget

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:00): My question is to the Prime Minister. Senior officials from the Department of Health yesterday revealed that they first heard about the Prime Minister's Medical Research Future Fund only days and weeks before the budget. Last night Australia's Chief Scientist, Ian Chubb, confirmed that he was not consulted at all. He said he is disappointed at the Prime Minister's cuts to science and research. Why is the Prime Minister not listening to experts, rushing his policy and making cuts to Australia's future by cutting science and research?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:00): Is it 'days' or is it 'weeks'? There is a difference. This is a government which has brought down a budget which is not only about living within our means; it is also about playing to our strengths. And one of Australia's great strengths is medical research.

Some eight Nobel Prize winners from this country were medical researchers, including Howard Florey, the inventor of penicillin. Over the last decade we have had some four Australians of the year who are medical researchers, including Fiona Wood, the inventor of plastic skin; and Ian Frazer, the inventor of the cervical cancer vaccine. We are very, very good at medical research. We are outstanding at medical research. We are one per cent of the world's population and we produce some five per cent of the world's refereed medical research.

This is not just a budget for saving but a budget for building. That is why I am so proud of the Medical Research Future Fund. It will help this country and help the world in the years and decades ahead.

Budget

Dr HENDY (Eden-Monaro) (14:02): My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister update the House on the action the government is taking to reduce Commonwealth debt and to foster economic growth? How will tackling Labor's legacy of debt and deficit help to build a stronger Australia?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:02): I thank the member for Eden-Monaro for his question. I can inform him that the government's Economic Action Strategy is about building a strong and prosperous economy for a safe and secure Australia. If you want a stronger economy you have to fix the budget; and if you want to fix the budget you have to tackle Labor's debt and deficit disaster.
The former Labor government, which members opposite were part of for six years, gave this country the six biggest deficits in our history. It increased unemployment by 200,000 as well as giving us the six biggest deficits in our history—$240 billion of deficit, almost a quarter of a trillion dollars of deficit, in Labor's six budgets. These are deficits stretching as far as the eye can see. And every year you are in deficit adds to the debt; Labor's debt, in a decade's time, would be $667 billion, and every dollar of debt adds to the interest bill. The price that Australians are paying for six years of Labor incompetence is $1 billion a month. That is just to pay the interest on Labor's borrowings. In a decade, it would have been $3 billion a month, just to pay the interest on Labor's borrowings.

The coalition did not cause the problem but we are prepared to take responsibility for fixing it. We were elected to fix the problem, and fix it we will. That is why this budget reduces projected maximum debt by almost $300 billion. We will take the projected deficit in 2017-18 from about $30 billion to under $3 billion, within sight of surplus. Less debt means lower interest rates; a lower deficit means that we can do things like scrap the carbon tax and help households to the tune of $550 every single year. But that is not all. We have negotiated two free trade agreements, with Korea and Japan; that means more exports. Thanks to the Minister for the Environment, we have approved $500 billion in new projects, and that means more jobs. This is a government with a plan, with an Economic Action Strategy. Unfortunately we have an opposition which just has one long complaint.

**Indonesia**

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:05): My question is to the Prime Minister. It has been 180 days since the government said it would work to agree a code of conduct with Indonesia. On the front page of today's *Jakarta Post*, a spokesperson for the Indonesian President said 'the ball is in Australia's court'. Will the Prime Minister sign a code of conduct during his visit to Indonesia later this week? And, if not, when will normal relations be restored?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:06): I am very pleased that Ambassador Najib is back in Australia. I am obviously very pleased that I will be meeting with President Yudhoyono tomorrow, because it is important that the relationship between Australia and Indonesia continues to improve. This is a very important relationship; in some respects, our most important relationship. I am determined to do everything I can to improve the relationship. I am particularly keen to ensure that the relationship improves while President Yudhoyono is in office, because not only has he been a great president of his country; he has also been a very good friend to Australia.

As the member opposite should know, these international agreements sometimes take a little while to negotiate. There were free trade agreements that members opposite tried to negotiate; they took years and years and years. It has taken a little while to negotiate. The Indonesians took some time to give us their draft, and we are now working on their draft. I am confident that, when the foreign ministers and the defence ministers sit down for the two-plus-two dialogue in a few weeks' time, that would be a very good time to finalise this code of conduct.
Mining

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (14:07): My question is to the Treasurer. Treasurer, would you please advise the House of the status of the repeal of the mining tax? Could you advise of any alternative approaches?

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney—The Treasurer) (14:07): I thank the honourable member for the question and recognise that it is hugely important that we repeal the mining tax, because the mining tax has been a blight on the economic landscape of Australia since it was first invented by the member for Lilley. I want to apologise to the House, because I was a bit tough on the former Labor Treasurer Andrew Fisher. One hundred years ago, Andrew Fisher invented a tax that only fell short by 96 per cent. I thought at the time that the mining tax fell short by 95 per cent. But, since the last budget, we have now revised it to recognise that the mining tax is 97 per cent short. So the member for Lilley gets the golden handcuff for coming up with the worst tax in Australian history.

Now we are starting to get a picture of why Labor promised four surpluses in a row. It was because they were basing it on taxes that raised no money. Only the Labor Party could come up with a tax that raises no money. It is only a one-in-100-year event, but both events occurred under a Labor Treasurer. So that is a great tribute to the member for Lilley!

The Leader of the Opposition said: 'We want to keep that tax. It has been such a great success story'—having a tax that raises no money—'that we want to keep it.' 'That is good economic policy,' says the Leader of the Opposition. But he goes along to the Minerals Council and he whispers in their ear: 'Don't worry, it will go, because there are people in the House and in the Senate who understand mining and they're going to get rid of it. They've got the numbers. Don't worry. We really want to get rid of this tax'—but—'we so want to get rid of this tax; we're going to vote to keep it.' That is the consistency of the Leader of the Opposition.

But I am very pleased to report that there is one canary in the mine. There is a report of an unnamed Western Australian Labor member—

Government members interjecting—

Mr HOCKEY: Unnamed. Who might that be? I do not know who that might be!

Government members interjecting—

Mr HOCKEY: I do not want to name her, but she apparently told caucus, 'We've got to get rid of this damn tax.' We agree—let's get rid of this damn mining tax. Against that mining tax that raises no money is $16 billion of expenditure. So every day Labor opposes getting rid of the mining tax it costs the budget and the Australian people.

Budget

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:11): My question is to the Prime Minister. Yesterday, Senate estimates revealed that his government has made no attempt to find out the impact of the GP tax on hospital emergency departments. Why on earth did the Prime Minister introduce a GP tax when he does not even know the impact on hospital emergency department waiting lists?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:11): Let's talk about the GP co-payment. The GP co-payment is a sensible measure from this government to try to make Medicare
sustainable for the long term. How can members opposite insist that it is right to have a modest co-payment for the PBS and it is somehow wrong to have a modest co-payment for Medicare? It just does not add up.

Ms Macklin interjecting—

Mr ABBOTT: The member for Jagajaga likes to interject. Let me quote from the National Health Strategy. Ms Macklin interjecting—

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Madam Speaker, I appreciate that there is a question you took on notice as a point of order yesterday relating to the lack of precedence around new standing order 68. The Prime Minister is now going to the exact same point—

The SPEAKER: We do not know that.

Mr Burke: and I think it would be wise to wait—

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: With respect, the fact of the matter is that I have said that I would take the question of the application of standing order 68 on notice—and I will give a considered statement on that tomorrow. In the meantime, we will hear what the Prime Minister has to say. I do not think we can anticipate what he is going to say.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: We will see what he has to say.

Mr ABBOTT: I am quoting from a document called the National Health Strategy. The National Health Strategy said: 'There is considerable pragmatic appeal in the use of co-payments.' Then I read on:

For further information about the National Health Strategy contact Jenny Macklin, Director, National Health Strategy.

So 'considerable pragmatic appeal in the use of co-payments'. But it does not stop there.

Ms Owens: You don't care about the truth, do you?

The SPEAKER: The member for Parramatta will desist.

Mr ABBOTT: We know the direct ministerial author of the co-payments was a gentleman called Brian Howe, former Deputy Prime Minister. Jenny Macklin said of Brian Howe: Brian Howe, as many on this side will know, has been a wonderful source of inspiration to me …

She went on to say:

It is a great challenge now to be able to bring those ideas into this place.

She did not have the guts to do that, but this government does.

Telecommunications

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (14:14): My question is to the Minister for Communications. Thank you for the funding of the election commitment of $100 million for mobile phone black spots. I understand that nationally over 1,800 black spots have been reported to the department and this money in the budget will be used to fix approximately 250. Given that many of the 1,550 remaining black spots are not financially viable for the telcos to build, and
in order to speed up the rollout, would you consider collocating mobile capability and NBN wireless towers?

**Mr Turnbull** (Wentworth—Minister for Communications) (14:15): I thank the honourable member for her question. The short answer to her question is yes and that in fact is our policy. If I can explain the history of this matter for the honourable member's benefit, during the Howard government substantial amounts of money were spent rectifying mobile phone black spots. As all honourable members from regional seats know very well, the biggest single telecommunications complaint is no mobile phone coverage. That is by far the biggest problem. Remarkably, for six years under the previous government not one cent was spent to address mobile phone black spots. As the honourable member for Indi has observed, we have committed $100 million in the budget.

When the NBN was established by the previous government, it had no mandate whatsoever to assist in mobile phone coverage. The then chief executive, Mr Quigley, admitted that in a committee hearing. We have instructed the NBN Co to, wherever possible, find opportunities where it can offer collocation and support for mobile network operators. There are a number of areas—it is not the majority of the 2,700 towers that will be established for the NBN—where there is fixed wireless coverage under the NBN Co planned where there is no mobile phone coverage or mobile phone coverage of poor quality, or mobile phone coverage from only one of the three carriers. So yes, there are opportunities to do that.

The NBN Co is also looking at a tower access product that will provide competitive backhaul from mobile phone towers to thereby reduce the cost of establishing new services in these areas via the mobile network operators. So we are looking at every way we can support this, but this is not a silver bullet. The honourable member should understand—I am sure she does understand—that the fixed wireless footprint is obviously focused on areas where there are premises to be serviced and that the black spots tend to occur in areas of thinner population.

It is an important part of the mission of the NBN Co and over the top of all of that we have the mobile phone black spots policy. My parliamentary secretary, the member for Bradfield, has been across the length and breadth of the country identifying these opportunities and he has done an outstanding job to ensure that this scheme will be designed and will get absolutely best value for taxpayers.

**DISTINGUISHED VISITORS**

The Speaker (14:18): I wish to advise that we have with us today the Rt. Hon. John Spellar, the member for Warley and shadow minister of state for foreign and Commonwealth affairs in the Miliband opposition. We make you most welcome.

We also have with us the National Rural Women's Coalition. They are in my gallery and we make you most welcome.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

**Infrastructure and Regional Development**

Mr Christensen (Dawson—The Nationals Deputy Whip) (14:19): My question is to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development. Will
the Deputy Prime Minister update the House on how the government's commitment of $6.7 billion over the next 10 years to fix the Bruce Highway will benefit communities in my electorate of Dawson?

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (14:19): I thank the member for Dawson for his question, coming as it does from one of the champions of the Fix the Bruce campaign. During those long years in opposition, coalition members at state and federal level were travelling up and down the coast to draw attention to the inadequacies of the Bruce Highway and the need to commit substantial funds to make it into the road that the 21st century demands. Arising out of the Fix the Bruce campaign, the coalition and the Queensland government agreed to an $8.5 billion package to upgrade the Bruce Highway and $6.7 billion of that came from the Commonwealth government. The honourable member, like me, would have been delighted to see the commitment to deliver on that package in the coalition's first federal budget. We announced 45 new projects and continuing funding for 16 more. That will make a real difference in helping to get this road up to standard, making it more flood proof, increasing its capacity and making it a safer road for people to travel on. Our $6.7 billion commitment compares with $4.1 billion that the Labor Party had put on the table for this major highway.

In addition, the Labor Party money was conditional on the Queensland government paying a 50 per cent contribution, when the traditional mix on the national highway network has been 80 to 20. In reality, Labor had no real plan to deliver the money at all. There were so many barbs and conditions attached to their funding offer that, in reality, many of the projects would not have proceeded. In the budget, there are some substantial commitments to the electorate of Dawson. I know the member has a particular interest in the Mackay ring road, which will be a $565 million project. The initial $11.6 million is being provided for planning and land acquisition to get that project underway. But there is more than that. There is a start on the $57 million Sandy Gully bridge project and the $45 million Yellow Gin bridge project—they both have their initial funding in this budget. On top of that there is the Vantassel Street to Cluden duplication in the southern part of Townsville. There will be $48 million extra provided to get that project underway and towards completion.

So there are real commitments to real projects, getting jobs underway. Under this government there will be a concerted effort to fix the Bruce and to make a difference for all of those people who depend on that vital highway.

Budget

Ms KING (Ballarat) (14:22): My question is to the Prime Minister. Senate Estimates revealed that the government has made no attempt to find out what the impact of the GP tax would be on the out-of-pocket expenses for patients with chronic illness such as kidney disease. Why did the Prime Minister introduce a GP tax when he does not even know how much pain it will cause sick Australians?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:23): I might equally well ask the shadow minister opposite: why did the former government introduce a PBS tax? What this government has done in respect of Medicare is exactly what the Labor Party did in respect of the PBS. It is exactly the same. If it was right to have a modest co-payment for the PBS, how can it be wrong to have a modest co-payment for Medicare? When members opposite brought in a modest co-payment for the PBS they said, 'It is to make this system sustainable, to
continue to have it accessible, to continue to have it affordable, to continue to have it universal, but to make it sustainable.' It is exactly the same argument, exactly the same ethical and moral considerations, which have led us to do exactly the same for Medicare which the Labor Party did for the PBS—exactly the same for Medicare.

The former Prime Minister Bob Hawke, the former Deputy Prime Minister Brian Howe, the former director of the national health strategy, the member for Jagajaga—we are doing for Medicare exactly what they proposed. We are doing for Medicare exactly what Labor's Assistant Treasurer proposes—that is, to make this great Medicare system of ours sustainable for the long term.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER (14:24): Before I call the honourable member for Lindsay I would also like to advise that we have with us Mr Russell Trood, the distinguished former senator from Queensland. We make you most welcome.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Budget

Ms SCOTT (Lindsay) (14:24): My question is to the Minister for Education. Will the minister explain how the government's higher education reforms will help the people in my electorate of Lindsay gain greater access to universities?

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr Conroy interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Charlton will desist.

Ms SCOTT: How does this compare with other approaches?

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (14:25): Madam Speaker, I have to confess that I did not hear the question because of the shouting.

The SPEAKER: I was having trouble myself. I call the honourable member for Lindsay.

Ms SCOTT (Lindsay) (14:25): My question is to—

Mr Conroy interjecting—

The SPEAKER: We will have some silence to listen to the question. That includes the member for Charlton.

Ms SCOTT: My question is to the Minister for Education. Will the minister please explain how the government's higher education reforms will help my people in the electorate of Lindsay gain greater access to universities? How does this compare with other approaches?

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (14:26): I am happy to tell the member for Lindsay that the University of Western Sydney is a great asset to her in Western Sydney and to the people of Western Sydney. People like those in Western Sydney will be big winners from the government's higher education reforms that we are introducing through the budget. They will be big winners because we are expanding university education to 80,000 more students around Australia, many of which will be low socioeconomic status students and first-generation university goers, just like many of those who go to the University of Western Sydney in the member for Lindsay's electorate. We are expanding and creating Commonwealth scholarships. We are lifting the cap on diplomas, which the
University of Western Sydney specialises in, as pathways for first-generation university goers. And we are opening the Commonwealth Grant Scheme to non-university higher education providers, which will create competition and a bigger market for students in the University of Western Sydney, giving more young Australians the opportunity to get a higher education qualification.

We have a plan in this budget to re-energise higher education as a sector in Australia in the future. That stands in stark contrast with the approaches taken by the Labor Party, because the Labor Party is no longer the working class party; it is the whingeing party of Australia.

Mr Dreyfus interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Isaacs will desist.

Mr Champion interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Wakefield, as usual, will desist.

Mr PYNE: The Labor Party approach in government was to cut $2.7 billion from universities without the corresponding granting of freedom to universities to innovate and compete with their Asian competitors. Labor's approach is to say no to 80,000 more places at university, to say no to the Commonwealth scholarships fund, to say no to expanding the Commonwealth Grant Scheme to non-university higher education providers, and to say no to lifting the cap on diplomas so that those people in Western Sydney get the chance to use pathways into being first-generation university goers.

Unfortunately, Australia's No. 1 whinger has no plans for Australia's future. The only response he has is to say no to the government's attempt to re-energise higher education to give our universities the chance to compete against their Asian competitors. But we will persist because we know that what we are doing is right and good for students and universities in the future.

Budget

Ms KING (Ballarat) (14:28): My question is to the Prime Minister. The Premier of New South Wales has said of the Prime Minister's $80 billion cuts to hospitals and schools:

The cuts have an immediate impact ... what we are seeing in the next 12 months is hundreds and hundreds of hospital beds ... impacted.

If the Premier of New South Wales knows the pain that the government's cuts will cause, why is the Prime Minister refusing to admit the damage he is inflicting?

Mr Hockey interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Treasurer will desist. The Prime Minister has the call. We will have some silence.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:29): Madam Speaker, when we are talking about public hospital funding from this government, there is a nine per cent increase this year, a nine per cent increase the year after, a nine per cent increase the year after that, and a six per cent increase in the final year of the budget.

Ms King interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Ballarat is asked to desist!
Mr ABBOTT: What is so wrong with nine per cent, nine per cent, nine per cent and six per cent? Where is the problem? We are increasing public hospital funding. Every single year, public hospital funding increases: by nine per cent this year, by nine per cent next year, by nine per cent the year after that and by six per cent the year after that.

The difference between this government and members opposite is that we want public hospital funding to be sustainable. We want public hospital funding to be sustainable. As for subacute beds, that was funding that the former government did not see fit to put in the Pre-election Economic and Fiscal Outlook. It did not see fit to put it in the pre-election fiscal outlook. All we get from members opposite is no solutions; all complaint. They are running the national complaints bureau and, frankly, the people of Australia are looking for better.

Asylum Seekers

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde) (14:30): My question is to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection. Will the minister update the House on the impact of Operation Sovereign Borders on people-smuggling ventures to Australia? Will he also advise the House of what it would have cost the budget if the border protection policies of the Australian government had not been changed?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (14:31): I thank the member for Forde for his question. I can tell him that the impact of Operation Sovereign Borders has been that, since 19 December, there has been no successful maritime people-smuggling venture to Australia—not one. Not one since 19 December. That is a critical period of time because that is the time when we moved into the second phase, effectively, of Operation Sovereign Borders, where turn-backs were introduced as part of the set of policy measures that were being put in place by the government. So there were no successful ventures.

I am asked about the savings, about what the cost might have been had these policies not been changed. I can inform the House that in the budget there are savings as a result of the success this government is having in stopping the boats. There are savings in the budget of $2.5 billion. It reads like this over this year and the forward estimates: $212 million saved this year; $960 million saved next year; $808 million saved the year after; $337.2 million in the second-last year of the out years; and $192.2 million. Stopping the boats saves this budget, year on year on year. Under those opposite, it cost us year on year on year—budget blow-outs of $11.5 billion. And those opposite come in here and lecture this side on economic management—unbelievable!

The truth is, though, that the savings are actually far greater, because as we know the budget is based on the midyear estimates, so these are just the savings off the MYEFO. If I go back to the PEFO—as we know, the PEFO is where the officials tell the truth about what the budget really is from the previous government; that is what it does—

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence on my left!

Mr MORRISON: That is what it does. Officials come together—and let me tell me you what your officials said.

Opposition members interjecting—

CHAMBER
The SPEAKER: There will be silence on my left!

Mr MORRISON: Let me tell you what they said. They said this year that under the previous government's policy, there would have been—

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The minister will resume his seat.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The minister!

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: We will not have a wall of noise. We will have some silence, and the minister can have the call again.

Mr MORRISON: This year, that is how many people were going to turn up on their government's policy. I can tell you what the estimate is this year, Madam Speaker. It is 7,667, and 85 per cent of those turned up in the first 2½ months, while that mob were in government. So the savings would have been far greater if we compared it to what that mob left us, if the policies had not been not changed. On simple arithmetic, it would have been over $4 billion.

Budget

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Throsby) (14:34): My question is to the Prime Minister. The Premier of Queensland has said of the Prime Minister's $80 billion cut to schools and hospitals:

A big red cross is cutting health and education spending. It's not acceptable.

If the Premier of Queensland knows the pain that the government's cuts will cause, why is the Prime Minister asking, 'What is the problem'?

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: I call the honourable Prime Minister, and there will be silence on my left and right!

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:35): The shadow minister is labouring under a misapprehension.

Ms Macklin interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Jagajaga is warned!

Mr ABBOTT: I presume he would not be telling a deliberate untruth, but the simple reality is that, every year, school and hospital funding increases under this government. Every year, school and hospital funding increases under this government. Public hospitals: nine per cent this year, nine per cent next year, nine per cent the year after that and six per cent in the final year. And, from memory, for schools funding it is eight per cent this year, eight per cent next year, eight per cent the year after that and four per cent the year after that. So we are continuing to generously fund public schools and public hospitals. In fact, when it comes to public schools in Queensland, we are doing so much better than members opposite. The Leader of the Opposition neglected to put $1.2 billion into the Pre-election Economic and Fiscal Outlook—simple truth.

Mr Shorten interjecting—
The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition will desist.

Mr Abbott: He cannot help himself. He is constantly interjecting, but I am afraid he is just embarrassed about the fact that he was not strong enough to keep $1.2 billion in the pre-election fiscal outlook. That is $1.2 billion ripped off from Queensland schools by that Leader of the Opposition and put back by this government.

Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme

Medicare

Mr Wilson (O'Connor) (14:37): My question is to the Minister for Health. Will the minister inform the House how a co-payment has helped make the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme sustainable? What plans does the government have to make Medicare sustainable?

Mr Dutton (Dickson—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (14:37): I thank the member for his question. He is very concerned about making sure we can get more support into rural communities, and we want to make sure that in this budget we strengthen Medicare.

Ms King interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Ballarat will desist!

Mr Dutton: I thank the member for his question. He is very concerned about making sure we can get more support into rural communities, and we want to make sure that in this budget we strengthen Medicare.

I want to start by acknowledging the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. We spend about $9 billion a year in this country on a great medicine scheme. I want to say thank you to the Labor Party for their support of a co-payment in the PBS in the 1960s. And I want to say thank you very much to the Labor Party for their support of a co-payment during the 1970s, when we saw an increase in the number of people that accessed the PBS and paid a co-payment. I want to thank the Labor Party for supporting a co-payment during the 1980s. I want to thank the Labor Party for supporting a co-payment in the nineties. In fact, it was the Labor Party, in 1991, that first introduced a co-payment for pensioners—not worried about those without means, not worried about those people who were most sick.

Labor's argument for 50 years has been that a co-payment is necessary to make the PBS sustainable. During all of that period, they have said the co-payment is a sensible policy. Now why would they oppose a co-payment to make Medicare sustainable? Because they are playing politics. For 50 years the Labor Party have supported a co-payment principle, and yet in the last 24 hours the shadow minister for health has referred to a co-payment on the PBS as a tax—a tax that they presided over for 50 years. If anybody ever needed any evidence of their hypocrisy and of the Labor Party playing politics, look no further than her comments of the last 24 hours. I saw the shadow minister's performance on Q&A last night.

Mr Dreyfus interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Isaacs will desist!

Mr Dutton: I have got to say it takes a special talent for a member of the Labor Party to fail on Q&A and to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. It really says a lot about the
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Labor Party. I want to make sure, as the Australian public does, that we can have a sustainable Medicare, and we will do that.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. We are yet to hear the minister refer to his own administration of his portfolio at all in this answer.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, the question—

The SPEAKER: The minister has the call and will address the question.

Mr Dutton: The point is that the Labor Party are full of hypocrisy. They have no solution to make Medicare sustainable. This party was elected to clean up Labor's mess. We will do that. We will make Medicare sustainable for generations to come. (Time expired)

Budget

Ms Rishworth (Kingston) (14:40): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to a report today that the people of the ACT will lose $47 million out of their healthcare budget on 1 July as a result of the Prime Minister's $80 billion cuts to hospitals and schools. Given the suffering that his cuts will inflict on Australians in just 27 days time, why is the Prime Minister asking, 'Where is the problem'?

Mr Abbott (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:41): I want to assure the member opposite that in fact Commonwealth funding to the ACT increases every single year under the budget that this government has just brought down. I do not have the figures at my fingertips, but I did look at them yesterday and, from memory, Commonwealth funding to the ACT increases by three per cent every year under this budget. In tough times like this, that is a pretty good deal.

Broadband

Mr Vasta (Bonner) (14:42): My question is to the Minister for Communications. Will the minister outline how the government will deliver the NBN faster and more affordably to all Australians? What will be the impact on the budget of delivering this key infrastructure more affordably?

Mr Turnbull ( Wentworth—Minister for Communications) (14:42): I thank the honourable member for his question, and I know that he has a particularly keen interest in his own electorate in getting the NBN rolled out quickly, cost-effectively and affordably. I can say that the most significant impact on the budget from the new approach to the NBN is that we are confronting the reality of the project. We are not in a sort of La-La Land of Conrovian economics, where you can believe that you can build things for half the cost it will really cost and you can believe that you can pass hundreds of thousands of premises with fibre but not offer any ability to connect. We are back in the real world and, since the election, we have got a plan to get the NBN back on track.

Since September, twice as many Australians are using the NBN—from 90,000 premises to 191,000 premises. We have increased the number of premises covered by the network by two-thirds, 65 per cent. In the built-up areas, the brownfield areas, we have tripled the number of premises connected, to 91,000 premises. Call us old-fashioned, but we are focused on actually getting paying customers on the network, because we have this old-fashioned view that you
will not generate any revenue unless you have got customers and you will not generate any improvement in the broadband experience of Australians unless they are actually connected.

This is a critically important part of the budget repair process, because it is vital that we focus on the facts—unlike the opposition leader, who denied reality throughout his budget reply speech—and get on with it. We have seen Conrovian economics from the very shy spokesman on broadband, the member for Blaxland. He may be the member for Blaxland, but he is no Paul Keating. He is really 'Young Jellyback,' he is so shy about asking questions. But, anyway, he has put out press releases saying that the NBN Co could borrow $43 billion without any government guarantee.

It is unfair to suggest that everybody in the Labor Party is a Conrovian because, as usual, the member for Fraser every now and then says something sensible. Only on 15 May, he said—

Dr Leigh interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Fraser will put his prop down.

Mr TURNBULL: 'I think infrastructure is a good thing, but I do see a risk.'

Dr Leigh interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Fraser will desist!

Mr TURNBULL: Madam Speaker, could I have a little more time, please. The clock is running down. You have taken up my time.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I think that question asked by the Minister for Communications is better directed at the Prime Minister.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order and we will have no more abuse of point of orders. The minister has two seconds.

Mr TURNBULL: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for your indulgence. Given that I only have two seconds, I will conclude my answer.

**Budget**

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (14:46): My question is to the Prime Minister. The health department has confirmed that the government has not investigated the impact of its health policies on hospitals. Can the Prime Minister confirm that his $80 billion cut to health and education is equivalent to 195,000 chemotherapy treatments over the next four years alone? Given the impact of his $80 billion cut on cancer sufferers, why is the Prime Minister asking, 'Where is the problem?'

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:46): We all know where the problem is: it is members opposite, who are in denial about the debt and deficit disaster that this country faces because of six years of incompetence.

For the benefit of the member who asked the question, this year there is a nine per cent increase in public hospital funding. Next year it is nine per cent and the year after that it is nine per cent and, in the final year, it is six per cent. When it comes to public schools, this year it is an eight per cent increase—

Ms Rishworth interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Kingston will desist!
Mr ABBOTT: Next year it is an eight per cent increase and the year after that it is an eight per cent increase. Madam Speaker, I got it wrong: it is not a four per cent increase; it is actually a six per cent increase for public schools in the final year. This is a government which is sustainably supporting the great public schools and the great public hospitals of this country. What we are not doing is pretending that we can forever put the mortgage on the bankcard and that is what members opposite tried to do. And that is why this country is now paying $1 billion every single month in interest on the borrowings. That is the price that every single Australian has to pay for Labor's incompetence. We did not create the problem, but we will fix it.

Child Care

Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt) (14:48): My question is to the Assistant Minister for Education. Will the minister inform the House what the government is doing to ensure more flexible, affordable and accessible child care for Australian families in the budget? How does this compare with other approaches?

Ms LEY (Farrer—Assistant Minister for Education) (14:48): It is great to take a question from the member for Leichhardt. Labor's flexibility trials have continued to be a flop. These were much-touted attempts by the previous government to demonstrate that parents need flexibility in child care. I am not sure why they needed an expensive $1.3 million measure to prove something we have always known, which is that parents want flexible, affordable child care. Unfortunately, only 244 families have so far accessed the pilot program. Seven of the initial trial sites are not providing flexible care, so it is the most inflexible 'flexibility trial' you could possibly imagine. Many parents were asked to enrol mid-year, which is about the time when you are already well and truly settled in the childcare centre that you have chosen for your child. It was another expensive Labor mess.

Mr Dreyfus interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Isaacs will desist!

Ms LEY: What a tattered Labor legacy in child care the Labor Party have left us. In fact, the only thing right about Labor's childcare policy was its title 'Labor's Affordable Child Care Plan.' In fact, they sat on their hands while childcare costs went up and affordability went down. Who can forget the double drop-off where 260 centres were promised and only 38 were built? What about the introduction of a new framework, which was just as much about red tape as it ever was about quality? We appreciate the quality, we sign off on the quality, but we do not sign off on the red tape that comes with it. In centre after centre that I go into I see trained, passionate, intelligent preschool teachers locked in an office, just filling in the paperwork. If the children want an exercise where they make a cake, they have to do a risk assessment on the hand-held beaters. That is just one example. Paperwork after paperwork, all shoved in a corner, all archived for 21 years, with no coherent narrative, no plan—just one dog's breakfast of a policy after another. And then, on the eve of the election—

Ms Kate Ellis interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Adelaide will desist!

Ms LEY: If the member for Adelaide yelled as hard at the tactics committee, as she does at me, she might get a question up. On the eve of the election we saw another expensive bandaid, the Early Years Quality Fund—a Labor union slush fund—which was in fact
scrambled by the member for Adelaide for United Voice to hand out in the streets of her electorate. She was worried about her vote. This was just a union slush fund.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Exchanges across the chamber will cease.

Ms LEY: This was just a union slush fund. We have a Productivity Commission inquiry into how to fix up Labor's mess. Labor put politics before parents. What a shameful legacy for Australia's children.

Budget

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:52): My question is to the Prime Minister. The median waiting time for elective surgeries like hip replacements is 36 days. What will happen to people already on surgical waiting lists because of the Prime Minister's $80 billion cut? Given that thousands of Australians will be forced to wait longer for surgery because of his cuts, why is the Prime Minister asking, 'Where is the problem?'

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:52): The shadow minister should just for once tell the truth. The truth is that there is a nine per cent increase this year, a nine per cent increase next year, a nine per cent increase the year after that and a six per cent increase in the final year. Hospital funding goes up substantially every single year. The shadow minister for foreign affairs should stop trying to scare the patients of Australia. She should come up with some solutions and put the complaints aside. If she is serious about replacing the Leader of the Opposition, she might as well start with a few ideas of her own.

Carbon Pricing

Mr BROAD (Mallee) (14:53): My question is to the Minister for Agriculture. Will the minister inform the House how repealing the carbon tax and putting spending in agriculture on a sustainable footing will help fix Labor's legacy of waste and mismanagement?

Mr JOYCE (New England—Minister for Agriculture and Deputy Leader of The Nationals) (14:54): I thank the honourable member for his question. The honourable member's seat of Mallee is home to the Mallee-Wimmera pipeline. I just noted this morning it did an inquiry and the Mallee-Wimmera pipeline is paying about $100,000 a year in carbon tax, so not only are we delivering water to all the people growing tomatoes, grapes and cereals but we are also delivering a Green-Labor Party tax. I do not know quite what the purpose of that is. But the member for Mallee would know that the person who ultimately pays the tax is the lady pushing the shopping trolley in the supermarket.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr JOYCE: Or the man.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Minister for Agriculture will resume his seat. It is impossible to hear the answer that is being given. There will be silence so that we can hear. The question has been asked and we are listening to the answer.

Mr JOYCE: I know that Labor and the Greens would be upset about hearing the answer, but we also note that to this day they stand behind a new tax on fuel on 1 July this year, a new tax of 6.85c a litre on all transport costs.
Ms Rowland interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Greenway will desist.

Mr JOYCE: It is amazing how they get themselves completely in a flux about an excise of less than a cent but they still stand behind a tax of 6.85c a litre on all transport so that anybody transporting tomatoes out of the Mallee, transporting grapes, transporting milk, transporting beef has to pay a transport tax. Who pays the transport tax? It is the gentleman pushing the shopping trolley.

The perverseness does not stop there. If we take a bullock from the seat of Mallee and we take it to an abattoir and on processing that bullock, on breaking it down, we take the carbon emissions of that abattoir over 25,000 tonnes, then that bullock is responsible for the crystallisation of a tax of 25,000 tonnes by $25.40, $635,000 for the processing of that bullock. Who pays that? It goes all the way through the cold store, all the way through the butcher's shop and lands on the family pushing the shopping trolley. Why are they paying this tax? They are paying this tax because of the Green-Labor Party solidarity, but they do not respect the mandate of the Australian people, they do not respect the views of the Australian public. The only thing they respect is the Green-Labor alliance.

Queensland Budget: Health and Education

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:57): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to the Queensland budget released minutes ago which refers to a $16 billion cut for Queensland schools and hospitals. Is Premier Newman lying when he says $16 billion is being cut from Queensland hospitals and schools?

The SPEAKER: This is a difficulty in that the Prime Minister is not responsible for the Premier of Queensland. As such, the way the question is currently phrased it is out of order. Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition wants to rephrase it to make it in order, but the Prime Minister is not responsible for what the Premier of Queensland does.

Mr SHORTEN: Thanks, Madam Speaker. I will rephrase the question. The Commonwealth pays money to states. I understand that in another place there has been a $16 billion cut announced to Queensland schools and hospitals. Is Premier Newman lying when he contradicts the Prime Minister of Australia and says there is $16 billion worth of cuts? Who is telling the truth: the Prime Minister or Premier Newman?

The SPEAKER: The term 'lying' is also unparliamentary. I do not know that the rephrasing of the question helped very much and I think it is out of order. I think we will move on.

Infrastructure

Mr MATHESON (Macarthur) (14:59): My question is addressed to the Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development. Will the minister update the House on what the government is doing to accelerate the construction of WestConnex and the Western Sydney Infrastructure Plan. How will these vital infrastructure projects boost jobs and create opportunities for people in my electorate?

Mr BRIGGS (Mayo—Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (14:59): It is a major commitment of the government, led by the member for Macarthur at the election, to invest in the WestConnex project and also in the Western Sydney plan. The
infrastructure Prime Minister made clear before the election that we would invest $1½ billion in WestConnex stage 1, which, in the budget, we have ensured that we have followed through with. Also in the budget, we announced that WestConnex stage 2 would go ahead, 18 months early, because of the first ever federal government concessional loan for a road project to bring that project forward by 18 months and all the benefits that it brings with it. Last week, New South Wales Minister Duncan Gay and I announced that the first stage of WestConnex stage 2 will get underway, with the planning application for the King Georges Road intersection and the M5 being lodged and the community consultation process beginning.

This is a project which will transform Sydney utterly. It will see, in combination with WestConnex stage 1, reduced travel times between Parramatta Road and Sydney airport by 40 minutes, halving bus travel times in the inner west of the city and bypassing up to 52 sets of traffic lights. It will remove 3,000 trucks a day from Parramatta Road by putting them underground, leading to neighbourhood revitalisation. And it will create 10,000 jobs during construction.

In addition to that, we have also started work on our Western Sydney Infrastructure Plan, our $3½ billion plan, to build infrastructure in Western Sydney. Last Friday, we announced that the contract had been awarded on the planning for Bringelly Road to begin that project later this year, led by the New South Wales government. It is a project which the Labor Party is opposed to—amazingly. The member for Chifley and the local members in the western part of Sydney are opposed to the $3½ billion being spent in Western Sydney. It is quite extraordinary. They are also opposed to the WestConnex project. They are opposed utterly to the WestConnex project. The Victorian members are opposed to the East West project—$3 billion from this government to get the East West project going. The member for Kingston is opposed to the Darlington Upgrade in South Australia, which will benefit her electorate more than any other. She is opposed to it. The member for Perth, who has had other things on her mind today, is opposed, with the Greens, to the Perth Freight Link project.

What we are seeing here is an opposition which is utterly obsessed by politics and which does not understand policy at all. It wants to get utterly in the way of ensuring that we have a stronger Australia, led by an infrastructure Prime Minister. We are going to get on with it. We are going to get on with ensuring that we build the infrastructure of the 21st century.

Climate Change

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (15:02): My question is to the Prime Minister. I note that the Prime Minister leaves to go overseas tomorrow. I also note that, courtesy of American comedian John Oliver’s video going viral on the internet, the Prime Minister is already putting Australia on the map. Will the Prime Minister raise his views on the science of climate change with President Obama next week, or are some jokes best left at home?

The SPEAKER: Before I ask the Prime Minister to accept the call, I would say to the member for Kingsford Smith: it is a little bit too smart. Under standing order 100, your so-called amusing remarks are against the standing orders. So I would say to the Prime Minister: you may answer the question but ignore those parts of the question which are clearly out of order.

Honourable members interjecting—
The SPEAKER: There will be some silence or someone will leave under 94(a).

Mr Shorten interjecting—

The SPEAKER: And it might be the Leader of the Opposition, if he does not desist.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (15:04): I am happy to take the question because, underneath the attempted humour, I presume there is a serious intent. The member asking the question wants to know what the policies of the United States government and the Australian government on climate change have in common. I can tell him that there is no carbon tax in the United States. There is no emissions trading scheme in the United States. This government is determined to ensure that there will be no carbon tax or emissions trading scheme here in Australia. What the United States is doing is taking sensible direct action steps to reduce its emissions, which is exactly what this government is proposing to do. We are proposing to put sensible measures in place to protect our environment. It is not sensible to protect the environment by damaging the economy, and that is why neither the United States nor Australia should have a carbon tax.

Mrs Griggs: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The former Treasurer, the member for Lilley, made a number of unparliamentary comments while the Prime Minister was speaking, and I ask that he withdraw.

The SPEAKER: The member for Lilley would assist the House if he withdraws unhelpful remarks.

Mr Swan: I withdraw.

Economy

Ms O'DWYER (Higgins) (15:06): My question is to the Minister for Trade and Investment. Will the minister inform the House how trade and investment boosts the government's Economic Action Strategy and how this will support sustainable economic growth and job creation?

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr Pyne: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It was quite impossible to hear the member for Higgins's question, and I ask her to repeat it.

The SPEAKER: I could not hear it either. Would the noise on my left cease. I wish to hear the question as much as others in the House, the people in the galleries and those listening. If anybody does not wish to represent their constituents in this place they can leave under 94(a). The member for Higgins has the call.

Ms O'DWYER: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My question is to the Minister for Trade and Investment. Will the minister inform the House how trade and investment boosts the government's budget Economic Action Strategy and how this will support sustainable economic growth and job creation?

Mr ROBB (Goldstein—Minister for Trade and Investment) (15:07): I thank the member for Higgins. Unlike those opposite, the member for Higgins fully understands that it is business, large and small, that is best placed to drive sustainable economic growth and therefore jobs.

Opposition members interjecting—
Mr ROBB: Don't you talk—519,000 lost jobs in the small business sector in your term of office! You ought to keep quiet on this question. It is business, large and small—not the hand of big government through unsustainable debt fuelled spending, not a continuation of the firestorm of choking regulation, not more futile and job-destroying taxes, not more decisions taken at the behest of the unions and the Greens—that drives sustainable growth. For this reason we are trying to displace big government and replace it with robust growth of the private sector. Improved trade and investment is an important part of driving that robust growth of the private sector.

Concluding significant trade agreements opens up new doors for business. They lead to job creation. They lead to growth. We have concluded landmark agreements with Korea and Japan. We have achieved in seven months what those opposite could not do in six years and six months. We suspect Labor failed to conclude an agreement not because of incompetence—no, not incompetence; they did not have their heart in it. They were following the instructions of their anti-trade union bosses.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr ROBB: We saw a firestorm of regulation going through this place at your behest, Leader of the Opposition. The Korean agreement will add $650 million a year to our economy. It will create more than 15,000 jobs, excluding significant services gains. The Japan agreement will open up major new export opportunities for a range of agriculture, horticulture and services. The beef industry alone is going to see increases of some $300 million to $400 million a year. We are making good progress with the free trade agreement with China—we concluded another round this morning and it gives me even more optimism that we can conclude this year. This will deliver, again, further gains.

On the investment front, since the First Fleet we have relied on foreign investment to help grow the economy, and that remains true today. Over the last seven months I have chaired 28 investment roundtables in 10 countries. It is delivering results. We are seeing billions of dollars come into Australia. Those opposite left behind a real mess. We are making a strong start to finishing it.

Mr Abbott: After 23 well-answered questions, I ask that further questions be placed on the Notice Paper.

STATEMENTS ON INDULGENCE

Asylum Seekers

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (15:10): On indulgence, Madam Speaker, to update the House on an incident, I am advised that a decision was taken last night to intervene and end a protest at the Christmas Island Immigration Detention Centre in order to maintain good order and return it to normal operations.

Protesting detainees were requested to disperse from the medical area of the green heart in the centre of the facility on a number of occasions. The Serco Emergency Response Team, ERT, was called in to assist with managing the situation and all detainees were again provided with the opportunity to return to their accommodation compounds. The majority of detainees were compliant. However, I am advised a small number exhibited noncompliant behaviour. The Serco ERT continued negotiations with those detainees who were refusing to comply.
Reports to me suggest some detainees became aggressive and were subsequently restrained and moved from the green heart area. At about 12.40 am, local time, protesting detainees had been cleared from the central area, with the majority moved to other compounds. All detainees were assessed by medical services provider IHMS. I am advised that two detainees suffered minor injuries arising from noncompliant behaviour and were treated on site by IHMS. A further four detainees were taken to hospital for a range of injuries, including suspected sprains or broken bones. One detainee has suffered an injury to his wrist. No staff were injured.

I am advised the facility remains calm. However, the department’s detention service provider continues to monitor and support all detainee compounds.

**QUESTIONS TO THE SPEAKER**

**Parliament House: Security**

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (15:12): Madam Speaker, in light of recent exchanges in Senate estimates about surveillance in our workplace, I ask if you approve of, and/or have final say over, CCTV footage in the House of Representatives corridors being used for non-security related purposes, and can our rooms be searched at any time?

The SPEAKER (15:12): The member gave me notice of his question before question time. I will take the most part of that question on notice because it is a very serious issue. No, I do not have final say on my own; obviously that is a shared responsibility with the President of the Senate. But I can assure you that your rooms cannot be searched. I will take the question on notice and come back to you with an answer.

**DOCUMENTS**

**Presentation**

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (15:13): Documents are presented as listed in the schedule circulated to honourable members. Details of the documents will be recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings*.

**MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

**Health Care**

The SPEAKER (15:13): I have received a letter from the honourable member for Ballarat proposing that a definite matter of public importance be submitted to the House for discussion, namely:

The Government undermining universal healthcare in Australia by cutting billions of dollars from healthcare and the pain this will inflict on Australians.

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 KING (Ballarat) (15:14): We saw it well and truly on display today from the Prime Minister in question time. Having said before the election that there would be no cuts to health or education or pensions and no new taxes, when questioned about the $80 billion worth of cuts to health and education that are in his own budget papers he could not answer any of the questions about the impact of those cuts. It is not surprising, given what we know
from Senate estimates that no modelling has been done and that no-one has looked at the impact of the GP tax on communities across the country. When the Prime Minister was directly asked the question about the impacts, he said: 'Where's the problem? I don't see any problem. There's no big deal here.' I will tell you where the problem is. When you cut $80 billion out of hospitals and education and when you cut some $55 billion out of hospitals it does mean fewer beds; it does mean longer waiting times for elective surgery; it does mean longer wait times in emergency departments; and it does mean that Australians will find it difficult to access the health care that they need. Perhaps that is exactly what the government is trying to do: to shift the responsibility for health out of the Commonwealth and onto the states and territories and onto individual taxpayers.

We know that if these cuts go through, and the government is determined to cut $80 billion from hospitals, we will not have the hospital beds that people need. We will not have the jobs for the doctors of the future, many of whom I have recently met in medical schools. We will have fewer nurses in our public health system; and we will have problems with our emergency departments. I want to take people through some of the detail, because the government and the Prime Minister have again been caught out on this. The Prime Minister is claiming, 'Oh, the cuts they are not for three years' time; they're funded on the never never and so they somehow don't exist.' The first thing is the $80 billion worth of cuts are in their own budget papers, and the savings from these—read cuts—are going into this Medical Research Future Fund which was established, we hear, some six weeks before the budget. If anyone has seen the Hollowmen episode on the endowment fund—I can highly recommend that you download it and there is a piece in the newspapers today by Dan Harrison—it absolutely bella the cat on the government's Medical Research Future Fund.

I am going to rely on a paper from the Parliamentary Library; it is a practice members opposite used to do on a regular basis, but this is on their own budget. It says:

A number of related health funding agreements with the states and territories are slated for termination, deferred or redrawn.

These are historic agreements that Labor signed with states and territories to end the blame game in health. Over the course of the last few years that blame game—the cost shifting between Commonwealth and the states—and the arguments over health have largely disappeared. This government has ended that by ripping up those historic agreements. It is not just ripping them up from 2017, as the Prime Minister said; it is in fact not honouring those agreements from 1 July this year. The Commonwealth had pledged to meet 45 per cent of the growth in the efficient price, rising to 50 per cent after 2017.

The government's own pre-election policy paper says that is exactly what they would do too. It is another broken promise. So ashamed are they that their health policy seems now, unfortunately, to have been removed from a webpage, but it stated that 'a coalition government will honour 50 per cent funding of the efficient price.' That is what their document said, and they have absolutely broken that promise. From July 2017 the Commonwealth's contribution will no longer use the funding model. The Commonwealth's contribution will be linked to movements of the consumer price index and population growth—essentially the funding model is being replaced. 'If CPI movements track below the growth in the cost of medical services, the state and territories will face a shortfall in funding under this new formula.' That is the Parliamentary Library's budget paper.
We have seen in Queensland in the last hour, as they handed down their budget, $16 billion of cuts to health and education and that is a direct response to the Abbott government's cuts to health and education. We have seen states and territories frantically redraft their budgets. The ACT is another case in point—they have frantically redrafted their budget—and Victoria's budget papers, which were handed down before the Commonwealth budget, clearly state that there are a whole lot of assumptions which they had to build in but which have been smashed. According to the Parliamentary Library paper:

From 2014–15, the Commonwealth will also cease the funding guarantees agreed to under the NHRA. Under the funding guarantee, the Commonwealth promised that no state would be financially worse off as a result of transitioning to the NRHA activity based funding arrangements which apply from 2014–15. The Commonwealth guaranteed that its contribution would be at least $16.4 billion greater than the amount the states and territories would have received under the superseded funding model. The cessation of the funding guarantee means payments of up to $574 million which were due to commence from July 2014, will not proceed.

That is money that was there in the budget and in the forward estimates. Any sort of spin that the minister wants to put on it that this money did not exist is not real. It was real money, all right—and it was real hospital beds and real nurses and real doctors—and you have cut them. The other thing that the government has done is this:

Under the NPAIPHS, the states and territories receive funding for improving access to elective surgery, emergency care and subacute care. Funding involves both facilitation and reward payments for meeting agreed targets. The budget announced that the reward payments for emergency care and elective surgery would cease from July 2015. Around $30.7 million in these payments were made to states and territories in 2013–14. Savings of $201.1 million over three years are forecast.

It is not surprising, and again I will quote from the Parliamentary Library budget paper—

Mr Fletcher: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the shadow minister a question under standing order 66(a).

The SPEAKER: I think that standing order applies only to speeches and not MPIs.

Ms KING: Obviously, they are a little bit sensitive on this point. Having lied to the Australian people, you are now being caught out when it comes to public hospital funding. You are absolutely being caught out. Your own budget papers say that there is an $80 billion cut to public hospitals and to education and your own health policy document says that you will honour those agreements 50 per cent. That is what they say. The Parliamentary Library paper says:

Unsurprisingly, the response from state and territory governments to the loss of Commonwealth hospital funding has been negative.

The response from the states and territories has been negative because many of the Liberal state governments across the country—Victoria and Queensland are cases in point—have been cutting funding to public hospitals and they know they are about to face a massive shortfall when it comes to funding hospital beds, nurses and doctors. According to the paper:

The Australian Health Care and Hospitals Association … expressed its concern that the change to hospital funding commitments will have an immediate effect on hospital waiting times and standards. Others hold concerns that the potential efficiencies from applying an activity based funding model with an efficient price, will be lost with a return to a population/CPI model which provides no incentive for such efficiencies.
Shame on this government! This government has tried to claim that, somehow or other, it hasn't not told the truth about what is happening with health and education funding, that really it is all not happening until 2017 and that no-one should worry about it. As of 1 July we will see hospital bed closures, elective surgery waiting times begin to climb again and times for people access emergency departments climb and climb again. Every single time that happens it will be on the head of this government, because of their $80 billion worth of cuts to hospitals.

Mr DUTTON (Dickson—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (15:24): This is a very important issue. People who are listening to this broadcast would be thinking: 'Why is the government saying that funding for public hospitals is increasing by nine per cent each year over the course of the next three years and six per cent in year four, yet we have just heard the shadow minister claim that money is being cut from public hospitals?' I will explain it in this way: imagine a person going to work on an income of $1,000 a week. His boss says, 'I'm going to give you a pay rise. Your pay will go from $1,000 to $1,200 a week.' The bloke goes home that night and says to his family: 'You wouldn't believe it. I was expecting $1,300 a week and my pay has been cut by $100 a week.' It just does not hold any water. The fact is that we are increasing hospital funding by nine per cent year-on-year over the course of the next three years and by six per cent in year four. Yes, the states and territories would want more than nine per cent, no question. That is understandable. But the reality is that this government was left with enormous debt by the previous Labor government. People realise that in their own budgets—in their own household budgets and their own small business budgets—you cannot afford to borrow money to pay the interest bill. You cannot afford to do that in your own household finances and you certainly cannot afford to do it at the Commonwealth level.

We have seen in New South Wales, where the health system was a disaster, that more money did not mean better outcomes. The O'Farrell government—now the Baird government—was elected to clean up Labor's mess in health. In New South Wales Labor put more money into health bureaucracies. Why? Because that is what the unions demand. Unions demand that more people go from the wards into academic positions, into positions that are non-frontline, and that new health bureaucracies be created. It is exactly the same picture that took place in Queensland, where we saw the Dr Patel disaster and the payroll debacle. We saw people spending years and years on waiting lists. It was not because Labor at a state level had cut money out of the public hospital system; indeed, they put more money in. They got worse outcomes because they had taken the money that used to be used for frontline services and put it into bureaucratic positions. It would be no surprise to anybody in this country that, over the course of the last six years, under the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd period of dysfunctional government Labor applied exactly the same formula. There were the Australian National Preventive Health Agency and Health Workforce Australia. Believe it or not, in addition to my department, the Department of Health, there were 23 outside agencies.

If you are taking money from the frontline services, from the doctors and nurses and hospital wards and from GP services around the country, and putting it into that ever-growing bureaucracy, no wonder you would have worse health outcomes. This has been Labor's formula, tried and failed at the state level and applied at the federal level over the course of
the last six years. We were elected, as were the O'Farrell and the Newman governments, to
clean-up Labor's mess; and clean it up we will.

In this budget we say that some states have overstated, for argument's sake, the amount of
activity that has been taking place in their hospitals. We say to the states, 'Under the crazy
Julia Gillard agreement that you signed, you were guaranteed funding in your hospitals even
if you didn't perform the surgery.' We will continue to honour the agreement and fund the
additional surgery that takes place within hospitals, but, you would not believe it, we are
insisting that the surgery actually takes place. I do not think that is a foreign concept to
anybody in this place, let alone to the Australian taxpayer, who funds all of these services. We
are saying that we will provide the additional funding if you do the surgery. If you see the
people in emergency departments, if you perform the surgery for not just hearts and hips but
knees and all the rest of the elective surgery that takes place, we will provide that additional
funding. I think that is a completely reasonable arrangement.

One of the lies that Labor push is that, somehow, money has been cut from this budget,
because we did not continue the so-called national partnership agreements. Let me give
members one example. Then Prime Minister Gillard entered into a subacute national
partnership agreement with the states and territories, which commenced on 1 July 2011. There
was a defined amount of money that went to the states and territories to help them build some
beds in public hospitals. Nobody argued against that. The funding was due to finish on 30
June this year, and it will finish. In the run-up to the election the Labor Party issued their
policy document and, through their discredited economic spokesperson, they put out their
numbers, which did not have one extra dollar from 1 July this year under that time limited
partnership agreement.

When we put out our policy, we also said, 'We accept that that partnership agreement
expires on 30 June this year, and we won't provide funding beyond that.' Labor and the
Liberals went into the election with exactly the same policy. Somehow the Labor Party now
says, 'The Liberal Party are cutting this NPA. They are not
providing funding going forward.'
It is a complete fallacy, and it is at complete odds with the truth of the Labor Party's position.

That is not where it stops, unfortunately. The former government had lots of problems.
They spent money, racked up debt and wasted money. The shadow minister before referred to
a series called The Hollowmen. Many people in this place and listening to this broadcast
would have seen The Hollowmen series. You know what? It was based on the Rudd
government years. It was based on the failed Rudd period of government. Kevin Rudd said—
as Bob Hawke said in 1991—that Medicare is unsustainable without a co-payment. The Labor
Party supported a co-payment in relation to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme in the 1960s,
the 1970s, the 1980s, the 1990s and right up until 24 hours ago when the Labor Party all of a
sudden referred to a PBS co-payment as a PBS tax. Why did they do that? Having said for 50-
odd years that we needed a co-payment to keep our medicine scheme sustainable, why are
they calling it a tax now? It is simply politics.

What we are endeavouring to do today is put the facts on the table in a rational way for
people to make a decision for themselves. The Labor Party claims that there is somehow a cut
in hospital funding, and yet the budget papers demonstrate that we will increase hospital
funding nine per cent this year, next year and the year after and by six per cent in year four.
We do not want to tear Medicare down; we want to build it up. We are saying in relation to
Medicare that in a country of 23 million people with an ageing population we cannot pretend that 263 million services for free each year is sustainable. It is not. Bob Hawke said in 1991, ‘We need a co-payment for the PBS because we want to make our drug system sustainable.’ He said, ‘We need a co-payment for the Medicare system because we want to keep the health system sustainable.’ Andrew Leigh, the shadow Assistant Treasurer, has written at length about this very issue and has said that Medicare is unsustainable without a co-payment. We know the member for Jagajaga, a senior frontbencher within the Labor Party, as the policy head of the health section within the Labor Party at the time advised that Brian Howe should introduce a co-payment. And Brian Howe did introduce a co-payment. He introduced a co-payment as Bob Hawke's health minister and as Deputy Prime Minister because he recognised then as we do now—and as Kevin Rudd did in 2007—that if we do not make Medicare sustainable it will collapse.

We are saying that, for people who can afford to pay a $7 co-payment, $5 of that will go towards a $20 billion medical research fund to address the fact that 7,500 Australians a week by 2050 will be diagnosed with dementia. I want to make sure that we can put more money into research to address the issues of an ageing population—such as diseases of the brain, cardiac disease and rare forms of cancer. I want to make sure that we can provide additional support to our medical researchers, and so $5 is going into that fund. The other $2 of the $7 will go to supplementing the money that doctors receive now under Medicare. That means that we can continue to bulk-bill those people who cannot afford the $7 and ensure the universality of Medicare.

The Labor Party at the moment believe you can rack up debt after debt on the country's credit card and that somehow that is sustainable. Nobody else believes that. This government was elected to clean up Labor's mess. As I said before, we will clean it up, and not just the boats, the economy and the budget. We will also make our health system sustainable. Australians know in their hearts and minds it is only the Liberal Party that can do that.

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Throsby) (15:34): The truth is that this policy is an orphan. The minister has done a valiant job of standing here and trying to defend something that none of his backbenchers will be out there in their electorates defending when they get back home. None of them will be out there defending it when they get back home. It is easy to understand why. When we got up and read out the MPI today, you could see people rushing for the doors. In fact, the National Party MPs just about knocked the doors off their hinges—they are still swinging—because they did not want to be in the chamber to stand up and defend what is clearly an indefensible policy.

There is little wonder. National Party members would have been entitled to think that, as they have a National Party minister with the title of ‘minister for regional and rural health’, she would have had some input into this policy. Yet we discovered something last night in Senate estimates when she was asked a very clear question about the impact of the GP tax on rural and regional Australia. She was asked by Senator McLucas:

Did you go through a consultation process with rural and regional health stakeholders to canvass the notion of a GP tax with them?

The answer from the minister for rural and regional health was:

I was not privy to any discussion around the creation of the GP co-payment.

She was not keen to claim it as one of her own. She said:
There was speculation leading up to the announcement. I did not have any specific discussions on that matter.

You could not have it any clearer than that. The minister who is responsible for rural and regional health had absolutely no input into the policy—and doesn't it show? The impact of this cruel GP tax and these cruel cuts to health and hospital funding are going to have a big impact on rural and regional Australia—and don't National Party MPs know it? That is why they will not be standing in this place defending them.

There is a word for people who do not tell the truth. We are not allowed to use it in this place because it is unparliamentary. Before the budget Mr Abbott said that there would be no cuts to education and no cuts to health. Then he lured people to vote for him. Then, at his very first opportunity, he whacks them with his very first budget. 'No cuts to education and no cuts to health'? The people of Australia are not going to forget it.

When they go back to their electorates—I can hear the noisy member for Bass over here, I can see the member for Page over there, and I can see a lot of other members from regional Australia—they will not be going out there defending this policy. They will be at pains to speak about just about anything else, because they know that this is going to go down like a bucket of sick in regional Australia. It is absolutely on the nose.

It is not only members on this side of the House that are bagging these horrible cuts to the health budget. What did the newest Premier of New South Wales have to say about this? He said this:

…in terms of the funding in health, what we are seeing…is hundreds and hundreds of hospital beds…impacted.

He also said:

We cannot absorb these cuts.

So all those members from regional New South Wales, when they go back to their electorates, should be repeating the words of the Premier of New South Wales. It wasn't just the Premier of New South Wales who confessed that these cuts are going to amount to 2,380 beds in New South Wales that will have to close; it is the Premier of Queensland. He said he was 'deeply concerned about what this budget means for health and education services' in his state. Today he stood up in his parliament and said it amounts to $16 billion worth of cuts to health and education services in Queensland. These were not the cuts the people of Queensland voted for. In fact, they were promised the very opposite.

In the nine months the government have been in office they have not had a health policy; they have had a wrecking ball! They have thrown away the National Health Reform Agreement; they have cut millions and millions of dollars from programs that are helping ordinary Australians. There is no policy. It is a cut to the fair go. These cruel cuts are closing beds in regional Australia, they are hurting everyday Australians, and you guys should vote against them.

Mr CHESTER (Gippsland—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence) (15:39): It is a pleasure to join the debate because it provides an opportunity to remind Australians about the mess this government has inherited and to highlight our efforts to keep our world-class health care system in place and sustainable in the future. It is a pleasure to support the
Minister for Health, who quite rightly acknowledged that in September last year the Australian people gave us a big job to do and we are determined to do it.

But listening to those opposite you could be forgiven for thinking that perhaps the last six years didn't happen—it was a mirage, an apparition, a hoax. But it did happen and the damage is real. I do not blame those opposite for being in denial about this. They do not want to acknowledge the mess they have left behind for the Australian people to clean up and the coalition government to clean up. That is all okay—I know it is hard to admit your mistakes. But those opposite are now acting like the tenants from hell. You have had them in the rental property. They have wrecked the rental property: they have broken windows, they have stained the carpet, they have pulled down the curtains—

Mr Hartsuyker: They owe rent.

Mr CHESTER: They owe rent and now they want to stop us from coming in and cleaning up the mess. They want to stay in there and keep doing the damage. Ten years ago the cost of Medicare to Australian public was in the order of $8 billion per year. Today we are spending about $20 billion per annum on Medicare. Any responsible government would acknowledge that there is a challenge there to make sure that Medicare is sustainable into the future. This government has had to make some tough decisions. They are tough decisions but they have been fair decisions. In proposing this modest contribution that we have put forward in the budget, with a strong safety net for concession card holders and children under 16 years, we are taking steps now to make sure that our world-class health system is sustainable in the future.

The members opposite in today's MPI like to talk about the Australian people feeling the pain. The Australian people know all about Labor's pain. We have had six years of absolute budgetary dysfunction from Labor. The record of Labor is something that we need to be reminded about. Labor converted the record surpluses of the Howard government into record deficits. Labor delivered nearly $200 billion worth of deficits and there is $123 billion of deficits over the next four years to come. That is 10 years of deficits. That is an extraordinary effort by Labor!

Get this—Labor promised a surplus in 2012-13 on over 500 occasions. We are still waiting for the member for Lilley's first budget surplus. Australia's debt is already costing us billions of dollars in interest payments. This year we are paying $12 billion in interest costs alone.

Mr Mitchell interjecting—

Mr CHESTER: Those opposite are going silent, apart from my good friend the member for McEwen—he's always up for a blue. The member for McEwen is the only one prepared to defend this. We are paying a billion dollars a month in interest payments. Imagine what that $1 billion per month could do in terms of new health care facilities, new hospitals, new roads.

It is fascinating to sit here and listen to Labor deny the mess they left behind. In the six chaotic years of Labor we had two Labor prime ministers, three deputy prime ministers, five ministers for regional development and six ministers for small business. In total they made 11 changes to ministerial arrangements. There were 20 different parliamentary secretaries and 48 ministers, with over 100 different ministerial titles. It was a mess. The Australian people, quite rightly, hired us to do a job in September last year—and that was to clean up Labor's mess.
This matter of public importance debate is important, but the premise of the statement is untrue. This government is not undermining health care in Australia; it is making responsible, long-term decisions to make sure that our health system is sustainable in the long term. The Abbott government is delivering record funding for hospitals and schools.

Mr Perrett interjecting—

Mr CHESTER: They don't like it, but it's true. The Abbott coalition government is delivering record funding for hospitals and schools. I am surprised that my good friend the member for Moreton is even here. He normally leaves by this time of day. The Abbott government is actually honouring its commitments and increasing hospital funding by over $5 billion or around 40 per cent over four years. Those opposite don't like it but it is true. Labor loves to make big promises but they never delivered. This government is in fact increasing funding for hospitals each year and every year. The annual assistance to the states for public hospitals increases by more than nine per cent every year for the next three years and will increase by more than six per cent in the fourth year.

I said at the outset that the Australian people elected us to do a job, and that job was to clean up the mess left behind by the Australian Labor Party. I urge those opposite just to admit their past mistakes. I know you didn't mean it—I know you didn't mean to make a complete mess of it—but admit your mistakes and get out of the way and let the clean-up begin.

Mr MITCHELL (McEwen—Second Deputy Speaker) (15:45): I would like to take this opportunity to explain exactly how these cruel and heartless cuts are going to severely affect my electorate of McEwen and highlight, yet again, the many promises that Tony Abbott has broken. Universal health care is absolutely vital for Australia and is one of the main concerns for our communities in McEwen. By introducing the GP tax, Tony Abbott is going to be charging our electorate almost $8 million a year just for being sick or injured. In regional areas such as Kilmore, Broadford and Seymour, where we have larger elderly populations, it is especially going to hurt. Our pensioners and people on fixed incomes are already struggling to make ends meet on modest incomes and now—

Mr Nikolic interjecting—

Mr MITCHELL: The Bass yabby—he goes on, doesn't he? They will struggle to afford to go the doctor. Let's say they can scramble together $7 to go the doctor. They may need to get a blood test done. That is another $7. Then there may be a follow-up appointment to check on their health progress. That is another $7. For those opposite, that is $21 for one ailment. What about the young families we have in areas in like Laurimar, Mernda, Craigieburn and Sunbury? A family with a couple of sick kids is being pinged $14 if they take two kids to the doctor. This heartless GP tax is hurting our most vulnerable Australians, those least able to afford it. And to add insult to injury, millionaire Joe Hockey fires off comments suggesting, 'It's no big deal, if you compare it to a pack of smokes.' He said:

One packet of cigarettes costs $22. That gives you three visits to the doctor. You can spend just over $3 on a middy of beer, so that's two middies of beer to go to the doctor.

This is why the budget is in such a mess. If the Treasurer is not competent enough to know three plus three equals six not seven, no wonder this country is in the state it is in. This budget is not worth even using as a boat anchor. How arrogant and out of touch is the Treasurer of
this country to honestly believe that those who are struggling to keep their heads above water can compare their health needs to a middy. This shows just how out of touch the Abbott government really is.

By now, we know Abbott's famous quote from the night before the election, but it bears repeating: 'No cuts to education. No cuts to health. No changes to pensions. No changes to the GST.' So four out of five promises have been broken. He has cut billions of dollars from public hospitals, dental services, preventative health initiatives, bulk-billing services, planning and training programs, and of course the Medicare safety net. If he thinks these are not funding cuts, I would hate to see a budget with funding cuts from the Prime Minister.

In February this year, in a doorstop with Bill Glasson, the Prime Minister was asked: 'Can you guarantee there won't be a Medicare co-payment?' Tony Abbott replied: 'Nothing is being considered. Nothing is being proposed. Nothing is planned.' The parliamentary Pinocchio also stated: 'Don't forget, we are going to be a no surprises and no excuses government.' There you have it: he reckons this is a 'no surprises, no excuses government'. I can tell him there are millions of vulnerable and struggling people across Australia who have been absolutely shocked by the cruel budget of broken promises, especially the people in McEwen. Even the Premier of Victoria, Dr Denis Napthine, a fellow Liberal Party member, has outed more of Tony Abbott's health-care cuts and lies. Mr Napthine states: The Prime Minister is telling Australians that the cuts will only take place post-2017. But our figures clearly show, as of the first of July ... there'll be a significant reduction in funding in health and concessions in Victoria.

In his 2009 book *Battlelines* on page 133, Tony Abbott writes:

Commonwealth spending on health and education now approaches $90 billion a year ... Still, any withdrawal of Commonwealth involvement or spending in these areas would rightly be seen as a cop out.

So what does the PM do? His budget has an $80 billion cut to health and education. Or for the intellectually bereft up the back on the other side, 'savings' is the term they use in the budget. 'We are not spending it; we are saving it.' That is a cut by any stretch of the imagination.

I reiterate: these savage cuts to health care and the cruel taxes on GPs and medications are going to drastically hurt the livelihoods of the people of McEwen. Needless to say, we are going to fight these. In this House in September 2010, it was said of the then government:

This government is built on a lie. This is a thoroughly dishonourable and deceitful government and it deserves to be exposed as such.

Well, Mr Abbott, when it comes to your perfidious government, I could not have said it better myself.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott):** Order! Member for McEwen!

**Mr MITCHELL:** That was a quote from the now Prime Minister. While those opposite sit there whingeing and complaining— *(Time expired)*

**Dr SOUTHCOTT** (Boothby) (15:50): Medicare celebrated 30 years this year. It is a system which has stood the test of time and part of the reason it is so popular in the community is that it built on the existing system. It was a fee-for-service system. It allowed discretion for medical practitioners to continue as they had before. But it has bipartisan support. It is supported by the Labor Party and it is supported by the Liberal Party and the
National Party. You only need to look at what we did when we were last in government. We had some great innovations for Medicare. The practice incentive payment was a great innovation. It allowed GPs to focus on chronic disease management. There were things that a fee-for-service system did not always lend itself to. It was a way of getting general practice computerised. That was a great success of the Howard government. We introduced the GP management plans and the team care arrangements. That expanded Medicare to allied health services, to podiatrists and more. We had the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme, an innovation of the current Prime Minister when he was health minister. He understood that it was not the checks that people needed but the access to restorative treatment. We had a great expansion, again, under the Prime Minister when he was health minister, in the area of mental health, greatly expanding Medicare there.

The issue now is the sustainability of Medicare. Whereas 10 years ago it was costing $8 billion, now it is costing $18 billion. For that reason, a modest co-payment is a good idea. This idea that it affects the universality of Medicare is simply rubbish. Medicare remains a universal social health insurance scheme. That has not changed.

Australia has a good health system. For nine per cent of GDP, we have a population which, by international standards, is healthy. We have one of the highest life expectancies anywhere in the world. We are in the top five countries in terms of survival from a cardiovascular event. We can do much better. There are areas that we can focus on doing better in, such as chronic disease management, and we must look at hospital readmissions and preventable hospital admissions. There is a lot more that can be done. But there is all of this confected outrage, over what is a very modest scheme which will allow Medicare to become sustainable.

The Labor Party understood this when they were in government in the early nineties. They understood that having a co-payment was a way of making Medicare sustainable. The principle of having a co-payment has been well established in the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme since the 1960s. We have a differential scheme: one for concession-card holders and one for everyone else. We have had it since the 1960s. And this is very similar.

When you look at how we stand internationally, about 17 per cent of health spending is an out-of-pocket spend by the patient. We are about average by international standards. And this measure is not a large measure. It is $7. There are protections there for people who cannot pay. There are protections there for people who are card-holders. They will have to pay on only 10 occasions. It is an important innovation to make sure that Medicare is sustainable. And it does preserve the universality of this health insurance scheme.

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (15:55): This government's budget rips $80 billion out of health and education. It is setting Australia's health system back 50 years. I have always believed that the Prime Minister looks to the past for inspiration, and we are seeing that in what he has done in this budget.

This government is waging war on the health of Australian families by attacking the universality of Medicare. It is a war that the Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, began to wage when he was Minister for Health. I remember the days when he stood up in this chamber and gave rolled-gold guarantees that he would not touch Medicare. I remember the days when he stood up in here with a smile on his face, smirking from ear to ear, and said, 'I am the best friend that Medicare ever had.' We know that the more he says something like that the less you can believe it, because the Prime Minister has made an art of saying one thing and doing
another—of presenting a case that he believes one thing when in actual fact he believes something else.

In the days when the Prime Minister was health minister, bulk-billing rates in Shortland electorate went under 60 per cent. When we came to government, when Labor was in power, bulk-billing rates rose to over 82 per cent. That says to me that Labor, the opposition, is committed to ensuring that those people who need health care can get health care when they need it, because, when the doctor bulk-bills, a person does not have to make a decision about whether they buy food to put on the table or go to the doctor when they are sick.

I know the Prime Minister has always believed in a US-style system. Millions of residents in the United States have absolutely no health insurance, and they cannot afford to go to the doctor when they are sick. Earlier I heard the minister talking about credit cards. Well, this government wants to make the Medicare card useless and force Australian patients to use their credit card when they get sick. That is really bad health policy. Good health policy encourages people to be involved in preventive health care, not just to react when they get so sick that they have got absolutely no option. If you have got to pay to go to the doctor, then people will put off going.

My electorate is a very old electorate and there are a number of people there who suffer from chronic diseases. They have been able to put in place good healthcare management plans, and they are a lot healthier because of the Labor government and the health policies that we had in place. Under this government and the cuts in this budget, the incentive will be for people not to go to the doctor when they are sick, but only to go when they are in a critical condition. This co-payment will have an enormous impact on the health of this nation, and those on the other side of this parliament just do not get it.

When Tony Abbott was in power, as health minister, he committed the then health committee to inquire into the funding of health. They brought down a report, The blame game. Now we are moving back to the blame game; back to a situation where the Commonwealth is passing the costs for providing health to the states. You have people like the Liberal premier of my state, Mike Baird, saying that these impacts start on 1 July and they cannot absorb them. They will have an immediate impact and that immediate impact is really going to hurt the people of Australia. This government stands condemned for its health policy. (Time expired)

Mrs Andrews (McPherson) (16:00): I rise to oppose this matter of public importance put forward by the opposition. When we talk about public importance there is nothing that is more important than ensuring the future viability of universal health care. And that is exactly what this government is doing. Medicare is a great system, which we all support. The health reforms in the budget are all about making sure that Australians continue to have access to affordable health care and ensuring that the system is viable in the long term.

Like other speakers in this debate, I want to debunk the whole premise of this MPI, that funding is being removed from the health budget. Budget Paper No. 1, page 6-25, clearly shows that Commonwealth health funding will grow from $64.5 billion in 2013-14 to $78.8 billion in 2017-18. This is an increase of $14.3 billion over the next four years. We have kept in place all vital safety nets to ensure that the most vulnerable are protected, especially the concession card holders, of whom there are currently about 8.9 million in this country.
But we are implementing reforms that will ensure that problems like overservicing and duplication of services are addressed. We are making some important decisions, including the introduction of a co-payment that will act as a price signal and help ensure the future viability of the scheme.

Labor has been claiming hysterically that this is the end of Medicare; nothing could be further from the truth. This is exactly the medicine that Medicare needs to stay strong. I ask members opposite to stop with the scaremongering and to be honest. Be honest, and recognise the fact that the co-payment is very low by world standards. Other countries with universal health care have much higher co-payments. For our neighbours in New Zealand it is $17; for those in Sweden it is between $20 and $30; and in Finland it is $20. Co-payments help to make universal health care viable.

Labor used to recognise this important fact. It was Labor themselves who introduced the co-payment on pharmaceuticals. The Hawke and Keating governments may not have been perfect but 'Old' Labor certainly looks like responsible managers compared to 'New' Labor, who learned all they know under the spin and mismanagement of the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd governments.

'New' Labor appear to live in some magical fairyland, where everything is free and you do not have to worry about how to pay for things. You can make promises that you will spend billions of dollars in 10 years' time without having to find the money, and then act outraged when someone asks you how you intend to pay for it. You can promise to cut waiting lists and never deliver. In fact, hospital waiting times for elective surgery grew from 34 days to 36 days under Labor. You can promise 64 GP Super Clinics but only deliver 33. You can promise not to touch private health insurance but then introduce $4 billion in cuts. You can do nothing about cost blow-outs. What are a few billion dollars more on the debt?

This is the world 'New' Labor inhabit. It must be a very cosy place, where you can be all-caring and promise the world. It is where you can self-righteously oppose the tough decisions that are necessary to fix the mess that you created. This is 'New' Labor: all care and no responsibility. They do not even pretend to offer an alternative. The Leader of the Opposition stood up in his budget reply speech and offered the Australian people absolutely nothing. It was quite unprecedented in the history of this place. He offered nothing but confected outrage, scaremongering and some sympathy—much like the Labor speakers in this debate.

That is not what responsible leaders do. That is not what good government is about. Good government is about ensuring that the things we value, like universal health care under Medicare, are managed properly and are viable long term. Good government is about planning for the future and having a practical vision, like building the world's biggest medical research fund that will help deliver better health care.

If those opposite had a modicum of decency, they would stop their scaremongering on health, they would step out of their 'New Labor Fairyland' and recognise that this government is taking the responsible decisions necessary to strengthen universal health care and make sure it is available for all Australians well into the future.

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (16:05): As Australians, we have enjoyed the envy of others around the world in relation to our healthcare system. Labor has had the courage to tackle the threats to our nation's health by listening to health professionals and formulating
sound health policy. It was Labor that delivered the universal health system, Medicare. But with the announced budget cuts our system is under threat.

The Abbott government's budget includes more than $80 billion dollars of cuts to health and education. Not only that but there will be a new tax if Prime Minister Abbott gets his way. After promising before the election, 'No new taxes,' here it is: a new tax—the GP tax! A tax that is claimed will raise $3.5 billion dollars. A tax that will be imposed if you dare to get sick and have to visit your GP. A tax that will be imposed if you want to get your child immunised and stop the spread of infectious disease. A tax that will cruelly hit Australian families and will damage Australia's health system.

What do the medical profession have to say about this GP tax? They are against it. The AMA, the Australian College of Emergency Medicine, the Public Health Association of Australia, the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, the Australian Healthcare & Hospitals Association, the Doctors' Reform Society of Australia, the Consumer Health Forum of Australia and many more health academics and economists have all advised against the GP tax, but their expert advice has fallen on the deaf ears opposite. Why? Because the Prime Minister of Australia is so out of touch with the population that he thinks it is fair to tax people for going to see a doctor. His policy, if implemented, will see the Australian healthcare system evolve into a two-tiered, American-style health system in which you will only be able to access quality health care if you can afford it.

On this side of the chamber, we advocate and believe that all Australians—it does not matter about your bank balance—should get the health care that they need, not just the health care that they can afford. I know that in my electorate, like in many around the country, people do not want to see Australia's healthcare system begin to mirror America's health system.

It is people in my community that will be affected by this tax. Current bulk-billing rates in Wyndham are at 92 per cent. The projected impact of the GP co-payment on the bottom line for our community is $11 million per annum. That is a lot of money out of our local economy. Why is there such a high bulk-billing rate? Because the doctors locally know the value of early access to health care as an efficient way to manage health costs. They know the pensioners and young families will stay away if the co-payment is the difference between keeping food on the table or visiting the doctor.

So what are the health issues in my electorate? They are cancer, diabetes and heart disease in adults, and asthma in children. The leading new cancers for Wyndham are bowel, prostate and breast cancer; 4.8 per cent of Wyndham's population has diabetes. The National Heart Foundation data suggests high rates of heart attack, unstable angina and heart failure in the Medicare Local catchment; and the leading cause of hospitalisations for children up to eight years is asthma. Mental health disorders are the most significant broad cause of years lost to disability in the western metropolitan sub-region, affecting 30.7 per cent of women and 29.3 per cent of men. Three-quarters of men in Wyndham have reported low levels of psychological distress. Seventy-five per cent is well above the Victorian average of 68.9 per cent. I want those men to see their GP and not wait.

So when these people in my community require the treatment of their GP, they will need to pay a tax under this government. When they are at their most vulnerable and require what is a most basic need of medical attention, they will have to pay a tax. And what if they cannot
afford it? It is quite clear they will simply not go to their doctor. We must ensure that Australians have access to good health care. We all pay through our Medicare levy at tax time. It is a system that has served us well for 30 years. I will not sit to the side and watch this happen and I know the Australian public will not either.

Mr VARVARIS (Barton) (16:09): This budget has revealed that we have a government which is committed to record levels of funding for health. What this budget clearly states is that we are committed to safeguarding the sustainability of universal health care for generations to come. This is an MPI which flies in the face of that truth.

The truth about health funding is that hospital funding is increasing by over $5 billion over the next four years—$5 billion in real money, in costed and affordable increases that we will actually be able to deliver for Australians. That is not a cut to health. Budget papers clearly demonstrate there is no cut. This misleading of the truth by the opposition is affecting the public adversely. Budget facts include funding to states for hospitals to increase over nine per cent each year over the next three years and a further six per cent in year four.

In my electorate of Barton, the St George Hospital services a large number of constituents and is one of the biggest hospitals in the area. The sad truth is that until a Liberal government came into power, it had not seen any funding. This was a terrible shame for the individuals who needed the services the most. The truth about health funding is that this government is not only funding health at record levels but is investing in a world-class Medical Research Future Fund, which will reach $20 billion of funding by 2019-20.

The Medical Research Future Fund will complement existing establishments like the St George and Sutherland Medical Research Foundation in Barton that will truly aid preventative health. These institutions are at the forefront of preventative health, something the opposition purports to safeguard but contradicts itself on by objecting to these initiatives. It is very short-sighted. The truth about health funding is that you cannot claim the moral high ground on health funding when you make uncosted promises for which you know you will not be in government when they unravel. That is real pain inflicted on unsuspecting hard-working Australians.

With regards to a modest GP co-payment, I would like to refer to the words of another honourable member by quoting the wise words of the shadow assistant Treasurer, the Hon. Andrew Leigh, in 2003:

As economists have shown, the ideal model involves a small co-payment—not enough to put a dent in your weekly budget, but enough to make you think twice before you call the doc. And the idea is hardly radical.

Well, this government agrees with Dr Leigh: the idea of a small co-payment is hardly radical. It hardly robs a nation of universal healthcare. It would take a lot more than $7 to fulfil the radical and dishonest premise on which this MPI is founded. It would take a lot more than a small co-payment, which is a feature of equitable healthcare services all around the world in great social-democratic countries such as Austria, Belgium, France, and our neighbour New Zealand, to undermine universal healthcare.

The government further agrees with and applauds the sensible notion first put forward by the Hawke government in 1991 when a small co-payment of $3.50 was proposed with the cooperation of the National Health Strategy director, now the member for Jagajaga. I look forward to seeing the customary respect shown by the opposition to their Labor forebears of
1991, who had the reason and the insight to look at a small co-payment as a way of safeguarding and sustaining universal health care for all Australians in this great and equitable nation. That was not an attack on Medicare then, and it is not an attack on Medicare now; it is a bid to sustain our healthcare system for generations of Australians to come.

The World Health Organisation itself, a body for which Labor would have the utmost respect, I imagine, has ruled that a co-payment is not incompatible with principles of universal healthcare or the right of humanity to essential medical treatments. Those opposite know very well that not all elements of health care are free to the user. The Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, a concessional scheme, requires a small fee, but Labor has never claimed that the PBS is an affront to universal health care. The truth is that receiving treatments free of charge is not the substance of universal healthcare; that substance is accessibility.

Sadly, Labor is not concerned with the sustainability of Medicare or with mapping the road to surplus and security for our finances, which include our government funded services. Labor is only concerned with finding the most fear-inspiring and sensational way to frame reasonable, sensible government proposals and flinging them towards a nervous public. I reject the premise of the MPI and reiterate that health care which is accessible to all Australians is a true measure of universal health care.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): The discussion is concluded.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga) (16:15): My Deputy Speaker, by leave, I wish to make a personal explanation.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): Does the honourable member claim to have been misrepresented?

Ms MACKLIN: Yes.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please proceed.

Ms MACKLIN: I have been misrepresented by the Minister for Health in the debate that has just concluded, and also by the member for Barton, who both wrongly said that I advised the Hawke government to introduce a co-payment. As correctly reported in The Australian today, I opposed the co-payment in 1991 and I oppose it today. The Minister for Health and the member for Barton should tell the truth.

BILLS

Australian National Preventive Health Agency (Abolition) Bill 2014

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr VARVARIS (Barton) (16:16): I am very proud to speak today on this bill. I am also very proud that all Australians have access to a world-class health system, with access to top-quality medical services and excellent health-promotion and preventative programs.

Australia has an ageing population; people today have longer life spans than their predecessors. We are simultaneously faced with chronic illnesses, diseases and lifestyle choices that produce adverse health effects in the long term. There is an increased need for
government to implement proactive health policies, and effective programs with sustained funding. Individuals are now expected to live longer with better access to health care than ever before.

The coalition believes in supporting individuals to embrace healthy and beneficial lifestyle choices and enabling them to take control of their lives with enhanced awareness. The government is committed to supporting, building and enhancing our health system and its allied professionals in developing sustainable innovations, incentives and networks to help all Australians make informed lifestyle choices.

In order to achieve these objectives, relevant information must be readily available to the targeted audience to influence desired health behaviours. The government's role is to ensure that the relevant department can disseminate such information so people are engaged to take control of their own behaviour and make their own decisions. Over the last few years, the three major health concerns facing Australians are tobacco, harmful use of alcohol, and obesity; and lifestyle choices have significant influences on all of these.

In light of this, the former Labor government in 2010 established the Australian National Preventive Health Agency, known as ANPHA, through the Australian National Preventive Health Agency Act 2010, as an outcome of Council of Australian Governments meetings. The focus of ANPHA was to establish and deliver preventative health programs and initiatives. This did not exclude the Commonwealth Department of Health from continuing its preventative health programs—which it had been doing for some time, with constant funding for these activities. In fact, the vision statement of the Department of Health is 'Better health and wellbeing for all Australians', with 'primary health care and preventative health' listed as some key areas of focus.

The Australian National Preventive Health Agency was founded on the basis that it would allow for states and territories to direct funding in return for specific preventative health advice. It would be a Commonwealth backed operation to deliver specific services to the states and territories at their request. However, it has been noted that funding simply based on projects delivered to states and territories will not be enough to sustain the agency. Since its inception, ANPHA has been solely funded by the Commonwealth, and, to date, no work has been provided to states or territory bodies. Further, its listed programs and initiatives have been jointly conceived or delivered alongside the Commonwealth Department of Health. No doubt it can be confusing navigating the distinct differences between the two agency functions for stakeholders. In addition, the Commonwealth Department of Health still provides programs, policies and advice on preventative health programs, in alignment with stakeholder concern for states and territories, which begs the question: why is ANPHA needed?

Although the previous Labor Minister for Health, the Hon. Nicola Roxon, had noted that Australia's preventative health efforts were 'fragmented and lacked cohesion and focus', the performance of ANPHA to date has not been an enhancement to the important work the Department of Health was already doing. Two separate government agencies with similar key objectives, with similar outputs, but requiring two lots of funding seems to make at least one of them redundant. The Commonwealth Department of Health has played a role in preventative health initiatives and programs through its continued policy work for a long time as part of advisory roles in addressing chronic illnesses and other major health reforms.
Departments performing similar if not sometimes identical roles in preventative health is arguably not an efficient or effective use of taxpayer funds. There is no clear demarcation of roles and responsibilities between the Australian National Preventive Health Agency and the Commonwealth Department of Health; hence the inevitable duplication of responsibilities and overlapping of preventative health functions. This bill would repeal the ANPHA Act and, in turn, abolish the agency to create better demarcation and division of roles. It would streamline administrative, policy and program functions and enable efficient use of Commonwealth— that is, taxpayer—funds.

The coalition is acutely aware of specific health problems facing the Australian population and we absolutely endorse relevant preventative health initiatives to empower behaviour changes that would ultimately reduce the abuse of alcohol, lower tobacco use and decrease rates of obesity. Having duplicate functions and departmental staff is not the key to prevention itself.

I note that the list of initiatives and preventative health programs already performed by the Department of Health as outlined on their website are also the intentions of the Australian National Preventive Health Agency. There is nothing that ANPHA has done that suggests it is uniquely different and independent to the Department of Health; hence, additional staffing, administrative arrangements and a special advisory committee at ANPHA are costly without the necessary quantitative benefits.

By keeping the Australian National Preventive Health Agency, taxpayer funds contribute to a bigger bureaucracy without addressing the real needs of medical health prevention. In my electorate of Barton, the St George and Sutherland Medical Research Foundation is an example of a program that is at the medical forefront, using science to provide key breakthroughs for better health outcomes.

The coalition is committed to proactively addressing increasing rates of health complications arising from lifestyle choices but believes in better ways of managing this. Repealing the Australian National Preventive Health Act will abolish the agency and streamline key functions and merge key roles with the Commonwealth Department of Health and save wasted Commonwealth funding on the fragmented, disjointed and overlapping of functions by the two organisations.

Empowering individuals through personal health responsibilities is pivotal. Many of the social determinants of health are beyond the healthcare system itself—at times, affected by socio-economic status. It is not apparent exactly how ANPHA will address this through its framework. I stress the importance and merit of taking ownership of health problems. Facilitating better use of taxpayer funds through effective preventative health programs, not duplication of processes and channels, will enable sustainable and better outcomes for all. Again, this is something the Commonwealth Department of Health has accomplished already.

Budget papers and forward estimates indicate that abolishing ANPHA with this bill will save $6.4 million over five years, which is important Commonwealth funding; money derived from our taxpayers that can be and should be used towards programs at the forefront of preventative health research, such as the one in my electorate and, recently, a national medical research fund. The medical research fund is an excellent initiative devised by this government that will complement the work of establishments such as the St George and Sutherland Medical Research Foundation to implement outstanding medical research that can prevent
and cure existing ailments and chronic diseases. This is a first in Australia and will save Australian lives at a time when individuals are living for longer but not always better due to crippling diseases.

Unfortunately, ANPHA is not doing the above or anything else the Department of Health has not already committed to or acted upon. When we have the debt and deficit left by Labor, it means a responsible government has to get the best value for taxpayers’ money that will generate forward savings, produce real outcomes and assist our future generations. But, regardless of deficit or surplus, it is what any responsible government should do. We are, however, in a more precarious position to make these decisions because our health system is already unsustainable in the long term based on current needs and exacerbated by Labor’s economic mismanagement. The path to surplus is not possible without identifying, assessing and streamlining duplication in our Commonwealth portfolios, and eliminating functions that simply are not value for money on the public purse.

The repeal bill will allow transitional arrangements for a smooth handover of existing projects for a wind down of ANPHA to reintege with the Department of Health. Since existing work on addressing tobacco, alcohol and obesity reforms have been underway for some time this will be a natural progression. The coalition is focused on existing commitments on grants, social marketing, analysis and expert advice on key health issues—all of which have been performed by the Commonwealth Department of Health. I must reiterate that, whilst transitional arrangements are in place, this government will continue to support Australia’s world-class health programs and preventative health measures.

There is no denying that tobacco smoking is one of the largest causes of preventable deaths and diseases in our country, and decreasing the rate of smoking is a must, immediately and into the future. There is no denying that obesity has a multitude of ongoing public health concerns and consequences for generations of Australians if nothing is done and that measures must be in place and appropriate programs implemented so that Australians are empowered to make lifestyle choices that can prevent the chances of increasing obesity and intergenerational health problems. Finally, whilst it is a steadfast Australian pastime to have a drink, abuse and misuse of alcohol have long been documented to have adverse effects on the individual, with other social economic effects. Again, targeted programs can alleviate these issues and allow individuals to make informed choices that benefit their health in the long term.

Addressing these key concerns is of national interest and one the coalition is devoted to. Simultaneously, it is also about responsible public spending and ensuring that previous funding is not wasted on maintaining a separate agency that performs the same functions. Allow me to assure the opposition that the new streamlined strategy does not devalue preventative health or diminish the role preventative health management has on the Australian public. The coalition does not assume—nor should anyone on the other side of the chamber—that preventative health measures are only derived through the agency. The key functions of the Department of Health will allow states and territories to facilitate measures by methods that are suitable for them to support its stakeholders in living better, sustainable lives.

The coalition has a strong track record in delivering effective preventative health strategies, and abolishing the Australian National Preventive Health Agency has nothing to do with cost cutting on preventative health programs. For example, it was the coalition who implemented
the highly successful National Bowel Cancer Screening Program in 2006, which has saved lives, and we will continue to fund this important program for biannual screenings of all Australians between the ages of 50 and 74.

Preventative health care is a key concern that should be shared by all. At the same time, government agencies established with the intention to prevent national health issues need to be scrutinised to ensure funding is producing the intended results. It is the coalition's responsibility—one which we are happy to actively work towards—to ensure that we have preventative health programs and initiatives that work in the best interest of all Australians and utilise the best value for taxpayers.

Having two separate agencies that produce almost identical functions and programs with the same key objectives is not sustainable, particularly when there is a lack of clear demarcation of roles and responsibilities, a lack of cohesion in a national framework and how obligations between states, territories and other agencies are achieved. We owe it the taxpayers of Australia to ensure their money is invested without folly. Abolishing the Australian National Preventive Health Agency Act is the first step in addressing this.

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (16:30): I rise like many of my colleagues to oppose the Australian National Preventive Health Agency (Abolition) Bill 201. Abolishing the Australian National Preventive Health Agency is a retrograde step but, sadly, is typical of this government's actions when it comes to health. It makes a huge case about the long-term costs of health for our ageing population—to justify cuts to spending—but fails to understand the old adage 'a stitch in time saves nine'.

Minister Dutton, the member for Dickson, has regaled us almost daily about a lack of frontline services in health spending like a tone deaf harpsichord player—discordant, aggressive and meaningless—and not just tone deaf but deaf to any voice but his own. Most alarmingly, the minister seems to be deaf to experts.

When Labor introduced the Australian National Preventive Health Agency, it did so with advice from the National Heart Foundation, the Public Health Association and the Royal Australasian College of Physicians. Labor established the Australian National Preventive Health Agency with an eye on health outcomes and an eye on the rising costs of health care in this country. It did so because preventative health care is a sensible way to keep our community healthy and to reduce costly hospital and specialist treatments. In stark contrast, the 'министр for a less-healthy Australia' introduces this legislation and shows a decided lack of understanding and vision for a healthy Australia.

The National Preventive Health Agency was established to take a national leadership role in preventative health, to coordinate, analyse and advise on key statistics and data in relation to chronic disease and prevention, to deliver and administer a preventative health research fund and to look closely at data to inform health strategies that will (a) improve health and (b) reduce the costs of health care into the future.

Data provided by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare tells us that the 672,000 hospital admissions in 2011-12 could have been avoided if we invested in primary care. This number includes selected chronic conditions: 38,500 with asthma, 51,000 with congestive heart failure, 68,000 with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and 87,000 with diabetes.
Data like that from the OECD in 2009 tells us that our hospitalisation rates are among the world's highest. They are higher than the OECD average, higher than those in the US and the UK and double the rate in Canada. Data provided by the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners in 2014 tells us that GPs provide comparatively cheap primary care: antenatal care with a GP costs $47 and at a hospital $223; a sexual health visit at a GP could cost $70 and at a hospital $253; vivisection for a GP costs $73 and at a hospital $438; a skin biopsy at the GP would cost $63 and at a hospital $289; and, wound management at a GP would cost $36 and at a hospital $162.

To date, this task has been undertaken with great professionalism and the links developed to health services across Australia have been invaluable. I know in my electorate, where diabetes, obesity and kidney, dental and eye health problems are prevalent, the relationships established through the Medicare Local, the GP superclinic, the headspace centre, ISIS Primary Care, private GPs and the Mercy Hospital have been terrific—all critically working together to improve health outcomes and the impact was flowing through. All this hard work could now be lost.

The Labor government knew the value of preventative health and supported the health system with services like those I just mentioned. We built GP superclinics, we established Medicare Locals, we funded headspace centres and, through national health agreements, we provided much-needed funds to hospitals for infrastructure.

In contrast, this government has no positive future plans for health services and this repeal bill is one small demonstration of that fact. In fact, I am having trouble working out what it is that the Abbott government ministers will be doing with their time, given the number of programs they have cut and the agencies they plan to abolish or amalgamate. Why would a government have such a short-sighted approach? A quick fix on the bottom line for the next year will result in an extra burden being placed on the health system in the future. It just makes no sense.

Why would a government and a health minister attack important efforts in preventive health? We see it again today in an article in *The Daily Telegraph* trivialising the work in the preventative health sphere. We have heard members opposite speak of this today. The ANPHA funded the promotion of the My Quit Buddy app at Summernats, an event that attracts over 100,000 men who are principally 25 to 40 years old—a target group which is difficult to get to take health seriously and a core target audience for the National Tobacco Campaign. The campaign clearly had an effect with 55,000 downloads of the app at Summernats in January, compared with 19,000 in the month prior—a threefold increase in one month.

One of the most fundamental mistakes of policymakers is to try and make change from the top without bringing the sector with you and to make change without the active engagement of third parties. I have seen this in education and it is logically the case for health policy. The way this government has approached health initiatives in this budget is to focus more on running it as a business, rather than looking at how you achieve reform to the health system and how efficiencies translate into better care and improved health outcomes.

I heard of a case recently in my electorate where a local hospital emergency ward doctor spent six hours on the phone trying to secure a patient transfer, six hours he could have spent treating other patients. There must be a way to ensure efficiencies. I do not know the details
of this patient's health issue but perhaps a well-resourced preventative health service may have avoided his emergency room visit in the first place.

The only thing this government appears to have tried to achieve in this budget is savings and the government appears to want to achieve those savings with little care or consideration for what the effect will be. The savings the government appears determined to achieve will hit at every level of the system: with this bill and the resulting cuts to preventive health programs, by imposing barriers to accessing primary care through additional out-of-pocket costs, by increasing the cost of medicines, by freezing rebates for specialist services and, of course, by cutting billions of dollars from the hospital system and public dental services.

These are not sensible savings; they are not savings that are reinvested back into strengthening Medicare or providing better access to services.

The intention to charge for GP visits, including for those that have to this point been bulk billed, is such an inequitable measure, as it actually provides a disincentive for GPs to bulk bill. And of course it is a solution based on a problem that does not exist. Australia does not have a higher level of GP consultations than the OECD average. With our ageing population and increasing rates of obesity, diabetes and heart disease, the Preventive Health Agency was rightly focused on measures that keep the population healthy and out of hospital. This is not what the changes proposed by this government will do. They will damage the system and not only stall the advances we have made but take health outcomes back decades.

In my electorate of Lalor we are well served by Mercy Health. However, this service was designed for an estimated population of 90,000. We will hit 200,000 people next month, and this government has no plans for the growth of that service—no plans to extend services in this high-growth area and only punitive measures taking away existing services. I will not and cannot support the erosion of Medicare, in any of the forms the government is trying, whether it be the GP tax, increasing the cost of medicines or cutting funding to public hospitals. I am and remain very concerned about the government's intentions in relation to private health insurance and primary care. I want to support more funding for medical research, but not off the back of taxing people when they are sick.

I watched with interest as Labor introduced many health reforms in the previous two parliaments. Labor in government embarked on a substantial period of health reform through the health and hospitals reform process. I saw the hard work, firstly of Nicola Roxon and then of Tanya Plibersek, to secure these agreements with the states. These were great achievements, and there were other milestones. We achieved things like the highest rate of bulk billing in Medicare's history; more in public hospitals, with the establishment of new efficient mechanisms to start to fund them into the future; heavy investment in new medical research facilities; new cancer centres in our regions; the establishment of e-health systems; upgrades and new integrated GP clinics; primary and community health centres; and Aboriginal medical services, to name a few.

Labor established Medicare Locals to provide a mechanism to directly support the integration between primary care and hospitals, to close gaps in service delivery and to address population health issues at the local level. I meet regularly with the team from the South Western Melbourne Medicare Local and am always impressed with the hard work and dedication of the team. And when I meet with other local health service providers, even those who were sceptical at first, they now sing the praises of this Labor initiative.
It is worth noting again that the cuts to health by this government are ill advised and will hurt the Australian population in the short and long term—and it is not just Labor saying this. This month's editorial in the Medical Journal of Australia also says so and makes some very salient points. I quote:

The direct effects of the proposed federal Budget on prevention include cuts to funding for the National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health, loss of much of the money previously administered through the now defunct—soon to be defunct—Australian National Preventive Health Agency, and reductions in social media campaigns, for example, on smoking cessation.

The editorial also made the point that the $7 GP tax will more likely be a $14 co-payment for those with chronic illness, because they generally include a test. It says clearly: The effects of these copayments on preventive behaviour are greatest among those who can least afford the additional costs.

It goes on:

The potential for prevention is greatest among poorer patients, who are often at a health disadvantage.

The journal made this salient point about preventative health and cuts to hospital services:

The greatest pity of all is that the proposed cuts to funding for health come at the time when the first evidence is at hand of potential benefits of the large-scale preventive programs implemented under the national partnership agreements. A slowing in the rate of increase in childhood obesity and reductions in smoking rates among Indigenous populations have been hard-won achievements.

Hard won achievements but not worth pursuing, according to this government.

I believe preventative health measures should not be a pawn in a budget game. They should be embedded in health policy and funded appropriately. A government serious about people being fit for work until they are 70 should be seriously investing more in preventing chronic disease, not less. Labor opposes this bill for the short-sightedness that it demonstrates in relation to the key priorities facing Australian's health today and for the lack of vision the government has in relation to understanding the challenges facing the health system into the future. Labor is also opposed to the government's callous decision to cut preventative health funding to the states and territories for work in increasing physical activity and improving nutrition and healthy eating and to support smoking cessation and the reduction of harmful alcohol consumption in communities around Australia.

We often hear those opposite complaining that we on this side are whingeing. We heard it again today. We are not whingeing, and neither are the people who will be hurt by this bill—now and into the future. We are rightly pointing out the disastrous impacts the government changes will have on this country. We are responding to real people's concerns and the concerns of the health experts in this country. We are responding to real people's requests that we oppose the government changes that will negatively impact on health outcomes and the long-term cost of health care in this country.

Dr Gillespie (Lyne) (16:44): I rise to speak about the Australian National Preventive Health Agency (Abolition) Bill 2014. This will repeal the 2010 bill that created the agency. As a result of this bill, the Australian National Preventive Health Agency will be abolished. I
wish to explain why. Essentially, we had a massive duplication of roles and responsibilities, a
duplication of the bureaucracy, with the creation of ANPHA.

You must remember: we do have a Department of Health with its own section dealing with
public health issues. We also have six state governments with their departments of health and,
similarly, their sections for public health. We all know that prevention is better than cure. We
all know and appreciate that fact, but we also know that duplicating bureaucracies just
increases costs, confusion and duplication and produces less outcome. It will not—I beg to
differ—increase health outcomes. I think it will inadvertently just lead to a waste of a lot of
money.

I see this recurring pattern of behaviour with the previous Labor government. They
identified an issue that was live in the community and they thought the answer was to create
another bureaucracy. It was quite a regular phenomenon. Increasing bureaucratic activity does
not necessarily lead to the outcome that will fix any problem.

The focus of the Department of Health on alcohol abuse, obesity and smoking will remain,
but we will not have the duplication of office leases, an increased number of staff, increases in
committees and the duplication of secretariats. ANPHA’s existing commitments and the
essential ongoing functions will be resumed by the existing Department of Health. This is not
going to affect the state departments of health, because it is 100 per cent federally funded. It
was created to help the departments of health in the states, but, as of the announcement of this
bill, there have been no approaches whatsoever by the state departments of health. Not one
thing had ever been referred to them.

We all know that too many Australians consume too much food, too many calories, and
they do not get enough exercise. We know that too many of us consume too much alcohol and
that we binge too often rather than drinking in moderation. Everyone in Australia, I am sure,
knows that smoking is bad for your health. Unless you have been on a desert island for the
last 40 or 50 years, everyone knows that smoking is bad for your health. So, without issuing
motherhood statements—

Mr Tudge: It might need a website!

Dr GILLESPIE: We might need a website! That is the answer! If you have a problem,
let’s create a website, after we have created a department and we have created a lot of
subcommittees! How often have we seen this phenomenon? Not only do we have the magic
pudding school of economics that the opposition go through before they get into parliament;
we have the ‘let’s create a committee’ school of thought.

I am quite sure that the state departments of health can get the message out. Not only do we
have the six departments of health and the federal Department of Health; we have an army of
general practitioners, specialists and dietitians. We have TV shows occupying the ‘fat space’
and trying to get people to lose weight and do more exercise. We have an explosion of
cooking shows, even some with children in them learning how to use unprocessed food in a
good fashion rather than highly processed, highly calorie-dense foods. So we have an
explosion of information. Even the Sunday papers now have a lifestyle section with lots of
healthy recipes and examples of what to do and what is bad.

We just need to stop and think. Do we relieve that inner bureaucratic urging that some
governments have, or do we just stop the bus, get off and see where we can use our health
dollar better? There are 23 outside agencies doing the functions that the Department of Health is charged with doing, and ANPHA are just one of the most recent. I know there are a lot of august experts who have been assembled by ANPHA, but I just went to their website, and there are not one, not two, not three, not four but five expert advisory committees to the agency. One is on research, one on alcohol, one on obesity and one on tobacco, and then we have the National Evaluation Advisory Committee, which has an unlisted number of members. On research, we have nine; on alcohol, we have seven; on obesity, we have eight; and on tobacco we have nine. All these committees report to the CEO, who then advises an advisory council. This is a merry-go-round of meetings and committees and advisory bodies. As I said, I have looked at the people on them. They are all experts in their fields, but, really, is this going to achieve what we want?

What we want is behaviour change, and that is so hard to achieve. You can have brochures. You can have TV programs. You can have TV advertising programs. But eventually it comes down to the individual to make wise choices and apply discipline. We can collect all the data that we want. We know an awful lot about the nutritional state of the country and that it has deteriorated despite a profusion, a wealth, of food being available, which was not so easily available to previous generations. But I think that everyone has got that take-home message, and it is up to individuals.

I looked at the achievements of ANPHA so far, and they are not that impressive when you compare them to the achievements of the coalition in its previous government. Between 1995 and 2007, the immunisation rate amongst children went from 52 per cent to 90 per cent. In smoking advertising, the graphic health warnings were introduced by our current Prime Minister when he was the Minister for Health and Ageing—30 per cent graphic health warnings on the front of a pack, and 90 per cent of the pack was covered as well. Smoking rates from 1998 to 2007 had the biggest drop on record, from almost 22 per cent to 16½ per cent. Six million doses of Gardasil, the human papillomavirus vaccine, were administered between 2006 and 2010. During the coalition's last term of government, eight new medical schools were introduced.

As opposed to this, the more notorious achievements of ANPHA included a 'fat tax' study that resulted in no change whatsoever—but they managed to spend $463,000 studying it. They created a virtual, or fake, Smokescreen Music Festival that annoyed most people that went to the website—and there were very few that did. The cost of that was $236,000. And we have had previous speakers mention the Summernats program to sponsor burnouts—$129,000.

The take-home message is that this is reducing red tape. There will be savings that can go into the increased spending we are putting into the state health budget—nine per cent every year for the next three years and then six per cent in the last of the four years. It will mean that there is efficient use of the taxpayers' dollars. All the functions that ANPHA was tasked with doing were duplications. There was confusion about responsibility and, as far as I can see, no net improvement, although there was a lot of bureaucratic activity. Individuals change their lifestyles; committees do not. We can have as many brochures as we like, but it is up to individual responsibility and individual choices to get healthy. I commend the action that this bill will lead to—using our health dollars more wisely.

Debate interrupted.
STATEMENTS ON INDULGENCE
Asylum Seekers

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (16:54): On indulgence, Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to correct a statement I made earlier in the House, based on new advice that I have received from my department. In my earlier statement, I noted, based on advice, that the incident I referred to had occurred at 12.40 am local time. I am now advised that it was 12.40 pm local time, which was yesterday, and obviously the decisions to take actions in relation to that incident occurred before that time. I thank the House.

BILLS

Australian National Preventive Health Agency (Abolition) Bill 2014
Second Reading

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

Mr WATTS (Gellibrand) (16:54): The bill before the House repeals the Australian National Preventive Health Agency Act 2011 and abolishes the Australian National Preventive Health Agency, a body established by my predecessor in the electorate of Gellibrand, Nicola Roxon, during her very successful period as the federal Minister for Health and Ageing. It is a testament to the short-term, self-destructive approach taken by those opposite since they came to government. Chronic disease is one of the biggest and fastest-growing cost burdens on the Australian healthcare system. There was ample evidence of the need to respond to this chronic illness crisis at the time of the establishment of the ANPHA. As my predecessor told this House in the second reading speech for the bill establishing this agency, Australia has serious preventative health issues in relation to alcohol:

… our overall per capita consumption of alcohol is high by world standards.

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

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

A similar story can be seen in Australia's obesity statistics. I quote again from the second reading speech at the introduction of this agency:

… we are now one of the most obese nations in the world.

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

The burden of chronic disease is particularly clear in my electorate. At present, men living in Melbourne's west are not healthy. There are areas in my electorate where over 50 per cent of men are overweight or obese and where one in three men smoke. The consequence is very high rates of diabetes, heart disease, lung disease, renal diseases and bowel and digestive cancers. As a result, in my electorate we have one of the lowest average life expectancies for men in urban Victoria.

During the lives of people afflicted with these illnesses, we also have a healthcare system struggling under the burden of providing ongoing and costly treatment of these chronic diseases. The cost-effective way to respond to these diseases is through investment in
prevention, not in treatment after the fact. You cannot cut your way to a more cost-effective healthcare system in a developed economy, certainly not through cutting preventative health measures, at least. This is why there is such a significant need for the Australian National Preventive Health Agency.

The ANPHA was recommended by both the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission and the national Preventative Health Taskforce. The ANPHA was established under the National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health, a COAG initiative announced in November 2008. Through this national partnership, the previous Labor government agreed with the states to commit to a wide range of initiatives targeting the lifestyle risk factors of chronic disease, including interventions in preschools, schools, workplaces and communities to support everyday behavioural changes focusing on diet, physical inactivity, smoking and excessive alcohol consumption, including binge drinking. The ANPHA’s role in this process was to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these interventions—to gather evidence about the effectiveness of various preventative health interventions by collecting data and collating statistics and then, on the basis of this evidence, to administer a preventative health research fund to inform future interventions.

The ANPHA provided leadership in centrally coordinating preventative health interventions across the health sector—across non-government providers and the health promotion and primary care sectors. Making this kind of coordinating role work requires long-term institutional leadership. It is not the kind of role that can be effectively performed within a Public Service juggling many other priorities, many of which are more pressing and immediate in nature but not more important in the longer term. A stand-alone body dedicated to maintaining a long-term focus on the importance of evidence based preventative health interventions is crucial to the long-term cost-effectiveness of our healthcare system. We need a body that will coordinate and maintain a focus on preventative health interventions beyond the budget cycle and beyond the political cycle.

The ANPHA provided the institutional infrastructure needed to operate an effective and efficient system of preventative health interventions in this country. That is why the establishment of the ANPHA was supported by public health groups like the National Heart Foundation, the Public Health Association, the Cancer Council, VicHealth, Quit Victoria and the Royal College of Physicians, to name just a few. Given this, you would think the value of such a body to Australia would be pretty near to incontrovertible. You would think this would be like debating the merits of motherhood. But no; instead this bill has been caught up in the ideological inanity that is the obsession of those opposite with the 'nanny state'.

We know the real reason why those opposite are opposed to the ANPHA. It is because preventative health institutions like the ANPHA are opposed by the big food, big tobacco and big alcohol industries. It is the same reason that these measures are so stridently opposed by the Institute of Public Affairs. In fact, the abolition of the ANPHA is No. 29 on the Institute of Public Affairs list, 75 radical ideas to transform Australia—a list which is rapidly becoming the governing blueprint for what was a craven and substance-less opposition.

Of course, the IPA's radical ideas list also targets other preventative health initiatives, introduced by my predecessor in the seat of Gellibrand including the repeal of tobacco plain-packaging legislation; the repeal of the so-called alcopops tax; the rejection of proposals for compulsory food and alcohol labelling—we recently saw how well that was managed by the
Assistant Minister for Health's office; and the end of all government-funded 'nanny state' advertising, whatever that means.

I suppose it is a quite radical approach to reject an evidence-based approach to policymaking. I suppose it is a radical approach to disregard expert advice on preventative health policy. But I cannot for the life of me understand it myself. I particularly cannot understand how anyone could think that these are five of the 75 most important issues for our nation. If the IPA revealed the sources of its corporate funding we might be able to draw inferences about the reasons for the prioritisation of these issues but, as it refuses to provide even the most basic transparency about its funding sources, we are left utterly in the dark.

Of course, it is not just the ANPHA that is being attacked by the Abbott government; preventative health initiatives across the board are currently under attack. Funding for the states and territories for vital preventative health programs has been slashed—programs designed to increase physical activity, improve nutrition and healthy eating and to help people quit smoking and limit their alcohol consumption.

The Medicare Local system, established by the previous government as a key partner with the ANPHA in enhancing the primary care sector's focus on prevention, will also be abolished. In my electorate our Medicare Local is already playing a key role in delivering preventative health interventions.

The north-west Melbourne and Macedon Ranges Medicare Local has joined with the Western Bulldogs AFL club to create the 'Sons of the West' Men's Health Program, a community health initiative which is designed to support men living and working in Melbourne's west. Partly based on a similar program run successfully by Liverpool Football Club in the United Kingdom—a place, like Melbourne west, facing major issues with chronic disease—this program aims to engage up to 2,000 men in Melbourne's west to promote healthy living and prevent disease. 'Sons of the West' is an innovative example of how to engage and encourage men to take control of their own health. The 12-week program emphasises activities that are social and fun, and alternates training activities with barbecues, health checks, comedy nights and do-it-yourself training. The men undertaking this program will train with the legends of the Western Bulldogs football team, including Steve Kretiuk, Brad Johnson, Scott West, Doug Hawkins and Tony Liberatore, and will learn how to prepare healthy meals from Jamie Oliver's Ministry of Food.

At the end of the program, if the men get in good enough shape to drop a shirt size, they will also be rewarded with a free Western Bulldogs guernsey. This program is just one example of the fantastic work our Medicare Locals do in providing tailored and coordinated support to the healthcare needs of our community. Yet, like the ANPHA, our Medicare Local and preventative health interventions of this kind are now facing the axe from the Abbott government.

Of course, all of these cuts to preventative health also come at the same time that the Abbott government has ripped billions of dollars out of frontline healthcare funding and is attacking the foundations of Medicare through its GP tax. This is a government that promised 'No new taxes,' and then slugged Australians with a $7 GP tax every time they visit the doctor. This is a government that promised 'No cuts to health' and then ripped billions of dollars in funding from our hospitals. This is a government that has shifted the costs or passed the buck for health care onto the states and onto the family budgets of low- and middle-
income Australians. As a result of these attacks, a typical Australian will pay an extra $270 a year in healthcare costs and even more if they have a chronic condition such as asthma, diabetes or some other form of ongoing disability.

I can reassure the House that Labor will always be the party of high-quality, affordable health care. We will fight these regressive policies in this chamber. We will also fight them in the other place. We will fight them in our communities in the lead-up to the next election and we will ensure that this government faces a reckoning for these policies. The Australian people did not vote for the Abbott government's attack on our healthcare system at the last election and they do not want it. Over the next two years, before the next election the Labor Party will work to ensure that the Abbott government pays the price for it.

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (17:04): Australia has indeed a fine history of public health. It is worth recounting briefly as we debate the Australian National Preventive Health Agency (Abolition) Bill 2014. As we consider the future of the Australian National Preventive Health Agency in this country, this is another example of yet another agency, well meaning, filled with talented and committed people but which is, ultimately, unaffordable.

In the years it existed, ANPHA failed to carve out its own space, supported by states and territories, its information not requested by jurisdictions. Ultimately, there is a certain impotence about collecting data which no-one uses. One of the great frustrations in the health system is that there are up to a dozen data-collecting agencies. There is no doubt that that cannot be good for managing an individual's health.

We know that over time, more so now, public health has shifted its emphasis from infectious diseases to diseases of lifestyle—obesity, diet, lack of physical activity, alcohol abuse and smoking. These lie at the core of what determines how long we live.

Everyday observers would probably say, 'Surely, just being healthy in and of itself is reason enough to lead a healthy existence.' But, alas, no. There is a need for both services to support health and ultimately public communication to remind people of the benefits, and significant investment. So we have a $130 billion health system to do just that. Australia is a developed economy and invests about 45 per cent of that in just two per cent of the population. The challenge for us is trying to extend disability-adjusted life expectancy as far as we can. We are now No. 2 in the world. But at some point we have to work out where along the life continuum is the best place to brief interventions from professionals that can change the course of our life. Ultimately, let us not forget what public health's limitations are. Ultimately, we all have to choose a door to pass through at the end of our lives. That time must come eventually. Public health may offer us a slight extension, it may improve the quality of that life but, ultimately, when that time comes those First World health expenses cannot be avoided—the need for that heart procedure, the long-term care if one suffers from dementia or those expensive treatments to slightly prolong life and reduce suffering if you contract terminal cancer.

For these three great doors, public health is trying to extend the quality of life and obviously reduce suffering as long as we can. It sounds quite heartless, as a health economist, to say that what we really want is to live a long, pain-free, productive life but in the course of that demise and decline that we do so as inexpensively as possible. That is the honest, laid-bare rationale behind health economics. So what do we have? We have a four-pillared health system of MBS, PBS, public hospitals and private health. It is the envy of the rest of the
world. We still spend less than 10 per cent of our GDP on health care but achieve outstanding results. That is in no small part due to the people who now work at ANPHA, committed professionals, as I have said before, who have worked in a number of roles before they came to ANPHA, took on that opportunity because the previous government presented that to them. It just seemed at one point, having already had AHPRA and APPRA and running out of acronyms, this government had to call it the Australian National Preventive Health Agency because they were running out of options. But in the three years they had they committed an enormous amount of goodwill and intellectual energy to the task.

In trying to address social determinants that lie around these health risk factors, we know that we can move to education in the early years, we can look at the quality of housing, we can look at the amount of physical activity people are engaged in, we can look at a whole range of personal behaviours, but ultimately publicly funded professionals cannot kick a door in and tell people how to lead their life. So it is a frustrating job for people working in public health to try and find interesting ways into a person's life, be it Summernats or a football game or sponsoring an app. You can see that some of these appear clumsy from the outside and sometimes wasteful, but in the end decision makers in this chamber have to say, 'Is the dollar best spent there or is it best spent making sure that that old bloke can get his knee done?' And we have to make sure that young children turning up to casualty are seen in a reasonable time. We have to make sure that people who need an operation for a hip can get it. We have to make sure that life-saving surgery can continue in well-funded hospitals. This is that terrible Hobson's choice.

In making that decision we need to have a clear way in which we proceed. We can never stop funding a hospital, we can never stop funding the subacute that transitions people out, we can never stop funding the aged care that delivers the transition for our seniors. But we have to then work back and say, for those who regularly are in and out of our hospitals with chronic disease, who can we best support to reduce those visits to hospital, those unnecessary trips back, the surgery that goes wrong, their mishaps within hospitals that could have been avoided? Nations overseas are becoming quite vicious about the way they will not fund wasteful health expenditure.

In Australia we are privileged to have the answer to the question I have just posed. It is our 35,000 general practitioners, some of the highest trained public officials or recipients of public funding in the country. Training for no less than 10 years, their job is within five to 10 minutes to deal with the health concerns of a concerned and often unhealthy Australian. They do it every day, all day, in every corner of this country. They are the linchpin, the cornerstone, of our health system. We must support them in every way. If they are working in increasingly complex team based arrangements to share information, to identify the people that need the health care most, to make sure that the people who are most ill get the most time, we need a quite elaborate and sophisticated health system to meet that challenge. If we are going to have public health interventions, they need to be cheek by jowl with general practitioners, because that is the front line.

With the greatest respect to many of us in this chamber who know no more about the health system then when visiting hours are at the local hospital, until you have worked and sat in a room with a general practitioner you cannot possibly begin to understand the complexity and the challenge of fixing this problem. With the greatest of respect, asking people to sit at

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shopping centres and encourage people to go in walking groups just sets up a weird kind of adverse selection where the worried well, the people we least need to worry about, start consuming public health resources. It is only the general practitioner who sets up that chronic disease management plan and knows that the extra time and money is best invested right there. If the general practitioner knows when that needs to be, with the greatest of respect, we do not need to be chasing young, fit people and telling them that the way they lead their life is no good. It is simply not an effective use of public resources. I have no problem with highly expansive and elaborate primary health care and health promotion as long as we get the tertiary end right, but at present the tertiary end is in many cases a shambles. General practitioners send their patients to a specialist. Letters come back in hard copy. There is no record available to the ambulance. They turn up at hospital and have all of their tests replicated. These most simple challenges to our health system are still in many cases beyond us. That must be our focus—we must get that part right.

Only one or two per cent of our population are in this category: high need, complex, chronic disease patients, usually with limited resources. Their entire calendar is devoted to marking off when their next health appointment is. When your health calendar and diary takes over your social calendar and diary, these are people that genuinely need extra investment because that will keep them out of hospital for longer and able to enjoy their life. It is not the focus to be putting out apps to people and counting your successes in downloads. No downloading of an app will stop a person smoking. It is the cigarettes that you do not smoke that fix your health. We are winning with cigarettes but there is still a long way to go with diet, exercise and alcohol. So let us start counting outcomes, not inputs. This is the great Labor myth: how much money we spent, how many apps got downloaded. But do you know what? We never checked how many people stopped smoking. We did not write that in because if we did we might prove the waste of money that it was. Sure, you downloaded the apps. That is exciting stuff. But nobody has stopped smoking, they kept smoking. Australia's drops in smoking rates were under the Howard government and the clear warnings on 30 per cent of the front and 80 per cent of the back brought in by the current Prime Minister. Australia's smoking results are the one positive trend that we see in public health. All of the others are potentially heading the other way.

If we are designing this for Australia we need to come right back to the general practitioner, the average GP working full-time, 25 patients a day, 150 a week, working till 6 pm at night with barely enough time to spend with people who truly need it and virtually no super-clinical coordination of the extra services that the GP needs to do it right. That post-stroke rehabilitation nurse who could be in seeing five of that GPs patients needs to be easily accessible to truly make a difference. They do not exist in every practice but they have to be easily accessible to the GP. That support to help them to do their job well is what matters. You do not need a five-storey building to do that. What you need is a care navigator sitting in the large practices identifying the 100 most high priority patients for that extra coordination and support. That can be SMS reminders, it can be calling them back in but not to see the general practitioner, that can be to do all sorts of health promotion activities, but let it be run through general practice.

We did not invest all this money in general practice only to set up a parallel entity like potentially, as we will debate later this year, the role of Medicare Locals. I have no problem
with the staff of Medicare Locals. Many of them are highly talented people, but they had no commissioning and no direction. They were simply unleashed by the previous government, who knew so little about a health system that they figured Medicare Locals would work it out for themselves. What we are left with are large entities, employing sometimes more than 100 people with large amounts of money in the bank and unable to spend it. I will do my best to stimulate again the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance, who is at the desk. He has a Medicare Local in his electorate and he must be genuinely concerned whether they are satisfactorily supporting his general practitioners. We must connect the information from specialists and from local public hospitals to support a GP's work. That is the essence of public health. That is what we call front-line services.

Right now, we have not had a satisfactory state buy-in for very good reasons. For the last 10 years, states have been slowly pulling back their services to in-patient related work and they are very happy to vacate the public health space to the Commonwealth. That presents us with a significant cost-shifting challenge. But, ultimately, the Commonwealth is arguably best placed to do primary health care. We are funding the general practice system already. We are putting enormous amounts of investment into vaccination. The last thing we need are three levels of government trying to do all of that at the same time. The last thing we need is a large Medicare Local over here and a large community health building over there, and none of these people know what the others are doing. That is the risk of Labor's monolithic bureaucracies getting involved in the health system and the millions of dollars that follow those dreams.

I anticipate that the people working in Medicare Locals, and potentially ANPHA, will find a role much closer to the front-line. It is where they need to emphasise their work. If we can get the tertiary, recurrent, complex patient area right, the big savings accrue mostly to state governments. If we can reduce the need for unnecessary admissions and procedures, that will be a saving for state governments. The problem is in state public hospitals where there are long waiting lists and it is effectively a ration system. Basically the faster they work, the quicker they go broke. So they have this enormous challenge where they need support from general practice to do everything possible to avoid unnecessary and poorly timed admissions. That can only be done if we identify our high-risk patients in every general practice, share that information with the local hospital, cooperate within that region and then play the efficiency game, and do as well as we can with those patients to reduce total health expenditure. If you get them right and we get tertiary health prevention right for the sickest Australians, then let's return here and let's have a debate about a role for ANPHA, for primary health initiatives and prevention. But right now that money is not well spent in that area, so long as we have poorly coordinated and fragmented tertiary services.

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (17:17): I am pleased to make a contribution in this debate because, quite simply, this is lousy public policy. This is a backward step when it comes to preventative health and providing better health outcomes for the Australian people. The Australian National Preventive Health Agency (Abolition) Bill 2014 repeals the Australian National Preventive Health Agency Act and seeks to abolish the Australian National Preventive Health Agency, unwinding decades of progressive work on improving public health outcomes by preventative health campaigns throughout Australia.
Labor established the Australian National Preventive Health Agency in 2011 to take national leadership on preventative health for Australia to coordinate, analyse and advise on key statistics and data in relation to chronic disease and prevention, and to deliver and administer a preventative health research fund. The Australian Labor Party recognise the value and need for long-term, sustained investment in preventative health and for the benefits to health outcomes and savings to the health system that this preventative investment can achieve. It is often said that prevention is the best cure and that is the view of health experts. That is the view of health professionals. Here we have a bill that seeks to undermine all of the good work that has been done at a government level to encourage preventative health throughout Australia, to encourage people to live healthier lifestyles, to encourage people to visit their doctor when they have minor ailments so that they do not become major ailments.

Since its establishment, the ANPHA has sought to embed preventative health as central to the delivery of health care. In particular, the ANPHA has been working with Medicare Locals to enhance the primary-care sector's focus on prevention. Now that approach is being undermined. We have seen that this government is seeking to undermine the Medicare Local network, those integrated health-care packages that have been developed by health professionals, by GPs in concert with specialists and allied health professionals in local areas to reduce some of the complexity involved in dealing with numerous layers of health bureaucracy throughout the country.

In the wake of the recent Abbott government budget, one thing has become resoundingly clear—that is, this government is bad for Australia's health. Despite promising otherwise before the election, once the government was elected they took an axe to the nation's health-care sector, cutting billions of dollars from hospitals and from the health budget. They are seeking to introduce a co-payment for Medicare and GP visits. The first level of health care in this country is usually a visit to the GP. By introducing a co-payment, the government is seeking to deter people, particularly those on low incomes and fixed incomes such as pensioners and the vulnerable within our society from making important visits to the doctor.

In the weeks after the budget, despite the fact that the program has not actually been introduced, it has not gone through the parliament and become law, despite the fact that it is not programmed to commence as law until 1 July next year, we have seen a dramatic reduction in consultations with GPs. We saw that anecdotal evidence from the Australian Medical Association, saying that in various surgeries and GP clinics throughout the country people had rung their doctor and said that they could not afford the co-payment and they were cancelling their consultation. That is even before the system was introduced. Imagine what it will be like when the $7 becomes a reality. And it is not just on GP consultations, of course. It is on imaging and pathology services. It is on other related health care, such as scripts and consultations with pharmacists. It is bad policy because it deters people from seeking preventive health actions. It deters people from visiting their local GP. That first line of consultation with health professionals is being undermined by a co-payment.

The other point to make in respect of a co-payment is that it will not work. The evidence from throughout the world demonstrates that. Australia's public health costs—as the previous speaker, who is a former doctor, admitted—are relatively modest compared to the rest of the world. Our public health costs, as a percentage of GDP, are about 11.5 per cent; the OECD average is about 11.3 per cent. So we are right on the average. If you look at a system such as
the United States', which relies much more on private consultations and private health insurance—it is a privatised system of health care—the public health costs as a percentage of GDP are up around 15 per cent. So not only is this bad public policy, in terms of not encouraging people to take preventive health actions; it will result, I believe, in an increase in our public health costs. That is not the manner in which we should be administering the public health system in Australia.

This government has taken short-sightedness to new lengths by scrapping the National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health and the National Tobacco Campaign. It has shown a complete lack of vision in relation to understanding the challenges facing the health system into the future. Labor is also opposed to this government's decision to cut vital preventive health funding to the states and territories for work on increasing physical activity, improving nutrition and healthy eating, and reducing harmful alcohol consumption in communities around Australia.

Recently, the Global Burden of Disease Study was published in The Lancet. It is a study that is undertaken periodically by the University of Washington. The results are alarming: they demonstrate that Australia is facing an obesity epidemic. One in three Australians is currently obese. That is 5.2 million Australians with a body mass index of 30 or higher, defined as obese by this international study. That represents an 80 per cent increase in the past 33 years. Australia is now one of the fattest nations in the world. We ranked 25th in the world, just behind the United States but ahead of France and Germany.

We all know that obesity is linked to higher risks of heart disease and stroke, blood pressure and bowel problems, oesophageal and pancreatic cancer, and osteoarthritis. Despite these sobering statistics about trends in the health of Australians, and despite these studies, which are becoming increasingly prevalent, about the increasing costs of treating people for preventable diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and obesity—despite these facts, the government is showing complete indifference to preventive health measures designed specifically to help Australians make healthy lifestyle choices. I ask the government: how is cutting funding for preventive health programs good for the fitness and health of our nation and its people? How is cutting funding for national partnerships on preventive health good for the health of our nation? How is cutting funding for, of all things, the National Tobacco Campaign—which is aimed at providing information encouraging Australians to quit smoking—good for the public health of our nation? And how is abolishing the National Preventive Health Agency through this bill good for the health of Australians? Quite clearly it is not. It is a backward, regressive step, and it clearly represents the approach of this government when it comes to public health.

This is also a massive breach of trust and faith with the Australian public. It was the Prime Minister who said, a couple of days before the election, that there would be no cuts to health, no cuts to education, and the like. But, clearly, what we see manifest in this bill, in the cuts to hospital funding and in the $7 GP co-payment is a breach of faith—a clear broken promise; a lie to the Australian public about this approach to national health.

Australia's first national nutritional survey in 20 years, conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics recently, revealed that, confronted with record obesity levels, Australians are not only not adopting more healthy eating habits, but we are eating more sugar, more fat, more salt and more processed foods. My wife is a nurse. She works in a large public hospital in
Sydney. She sees the results of the worsening of Australia's public health. She deals every day with preventable disease. And, since the last survey, the amount of fruit and vegetables in our diet has dropped by an alarming 30 per cent. Less than seven per cent of the Australian population now follows the recommendations on the appropriate number of serves of vegetables to be eaten each day. Among those surveyed, a quarter had consumed alcohol in the past day, and more than a third of the kilojoules they ate came from foods labelled 'discretionary', which include cakes, chips, chocolate, biscuits and the like. More and more, we are unhealthy. More and more, we are eating the wrong foods. And this is pushing up public health costs. People like my wife, working as a nurse in a public hospital, are dealing with this every day. And we all pay for it. We all pay for it through our public health costs.

But instead of encouraging greater dissemination of information to assist Australians to make the right choices about what they put on their plate—instead of encouraging Australians and providing more information in the public health realm about healthy eating—what is this government's approach?

This government's approach has been to pull down a website that was aimed at encouraging greater public health, about encouraging Australians to eat healthy foods, about providing Australians with more information about better nutrition, about changing behaviour regarding eating healthier food in Australia and, ultimately over time, about changing the culture of junk food in Australia to ensure that we are healthier and, over time, reducing preventative disease and the burden on the Australian healthcare system.

The great disappointment about this decision by the assistant health minister was that two years' worth of work had gone into this program—two years' worth of hard work and research about providing information through a website to the Australian public. It was torn down on the advice of a person who worked for the assistant health minister, and it was discovered later on that in a previous career they were an alcohol and soft drink lobbyist. You cannot get a more disgraceful decision by a minister of the Crown that affects, and will have a likely effect, on health outcomes in this country. And cuts to prevention come on top of other budget measures which will put a financial barrier in place, deterring people from accessing primary health care, which is an essential part of preventative healthcare delivery.

The Australian National Preventive Health Agency was not something that was dreamed up overnight. It was recommended by experts who comprised the Preventative Health Taskforce. This was not knee-jerk public policy. It was sound public policy that followed a lot of actions that have been taken throughout the world. It is proven that you can be positive and progressive on public health outcomes and get results.

I evidence the reforms that were introduced by New York's, Mayor Bloomberg—particularly in banning trans fats in fast food throughout New York—and the positive agenda that was introduced by that particular governing authority to improve public health outcomes in New York. It proves that if you make an investment in preventative health you will get healthier outcomes and you will see Australians reduce the amount of preventative disease. Ultimately, we will see Australians happier, healthier and less of a burden on our public health system.

This bill comes before the parliament at a time when our health system is under unprecedented attack from this government. It is an attack that is based on broken promises; an attack that seeks to attack Medicare and dismantle universal healthcare in Australia; to rip
money away from hospitals; to shift the cost of health care from the government onto low-
and middle-income Australians; and to attack families. This bill is bad public policy—it is
lousy public policy and it must be opposed.

Dr SOUTHCOTT (Boothby) (17:32): In speaking to the Australian National Preventive
Health Agency (Abolition) Bill 2014 I just want to emphasise that the preventive health effort
will continue if this bill is passed. The efforts in reducing smoking, reducing levels of harmful
drinking and addressing our growing problem with overweight and obesity will be where they
have always been at the Commonwealth level, and that is in the Department of Health.

Right now some of the claims that have been made that this winds back decades of effort in
preventative health are absolute rubbish! What absolute rubbish, the idea that abolishing the
Australian National Preventive Health Agency will wind back decades of progress in this
area. This is a new agency that came out of one of the peaks of Kevin Rudd-style activism.

The previous speaker election the fact that people are not eating the recommended amounts
of fruit and vegetables. That is correct. But how many people know that there was a national
partnership agreement with all of the states and territories where we were going to measure
the amount of fruit and vegetables that each state and territory was eating, and the states were
going to be given reward payments for this. What we now know is that those national
agreements, and the National Agreement on Preventive Health, have been a spectacular
failure.

One of the issues with the Australian National Preventive Health Agency was that it was
meant to be a collaborative effort with the state and territory governments. The state and
territory governments do have jurisdiction over the preventive health agency, and yet no state
or territory has ever put in one dollar into the preventive health agency.

So we see duplication and confusion about the roles between the agency and the
Department of Health. If you look at the area of tobacco control, the Australian record is one
that we should be very proud of. Over the last 33 years we have seen the rates of tobacco
smoking amongst men and women decline in both genders by more than 40 per cent. And
there is only a handful of countries that have seen anything like that progress. Really,
Australia now has one of the lowest smoking rates of anywhere in the world and we are a
country that has been very successful in changing the culture and reducing the levels of
smoking. And that will continue.

There have been a lot of good reports provided to government, and the Preventative Health
Taskforce did actually outline a lot of things that any government can pick up on. When we
look at smoking, there are many groups where smoking rates are still too high: the Indigenous
community, people with mental health issues and lower socioeconomic groups. Any future
campaigns really need to look at those groups.

When we look at alcohol, Australia is in the middle ranks of OECD countries in alcohol
consumption. We do have problems with levels of harmful drinking. We have got problems
with binge drinking. One of the things that came out of the Preventative Health Taskforce
was: while there are a lot of measures that are controversial, there is one that actually is not
controversial and which provides enormous benefit—that is, a targeted intervention from a
general practitioner really does pay dividends. That is something that I think this government
needs to focus on.
It is true, when we look at our levels of overweight and obese Australians, that we are one of the top countries now. It is not something to be proud of. It is something which has happened within the space of a generation. All countries are seeing this. France has had some success in actually halting it and there is some evidence from the United States that they have had some success in stabilising their very high levels of obesity.

One of the campaigns in this area that I think was a particularly good one and which has continued is the Measure Up campaign. It started in 2006 and it recognised that in this area you need to have TV advertising, you need to have advertising on bus shelters and you need to work with health professionals especially GPs so they have got the material. It does require a multipronged strategy to really start to get our nation healthy, otherwise there will be a huge burden in the future.

The preventative health effort will continue. It will be run by the Department of Health at the Commonwealth level. The buck will stop with the Minister for Health and the Assistant Minister for Health. One of the things that I think is of concern around the country is the state and territory governments are getting out of the primary health care space, the preventative health space and the community health space at a rate of knots. They have taken the opportunity from Kevin Rudd's dramatic reforms to vacate that space. It is something that is going to be left with the Commonwealth government in the future. We need to continue to have strong tobacco control policies. We need to do much better in the areas of alcohol and obesity because those things will continue.

Mr KELVIN THOMSON (Wills) (17:40): In my speech on the 2014 budget, I flagged that I intended to become more expert and involved in the area of health policy. One area of health policy I particularly intend to become more expert in is preventative health—policy promoting good health. I am therefore pleased to have this opportunity to talk about preventative health and the promotion of good health, though I regret the government initiative that has led to this debate.

As part of my journey into the area of good health policy, I met yesterday with the CEO of the Public Health Association of Australia, Michael Moore. I am indebted to him and to the Public Health Association for some of the following material.

Why do we need a National Preventive Health Agency and why is it wrong to be abolishing it as this bill proposes? For me, the first reason is obesity. Obesity is Australia's most important public health issue. Obesity increases morbidity and mortality due to insulin resistance and type II diabetes, high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, stroke, sleep apnoea, gallbladder disease and osteoarthritis. It is linked to cancer of the stomach, prostate, breast, uterus, cervix, ovary, oesophagus, colon, rectum, liver, gallbladder, pancreas and kidney.

The National Preventive Health Task Force reported that in just 15 years, from 1990 to 2005, the number of overweight and obese Australian adults increased by 2.8 million and predicted that if these trends continue almost two-thirds of the population will be overweight or obese in the next decade. Last Thursday, the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation published a report in the Lancet saying that Australians are fattening up faster than anyone else. The proportion of obese adults went up from 16 per cent in 1990 to 29 per cent last year. Australia and New Zealand experienced the largest absolute increase in adult obesity in any of
the 188 countries studied. An estimated 11 million Australians are now overweight, almost half of them severely.

One of the saddest aspects of obesity is the impact on children. There is increasing evidence that obese parents are producing obese children. The National Preventative Health Taskforce identified that a quarter of our children are now overweight or obese. This is up from just five per cent of our children in the 1960s. Almost a third of children do not meet national guidelines for physical activity and only about a fifth meet dietary guidelines for vegetable intake.

There was a report in the Weekend Australian Saturday magazine last Saturday entitled *Why childhood obesity is out of control*, which gave a troubling insight to the battles faced by parents with their children, reporting that kids as young as two are going to obesity clinics. One health expert said that obesity is killing our children, giving an example of a severely obese 10-year-old, who died of sleep apnoea after his heart stopped. Children now consume 400 kilojoules a day more than they did 40 years ago, encouraged by processed food that is high in sugar, fat and salt.

What does the Public Health Association of Australia say we can do about it? Quite a lot. In the first place they propose that we develop a national nutrition policy which links in with other policies such as the National Food Plan and policies in the area of physical activity, women's health, Indigenous health and the national curriculum. It further suggests a levy or tax on nutritionally undesirable food such as sugary drinks with a view to using the funds for preventative programs and to subsidise nutritionally desirable foods for disadvantaged groups. They also suggest legislated controls and active monitoring to protect children from the advertising and promotion of nutritionally undesirable foods—those that have low nutrient density or that are high in fat, salt, sugar or energy. They advocate improved labelling of foods so that nutrition and health information is clear and consistent, with effective controls to stop false health claims for nutritionally undesirable food. They also propose research and implementation of effective health and physical education in schools in the new Australian curriculum.

There is certainly a need for real action to tackle obesity and the damage it is doing to our nation's health, and in particular to our children. And it makes me wonder why this government wants to abolish the Australian National Preventive Health Agency. Labor established this agency in 2011 to take a national leadership role in preventive health for Australia; to coordinate, analyse and advise on key statistics and data in relation to chronic disease and prevention; and to deliver and administer a preventive health research fund.

The Australian National Preventive Health Agency has been providing leadership across the non-government, health promotion and primary care sectors, in order to deliver coordinated and effective preventive health activities and policies. It has been playing a central role in collaborating across the health sector to embed preventive health as central to the delivery of health care, in particular the agency has been working with Medicare Locals to enhance the primary care sector's focus on prevention. We recognise the value and need for long-term, sustained investment in preventive health, and for the benefits to health outcomes, and savings to the health system, that this investment can achieve. This is why we established a dedicated agency, to drive the agenda over a sustained long-term period and provide the infrastructure for this to continue beyond the budget cycle.
Prevention became a central focus for the health system, and the agency was directing action specifically around obesity, tobacco and alcohol use. Many of the most important organisations working directly in public health supported the agency, including: the National Heart Foundation, the Public Health Association and the Royal Australian College of Physicians.

We will oppose this bill for the short-sightedness that it demonstrates in relation to the key priorities facing Australian's health today, and for the lack of vision the government has in relation to understanding the challenges facing the health system into the future.

Labor is also opposed to the government's callous decision to cut vital preventive health funding to the states and territories for work in increasing physical activity, improving nutrition and healthy eating, and support for smoking cessation and reduction of harmful alcohol consumption in communities around Australia.

This bill comes before the parliament at a time when our health system is under an unprecedented attack from the government; an attack that is based on broken promises, an attack that seeks to attack Medicare and dismantle universal health care in Australia, an attack that seeks to rip money away from hospitals, and an attack that seeks to shift the cost of health care from the government onto the strained budgets of low- and middle-income Australians. This attack that will see a typical family pay more than $270 a year in healthcare costs—and it will be even more for senior Australians and families dealing with disabilities and chronic conditions like asthma and diabetes.

These decisions, in combination, are likely to impose a significant setback to the preventive health agenda and the efforts that states and territories were contributing to. Combined with the government's other health budget decisions—the GP tax, more expensive medicines and substantial cuts to hospital funding—the decision to rip money away from prevention will add to the potential for people to become more sick because of financial barriers to seeking primary care and the cessation of community initiatives supporting them to stay healthy and out of hospital.

I believe preventative medicine should always be the cornerstone of a nation's health policy. Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing, and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity. One of the things I have noticed when reading about these things is that part of this is a healthy exposure to the natural world, to the environment. In a paper by Graham Rook from the Centre for Clinical Microbiology, Department of Infection, and the National Institute for Health Research and University College London Hospitals Biomedical Research Centre, which states:

Numerous studies demonstrate that living close to the natural rural or coastal environment, often denoted 'green space' or 'blue space,' respectively, is beneficial for human health. It reduces overall mortality, cardiovascular disease, and depressive symptoms and increases subjective feelings of well-being. The beneficial effects are particularly prominent in individuals of low socioeconomic status.

There is evidence that access to green spaces can provide health benefits, through improved mental wellbeing and levels of physical activity, and reduced exposure to pollution and high urban temperatures. For example, the National Health Service in the United Kingdom is increasing green space on its estates through the NHS Forest Project, which will plant 1.3 million trees by 2015.
The UK Public Health White Paper 2010 notes that green spaces can improve mental health and the quality of community life. Researchers have observed a link between increasing urbanisation and psychosis or depression; living closer to urban green spaces is also associated with lower mental distress. One study of the same 10,000 people over 18 years concluded that living in an area with high levels of green space led to a decrease in mental distress, compared with living in areas with little green space, once factors such as age, gender and income have been statistically accounted for.

Experimental evidence suggests that spending time in green space, or simply having views of nature, can improve reported mood, self-esteem and concentration, and treat stress and mental health disorders. The UN Millennium Ecosystem Assessment 2005 and the second phase of the UK National Ecosystem Assessment identify the multiple benefits of nature for mental wellbeing. The magnitude of these benefits is partly dependent on the quality of a green space, so careful design and maintenance is important.

In the 19th century, public open space was created in the United Kingdom and the United States precisely with a view to improving the health and quality of life of the working classes living in squalid and crowded living conditions. Perceived as the 'lungs' of polluted cities, public open space provided alternative activities for the workers, who were seen to be slipping into what was described as moral decay, as well as a place for physical recreation. Today, well-designed public open space that encourages physical activity is a community asset that contributes to the health of local residents. A study published in the American Journal of Preventative Medicine confirmed that public open space is an important community resource. Good access to attractive and large public open space is associated with higher levels of walking. Public open space continues to play an important role in contemporary society.

It is clear that this government intends to slash spending on health as part of one of the most radical programs of welfare-state retrenchment in recent times. The then Shadow Treasurer said in London in April 2012, 'The age of entitlement is over'. Just so no-one misunderstood, he went on to say, 'Government spending on a range of social programs including education, health, housing, subsidised transport, social safety nets and retirement benefits has reached extraordinary levels as a percentage of GDP.' There is no evidence for this claim, and I note that Professor Peter Whiteford, from the Crawford School of Economics at the Australian National University, recently stated that OECD data shows that Australia is 'relatively low in terms of social security and around average in terms of spending on health'. Of course we know that this government rejects the advice of experts that do not agree with the opinions of the Prime Minister, but it is important that we have an ongoing national investment in health, because the consequence of not doing this for our community and for our children will be very severe.

Labor will always be the party of health care. By contrast, Australians know that the coalition simply cannot be trusted when it comes to providing a strong, sustainable and universal healthcare system. Unlike those opposite, Labor understands the importance of investing in preventive and primary health care. We understand that preventive health is not a dispensable plaything to be thrown around in budgets; it is a crucial component of public health policy pivotal in ensuring a strong and sustainable healthcare system. It is regrettable
that the government has introduced this bill. I hope that it does not pass the parliament. I hope that we as a country continue to have a strong focus on preventive health.

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson—The Nationals Deputy Whip) (17:55): I strongly support the Australian National Preventive Health Agency (Abolition) Bill 2014, because it is a removal of duplication and expense that is an unnecessary drain on taxpayer funds and I question why we need to have an agency that tell us exactly what to do. Before the election the Liberal and National parties said that we were going to remove unnecessary red tape and regulation, and that is what we are doing. We are doing it here today because the Australian National Preventive Health Agency is a redundant agency. It is funded by the Commonwealth, funded by taxpayers, in addition to the Commonwealth Department of Health, despite the fact that most of its functions actually overlap the functions that are in the Department of Health.

In addition, a range of other Commonwealth research bodies have been funded to work in the same space: the Australian Research Council, the National Health and Medical Research Council, the Productivity Commission and the Australian Law Reform Commission. None of these bodies, though, were ever specifically tasked by government to actually lobby government, but this agency that we are abolishing here today was. One of the legislatively defined functions of the agency is to lobby and advocate for public policy change. The agency is a taxpayer funded lobby group—government giving money to an agency to then lobby the government for particular changes. How crazy is that?

I read a lot from the Institute of Public Affairs. They put out a lot of good stuff. One of the reports they had, which was called The biggest vested interest of all: How government lobbies to restrict individual rights and freedom, said:

One-third of the submissions to the Preventative Health Taskforce—which established the Australian National Preventive Health Agency—were from bodies which received large amounts of taxpayer funding.

So, there you go: taxpayer dollars going to agencies that are going to another taxpayer funded agency to recommend that an agency be created that recommends back to government programs that have to be funded out of taxpayer dollars. It is absolutely crazy.

The method of this self-lobbying works something like this: (1) Taxpayers fund an agency to come up with a health-first paternalistic policy; (2) taxpayers fund research to justify the policy; (3) taxpayers pay for the agency to lobby the government to impose the policy; (4) the policy is then introduced; (5) the policy is then measured and evaluated; (6) if the policy was ineffective, a stronger policy is then proposed, because the earlier one failed; and (7) if the policy was effective, a stronger policy is proposed because the earlier one succeeded. And round and round we go on that taxpayer funded merry-go-round. We end up with a self-reinforcing taxpayer vortex of control.

While, with this bill, we are getting rid of some duplication, this bill includes transitional provisions for functions from the agency to transfer the Department of Health. I am glad that this agency is going, because it is, as far as I can see, a lead apparatus in the creeping nanny state. We have seen the nanny state creeping into our lives, particularly under the last government—riding on the back of these supposed preventative health measures. We have just heard from the member for Wills and after I had listened to about five minutes of his
speech, I thought, 'God, I should be dead'—after all that doom and gloom. I am one of those people, as you can see, Mr Deputy Speaker, who suffers from something called obesity.

Mr McCormack: Surely not! Surely you jest.

Mr Christensen: No, it is true, Member for Riverina. I am going to echo some of the words that the member for Herbert said—and I am glad he is here. He went public with some of this. When Labor sees a fat person, they think, 'Oh, that person has a problem; let's set up a bureaucracy.' When they see someone smoking, they say, 'Oh, he's got a problem; let's set up a bureaucracy.' When they see someone having more than the standard number of drinks at night, they say, 'Let's set up a bureaucracy to deal with the person.'

But it actually has to come back to individuals making choices, sure with the help of some community support. I have to tell you something. When the Labor Party were in government, they eroded the community support there was for individuals. They established these things called Medicare Locals, which were, again, a creation of government, a quasi-government department, and they stripped all of the health funding that was going to community groups running local, on the ground, preventative health measures in which people could actively get involved and they transferred them over to the Medicare Locals. Because of what Labor did, the Burdekin Centre for Rural Health is about to lose over half a million dollars in annual funding because all of their functions have slowly been transferred over to the Medicare Local and they will not be rolling out to the degree that the Burdekin Centre for Rural Health is engaged. That is a prime example of the rhetoric we hear in this chamber not matching the reality when it comes to what Labor actually does.

Ultimately, the individual is responsible for their own actions. That is why, when the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd government legislated plain packaging for cigarettes, I spoke against that bill. I did not believe then and I do not believe now that inch by inch encroachment into our personal lives is what our society should be about. We, as Australians, have the right to make our own choices and every time the government makes that little bit more regulation to force a particular world view onto the choices we make, our personal freedoms are eroded. At the time I said that, if the regulators and the Labor Party felt so strongly about telling people what they can and cannot do, they should just ban it. If we honestly believe that smoking is that evil we should have the guts to ban it. If we do not feel that strongly about it, the nanny state gets out of people's lives, let them make their own choices and let them live the way they want to live. We have seen regulation after regulation applied to the tobacco industry and still people smoke. I talk to local shops. They report that the number of people buying cigarettes is increasing.

The previous Labor government attempted to drive smoking underground, so much so that sellers are not even allowed to display their little olive green products. It does not appear to have made any difference because in the three years since the legislation was introduced, the nanny state advocates have produced no evidence to suggest it has changed smoking rates in Australia. That seems a bit odd, given there has very likely been some surveys done in the course of those three years. Surely there are teams of wowsers waiting for the opportunity to tell us, 'I told you so.' Given that smoking rates in Australia have been steadily declining since 2001, even business-as-usual decline could have been twisted into some kind of 'proof' that interfering with people's lives actually works. It is not news the nanny state wants to hear but
there is at least some feedback on the Australian experience being presented in the UK. The Times reported on 3 February this year:

Cigarette plain packaging law a failure, tobacco industry tells UK. Putting cigarettes in plain packs has failed to cut smoking in Australia, led to record levels of smuggling and could be illegal in the UK, the tobacco industry has warned a British government review of the measure.

Was there an outcry about the claims? No. The usual suspects argued the toss about the sale of illegal tobacco. An article in The Age, on 12 April 2014 read:

Last week, Fairfax Media visited several retailers in Melbourne's west including gift shops, milk bars and liquor stores, with the ex-Purana Taskforce detective employed by British American Tobacco. Illicit tobacco products were freely available upon requests for 'cheap cigarettes' and pre-rolled 'tubes' of loose tobacco or 'chop chop'. Illegally imported cartons of Marlboro Red and Dunhill Red cigarettes were sold at half the legal retail price, while other brand-named packs of 25 cigarettes cost as little as $8, compared to the normal price of almost $20. One Asian grocery store in Sunshine was asking $90 for a 10-pack carton of Manchester cigarettes—a fake brand manufactured in the Middle East for the black market. None of the illicit cigarettes were sold in the plain, olive-green packs required by Australian law, and many had no health warnings.

So what is the score on plain packaging? I will tell you what it is: free choice 1, nanny state nil. Even more questionable programs have been the photo competition run through the 'Be the Influence' campaign, calling for entrants to submit photos of their 'memorable moments' from One Direction concerts and spending $200,000 on developing a cookbook. One Direction fans could win One Direction merchandise, so there is a great investment of taxpayer dollars. And the cookbook included such classics as baked beans on toast, chicken and avocado sandwiches and 'the daily snack, banana and yoghurt'. Apparently these measures are about preventative health and reducing tobacco consumption.

This year—and last year as well—we have seen the nanny state sticking its nose into alcohol consumption. In February, the Australian National Preventive Health Agency produced its draft report Alcohol Advertising: The effectiveness of current regulatory codes in addressing community concern. I have concerns with the whole concept of telling people how to live their lives. I also have concerns about the 'evidence' the agency has used to justify that interference. The agency needed something on which to base their interference. For the record, here is some of their recommended interference for the media in relation to alcohol:

Free-to-Air Television: Remove the exemption for free-to-air television that allows direct advertising of alcohol products before 8.30 pm as an accompaniment to live sports broadcasts on public holidays and weekends.

Subscription Television: Restrict direct advertising of alcohol products on subscription television before 8.30pm and after 5am.

Cinema: Restriction on the direct advertising of alcohol products on-screen in cinemas before 8.30 pm and after 5 am.

Outdoor and billboard: Increase the distance of advertising from schools from 150 m to 500 km.

Then there is the thought police recommendation:

Where an advertisement has a strong or evident appeal to children or adolescents, then it should be found to be in breach of the Code irrespective of whether the marketing is also appealing to adults or the community generally or whether the advertisement is deemed not to be directed to children.
On the subject of social media, the report notes how the agency has wrestled with control of the internet:

Many of the alcohol-related fan, event and group pages on Facebook are accessible to users of any age. The video viewing site YouTube also allows alcohol companies to develop their own pages and there are seemingly no age restrictions on viewers. YouTube provides a platform for companies to display recent and previous television advertisements, which may include older advertisements that do not satisfy current codes.

So next batter up on the nanny state hit list is YouTube. That is no surprise. But if there is concern about old advertisements 'that do not satisfy current codes' being accessible to children, then burn down the library. Burn it down. Burn down all the books and the microfiche that documents our history. Burn the old newspaper archives, the magazine archives. Don't leave behind any trace of a culture that was once great and things that were done in the past because they do not satisfy the standards of the day. Because that is what this is really all about: the nanny state trying control society, trying to manipulate our lives, our actions and our thoughts.

According to an article in *The Australian* on 14 February this year, it goes even further: fizzy drinks. 'Fizzy drink tax could save 67 lives: study'—that was the headline. It is a pretty specific outcome for a tax. The story kicks off with:

A 20 per cent tax on fizzy drinks would save about 67 lives a year, a new study says.

Researchers at the National Institute for Health Innovation at Auckland University, aided by Otago University, estimate such a tax would reduce energy consumption by 20 kilojoules a day, or 0.2 per cent.

This would be enough to help avert about 67 deaths from cardiovascular disease, diabetes and diet-related cancers a year, according to the study, published in the New Zealand Medical Journal on Friday.

I have got to tell you: if the greatest Treasurer in the world could not get the mining tax right, I do not know about these guys with their 67 lives, either. As one commentator said about the tax:

If there are 67 people out there so close to death yet so bent on avoiding even the measliest of changes to their eating and drinking habits that they could save their own lives by cutting just one diet soft drink from their diet every day then the cost of soft drinks is not the problem—those people are, and that's not a problem you can attack with a tax on all soft-drinkers.

Another blogger lamented:

Through laws and taxes and regulations they try to consign us to an existence instead of a life; and this is not because the decisions they would make for us are necessarily bad decisions, but because they are not our own.

Society is not determined by some herd of hand-wringing heifers and steers in a departmental subcommittee's focus group. Culture is not ordered off a left-wing menu like some half-strength double decaf soy latte in a recycled paper cup. Society and culture are about people. Our culture is the function of our people—all the people, not just a select few. It is a combination of the lives, the actions, the thoughts and the choices of individuals. Some individuals will choose to drink alcohol. Some will choose not to. I do not believe the non-drinkers have any moral right or obligation to enforce their view and their personal choices on to anyone else's. This is not your culture; it is our culture. And our culture evolves individual
by individual. We do not need a pseudo health agency to manufacture a culture for us; we need a health department to look after health.

And, sure, there are a lot of things that affect our health—drinking, smoking, eating, sugar, salt, caffeine, fat, carbohydrates, protein, gluten, wheat, vitamin supplements, water and air. If anyone holds strong convictions about any one or more of those things, that is fine. They can choose to consume or not consume. If they have scientific evidence to support it, that is fine. They can report those findings. But if we listened to every bit of advice about what not to consume, we would all be dead. Somewhere in the middle there may be a truth, but the question is this: for whom is it a truth and who has the right to impose their interpretation on everyone else?

According to the Australian Taxpayers Alliance, the interpretation should not be with ANPHA. They said in a media release earlier this year:

ANPHA was an uninspired tax sinkhole that a power-drunk wowser elite used to advocate banning, taxing, and taking away consumer's choices ...

They have taken every chance to promote policies of control, because they are the only way to meet ANPHA's increasingly neurotic standards of acceptable quantity of life.

They've wasted millions of taxpayer dollars on feeble, nagging media campaigns for no measurable benefit …

I support the bill.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Broadbent): I thank the member for Dawson. Clearly you do.

Dr CHALMERS (Rankin) (18:10): It is my honour to follow the member for Dawson. The member for Dawson is often entertaining but almost always wrong. He is wrong in this case about the Australian National Preventive Health Agency (Abolition) Bill 2014. As hard as it is to believe, this bill does abolish the Australian National Preventive Health Agency, and in doing so it takes Australia a huge leap backwards in the area of public health. It is being abolished not because it was not doing good work but because it was a proud achievement of the former Labor government. In that respect, the short-sightedness when it comes to investing in the future is breathtaking.

The abolition of this agency is not an isolated assault. It comes on top of tens of billions of dollars in cuts to hospitals, attacks on Medicare and the scrapping of the National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health—all in this one horror budget. The $360 million worth of cuts to the national partnership funding, for example, will see the closure of countless programs that were tackling obesity, that were increasing physical activity and improving healthy eating for adults and children right around the country. Not only will this government make it harder for Australians to see the doctor; they will make it harder for people to develop the healthy lifestyles that will keep them away from the doctor's office to begin with.

The government is trying its absolute hardest to turn Australia's proud system of universal Medicare into a two-tiered American style health system in which only the richest have access to good quality health care. Labor will resist this government's attempt to undermine the founding principle of our health system, that Australians should get the health care they deserve and not just the health care they can afford.
Cuts to preventative health are just one of many cruel cuts in the Abbott government's budget of broken promises and twisted priorities. The day before the election, the Prime Minister now famously went on Sunrise on national television and told Australia that there would be no cuts to health and that in fact funding for health would go up. Like so many others, this has proven to be a broken promise and a clear demonstration that this Prime Minister and this government just cannot be trusted when it comes to health care in our country.

Cuts like these are not just cruel. They are not just crazy. They are both. Cuts to preventative health will cost Australians in the long term, placing a greater burden on the hospitals and primary health care providers of tomorrow. But it goes further than this. Investment in preventative health is investment in healthier, happier and far more productive communities. This government's attack on preventative health funding is an attack on those communities—on my own community in Rankin—and will lead to worse health outcomes for countless Australians.

I spoke in this place last week about the human face of this budget of broken promises and twisted priorities. I would like today to talk about the human face of the brutal cuts to preventative health in the budget, including the cuts to the National Preventive Health Agency and also the national partnership that I mentioned a moment ago. After the budget a couple of weeks ago, I met with a group of very concerned locals—devastated locals—who described to me the devastating impact of the health cuts on the Good Start Program on the Maori and Pasifika communities that this program seeks to support. The Good Start Program does some tremendous work in my area and in the member for Forde's area as well, reaching out to Maori and Pasifika families to combat community health problems like obesity, unhealthy eating and physical inactivity.

Health statistics amongst the Pasifika community in Queensland are really scary. The death rate for diabetes among Queenslanders born in Oceania is almost 230 per cent higher than the rate among Australian-born Queenslanders. Maori and Pasifika people are also far more likely to suffer from heart disease, vaccine-preventable diseases and smoking related diseases as well.

It is not okay for a government to sit on its hands as a sizable group of its residents die prematurely from preventable diseases. We need to do all we can to make sure that the Maori and Pasifika kids that live in my community, kids that I see around Rankin every day, live lives as long, healthy and productive as other Australians. We need to do all we can to eliminate the health divide that continues to widen not only between Pasifika Australians and the general population but also between low-income Australians and the better off, rural Australians and the city-dwellers, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and the rest of us.

My community is incredibly fortunate to have a program like Good Start. It is a disgrace to see that it only has a few more weeks to run. The electorate of Rankin has the second-largest number of New Zealand-born residents of any community in Australia, with almost 14,000 people. As such, my area—and that of the member for Forde—is hit harder than many by the higher incidence of preventable disease among Maori and Pasifika Australians.

This is one reason why the last Labor government invested so much in preventative health in Australia. It is why we introduced the Australian National Preventive Health Agency: to
lead a concerted national approach to preventative health in Australia. It is why, through national partnership agreements with the states, we funded programs like Good Start to attempt to narrow that divide in health outcomes among the general populace.

Good Start has entered into partnership with several schools and community groups in my area to work collaboratively to improve health outcomes. They have tailored the fundamental lessons of community health—which are nutritious eating, physical exercise and moderation in alcohol consumption—to the large Pasifika and Maori community in my area, and it is beginning to work. The preliminary evaluation of the Good Start Program in schools, conducted by the University of Queensland in the second half of last year, is really encouraging. The report says:

Preliminary results show that the Good Start Program is having a positive effect on knowledge and attitudes with regard to both fruit and vegetables, and physical activity—both important lifestyle influences of chronic disease.

This is an excellent outcome for health and wellbeing in my community but unfortunately one where the investment is about to be cut off.

The results of the study are fantastic, but the schools and community groups involved with Good Start do not need these academic studies to tell them how important their work is. Woodridge State High School, in my electorate, have described the program as 'outstanding' and attribute a substantial increase in HPE results among Good Start participants as a sign of its success.

Te Korowai Aroha, an organisation devoted to raising the profile of Maori and Pacific islander people in my area, have a strong working relationship with Good Start and nominated them for a public sector multicultural award last year. Together, they have worked towards offering healthier options at the annual Waitangi Day festival at the Kingston Butter Factory, in my electorate.

The Mater Child and Youth Mental Health Service coordinator describes the Good Start Program as 'a crucial service for the Pacific island communities in Queensland' and as a 'vital health service'—'the only culturally tailored service in response to chronic disease'.

And yet, because of this budget of broken promises and twisted and sick priorities, funding for Good Start will cease on 1 July this year. The result is that hundreds of children in my area who already have the scales of probability of future health issues tipped against them will miss out on these unique, life-improving, culturally tailored education programs. A Change.org petition calling on the Queensland Minister for Health, Lawrence Springborg, to continue the Good Start Program is already attracting lots of support, and I would encourage all of those who care about this issue to get on board with that survey.

The government's short-sighted position when it comes to preventative health funding is a clear indication of their warped values and priorities. They can find room in the budget to pay $50,000 to millionaires to have babies. They can find room in the budget to give superannuation tax concessions to the wealthiest 20,000 Australians. They can find room in the budget for a $100 million union witch-hunt and $20 million for marriage-counselling vouchers. But they cannot find room in the budget for preventative health services to improve the life quality and life expectancy of some of our most disadvantaged Australians.
It does speak to the difference between the two parties. On this side of the House, when we were in government, we did recognise the value of and the need for long-term investment in public health. We did see the need for a National Preventive Health Agency to drive a long-term agenda of improved public health outcomes and to develop the infrastructure necessary for important programs to get off the ground.

You only need to look at the list of programs and projects that the agency manages to see its importance. For example, there is the independent review of the advertising of unhealthy food and drinks to children; the National Binge Drinking Strategy and the associated investigation into the public interest case for establishing a minimum floor price for alcohol; and its National Tobacco Campaign and the My QuitBuddy smartphone app that it developed to help Australians stop smoking. The app has been downloaded over 265,000 times, and over 40 per cent of smokers using the app reported being smoke-free after six months. That is a whole lot of people living healthier and happier lives directly as a result of the work of the Australian National Preventive Health Agency. It is also a whole lot of people who are far less likely to develop smoking related diseases, saving the health system money in the long term.

The Labor Party understands that spending on preventative health is an investment that will pay off in the future. Apart from it saving us money to treat preventable diseases in the future, studies have also shown that improving general health also, in turn, improves economic wellbeing. So these cuts to preventative health have the potential to lead to a less productive workforce and a less prosperous economy in the months and years and decades to come.

Cuts to preventative health also underline the hypocrisy of this government's approach to health policy. The Treasurer and the Minister for Health have attempted to justify their $7 GP tax as some kind of attempt to ensure the sustainability of Medicare. But, at the exact same time, they attack the sustainability of the health system through these cuts to preventative health, which defer the burden of health spending into the future. Their hypocrisy on this point just shows that their attack on Medicare and the health system is ideological and has no basis in rational and strategic thought. As I said before, the short-sightedness of this cut is absolutely breathtaking.

The Labor opposition will be opposing these cruel cuts to preventative health, as we will be opposing the brutal attacks to Medicare in the weeks to come. We are not doing so just because they are a broken promise by the Prime Minister, although they are most certainly that. We are doing so because these cuts will lead to a worse Australia in the future, an Australia which is less healthy, less active and less economically productive. My community in Rankin, the people I represent, the people who send me here, will be worse off as a result of these harsh health cuts.

Mr Van Manen: Have you been there?

Dr CHALMERS: I am there in that community in Logan City much more than the member for Forde is. At four mobile offices in my electorate on the weekend—four more than the member for Forde would have done in his electorate, because he would have hidden from this budget of broken promises and lies—people came to me concerned that they would no longer be able to afford the health care—
Mr Van Manen: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I think the member for Rankin can focus on his electorate. We are out in the electorate plenty. I am happy to explain the budget to my constituents.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Broadbent): There is no point of order.

Dr CHALMERS: I would have thought the member for Forde would be too embarrassed to interject on something like this, given we both represent the same city council of Logan. As I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted, at four mobile offices in my electorate on the weekend, people came up to me concerned that they would no longer be able to afford the health care that they need. It is on behalf of my entire community—and on behalf specifically of the local Maori and Pasifika community, who will miss out on this vital public health education program I have spent some time on today—that I will be voting against these health cuts. Anyone who votes for them is consigning our communities and our country to a sicker and poorer future, and that is unforgivable.

Mr EWEN JONES (Herbert) (18:24): I like to follow the member for Chalmers—I mean the member for Rankin. He has not had a seat named after him yet. No doubt there will be one! Well may we say 'glory days', because that speech left me dazed! The problem we have with this budget is that you just seem to be so totally opposed to absolutely everything—vuvuzelas of negativity, as the member for Grayndler used to say about us in the last parliament. I want to address a couple of things that the member for Rankin was just talking about. This notion about broken promises is so blatantly wrong. All the way through, our promises were: we would stop the boats—

Dr Chalmers: 'No cuts to health'!

Mr EWEN JONES: No cuts to health. There are no cuts to health. I will take the interjection. I will skip all this stuff and the member for Fremantle will be able to get up sooner, because I want to get this thing through. You have got record spending in health from this government for the next four years. There is no deal. You have to try and come to the Australian people and tell them how this works. The Labor government sat down with a bunch of state premiers and said, 'We want you to commit to this plan.' 'We don't want to commit to it.' 'Would an extra $1 billion help you?' 'No.' 'Would an extra $2 billion help you?' 'No.' 'Would an extra $10 billion help you? Would an extra $40 billion help you? Would an extra $80 billion help you? Anything—just sign up.' There was no plan.

We have just been through 15 minutes of the member for Rankin's speech. He said, 'We're going to oppose these things. We're going to oppose absolutely everything.' Where is his plan? Where is the money coming from? Spending in this budget still goes up by 2.7 per cent. Those opposite, including the member for Rankin, who is supposed to be a doctor—I'll get a script off you for that thing there; make you see these pretty colours!—will cap spending to two per cent. So they have got a find another 0.7 per cent on top of all this extra money that they are saying we are cutting out. Where is their plan? The Leader of the Opposition in his budget reply speech was saying, for 33 minutes, 'Try us on!' and 'We're a party that stands for something!' Give us something. Give us an option. Tell us what you are going to do, because there is nothing there.

I understand what it is like in opposition. It is hard when you have not got the staff anymore and all that stuff, but at the end of the day you have to stand for something. Whether
or not you believe our projections about the $123 billion worth of deficits and the $667 billion worth of gross debt if we do not do anything, it does not matter. I will let you get away with that. I do not care what you believe in. What the opposition cannot possibly deny is that we have just racked up, as a nation, $191½ billion worth of successive deficits. That is what we have racked up. All the way through, as soon as you start talking about deficits, you always hear them say, 'But it was the GFC.' Let us be very serious about the GFC. The GFC was principally a North American and European thing. During the late nineties and early 2000s, we faced the Asian financial crisis, and we stared that down. The Howard government went into deficit for one year by $1 billion. That is how we dealt with that. We were in surplus the next year and we continued to pay down debt. That is how you respond. You do not keep on spending.

Before I came here, I made my commercial life from 1990 as an auctioneer. My specialty was insolvency. It got to the stage where I would walk into a business and I would know why they were going bad—because the business would have taken its eye off the ball. I had a classic one. A businessman had a fantastic nursery. He used to grow plants and sell them. He made a lot of money. His accountant told him he should diversify, so he went and bought something else. He bought another business, about which he knew absolutely nothing. That business started losing money, so he started taking money off the other business to prop up the business that was failing, because he knew nothing about it. Eventually, he lost them both because he took his eye off the ball as to why he was there. He was there to provide employment for his people, to secure his future with his business. And because he took his eye off the ball and started mucking around with things, about which he had no knowledge, he lost the lot.

When it comes to things that the Labor Party do not know anything about, they do not know anything about adding up. They can count the numbers in the caucus and that is about it. They just cannot add up. When it comes to balancing the books or managing finances, they just do not get it and they should walk away.

The first thing you do when you take over a business, move into a new business or take over a new branch or anything like that, you walk around and you see what the place is like, how well it has been organised and how well it has been run. This Friday, 6 June, Queensland Day, D-day, will mark 20 years that I have lived in Townsville. When I took over the Townsville office of the auctioneering firm for which I was working, I walked into that place and it was untidy. It was dirty and they had all their stuff that could not be sold because the reserves were too high crushed up against one wall. We had to go through it. I worked the first 12 weeks, seven days a week, to get that place tidied up.

When we came into government and had a look at the books, we saw the exact same thing—the place was a mess. There was no care and attention paid to anything. When that happens, decisions have to be made. When you are losing money in a business, when you are racking up debt in government, you only have three options: continue to borrow, continue to make a mess or fix it.

Before the election, we said well and truly that our philosophy on health was to get help as close as possible to the customer, the client, the person. We wanted a GP focus. That is what we said all the way through. The Australian National Preventive Health Agency, about which we are speaking here—the abolition bill 2014—was an organisation that was just set up to
spend more money. It did not really provide anything. We had the member for Rankin talking about the Good Start program and that it was starting to show results. Worldwide, we are getting fatter. So please tell me where the results are—maybe not the member for Throsby, although I will say that during his effort on the MPI he nearly broke the record for the most number of talking points in a five-minute speech and the most number of cliches at the same time.

This is about trying to get things as close as possible to the customer, the client. When it comes to this matter, our philosophy is to get rid of bureaucracy all the way through. We believe in smaller government. We believe that the federal government has a role in providing funds for general health, but we do not believe we should be too involved in it because we do not do it well. Federal public servants do a good job, but we do not do these things well, so we should stay out of them.

I want to tell you another story about what Labor did whilst in government in relation to bureaucracy. A mate of mine works at the Townsville Hospital. Following the Dr Patel matter, they brought in another layer of bureaucracy. He is a clinician and he had to take Fridays off, because he could no longer just put notes on a piece of paper; he had to load them into a computer. They brought in another layer of bureaucracy that checked his notes, as opposed to what was actually happening with the client. He was smart. When the file was open, he was to be notified. He had done this for three years under Labor and not once were any of his files opened. So for three years he had a whole day, a Friday—20 per cent of his working week—taken out to do this, with no result whatsoever. Labor have never met a layer of bureaucracy that they cannot add. They have it stacked too high.

That is why we as a government have decided that agencies like this no longer have a role in this place. We have to ensure that people are getting a relationship with their GP. Agencies like this take up more money and provide fewer services. They do have to pay the ultimate price and go, and I do not think we should be making any apologies for that.

I support this abolition bill and I am happy to go out and speak to my people about it. When you have no money, you have very few options. We have to get back to the situation where we are able to afford what we are trying to do and, in the meantime, we have to target our resources at the best. This simply is not it. I thank the House.

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (18:35): I rise today to speak against the proposed abolition of the Australian National Preventative Health Agency. It was at the recommendation of the health experts who comprised the National Preventative Health Taskforce, and with support from, among others, the Royal Australian College of Physicians, the National Heart Foundation and the Public Health Association that the Labor government created this agency for the purpose of improving the health of Australia's people in the long term and reducing costs to the health system.

In everyday life we often use the phrase 'prevention is better than the cure' metaphorically, but of course this axiom is the literal explanation of why preventative health measures, both for individuals and for national health outcomes, are so valuable.

By focusing on some of the biggest health challenges we face, tobacco use, excessive alcohol use and obesity, the agency was building its strategy for a comprehensive and coordinated attack on preventable conditions. For a modest cost, this agency would deliver far
greater savings to future health budgets and, most importantly, would prevent people from becoming ill in the first place. Unfortunately, it does not appear to matter to this government that prevention is far preferable and less expensive than a cure.

The government’s approach to agencies that work to minimise the harm done by chronic health problems was first seen with the abolition of the Alcohol and Other Drugs Council. Now, in the context of this health-slimming budget, we see preventive health removed in the name of short-term savings, while the personal and long-term systemic costs are left to lie where they fall. And one suspects this government sees no problem with disregarding expert advice or ignoring the potential for positive health outcomes if it means posturing against government involvement or intervention in areas of health, like obesity and addiction, where the ultra-liberal view is that individuals should be entirely responsible for avoiding such health impacts. With this bill and its swag of other budget cuts to health, the Abbott government has set about destroying the very foundation of affordable and universal public health care in this country. Left on this trajectory, we will certainly see a two-tiering of the health system and a disproportionate representation of poor health among our poorest and most vulnerable citizens.

In the 2010 legislative debates that led to the creation of the Australian National Preventive Health Agency, coalition participants appeared to support a greater focus on preventive health in this country. Indeed, the speakers at that time noted and appreciated the ultimate cost-benefit merits of funding preventive health initiatives. Speaking to the point that 32 per cent of Australia’s disease burden stems from modifiable risk factors, Senator Fierravanti-Wells said:

Investing time and energy into preventing chronic life-threatening disease will obviously assist. The coalition believes preventive health should be on the national agenda because treating people with chronic preventable diseases leads to a substantial reduction in economic and social costs. Chronic disease is a significant burden on our healthcare system. This leads to substantial economic and social costs for all Australians. If we can manage these costs then it will raise a significant burden from Australia’s healthcare system—a system that is already under a lot of pressure. Increased focus on preventive health—keeping people healthy and out of hospital—is a very important goal for any government. Of course, we agree with provisions to this effect.

And Senator Barnett made the following contribution:

We need a total paradigm shift in this country in supporting health prevention measures. I am pleased to say that this bill goes some way to starting that effort and making a difference.

Senator Birmingham had this to say:

The coalition are supporting the passage of this legislation because we recognise that there is more work to be done in the area of educating people and ensuring a greater understanding by all Australians of what we should engage in to live a healthy lifestyle.

Deputy Speaker, of course you would be hard-pressed to find anyone in this place disagreeing with the benefits of preventive health programs and measures. Yet in this very bill the government demonstrates its disregard for preventive health strategy, coordination and program assessment. In doing so it is ignoring the fact that the community, and especially stakeholders in the health arena, expect governments to lead, to coordinate, and to assist in tackling the very significant health challenges facing our nation. This government and its members talk about the value of preventive health while ripping away the key statutory
agencies and funding that actually work to help make that change. It is frankly appalling that expert advice which recommended a focused, concentrated, educational approach is being cast aside. Instead, we will see the targeted effort subsumed within the broad health portfolio and no doubt weakened and diluted within a prevailing atmosphere of funding cuts and uncertainty. Preventive health will not be on the front-burner; it will not be prioritised to help make a paradigm shift in society; and people will continue to suffer from preventable chronic diseases, with all the individual and health system burdens these bring.

In its short life, the National Preventive Health Agency has already demonstrated ingenuity and contemporary relevance in its social marketing approach. Its free My QuitBuddy app, designed to help smokers beat their addiction, has proved to be an innovative and effective tool in the war against smoking, receiving a gold medal at the Association for Data-driven Marketing awards. As previous speakers have mentioned, we have today seen the health minister attack this, and other preventive health measures. The reality is that the ANPHA funded promotion of the My QuitBuddy app through the Summernats events was undertaken precisely because it attracts over 100,000 people, with the large majority being 25- to 40-year-old men. This is a core target audience for the National Tobacco Campaign and the promotion was undoubtedly a success, with 55,000 downloads of the app in the month of January, when Summernats occurred, compared with 19,000 in December. That is virtually a 300 per cent increase from one month to the next—and it is exactly what a smart and well-designed promotional campaign should deliver.

In its final report, handed down this month, the agency explored the often canvassed idea of placing a minimum price on alcohol to reduce harmful consumption. Contrary to the intuitive reasoning that stands behind minimum pricing, the report concluded that such an approach was not advisable. It said:

As Australia's alcohol distribution and retail systems are fully private, a regulated minimum price increase (as distinct from a tax) would lead to profit increases flowing to the private sector from the monopoly rents created. This significantly reduces the available public benefits which could be used to further reduce or treat alcohol-related harm or be redistributed by government for other purposes.

I am not sure that I entirely agree with that conclusion—and I am aware that experts in this area believe that a minimum floor price, along with other measures, including a comprehensive recasting of the current inconsistent excise arrangements, does have a role to play in reducing the severe impact of alcohol-related harm. But the report nonetheless demonstrates the critical and valuable role the agency is performing, and the value of its independent input into the public policy process. With its dedicated focus, the agency is equipped to respond quickly and specifically to issues as they arise. The agency's Be the Influence—Tackling Binge Drinking campaign has successfully connected with its young target audience; it is amongst the most popular government social media pages with 189,000 Facebook likes. This campaign also has a presence within 16 national sporting organisations to help reduce the exposure to alcohol imagery and break the links between sport and alcohol.

Under this government, disappointingly, the funding for Be the Influence is about to disappear. The funding of campaigns and the examination of questions like those I have just mentioned need to be sustained. This critical area of work must be continued and expanded if we are to achieve the aim of reducing the prevalence and impact of preventable chronic disease in this country.
Increasing the cost of visiting the doctor in order to create 'new' medical research funds while at the same time cutting perfectly functional and forward-looking programs and agencies, and acting to strip future hospital funding, is simply topsy-turvy nonsense. In The Age on 16 May, economics editor Peter Martin pondered the government's health priorities as follows:

Imagine for a moment the government is serious about reining in health costs. What should it do? Should it invest heavily in preventive health, trying to change lifestyles so more people don't get ill in the first place, or should it amass billions for medical research?

A government concerned about pay-offs will do the first. Or it may decide to do both, investing in preventive health while also putting aside funds for medical research. What it won't do is shut down existing attempts to prevent illness in order to fund research. That's if it is serious.

Sadly, this government is not serious about sensible, balanced, long-term health policy—and its abolition of the Australian National Preventive Health Agency is yet another example of this nation being put into reverse gear with barely a glance in the rear-view mirror for the dire health consequences that await.

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Throsby) (18:45): I rise to speak on the Australian National Preventive Health Agency (Abolition) Bill 2014, the sole purpose of which is to abolish the only agency dedicated to preventative health policy at the Commonwealth level, the only Commonwealth agency capable of delivering the sorts of programs that my friend the member for Fremantle and my predecessor in the role as assistant shadow minister for health outlined so eloquently in her address on this bill. I think if you want to understand the disposition of those who move such legislation in the House, it is instructive to look at what they have said on the matters in the past, and I did exactly that. I had the opportunity of availing myself of the second reading speeches of the then Minister for Health, former member for Gellibrand, Nicola Roxon. Some excellent speeches were made in the introduction of the original bill which founded this agency. She talked about the fact that it arose out of discussions and consultations through the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission. There were consultations at the COAG level, and it received expert advice. The tenor of that advice was that we needed a stand-alone expert agency to focus on the issue of preventative health. That is the tenor of the second reading speech of the then Minister for Health.

I then pulled down a copy of the second reading speech of the now Minister for Health, who sponsors this bill that is before the House. I think the attitude in that speech is very revealing of why we are now debating a bill to effectively dissolve the Preventive Health Agency. I will concede this: it is always very dangerous to pick up a speech from a member of parliament and focus in on one or two sentences and say, 'This is the ratio of the argument.' Nothing bespeaks the attitude of the Minister for Health more than this contribution in his second reading speech on the National Preventive Health Agency bill, where he had this to say:

The issue is complex. As unpalatable as it may be, the taxpayers should pick up the bill through the health system for someone who lives their life with reckless disregard for the health consequences. Government intrusion into an individual’s life and lifestyle should always be closely scrutinised.
I think that says it in a nutshell. Before he has already started, the minister has thrown his hands up and said: 'There is nothing that we can do in this space that is going to make a difference. The only thing we can do is pick up the bill at the end of the day.' It really is an extraordinary admission from the same minister who is introducing proposals into this place which are going to massively slash Commonwealth expenditure in the health area—over $80 billion of cuts in health and education funding to states and massive cuts to expenditure in other areas of the health portfolio. So it is really extraordinary that you have the minister before he even gets going saying, 'The only role as the Commonwealth is to pick up the bill at the end of the day. We have no role in saying anything about the lifestyle choices or the consumption behaviours of consumers.'

You do not have to go back to 2009 to see those sorts of attitudes when it comes to preventative health. I have the great benefit of sitting in front of gorgeous George Christensen, the member for Dawson, in the House of Representatives. I am often amused by his contributions. We can share a joke but we do not share many opinions on many things. When I listened to his contribution in this debate, I formed the view that he represents the extreme libertarian view on this particular matter. The member for Dawson was essentially saying that there is no role for government in preventative health, that individuals should be able to eat what they like, smoke what they like and drink what they like in complete disregard of the consequences, and there is no role for government in this space.

I agree in part with the member for Dawson. It is not the role of the government to stand by the pantry door and tell people what they can and cannot eat. It is not the role of government to stand by the bar and say, 'Do you really need that extra middy? It is not the role of government to be standing outside the building, except in the planning sense, and telling people, 'Really, you should put that cigarette away.' But it is the role of government to be engaged in education, to be engaged in research and to be informing the public debate. It is certainly the role of government to be informing the public debate about the consequences of our lifestyle choices. I have said at this dispatch box before, if we were to just leave it to business and if we were to just leave it to civil society, we would not know a hell of a lot that we now know about the negative health consequences of many products that are on the market. I have used the example of asbestos in the past. Had it not been for the research organisations funded by government and ultimately the regulations by government, the health consequences of that building product would not be known. And we could, without dragging the analogy too far at all, make the same observation about so many other things.

I do not agree that it is the role of the government to be some sort of statutory fat-controller, but it certainly is the role of government to engage in education, research and dissemination of advice. It is simply not good enough for either the member for Dawson or the minister to be saying, effectively: 'The role of government is to pick up the bill. We've got no say about what's on the menu; in fact, we should remain completely silent about what's on the menu. We just pick up the bill at the end of the meal.' I think most Australians would find that view completely unsatisfactory.

There are a number of medical practitioners within this House, and you would normally rely upon them, in a debate such as this, to shine some light upon the issues before the House. That is why I tuned in to the contribution of the member for Lyne, who is a medical practitioner. I thought, 'This is a bloke who's going to be able to shine a bit of light on this
debate and add a bit of sense to it.' I thought he might have something to say. So I listened very carefully to what he had to say in this debate, and I have got to say: never this evening was I more disappointed. His stunning contribution to the debate in the current environment was: 'We don't need a preventive health agency because we've got doctors and dieticians out there who can provide this sort of advice.' Knock, knock, Dr Gillespie—your side of the House is trying to stop people going to doctors and dieticians by putting in place a GP tax to make it more expensive because you think people are going too often. So to suggest that the answer to having a Commonwealth-funded preventive health agency is available through our GPs and dieticians shows that the good doctor is just not with the program.

The member for Lyne also suggested that the agency was somehow redundant because we had cooking shows and TV ads which filled the space. Well, the good doctor from Lyne simply has not been following the public debate on this issue. And there are a lot of things that I see advertised on TV that I am sure, when he was in private practice, he would not have been recommending to many of his patients.

The most stinging criticism that he made of the agency, and the reason he gave for it needing to be abolished, was that it had too many experts advising it. I can say to the good doctor: if there had been a few more experts advising the minister and the Treasurer over the last couple of months, they would not have made some of the stunning mistakes that they have made. A few experts might have been able to tell their Commission of Audit, and then the Treasurer and then the Minister for Health and the Minister for Social Services, that in fact Australians are not visiting a doctor on average 11 times a year, as they have built their whole health policy upon; it is actually less than half of that. If they had listened to the experts, they may have not built a health policy, the GP tax, on this terrible mistake.

If they had listened to the experts before they introduced these proposals into the House, they probably would not have had a string of experts from here to Hobart lining up to bash down their doors, saying: 'You've got it terribly, terribly wrong. Your GP tax is going to have a terrible impact on public health outcomes in this country. Your proposals to hike the PBS payments are going to have a terrible impact on public health in this country. And your cuts to health and hospital funding are simply unconscionable.' If they had listened to the health experts, they might have listened to advice such as this.

The work of this agency is too important to be glossed over. It focuses on some things that really ought to be at the centre of the public health debate in this country. Many other speakers have talked about the importance of having strategies around alcohol abuse and obesity, and 'Quit smoking' and antitobacco messages. I think these are all critical strategies.

But I would like to say a few things about the important work that the agency is doing when it comes to men's health. I am very pleased to see the member for Port Adelaide at the table as I make this contribution, because I know that he was very involved last year in the launching of a men's health strategy, and was particularly focused on the importance of having a mental health strategy for men. But he would recall—as I recall and as other members on this side of the House would recall—that, when we launched those policies, we had bipartisan support. We had former Liberal Party premiers up there as guest speakers at the event; we had former Liberal Party chief ministers backing the initiative; and we had a front row—you may even have been there yourself, Mr Deputy Speaker Vasta—full of Liberal
Party and National Party MPs standing there saying: 'It is critically important that we have preventive health strategies addressing the issue of men's health.'

We know that there are particular issues when it comes to men's health. Men are four times more likely than women to commit suicide—it is five men a day, on average. Men are more likely to suffer from chronic diseases, cancer, heart disease, and a whole range of other issues. And if we are going to address the issues associated with men's health then we need a preventive health strategy.

We do not have a preventive health strategy. What we have in its stead is a wrecking ball. Instead of having a proactive strategy for dealing with preventable health issues, what we have is the GP tax. We have slashing of funding for hospitals in the states' health systems. We have the tearing up of the National Health Reform Agreement; we have the tearing up of the National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health; we have the tearing up of the National Partnership Agreement on Improving Public Hospitals. The list goes on and on: the National Preventive Health Agency, which we are debating today; Health Workforce Australia; Medicare Locals, which are having their role downgraded; the Private Health Insurance Ombudsman and council; the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare; the National Blood Authority; General Practice Education and Training; the Medicare Safety Net, which is going to be altered; the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, which is going to be altered—in fact, everything that we have built up, not only over this term of government but over the last 30 or 40 years, is standing in front of their wrecking ball. They do not have a policy for preventive health; they do not have a policy for public health. They have got a wrecking ball, and the people of Australia are being asked to pay the consequences.

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (19:00): I speak in relation to the Australian National Preventive Health Agency (Abolition) Bill 2014. When I was Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing in the last government a few facts were really in the forefront of my thinking, particularly as I was involved in negotiating the front-of-pack labelling with the states and territories and in consultation with the Australian Food and Grocery Council, Choice and the Public Health Association of Australia. Those facts were these: today, more than four million Australians are obese, almost 10 million are overweight, one in four children are overweight or obese and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are almost two times as likely as non-Indigenous Australians to be obese. Overweight translates into chronic diet related diseases, hospitalisation and significant rises in long-term care.

We know that well-planned prevention programs work. The National Preventative Health Strategy clearly demonstrates that by putting a few facts in front of all of us. We know that the health programs in the 19th century were very successful in improving the longevity of life and the health and wellbeing of people. In the 1950s three-quarters of Australian men smoked—a figure that is unimaginable today as preventive health strategies have worked to reduce the rate of smoking amongst men and, indeed, women.

Deaths from cardiovascular disease have decreased dramatically from all-time highs in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Road trauma deaths on Australian roads have dropped by 80 per cent since the 1970s. Even deaths from SIDS have declined by almost three-quarters. And a study commissioned by the Department of Health and Ageing in 2003 showed spectacular long-term returns on investment in working on tobacco, road safety and programs in relation to cardiovascular disease. It showed that across 20 years, from 1975 to 1995, these programs
prevented about 400,000 premature deaths in this country, saving a cost to the taxpayer of $8.4 billion. That is more than 50 times greater than the amount spent on anti-smoking campaigns over that period. In America, a study in 2008 in relation to Prevention for A Healthy America, showed that a return on the investment of one dollar resulted in a return to the health system of $5.6 within five years.

So we know that good programs and projects work well in reducing overweight and obesity problems, harmful use of alcohol and tobacco control. We know these programs work. We know that these are big problems in our country, so this is not the time to save a few million dollars by getting rid of an agency that is doing its job and for a faux budget crisis that does not exist.

This particular legislation is short-sighted, and I have spoken on this legislation before when we were setting up this agency. I cannot believe the nanny state arguments from those opposite. This abolition is short-sighted; it will go towards adverse outcomes in our people's health. This budget rips $377 million from preventive health alone by the abolition not just of this agency—which is a measly $6.4 million, in the context of the budget for health and ageing across this country—it delays, of course, the National Partnership Agreement for adult public dental services and it makes a whole range of cuts, not just in terms of children and older Australians but also Indigenous Australians.

These are cruel cuts because they will have an adverse impact on health and wellbeing across the country. And, of course, they have abolished the Medicare Locals—something that the now Prime Minister specifically said he would never do when debating Kevin Rudd, the then Prime Minister, on national television. In my region, the West Moreton-Oxley Medicare Local has been providing wonderful preventive health services and front-line services in Indigenous health, support for GPs, support for older Australians, after-hours clinic funding and HACC funding as well. And they are getting rid of this.

This is a terrible budget, and I think the most egregious aspect is the extra seven dollars to visit your doctor. Often people go to see the doctor for preventive health reasons, and this particular decision is very short-sighted. Of course, it is all about allegedly saving money for the taxpayer. But, in fact, if you look at the last year, the budget outcome is $18.8 billion worse under this mob than it was under us. Across the forward estimates it results in being worse by about $7 billion than under us. So they should not come into this place and tell us that it is all about budget cuts and getting the budget back to surplus because PEFO actually revealed the true story.

Today we had the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection revealing that he looked at PEFO actually to establish the true situation for the actual economic outlook and forecast for the country. Finally we had the minister saying something that was true in relation to that issue. Clearly, the Minister for Health does not understand the need for preventive health programs.

I am glad that the shadow assistant minister for health is here because he has pointed out clearly many times—and I have heard him talk about this—the impact of preventive health strategy failure by the coalition in regional and rural areas. These are the facts: it is 1.3 times more likely that people in those areas will have diabetes; they are 1.2 to 1.3 times more likely to have arthritis; 1.2 to 1.3 times more likely to get a melanoma resulting in cancer; 1.1 times more likely to be obese; and, if they are male, 1.3 to 2.6 times more likely to suicide. And that
list goes on and on. So regional and rural areas will suffer worse as a result of the cuts—the
cuts with the GP tax and the cuts to preventive health strategy and programs in this budget. It
is also a brutal budget for my shadow portfolio of Indigenous affairs. There was $125 million
stripped from programs.

Even in Senate Estimates last Friday, departmental officials had to admit that the
organisations that fund and deliver services across the country in regional and rural areas,
including in remote places like Alice Springs and Utopia homelands and other places up in
the Kimberley, as well as in cities like Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne will not know for six
to 12 months whether those preventative health programs will still be funded. They have not
been told and will not know for six to 12 months what will happen.

I say to the minister, who comes in here comes in and says things like he 'remains
committed', they 'do not diminish', and their commitment is 'not jeopardised' by this
legislation and by this decision to cut funding. This is Orwellian phraseology. If you say it; it
does not mean it is going to happen. You have got back it up with political will and money. It
is the sort of phraseology we saw in George Orwell's 1984—war is peace, freedom is slavery,
ignorance is strength, preventative health cuts equals preventative health care. That is the sort
of language they are using. Those opposite cut the funding and claim to be still committed.
How can they be?

I do not often quote this bloke, a Queensland LNP politician, but the Queensland Treasurer
very clearly in his budget statement in the Queensland Parliament in George Street in
Brisbane said:

Without a doubt though the most pressure relates to health. The problem is serious: National
Partnership on Preventive Health—terminated; National Partnership on Improving Public Hospital
Services—terminated. From 2017-18 the federal government is turning its back on the challenges of
health funding.

That is what the LNP Queensland Treasurer in his budget speech said today. He went on:
With the ageing of the population and rapid advances in medical technology health expenditure is
expected to grow by around 8% per annum into the future. But the federal government—
Referring to the Abbott government—

thinks the states can survive with less. Their funding falls well short of what is required to meet the
reasonable expectations of Queenslanders. Queenslanders can be reassured this LNP government will
engage in a robust and vigorous debate with the federal government to protect their interests. This is a
discussion we intend to have with the federal government over the coming months.

Good luck with that because they have cut the COAG process off in Indigenous health
funding. They have cut the COAG process off in preventative health. So who are they going
to discuss it with? This mob over there do not want to talk about it with the states and
territories. The Queensland LNP Treasurer said today the consequences are devastating.

Let me give you an illustration in my area where this mob opposite, the government,
actually do not care. When we were in government we funded in my electorate the HAPI
Ipswich program—the healthy active people in Ipswich program—partnering with Jamie
Oliver's Ministry of Food, Austcycle, the Heart Foundation Heart Moves and the Ipswich
Hospital Foundation. The Jamie Oliver Ministry of Food is right in the heart of the Ipswich
CBD, in D'Arcy Doyle Place. It is fully booked because people use the classes to learn about
nutrition and how to cook well. I have seen young and old people there. In fact, I have seen
primary school and high school kids there and I have even seen councillors from the Ipswich City Council there. I have visited there myself. It is a terrific initiative.

The HAPI Ipswich program has been terrific. It has been at the Ipswich show running these programs and holding classes. We funded that sort of preventive health strategy and program but it was terminated this year. It is gone; it is not being funded or continued on. That is one example locally in my electorate where the coalition has failed across this space.

The AMA is critical of the coalition in this. We see health professionals critical of these types of cuts. The new president of the AMA, Professor Brian Owler, made the point very clearly. He said of the health spending in the budget that he 'remained unconvinced'. He was talking about the $7 GP tax and he then referred to preventative health care. He said this:

Well, the safety net is a limit of 10 co-payments for people with concessions and also people under 16 years of age. But there are many people that fall outside of that safety net, particularly those with chronic disease. And so even a total of 10 $7 co-payments, $70, for some people, particularly if there are a number of people in the family, is prohibitively expensive.

Also concerned that in terms of preventative healthcare, making people for instance who want to go and have vaccination, if you're putting up a financial barrier to do that, for them to go and see their GP, it goes against the grain of what we've been arguing about the importance of preventative healthcare.

That was from the AMA.

The government has got their priorities wrong across this space. This is not about nanny-state stuff; this is about making sure that our people get the best health outcomes possible. It is also quite clear on cost benefit analysis that it is in the best interests of our economy as well as our society to make sure people are healthy and well, and live long productive lives and contribute.

This government is not listening to the expert advice. They do not like experts. They rejected world scientific consensus on climate change. They have not listened to experts when it comes to education. They have not listened to experts across a whole range of areas. We have not even got a minister for science in the government. What they failed to do is look long-term at the value of preventative health strategies, at the long-term sustainability of investment in preventative health, at the benefits to health outcomes, at the benefits to our economy and at the benefits to the health system.

We know what those investments can make. When we were in government, Labor provided $1.2 billion from 2010-11 to 2013-14 for those kinds of services nationally. We committed $516 million, as the shadow assistant minister said, for mental health services. We put a massive amount of funding across those spaces.

We know we must plan for the future, and that is why we established the National Preventive Health Agency to drive a preventative health agenda and provide the kind of assistance that goes beyond the cycle of three years of a parliament. We did it on the recommendation of the National Health and Hospital Reform Commission, the Preventative Health Taskforce and the National Primary Health Care Strategy in accordance with that strategy. So we listened to the experts and we did what we were supposed to do. This government will not listen to the experts. It will not listen to science. It will not listen to the healthcare professionals. It will not listen to Indigenous people who want to roll out the types of programs that I mentioned. It will not listen to councils like Ipswich City Council, which wants to roll out those types of programs. It is just not listening to preventative health.
Ms CLAYDON (Newcastle) (19:15): Labor established the Australian National Preventive Health Agency in 2010 to take a national leadership role in preventive health in Australia. The agency's goal is simple and is listed clearly on the top corner of their website. They exist to promote a healthy Australia. Unfortunately, the home page of their website now carries another message under the title of 'Budget Outcome for the Preventive Health Agency'. The message details that the Abbott Liberal government plans to (a) close the agency and (b) terminate the National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health. This government's message is clear. They have given up on coordinated preventive health. They do not understand the benefits of preventive health today or the benefits it provides for the future.

Since the Preventive Health Agency was created, it has provided leadership across the non-government, health promotion and primary care sectors to deliver coordinated and effective preventive health activities and policies. They play a central role in collaborating across the health sector, embedding preventive health as central to the delivery of health care. Labor understands and recognises the value and need for long-term, sustained investment in preventive health. We appreciate the benefits of investment for improved health outcomes and acknowledge the savings to the health system that this investment can achieve. This is why we established a dedicated agency to drive the agenda over a sustained long-term period and provide the infrastructure for this to continue beyond the budget cycle. We built the agency so that prevention became a central focus for the health system.

The agency's programs direct actions specifically at obesity, tobacco and alcohol use—three core issues where preventive measures can have a profound impact on our health and on our overall health spend. Unlike those opposite, Labor understands the importance of investing in preventive health and primary health care—it makes sense. Indeed, it makes sense to everyone but this government. The government's ignorance was on show again today in the Daily Telegraph, when the Minister for Health attempted to discredit the Australian National Preventive Health Agency and undermine the value of preventive health by attacking targeted funding programs. The minister was especially critical of a program that the agency funded at Summernats, an event that attracts over 100,000 people, principally 25- to 40-year-old men—a notoriously difficult demographic to reach and engage with, but a core target audience for the National Tobacco Campaign. It makes perfect sense to direct a health message at an event where this demographic will be gathered in large numbers, and that is why the agency funded the promotion of an innovative quit smoking app at Summernats.

The campaign clearly had an effect, with 55,000 downloads of the app in January, when Summernats was held, compared with 19,000 in the month before—a threefold increase in just one month. The QuitBuddy app that was promoted at the event helps people to get and stay smoke free—a key preventive health measure. It helps to get the quit smoking message across when smokers need support most—like at the end of a long, stressful day, or perhaps after preparing a budget that has misled millions of people and is full of broken promises. It is clear that more needs to be done to cut through with the quit message, even to the well-educated. Innovative programs like the QuitBuddy app are making a difference. Targeting the message in a coordinated fashion, as the Preventive Health Agency has been doing, is the best way to do this. Labor will oppose the Australian National Preventive Health Agency (Abolition) Bill 2014—the abolition of the Preventive Health Agency. The abolition is short-
sighted and demonstrates the lack of vision this government has in understanding the challenges facing the health system both now and into the future.

Labor is opposed to the government's callous decision to cut vital preventive health funding to the states and territories for their work in increasing physical activity, improving nutrition and healthy eating and supporting smoking cessation and reduction of harmful alcohol consumption in communities around Australia. In fact, rather than cut preventive health programs and funding, I urge the government to look to communities like Newcastle, which have successfully implemented strategies that are helping to curb binge drinking and are addressing the nutrition and healthy living habits of our youth, ably guided by the research work of Professor Clare Collins and her team from the University of Newcastle.

It is not just preventive health that this government does not understand; it is the whole health portfolio. What is becoming increasingly clear is that this government—led by their health minister and with a former health minister now as Prime Minister—is on the wrong path when it comes to health policy. They clearly do not understand what is best for the health of the Australian people. We will be paying for their mistakes for generations to come.

Professor of Public Health Policy at Curtin University, Mike Daube, puts it simply:

The Prime Minister promised before the election that there would be no cuts to health. He has broken that promise. In this, their very first budget, the government has taken a scalpel to health spending, slicing out more than $50 billion from public hospitals, including more than $156 million from hospitals in my local area. The New South Wales Liberal government has confirmed these cuts will start hitting hospitals this year—next month, in fact; not in future years, as the federal government is suggesting. After the budget, the New South Wales Liberal Premier, Mike Baird, said:

We cannot absorb these cuts ...

... … ...

The impact starts on the 1st of July. The equivalent here in New South Wales is over 300 hospital beds in funding disappears.

These cuts will clearly have an impact on preventive health.

It is also worth noting at this point just some of the other budget measures this government has introduced that we know will also have an impact on preventive health. The $391 million of funding for the national partnership agreement for adult public dental services has been deferred and $229 million has been cut from the Dental Flexible Grants Program. Funding has been cut from the Charles Sturt University dental and oral health clinics. The Diagnostic Imaging Quality Program has been stopped. The National Partnership Agreement on Improving Public Hospital Services has been ended. Funding to the World Health Organization has been reduced. GP Education and Training Limited and Health Workforce Australia have been abolished. Funding has also been axed for nursing and allied health scholarships in Tasmania. The list goes on and on.

The rollout of the Partners in Recovery Program, which has been very successful in my electorate, has also been delayed by this government. Nearly $54 million of funding to set up 13 Partners in Recovery centres around Australia has been pushed back for another two years. As the program is already operating in Newcastle we have been spared; however, others
around the country with severe mental illness and complex support needs are left without the much-needed support it offers. Unfortunately, those who need help cannot just 'defer' their illness like the government is deferring the program funding. What a shameful legacy this government is leaving for those living with mental illness, their families and loved ones.

Also, with this budget the Abbott government has gone back to its roots and launched the greatest attack on Medicare and universal health care that our nation has seen. Liberals have always opposed Medicare—it is in their DNA. This Liberal government is no exception, having already commenced their ideological disintegration of our greatest preventive health measure, Medicare. This year we celebrated Medicare's 30th birthday, but if the Liberal Party had not got their way the first time around we would have been celebrating its 40th anniversary. Instead, it took 10 years to get Medicare through the Australian parliament. Despite the wait, few could argue Medicare has not been a benefit to the health of all Australians. We live better, healthier lives because of Medicare. Dismantling Medicare does not make sense. This government is pulling apart the most efficient aspect of our primary healthcare delivery.

A broken promise from the Prime Minister, that there will be no new taxes, is at the core of Medicare's destruction. The introduction of a new $7 GP tax and an increase in the cost of medicines are indeed new taxes that are another hit to preventive health in Australia. This broken promise of no new taxes will cost a typical family up to $270 per year. The GP tax alone will cost Australian families $3.5 billion in out-of-pocket expenses. This is a tax that hits everyone: pensioners, parents, unemployed, low-income earners, people with a disability, even veterans. In my electorate of Newcastle the $7 GP tax will add more than $5 million to the healthcare bills of Novocastrians every year. This is a policy that will hit the 13,000 families in my electorate hard, especially the low- and middle-income families.

The GP tax is flawed policy, and the experts agree. The AMA, the College of Emergency Physicians, the Doctors Reform Society, the Public Health Association, the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, the Consumer Health Forum, the Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association and countless health academics and economists have all advised against this tax, but the government is doing it anyway. What arrogance! The AMA has been especially critical of the tax. They have said that targeting GP services for health savings is a false economy that will lead to much greater health costs down the track. When the discussions on a co-payment were gathering momentum in January, Dr Steve Hambleton, president of the AMA at the time, said general practice was the most efficient part of Australia's health system. His greatest concern, however, were the barriers that the GP tax would put in the way of people seeking relatively inexpensive GP treatment for health complaints that might develop into much more expensive and serious problems if not treated early. In an interview with ABC Radio, Dr Hambleton said:

The main problems we've got with our health system are the growing amounts of chronic disease and our ability to treat lots of diseases that we couldn't treat that well in the past. Our concern is that both people who need to go [to the doctor] and who don't need to go, will not go—because of the co-payment. We do not want people to second-guess the need to see their GP because of cost.

In February when I raised the issue of the government's plan to introduce a GP tax in this place I was heckled by those opposite. They admonished me as a scaremonger, yelling and
interjecting as I highlighted the impact of this attack on Medicare and universal health care and what the GP tax would mean for the people of Newcastle. But as it turns out, as we have seen in this budget and in the Commission of Audit report, there was a plan all along to introduce a GP tax. The backbench may not have been told about this plan, but it was there and the media knew about it too. I did, however, make a mistake when I first spoke about this issue in the House. I suggested a $6 GP tax would hit families hard. Well, a new $7 tax will hit even harder. And the $15 proposed by the Commission of Audit, the Liberal Party's blueprint for the future, will be diabolical.

If the Prime Minister gets his way and the GP tax is introduced, Australia will be left with a two-tiered, American-style health system in which only the richest have good access to quality health care—a system where your wealth determines your health. Labor believes all Australians should get the health care they need, not just the health care they can afford. The Abbott Liberal government are a government with the wrong priorities. Their short-sighted approach to preventive health is a clear example of their misguided direction.

The Australian National Preventive Health Agency does great work. It provides a national capacity to drive preventive health programs and policy. We need a coordinated approach, not a scattergun random approach. Abolishing the agency is not good policy, nor are the Abbott Liberal Government's attacks across the health portfolio. Labor will oppose this bill. Labor will always be the party of health care. This bill, this budget and the actions of this health minister show that the government simply do not get it. They ignore the experts, they ignore the evidence and they ignore the needs of Australian families and pensioners who deserve a world-class health system.

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (19:29): I would like to congratulate the member for Newcastle on her fine contribution to this debate. She is a colleague of mine from the Hunter and I have been able to observe how active she has been in the community in advocating for strong preventive health action. She was very active when Newcastle led the way in addressing the issue of binge drinking and alcohol consumption. I congratulate the member for Newcastle and acknowledge her fine contribution in this area and the fact that she does get it. She does understand how important preventive health care is and how decisions of government can impact on people's health. She understands how the government ripping $80 billion out of health and education will impact on her constituents and how the GP co-payment will affect those people she represents in this parliament as much as the people I represent.

The Australian National Preventive Health Agency (Abolition) Bill 2014 is bad, short-sighted legislation and the Abbott government needs to recognise that the abolition of the agency in combination with ripping money out of the health system and the GP tax will lead to poor health outcomes. In other words, Australians will become sicker and die younger. The agency was established in 2011, and I remember speaking in the original debate in 2010. At that time I implored the then shadow minister for health to support the legislation. I emphasised the importance of making sure we work hard to address issues of preventable diseases. This is best done through a strong preventive health strategy. This government has always looked aversely on preventive health. It has never been supportive of actions to address obesity or drug and alcohol abuse and smoking. They were dragged kicking and screaming to stop accepting donations from tobacco companies.
We on this side of the House believe in a sustainable investment in public health because we believe that will benefit Australian people. It will lower the burden of disease; it will have enormous economic benefits for all Australians. The government's position is a false economy. It shows a total lack of understanding of health that any government would get rid of something like the National Preventive Health Agency. Labor recognises the need for long-term, sustained investment in preventive health and the benefits it achieves in leading to positive health outcomes.

This government is not interested in preventive health. It is more concerned with protecting its mates. The minister responsible for the area of preventive health has removed the food-labelling website. I would like to spend a little bit of time on this. Back in February this year, the minister, Senator Fiona Nash, failed to meet with major health bodies central to her portfolio, despite taking significant decisions, including the removal of the healthy food-rating website. In addition to that, this minister employed a lobbyist as her chief of staff—somebody who was involved in the fast-food industry. When this government has a minister who employs somebody who works in the junk-food industry, it has a total lack of commitment to preventive health and to the issues surrounding preventive health.

The Australian government has introduced in this budget a number of changes to the current preventive health arrangements. An essential function of the National Preventive Health Agency will be transferred to the Department of Health by 30 June 2014 with a view to closing the agency. Closing the agency will come to fruition with the passing of this bill through the parliament. As well, the National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health will be terminated and programs transferred to the department will be integrated into the department's own work. That will handle issues like tobacco usage, obesity and the use of alcohol.

I have touched a little on the way the government has related to tobacco and how it has a long history of being close to the tobacco industry. They finally supported the plain packaging legislation, but they did so reluctantly. It is interesting to see that they are moving away from money that has been invested in the national tobacco control campaign. It is also very interesting to note their approach to obesity. As everybody in this parliament knows, obesity is probably one of the major issues confronting our community. Australia has the second fastest growth rate, and this government, by getting rid of the Preventive Health Agency, is showing that it is not interested in putting in place a strategy to address obesity and to monitor that strategy. This lack of interest will lead to this generation's dying at a younger age. The generation being born now could be the first generation that dies at a younger age than their parents. It is interesting and important to note that the rate of childhood obesity has slowed down since the Preventive Health Agency has been in place. I can only say that with the abolition of the agency there is no guarantee that that will continue. The government has never been committed to addressing the issue of obesity.

In May 2009, a report entitled 'Weighing it up' was tabled in the parliament. In that report a number of recommendations were made. I remember that the member for Mayo, the Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, who is at the table, spent some time on that committee, as did the member for Cook, the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection. On that committee we had some quite heated debates that tended to be about advertising, the promotion of junk food and putting in place proper strategies to address the
obesity epidemic that was taking place in Australia. Some wonderful recommendations were made about diet, weight and physical exercise and about involving the states and territories in programs and negotiations so that there was a whole-of-government approach to addressing the issues of obesity and preventative health.

I do not think the government has moved on from the position that the member for Mayo and the member for Cook took when they were on that committee. They support the fast food industry. They support the tobacco companies. And of course they also support the alcohol industry. It is interesting to note that if there is an area that we as a government need to address it is alcohol consumption. There has been a lot of media interest in issues surrounding alcohol consumption and the fact of young people losing their lives. In the Kings Cross area of Sydney they have put in a curfew, a strategy similar to the one that has been put in place in Newcastle. It is really important to note a few facts about alcohol consumption. The AMA sees it is one of the biggest problems in our society. Not only can alcohol affect a person’s health it can lead to road accidents, domestic violence, vandalism and chaos within our community. As I mentioned just a moment ago, alcohol has led to the death of many young people from one-punch attacks, which have taken place a number of times. I have looked at this very closely. There is evidence of a high level of alcohol use and abuse in Australia, showing that 90 per cent of people have tried alcohol and 83 per cent have consumed an alcoholic drink in the last 12 months. Only about 10 per cent of people have never tried alcohol. The AMA found that about eight per cent of Australians drink daily and about 41 per cent drink weekly. There is an enormous cost associated with alcohol abuse. Alcohol abuse, along with those over two factors—tobacco smoking and obesity—that I spoke about, is responsible for a large number of hospital beds being occupied in this country. Obesity leads to cardiovascular disease, diabetes and cancer. The way to address all these issues is through the Australian National Preventive Health Agency, which this government is seeking to abolish.

Currently, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health is looking at issues surrounding skin cancer. One of the issues that come up time and time again is the need for more research and for education programs. Educating the Australian people on the best way to prevent developing skin cancer, about the way to eat and about ensuring that they do not get sick from the consumption of alcohol and tobacco are very important roles played by the Preventive Health Agency. The agency actually tracks the progress of preventative health programs.

I have heard a number of people on the other side of this House talking about individual responsibility and individual choice. Yes, an individual does have responsibility for their actions, but they need education and they need to be able to develop the knowledge and skills to make the right decisions. Unfortunately, under this government that will not happen. There has been criticism about the My QuitBuddy app at Summernats. That app actually attracted 100,000 hits from 25- to 40-year-olds. It is working to educate people. There has been talk about the fact that $200,000 was spent on a recipe book. If you can teach people how to eat properly, if that recipe book goes out and teaches people the exact kinds of food they need to eat, it has been successful.

This government is a failure in the area of health. It rips money out of basic services. It is going to tax Australians to go and see the doctor. It is going to rip money out of the health
budgets of the states. It is going to ensure that Australians end up getting sicker and dying younger. At the same time it is not putting in place any strategies to address the gap that will be left by the removal of this agency. I condemn the government.

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (19:44): One would have been forgiven for thinking that a Prime Minister who had previously been a minister for health might have led a government that was passionate about health care—but, when it comes to the Abbott government, nothing could be further from the truth. Immediately after coming to power it was clear that this government cared nought about preventative health and was, in fact, determined to undo so much of the very good work that had been done in this space over the last six years.

In November last year, in one of its first acts since coming to power, the Abbott government inexplicably cut funding to the Alcohol and other Drugs Council of Australia. ADCA had operated since 1966 as the peak body for organisations working to minimise the harm caused by drugs and alcohol on an annual budget of just $1.6 million. ADCA was the non-government national peak body, representing the interests of the alcohol and other drugs sector and providing a voice for those who work to reduce the harm caused by alcohol and other drugs.

ADCA collaborated with government and non-government organisations, business and the community to promote evidence-informed, socially just approaches to confront the health, economic and social harm alcohol and other drugs cause individuals, families, communities and the nation. Members of ADCA included organisations, services, agencies and individuals engaged in alcohol and other drugs sector services nationwide. ADCA counted among its membership major university research centres, tertiary institutions offering courses in addiction studies and programs for alcohol and other drugs workers, officers of the law and the criminal justice system, policy analysts and administrators.

ADCA also offered a range of online services and resources to support the alcohol and other drugs sector in Australia, including the: National Drug Sector Information Service; the Register of Australian Drug and Alcohol Research; the National Inhalants Information Service; the Drug Database; Drugfields, which was a professional development, policy and practice information service for the alcohol and drug sector; Update, an alcohol and other drugs information bulletin board; and Drugtalk, an alcohol and other drugs discussion list. These services, like ADCA, have now all been abolished.

The decision to axe ADCA truly came out of the blue. Last year, under the Labor government, ADCA received an assurance of its ongoing funding. On 14 October last year, the new Prime Minister Abbott wrote to ADCA and said, 'I look forward to working with you in the years ahead.' Yet, just six weeks after the Prime Minister wrote these words, ADCA was axed. Understandably, ADCA has been wondering why. In 46 years this is the only government that has decided it can do without ADCA's advice.

The minister responsible for preventative health, Senator Nash, has failed to provide us with a reason. The AMA said closing ADCA was a bad idea. The National Alliance for Action on Alcohol said it was a bad idea. The Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education said it was a bad idea. But the Abbott government and the minister ignored them all.
In February of this year, the Abbott government's already poor track record in preventative health worsened substantially when Senator Nash, through her chief of staff, ordered the removal of the health star rating website within 24 hours of its launch. This health star rating system is a voluntary system for food manufacturers to display star ratings based on the nutritional quality of their food. Two years were spent developing this system. It was two years of research, trials and consultation to work out how to improve food labelling—and it was pulled down within 24 hours. The health star system would have allowed people to more easily compare different brands of packaged food to see which ones are higher in hidden salts, saturated fats and sugars. It is a much-needed step in our ongoing battle against obesity.

After the website was taken down, it was revealed that Senator Nash's chief of staff, who had also played an instrumental role in the axing of ADCA, is the co-owner of a lobbying firm that has represented major food companies who were vocally opposed to the new health star labelling system. According to Fairfax, he also co-owns a company which, in turn, owns another that lobbied for the alcohol industry. This, to me, is the ultimate indicator of the Abbott government's attitude towards preventative health. The person hired by the Abbott government to be the key advisor to the minister responsible for preventative health had spent a considerable amount of their career working for, and still had a financial interest in, companies that actively and aggressively lobbied against the messages of preventative health.

It is no real surprise, then, that the next step in the Abbott government's war on preventative health was to abolish the Australian National Preventive Health Agency, which they seek to do through this legislation. Labor established the agency on 1 January 2011 to support the development and implementation of evidence based approaches to preventative health initiatives. The agency has a particular focus on the areas of obesity and harmful alcohol consumption. The establishment of a dedicated preventative health agency that could work across jurisdictions was widely supported. In November 2008, COAG had signed the National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health, which included an agreement to establish a dedicated preventative health agency. The National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission's report of July 2009 and the final report of the National Preventative Health Taskforce of September 2009 had both also recommended the establishment of such an agency. Establishing the Preventive Health Agency also had the support of community organisations in the health sector, including the National Heart Foundation, the Public Health Association and the Royal Australasian College of Physicians—to name a few.

The Preventive Health Agency plays a leadership role in preventative health and health promotion, it coordinates, analyses and advises on key statistics and data in relation to chronic disease and prevention and it delivers and administers the Preventive Health Research Fund. One of the key benefits of the Preventive Health Agency is that it does work across jurisdictions. It supports all Australian health ministers in managing the complex challenges of preventable chronic disease. The agency has also worked with Medicare Locals to implement preventative health measures at the primary healthcare level.

I want to talk now about one of the recent initiatives of the Preventive Health Agency. As part of the National Binge Drinking Strategy, the agency ran the 'Be the influence—tackling binge drinking' campaign to help give young people the tools to cope with peer pressure and ensure every night out is a good one. The message of this campaign was that drinking responsibly and having a great night out can go together. In fact, a night out is always better
when you are in control and do not put yourself at risk or risk being a burden on your mates. The campaign focuses on communicating with youth where youth are, and so the campaign centres around social media—Facebook, Twitter and Instagram—music festivals and sporting events.

Recently the Department of Finance, through the Cross Agency Social Media Forum—a group of social media users across the Public Service—tracked which government departments, agencies and campaigns attract the most Facebook 'likes' and the most Twitter followers. This research found that the Be the Influence—Tackling Binge Drinking campaign Facebook page is one of the most popular Australian government social media pages in history, with over 189,000 likes to date.

The reason I mentioned this is that so many of the government speakers on this legislation have lambasted the agency for using social media for campaigns and for thinking outside the box when it comes to delivering preventative health messages. But, I ask those opposite: what better way is there to communicate with young people—like you do, yourselves—than in the spaces that they use, such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram? The fact is that an ad in a newspaper simply isn't going to cut it when it comes to sending a message about binge drinking to teenagers. Plus, it is expensive.

In their speeches on this legislation, some of those opposite have also spoken about preventative health as a luxury. They have said: 'Let's fix tertiary health first. Once we have done that we can consider looking at preventative health.' What those opposite fail to understand is that you will never 'fix' tertiary health unless you invest in preventative health.

The speeches of those opposite on this legislation have shown just how out of touch they are when it comes to preventative health. They just do not understand it and they do not support it. They think of it as easily dispensable, an overreach of government or an added extra. They fail to understand that preventative health is a crucial component of public health policy, pivotal in ensuring a strong and sustainable health care system.

Let us not forget that abolishing ADCA, pulling down the Health Star Rating website and abolishing the Preventative Health Agency are not the only attacks on preventative health from this government—far from it. The Abbott government's budget of broken also promises to: scrap the National Partnership Agreement on Preventative Health; scrap the National Partnership on Improving Public Hospital Services; cut hospital funding; increase the cost of prescriptions; significantly downgrade the role of Medicare Locals; rip $125 million out of Aboriginal health programs; and introduce the GP co-payment, a financial barrier that will deter people from accessing primary health care. That is just what we know about.

I would call this a sustained and brutal attack on our health system, not to mention a broken promise from a Prime Minister who said as recently as the day before the budget that there would be no cuts to health. The government calls this making our health system more sustainable. That is complete and a nonsense. It shows again just how little understanding the government has about the benefits of preventative health. Investing in preventative health is the best way—in fact the only way—to ensure we have a sustainable health system in the long term. Labor opposes this legislation because we recognise the need for long-term, sustained investment in preventative health. We recognise that preventive health is pivotal to ensuring a strong and sustainable health care system. Abolishing the Preventative Health Agency is short-sighted. The cost to future generations of Australians will be immeasurable.
Finally, I want to add that the Australian National Preventative Health Agency is located here in Canberra, and many of its hardworking, dedicated and specialised employees are my constituents. So tonight, I want to say to them: thank you. Thank you for all that you have done for the health of this country. It has not gone unnoticed. I know that many of you are now in a state of uncertainty, unsure if you will have a job at the end of the month, unsure if the work you have dedicated your lives to for the last three years will continue. I want to assure you that Labor will continue to fight for preventative health and oppose the Abbott government's reckless and damaging cuts to health.

Mr SNOWDON (Lindiari) (19:56): It gives me no pleasure to be participating in this debate. This is a debate we should not be having. To abolish this agency is, I think, a demonstration of how short-sighted the government's health policies are and how ill-conceived they are. The fact that they are ill-conceived should worry us all. They are ill-conceived because, clearly, they have decided that somehow or another advocating against obesity, looking at ways we can stop kids getting obese; making sure adults understand what they need to do to be healthy; and making sure that we look at the impact of alcohol and tobacco on the community, are things the government thinks are a luxury. Frankly, that is a great disservice to this nation of ours.

It is worth just contemplating from moment that COAG committed $932 million to the National Partnership Agreement on Preventative Health in 2008. That was extended by three years in 2012. Of course, the Australian National Preventative Health Agency, established as it was in 2011, is the mainstay of that agreement. This bill seeks to abolish that agency. It is worth just reminding ourselves what that the agency was established to do. It was a key element, as I said, of the COAG agreed National Partnership Agreement on Preventative Health and, from the department's website, it says:

The Agency assists in driving the prevention agenda, including by:

- providing evidence-based advice to health Ministers;
- supporting the development of evidence and data on the state of preventive health in Australia and the effectiveness of preventative health interventions; and
- putting in place national guidelines and standards to guide preventative health activities.

The Agency is responsible for a number of programs outlined in the Agreement including:

- two national social marketing programs relating to tobacco use and obesity;
- managing the Preventive Health Research Fund focusing on translational research; and
- managing the development of a National Preventive Health Workforce Strategy in partnership with Health Workforce Australia.

I would have thought they were eminently sensible objectives and functions for an organisation like this, and eminently sensible functions to be undertaken by an organisation like this at the request of a national government.

I have heard the contributions of many of those opposite in the government talking about people 'accepting personal responsibility for their health'—and a whole range of other fairly silly proposals, ideas and criticisms which really do not go to the substance of why you should abolish an organisation like this.

Why should you abolish an organisation like this? It is not as if it is a body which worked in isolation. It worked in conjunction with the department and with other agencies. It has a
professional advisory council, whose membership included Professor Christine Bennett as the chair, Professor Rob Moodie as the deputy chair, Mr David Butt, Professor Michael Daube, Ms Judith Munro, Dr Lyn Roberts, Dr Roscoe Taylor, Ms Pat Turner, the Hon. Trish Worth, a former member of this place, and Dr Jeannette Young. These are eminently responsible Australians who have the capacity, foresight and knowledge to act as advisory council members for the agency. They did their job with competence and aplomb, and provided insights to government, to the health department and to other agencies about why it was important, and is important, to retain competence in prevention. It has had—and should still have, in my view—a national lead role in preventative health across this country.

Examining the agency’s functions in some detail reveals its status as a necessary criterion in preventative health strategy and practice, including: to understand and use the link between lifestyle, behaviours and chronic disease risk; to address the rising prevalence of smoking related chronic disease; to collect essential population health data, including data specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities; to establish national preventative health guidelines and standards; to evaluate the effectiveness of preventative health interventions; to run social marketing programs relating to tobacco use and obesity; and of course, as I said earlier, to provide management of other things.

I spoke to someone just a day or so ago, someone who I regard as one of Australia’s national experts in health prevention, public health policy and population health policy, someone who should be listened to by this government. When I spoke to him, he said: 'Cutting the agreement with the states is awful. Prevention is an essential service. This is as bad as stopping renal clinics or cardiac surgery.'

We need to put this in some sort of context. Why is it that it could be so difficult? Why is it that it is so important? I live in the Northern Territory, and we have some of the highest chronic disease management issues in the country. They revolve largely around Aboriginal communities, who have diseases which relate to all the things that this organisation was set up to address, including a very high incidence of smoking, renal failure, diabetes, heart failure and a range of other diseases which need to be addressed and which are all preventable.

What this government says to those communities is effectively: 'We are not really interested in trying to prevent the disease. We will try and treat them'—although treatment will become more difficult and less attainable for many as a result of other decisions in this budget around co-payments and access. Nevertheless, the government is clearly saying that they are not interested in prevention: 'We do not care how much you smoke. We do not care what food you eat. We simply do not care. It is your responsibility to look after your own health. When you get crook and go to a clinic or a doctor, pay up front—if you can afford it—and you will get treatment.' That is so short-sighted and stupid that even the government should recognise the problems with it.

It is interesting because the previous speaker, the member for Canberra, spoke about cuts to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health monies. As a result of the estimates process this week we learned that preventative health programs make up the bulk of cuts to Indigenous health, particularly the Tackling Smoking and Healthy Lifestyle programs. Why would you do this? Why would you go about cutting these programs?
Let me just remind you about ongoing measures in the budget which have now been cut substantially by this government: $106 million was made available over four years from 2009-10, an ongoing measure, so money was available for this, to tackle smoking in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as part of the COAG agreement; $58.3 million for tackling Indigenous smoking workforce and on-costs; $18.8 million for regional tackling smoking funds; $10 million for training resources and programs, including brief interventions and so on.

Why is this important? Let's just comprehend why this is important. In 2003 smoking was responsible for one-fifth of the deaths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Tobacco smoking directly caused one-third of cancer and cardiovascular disease burden in that population.

It is important to understand that improvements have been achieved in smoking rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, with a decline in smoking from 51 per cent in 2002 to 47 per cent in 2008—and I believe there has been a subsequent decline as well. Compare this to the smoking rate for all people in Australia, which was 23.2 per cent in 2001, 19.4 per cent in 2007 and 18.1 per cent in 2010, and it has come down significantly since. What would you have in your mind that you would say to the community, 'Smoking rates are okay; we don't need to have healthy lifestyle workers or tobacco action workers in Aboriginal communities anymore because really only half of them smoke'?

When you make that sort of statement, do you then ask what diseases have resulted from this use of tobacco? As I have just explained, one-fifth of the deaths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are attributed to tobacco smoking—and we are told that there is no need for the preventive health agency that the government is seeking to get rid of! You will not stop people smoking unless you educate them, work with them, understand what their needs are and try to make sure that they appreciate what smoking does to their health and then provide them with the services that are available.

We learnt this week why it is important to have prevention measures in place. A very timely paper was released by the *Australian Medical Journal*, which talks about solid evidence that better access to primary health care in remote Northern Territory communities saves money by preventing costly hospitalisation and improves health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people—in this case Aboriginal patients with diabetes. What is important about this particular study is that it tells us that primary health care is an effective and efficient way of providing basic health services that promote health and prevent illness. It tells us how important primary health care is in delivering services. It also tells us that if you deliver these primary healthcare services in a proper way, and in conjunction with the other things that are happening in remote communities, you can actually improve the health outcomes for these populations.

What it tells us is something the government does not seem to want to hear—because, if you are going to achieve these outcomes, a co-payment ain't going to help you. The importance of the co-payment in this sense is that we will have these preventative health measures and educative programs—developed by organisations such as this agency the government is trying to knock off tonight—to educate people about the importance of taking particular actions in their lives being delivered by primary care organisations. I say to the minister: I am not sure why you would want to do this. I appreciate that you are the
government and I appreciate that you have every right to determine your own budgets, but this particular budget measure is short-sighted and will, in the longer term, be something which you will regret and the Australian community will regret, because it will mean, ultimately, that many of the measures we want people to understand are important to them and their own health—and which are therefore a cost to the community—so they understand what they should do ameliorate the impacts on them and their community will not be clearly understood and appreciated. Sadly, that is an indictment upon you and this government.

Mr DUTTON (Dickson—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (20:11): I want to thank members for their contributions to the debate on the Australian National Preventive Health Agency (Abolition) Bill 2014. As has been acknowledged during the debate, it is essential that our health system supports the health needs and outcomes of all Australians. In this context there is a role for the Australian government to play in supporting effective preventative health efforts. Part of this role is providing leadership to streamline and better coordinate public health efforts that are currently spread across agencies and to ensure there is no unnecessary duplication or waste of taxpayer funds. This is particularly the case when such inefficiencies are not enhancing health policy or the health system.

Repealing the Australian National Preventive Health Agency Act 2010 and thereby abolishing the Australian National Preventive Health Agency—otherwise known as ANPHA—will reduce unnecessary duplication, red tape and regulation and enable the Australian government's focus on preventative health to be more cohesive, holistic and efficient. For Labor, this agency was always about symbolism over substance. The current arrangements create inefficiency, duplication and confusion. They add another layer of red tape and regulation which are not needed to support preventative health policies and improved health outcomes for Australians.

Abolishing ANPHA through this bill demonstrates our commitment to getting money away from bureaucratic structures and back to frontline services, including in the area of preventative health. A separately established Commonwealth funded agency is not needed for a focus to be given to this area within the health portfolio. The necessary work in this area will be continued under more efficient arrangements in the Department of Health. This bill will enable efficiency and effectiveness in terms of the delivery of functions, the most efficient use of government funding and an ongoing national focus on preventative health priorities.

It is understandable that this issue is contentious, but it goes to the heart of the choice about how we govern. On one side of the debate we have those who favour symbolism and bureaucracy over clinical outcomes and patient improvement. ANPHA has spent its time and, more importantly, taxpayers' money examining fat taxes, sponsoring burnouts at Summernats and on fake music festivals. It has been supported by those who mistake programs for outcomes. On this side of the House we believe a good government is judged by what it achieves, not by what it spends. We believe that health outcomes are best delivered through frontline services, through doctors and nurses who care for patients, through the vaccines that prevent disease and through medical research.

We recognise that people need to take responsibility for the choices they make that impact on their health, and this includes supporting their efforts to address alcohol, tobacco and obesity by ensuring that information is available for the public to inform these choices. The
Commonwealth’s work with stakeholders, seeking expert advice or forming productive working relationships with other bodies, will continue—just without the significant overhead costs of another agency.

I am pleased to have introduced the Australian National Preventive Health Agency (Abolition) Bill 2014 as one of many steps required to achieve much needed efficiencies, given the waste of the last six years, within the Commonwealth health portfolio. It will in turn benefit the public health sector and the Australian population more broadly. I want to thank all of those who have supported the bill and recognise the immediate and longer term benefits that it will produce.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Vasta): The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

The House divided. [20:19]

(The Deputy Speaker—Mr Vasta)

Ayes ..................... 76
Noes ..................... 48
Majority .................. 28

AYES

Alexander, JG          Andrews, KJ
Andrews, KL            Baldwin, RC
Billson, BF            Briggs, JE
Broad, AJ              Broadbent, RE
Brough, MT             Buchholz, S (teller)
Chester, D             Christensen, GR
Ciobo, SM              Cobb, JK
Coulton, M (teller)    Dutton, PC
Entsch, WG             Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA         Gambaro, T
Gillespie, DA          Goodenough, IR
Griggs, NL             Hartsuyker, L
Henderson, SM          Hendy, PW
Hockey, JB             Hogan, KJ
Howarth, LR            Hunt, GA
Hutchinson, ER         Irons, SJ
Jensen, DG             Jones, ET
Joyce, BT              Laming, A
Landry, ML             Ley, SP
Macfarlane, IE         Marino, NB
McCormack, MF          McNamara, KJ
Morrison, SJ           Nikolic, AA
O’Dowd, KD            O’Dwyer, KM
Pasin, A               Pitt, KJ
Porter, CC             Prentice, J
Pyne, CM               Ramsey, RE
Robb, AJ               Robert, SR
Roy, WB                Ruddock, PM
Scott, BC              Simpkins, LXL
Smith, ADH             Southcott, AJ
Stone, SN              Sudmalis, AE
Sukkar, MS            Taylor, AJ
Tehan, DT              Truss, WE
### Question agreed to.

**Bill read a second time.**

#### Third Reading

**Mr DUTTON** (Dickson—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (20:27): by leave—

I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

**Health Workforce Australia (Abolition) Bill 2014**

#### Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.
Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (20:28): It is very important that I am able to speak on the Health Workforce Australia (Abolition) Bill 2014 tonight, because if we do not plan for our future health work force on a national scale we will not have the right number and type of health professionals to meet the health care needs of Australia in the future. The Australian population is growing older, and we are living longer. We will have more complex health care needs with the rise of chronic conditions such as diabetes. And they will need access to services more often. This means the cost of providing these services will increase. Our current health work force is already under tremendous pressure to meet the health care needs of the nation. This pressure is only going to increase in the coming years. Our health work force is also ageing. There are more health professionals retiring, and this rate will be increasing over the coming years. There are also fewer young workers coming through to replace them.

National health work force planning is a critical part of addressing this looming crisis and ensuring that we have a sustainable and affordable health work force that is able to meet the needs of the people wherever they live. We need to take a national approach to health workforce planning to ensure that we have the right numbers and types of doctors, nurses and allied health professionals in the places—importantly—where we need them. We need to plan on a national level now because of the length of time it takes to complete medical or health service training.

We cannot go back to the mistakes of the past, where for 20 years health workforce planning did not exist. In the past there was a piecemeal and reactive approach to medical and nursing training, immigration and workforce deployment. This led to a boom-bust cycle in the supply of doctors, nurses and allied health professionals because the system reacted in an ad hoc fashion. This has also resulted in a maldistribution of health professionals which particularly affects regional and rural areas.

This scenario is unsustainable and unaffordable and will result in a health workforce that will not be able to meet the increasing demands for health care now and into the future. This was recognised in 2006 with the Productivity Commission report *Australia's health workforce*. This report concluded that a more sustainable and responsive health workforce was needed. The report also highlighted the complexity of Australia's health workforce arrangements and the involvement of numerous bodies at all levels in health workforce education and training.

These are the mistakes of the previous coalition government and the mess that we inherited when we came back to office in 2007. Indeed, 74 per cent of Australia faced a medical workforce shortage when Labor took office in 2007. This affected 60 per cent of the population, including many constituents in my electorate of Kingston who struggled to find a local GP. Of course, it was not limited to my local electorate; it was right across the country. There was no vision and no policy from the Howard era, in which the now Prime Minister was the Minister for Health and Ageing. It seems that this pattern will now continue under this new Prime Minister.

Indeed, when Labor came to office, we had to start fixing up the mess that the previous health minister, now the Prime Minister, had left. In 2008, Labor funded a $1.1 billion National Partnership Agreement on Hospital and Health Workforce Reform, which included more funding for undergraduate clinical training, an increase in postgraduate training places...
and a huge capital investment into teaching and training infrastructure to expand teaching and training, especially in major regional hospitals to improve clinical training in rural Australia.

As part of this agreement, we established a national health workforce agency, Health Workforce Australia. Importantly, its job was to drive a long-term vision and plan for our health workforce. It commenced operation in January 2010 following the enactment of the Health Workforce Australia Act 2009. Health Workforce Australia's national responsibilities include funding, planning and coordinating clinical training across all health disciplines and jurisdictions; supporting health workforce research and planning; funding simulation training; and progressing new workforce models and reforms. In establishing Health Workforce Australia, we recognised that a national coordinated approach was needed to create a health workforce able to meet the current and future healthcare needs of all communities. We recognised that, without strategic and coordinated reform, the demand could not be met and the challenges could not be overcome. We recognised that reform must be national and large scale and that it must cut across jurisdictional, sectoral and professional boundaries.

During the last four years, Health Workforce Australia has achieved far more than any previous coalition government has achieved in health workforce planning. Health Workforce Australia produced the first-ever national long-term projections for doctors, nurses and midwives in the 2012 publication *Health workforce 2025—doctors, nurses and midwives.* This document cannot be underplayed. *Health workforce 2025* represents the first time that health workforce planning has been conducted on a national level. The three volumes of this landmark report highlight a range of major issues facing our health workforce. Under current policy settings, Australia will face a significant shortage of nurses and a less significant shortage of doctors by 2025. It also found that Australia will continue to remain highly dependent on migration of international health professionals, particularly in rural and remote communities.

As a result of *Health workforce 2025*, Health Workforce Australia provided a set of policy proposals to address these serious challenges, which were subsequently approved by health ministers. These actions include improving productivity through workforce innovation and reform; improving mechanisms for the provision of efficient training through the establishment of a National Medical Training Advisory Network; examining the barriers to and enablers for workforce reform; streamlining clinical training through the development of nationally consistent approaches to funding clinical training opportunities in public, non-government and private sectors; and investigating the implications of increasing self-sufficiency in the medical workforce.

Health Workforce Australia has been leading the implementation of this reform effort in partnership with government, the higher education and training sector, the health sectors, employers, professions and regulatory bodies. But its achievements do not stop there. Health Workforce Australia's Clinical Training Funding program has successfully expanded the clinical training capacity of our health workforce. This investment in infrastructure saw clinical training facilities being built or refurbished in urban, regional and rural Australia.

There are many great examples of this investment in clinical training infrastructure, but I will just highlight a few. The projects include the Adelaide Women's Health Centre, a project that was a collaboration between the Women's and Children's Hospital and the University of Adelaide. Thanks to the investment of Health Workforce Australia, the health clinic was
refurbished and student and consulting rooms were developed. This refurbished facility allowed medical students to gain real-life clinical training experience and develop their expertise in women's health.

Another great Health Workforce Australia investment was at the Graylands Hospital in partnership with the WA Department of Health to improve teaching for nurses in mental health. Through the Clinical Training Funding program, the funding allowed the department to remodel and the hospital to become a centre of excellence in education and research for nursing. New areas for group work student nurses were established, and there was an increase in capacity in clinical areas. This investment allowed students to gain the maximum exposure to training in nursing and mental health, as well as increasing the facility's capacity for students by 94 per cent. In addition, they were able to learn from vastly experienced clinicians and address the shortage of mental health nurses.

Student accommodation to support clinical placements was also funded by Health Workforce Australia. This program has already achieved 8,400 new quality clinical training places for students over 22 individual disciplines. This has included new and refurbished accommodation for medical and nursing students. This has supported students to undertake clinical placements, particularly in rural and remote areas. One of these examples includes mobile accommodation and learning areas for students on clinical practice from Southern Cross University in New South Wales. This has allowed the university to support students to undertake placements in rural and remote communities in areas where the infrastructure was previously not in place. This meant that clinical training opportunities in those communities would not occur. These mobile accommodation units have been able to quickly respond to support students to complete these placements in otherwise out-of-reach communities. The refurbished student accommodation next to the local health service in Geraldton, Western Australia, allows students to stay in rural areas for a longer period of time. The results of this Health Workforce Australia funded initiative have been the ability to get students to undertake clinical placements in rural areas, to ensure that they are rural workforce ready and to entice them to come back and work in these areas when they are qualified.

In addition to these achievements, Health Workforce Australia has supported a 115 per cent increase in simulation education hours in 2012, through its Simulated Learning Environments program. Simulated learning provides a realistic, cost-effective and flexible alternative to clinical training. An example of this is in the purpose-built simulation centre which was a collaboration between Mater Health Services, Brisbane, and the University of Queensland. The addition of the purpose-built simulation centre has ensured that nurses and midwives are clinically confident when they graduate. It has ensured they understand how to manage a whole case, including emergencies that may arise, and learn different skills, which before this purpose-built centre, they would have never had the opportunity to rehearse.

Another investment in simulated learning education can be seen with the SA Ambulance Service's vehicle crash simulator, which allows paramedics and ambulance officers across the state to undertake realistic simulated emergency training exercises. The vehicle crash simulator is the first of its type to be developed by an Australian ambulance service. The simulator is a modified Holden Commodore that can be dismantled section by section to simulate an extrication. All four doors, their windows, the B-pillar and the roof can be removed to help provide a realistic environment for car crash scenarios. The vehicle crash
simulator is part of SA Ambulance Service's mobile simulation training unit, which also includes a decommissioned ambulance and car carrier trailer to transport the unit across the state. This is another great example of how Health Workforce Australia's investment was building the capacity of those in our health workforce, and paramedics in particular.

In the 2013-14 budget, the Labor government invested more than $344 million through Health Workforce Australia to support Australia's healthcare system and its workforce, especially in rural and remote areas where support programs are vital in addressing workforce shortages. It is disappointing that, when this government came to office, it put a freeze on all unallocated funds, ensuring that no money left the door.

Health Workforce Australia jointly funded the construction of Australia's first national test centre with the Australian Medical Council. The facility in Melbourne, which opened in July 2013, enables international medical graduates to take their clinical examinations. The centre was a direct response to the House of Representatives *Lost in the labyrinth* report, which highlighted the need to clear the backlog of IMGs waiting to sit their examinations.

Health Workforce Australia has delivered an additional 446 nurses and allied health professionals to rural and remote communities. Health Workforce Australia also responded to new and innovative ways of getting the best out of our workforce, through its Expanded Scopes of Practice program, which aimed to increase workforce productivity, recruitment and retention by expanding the scope and uptake of established health professional roles. Since July 2012, Health Workforce Australia has supported 27 project sites across 25 organisations from around Australia to develop and implement expanded scope of practice initiatives. These include expanding the scope of nurses in eight emergency departments and physiotherapists in nine sites to help manage the increasing number of patients presenting to emergency departments; five projects where advanced practice in endoscopy nursing has led to increased capacity and productivity in gastrointestinal endoscopy to help meet an increasing demand; and extending the role of paramedics in five sites, a project which aims to provide care to patients in their usual place of residence, thereby reducing the number of emergency department admissions and transfers to other health facilities.

There have already been tangible results from this program. Between January 2013 and January 2014, the nurse endoscopist trainees completed 1,259 colonoscopies. A nurse endoscopy program implemented at Victoria's Monash Health has reduced its seven-year waiting list for routine endoscopic procedures to a maximum of 40 days, from its initial waiting list of 400 people. This is a significant achievement. This initiative has certainly changed people's lives and helped patients get the treatment they need and given them peace of mind.

An initiative to expand the scope of practice for physiotherapists in emergency departments has also been a resounding success. This initiative involved experienced musculoskeletal physiotherapists undertaking a primary contact role for suitable patients with musculoskeletal injuries. These highly trained physiotherapists have increased competency and autonomy in areas such as simple fracture management, interpretation of imaging and referral to specialist services. Indeed, at Ballarat Health Services, their expanded scope of practice physiotherapists have received rave reviews from patients.

In conjunction with the ED team, the expanded scope of practice physiotherapists have treated patients with musculoskeletal injuries at the weekend, caused mainly by sporting
activities. Patients ranging from junior netball players to self-employed businessmen would have faced significant waiting times in ED prior to the expanded scope of practice physiotherapists initiative. But these patients now receive treatment when they need it quickly and they are back at work or school on Monday. The treatment from the expanded scope of practice has enabled doctors to treat patients with more serious injuries.

Another major success of this program was extending the role of paramedics. These are experienced paramedics with advanced training and skills in patient assessment, the delivery of quality care and the coordination of appropriate referral pathways. Extended care paramedics treat identified patients in collaboration with other health professionals in their usual place of residence, thus reducing emergency department presentation and interfacility transfer. This model of care was customised in South Australia, Tasmania, the Northern Territory and the ACT.

Preliminary findings show that patients are being treated in situ and are avoiding transport to an emergency department in around 70 per cent of cases. This is another real example of the model working well and a model benefiting from the funding.

Another example of this extended scope of practice working is at residential aged-care facilities in Tasmania where there has been a break-out of gastroenteritis. Extended care paramedics were able to provide in-home treatment and support to residents and staff, resulting in several residents avoiding having to go to hospital. It also saw minimal disruption to both residents and staff. It is hard to believe—and I have only provided some of the evidence—that Health Workforce Australia has been in existence for only four years because it has achieved a lot.

However, the coalition government are proposing to abolish Health Workforce Australia as part of their cruel budget. They want to turn their back on the health workforce and health workforce planning. It does not seem to matter that Health Workforce Australia has achieved more than any other coalition administration. It does not seem to matter that they are delivering on clinical training hours, more efficient and effective workplaces, and health workforce strategies. This has caused alarm bells to ring not just for us on this side of the House but also for many other third parties around this country. For instance, Dr John Hall, of the Rural Doctors Association of Australia has expressed his fears about the closure of Health Workforce Australia. He said, 'It is critical that the good work the agency has already achieved is not lost.'

The Health Workforce Australia (Abolition) Bill 2014 seeks to repeal the Health Workforce Australia Bill 2009 and to absorb Health Workforce Australia's functions and programs into the Department of Health. The Health Workforce Australia (Abolition) Bill 2014 will transfer Health Workforce Australia's functions and programs to the Department of Health.

Our concerns about this bill are very simple. If this bill is passed the complex planning work will not occur on a national level and the burden will fall on the states and territories. This government seems to be determined to dismantle universal health care and consign our country to a return to a piecemeal approach to health workforce planning, which will result in a boom-bust cycle in the supply of doctors, nurses and allied health professionals. Without Health Workforce Australia there will be no investment in clinical training. This government has
is neglecting tomorrow's health professionals and ripping away training opportunities that they need.

The agency was an independent body that worked collaboratively with a number of key stakeholders and had direct links with states and territories. I think this is an incredibly important point: that on the board of Health Workforce Australia there were representatives from the states and territories, the Commonwealth, and training facilities, universities. So everyone who had a stake in training our future health workforce was represented. Unfortunately, as soon as they came to government, those on the other side turned their backs. They refused to appoint a permanent CEO, making it clear before they had received any advice, that they had no intention whatsoever of ensuring that Health Workforce Australia was a success. Indeed, they refused to re-appoint board members when there was a vacancy. Up until their announcement, there were only four board members left, out of a possible 13. So, once again, that shows huge neglect of this important independent body.

Importantly, this board had links with universities. These are so important because it is universities that train our medical workforce. They are focused on providing leadership, advice, research and funding to address the challenges of building a sustainable health workforce for our future. These relationships will be now be lost if this bill is passed.

As a member of parliament from South Australia, there are deep concerns about the future of the 130 staff, based mainly in Adelaide. A number are also based in Melbourne and other cities and these jobs are now in jeopardy. It remains to be seen how many Health Workforce staff, who have a great deal of expertise in all facets of the health workforce, will go to Canberra and work for the department. In fact, many have less than a week to decide their fate. Indeed, many will decide not to come to Canberra. Therefore, they may not have the opportunity in Adelaide to work in the area that they love.

In addition, we know that while the coalition is saying that this department will be able to just as effectively and efficiently be run as the Department of Health, we know that that was not the case under the previous government and that it did not happen. It did not work and that is why so many people supported the creation of Health Workforce Australia and why there have been so many people willing to work in a collaborative way to see that these projects are a success.

We also know that, in addition to perhaps not having the expertise and ability to engage with stakeholders in the way that the board of Health Workforce Australia was able to do, approximately $142 million is being ripped out of Health Workforce Australia. We know from Senate estimates hearings today that there will be no more money going out of the door, funding clinical placements on the ground. We know from Senate estimates that there is no certainty about the simulated learning environments that I spoke about previously and the success they had. Indeed, the department has revealed today that they probably will not exist after December 2014. So not only is the coalition trying to pull the wool over people's eyes with 'Nothing to see here, health workforce planning will still go ahead,' what we really know from Senate estimates today is that there is no money there anymore. There is no money going out to universities, going out to health services, going out to rural and regional areas to help with clinical placements and clinical funding. This is a real travesty, especially when we are dealing with this challenge for the future.
There are a number of questions that need to be posed and have not been answered. How will the Department of Health continue the momentum of the programs, or will they just fizzle into the history books? How can this government assure the House that this good work will continue when money is being ripped out? How can this government assure the House that national health workforce planning will continue if only a handful of Health Workforce Australia staff are relocated and work in Canberra? Health Workforce Australia has a proven track record in national health workforce planning. Why break something that doesn't need breaking? Surely this is ideology gone astray. This scenario is unsustainable and unaffordable and will result in a health workforce that will not be able to meet the increasing demands. Of course, the government have argued that this is all about getting rid of health bureaucracy and cutting red tape. However, by abolishing Health Workforce Australia, and indeed other organisations such as Medicare Locals, they are indeed cutting the very quality of our future health care.

Those on the other side have said they want to direct money into frontline services, but where are those frontline services going to happen if there are not the doctors, the nurses and the allied health care professionals to deliver them? We know that they are cutting billions of dollars from hospitals, preventive health and indeed primary health. In addition, we are now seeing cuts to health workforce training. Labor opposes this bill. We will not stand by and let this government throw a wrecking ball at Health Workforce Australia and smash all of its good work.

The Prime Minister promised not to cut health. We now know he is putting a $7 tax every time you go to the doctor and is cutting billions from our hospitals. He is also abolishing Medicare Locals. This seems to be an ideological assault on the health care of this country, an ideological assault that is about ensuring that if people can afford health care they get it and if they cannot afford health care then bad luck. But when it comes to health workforce planning, I had hoped that the Prime Minister would have learnt from his mistakes while he was health minister. At that time there was a significant problem when it came to health workforce planning in this country, and surely after the mistakes of the past he would have had a bit of a flare go up when this proposal came to cabinet. He would say, 'Look, I don't think it's right that we don't plan properly for our health workforce. I remember the trouble I got into when I didn't plan for the health workforce needs.' Unfortunately, it has not been the case and ideology has won out.

All the good work that has been done by Health Workforce Australia to improve the workings of our services, to ensure that rural and regional areas actually get the services that they deserve, to ensure that students have the best possible training and that models of care are done in the most efficient way—you would think that would be a priority of the government when they are talking about an efficient health system. You would think that having the most efficient model of health care would be something to strive for, but no—the body that worked towards ensuring lower emergency department presentations by extending scope of practice for medical practitioners abolished, not just the agency that delivered it but the program abolished by December 2014. It is of great concern to Labor. We will oppose this bill. We believe in putting practicalities of planning for our future health workforce before ideology and therefore we will not be supporting this bill.
Mr TUDGE (Aston—Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister) (20:57): I rise to speak on this bill with a few minutes remaining before we adjourn for the evening. The first point I wanted to make is that the Commonwealth does not employ any doctors, does not employ any nurses, does not employ any physiotherapists, does not employ any occupational therapists—indeed, does not employ any health workers. The Commonwealth government does not do that because that is the role of the state governments and of private entities. The state governments have responsibilities for hospitals, the state governments have responsibility for most of the primary health care, and that is where the doctors and the nurses are employed. So one of the reasons why we are abolishing this entity—not the programs, just the entity—is because we do not actually employ any of the doctors and nurses. It is a classic Labor agency, isn't it, a Health Workforce Australia agency supposedly to do all this terrific planning of the health workforce when we do not actually have any health workers employed by the Commonwealth. There are 21 health agencies in the Commonwealth despite not employing any doctors and nurses. This is a sensible measure. Yes, it is to save some money but it also is to make the overall system work more effectively and more efficiently. We have previously debated the abolition of the Australian National Preventive Health Agency and now we are debating the abolition of the Health Workforce Australia agency. We are doing this in order to make the overall system of governance more effective.

The second point I would make is that many of the programs that were being run by Health Workforce Australia are not being abolished overall but are being incorporated into the health department. Why are we doing this? Firstly, so that they can be more effectively executed and in line with other policy which is being implemented by the health department. But, yes, we are doing it in order to make some cost savings. I know that the opposition does not quite realise this, but they left the budgetary finances in a complete and utter mess, so we do need to make some tough decisions in order to bring the budget back into surplus in the medium term. We are prepared to accept that responsibility to do so.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

The SPEAKER (21:00): It being nine o'clock, I propose the question:
That the House do now adjourn.

Budget

Mr WATTS (Gellibrand) (21:00): The recent Abbott government budget has sent Australians into a white-hot rage, and deservedly so. Not only is the budget an attack on Medicare, the pension, our higher education system, our schools, our hospitals, our public transport system, the ABC, the SBS and the family car; it is also a sneak attack, systematically breaking countless promises made by the Prime Minister during the last federal election. Many Australians are saying, 'I didn't vote for this and I don't want it.' Many Australians are justifiably asking how this could happen. Tony Abbott certainly has no mandate for the extreme measures he has sprung on Australians in this budget. How could a bait and switch of this magnitude occur in our democratic system of government?

A measure of the anger and the fear in the community that this government is going irrevocably change something fundamental about the kind of country that we live in is the number of letters and emails that Labor are currently receiving, calling on the ALP to block
supply and force an election’. I understand the community's anger about this budget and I share Australians' fears about how the Abbott budget could change the kind of society that we live in, but I do not share the view that Labor should seek to block supply in response. Given that an Essential Research poll released today found that 47 per cent of respondents supported Labor 'blocking the budget and forcing a new election', I thought it was appropriate tonight to say why.

It is first necessary to make it clear that it is perfectly possible to oppose specific measures in the budget without blocking the passage of the appropriation bills, commonly referred to as the supply bills. Most of the policies announced in the federal budget are implemented through legislation introduced separately to the appropriation bills. This is true for the GP tax, the government's higher education changes, pension changes and petrol taxes. Bill Shorten has made it absolutely clear that Labor will fight on these measures and oppose their passage through the Senate. The opposition are able to do this without resorting to blocking supply. In contrast, the appropriation bills, or supply bills, are the bills that provide parliamentary approval for the expenditures proposed in the budget.

When introducing the federal budget, the Treasurer introduced three supply bills: (1) a bill to fund the 'ordinary annual services of government'—that is, the funds necessary to administer the government, including public servants' salaries for the next 12 months; (2) another bill to authorise funds for other purposes, including public works, grants to the states et cetera; and (3) a final bill to fund the running of the parliament itself. Section 53 of the Constitution provides that the Senate may not amend bills for the 'ordinary annual services of the government'. So the first of these bills are an all-or-nothing shot. The measures in the Abbott budget that deal with funding that forms part of the 'ordinary annual services of government', including cuts to the ABC, the SBS and the CSIRO are therefore not able to be opposed without refusing to fund all 'ordinary annual services'—that is, blocking supply. Unless they are passed by 1 July, the government will not have access to the funds necessary to operate government departments. While it is true that, unlike the United States, the majority of Australian public expenditures, including social security payments and Medicare payments are separately appropriated and would be unaffected by such action, this would still be an extreme and extraordinary step. It would be taking Australia down the path of Tea Party style politics.

The reason that the Labor Party will not consider blocking supply is because we have been on the wrong end of this antidemocratic act at many times in the past. State and federal Labor governments have frequently confronted conservative controlled upper houses that have either blocked or obstructed supply—for example, in Tasmania in 1925 and 1947, Victoria in 1947 and federally in 1974-75. We do not forget these antidemocratic acts and, as a matter of principle, we will not perpetuate them ourselves. These were dark days for our democracy. On this side of the House, we do not seek to emulate them.

However, in addition to principle, there are good pragmatic reasons for Labor to not block supply. Any opposition that use the Senate to block supply would be creating a noose for its own neck, should it ever form government and not control the upper house itself. Given the history of the composition of upper houses in this nation, this would be a foolhardy precedent for the Labor Party, indeed, to set. At times like this, it is worth reflecting on the importance of our democratic institutions.
Our democratic institutions are some of Australia's most valuable assets. I know Madam Speaker agrees with me on this point. They are worth more than all of the mineral wealth in Australia. As a democracy founded on the Westminster system, many of our democratic institutions are founded on unwritten conventions of behaviour. This means that these institutions are fragile. It also means that we, in this place, are their keepers. It is a serious responsibility. I welcome and share this community's anger at this federal budget. There is plenty to be angry about. But I do not support calls to block supply in response. Our democratic institutions are too important to trash for short-term political gain. Unfortunate though it may be, unseating the Abbott government should be a marathon not a sprint.

**Dobell Electorate: Telecommunications**

*Mrs McNAMARA* (Dobell) (21:05): Quality investment in telecommunication infrastructure is essential in developing a digital economy to support and generate job growth, particularly in electorates such as Dobell. The government are addressing the legacy of mismanagement we inherited from the former Labor government. We are committed to rolling out the National Broadband Network as quickly as possible, at least cost to the taxpayer and more affordably for consumers. The NBN is an integral part in promoting a new digital age, one where Dobell businesses and industry will be able to boost productivity and develop more efficient ways to conduct business.

In Dobell, there is tremendous potential for growth through the application of high-speed broadband technology in industries such as teleworking, education and health. While local business and industry are eager to reap the benefits, the original NBN rollout ignored the businesses of Dobell. Key employment centres, including the Tuggerah Business Park, North Wyong Industrial Park, The Entrance and Wyong were never considered in Labor's NBN rollout plans. For some bizarre reason, no consideration was given to the engine room of the Dobell economy. The small businesses of Dobell are collectively our largest employer. The Tuggerah Business Park would no doubt be the most significant exclusion from the previous government's chaotic NBN rollout. Home to some 200 businesses, NBN Co failed to include the business park in the rollout, despite identifying surrounding residential areas for access to the NBN. Rendering this even more confusing is the fact that the NBN infrastructure runs adjacent to the business park, yet no provisions were made to supply the NBN into the park.

As a result of the Labor government's chaotic mismanagement and failure to provide high-speed broadband to our local businesses, we have seen situations where local businesses have contemplated relocating from Dobell to areas with high-speed broadband. Thankfully these businesses have been in a financial position to finance their own broadband infrastructure, but this is not fair. Businesses in one region should not experience the disadvantage of having to self-finance infrastructure when businesses in other regions have these services provided by government, yet this is the legacy of the Labor government. Labor's chaotic mess and mismanagement have now resulted in businesses in other regions with NBN access having a distinct advantage over Dobell based businesses. I firmly believe that a key priority for the NBN rollout in Dobell is our business community. The NBN should serve as an incentive for businesses to relocate or start up in Dobell, in turn boosting local employment opportunities. With this as our focus, we would see a greater return on investment, more local jobs, increased productivity and innovative new business start-ups.
Edgar Adams of the Central Coast Business Review, a staunch advocate for the NBN, has endorsed this approach by stating: 'We now know that more and more local people are engaged in work in technology industries, working from home or out of small premises, employing a small number of people. We call them start-ups, and even more are using the internet to work from home. With a large unemployed young workforce that is tech-savvy, the Central Coast has a resource that can be made productive, but to do that it is absolutely essential for the government to continue the rollout of the NBN across the Wyong region. The NBN got the rollout map wrong in Wyong to start with; they now need to look at where the major employment areas are and get them connected.'

Another significant barrier confronting the Dobell business community is poor mobile coverage. I recently had the opportunity to introduce Paul Fletcher, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Communications, to key Dobell business stakeholders to discuss challenges encountered in regards to local mobile coverage and telecommunications. In the same way in which the lack of high-speed broadband acts as a barrier to business growth, poor mobile coverage is contributing to a lack of business confidence. Of particular concern are the Wyong valleys, home to our agricultural sector and growing tourism businesses, where there is a distinct lack of mobile coverage.

Dobell deserves better broadband services and mobile coverage than those provided by the former government. This government is addressing this issue by delivering on its commitment to invest $100 million to improve mobile phone coverage across Australia, and I am determined to see Dobell receive its fair share. This government is committed to addressing the issue of mobile black spots in Dobell and many other communities facing similar challenges.

I would like to pay particular thanks to Edgar Adams from the Central Coast Business Review, Sandra Kerr from the Wyong Regional Chamber of Commerce, Bob Platt from Wyong Shire Council, and Daniel Farmer and Ian Martin from the Central Coast NSW Business Chamber for advocating for our region's telecommunication needs on behalf of our local business community. Through working with our local business community, I am committed to advocating the priority rollout of the NBN and Mobile Black Spot Program in Dobell.

Budget

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (21:10): I rise this evening to draw to the attention of the House the absence of a rural and regional ministerial statement in the 2014-15 budget. To my knowledge, this statement has been included in every budget since 1996-97, except for 2006-07. It was also absent this year.

This evening I want to discuss why I think this is a serious issue, and I will make reference to last Thursday's matter of public importance discussion on the issue of rural and regional Australia. Following the budget, I and my staff and volunteers undertook a budget impact study in Indi. We conducted listening posts and talked to over 700 people. The feedback from this tour has made it clear to me that the lives of rural and regional people and the impact of the budget have not been adequately considered in the creation of the budget.

My constituents believe that the government has a mandate to manage the economy. They are happy about the infrastructure projects, and happy about the money for agriculture. What
they are not happy about are the consequences of the social elements of the budget: the changes to education, the changes to health and the severe changes to welfare and education that will impact greatly on young people. People told me, 'One size does not fit all,' and that the budget does not take into account the unique elements of regional living.

Last Thursday, 28 May, in this place a matter of public importance relating to rural and regional areas was strongly debated. I paid close attention, as I wanted to understand the state of the debate and the thinking on rural and regional Australia in this place. The following became very clear to me. There is strong support within the government for agriculture and farming, and the white paper is an excellent idea and has been well received. What is not clear is the visioning and leadership process for other groups living in rural and regional Australia.

What is the government's plan for regional living? Let me tell you what I mean by regional living. This would involve a plan that ensures that there is quality social and physical infrastructure available in regional areas: quality roads, reliable public transport, mobile connectivity and fast internet. With this infrastructure, businesses will be supported—businesses that produce food, resources, materials and services for Australia and the world. These businesses and the people who work within them will be supported by quality health care and innovative learning options, and our young people will have the opportunities and the support they need to become involved in their communities. Social welfare will be available when they need it, the education and employment options will be diverse and accessible, and access to world's best quality telecommunications and public transport will be the norm.

This budget does not look at regional Australia in this holistic way. It does not do this because, for decades, planning for the future of rural and regional Australia has been incomplete. Governments have focused on farmers, but not on the people who live near farms, or support farms, or work in businesses that are relied upon by farmers.

The lack of a rural and regional statement, and the government speeches made last Thursday, show that the planning for people living in regional areas is not being done. But it is not too late to start.

I acknowledge the $1 billion National Stronger Regions Fund. This fund is an excellent opportunity to kick-start this planning and development process. I hope that the money is allocated based on the lessons learnt from Regional Development Australia processes and best-practice consultation with communities.

I have worked in regional Australia all my life, and I know that communities and the people who live within them want to be involved and are willing to work hard if they see the benefits for their community. I also know that regional people have a vision for the future of their communities and are keen to take on leadership roles.

I call on the government to undertake a serious consultation with regional Australia. Ask them what they would like to see happening in their communities in 50 and 100 years. Take this information and use it to better inform government policy. Acknowledge that a one-size-fits-all policy rarely works. I call on the government to reintroduce the rural and regional ministerial statements, and to demonstrate that regional living forms part of our national plan and our vision for the future of this great country.
Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson) (21:15): I rise in this debate on behalf of the many Australians who expect higher standards of parliamentary behaviour than what we have been witnessing lately, and who recognise that decent standards must start with respect for the role of the Speaker of the House.

Madam Speaker, from the very day that you were elected to the role, the Opposition, led by the Manager of Opposition Business, has displayed a patent lack of respect. He stood up in this place, just minutes after your election and said:

This day in parliament, probably more than any other, functions like a first day back at school. People have remarked today about this being reminiscent of the Harry Potter novel in which they all returned to Hogwarts and found that Dumbledore was gone and Dolores Umbridge was in charge of the school.

Without going into detail about the character, Dolores Umbridge, it is sufficient to say that she is a particularly cruel witch. It is clear that for the Manager of Opposition Business to refer to you in that manner was unpleasant and uncomplimentary. At the time many of us dismissed the comments as an attempt at humour that had overstepped the mark. However, looking back, it was the start of a very disrespectful pattern of behaviour.

But the Manager of Opposition Business was not alone in the Labor ranks that day. Even before he made his derogatory remarks, the member for Wills set the ball rolling by saying:

No-one doubts that the member for Mackellar is experienced, but we have experience of her. I think members will understand what I am saying when I say that she is very black and white: there are certainly no shades of grey with her.

Madam Speaker, that very first day was an insight into Labor's approach to you as Speaker. They did not want you in the job, and a pattern of disrespect and disruption has continued ever since.

Those opposite spin a fairytale that they are victims who have been pushed to the brink, and that their behaviour is an outpouring of frustration over what they think is long-standing unfairness. But that is simply not true. In fact, on 10 December last year, the Manager of Opposition Business and the member for Grayndler themselves turned parliament into a farce by moving dissent from your ruling because they did not like debate on a bill being guillotined. A hypocritical move, given Labor guillotined debates on many occasions during the last parliament.

Madam Speaker, the Manager of Opposition Business described your comments as:

… a half-funny, childish interjection.

The member for Grayndler screamed, 'That is outrageous!' in a theatrical fit of pique. And this, they believe, is an appropriate way to address the Speaker of the House of Representatives? I do not think so. And their poor behaviour continued the very next day, with the member for Oxley coming out and accusing you of 'sledging'.

All of this took place only a few sitting weeks into this parliament. This was not pent-up frustration spilling over. This was not a heated response to so many of their members being named for their poor behaviour. It was clearly part of a concerted and deliberate campaign to undermine you.
But I believe this attack on the Speaker is really just the manifestation of a broader problem with Labor: they just cannot accept that they are not in government. They cannot accept that at the last election a majority of Australians voted for change. They cannot accept that they no longer run the parliament. And we see that bitterness reflected in their actions. The name calling, the faux outrage and the drama; it is all just one big temper tantrum because Labor has not got what they want.

Madam Speaker, it would take more time than I have to list the full extent of the treatment meted out by Labor. But I do want to make this point: in the nominating debate, the member for Moreton said:

Let us have a look at how the member for Mackellar has treated the sisterhood when given the opportunity.

Well I ask, where is the sisterhood now? Where are the former senior female Labor ministers who were collectively dubbed 'the handbag hit squad'? If anyone on our side of politics had treated the former Labor Speaker, the member for Chisholm, with the same contempt there would have been howls of protest and cries of 'misogyny' from the very people who now behave so poorly. But now there is silence. Perhaps it is because for Labor women it is only a misogynist attack when it is conservatives dealing with women—not the males of the Labor Party right wing.

Madam Speaker, Australians expect better standards of conduct than what the Labor Party have displayed towards you. So I say to members opposite: take a long, hard look at your behaviour. Let's stop the tantrums, let's stop the confected outrage and let's accept the result of the last election. But most of all, let's behave in a civil manner and show some respect to the Speaker of the House.

Palliative Care Week

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (21:20): Last week was Palliative Care Week, and it gives me the opportunity to acknowledge and pay tribute to Ipswich Hospice Care, a wonderful facility in my electorate.

Like many in this place I had the pleasure of attending a breakfast held by Palliative Care Australia last week. I want to acknowledge the terrific work of Palliative Care Australia, and I am happy to say that the CEO, Dr Yvonne Luxford, has been a regular visitor to my office over many years. She is a fierce advocate for palliative care. I congratulate her and her new team on their new logo and branding.

The theme for Palliative Care Week 2014 was 'Palliative care everyone's business: let's work together'. It is important to appreciate all of the different people involved in palliative care, to encourage people to think about what their role may be and to honour and respect what they do.

At that recent breakfast we heard from some wonderful people who have been involved in palliative care. There was a husband whose wife died from breast cancer who then went on to care for his mother-in-law at the end of her life. There was the mother whose son had a life-limiting condition that extended beyond a prognosis of a few months when he was born to 17 years of age. She was so inspired by her experience she is now a palliative care nurse. And we heard from Dr Sarah Winch, an experienced nurse, healthcare ethicist and sociologist from Queensland, whose own husband passed away at just 48 years of age—just four months after...
being diagnosed with kidney cancer that had spread throughout his body. She has produced a practical and personal book called *Best Death Possible: a guide to dying in Australia*, which speaks to those who are dying. It is a $15 book with which I highly recommend many of us to become familiar.

Palliative care is an issue which affects all of us at some point in our lives—that may be as a patient or a carer, as a family member or a friend. It is a fact: we all will die. It is a natural part of life, and palliative care is and should be a natural part of health care—as natural as childbirth or emergency care. Yet it is difficult for most Australians to have that conversation with those closest to us about our final stages of life. Indeed, I can say from my many years as a lawyer I have observed that it is even difficult for people to make wills, powers of attorney or even advanced health directives. Many of us do not understand what palliative care is all about and many Australians do not really want to know.

I have heard people say they feel as though palliative care is about giving up on life; it is not. The aim of palliative care is to improve the quality of life for people living with a life-limiting illness by providing care that recognises their many and individual needs, including physical, emotional, social, cultural and spiritual. Further, palliative care supports the person's family and carers during their illness and in bereavement.

My own electorate of Blair is home to a wonderful facility. Ipswich Hospice Care is a seven-bed healthcare facility providing quality palliative care to terminally ill people and their families in a caring, home-like environment. The centre is run with professionalism and compassion by Ros Holloway and supported by a terrific team. I congratulate them on their recent silver-service luncheon for 40 members of the National Seniors Association Ipswich Branch organised by Dana McKerrow, a student at Bremer TAFE ably supported by the staff and students at that TAFE. A. It was an honour to be there to see the great work they do—not just the students but Dana and all the people from Ipswich hospice care.

According to Palliative Care Australia: 75 per cent of Australians would prefer to die at home, but less than 25 per cent do; 70 per cent of people who die each year would benefit from palliative care services yet only 20 per cent do; less than 15 per cent of people who died in residential aged care in 2011-2012 were assessed as needing palliative care before they died; and, more than 50 per cent of people who lost a loved one recently had not discussed end of life care with them, and their family were not confident to carry out the wishes of their loved one.

Palliative care needs to become an integral part of our healthcare system and our aged care mix. It is important for all of us to have that conversation and turn it into adequately funded social policy. We want to live well. And most of us, if we are honest, want to die well. So it is important we think about what our role may be and have that conversation with our family. Remember, for all of us, family and friends, palliative care is everyone's business.

Rossi, Mr Bob Snr

Rossi, Mr Bob Jnr

Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt) (21:24): I rise to pay tribute to a remarkable family from the Far North, the Rossi family, who had two very sad losses in the last couple of weeks. Bob Rossi Snr, OAM, KC, passed away last month aged 90 years. His story highlights just what
can be achieved through hard work and determination. The second loss was that of Bob's son, Bob Jnr, on Saturday, which was a huge shock to his family, friends and the community.

Today, in this place, I would like to highlight the inspiring story of one of the Far North's best-known families, and their incredible contribution to our community. Bob Rossi Snr was born in 1923 in Italy. His father migrated to Australia to give his family a better life, as did so many in depressed post-war Europe. After an arduous journey, his wife and young son arrived at a rugged cane farm near Alloomba, Queensland, in 1925.

It was not an easy life, but Bob Snr always stated, 'We were poor, but we were very happy.' As for many immigrants, hard work and enterprise were life-changing for the Rossis. Over three years, Bob Snr's parents saved 900 pounds, which helped them buy their first farm of 50 acres on the Mulgrave River. Young Robert struggled at school, speaking only Italian, but, by the age of nine, he was fluent enough to accompany his father as an interpreter in business dealings. His schooling placed him in demand with the Italian community for writing letters and interpreting; and he continued to help Italian families throughout his life. In 1994, the Italian government bestowed a Knights of Cavaliere honour upon him.

Bob met his future wife, Luciana, at a school dance in 1946 and they were an ideal match. They went on to have three children—Robert, Gloria and Lynette. Bob always paid tribute to Luciana as being a huge support in his life. Despite having being interned as an 'enemy alien' during WWII, Bob began a legacy of community involvement. He was a foundation member of the Mulgrave Junior Farmers and held numerous roles in the sugar industry for the next 35 years. His focus on innovation brought new techniques to a traditional practice. He was responsible for forcing Australian companies to manufacture harvesters that could cut green cane.

Bob's involvement with Mulgrave Shire Council began in 1968 and lasted 23 years. In his role as deputy to the late chairman, Cr Tom Pyne, the pair formed a solid relationship which oversaw much of Mulgrave's rapid growth. After a productive public life, Bob retired in 1991. He was awarded the Order of Australia Medal in 1992, one of his proudest moments. Bob reflected that despite growing up at a time when Italians were regarded poorly, it never affected him because he knew that success would come from within himself. His focus on family was a great strength, especially in later years when he enjoyed the company of children, grand-children and great-grandchildren. When his health deteriorated he said, 'I have had 70 years of good life and health. If I have a few years of disability, it might test my character.' At Bob's funeral in Gordonvale on 23 May, hundreds, including myself, paid their respects to a man who was fiercely proud without being self-centred, quiet but with a lot to say.

Given the focus on family, it was fitting that his son, Robert Jnr, travelled to Darwin last week to catch up with his daughter and new grand-child. Sadly, Bob passed away while attending a rock'n'roll dance—one of his three great passions in life, along with his family and barra fishing. We can take some comfort from the fact that he died doing something he loved. Bob Jnr was 64, and is survived by his wife Pam and six children—Lisa, Angela, Michael, Narelle, Glenn and Daniel. Like his father, he leaves a legacy of community service. Bob Jr played a very active role in the Gordonvale RSL, and was well-known for organising dances as a popular social activity. His commitment to the state and high school P&C was well-known, as were his efforts with the Mulgrave Central Mill, Pyramid Race Committee,
Southern Suburbs Junior Rugby League, the National Party and subsequently the LNP. He was highly respected in the community and if anybody needed a hand, Bob Jnr was always the one to offer.

The Far North has lost two very special men in Bob Rossi Snr and Bob Rossi Jnr. Their collective efforts have been greatly appreciated by the community and we are certainly a better place for that. They will be well and truly missed but they will never be forgotten and I add my tribute to them in the House this evening.

The SPEAKER: It being 21:30, debate is interrupted.

House adjourned at 21:30

NOTICES

The following notices were given:

Mr Macfarlane to present a bill for an act to repeal the Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency Act 2008, and for related purposes.

Mr Macfarlane to present a bill for an act to provide for trade support loans for certain apprentices, and for related purposes.

Mr Macfarlane to present a bill for an act to deal with consequential and transitional matters in connection with the Trade Support Loans Act 2014, and for related purposes.

Mr Hartsuyker to present a bill for an act to amend the Social Security (Administration) Act 1999, and for related purposes.

Ms MacTiernan to move:

That this House:

(1) notes with concern the extent to which 457 visas are being used where there are ample, suitably qualified Australians; and

(2) urges the Government not to delay the completion of its review or its response to this growing problem.

Mr Ferguson to move:

That this House:

(1) expresses concern about Iran's systemic practice of human rights violations ranging from the massacre of 30,000 political prisoners in 1988 to the massacre on 1 September 2013 at Camp Ashraf, Iraq;

(2) seeks:

(a) referral of the Camp Ashraf massacre to the United Nations Security Council and the International Criminal Court to bring the perpetrators to justice;

(b) pursuit by the United Nations of the Iraqi Government to release seven hostages taken from Camp Ashraf;

(c) a requirement of minimum protection for security at Camp Liberty;

(d) a team of United Nations Blue Helmets at Camp Liberty to guarantee the safety and security of the residents until they leave Iraq; and

(e) the immediate transfer of Camp Liberty residents to the United States of America, European Union and other countries;
(3) expresses grave disquiet about the surge in executions of ethnic Baluchi, Arab, Kurdish and Azeri minorities by Iranian authorities; and

(4) notes the increased consultative meetings between Iraq and Iranian officials about possible deportation of Iranian political activists and the isolation of 32 inmates from section 350 of Tehran's Evin Prison.
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Griggs): took the chair at 16:02.

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Mabo Day

Dr CHALMERS (Rankin) (16:02): Today on Mabo Day on ancient Ngunnawal and Ngambri land and recognising the Yugambeh and Jaggerra people who have long inhabited my own local area, we celebrate the life and achievements of an Australian hero, a man whose name now echoes through our history, a man whose crusade for rights and equality for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is a source of pride for all of the original custodians of this land and, indeed, for all Australians of good heart. Mabo Day celebrates the day 22 years ago that saw the end of the legal deceit 'terra nullius'. It was when the Australian legal system, itself a construct of the white settlers, conceded the original ownership of this country. This called for leadership and courage from the political system, and not for the only time. Paul Keating delivered it by legislating native title in response to the High Court decision of 1992.

I find it really moving to read again his reflections on this period. He said:
… I saw the approach of using the High Court’s native title route as possessing an even greater attribute—and that was truth. There is, especially in public life, no more beautiful a characteristic than truth. Truth is of its essence liberating; it is possessed of no contrivance or conceit—it provides the only genuine basis for progress.

And in the words of the member for Jagajaga, herself a crusader for Indigenous rights, the journey of Eddie Mabo, the High Court decision and the Keating's subsequent legislation 'saw past a falsehood to a future'. The audacity of fighting for this ideal in the face of absurd and shrieking arguments from its opposition, as Mabo did on behalf of his people and Keating did on behalf of the government, is a moment of national truth-telling that we should remember forever.

Chris Tamwoy, an up-and-coming Torres Strait Islander musician who lives in my electorate and who I am proud to call my friend, said on Facebook this morning that 'Granddad Eddie' as he calls him, is a 'great warrior' and a 'legend'. I wanted to join with Chris and all other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from my electorate and around Australia—all people who believe in reconciliation—to recognise this great warrior, Eddie Mabo, and those who fought alongside him to tell this truth and to right this wrong.

Banks Electorate: Anzac Day

Mr COLEMAN (Banks) (16:05): I rise to congratulate the Banks community on the recent Anzac Day commemorations. Anzac Day reminds us of the sacrifices made by so many Australians on our behalf. Those of us who have not experienced war can never truly understand what they endured for us, but we must always remember their service. I had the privilege to spend time and commemorate this critical day with local residents and members of the veterans community. In the week before Anzac Day I joined the community at Oatley Memorial Gardens, where a moving Anzac memorial service took place. I must commend and thank the President of the Oatley RSL Sub–Branch, Mr Michael Tiddy, and the branch secretary, Mr Ian Thompson, for organising the service. I know that the branch is already
planning for Anzac Day 2015, which will be a very special year, commemorating, as it does, the centenary of Anzac.

This year, Mortdale RSL Sub-Branch hosted the joint service at Mortdale Remembrance Park—a joint service of Mortdale, Penshurst and Oatley sub-branches. More than 800 local residents braved the early morning rain to pay their respects. It was particularly great to see a strong showing of families, including young children. It was also tremendous to see representatives of local scout groups, Girl Guide branches and schools lay wreaths. The Riverwood squadron of the Australian Air League provided the catafalque party and represented the squadron well. Thank you to Mr John Delaney, president of the sub-branch, and to his entire committee, including Mr Reg Miller and Mr Peter Dufty, for hosting such a wonderful commemoration.

Prior to Anzac Day, Mortdale RSL also held a smoko at Mortdale RSL Club. It was a well-attended function and I again commend the sub-branch on their organisation of it. I also attended an Anzac remembrance service at Christ Church Mortdale, organised by the church and Mortdale RSL Sub-Branch.

Penshurst RSL Sub-Branch hosted a smoko, which drew a great crowd and was a fitting commemoration. I was particularly impressed by the cartoons, dating back to the 1920s, drawn by a local RSL member, which were on display throughout the event. Mr John Hoban, president of the sub-branch, and his committee, including Mr Kevin Kelly, Mr Ken Riley, Mr Graham Grant and Mr John Lloyd did a tremendous job organising this event.

At Riverwood, I attended the legion sub-branch Anzac Day service. President Dick Matthews leads a strong sub-branch that is particularly well connected to the community. This was evident on Anzac Day, with a great turnout and involvement from many local schools. I thank Mr Mathews and his committee for hosting this service.

Anzac Day is a very special time, and I was very honoured to join with our local community to commemorate the services of our armed forces at these events.

Budget

Ms BIRD (Cunningham) (16:08): I want to report to the House about an issue raised with me by a delegation of local constituents who are members of the GetUp! organisation who attended my office on 7 May and I indicate to the House that I am joined by a famous television personality and acclaimed feminist in talking about this issue in the House today. Of course, I am referring to Peppa Pig. Members may be aware that the shadow minister has expressed concern about the future of Peppa Pig and has indeed put out a press release recently expressing, 'Peppa Pig: Roasted by Abbott's budget porkies.' I invite Peppa Pig to have a seat here while I talk about what the GetUp! campaigners raised with my office.

Of course they were concerned, because before the election the Prime Minister indicated, 'There will be no cuts to education, no cuts to health, no changes to the pension, no changes to the GST and no cuts to the ABC or SBS.' The GetUp! petitioners, like so many people in my electorate, greatly value the ABC. In particular in our area, we have an ABC regional radio service which is very important to our local community.

Sadly, as much as I was hoping that I could give them good news after the budget, I was not able to do so. It was another broken promise by this government. The budget in fact cut $232.3 million from the ABC and another $8 million from SBS. It abolished the Australia
Network, despite the fact the network reaches up to 167 million households, giving our vital Asian neighbours and the world an insight into Australian life and values. The ABC Managing Director, Mark Scott, confirmed the ABC cuts were a broken promise and said ABC services will be affected. I quote his words directly:

The funding cuts will be disappointing for audiences. The government gave repeated commitments before and after the election that funding for the Corporation would be maintained.

There are concerns not only in my area but right across rural and regional Australia. Many colleagues in the chamber now who represent those areas of Australia understand the absolute importance of the ABC to all of our communities. I think it is fair to say that they feel particularly betrayed, because they were given a promise before the election that there would be no cuts.

Labor invested strongly in the ABC. We believe in the public broadcaster and we are very concerned to see that it is retained as a strong provider of services across all of our communities. I will continue to fight, I can assure those GetUp! members, for the strength of the ABC into the future.

Queensland Sugar Industry

Ms LANDRY (Capricornia) (16:11): I rise to raise a serious issue impacting on the Queensland sugar industry in my electorate of Capricornia and the nearby electorates of Dawson, Flynn and Hinkler. It relates to a recent decision by processing giant Wilmar to break away from Queensland's sugar desk marketing system for sugar. Farmers tell me that, in doing so, Wilmar is behaving like a schoolyard bully. The Capricornia electorate takes in sugar growers from Koumala to Sarina and West Mackay and includes sugar processing facilities at Plane Creek and Racecourse. Wilmar's decision would take two million tonnes of sugar out of the current Queensland Sugar Limited's 3.2 million tonne marketing operation.

I have been inundated with concerns from Capricornia canegrowers, with some fearing they may lose their livelihoods if Willmar abandons the current single desk system under QSL. I urge Wilmar to listen to canegrowers. Wilmar once had the trust of local farmers and now there is great concern over the future of the entire industry. Nearly 79 per cent of canegrowers in my local area of Plane Creek have said no to Wilmar's announcement, and I urge the corporate giant to reconsider its decision for the sake of the Australian industry.

Central Queensland's 1,400 sugar cane growers make up about 30 per cent of the industry, which contributes about $700 million annually in gross returns to the local regional economy. So far, over 3,000 growers have given their thumbs down to Willmar's proposal. This is a significant voice as there are only 4,000 canegrowers in Queensland and northern NSW. My growers want the government to express strong support for a single desk selling system for sugar. They argue that if you have one seller such as QSL you have a better chance of negotiating better prices overseas than with a split market competing with each other.

At a meeting on this issue recently, we saw the biggest gathering in decades of Plane Creek canegrowers at a local sugar meeting. One industry leader described Wilmar's actions as akin to putting a gorilla in a room with a Chihuahua. The fact is that local growers are comfortable with the current marketing arrangement for sugar. Wilmar is a new boy on the block and it knew what it bought into at the time of taking over sugar company Sucrogen.
The sugar sector is worth about 50,000 to 60,000 jobs in Queensland alone. Wilmar was very much aware of the structure of the Queensland sugar industry before they made their decision to invest in Queensland. I urge Wilmar to reconsider their position and return to negotiations with Queensland Sugar Limited.

Medical Research

Mr GRAY (Brand) (16:14): I rise to speak on the subject of medical research and the scientists who do this work. I rise to speak in particular about the Royal Melbourne Hospital's Research Hall of Fame. In 1848 a small group of visionary Victorians came together to open Victoria's first public hospital. Since that time the Royal Melbourne Hospital has become the linchpin of the Parkville Precinct's leading biomedical research hub and a magnet for some of the brightest minds in medical research. As Victoria's first hospital, the Royal Melbourne Hospital has seen many pioneering innovations in medicine and health care. Many of these innovations have had a real and lasting impact on health care today, not just in Australia but around the world.

In a few weeks—on Saturday, 21 June 2014—the Royal Melbourne Hospital will celebrate its rich history and bright future in medical research by launching the Research Hall of Fame and the inaugural Royal Melbourne Hospital Research Medal for a mid-career investigator. The special evening will honour the research legends of the Royal Melbourne Hospital, whose courage and brilliance has changed the face of medicine over the past century and before. They dared to challenge conventions of their day, and their legacy inspires today's researchers.

The inaugural inductees for 2014, in alphabetical order, are Dr C Glenn Begley, for contributions to leukaemia and cancer research; Dr Lucy Bryce, for pioneering work in blood transfusion services; Professor Sir Macfarlane Burnet, for contributions to immunology; Dr John Cade, who discovered lithium as a treatment for bipolar disorder; Dr Michael Denborough, for the discovery of malignant hypertension; Dr Edward Embley, who recognised in 1902 that sudden cardiac failure occurred with chloroform; Professor Maurice Ewing, for contributions to surgery, including Australia's first successful cadaver-patient kidney transplant in 1963; Professor Richard Fox, for clinical application of the blood cell growth factors, the CSFs; Dr James St John, for establishment of Australia's first bowel cancer registry in 1979; Professor Priscilla Kincaid-Smith, nephrologist, for pioneering work in renal medicine; Professor Richard Larkins, for contributions to diabetes research and health policy reform; Professor Richard Lovell, for contributions to understanding and treatment of hypertension; Dr Ian Mackay, immunologist, for recognition and treatment of autoimmune diseases; Professor Donald Metcalf, for the discovery of the blood cell growth factors; Professor Sir Peter Morris, for furthering the understanding of immune mechanisms in transplantation; Professor Sir Gustav Nossal, for contributions to immunology; Sir Benjamin Rank, for pioneering work in plastic and reconstructive surgery; Dr Graeme Robertson, for radiological examination of the brain; and Dr Graeme Sloman, who established the first coronary care unit in Australia in 1964.

These are great researchers whose contributions will live through the lives that they have improved and lives that they have saved.
Petrie Electorate: Margate CBD

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (16:18): I rise today to talk about the Margate CBD in the Petrie Electorate. The Margate CBD is soon to become a lot safer, thanks the coalition government's Safer Streets Program. The government is delivering on its commitment to address crime and antisocial behaviour in all of our communities. Under the Safer Streets Program, the Margate CBD is receiving $170,000 for the upgrade of closed circuit television systems. These systems will provide a physical deterrent to counteract antisocial behaviour. They can provide a clear image of offenders in action and may assist police in making arrests. It is a known fact that fewer incidents of crime occur when CCTV systems are installed in a premises or nearby.

Whilst these systems do not reduce crime completely, they do force criminals to rethink their actions or choose, perhaps, a different target. At around Anzac Day this year, I was down in the Margate CBD doorknocking some of the local businesses. Unfortunately, three of the local businesses—Big Dad's Pies, the Bendigo Bank and the local Thai takeaway—all had their windows kicked in, in the couple of weeks before I was there.

Businesses need to be able to invest with confidence in their shopfronts. We know that to run a successful business we need great customer service and good products and services. But we also need to be able to invest in our shopfronts to make them look fantastic. A strong risk of people kicking in windows would, I believe, stop people investing in their shopfronts.

We will work with the local council to make sure that these CCTV systems are placed in great spots. We need local businesses like those that I mentioned to continue to invest in their businesses to help grow the local economy and to create more jobs. Small businesses are the lifeblood of our community, and the small business owners in the Margate CBD in the electorate of Petrie will soon have the confidence to close their doors at night knowing that they have the added protection of CCTV.

I am proud to be part of this government that is committed to helping local communities deliver effective solutions to crime hot spots and anti-social behaviour throughout all our electorates. Every business owner should feel confident to invest in shopfronts, and the community should feel safe to walk the streets all the time.

Australian Interactive Games Fund

Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (16:20): It was my pleasure this morning, with the shadow Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus, to meet with Adam Boyle and Tony Lawrence, from 2K Australia, to discuss the government's axing of the Australian Interactive Games Fund. This was a $10 million cut from the budget. That is a small amount when compared to what this government has cut out of health and education, but it is a significant cut when it comes to the nascent Australian gaming industry. The Australian gaming industry has given us games such as the BioShock series, Fruit Ninja, LA Noire and Test Drive Unlimited. As Mathew Zagby, an intern in my office, puts it, 'gaming is a way to relax, escape reality and just enjoy an alternative reality for an hour or so'. According to Antony Reed, the CEO of the Game Developers Association of Australia, the gaming industry in Australia turns over in the region of $300 million annually. The $10 million earmarked for the Australian Interactive Games Fund was a way of growing this critical creative industry.

The gaming industry, in a sense, sits at the intersection between computer science and film making—two industries whose value is broadly recognised—but, perhaps because of the
word 'gaming', it is not taken seriously by this government. That is a pity. Just around the corner from my electorate office, in Braddon, I am very proud to have 2K Australia, a business which is creating jobs—good jobs, and export oriented jobs at that. It is a firm which would benefit even more if it had the National Broadband Network, which, under this government, in a cruel twist of fate, will stop a block away from their headquarters and indeed my electorate office.

The Australian gaming industries struggled through the global financial crisis. Despite that, the gaming industry worldwide is valued at $93 billion. It is vital that we expand Australia's gaming industry in order to provide more opportunities for Australian computer science graduates. 2K is Australia's only AAA developer, which means they develop large games at the forefront of the gaming industry. 2K has 45 staff and has managed to develop some critically acclaimed titles. 2K does not benefit from the Australian Interactive Games Fund but says it is vital in promoting the industry and bringing up and comers into the gaming industry.

Chatfield, Mr Alan
Wagstaff, Mrs Margaret

Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (16:23): I will call this statement 'Two Beginnings' because this week we lost two icons of music and arts in West Gippsland—Alan Chatfield and Margaret Wagstaff. I was extremely close to these people because of the beginnings they gave me. I thought I could sing a bit, so I went out to Alan's place at McCraw Road in Nar Nar Goon. I sat there with Alan and his beautiful wife, Heather, at the piano and started to sing a bit. Alan said, 'You're going nowhere, you've got no future, you haven't got a future at all.' But Heather said, 'No, give him a go. I reckon he'll be all right.' Thanks to Alan, 20 years later, in 1987, I stepped off the stage and said I would never sing another song for money—and I haven't! I have great feelings for Alan and all that he gave me. Alan and his brother were dairy farmers at Nar Nar Goon. They were the Chatfield Rythymaires. They played day and night. I remember the functions they played at West Gippsland for the young farmers. They would go from eight o'clock at night until two o'clock in the morning. Young people these days have no idea how much work and energy there is in that. I wanted to sing with the best, and I was able to sing with Alan for a short time before I went to Melbourne to sing.

Alan made a fantastic contribution to our music industry. Whatever he touched, wherever he went, he was loved, along with his brother Ian. The icons of the band were Wally Webster, Stewie Saunders, Ran Webster, Alan Chatfield, Ronnie Banbury and Robbie Arnold, their chief singer.

Margaret Wagstaff was a schoolteacher. She was a choir teacher and an individual teacher. She was a mum and a lover. She was all things to all people. She gave me a beginning. After I had lost four election campaigns I was pretty knocked about publicly and I was not really interested in public activity at all. She said to me, 'I want you to come and sing in the church play.' I said: 'I don't want to sing in the church play. I don't want to be seen.' She said: 'No-one will see you. You're a tree. You will sing and speak from inside a tree. You're going to be Redgum.' Thank you, Margaret. What she gave me was my first tentative steps back into public life through being a tree—Redgum in Spindles and the Lamb. She was right: nobody ever saw me; nobody knew who the singer was in the tree. Everybody left before the person came out of the tree. In fact, they thought I was a recording.
Margaret, I love you. Alan, I loved everything that you did. We were so lucky to have you giving your life, your time, your energy, your music and your enthusiasm to our community. Margaret, we said goodbye to you yesterday. That is why I was not in the parliament. Alan, we will say goodbye to you tomorrow morning. You will be sorely missed.

**Gellibrand Electorate: Save Sunvale Campaign**

Mr WATTS (Gellibrand) (16:26): I rise today to update the House on the progress of a community campaign that has been running in my electorate for almost five years. Since 2009 the Save Sunvale campaign has sought to have the site of the former Sunvale Primary School in Sunshine rezoned as a public park and for the local community rather than being sold off for residential development. Our communities grow in our shared spaces. Communities rely on open public spaces for families and individuals to be able to come together for recreation, celebration and communal activity.

Save Sunvale campaign's John Hedditch and Sean Spencer recognise this and they have noted for some time that Sunshine is currently lacking high-quality open public spaces for its community relative to other areas in Melbourne so they have been campaigning since 2009 to have the entire site converted into a high-quality open public space for the people of Sunshine. The Save Sunvale group met with representatives of all political parties in Melbourne's west with this objective for many years. Before the 2010 state election this group met with Mr Bernie Finn, the Liberal upper house member for the western metropolitan region, and Matthew Guy, the then shadow planning minister. In this meeting Save Sunvale assert that Mr Finn committed that the entire site at Sunvale would be rezoned as a public park should the Liberal Party win the state election in 2010. In fact, Mr Guy joked in this meeting that the site should be renamed 'Finnland' in honour of Mr Finn's lobbying efforts for the group.

Unfortunately, Bernie Finn seems to be following in the footsteps of his federal Liberal colleagues and is now claiming not to recognise the promises he made to his own community while in opposition. In a recently released tender for the land, the state Liberal government has made only the western portion of the Sunvale site available as open public space. Like his federal Liberal colleagues, Mr Finn is now insisting that he never promised otherwise, telling the Brimbank weekly:

That promise was never made, never, ever, ever. You can provide a Bible or the Koran or a Footy Record, I’ll swear on all those, that promise was never made.

Mr Finn made this statement to the local newspaper because he refused to front a recent community rally on the Sunvale site to explain his government's actions. For someone whose campaign slogan is 'the voice of Melbourne's west' Mr Finn seems to have gone very quiet in the face of community activism. Mr Finn further told the Brimbank weekly:

I have spent more time on this site, on this issue, than on any other single issue in the west …

I put it to the House that this really sums it up. These are the results you get from state Liberal MPs in Melbourne's west: a failure to deliver for their community, even on the issue that by their own admission they spent more time on that any other.

The Victorian Liberal government should stop the tender for this site until they meet their own election commitments to keep the entire site as a park. In the meantime, members of the Save Sunvale group are now occupying the site in protest at the flawed tender process, setting
up an around-the-clock camp on the site and engaging in subversive protest actions like mowing the grass and installing a raised community vegetable garden. I wish them good luck in holding the Liberal Party to their promises. I will be glad to set up a swag with them when I am back in Melbourne.

**East West Link**

**Jobs 4 Geelong Jobs Fair**

Ms HENDERSON (Corangamite) (16:29): I rise to speak about the Geelong jobs fair that is going to be held on 20 and 21 June. Before I do I would like to ask the member for Gellibrand to stay for one minute because his constituents and all people in Western Melbourne need to know that the Labor Party is blocking the East West Link, one of the biggest infrastructure projects for our state. What a fantastic project. We are putting $3 billion into that. It will be wonderful for the people of Geelong. It will cut commuter times by some three hours a week, so important for jobs, so important for the local economy. What a shame the member for Gellibrand is not standing by this incredible commitment. The Labor Party are working hard to oppose it, and that is the worst thing that they can do for the people of western Melbourne and for the people of Geelong. And shame on the member for Corio, because he is also blocking this important project. As I said, I rise to talk about jobs and that is a project that will employ more than 6,000 people. Labor, frankly, is again standing in the way of jobs and, frankly, it is an absolute disgrace.

The jobs fair is a great initiative. As I said, it is being held on 20 and 21 June and I am very proud that the Commonwealth is taking a leading role in funding the jobs fair, along with some important sponsors: the Geelong Advertiser, Bay FM K-Rock, Deakin University, Enterprise Geelong and the City of Greater Geelong. We have had a fantastic response. More than 50 employers have signed up, but we say to all employers across our great region, across Corangamite: we are a region of so many wonderful skills—so much capacity in health, in education, in community services and of course in manufacturing—so I urge all employers to sign up so that they can showcase their opportunities and they can meet the best and brightest in our region.

Over the past six years we have seen a terrible record in employment when it comes to the Labor Party's performance. Some 519,000 jobs lost in small business, another 129,000 manufacturing jobs disappeared under Labor. At a time when manufacturing and traditional manufacturing is under pressure, it is so important to stand up for jobs and to look at a very bright future, and we are very focused on the importance of advanced manufacturing for our region. I urge everyone across Geelong who is looking for a job or who is looking for a great employee to get along to the jobs fair. It is a very important initiative and, coupled with our $155 million growth fund, it is a very important investment in regional infrastructure, in next generation manufacturing. Our government is proudly working very hard for jobs growth.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Griggs): Order! In accordance with standing order 193 the time for members' constituency statements has concluded.
Cognate debate.

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (16:32): On the morning of the last of federal budget, the Liberal MP for Hume, Angus Taylor, set the tone for the day by sharing some ancient wisdom, which I picked up in a note today. In a series of tweets, he cited the values of Roman philosopher and statesman Marcus Tullius Cicero:

The budget should be balanced, the Treasury should be refilled, public debt should be reduced, the arrogance of officialdom should be tempered and controlled, and the assistance to foreign lands should be curtailed lest Rome become bankrupt. People must again learn to work, instead of living on public assistance.

Certainly Cicero knew a few things about a hostile Senate, which we also face. He was eventually decapitated. I hope that is not the case with this budget!

Having mentioned the new member for Hume, I cannot help but remember his predecessor, Alby Schultz. Alby Schultz was a great warrior for his cause, and for many causes he and his wife had—especially farmers in their district and those across the nation who were suffering as farmers. Now why do I mention Alby? I went to a party room meeting this morning, Alby, and nobody attacked the National Party. Without you there, we do not have that solid resonance from those who come from your side of the square. You are so different, so special, and we wish you all the best in your retirement. I believe you have just had very, very good health news. All the best to you.

There is one thing I want to say to the wider Australian community, to the truck driver on the road, to the school teacher listening now, to the person hearing this in a remote part of Australia, in our suburbs and anywhere else—to each one of you. Firstly, with regard to the nation's health and wellbeing, especially its financial health and wellbeing, whatever we were doing was not working. Doing nothing, the status quo, which meant staying in the mess we were in, was not an option. It was not an option to allow the country to continue on the road it was on because all the forecasts were not prudent courses for appropriate outlays on your behalf to achieve a beneficial, healthy resurgence in this country.

I, like many other members of parliament, have desires for my electorate. For the nation, yes, there are many outlays that, whether you like it or not, whoever you elect is locked into making those payments. There are very small parts of the budget that can be adjusted to put us on a road back into the black. Basically, for health, education, welfare, support for older people, most of the costs are already locked into today's and our future budgets. So we have a
small opportunity, in parts of the budget, to look at how we can make a change to what we are doing that will be beneficial for our future.

Not all debt is negative, either at a local or state or federal level. If you are building infrastructure for the future, sometimes, as with the business I was in, you need to be in debt. At other times you need to be in surplus, and you have to have the goal of being in surplus, otherwise you will forever remain in debt. Understanding that is clear to everybody across this nation. You have to have a goal to be in surplus in your family budget. You do not want to leave the debt to your children after you are gone. One thing we know for sure, in this place and outside this place, is that one day it will all be gone.

You have few chances to do the right thing by the nation while you are in power. For me it is not the office I hold that is important; it is the outcome that I deliver after holding that office. If I came here and I said nothing and I did nothing, I would be marked down. If you come here as an individual or you come into power as a government, you get hold—as Paul Keating said—of the levers of power. If you do that and leave the train just sitting on the rails at the station, going nowhere, you have done nothing for your community and you have done nothing for the nation. So it is not the office I hold but the outcome. In everything I do, both in this House and more broadly, I have taken those positions because I believe we can deliver a better outcome internationally, nationally, at our state level and our regional level. We have a large role to play in that.

As local members, though, we have desires for our community. I do not know what it is like in your electorate but, for me, it is not hard: I need a new hospital in West Gippsland. I cannot have that new hospital if we are in such great debt here that I cannot go to the government and say I need an outlay of many millions of dollars because over a long period of time the hospital that has served the community so well is one that was placed in a regional country area but is now directly on the outskirts of Melbourne, if not actually included in the outer Melbourne area. It has all the pressures of Melbourne's outer growth and at the same time it has the Latrobe Valley pressing on it from the other way. It is a very important health facility for our community in the West and South Gippsland areas as part of a framework of other hospitals, in Leongatha and Wonthaggi and, closer to Melbourne, in Casey, but it is the next port of call for people.

The committee, thoughtfully, have purchased the land for the new hospital, but what they will need is the go-ahead for the funds to build. The Leongatha bypass has just been funded by the federal government. We were blessed to get that through. It will make a difference to that community. It will change that community completely from having massive trucks going through it. We funded that.

There is the long jetty restoration at Port Welshpool, which I have been campaigning for ages. It is a beautiful old jetty that has heritage values. It has been burnt recently by vandals, and that is why it needs a complete rebuild. It is going to cost some millions of dollars to do. It has been a promise of mine in every election campaign up until the last one, when it was refused because of the situation we found ourselves in. I was not making promises during the election campaign. It will give access for disability fishing, it will change the nature of the town, tourism will grow, you will save the kindergarten, you will save the school, you will increase the business opportunities around the port area, and the whole area around Port Welshpool will be enhanced.
The West Gippsland round football stadium regional hub at Pakenham is needed because of massive growth. One family every day moves into my district around the Cardinia shire area, but particularly around the Pakenham-Officer area. There is one family every day. Probably on the figures, some days, two families. Their needs for infrastructure for sport for the young people are being catered for by the community as best we possibly can. The next step is a fairly major round ball—we used to call it soccer—football complex. That is a request of mine for the next election campaign and that is what I will be putting to my leadership.

The Moe Rail Precinct Revitalisation project has been funded, signed off, ticked off by the government. That will make an enormous difference to Moe and district and our pride in our community. The business community are right behind this. The two girls I am talking about will know who I am talking about, because one has a surname like mine, so I cannot really use it because it sounds like we are related. That is not the case at all, but can I just say to the two girls in those two businesses: congratulations on your work to push all the way through for the Moe revitalisation precinct, and I look forward to the turning of the sod for the next part of that.

Unless we can get our finances in order, we are not going to be able to fund the Korumburra Early Childhood Community Centre. I am very desirous of funding these projects, but governments have to have the money to be able to fund them. The only way we can do that is to make the sacrifices, as the Abbott government has outlined in this budget.

We had the great blessing of opening Prom Country Aged Care, as I said in an address the other day. They have asked for an extension. They now have a long waiting list of people who would like to join in that centre, and they are asking for more funds. I also met with Hillview aged care the other day. They have a proposition that they want to put to government, to the department, to say that we can join these two parts of the building up here, it will cost $900,000 and they don't need any more facilities—for example, kitchens and facilities to back it up; all the services are there. It is $900,000 and the former minister at the table knows exactly what I am talking about. It is a great opportunity at little cost, shovel ready. What is the problem? There is $5 million in capital works grants to be spread right across Victoria. That is one drip in a very, very big bucket needed for aged care right across the country.

There is one particular issue—treating young people with respect and saying to them: 'Look, we want your first work payment not to come from the government.' We want your first payment to come from your endeavours, so we are striking an accord with you to say that we do not want your first payment to be a dole payment.

I do not know what I would have been like as a 15-year-old when I did my first part-time job if I had been looking forward to my first payment being an unemployment benefit. I was always looking for my first payment to be what it was when I was 15 and went out carting swedes, hay and potatoes and weeding onions. You may say that those jobs are not there today, Russell, because the hay carting has been taken over by the big round bales and there are special insecticides now to remove the weeds from onions et cetera. But there are other jobs out there that were not there in my day of opportunity. I agree with the message that is coming from the government that for the first six months, surely, you can either learn or you can earn. If you have special disability, of course we are going to look after you, but I want your first payment to be an exciting payment.
When my dad first saw that cheque for £15, after I had spent two weeks digging and carting swedes, he was excited. I was the slowest digger and carter of swedes of the whole group of people in that paddock, but I earned £15 for the two weeks and I was pretty excited about that too. My father was so excited about it that he kept the cheque and gave me the money—he never thought I would earn anything!

Having said that, it is important that we send a message to the young people of Australia: here is the opportunity. If you are thinking that when you leave school you are going straight on a government benefit, no, we want you to have a view that you are going into the workplace. We want to change the culture of the nation to one that says, 'I am not after a government handout; I am after the government supporting me into opportunity either through learning or any other way that can support me into a job.' I think the government in this budget wants to change the culture of the nation.

Paul Keating said that when you change the government, you change a nation. Mr Abbott and Mr Hockey and their team have put forward this budget. Let us give it the opportunity to work over time and the benefits will flow to the generations. Rather than leaving our generations with a debt, rather than leaving the next generation to pay the bill, we can be the generation that began the cultural change and began the great opportunity to make something of this nation, starting with its young people.

Mr BUTLER (Port Adelaide) (16:47): It is a pleasure to follow the member for McMillan. I do not agree with everything that he said but as usual he says it eruditely and with sincerity. It is a pleasure to talk on the Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2014-2015 and related bills. They are part of a set of the most important bills, certainly in my time in parliament and I suspect much longer, because they lie at the centre of a budget that does more to challenge and confront what we understand to be the Australian way of life than any other in my memory.

Before addressing the details of the budget underpinned by these bills, I want to talk a little bit about the seeds of the response that has come from the community about this budget, because in my view the seeds of this budget and the response that it has generated in the community go back to last year, a time when the now Prime Minister as opposition leader was presenting himself to the Australian people as all things to all people. He was trotting around the country talking very negatively about our government’s agenda—which I guess was his role as the opposition leader—but not telling any hard truths to the Australian people about the challenges that our country and so many other countries confront in the 21st century. It was all going to be, according to the then opposition leader, beer and skittles.

It was clear though from feedback that I received in my electorate and when travelling the country with the then Prime Minister, and the research we received—and, I suspect, the anecdotal feedback that all members at the time received—that the Australian people were concerned that, if elected, the then opposition leader now Prime Minister would cut services, that he would cut health services, education funding and a range of other things. They knew that he was a member of parliament who had form, particularly when health minister. They knew that the member for Sturt had been trash-talking the Gonski school reforms for months and months. They had concerns that this Prime Minister, if and when elected, would cut seriously into services that they cherish. Clearly, the Prime Minister was getting the same feedback, because he gave the clearest possible assurances to the Australian people right up to
the day before the election that there would be no cuts to health, no cuts to education, no changes to pensions, no cuts to the ABC or the SBS and no changes to GST arrangements.

The Australian people, rightly and understandably, took the then opposition leader at his word. Well, the deception started within weeks, with the release by the Treasurer of the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook, the MYEFO. This, as was very helpfully pointed out by the minister for immigration today in question time, follows the PEFO, the Pre-Election Fiscal Outlook, which is signed off by the secretaries of the departments of Treasury and Finance, with no political overlay, no consultation with the political leadership of the government, the Treasurer, the finance minister, the Prime Minister of the day—a very clear set of books that was countermanded in a spectacular way by the Treasurer only several weeks after being elected into government.

The MYEFO released by the Treasurer in December changed extraordinary economic assumptions. It gave $9 billion to the Reserve Bank of Australia and it more than doubled the deficit over the course of the forward estimates, adding more than $68 billion in deficits in a matter of weeks, just weeks after the government being elected in 2013. The Australian people rightly ask, ‘Why would the Treasurer have done this?’ and the answer unfortunately again is crystal clear. The Treasurer was hell-bent on trying to manufacture a crisis, trying to give the sense of a budget emergency, which he has maintained ever since. Never mind the truth—that the previous government had achieved AAA credit ratings from all three major international credit agencies. No matter the fact that the public finances of this country are the envy and have been the envy for many years of the developed world, the Treasurer was hell-bent on manufacturing a sense of crisis and budget emergency.

The next phase of the deception was an old trick of the coalition, a trick they have engaged in for as long as I have been involved in politics—the Commission of Audit, to come in and write a blueprint for an incoming coalition government, be it a state government or a Commonwealth government, to start hacking into government services cherished by the Australian people. On this particular commission there was no diversity of views. There was no vague attempt by the government to ensure there was a diversity of views on this Commission of Audit—all good people, I am sure, but no diversity in this group. It has been said I think by the opposition leader that this was a report by the big end of town for the big end of town. Then the Treasurer sat on it. To add to the deception, the Treasurer sat on it. While the people of South Australia and Tasmania went to state elections, while the people of Western Australia unfortunately were dragged back to another Senate election, the Treasurer and the Prime Minister refused to release the hard truths of their blueprint for cutting services.

On budget night a few weeks ago 12 months of this calculated deception finally crystallised into a budget of broken promises. This budget hits pretty much every group in the community that you can imagine, except obviously the big end of town, which was protected by the Commission of Audit report. It hits pensioners in the Port Adelaide electorate, it hits low- and middle-income families in an appalling way, it hits young people trying to get a start in life in the way in which the member for McMillan talked about, it hits motorists, it hits Australians visiting their doctor and so much more, all to halve a deficit that the Treasurer had created only a matter of a few months earlier.

It is hard to know where to start with this budget. As I am sure is the case with all other members—although on this side of the table we are probably being a bit more frank about
this—I and my office have been inundated with calls from members of the electorate I represent, Port Adelaide. I have been spoken to at street-corner meetings over the past few weeks about the measures they are most concerned about in this budget. Without ranking them in any particular order of concern, it is quite clear that the measure attracting the most calls and the most significant feedback to my office and to me personally has been around pensions.

The Prime Minister could not have been clearer before the election, including the night before the election, when he said that there would no change to pensions under a government that he would lead. Well, there clearly are. The lift to the age of 70 is quite profoundly and qualitatively different to the package of pension reforms that the Rudd government put in place in 2009. A lift to the age of 70 as the eligibility age for the age pension would be the highest eligibility age that I am aware of. No-one is able to point to a higher eligibility age anywhere, at the very least in the developed world.

The difference also between this change and the 2009 reforms was that those reforms by the Rudd government were part of a package that importantly included the largest-ever increase to the single pension in its history—an increase that finally saw the single age pension brought up to a benchmark of two-thirds of the couple's rate. This is something that seniors group had been agitating for, for many years and something that was not delivered by the Howard government, although I do acknowledge that the Howard government made some positive changes to the pension, which are impacted by this budget.

I particularly refer to the Howard government’s decision effectively to index, effectively to benchmark, the age pension to earnings or to MTAWE. This is perhaps the most insidious change proposed to pensions in this budget. Not even the Commission of Audit recommended that pensions be indexed according to the consumer price index. Even the Commission of Audit recommended that indexation at least be at the PBCI, which, in the vast majority of quarters, will be higher than the CPI. As I said, there is effectively and has been for a decade and a half a wages link, an earnings link, for pensions in this country, which is so important for maintaining the value, the purchasing power, of the age pension, the disability support pension, the carers payment and a range of other pensions as well. A couple of days ago, the Treasurer in the parliament said that the CPI, apparently in one quarter recently, was higher than MTAWE, the male ordinary times average weekly earnings. I challenged him to find another quarter in the last 10 or 20 years where CPI had been higher than MTAWE, and of course he could not. For the vast bulk of modern Australian economic history, MTAWE has been significantly higher than CPI.

We have seen a change like this before in the early 1980s. We saw Margaret Thatcher get rid of the earnings link for the British basic state pension and link it instead to CPI. What we have seen over the course of three decades is the purchasing power, the value, of the basic pension in the UK deteriorate markedly, to the point where it is now probably only around 15 per cent of average earnings in Britain—a country which now finds 30 per cent of its older citizens aged over 65 officially living in poverty. This is an incredibly poorly thought-out change in this budget—something which does nothing to recognise and value the contribution of particularly older citizens in this country, who have worked hard, paid their taxes, raised their families and built the society that we so often, unfortunately, take for granted. This is a measure that will be resisted very, very strongly by the Australian Labor Party.
Time does not permit me to go through all of the other measures that people in the electorate which I have the privilege of representing have raised with me. The electorate is also very concerned about the changes to family payments, the freeze on rates and the exclusion or the removal of family tax benefit part B for families when their youngest child turns six. It is a shocking hit to single income households, including single parent households, along with a whole range of other changes and hits that this government has inflicted on those families—for example, removing the schoolkids bonus. Apparently, this is part of the Prime Minister's tough choices—the tough choices that include a tax increase to people on $200,000, which, by contrast, involves them paying $7.70 a week extra in tax for just three years, while single income households, with a primary and a high school aged child, might take a hit to family payments and cuts to other benefits that would total more than $6,000 in a year in 2017-18.

I would also like to talk very quickly about some measures in my portfolio, the environment, climate change and water portfolios, that have again shocked the constituencies in those areas. It is not easy to shock stakeholders in the environment portfolio when it comes to decisions by this government because, in eight short months, they have shown themselves to be a government that is disdainful of environmental protection, science and evidence based policy in the areas of environmental protection and climate change.

I particularly want to point to the decision in this budget to abolish ARENA, Australia's renewable energy agency, in spite of a very clear promise before the election that ARENA would be maintained by an incoming coalition government. It is yet another broken promise, perhaps overshadowed by the extraordinary broken promises in the areas of health, education, pensions and the like, but a very significant broken promise on the back of more than $400 million being stripped from that agency in MYEFO.

Half a billion dollars has been taken out of Landcare. The Minister for the Environment will say that that has been replaced with the Green Army program, a program that the opposition will not oppose, but natural resource management bodies and Landcare bodies will tell members of the coalition, as much as they tell members of the opposition, that a labour market program like the Green Army is no substitute for Landcare programs. As much as the Minister for the Environment might pretend otherwise, if you go out and talk to farmers and NRM bodies, which have been working on land care for years and years, they will say that switching $500 million out of that program into the Green Army is nothing more or less than a sleight of hand. Another $500 million has been stripped from the Solar Roofs program; a million solar roofs was a rock-solid promise made time and time again by the Prime Minister and the Minister for the Environment. It disappeared under this budget, as so many other things in the environment, climate change and water portfolios did.

I did want to mention one or two things in closing that are not in my portfolio, but are close to my heart. In spite of the Prime Minister's promise to make no cuts to health, I was very disappointed to see $50 million stripped from Partners in Recovery, a program designed to support the needs of perhaps the most vulnerable Australians in the community—people with enduring, chronic and very severe mental illness. I was very appreciative of the support that we received from the shadow minister for health in the Mental Health Reform package. I was very disappointed to see that cut to the program that was intended to support perhaps the most vulnerable Australians.
Labor will fight this budget; we will hold the Prime Minister to his word and we will make sure that Australia retains the pillars of a fair and prosperous society that have been attacked by this budget and that so many Australians fought to build up.

Mr PASIN (Barker) (17:02): It is a privilege to speak on the first occasion as the member for Barker on the budget that was recently delivered. I thought I would begin by waxing lyrical about the process, but in truth—perhaps because I am feeling a little homesick—I will reflect on a discussion I recently had with my daughter who is four. I must say, she is particularly advanced—she takes after her mother rather than me. I knew Bella had reached a level of maturity when she said, 'Daddy, I have made a mess and I'll have to clean it up.' That speaks to maturity. My daughter, barely a few days over four, knew that having made a mess she would have to help to clean it up.

It is disappointing that those on the other side of the chamber do not have that level of maturity. Having made a mess, and that mess is a gross national debt of $667 billion, they intend to make it difficult for us to clean that mess. The other difficulty here is—it is new to me as a new member of this place—the exercise in misinformation. It is a monumental attempt at academic dishonesty, if you like, when it comes to the situation we find ourselves in—as I said a gross national debt of $667 billion and the interest alone is $1 billion a month. If we are to talk about what is best for the young people of Australia, and much of this debate has been about what is best for the young people of Australia, clearly what is not best for the young people of Australia is to saddle them with our debt today to be dealt with tomorrow. That is why difficult decisions with respect to this budget have had to be made.

I thought I would take my time to debunk some of these myths, because quite frankly I am alarmed at the level to which the Labor Party will sink to effectively scare the constituents of this nation. They want them scared, they want them to fear the decisions that are being taken in this budget, because if they did not want to scare them they would not be using words like 'cut'.

There was a rally recently in Mount Gambier and you will not be surprised, Madam Deputy Speaker, that a stalwart of the Labor Party spoke at that rally. A chief organiser of the CFMEU spoke at that rally, and I happened to listen to the coverage. What people heard, with the recitation of these lines of misinformation, is that effectively this budget is about cuts when in fact it is nothing of the sort. I was concerned to speak to a pensioner, who said to me, 'Tony, why is my pension being cut? I am being told that my pension is being cut.' I took a considerable amount of time to speak to this particular constituent and, at the conclusion of that discussion, she said to me, 'So you're telling me that my pensions will continue to increase twice yearly.' And I said, 'That's exactly the position.' She said, 'That's not what I'm being told. I'm being told that my pension is being cut.' Herein lies the harm. We need to be honest with the Australian people—not just honest with the headline gross debt figures but honest in terms of the impacts on individuals of the decisions we have made. There will not be pension cuts. What there will be is a continuation of twice-yearly increases, at a different rate and calculated on a different basis, but still twice-yearly increases.

Much of the rally in Mount Gambier spoke to the reforms in the education space. As someone who was lucky enough to achieve a tertiary degree, this is an area I feel passionate about. ABS statistics that have been quoted consistently throughout this debate tell us that, over the course of a lifetime, those who attain tertiary qualifications are, on average, likely to
earn a million dollars more than those who do not. Equally, under our current system we have falling standards in our universities, in that we no longer have a university in the world's top 20, and we have very few in the world's top 100. What we have is a system whereby 60 per cent of the costs of delivering a tertiary degree is met by the public purse and 40 per cent is met by the individual. There is obviously good reason why we embark upon educating our young, but what we are doing through these reforms, and what we have made clear through these reforms, is asking for an increase in the contribution by individuals towards their education in such a way that they will be, along with society, the principal beneficiary of that education. I need to also remind the chamber that not a single individual student will be prevented from undertaking a tertiary degree. There will be no requirement for up-front fees.

When I heard at this rally the alarmist suggestions that nobody will be able to afford university and that university will be just for the rich, quite frankly it saddened me, because that is nothing more than a wolf whistle. It is the kind of politics that I thought we had left behind in this country in the 1960s. It is divisive. It is class politics. It is base politics and, quite frankly, it is incredibly sad.

Speaking briefly in the area of health, in this country 260 million GP visits are provided free. Of course, medical treatment has never been free to the public purse and I respectfully suggest that it should not be free to the individual. What we are asking for is a modest contribution from those who seek medical treatment. There are adequate and substantial safety nets. You hear the catch cry from those opposite that this administration is taxing the sick, but they do not offer the academically honest observation that there are in fact these safety nets; for pensioners, for people with health care cards and for children under the age of 16, the number of co-payments they have to pay is limited to 10 a year.

None of this is easy; cleaning up a mess and correcting errors is never easy. But the first and most important thing one has to do when embarking on this course is to accept that there is a problem. That is why, as disturbed as I have been about the rhetoric around this budget, what disturbs me most is that those opposite continue to promulgate the idea that there is no problem here. Of course there is a problem. With the interest payments on our national debt, we are effectively using one credit card to pay off a liability on another credit card. Ordinary Australians know that we just cannot sustain that. If we had not taken corrective action, each and every Australian would be saddled with $25,000 worth of debt. For the average household, for a family with two children, that is $100,000 of debt.

Those opposite who say this is a budget that takes from the poor and gives to the rich ignore the fact that not only is there to be an adjustment to the highest marginal tax rate but those who find themselves in that tax bracket—including me and other people in this House—pay close to $60,000 per annum in tax. Notwithstanding that fact, we have moved to increase the tax rate for those in the top marginal tax bracket. Why? Because everyone needs to do their bit. Whether it is local government, state government, high wealth individuals or those in receipt of benefits, each and every Australian needs to do their bit.

There has been misinformation around the decision to move the age of eligibility for the age pension to 70 by 2035. The level of misinformation on this has been quite surprising to me. I have dealt with inquiries from people close to the retirement age who say it is unfair that they should be expected to retire at 70 as a result of decisions taken in this budget. It has taken some time to explain to them that this change will take effect from 2035—that it will affect
me but perhaps not them. We should be celebrating the fact that, as Australians, our life expectancy is increasing. We should celebrate the fact that 70 is the new 55 and not be scared of working until 70 if we can. Of course, we should remember that the Labor Party put us on this trajectory in 2009 by raising the age pension eligibility age to 67 from 2023.

I began my comments by talking about my young daughter. In the few minutes I have remaining, I wish to mention her again. She, like many people her age, is a massive fan of *Peppa Pig*. I never thought I would become a connoisseur of children's television, but I can recite almost every skit the Wiggles have ever embarked upon and I find myself knowing about not just Peppa Pig but her extended family. So if we are talking about the egregious way in which those who oppose these measures have gone about whipping up hysteria in the community, I cannot go past the suggestion by the ABC that this budget will see the end of *Peppa Pig*.

Let's be clear: the ABC and the SBS as the nation's broadcasters have been asked to find a one per cent efficiency dividend. I come to this place having spent a long time in private business. I grew up at the feet of my parents operating a small business. If they were not finding efficiency dividends of that and more per year they would not have been lucky enough to continue in business. This might go some way to explaining why particularly the ABC and particularly in my electorate of Barker has given such significant coverage to the budget. Quite frankly, I am glad they have, because it has given me the opportunity to explain the need for these measures.

Nobody makes tough decisions because they think that it will be a fun ride. The Prime Minister and Treasurer have not taken these tough but fair measures because they thought it would be great to run these ideas around the park. They have taken them because they, like me, do not want to bequeath to the next generation of Australians mountains and mountains of debt—$667 billion if we take no action. Quite frankly, that is a debt limit you could not fly a rocket over, and yet those in the Labor Party would have you think, 'There is nothing to see here. There is no need for change.' Indeed, recent announcements would have seen that debt level increase by over $100 billion.

I am proud of the budget that has been delivered. I am proud because, having been asked to make the difficult, sensible and appropriate decisions, the Abbott coalition government has done that. This budget is one that will show its merit in years to come. I am certain that not only the constituents of Barker but the wider Australian community are ready to fix the problem. They elected us to fix the problem. We have taken the first step on that road, and I am looking forward to completing the job.

**Ms CLAYDON** (Newcastle) (17:17): I rise to speak on the appropriation bills that are currently before the House. In total, these five bills seek parliamentary approval for around $1.3 billion in the 2013-14 year and $88.4 billion in the 2014-15 year for both the ordinary continuing operations of government as well as a number of new measures contained in the 2014-15 budget. It is this budget, the Abbott Liberal government's first budget, that I wish to speak to today because it is this budget that betrays the trust of the Australian people.

This is a budget built on broken promises and wrong priorities. This is a budget that exposes the Abbott government's systemic deceit—their false promises to the Australian people about reducing the cost of living, their false promises about the state of the budget and their false promises about returning the budget to surplus without imposing new taxes or new
spending cuts beyond those they had already identified before the election. This is a budget that makes clear that what this government say before an election bears little, if any, resemblance to what they say and do after an election. Every day we see the Prime Minister on his bike pedalling as fast as he can to escape his pre-election promises and commitments. Does the Prime Minister honestly think that no-one will remember? It is not as though all those press conferences, billboards, signed pledges, glossy brochures and photo opportunities did not exist, and it is not as though there are not more than a few traces left behind to remind us all. Prime Minister, I can assure you that the people of Newcastle remember well what you said before the election and they, like the vast majority of Australians, have completely and comprehensively rejected this budget.

This is a budget that compounds inequality in our society, and Australians everywhere have denounced it. But it is not just Labor members of parliament making this point. As one senior Liberal MP put it, this budget is a stinking carcass around the government's neck. And while the Liberal Minister for Small Business is more polite in his observations that there are no clear winners in this budget I can assure the minister and the Abbott Liberal government that there are plenty of losers. There have been cuts to education, cuts to health, cuts to family payments, cuts to the ABC and SBS, and cuts to legal services, science, the arts, the environment, the Human Rights Commission, foreign aid, social services, Indigenous affairs—the list goes on and on. To make matters worse, the so-called justification for these savage cuts is a fictitious budget emergency concocted by this Prime Minister and his Treasurer to suit their own political purposes. No amount of spin, however, can hide the fact that these budget cuts are a complete betrayal of the Australian people, who put their trust in this Abbott Liberal government.

Let us be clear, this is a budget based on a long list of broken promises and commitments that this government made when seeking office. Who can forget the Prime Minister's words on the eve of the election when he was interviewed by SBS news? He said there would be no cuts to education, no cuts to health, no changes to pensions, no changes to the GST, and no cuts to the ABC or SBS. This was the same Prime Minister who told the ABC in July last year:

*The great thing about the Coalition is you know exactly what you will get from the Coalition.*

Well, Prime Minister, this budget was certainly not the budget Australians thought they were getting or that they were told they were getting.

This budget is, however, unravelling before our very eyes, as an understandably very nervous government tries to sell the stinking carcass to the Australian people. Given the enormity of the task ahead you would think that the government would at least be across the detail of what they were trying to sell, but as we have seen over the last two weeks that could not be further from the case—with the Prime Minister, the Treasurer and the ministry in complete disarray over their own budget measures.

Last week, we had the education minister floating the idea of collecting student debts from the dead as a way of boosting the budget bottom line. He said he had no ideological opposition to collecting debts from the estates of former students who died owing money to the government—a new death tax, the burden of which could be passed on to future generations. While the minister for education got the backing of the Treasurer, the Prime Minister moved swiftly to rule out any notion of collecting fees from dead students' estates,
telling ABC radio that the existing arrangements regarding HECS debts would not be changed. What a shambles. The minister, Treasurer and Prime Minister are at complete loggerheads over their own budget measures.

And it does not get any better when it comes to health, where we have the Prime Minister and the Treasurer providing answers to questions on the new GP tax that directly contradict information in the budget papers. Who are we to believe? The Prime Minister, the Treasurer or the relevant minister? Can we even trust the budget papers—who knows? The question remains: if the Prime Minister and Treasurer do not understand the policies they are introducing, why should the Australian people have to pay for them?

Why should the Australian people have to pay a new tax every time they visit a doctor or are sent for x-rays or blood tests, when they already pay a Medicare levy through the tax system? This new tax on doctor visits hits everyone—pensioners, parents, unemployed, low-income earners, people with a disability and even veterans. For those who think they are not affected because their doctor does not bulk-bill, think again. Next time you go to get your Medicare rebate you will notice that it is $5 short because this government has cut the fees they pay to the doctors.

Why should pensioners and carers be asked to take a hit and accept lower rates of indexation when the government increases the pension age to 70, cuts the seniors supplement and rips up the national partnerships that deliver concessions to pensioners and seniors across Australia, while this government insists on paying millionaires $50,000 to have a baby? Why should Australians accept this government’s refusal to invest in education? We know that education is what shapes the future of our children and our nation, but this government is ripping out $20 million from our local schools, putting an end to the Gonski reforms and abandoning needs based funding. Along with cuts to trades training, huge increases to university fees and ever-spiralling HECS debts for students, this government is attacking education on all fronts, despite promising before the election that they were on a so-called unity ticket with Labor. Before the election, Tony Abbott promised no cuts to education; after the election it is a very different story—another broken promise from this deceitful government.

Let us take a look at some of the perhaps lesser known but no less nasty cuts contained within this budget. A close reading of this budget confirms that the government have no plan for Australian jobs and, just as shocking, they fail dismally to understand the needs of regional Australia. We have seen job cut after job cut in Newcastle since the government were elected, with hundreds more in danger. Yet we have seen no action or plan on jobs from the Abbott Liberal government.

To make matters worse, if you are under 30 and are one of the unlucky ones to lose your job, this budget makes it clear you are on your own. There are the cuts to apprenticeship and job seeker support programs, the abolition of career advice and mentoring schemes, the cuts to Youth Connections and the cuts to tools of the trade grants. Massive changes to Newstart and the freezing of payments in six-month intervals while you are trying to find work are especially cruel. These programs help people keep and find work, and support job seekers in transition, yet this government is abandoning them at their time of greatest need.

The social and health impacts of these cuts are profound and tear at the social fabric of our community. Professor John Mendoza of the University of Sydney and the University of the
Sunshine Coast notes that this budget is particularly cruel for younger Australians and is concerned about the ongoing effects. He said:

… younger Australians are been actively excluded by Government. It is discriminatory, divisive and dangerous. The changes to Newstart allowance in particular are the most egregious and dangerous proposals. The links between mental illness, suicide and under-employment and unemployment are well documented and known.

Removing this very basic safety net provided by Newstart will put more unemployed people at even greater risk—possibly unprecedented.

This is a shameful legacy for the government to leave for our young Australians.

In Newcastle we have benefited in the past from the decentralisation of federal government departments and agencies, creating local jobs and offering dedicated services to the community. We are proudly home to a major ATO facility and CSIRO's clean energy centre, a world leader in solar and thermal research. Indeed, I would like to put on the record my congratulations to the scientists in CSIRO in Newcastle who this week announced success in using solar energy to generate the hottest supercritical steam ever achieved outside of fossil fuel sources. Dr Wonhas said:

Instead of relying on burning fossil fuels to produce supercritical steam, this breakthrough demonstrates that the power plants of the future could instead be using the free, zero emission energy of the sun to achieve the same result.

The $9.7 billion research grant for this project was supported by the Australian Renewable Energy Agency, ARENA, which this government has also cut. Only a government with no vision for the future would contemplate cutting science and scientific agencies like CSIRO and ARENA.

This budget contains no joy for our shipbuilders at Forgacs, where 900 highly skilled men and women continue to face an uncertain future with a lack of government commitment to major Defence shipbuilding contracts. The work is there—successive Defence white papers have identified the need—but this government continues to sit on its hands.

This Prime Minister also went to the election on a platform of no cuts to the ABC or SBS, yet in his first budget he has stripped $232 million from the ABC and $8 million from SBS. In Senate estimates last week ABC Managing Director Mark Scott confirmed that these cuts will result in job losses and a reduction in news services. In regional areas like my own electorate of Newcastle, the ABC is more than a news provider and a kids TV station; it is an integral part of our community. In times of disaster and emergency, like the bushfires experienced in our region in October last year, the ABC dropped everything to support our community. Cuts to the ABC in Newcastle are direct cuts to our community. Mr Scott also said in Senate estimates that local radio was the spine of what the ABC delivers but was uncommitted on its future in the wake of the announced funding cuts. He said:

I just hope that our budget envelope is one that allows us to continue to be able to invest in the renewal of local radio. It is the lifeblood of what we do.

On emergency broadcasting, he said:

… we look to be responsible stewards as emergency broadcasters. We take the role very seriously. I think in any circumstances we would look to deliver the best possible service that we can. But it is expensive and we continue to try to prioritise funding for it.
The ABC are trying to do their best for regional Australia, but this government is undermining their efforts.

This government has also removed a key voice for people with disability through the abolition of the dedicated Disability Discrimination Commissioner role from the Australian Human Rights Commission. Earmarked as a cost-saving measure to repair the budget, the cutting of the role currently held by Mr Graeme Innes AM, who is legally blind, is ill-considered and illogical. Five members of the Human Rights Commission have expressed their disagreement with the decision. As confirmed last week in Senate estimates, nearly 40 per cent of the Human Rights Commission’s caseload is from the disability area—nearly double the next highest caseload. It deserves to have a dedicated commissioner. I echo the call of my colleagues and Mr Innes: Prime Minister, do not abandon this important voice for people suffering from discrimination.

Let us take a look at the government's $16 billion cut to overseas aid, another broken promise that will hurt the world's poor. Sixteen billion dollars in overseas aid can make a world of difference to some of the poorest countries and people on earth. For example, it could teach 53 million people to read and write, provide 3.2 billion lifesaving malaria treatments, deliver antiretroviral treatments to 20 million people with HIV-AIDS or train 6.4 million new midwives in developing countries. Australia is a rich and prosperous nation and it is our responsibility to support those in need. In a year when we are chairing the G20, we should be setting an example to the rest of the world about how to look after others less fortunate. Instead, we are tearing up our commitment and abandoning those who need our help the most. Again, it is not just Labor highlighting the unjust aspects of this government. In response to the budget cuts to foreign aid, Helen Szoke, Chief Executive of Oxfam, said:

Unless countries like Australia invest more in humanitarian assistance and efforts to reduce disaster risk we are going to see more people go without life-saving assistance—Australia needs to be part of the solution, not backing away from its responsibility.

Budgets are about choices, and while the Prime Minister likes to talk about making tough decisions and tough choices, the Australian people have every right to question his priorities. Just how tough was it to produce a budget that makes the lower income earners do all the heavy lifting while high earners are left with barely any change or are indeed better off. Just how tough was it to cut health, education and pensions while giving $50,000 to already wealthy people to have a baby? These are not the values or priorities of the Australian people. This is a budget that divides Australia and entrenches inequality. That is why Labor will be fighting this budget and making the case for a better future, a more equitable future. Australia can and must do better.

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde) (17:32): I thank the member for Newcastle for her contribution but, as usual, there is nothing constructive from those opposite to help the future direction of this country. It is important in this debate to reflect on some of the reasons why we need a responsible budget. History is a wonderful teacher in this regard; listen to the wise words of Cicero some 2,600 years ago. He said:

The budget should be balanced, the Treasury should be refilled, public debt should be reduced, the arrogance of officialdom should be tempered and controlled, and the assistance to foreign lands should be curtailed lest Rome become bankrupt. People must again learn to work, instead of living on public assistance.
For far too long politicians of all persuasions have failed to have an honest discussion with the Australian people about the limits of government and what governments are actually capable of providing and not providing. It is wise to reflect on a little story that illustrates the situation very well. I quote from an article titled 'The Tragedy of the Welfare State' by Tom Palmer. He uses this little analogy:

The welfare state has something in common with fishing. If no one owns and is responsible for the fish in the lake, but one does own all the fish he or she can catch and pull out of the lake, everyone tries to catch the most fish. Each reasons that "if I don’t catch the fish, someone else will." Each of us may know that catching lots of fish now means that the lake will be fished out, but so long as others can catch whatever I don’t catch, none of us have an incentive to limit our fishing …

The consequence is that we do not:

…let the fish population replenish itself. Fish are caught faster than they can breed; the waters are fished out; and in the end everyone is worse off.

Over the past six years we have seen exactly that scenario play out in this great country. The end result is that we are at a point where approximately 50 per cent of Australians pay little if any income tax once the various government benefits are taken into account; the top 10 income earners pay approximately 45 per cent of all income tax; and we have one of the higher corporate tax rates in the world—certainly well above OECD and Asian averages.

I acknowledge that this budget does make some difficult decisions, but as with the story we have just heard, if difficult decisions are not made what are going to have left the future generations? We need not only to look at the short-term impact but also to consider the longer term outcomes for this country. Far too often we focus on the here and now and, unfortunately, more often than not for political not national game, as we see from those opposite. We should also be considering the impact of today's decisions on future generations. That is exactly the purpose of many of the measures in this budget. They will create a system that is sustainable for the long-term future for not just current generations but the generations to come. If we do not start to manage our expenses and the long-term sustainability of government programs there will come a time when, just as in the fishing story, they will become unaffordable. This is of no benefit to current recipients or those who may seek to claim a benefit in the future.

We clearly stated during the election campaign that our four key areas of focus would be: stopping the boats, it is well over 150 days since a successful boat arrival; repealing the carbon and mining taxes, our legislation for both of these has passed the House of Representatives but is being blocked in the Senate; building the roads of the 21st century, we are spending some $50 billion on road and rail infrastructure in this budget alone; and, crucially, bringing the budget back into order. This budget is the beginning of that process. In my electorate of Forde during the election we announced that a coalition government would deliver some $3 million towards the upgrade of the Beenleigh town centre, as well as close to $1 million for CCTV cameras and some $20,000 for our local SES groups. I can happily say that all of these items are being delivered in this budget.

In this debate it is worthwhile to have a little bit of history and some perspective about how we got into this situation in the first place. When Labor came into office in 2007 the previous coalition government had left them with a surplus of some $20 billion, with no net debt and some $45 billion in the bank. The following six years of Labor government saw that situation
deteriorate markedly with the result being that if nothing changed over the subsequent 10 years we would not see a budget surplus and we would finish up with gross debt of some $667 billion. During those six years the previous Labor government promised on some 500-odd occasions that we would have a budget surplus. It was like they had been wandering around in the desert for six years and every now and again saw a mirage of a surplus that, as they got closer, disappeared and turned out to be sand and more desert. That is the debt and deficit disaster that the previous Labor government left the Australian people. The Australian people elected a coalition government to clean up the mess. We have a choice to be a responsible government and repair that damage, not just for the here and now but for the longer term. If we do not make any changes in the way we are going, the budget will be in deficit for another 10 years, which would be longest stretch of deficits since World War 2.

It is important to note that the dollars we borrow today and spend today are a cost to future generations because we are spending their taxation income today. Unless these policies change, as I said earlier, we will be facing $667 billion of debt in 10 years time, equal to $24,500 for every man, woman and child in this country. We currently pay $1 billion a month in interest. If nothing changes it will be close to $3 billion a month. The current $1 billion a month is equivalent to the cost of building a world-class teaching hospital each month or, to bring it closer to home, of upgrading the M1 between Loganholme and Daisy Hill.

This budget seeks to begin the process of restoring long-term financial stability for future generations in this country. As a result of some of the difficult decisions we are making, debt is forecast to be about $275 billion lower in a decade. This is vitally important because we would then not be paying so much on that interest bill and we would not be paying it to overseas. When you strengthen the economy, small businesses succeed, families have less pressure on them and jobs are created.

As other speakers on this side have quite rightly pointed out, those opposite have been running a scare campaign to frighten the Australian people with their apocalyptic versions of this budget. We have taken the time in my office to sit down with many of my constituents and explain the realities of what we are actually doing and to inform them of the true facts about what this budget is seeking to achieve. So let's clear up a few of the misconceptions from those opposite.

Let's look firstly at health. We are not cutting health funding. Despite the rumours going around, the annual federal funding to the states for public hospitals will increase by more than nine per cent every year for the next three years and by more than six per cent in the fourth year. Labor says that that six per cent is a cut. Well, that is based on their blue-sky mining promises that were never sustainable in the long term. As I said earlier, it is our responsibility to demonstrate prudent fiscal management for the longer term. In total, there is an increase of 40 per cent over the next four years. In addition, we are looking to improve the long-term sustainability of the Medicare system with the introduction of the co-payment fee, of which $5 will go into the medical research fund to provide funding for cures for diseases such as cancer, diabetes and stroke, many of which Australians suffer regularly.

In education, again, we are not cutting funding. Students and schools will benefit from the government's record funding investment of some $64½ billion over the next four years. Schools in Forde will benefit not just from that funding because we plan to put other reforms in place to improve the quality of teaching. In the first part of this year schools in the Forde
received some $3 million from the federal government, and that funding would never have been received if Labor had been re-elected. From 2013-14 to 2017-18, total Commonwealth funding to all schools in Australia will increase by some 34 per cent. From 2018 funding for schools will be based on the CPI plus growth in school enrolments. But, again, it is about putting the budget on a long-term, sustainable footing.

In higher education, for the first time ever, the government seeks to provide direct financial assistance to all students studying diplomas, advanced diplomas and associate degree courses in addition to bachelor's degrees. The coalition government's reforms expand opportunities for Australian students and will provide additional financial support to over 80,000 students each year by 2018.

In addition to tertiary education, we see increased support for people wishing to pursue an apprenticeship or trade vocation through the trade support loans, to help more apprentices finish their training and get straight out into the workforce by providing support across the entire period of their apprenticeship and providing an incentive to complete their course.

There has been much discussion about the impact or lack thereof on pensioners. As I mentioned earlier, there has been a lot of misinformation surrounding pensions, largely thanks to a great scare campaign by those opposite. I have been out in the community making myself available to constituents to discuss their concerns regarding this fear campaign. On Saturday I met with a number of seniors at a local coffee shop to discuss their concerns and to advise them that we are not—I repeat not—cutting their pensions. I explained that the government seeks to continue increasing the rate of the age pension and that pensioners will keep their Commonwealth concessions and benefits. Age pension payments are increasing and they will continue to increase twice each year to keep up with the cost of living.

In March this year the pension rate increased by a maximum of $15.70 a fortnight for single pensioners and $11.90 a fortnight for each member of a couple. There will be a further pension increase in September. I think in this debate it is relevant to note that the March increase for pensions was based on CPI, not on MTAWE, which is exactly where we are looking to go from 2017-18. Pensioners will also continue to receive the pension supplement, which will be indexed twice a year. This government is focused on creating a long-term, sustainable system for all Australians.

We are also supporting small business, which is the engine room of our economy and, in Forde, our largest employer. The budget contains a range of measures for small business, including establishing a Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman. We have also spent significant time already reducing the huge amount of red tape.

In summary, this budget is focused on creating a long-term, stable financial situation for the long-term benefit of this country. (Time expired)

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (17:48): I am glad to have this opportunity to be heard on the government's appropriation bills, which underpin a budget based on a fictional emergency and are driven by a set of ideological prejudices. It is a budget that amounts to a dismantling of Australia's future. It is a budget that is punitive towards those who have least and it makes no attempt to address the areas of expenditure or tax concession that are ineffectively directed towards those who have most, especially large corporations. It is in many ways a cruel and distorted budget. There is no other way to explain an approach that seeks to penalise the...
unemployed, age and disability pensioners, university students, single parents and low-income families while making a big show of getting a balanced contribution from high-income earners and big business with what amounts to a slap with the limpest of limp lettuce leaves.

Under this government's proposed budget, single parents will be poorer as their support is reduced, as they face GP co-payments, as they lose the schoolkids bonus and as they deal with the direct and indirect effect of higher petrol prices. Meanwhile, there is a tax cut for business, and even the biggest companies, at worst, will stay the same. The levy they face, which offsets the general tax cut, will be used to pay for an unnecessarily generous paid parental leave scheme, in a strangely firm adherence to the one commitment the Prime Minister apparently does want to keep.

The attempts to sell the budget have involved repeated claims that its harsh and conflicting measures are necessary for the long term, yet the budget takes a number of incredibly retrograde steps in relation to future costs. Some of the so-called budget savings, though dealt with by separate legislation, are created by unwinding national preventative health coordination and research and by decreasing investment in technologies that improve energy efficiency, increased renewable energy and support for the low-carbon jobs of the 21st century. These cuts conform to the coalition's general disregard for the role and responsibility of government in taking the long view and in shaping Australia's economic and social future. The cuts conform to a belief that the market will automatically provide wonderful solutions to the challenges that lie ahead even though history shows that without proper guidance, regulation and support the market is a poor mechanism for getting ahead of the curve. Health services and costs in the US are a great example where a much higher mix of private to public funding and service provision delivers significantly worse and less fair health outcomes at a much higher cost to the public purse.

The retreat in the area of climate change action is particularly muddle-headed when you consider that a set of balanced revenue and investment arrangements are being taken away, to be replaced by a direct action spending plan that all the experts agree will not sufficiently reduce emissions. So big polluters will no longer pay for the cost of their pollution. The incentive to lower emissions and improve efficiency will disappear, and the historic investment in Australia's renewable energy capacity, innovation and jobs will drop away at a critical period in the industry's burgeoning development.

Last week I had the privilege of meeting several young people from Kiribati and Tuvalu who were visiting parliament with the Pacific Calling Partnership facilitated by the Edmund Rice Centre's Eco Justice campaign. They discussed the devastating impact that climate change is having on their tiny islands, with increased cyclonic, drought and storm surge events, and sea level rise eroding precious land and polluting crops and freshwater with salt. There is nowhere for them to go as their islands become thinner and thinner. Nineteen-year-old Apisaloma Tawati from Kiribati described the 'slow and horrible decay of life—life of plants, animals and humans'. They called on Australia as a rich and developed country to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and to help finance small island countries to adapt to the damage that climate change is causing.

Unfortunately this coalition government is taking Australia down the opposite path in turning our back on climate change and pulling out of international climate finance

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agreements that would help developing and small island states to adapt to the damage caused by climate change. This has consequences not only for our international reputation but also, far worse, for our Pacific Island neighbours whose nations are slowly drowning. If we truly care about the Pacific, as the government says we do, then we need to take appropriate and urgent action on climate change both here in Australia and internationally.

It goes without saying that there are a number of impacts that this budget will have on the people I represent in Fremantle. The changes to support for pensioners and senior Australians including the planned reversion to CPI pension indexation, the reset of deeming thresholds, the cutting of the senior supplement and the abolition of the national partnership through which state-based concessions are supported, will all have the effect of reducing the real income and the real quality of life for older Australians. Mr Abbott said 'no change to pensions' on the eve of the election. That commitment has been shattered.

As a co-chair of the newly-formed Parliamentary Friends of the ABC launched last week, I note with particular regret that the budget also includes cuts to the ABC and the SBS of $232.3 million and $8 million respectively. On the eve of the election Mr Abbott said 'no cuts to the ABC or SBS'. This is another promise given, another promise broken. Fremantle is a diverse and multicultural electorate with a community that has special regard for the value that exists in a properly resourced public broadcaster and a properly resourced multicultural and multilingual broadcaster. These cuts and those false words will be keenly felt in Fremantle.

We are all fortunate that Australia is, to a large extent, free of the phobia that exists in much of the US, for example, when it comes to government and the Public Service. We recognise that good government is a good thing—politics and politicians aside—that government is a critical guarantor of fairness and balance, an essential custodian of public institutions and free public goods and a particularly important regulator when it comes to the protection and conservation of our shared environment and natural resources. Unfortunately, as I said earlier, the Abbott government feels it has a duty to be a government in retreat, to abandon the role of custodian, to abdicate the responsibility of leadership. All around us, with perhaps the sole exception of defence and border control, the public institutions, public servants and public services that Australians depend upon are being whittled down and weakened.

We have seen cuts to the CSIRO, the abolition of the Alcohol and Other Drugs Council, the disappearance altogether of AusAID and the prospective dissolution of the Medicare Local network—all steps that reveal a fundamental disregard for public servants and publicly-funded services. While the member for Tangney and I do not agree on major policy all that often, I believe he made uncommon good sense on the radio last week in relation to the CSIRO cuts when he said that it appeared that this government and this Prime Minister simply did not understand science—on this, he is absolutely right.

The Abbott government does not understand medical science or else why dismantle the recently established structure of preventative health research and coordination within our health system. It does not understand climate science or else why dismantle the historic and forward looking changes to reduce emissions and grow renewable energy production and jobs. It does not understand environmental science or else why propose changes that seriously weaken the regulatory effectiveness of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity
Conservation Act by devolving decisions that are rightly for the Commonwealth to consider, including World Heritage and the application of the water trigger, down to the states and even to local governments.

As Adjunct Professor Rob Fowler from the Law School at the University of South Australia said in an address to parliamentarians last week titled 'Rolling back the years—regression in Commonwealth environmental laws':

Given the scale of the environmental challenges needing to be faced in this country, and globally, at the present time, and given also the growing sense of urgency on the part of scientists concerning the need to address these problems, it is difficult to understand the rationale for a substantial withdrawal from the field of environmental management by the Commonwealth.

It is the combined effect of the government's policies and budget measures that deliver compound harm in my electorate of Fremantle. The best example of this is the Abbott government's commitment to fund the construction of Roe Highway Stage 8, in combination with its decision to make no investment in urban rail and its intention to devolve EPBC assessments to state and perhaps even local governments.

In the case of Roe 8, this means providing funding to a massively expensive and out-of-date road project in the absence of a clear port and freight network plan. It means going forward with a road project whose only certainty is severe damage to a rare and precious remnant wetland and the cutting in half of local communities. I take this opportunity to again thank community campaigners from the Save Beeliar Wetlands group, including Nandi Chinna, author of Swamp Poems, Kate Kelly, Felicity McGeorge, Joe Branco, and Nyoongar elders Patrick Hume and Reverend Sealin Garlett. I congratulate them for their successful community workshop that was recently held in the Bibra Lake area.

The final substantial area of the government's proposed budget that I want to touch upon is international development. As someone who had the honour and privilege of holding, briefly, the role of Minister for International Development, how disappointing it is that, since its election, the current government has perhaps moved faster and more savagely to undermine both the organisational capacity and the funding for Australia's foreign aid program than it has in relation to any other area of government operation. Sadly, foreign aid continues to be seen by those opposite as a kind of misguided niche interest held by those with a bleeding heart—and therefore naturally the primest of prime candidates for funding cuts at every turn.

The reality is that Australia's international development program under the Labor government secured its place as a world leader in terms of effectiveness and efficiency. It has been making an incredibly important lifesaving difference to the poorest and most disadvantaged people in the world—many of whom are in our region. Even if you were the kind of person who thought Australia should not make that sort of contribution to the wellbeing of our fellow men and women, you should reflect on the fact that, dollar for dollar, well-directed foreign aid is as effective in improving economic capacity and for building regional peace and stability as spending in any other government program area.

It is profoundly depressing that some people will hardly bat an eyelid at the most astronomical expenditure on certain defence projects but will enthusiastically applaud the taking of money out of programs that give children the chance of living beyond five years of age. It is appalling when politicians say that we cannot commit funds to reduce poverty and disease in other countries in the circumstances of our own small and manageable national
borrowings, yet heartily welcome the fact that we have committed to sending $24 billion overseas to purchase a set of warplanes in precisely the same fiscal circumstances.

For all the people of Fremantle, this budget is disappointing, short-sighted and dishonest. For many of them, it is also frightening and punitive. People in my electorate are bewildered at the conduct of a government whose single act of creation so far is the reintroduction of dames and knights and whose principal focus seems to be the relentless practice of negativity they honed in opposition.

Those opposite who spent the entire period of the Labor government opposing measures that were not only for the broad economic and social benefit of this country but were also matters that Labor had canvassed openly with the public can have no reason to believe that we on this side should go along with policies that harm low-income and disadvantaged Australians and that were loudly and plainly disavowed by Mr Abbott in the course of the 2013 election campaign.

We will not go along with a budget that dismantles Australia's public health and education, our welfare safety net, our scientific excellence, our environmental protection framework, our public broadcasters, and our Clean Energy Future. We will not go along with a budget that goes blindly into massive defence spending commitments and turns a blind eye to the poorest people in the poorest countries. We will stand up for the values and the people that Labor has always represented—for fairness, for those who need support, for the public goods and services we share, and for a progressive approach to the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. We will do this government the favour of holding them to their promises, which means opposing the broken commitments and backward measures contained in this budget and these appropriation bills.

Mr SIMPKINS (Cowan) (18:01): I do welcome the opportunity to speak on behalf of the future generations of this country and to say to the opposition that it is not business as usual. Things have changed and they should be very clear on what has changed. Back in 2007 there was $50 billion in the bank. Now, after six years of deficits—six years where the reality that followed the budget papers a year later never reflected what was in those papers—things have changed and things now must change. So for those that have created the mess to now complain and whinge and appeal to the worst in human nature in this country—self-interest—it is a real shame. There are things that just need to be done differently.

Of course, when I look at the budget, there is lots of it and I am not happy about. Sure, no-one needs to be happy about it, but people need to realise that something has got to be done. It just cannot go on having bigger and bigger deficits. Things have to change; spending needs to be changed. Otherwise it comes down to a betrayal of few generations of this country. I do want to, in the years ahead, way after I am gone from this place, looking into the faces of my daughters and maybe their children and say, 'We just handed the debt onto you because I adopt the path of least resistance and did what was easy rather than what was right.' So I see this as things that need to be done. Again, no-one needs to be happy about it, but the reason why they need to be done is the last six years of spending, of borrowing and promises into the future.

So it has come to this. I did not use to be like this. There was $50 billion in the bank back in 2007. Now it is $1 billion a month in interest payments—borrowing just to pay the interest. And, possibly, if we do not get this budget through, then the $667 billion that this country
would have been saddled with after 10 years will be at that much or even more. Instead, if this budget gets through, then we will be looking at something far less in the future of $389 billion. Of course, things need to change. Again, we do need to get back to surplus and we will see that in the future just beyond the forward estimates.

I look at this budget and I see that this is an appeal to the best of the nature of Australians. This is an appeal to people to say: 'There is a problem and it is all hands on deck. Everybody needs to make a contribution.' It is an appeal to people to say, 'Apart from making that contribution, we must also think about the future in terms of infrastructure, in terms of higher education and in terms of better health outcomes for people around this country.' It is, again, asking people to look beyond their own circumstances and say, 'As part of the Australian team, we need to do things better and we need to look to a better future.'

The Treasurer talks about contributing and building, but part of that is the petrol excise, which will take 40 to 60 cents a week extra from the people who use the roads for better roads. In your own electorate, Deputy Speaker, the Swan Valley Bypass is an important regional road to give business and industrial traffic, commuters and tourists the safer option of bypassing the Swan Valley in moving north onto the Great Northern Highway. All around the country that petrol excise will be used for the betterment of roads and people. Again, if you do not use a car, you will not pay; and so the user is paying.

On the point of the doctor co-payment, $5 of it will go to the Medical Research Future Fund and when that fund reaches $20 billion we will see research from the proceeds go towards diseases like diabetes, cancer and dementia. These are great afflictions on Australians. I am sure all members will have had contact with people afflicted by type one diabetes—a young child whose life is made far more difficult or their families woken during the night for the pinpricks on fingers. Then there is the acquisition of the pumps for insulin. It is a hard life, but through this fund we can hopefully get all the tools to beat these disease—type one and type two diabetes and the cancers that ravage so many Australian families. Again, it is asking people to contribute to these greater future outcomes and to build something bigger and better.

On higher education there is a lot of concern. I believe Australia has only one university in the top 50 and only about five in the top 100. Here people are also being asked to contribute to help universities compete in the region and around the world. Why shouldn't more Australian universities be in the top 100 and in the top 20? Why can't Australian universities be among the greatest universities in the world? If there was more money in the Commonwealth coffers, then it might be possible for greater continuing contributions from the government. But I am afraid there is simply not any money any more—again, the $1 billion a month on the credit card—and the options are few. When students are being asked to pay around 50 per cent of their tuition fees, the government is still there with the people. The days of free degrees have passed. Fees have increased over time, and co-payments are the way of the future. People are being asked to contribute to their own education; they will be better off for the outcomes they receive—opportunities and wages from higher qualifications.

It is not unreasonable to ask people to make those sort of contributions, and there is a history of doing so: for HECS fees, co-payments were introduced. There has been something similar to doctor co-payments in the past; there have been co-payments with the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. This is just a continuation of past schemes.
I want to go back to what the opposition has been talking about. There has been a lot said and there have been many questions about $80 billion in education and health cuts and also foreign aid cuts. The opposition has promised to put $80 billion back into education and health and $16 billion into foreign aid. It is clear that that has been promised, and that would of course have to go back onto the bottom line of the budget, should Labor get the opportunity to do that. Unfortunately, what has always been missing is an explanation of how that is going to be paid for. We have been trying to reduce the amount of spending and get back to a budget surplus, so we have put some stuff out there which obviously it has not been popular—there is no doubt about that. Lots of people have concerns, but what we have to think about is the future. Rather than just passing on big debts and deficits to future generations, someone has to actually do something about it. While we did not create the problem we are trying to do something about it.

I note the member for Fremantle spoke about the ABC and the SBS. It is clear that as government agencies or bodies there are no special deals for them. The efficiency dividend is applied to them as it is to every other government agency and body. It is unwise for any government to offer special deals. Again, that is where we were at.

I should also have mentioned when I was talking about education and health that the health budget will continue to grow, by nine per cent, nine per cent, nine per cent and then six per cent in the fourth year. For schools, it will be eight per cent for the next three years and six per cent after that. So growth is always guaranteed. There is always going to be an increase in spending from the Commonwealth. As we also know, and this is particularly where the rubber hits the road for Western Australia, when we came to office in September the education minister was able to find $1.2 billion that the former government had taken out of education and to put that back in. That benefitted the schools in Western Australia. So, despite what is being said, there continues to be growth in education and health funding and we are continuing to support these areas.

I have noticed that there have been a lot of complaints. In my electorate I have only received 35 emails complaining about the budget, but we have gone back to people and explained what it is about and why we needed to do the things we have done. What concerns me is the violence in protests particularly around universities. There is no problem with protesting, of course, or even showing passion, but violence is deplorable. That is just not the way things should be done.

I would also like to express my concern about how many children are being politically indoctrinated to hold up signs at protests, being dragged along—maybe dragged out of school—to hold up placards when they do not even know what the words say or understand the content or the meaning. I think we occasionally find this when we are out and about in our schools, including in primary schools. I remember one day when I was speaking to a year-4 class that a young boy told me he was on a particular side of politics. He said, 'I am'—I will not mention the party, but he said he was that. I said to him, 'I guess that is the view you have been told. I am a member of the Liberal Party. I am a member of this parliament, and I have two daughters aged 15 and 11. I do not tell them which side they are on.' I think it is very wise for parents around this country to be very careful about trying to impose their views or about dragging their children out to make up the numbers in these sorts of protests. I do not think they should force upon the children of this country a political opinion when they do not have
the knowledge or the experience to determine what the issues are for themselves. I think it is pretty much an abuse of children, particularly when we have seen some children holding up signs which use four-letter words; it just goes far too far.

In conclusion, I think we are all elected to do what is right and not what is easy. I will not betray future generations by taking the path of least resistance in this matter. This is a cause worth fighting for and, as I have always believed, if the cause is worth fighting for then I am prepared to risk my seat over it. If I lose my seat for a good cause—for this cause—then that is the way it should be.

Mr MITCHELL (McEwen—Second Deputy Speaker) (18:16): It is always good to follow the member for Cowan. I, too, remember those children being forced to hold up the untruthful carbon tax signs. I want to rise tonight to record my disgust at the distrust that the Abbott government has delivered with this budget. Let us start first with the health sector. The introduction of the GP tax is a cruel and broken promise that will hurt the most vulnerable in McEwen. Mr Abbott told the people of Australia, time and time again, that there would be no new taxes but here he is imposing a painful tax on the sick, the elderly and the vulnerable—those who can least afford it. The GP tax means that people in the electorate of McEwen will be taxed almost $8 million a year just for being sick or injured. This comes on top of the $270 million cut from the current provisions of Medicare offers and the increased cost of medicine. What are the sick and the elderly to do? They certainly cannot visit their local public hospitals, since Tony Abbott has cut $200 million from the public hospitals, as well. His budget is forcing the sick and the vulnerable out of the health system, unfairly.

On the night before the election, Tony Abbott promised there would be no changes to pensions, but this budget confirms that that is a broken promise. These vicious cuts will have severe effects on the lives of 24,600 pensioners who live in McEwen. Right across the electorate, pensioners have been coming up to me to express their concerns about the cuts to pensions. I am extremely sad to say that their worst fears have been confirmed. Tony Abbott is slashing the current system that makes sure pensions keep pace with the cost of living; he is instead going to index the pensions by CPI. That highlights just how out of touch the Prime Minister is, since he is oblivious to the fact that CPI increases do not come close to reflecting the real cost of living—especially with all the new taxes he is introducing. These savage cuts are ensuring our pensioners will not be able to make ends meet, especially now, when they are only living off $20,000 a year—or, to put it in terms that the government likes, the equivalent of two-fifths of the paid parental leave scheme. The government wants to pay wealthy women $1,923 per week for having a baby but our pensioners are expected to live off $384.

What about the other callous cuts to important concessions and assistance packages pensioners rely on to keep their heads above water? These programs are designed to help the disadvantaged—and it is just a slap in the face to our seniors and pensioners who have worked all their lives only to be thrown on the scrap heap by this government.

McEwen is going to be hit especially hard by the privatisation of Defence housing. We have 300 families in the Whittlesea area and 308 families in Puckapunyal and the Mitchell Shire living in Defence housing. What are these families going to do when the government privatises the DHA? These families have been left in limbo because their futures in our community are in doubt.
The budget is slashing millions of dollars from local councils, which hits regional areas of Victoria particularly hard. In McEwen, the Macedon Ranges Shire and the Mitchell Shire, which make up the bulk of my electorate, stand to lose $1.1 million each—up to 14 per cent of their revenue. This is going to wreak havoc in the flow-on effects to our communities since these councils will have to increase their rates or cut services to keep pace with rising costs of maintenance and services that they provide to our community.

I have already received dozens of emails and phone calls from constituents concerned about the consistent increases in council rates, but now because of this cruel Abbott government they will face further strain on their family budget. Fewer families in McEwen will be able to make ends meet with the Abbott government's lowering of the threshold for both family tax benefit parts A and B. We have 16,139 families receiving family tax benefit part A and we have 13,856 families receiving the important assistance of family tax benefit part B. So there are 29,995 families in my electorate that are going to be worse off because of the short-sightedness and the heartless money-grubbing tactics of Tony Abbott.

McEwen is one of the biggest users of child care in the country. Our demographics show that. We have the largest population of children aged nought to five in the country. That is how we rely on childcare services right across electorate. The Abbott government has cut millions of dollars in preschool funding, childcare services and accessibility programs outside school hours along with freezing the childcare rebates. Even Mr Abbott's fellow Liberal Party member, and Premier of Victoria, Dr Denis Napthine stated:

The more we look into this federal budget, the more we're seeing impacts ... that are detrimental to our state and our families.

I would not normally agree with Denis Napthine, but on this occasion I think he is dead right. He knows that this federal government is punishing Victorians just because of an ideological position of the Prime Minister.

I would also like to discuss how cruel this budget is in ruining the future of young people in McEwen. The Prime Minister has cut $1 billion of support the apprentices and trade training centres. Labor's program of trade training centres has been integral to building the skills and expertise of young people. Before the election the Prime Minister promised Australia's 400,000 apprentices more financial assistance to help them learn their trade and find a good job—another broken promise. He has cut assistance through the tools of trade program. There are now hundreds of apprentices who are going to be out of pocket, since these cuts come into effect on 1 July.

I would like to highlight the significance of the heartless cuts to youth programs. In McEwen we have several community organisations that work hard to ensure that our youth either remain in school to complete year 12 or at least engage in some sort of training, such as trade training, which I mentioned earlier. The government has stripped away funding for these essential programs, where only $130 million was needed to keep them going until 2015. Ben Falcone-Mayo is a very bright young youth worker from Craigieburn. He is furious about the cuts to youth programs and support made by this government. Regarding the funding cuts, Ben states:

We're looking at a hard future. If you go around stripping programs supporting youth, you're in a lot of trouble. I am a big advocate for counselling for young people when they need it, but for many young people this will be more confusing. We [Australians] are letting young people down. We're all a bit
frightened and we have the right to be. There's just so much going on; we've really dropped the ball here.

Cobaw Community Health Service and Kildonan UnitingCare are two organisations also involved in delivering the Youth Connections program in McEwen that will have to close their doors. Young adults are now destined for a lifetime of unemployment and reliance on the welfare system, which has also been cut. In some parts of McEwen, we have a 17.5 per cent youth unemployment rate, which is the fifth-highest in this nation. These young adults will be completely at a loose end with Newstart payments not kicking in for six months. So now they will have no job and no money and, to add insult to injury, the government wants them to completely upend and move away from their families and support networks to find work.

What if they want to study to follow their dreams and make a better life for themselves? With the Abbott deregulation of university fees this is also off the cards. Tony Abbott has deregulated the system so universities can name their price. Experts all agree that if universities get the chance to increase fees, they will. Swinburne University vice-chancellor has stated:

… deregulation will inevitably lead to much higher fees for our students … Over time, full fee deregulation will lead to a higher education system characterised by the ‘haves’ and the ‘have nots’.

Stuart Edwards from Riddells Creek in my electorate is a single dad with four kids, who works as an alcohol and drug counsellor whilst studying psychology part time. Stuart said:

I don't want to live in a nation where uni places are given to the rich. I don't know how I could afford to send my four kids to uni if these changes happen. Certainly nobody is offering my kids a free education Mr Abbott!

It is an important point, because those opposite in the government, that are making these decisions all benefited from free education. Across McEwen 36.5 per cent of students who completed year 12 last year went to university. All these students will be hit hard by the government's changes to the HECS-HELP debt repayment, changes that will come into effect in 2016. They will be crippled with debt for the bulk of their lives just for striving for a better life and opportunity. Education is just another promise broken by the Abbott government, a government by a party which, as Tony Abbott promised the Australian people before the election, would be 'the party of political honesty'. All this government has shown us is a steady stream of broken promises and no compassion.

But really, we should not be surprised. After all, Tony Abbott said:

We will be a consultative, collegial government. No surprises. No excuses.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Porter): I remind you that you should refer to the minister by his title.

Mr MITCHELL: I am going to finish on one particular point which directly affects my electorate of McEwen possibly more so than any other electorate in Australia—the Prime Minister's fuel tax, this great big untruth that was put on the people of Australia. It is one of the cruellest blows yet. In fact it was so cruel that even the former Liberal member for McEwen came out and attacked the government for being untruthful.

Due to the particular makeup of the different regions in our electorate, families rely heavily on their vehicles to get from A to B. We in McEwen have one of the highest rates of cars per
household across the nation. With a lack of other transport options, cars are often the only form of transport available. For example, take a mum in Romsey or Lancefield who has to drive her kids to and from school in a neighbouring town, then to their swimming lessons in yet another township. There is no alternative transport in that area. Why should she have to pay more just to give her kids the same opportunities as the kids who live in an inner city?

What about those residents in Mernda, Sunbury, Gisborne or Laurimar who have to drive to and from work in order to put food on the table for their families, or those of us living in towns like Whittlesea, Wallan and Kilmore where 70 per cent of people commute an hour each way to work? Again, there is no other option for transport in some of these areas so why should we be punished for providing for our families?

Any tax that affects one community far more than others is categorically unfair. In addition, any increases in the cost of fuel are going to adversely affect farmers in rural and regional Australia particularly across McEwen. The National Farmers Federation has stated on record that the price increases in the supply chain ‘will be felt at the farm-gate’. So despite the rhetoric from those opposite, it is going to cost more—more every day for the food that you put on the table, more every day for the clothes on your back and more every day just to get to work or just to get to school. Communities right across our electorate have every right to be furious with the Liberal government’s introduction of the fuel tax. This is a direct tax on our electorate.

I would just like to finish by stating how appalled I am, yet not surprised, by the Abbott government’s budget. The Prime Minister Tony Abbott has cut health funding, pensions, family benefits and education as well as taxing people for things like going to the doctor, getting older or driving a car. People will not forget this budget and they will not forget the broken promises by the now Prime Minister, and I will be there every day with them fighting to make sure that they do not forget.

Mr WILSON (O’Connor) (18:29): I rise to speak in support of what is the most important budget in nearly two decades, a budget that not only tackles head-on the economic issues facing our nation but also begins a cultural change that will wean us off our welfare mentality and encourage a return to the thriftiness and self-reliance that once formed our national identity. As a nation, we have to get out of our borrow-and-spend mentality and, to get the budget back on track and build a more prosperous economy, we have to start living within our means. We cannot wish away the challenges that we face.

This is a budget designed to redirect taxpayers’ dollars from unaffordable spending today to productive investment in the future. It is a budget that will help us build a more prosperous nation. It is a particularly important budget for my electorate of O’Connor because, while this budget heralds a new attitude that will hopefully be the beginning of the end of the age of entitlement, it also delivers on the fundamental projects that will help our nation’s economy get back on track, boost productivity and create jobs.

The $50 billion Infrastructure Growth Package is critical for the country and critical for O’Connor. We are an electorate of more than 900,000 square kilometres. Our mining and agricultural industries, our major export earners, depend on good road transport links to get their products to market. O’Connor's share of the Infrastructure Growth Package over the next four years will help create safer and more efficient links for our industries and our communities.
The budget confirms the Commonwealth's commitment to fund an upgrade of the Great Eastern Highway between Walgoolan and Coolgardie, which is heavily used by miners and other freight transporters. This is a vital intrastate freight link as well as linking Western Australia to the broader national network. Thirty-six kilometres of highway will be widened and three overtaking lanes will be built, increasing regional economic productivity as well as delivering a safer road. This funding commitment highlights the importance of the Great Eastern Highway freight link to the broader national economy. I will be fighting for as much of the $50 billion fund as possible to be directed towards other projects in O'Connor that will ease the transport burden for our industries and our communities.

The very successful Roads to Recovery program has been extended with a further $350 million per annum to extend the program to 2018-19. The black spot program targets dangerous sections of local roads by funding safety improvements, such as traffic signals and roundabouts. The Australian government has extended the black spot program and will provide $60 million per annum from 2014-15 to 2018-19. Both these programs will provide very important funding across the whole of O'Connor.

As an electorate with a large agricultural base, the $100 million for rural research and development to support innovation is a welcome investment in the future of farming, but there is also $15 million to help small exporters with export costs, $8 million to improve access to agricultural and veterinary chemicals and $20 million to develop a stronger biosecurity and quarantine system. Each of these initiatives is a welcome boost to rural Australia.

The Exploration Development Incentive scheme is an election commitment to encourage investment in greenfields exploration by smaller mining companies. This is obviously of great importance to the mining sector based in the goldfields and Yilgarn. The budget has confirmed that $100 million will be allocated to the EDI over three years, and that is very good news for our region.

In a vast electorate like O'Connor it may be expected that there will be areas where there is little or no mobile phone coverage. When I say that I am thinking about the desert and remote lands that make up a significant portion of the electorate, but it is untenable that just a few kilometres outside some of our major towns it is impossible to get a mobile phone signal. That is the situation in much of our populated areas. The $100 million allocated to improve mobile phone coverage has been welcomed in O'Connor. I will continue to lobby Minister Turnbull for more funds to significantly upgrade our coverage.

In rural and regional Australia access to an efficient and effective internet service is not a luxury; it is a necessity. In this technological age much of our business is done online. We need fast and reliable internet access not to download movies, although that would be nice, but to do business, whether that be banking, selling grain or fixing the tractor remotely. So I welcome this budget's commitment to streamlining the rollout of the NBN. Under our plan the NBN will be finished four years earlier than under Labor's plan and nine out of 10 Australians will have download speeds of 50 megabits per second by 2019.

Access to quality education is critical for all Australians, but young people in regional, rural and remote areas face particular challenges. That is why I am so pleased to see some very important changes to our higher education sector, some of which will have a positive impact on the young people in my electorate. This is the biggest reform in higher education in 30 years, and not before time.
Deregulation of the higher education sector will remove fee caps from universities and expand the demand-driven system to bachelor and sub-bachelor courses to create more competition. That has been particularly welcomed by regional universities, and I expect the University of Western Australia's Albany campus in particular will be able to expand its courses and make it easier for young people in the southern region to study for at least some of their degree from their home base. The demand-driven system gives universities the opportunity to do more of what they do best and that will make regional universities more viable.

For the first time all students—students studying at TAFE and for diploma courses offered by registered training providers—will have access to HELP, the Higher Education Loan Program. Loans for apprentices finally recognises the importance of financial support for trade qualifications.

Most importantly for us is the setting up of a renewed Commonwealth scholarship scheme which will help disadvantaged students. In the past, Commonwealth scholarships made it possible for young people from regional and rural areas to pursue higher education. This system this government will introduce is the biggest scholarship scheme in our nation's history and I believe it will again open the doors to higher education for many young people in my electorate. Will they have to pay for their education? Of course. That is as it should be. There is no reason why the taxpayer should subsidise a student's education if it gives that student an opportunity to earn a good salary as a result. I find it offensive that a tradesman on a mine site who received no government handout while getting his trade qualification should be subsidising the education costs of a mining engineer working alongside him who is earning a significantly higher salary.

What the budget does not address is the issue of youth allowance for students from rural and regional areas. Together with other regional members I have made representations to Minister Andrews and will continue to push for changes that recognise the difficulty country students have when they leave home to pursue a university education in the city.

In O'Connor we have some problems with high youth unemployment which in some cases is becoming a generational issue. For young people who have grown up in an environment where unemployment benefits are a way of life, there is the danger that it may become the norm rather than the exception. That is why the 'earn or learn' model is so important. It has the capacity to change the thinking of those young people who think it acceptable to live on the dole. 'Earn or learn' is a very simple philosophy: 'If you are not earning then you had better get some skills that make it possible for you to get a job and earn an income. We will support you through Austudy and youth allowance while you get those skills.' To those who raise their voices in opposition to this initiative I ask, 'Why is it okay to condemn young, unskilled people to a life of welfare?' The best possible gift we can give young people is the capacity to learn and to live a full and productive life with the ability to support themselves and their families. This is the first step towards changing the disturbing mind set that has permeated our society over the past few decades, that hanging off the welfare system—for some, in some cases, for a lifetime—is an entirely acceptable way to live. The dole should not be a default position for young people looking for work. Young people should be encouraged to move into employment before they embark on a life of welfare. I think we need to question whether we have made it too easy for people not to work or study when they have the capacity to do so.
This is a budget that focused on training and creating work. We have introduced a $476 million industry skills fund to streamline training and make us globally competitive. It will deliver close to 200,000 targeted training places over four years. That will complement the trade support loans and encourage people to take up a trade. There are $20,000 loans for the life of an apprenticeship and, like HELP loans for uni students, they will be repayable once recipients are on a sustainable income. We have specifically target occupations on the National Skills Needs List—diesel mechanics, fitters, electricians and plumbers.

We are establishing a wage subsidy scheme for mature-age job seekers. It is up to $10,000 for employers who take on mature-age job seekers who have been unemployed for more than six months. We are delivering on our commitment to establish a single entry point into the Commonwealth for small business. $8 million has been allocated to the Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman to contribute to reducing compliance burdens as well as to act as an advocate for small business. We are committed to cutting the company tax rate by 1.5 percentage points from 1 July 2015. For big companies, the reduction will offset the cost of the Paid Parental Leave scheme, but for an estimated 800,000 small- and medium-sized companies there will be a net boost of productivity and profitability.

Making sure that the fundamental programs that underpin our way of life—the age pension scheme and Medicare—are sustainable is the key element of this budget. The $7 co-payment will be capped at 10 doctors visits for concession card holders and children under 16. That is a maximum impost of $70 per person per calendar year. The co-payment is designed to ensure health services are sustainable and used efficiently. Other countries provide universal health systems that are underpinned by patient contributions. In New Zealand it is $15. Our healthcare system is under such enormous pressure that there is a real danger, if we do not make some changes, it will collapse under the weight of financial strain. This change is a start.

This government is committed to GP training in rural and regional areas. That is great news for O’Connor. Rural medical training continues to receive dedicated support in this budget, with at least 50 per cent of general practice training places required to be located in rural and regional areas. The budget provides for about 500 new allied health scholarships, with $13.4 million allocated to support the delivery of these scholarships over three years and to target workforce shortages in regional and rural areas. The government has already committed $40 million over four years to support extra medical intern places in private hospitals and in regional and rural areas. Seventy-six interns begin their one-year placements in January 2014.

Aged care is a special concern of mine, and this budget contains good news for the aged-care providers in my electorate. Providers who receive the viability supplement will get a 20 per cent increase in the supplement in recognition of the unique challenges they face operating in regional, remote and rural locations. The supplement is particularly targeted at small providers, who face very different challenges to the large providers operating in metropolitan and larger country centres. It is worth $54 million to help provide quality aged care for people who live in the country and want to spend their final years in the towns and communities they have lived in all their lives.

I can assure you that the aged-care providers in O’Connor have been particularly pleased to learn of this measure. As part of our election commitment to repurpose the previous government’s aged-care workforce supplement, which imposed additional red tape on
providers, payments for all providers have been increased by 2.4 per cent across the board. For providers in my electorate that is a 2.4 per cent funding increase on top of the 20 per cent increase in the viability supplement.

We have expanded the Home Care Packages Program, which is going to be a terrific boost for those O' Connor residents who wish to stay in their community or home, and an additional $103 million in capital grants under the Rural, Regional and Other Special Needs Building Fund will be offered as part of the 2014 ACAR round. The Abbott government recognises that many older Australians wish to remain in their home as long as possible, and these extra residential aged-care places and home care places will help further meet the growing demand for aged care. So it is a funding boost but is also giving individual providers the flexibility to direct funds to areas where they need it most. It means that they can get on with what they do best—that is, providing quality aged care for older Australians.

The bottom line is this: for our economy to prosper, we need confidence. Confidence is essential if our businesses are to invest and grow. That is what this budget is designed to provide. What this budget is also designed to do is to start the cultural change that will encourage a return to the thriftiness and self-reliance that once formed our national identify.

I have been intrigued, although not surprised, by the reaction to the budget from those opposite. The fact is that this is the first budget in nearly two decades that takes away instead of handing out. As a nation we appear to have become pretty comfortable with the taking mentality and not so comfortable with the concept of tightening the belt. The howls of protest from those opposite are deafening, and what a fine job they are doing stirring up the fear and loathing, with some spectacularly inaccurate interpretations of the measures contained in this budget. But encouraging outrage is a far easier option than recognising that the budget legacy they bequeathed us has to be fixed, or indeed offering any solutions of their own.

The Commission of Audit developed a set of common-sense principles to guide its deliberations. The first, No. 1 rule was: live within your means. We have to start doing that and we have to start doing it fast, and that is what this government has started with this budget, and I commend it to the House.

Ms Ryan (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (18:42): As Ross Gittins outlined earlier in the week, this budget is all about shifting—cost shifting and blame shifting. It shifts cost to the states, families, pensioners, students and young adults. It shifts the blame to welfare recipients, to parents, to the vulnerable.

I have spoken on several occasions in the past weeks about the impact of this year's budget on my electorate of Lalor, about the cruel budget cuts and the impact this will have on education provision, from our youngest pre-schoolers to our rapidly expanding school system and for our young adults to access university, TAFE, apprenticeship and employment support. But today I want to focus on something different—the impact of this budget on women.

The average gap between men and women's earnings in Australia is approximately 17 per cent. We know that women take time out of the workforce for child rearing and caring responsibilities in much higher numbers than men. Women are often employed in part-time positions so that they can juggle their family responsibilities, and they are under-represented in high-paid executive positions. These factors alone mean this year's federal budget will result in a disproportionate impact on women.
I agree that responsible governments will always look for ways to ensure we keep spending under control. This is as it should be. But much has been made about all sections of Australia sharing the burden, when the reality of this budget means it is unfairly weighted against women. As we know, this year's budget was the first budget since 2005 not to include a family impact statement. It is also missing a women's impact statement, a tradition that goes back 30 years. This has meant it has taken time to assess the impact in full. However, we are fortunate that the ANU and the National Foundation for Australian Women, amongst others, have taken the time to unpack the potential impact on women. The budget savings have been shown to fall disproportionately on those who rely on benefit payments. Which group is in the majority for relying on benefit payments? Women. This means this budget adversely affects women. Those women in caring roles, those women with low or modest incomes and especially those young women making a start in education training or the workforce.

Women want to engage in the workforce. They also want to provide for their families. This means many juggle work and caring responsibilities with part-time work and with periods of time out of the workforce. A paid parental leave scheme is a great way to support women during their child-rearing years. That is why Labor introduced a sensible scheme in the last parliament. This government, however, is committed to its deeply unpopular, gold-plated parental leave scheme—paying women on high incomes $50,000 while others receive so much less or indeed nothing if they are out of the workforce. This expensive, token bone thrown to women who do not need it is designed to mask the real nasties in this budget: the cost-shifting to women who can least afford it. And it may well be less token, this commitment to the rolled gold PPL scheme, given there is not one cent allocated in this year's budget—that is right, there is no income source identified in this year's budget for the Prime Minister's gold-plated parental leave scheme.

A paid parental leave scheme is one part of the women's workforce participation puzzle. Child care is another. The changes to family benefit and the increased cost for health services will necessitate women returning to work. We know women are already under-represented in the workforce, are concentrated in service industries and earn less than men. This government is introducing a range of measures that will punish women into the workforce—in itself not necessarily a bad thing, depending on your perspective; however, at the same time the government is choosing to withdraw existing support for women to work. Single parent families are predominantly headed by women. The learn or earn requirement will be difficult for these women to meet unless there is suitable access to child care, especially out-of-school-hours care. So what does this government do? It changes various childcare support measures. It has frozen the cap on the childcare rebate and the threshold for eligibility. This will have the impact of making child care less affordable, especially for low-income women. The Jobs, Education and Training Child Care Fee Assistance will drop from 50 hours to 35 hours per week. Cuts to Aboriginal Child and Family Centres will hurt Indigenous women. There has been $450 million cut from out-of-school-hours care, and the abolition of the program that provides training places for teenage parents will hit young women before they even get a chance to enter the workforce. They will be left with the prospect of a life of low-paid, low-skilled work.

And where they have got support, like the much-lauded Trade Support Loans scheme, it is heavily weighted to male-dominated industries. It will do very little to support female
apprentices. For those women wishing to start or to return to the workforce by returning to study or by upgrading their skills, this budget just brings more bad news. This budget contains no new measures to encourage participation. And just when women might have been making healthier contributions to their superannuation in their 40s and beyond, they may now be left to support their young adult children up to the age of 30 due to changes to Youth Allowance and Newstart. We know that women retire with less than their male counterparts. In recent years Labor introduced measures to try to address this: the increased rate to the Superannuation Guarantee and the low-income superannuation contribution. The budget measures to defer the increase to the Superannuation Guarantee and the abolition of the low-income superannuation scheme will have a greater impact on women, who are more highly represented in low-income employment.

The list of fails for women in this budget are extraordinary. There is an impact with the health measures. Medicare was established 30 years ago. It is our much-lauded universal health system, the envy of many other countries. This budget puts that under threat. The burden of the GP co-payments again will fall unfairly on women. The planned GP co-payment is not just a pressure on the cost of living but a back doorway to eroding the Medicare system. It the pathway to a two-tiered health system for the haves and the have-nots. And who are the have-nots? By and large, they will be women. As already outlined, women are generally lower paid, so the impact of the GP co-payment will have a disproportionate effect on them.

Women often take on the role of health manager in families. We know that visits by women make up around 60 per cent of visits to the GP. Mothers take their children, and often their elderly parents, in addition to attending for their own needs. For many on fixed incomes, this financial pressure will be an extreme burden. These women as health managers will also be disappointed by the withdrawal of preventive health programs. Keeping family members well and out of the health system through these beneficial programs will now be far more difficult. My electorate has an extremely high rate of diabetes, obesity, kidney problems and macular degeneration. Progress was being made through preventive health programs; this is now all at risk. The breakdown of the health agreements with the states will also impact negatively on the health system, adding pressure on health provision. Lalor is already under-resourced for its population size, and it seems no relief is in sight for additional resources coming our way.

Many of you know that, as a former school principal, I know what it is like to work in an area with low-SES families, with a high number of migrant students and students with a disability. You also know that I am a passionate advocate for the Gonski school funding model. Low-income families—the majority headed by women—were set to be the most supported families through these reforms. Bringing each school to an even standard meant many of the schools where I previously taught would receive an unprecedented level of funding—funding that would have enabled them to provide additional programs, employ specialist teachers, develop and support existing staff, have homework clubs and extra tutoring and provide equipment and textbooks when families could not afford to provide them. Education is a powerful tool to lift children out of a cycle of poverty and struggle. The dream for many women—to see their children succeed—is now dashed by the cruel cuts to the Gonski model. And the assistance to families on benefits twice a year, through the
schoolkids bonus, to help pay for uniforms, books and excursions, was an early cruel cut by this government.

What does this budget offer the young women who do make it through and endeavour to take on further training? The Industry Skills Fund, a loan to VET students to support them through their studies, does very little to support female VET students, as it is weighted heavily to male-dominated trades. For those women who may benefit—if you call starting your career with a significant loan to repay a benefit—the lower incomes generally earned by women mean a longer loan repayment period, resulting in higher interest repayments. In a similar way, the deregulation plans for the university sector will also impact more adversely on women for the same reasons: lower pay and longer repayment times, resulting in more interest accrued and a higher debt.

Women currently make up 57 per cent of the higher education population. The current system has allowed for this growth in female participation in the tertiary education sector. What will this new system do? Once young women understand the financial implications, they will need to learn to earn and then earn forever to pay for that learning. Even other small program cuts, like cuts to the workplace English language program, the VET fee waiver for childcare qualifications and the training program for teenage parents, all will have a detrimental impact, mostly on women.

The more we unpick this budget the worse the outlook is. I already knew that it would have a terrible impact on education, on health, on pensioners and on the young, but the common thread that runs throughout is women. I am not sure why this surprises me. The Office for Women has been swallowed up by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. The minister for women shows no signs in this policy area for it to be a priority, other than tips on ironing. There is only one woman in the cabinet. Women make up 24 of the 125 LNP members and senators, and only one has, on merit, been included in the cabinet of this government. This budget is the first in 30 years not to include a women's impact statement.

Are these things indicative of an oversight, or of malice? Did no-one think to put a lens over the budget to test its impost on women? Either way, it is a timely reminder that women can never afford to be complacent. I have rarely entered the women's debate. I have had the advantage of women going before me and changing the world. I believe strongly that women can stand on their merits and get ahead; I have seen so many strong women do just that. But recent history, and this budget, has taught me not to take the place of women in this society for granted. Australia is known for its sense of the fair go. This budget, however, has ripped away many beneficial programs that enable women to access that fair go. I implore the women from the government benches to take the time to read the budget analysis by the National Foundation for Australian Women.

In conclusion, I would like to make a few further points. This budget is built on a fabrication. First, the government attempted to establish a budget emergency. It has only taken a few weeks for the economists to put that argument to bed—and I believe the Australian public understand that now. Second, this budget sets up a divide between the haves and the have-nots, and the government's rhetoric lauds the taxpayer and demonises some mythical nontaxpayer for being a burden on the bottom line. The reality is that most pensioners have contributed throughout their working lives—and most women have contributed—and through access to education and training we can have a productive
economy, with close to full employment, where our young people also can make their contributions.

So why make these cruel changes? Why do we have a budget where an unemployed lone parent with one eight-year-old child will lose $54 a week; where low-income earners, disproportionately women, lose $500 a year with the repeal of the low income super contribution; and where sole parents working part-time or on benefits stand to lose more than $3,000 a year? The budget fails the fairness and equity test. Australia is a mature society where we value the fair go and those who work hard get ahead. This budget does not reflect the Australia I know and love. I call on the government to rethink its budget measures and ensure Australia remains a strong and equitable society.

Mr TONY SMITH (Casey) (18:57): In speaking in this budget debate and on these appropriation bills I have had the opportunity to listen to many speeches—but not all—from those opposite, and I have just listened to the last 10 minutes of the previous speaker. Whilst they have all covered varying topics, they are all absolutely united in a couple of respects—that is, no apology for and no acknowledgement of the mess they left the budget in, which we are now discussing here in this chamber. They have absolutely no plan to fix the mess. For those opposite to come in on this debate after six years of fiscal failure and not acknowledge the mess they have created, nor put forward any alternative plan that would deal with it, really tells the Australian people that, if Labor had been re-elected, it is very clear where they would have headed—further along the debt and deficit road.

What we are seeing here in this debate and in the wider parliamentary debates and public discussions is the Labor Party of 1996, 1997 and 1998 and all those years where this side of the House was cleaning up their last fiscal mess. After inheriting net government debt of $96 billion and taking the difficult decisions to get the budget back on track, returning the budget to surplus, delivering surplus after surplus to pay down that debt and, finally, after 10 years having completely paid off that debt and starting to inject those future surpluses into the Future Fund, at that time we saw Labor doing what they are doing today—refusing to acknowledge any fiscal fault and refusing to put forward any plan. They are doing one thing now, however. They are doing everything they can to stop the clean-up of that fiscal mess.

In 2007 those opposite were elected proclaiming to be fiscal conservatives. In fact in their first budget they were criticising the coalition for not having large enough surpluses in those final years. Fast forward to today to a situation when on taking office this government and the people of Australia confronted combined deficits of $123 billion over the forward years, leading to gross debt that would peak at $667 billion. Labor's plan is to stay on that road and to not acknowledge their failure.

By necessity, this budget has had to take some very difficult decisions. We have heard lots of criticisms in the contributions from those opposite, but what the Australian people are owed is Labor fessing up. If Labor really believes Australia should keep living beyond its means, if Labor really believes that we should continue to rack up deficit after deficit and continue to increase debt, they should say so. If they think that the budget should be brought under control in other ways, they should say so. But they will not. That is the thing that has united all of the speeches from those opposite.

Another thing that has united the approach and so much of what has been said in the days since the Treasurer delivered the budget, has been the utter hypocrisy of those opposite. We
have seen it in full glare in the last week on the issue of the Medicare co-payment. I am going
to take a little bit of time to go through the history of this. The Prime Minister has rightly
pointed out some of the history of it, as has the Minister for Health. But I think a full exposure
of the history of this issue and the history of those opposite is an interesting way to view the
hypocrisy and the populism of the approach of those opposite under this Leader of the
Opposition.

We have heard in the chamber how a Medicare co-payment was invented by the former
Hawke Labor government. Back in the budget of August 1991, the then Treasurer John Kerin
announced a co-payment, because at that time the Labor government recognised that a co-
payment needed to be introduced to deal with the challenges confronting the health system
then and confronting it, more importantly, in the decades ahead.

Some of my colleagues have pointed out that this idea, in more recent years, has been
advocated by the member for Fraser, the shadow Assistant Treasurer, who outlined it in either
a book or an article some years back. It has been rightly pointed out that not only has the
member for Fraser advocated it but, on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme co-
extension on numerous occasions by the Hawke governmen—many members opposite
have strongly endorsed the necessity for a co-payment. The Prime Minister yesterday quoted
the member for Hunter, who said back in 1996 that it was a very brave decision by the Hawke
government and a very necessary one.

Let me add to the debate the words of a former Treasurer who went on to become Prime
Minister, and that is former Treasurer Keating, who, in his 1990 budget speech, announced
measures that were enacted to extend the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme co-payment. He
justified it on the sustainability of the system. Here is what he said on budget night in 1990:
The alternatives are stark: reconstruct the scheme so that it remains fair for everyone, or lose the scheme
altogether, so that access to complete health care would only be available to the wealthy.

Those on my side of the House have rightly pointed out the hypocrisy of those opposite
opposing this government's actions on the Medicare co-payment when they support just such
a co-payment when it comes to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

The other issue I want to take a bit of time to address in this budget debate is why it was
that the Hawke Labor government introduced the Medicare co-payment back in 1991. As has
been pointed out, the then Minister for Health, Mr Brian Howe, announced in detail with that
budget that the government had decided to take this course of action following a review of
health that had been led by none other than the member for Jagajaga, then Jenny Macklin,
private citizen. In fact the budget papers themselves contain these statements:

Last June the Government announced the establishment of the National Health Strategy ... to develop
ways to refine and improve the health-system to meet the health challenges of the future:

... ... ...

The measures being introduced in this budget relate to the preliminary findings of the National Health
Strategy. They are the first steps in dealing with structural problems in the health care system.
The budget papers then go on to justify the introduction of a Medicare co-payment, initially of
$3.50 but later $5. So it is very clear from the budget papers that the review led by the now
member for Jagajaga led to the Hawke government introducing the co-payment. There can be
no denying this. The budget papers of 1991 say that the work of the review led the government to introduce this co-payment.

As the Prime Minister rightly pointed out, there is a father of the Medicare co-payment in former Prime Minister Hawke; there is a mother of the Medicare co-payment in the member for Jagajaga. I suppose there is an uncle in the former health minister. Of course, we have Dr Leigh, who is perhaps a child of the Medicare co-payment. But not only that: on my count there are two members of the Labor Party today sitting in the parliament, in the House of Representatives, who actually voted for that co-payment—because the co-payment was legislated. It is true that it was subsequently repealed by Prime Minister Keating, but it was legislated through both houses. It was guillotined through the House of Representatives, and two members who voted at that time to support the passage of those bills include the member for Lingiari and the member for Werriwa and, in the Senate, Senator Faulkner. So the Labor co-payment family keeps growing.

The member for Jagajaga got up in the parliament and made a personal explanation. I want to take a little bit of time in the minutes remaining to address this. Amongst other things, the member for Jagajaga said the following:

They wrongly accused me of supporting a Medicare co-payment. This is completely untrue. As correctly reported in the Australian today, I was opposed to a Medicare co-payment in 1991 and I am opposed to it today. This was confirmed in the paper today by the then Secretary of the Department of Finance, Dr Michael Keating.

Indeed, on 29 May, that day, it did mention that, when asked by the Australian about her role, Ms Macklin told a Melbourne Institute function in Canberra this month that she had argued, with the then head of the Department of Finance, Dr Michael Keating, against the co-payment. That conference was on 21 May.

What is interesting is that, if this is true—and I have my doubts, of course, as you can tell—what we are expected to believe is that the person who led the review that led to the co-payment was opposed to the co-payment but never said so, was happy to stay on leading the review for the next couple of years and, at no point that I can tell, until a couple of weeks ago, has come forward to make this convenient statement now. In fact, I did a calculation. If it took her from budget night 1991 through until 21 May, what that means is that it took the member for Jagajaga 22 years, nine months and one day to reveal that she was opposed to it. That is very strange indeed. It does not pass the sniff test.

Mr Wilkie (Denison) (19:12): Every government has the right and try and implement the platform they took to an election. They also have every right to deal with the countless other issues that come along in a way that is consistent with their broader ideology. But no government has any right—they have no right at all—to wage an ideological crusade against the poorest and most disadvantaged members of the community—and, in particular, against students, the unemployed, the poor, the sick and disabled, the aged, single parents and anyone else, for that matter, who just needs a fair go in one of the richest and most fortunate countries in the world. There is simply no excuse whatsoever for the government to bring down the budget it did a few weeks ago and which we are now being asked to pass judgement on.

That is exactly what this budget is—it is an ideological crusade that attacks directly the poorest and most disadvantaged members of the community, not the big corporates, the miners and the armed forces, which did very well in this budget, but the rest: those on low
incomes and those with disadvantages which could be, and really should be, remedied in a country as rich and as lucky as ours.

Now, I know it is perfectly understandable for the supporters of one side of politics or the other to complain when the other party or parties are in power. That is obviously fair enough. And it is also understandable that there be calls for an early election when the government is embroiled in controversy, as was obviously the case during the 43rd Parliament. It was certainly my experience that for three years my office was periodically bombarded by calls for me to help in that parliament. But, of course, even the most unpopular government should as a general rule be allowed to run its course because the time for judgement should be at the next regular election, except that right now a line has been crossed because this budget is such a miserable piece of work that the convention of waving through the appropriation bills is, or at least in my mind should be, fundamentally in question. It certainly is for me.

And, in fact, I have wrestled for many days now with the rights and wrongs of voting against supply, if only to force the government back to the budget drawing board. And in the end I have decided to do so—to vote against the appropriation bills—because I do believe that this particular budget should be redone before it can reasonably be approved by the parliament. And I feel confident that my vote, for what it is worth, will represent a clear majority of Denison constituents and indeed the broader community.

Now, whether or not I will be joined by anyone else in trying to block supply remains to be seen although, going by all the huff and puff of recent weeks, I should be able to expect to be joined by Labor, the Greens and the Palmer United Party. If I am not, if the opposition and crossbenchers wave through the appropriation bills and leave their fight to the separate budget enabling legislation, then effectively they will have shown their support for the weight of the budget, and let the record show that.

Of course, if non-government members and obviously senators where the numbers exist to achieve a block were to join me then the government would be forced to go away and redo the budget and to return with a better and fairer set of proposals. If Labor, the Greens and others do in fact join me here and in the Senate but the government refuses to rewrite the budget then so be it. If supply is blocked then we can go back to the polls where the people can decide this budget and indeed the government's fate.

And let us not be fooled by any claims that it is only the budget's enabling legislation that really matters because if you want to find the $43.5 million cut to the ABC and SBS and the cut to CSIRO, as well as the weakening of indexation for government pensions and payments, just for examples, then look no further than the appropriation bills. These bills are a part of the problem and anyone, any party, genuine about opposing the budget is in fact compelled to try and block the appropriation bills until they are remedied.

I am every bit as exercised about all of this as are many Australians worried and even downright scared about the consequences of the budget for them. And we all feel betrayed not just by all the pre-election promises but also by the very notion that we have a budget emergency in the first place and that it should be justification for targeting the disadvantaged members of the community. In my electorate of Denison in 2013, for instance, there were 5,334 people on the disability support pension, 11,223 people on the age pension, 1,816 people on parenting payment, 3,867 people on Newstart and 12,973 family tax benefits were
paid. All of these people will be adversely affected by this budget, and I will not support this budget, if only for them.

The change to Newstart is an especially nasty proposal and one that will, undoubtedly, see many people left without any financial support whatsoever for six months at a time. And what about single parents? They have the perennial difficulty of finding gainful employment between dropping the kids off at 9 am and picking them up at 3 pm—and when it comes to the parenting payment they have already taken a big hit with the reduction in the qualifying age of children from 16 to eight. But now they face cuts to family tax benefits, co-payments for seeing the doctor and getting their scripts filled, and even more to fill the tank in the car. What is going on here? Why are single parents, and in particular single mums, being singled out for even harsher treatment than the rest of the community?

And, talking about co-payments, this is an especially miserable proposal—not only because it will disproportionately impact people on low incomes and the sick but also because the reform will be a significant dismantling of Australia's universal free public healthcare system. In Denison in 2011 the GP bulk-billing rate was 72.5 per cent, and all of these people will be adversely affected by increased fees when visiting their doctor and when filling their prescriptions. Even those receiving a concession on their medication will have to fund two or more additional prescriptions themselves each year.

I am also particularly alarmed by the attack in the budget on people with a disability, and in particular the tightening of assessments for the disability support pension. In fact, over recent weeks a number of people with a disability have approached me about the prospect of such changes, and all were alarmed and some even beside themselves with fear and panic. I fear some will be driven to take their own lives.

Moreover, Australia can afford to give people a world-class education but the moves to deregulate university fees, to increase HECS debts and to alter the HECS repayment arrangements are entirely at odds with that noble aim. Students will now pay more fees and have no certainty that the fees for their desired course will be the same in the future. That alone will deny many potential students the opportunity to gain and benefit from tertiary qualifications—all of which is especially relevant to my electorate and Tasmanians more generally. In fact, in Denison in 2011 there were 30,232 people attending education in one form or another, including 6,700 at university or other tertiary institutions. Many of these people, and those that will or would follow them, will be adversely affected by this budget.

More broadly, Australia's wealth and good fortune should not be hoarded, and the cut to foreign aid in the budget is bitterly disappointing and short-sighted. Obviously we have a moral obligation to assist the world's poor. But doing so is also clearly in our own national interest, because development assistance creates stability and opens up markets—so much so that the slashing of over $7.6 billion for official development assistance over five years is patently a false economy for Australia. Yes, we do need to deal with the structural revenue and expenditure weaknesses in the nation's finances, and the move to tax the wealthy more and tighten the means testing of government pensions and payments is sensible. And, yes, the previous federal government let us down badly by putting the majority of spending for the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the Gonski education reforms beyond the then forward estimates where it did not need to be properly explained. But none of that gives the current government license to attack the poorest and most disadvantaged members of our
community. Nor does it provide any justification for the government's determination to implement a paid parental leave scheme that would pay up to $50,000 per eligible person in just six months. This is extravagant, unaffordable and set to disproportionately benefit relatively well-paid recipients.

There are also a range of other measures, not addressed in the budget, that would help to put the budget on a better footing—for example, a super profits tax on any company making a super profit, like the banks, just four of which are in the process of running up some $30 billion in profits in one year alone.

Tasmania will not be spared any of the downsides of the budget, and Denison in particular will be hard hit by the $111.4 million cut to CSIRO nationally and the other Public Service job cuts. And, while the Antarctic Gateway Partnership will receive $24 million, this is not new money, and what there is will be sourced from the already underfunded Australian Research Council. The Tasmanian environment will not fare any better, with $4 million being stripped from Tasmanian forest reserve tourism. And the government has pledged not to support any further reserves in the state.

In closing, let me make the point again that Australia is a rich and fortunate country, and one that can easily afford to look after those in genuine need of assistance. There is simply no good reason for students, the unemployed, the sick and disabled, the aged, single parents and others to not be able to access high-quality care or an income to live a decent life. That is why I oppose the budget and why I will seek to call a division on the appropriation bills—in other words, to try and block supply. It is also why I challenge Labor, the Greens, the Palmer United Party and all of the other crossbenchers to join me and to in fact put an end to this miserable budget as they have the power to do; to act and not just talk.

Budgets are a chance for governments to show the community what they think is important, and this government has sent a clear signal to the Australian people that it is more interested in a surplus than in their future.

Mr WILLIAMS (Hindmarsh) (19:26): I rise to speak on the appropriation bill because I think it is important for us to understand and to articulate clearly where we are as a nation and why we need to make some changes now and not before it is far too late, when more austere measures are required. We need to do that so that the case for budget repair is understood by the public out there.

The constituents of Hindmarsh and people of Australia know that something has to be done. They know that we cannot go on in the same way that we have in the past. Without change, Australia will record the fastest growth in spending of the top 17 surveyed advanced economies. People know that we need to reduce the unsustainable spending. We know that our demographics are changing. Life expectancy is increasing. This is increasing pressures on social welfare and welfare payments, which we want to maintain. The budget repair will allow us to fund future spending commitments on necessary social services, whether they be health, aged care, pensions or education. It will also allow us to fund future unexpected events.

If you think back to the Howard years you will remember that they made some tough decisions. They ran budget surpluses in 10 out of 11 years. So when the global financial crisis hit they had money in the bank. There was money there to spend on necessary social
infrastructure such as education or other areas to help families during those difficult times and to help with employment. But the government could do that because the hard yards had been done because we managed our finances and we lived within our means.

Furthermore, the Commission of Audit talked about expenditure increases over the next decade—a doubling, or even more than that of expenditure on health, aged care, education and pensions. What does this add up to currently? Where is our budget at? What is our financial situation? We have interest repayments of $1 billion a month. Worryingly, around $700 million of those repayments go overseas—out of our economy. That amount is unable to help the people of Australia to manage their costs, to get on with their lives.

What could we do with $1 billion a month? This is the question I put to the Labor Party, opposite. We could do so much. We could help the people that those on the other side of the chamber want to help. We could assist local communities. We could build a new hospital. We could build new schools. We could build new infrastructure—new roads. We could do so much. We could help families with their daily struggles. But that money is wasted; it is going overseas.

This point has not been addressed by the member for Denison, who just spoke, or by our opposition, the Labor Party. What do we do about that situation? Where is the solution? If we do not do anything now the repayments will increase to $3 billion a month within 10 years—hence, something needs to be done now. It would be a travesty to have more interest payments going overseas—more wasted money so that we are unable to fund community services, the social services and the physical infrastructure that we need.

If action is taken now, which we intend to do, it will save us $16 billion over that 10-year period. This is more than the NDIS, this is more than higher education and this is more than the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. That is what the end dividend is, that we will make these savings which we will be able to contribute back into our budget revenues and help to fund the necessary expenditure that we need.

What is Labor's solution to the debt problem? Wasted money on interest repayments and more expenditure in the future. We are going in the right direction. It will be a shared contribution. As the Treasurer said, and as Menzies said many years ago, 'We are a nation of lifters, not leaners', where all Australians must contribute in a fair way. We are discontinuing the trend of industry assistance, away from corporate welfare, towards programs that facilitate innovation and self-reliance. So we are making necessary changes across the board, looking at taxpayers' money and how to spend that in the best possible manner.

Low-income households will continue to receive significant payments, and when we get rid of the carbon tax every household will benefit by $550 per year. This is where the Labor Party, who cry out about the cost of living, can do something. They can vote for the carbon tax to be removed. But, no: they sit on their hands.

There are structural reforms that we are undertaking to address the ageing population and our slowing economic growth. We are making sure that everyone makes a contribution by asking higher income earners to pay the budget repair levy. They already pay a significant amount of the tax—around 50 per cent of all tax revenue is from high-income earners—admittedly, they are only 10 per cent of the population. This is very much an equitable measure.
We are building Australia's future, with $50 billion in infrastructure and social infrastructure, with education reforms, is not to be forgotten. The $50 billion in infrastructure is a record amount, as we all know. It will improve our economic activity and productivity even more so. It will reduce congestion, lower our business costs and get people home quicker so that they can spend more time with their families rather than being stuck in traffic. In South Australia alone, the South Road upgrade of $1 billion is a great announcement, and I commend the Prime Minister, who committed to this upgrade of South Road within 10 years last October, and Minister Briggs for the work he has done. In my area, the $448 million Torrens to Torrens project is to commence in 2015.

Still on the economy, the people of Australia know that Liberals are businesses' best friend. The small-to medium-size enterprises out there will benefit from a tax cut to around 800,000 small-to medium-sized businesses in Australia. This may provide incentives for those companies to expand, to buy some new capital equipment, to look at new research and development or to employ people: 'Wouldn't that be a great initiative?' the Labor Party says. Ultimately and importantly, the workers benefit.

Lower taxes—the mining tax being removed will help my state of South Australia with iron ore. And, naturally, there is the carbon tax. The member for Makin is here again today, and he heard me speak last night about the benefit of removing taxes. He knows that the companies, the small businesses and the households in his electorate are finding it tough because of the high utility costs, where the state Labor government is contributing to higher power prices through their solar feed-in tariffs and the previous federal government did through the carbon tax. The member for Makin is happy that at least now there is a government that will reduce taxes and help the people in his electorate. On reducing taxes: the tax take for this budget will be $5.7 billion less. That is a significant change to the previous Labor government.

To leverage further private sector investment, the government is prepared to use its balance sheet to help manage risks that might otherwise impede private sector financing. We are looking at new and innovative ways and we are working with the states in how we can finance infrastructure. We are breaking new ground in this sense. In my local community of Hindmarsh there have been infrastructure projects that will help local people. There are CCTV cameras in Henley Square and the redevelopment of the foreshore at Glenelg, where the Foreign Minister was just recently.

We are supporting local clubs through the budget, whether they be football clubs, soccer or other sporting clubs. And we are supporting environmental projects—the Green Army is just one of those initiatives.

I now want to move to education. There have been some groundbreaking education reforms introduced in this budget by the Minister for Education, Christopher Pyne. Let us just reflect on where we are now with tertiary education. We have no university inside the top 20 in the world. A nation such as Australia deserves to have a very high quality top ranked university. Our universities, moreover, are slipping in global rankings—going in the wrong direction. Asian universities, especially those in China, are improving. Something must be done to enable our universities to improve and be the best that they can be.

The Commonwealth will provide around $16 billion to universities this year, with increases each year. Importantly, there is a new initiative to expand opportunities and provide support
for students through direct Commonwealth financial support for those studying higher education diplomas, advanced diplomas and associate degrees with all registered higher education institutions, whether they be in the city or in the country, whether it be TAFE or vet, whether it be universities or otherwise. There is considerable support for students going forward in terms of financing their studies in the first instance.

Significantly, we will be establishing a new Commonwealth scholarship scheme to assist students from a disadvantaged background so that they do not miss out. The new Commonwealth scholarship scheme will expand opportunities for students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, Indigenous students and students from regional Australia. These new arrangements will mean our smarter students can receive a world-class education no matter what background they are from. You would think the Labor Party would be supporting such an initiative. Well, we do not hear anything from members opposite; there is a lack of consistency in their ideals at times.

Other support and equity measures include that 80,000 more students will be supported as they pursue the best course for them. There is $820 million overall to expand access to education. We are removing the FEE-HELP loans for students and we are ensuring graduates will only begin paying their HELP debt when they are earning a decent income. This is fair. The Group of Eight universities unanimously support the core elements of the government's proposed reforms, as they said in a recent press release. They said:

In particular we support: expanding the demand-driven system to non-university providers, with adequate quality controls—

and something that has been overlooked in the education debate is that there will be more students wanting to attend university and tertiary education—

extending funding to sub-Bachelor Degree programs (e.g. Diploma and Associate Degrees); and
deregulating tuition fees.

I want to quickly touch on education funding, which will increase for schools year on year. Students and schools will benefit from a record funding investment of $65 billion over the next four years. From 2013-14 to 2017-18 the funding will increase by 34 per cent, a $4.6 billion increase. So this whole notion of education being cut is ridiculous and misleading. This is over $1.2 billion more than Labor would have spent over the next four years. From 2018, there will be a stable and sustainable system for schools funding based on the CPI. In South Australia alone—and this is something the member for Makin should again take note of—the funding will increase by an additional $74 million in 2014-15, $64 million in 2015-16, $68 million in 2016-17 and $70 million in 2017-18. I am sure the member for Makin will tell his South Australian Labor colleagues that they should be clapping their hands for the record increase in funding that the federal Liberal government is providing to South Australian schools in this budget.

In addition to what we are doing in terms of funding, we are looking at increasing excellence in teaching and school leadership. It is not all about funding, as we know. This debate requires a much more analytical approach than just throwing money at things—we know that is what the Labor Party love to do, but they do not get the outcomes. As we know, the quality of teachers is one of the biggest influences on student results and development.

The Medical Research Future Fund is a groundbreaking initiative. I want to quote what the member for Sydney said in August 2013:
Labor wants more Australian research advances to be taken into the marketplace by Australian firms rather than watching the commercial benefits of our ideas exploited by overseas companies with better access to investment funds.

She will be pleased to know that what we are proposing will help significantly, through the Medical Research Future Fund and other initiatives we are taking, in terms of changing corporate welfare to look at innovation.

In closing, I want to quote another opposition member, now retired, former PM Julia Gillard. She told parliament on 14 March 2013:

In line with our fiscal strategy, we are asking the nation to take some tough decisions and to make some tough choices.

Yes, this sounded good, but Labor failed to deliver the fiscal strategy. Well, they gave us the five highest deficits in history—tough decisions—and the mining tax: how much did that raise? They changed their mind so many times. Tough choices? The only tough choice the Labor Party made was to bring back Kevin Rudd and change leaders so many times. They were not focused on being a good government for the people of Australia. They were more concerned with their leader and who was going to get the spoils of office. They were all talk and no action.

We are making some challenging decisions so that we can repair the budget, as we said we would do, and provide sustainable finances to fund expenditure in the future. We did not make this mess. We are taking responsibility to clean it up. This is not our desired course of action, but we are cleaning up Labor's mess and taking the responsible course the Australian people need.

Ms VAMVAKINOU (Calwell) (19:41): Over the past weeks there have been a lot of calls from government MPs and business leaders—not all but some—for people to stop complaining about the federal budget measures and to get on with the business of putting shoulders to the wheel to collectively address the so-called pending budget emergency or the debt problem—as the member for Hindmarsh constantly referred to it in his contribution this evening—by putting an end to the age of entitlement. Underlying these calls is the message that the Australian people have never had it so good and therefore a bit of pain for the sake of the nation's prosperity is justified.

There are so many ways in which this narrative is so very, very wrong. It is wrong because these budget measures are predicated on a series of untruths, concealments and broken promises, as evidenced by the Prime Minister's own words throughout last year leading up to the federal election. I want to quote the now Prime Minister, who was then the opposition leader, because he ran on a strategy of credibility and not breaking promises. The then opposition leader, now Prime Minister, on many occasions said to the Australian people: 'no changes to pensions', 'no cuts to health', 'no cuts to education', 'no plans to increase university fees', 'no cuts to ABC and SBS'. He said: 'We are about reducing taxes, not increasing taxes. We are about getting rid of taxes, not imposing new taxes.' Finally, the one that I like most: 'A dumb way to cut spending would be to threaten family benefits or to means test them further.' So, rather than telling Australians to stop complaining about the federal budget, the government—and in particular the Prime Minister—should explain why they have misled the Australian people, why this budget is so unfair and why it is a budget where most of the heavy lifting will be left to those who have the least capacity to do.
In the words of St Vincent de Paul Society New South Wales CEO Michael Perusco, more than one million Australians have consistently missed out on the prosperity this country has experienced over the past 20 years and this is the group who will be left even further behind by the measures in this budget. This is especially true of the people living in my electorate as it is my residents who will be the ones most adversely affected by the measures introduced in this budget, putting low- and middle-income local families under further pressure, making it harder for pensioners to make ends meet, and in particular—because this budget in particular targets young people—putting many young people under a lot more pressure than they are presently experiencing.

My constituents form a part of current public opinion that overwhelmingly has rejected the Abbott government's budget measures—not only because they disagree with its inherent unfairness and twisted priorities but because they take exception to being played for fools by a prime minister who was so eager and prepared to say anything and do anything in order to win the federal election.

My electorate has a long history of labour market disadvantage. Areas of my electorate are in the lower socioeconomic index, and as a community we have fought long and hard to secure government investment in our schools, our medical services, our roads, our manufacturing and industry and our social infrastructure in general. Opportunities for a job and for education and training is the bedrock of my community's aspirations and there is good reason for this, both current and historical. This Abbott government, through its budget measures, is slamming the brakes on my community's prospects, casting them into uncertainty and further burdening their struggle to make ends meet.

The most recent data for the Hume local government area shows an unemployment rate of about 6.3 per cent, well above the national average of 5.2 per cent. These figures reflect unemployment in my constituency which are consistently higher than any other local government areas across the country. My community both expects and relies on governments, both state and federal, to invest in programs that encourage, provide opportunity, assist and further their prospects for getting a job, especially when it comes to the young people in my electorate. It was for this reason, and in recognition of this, that in 2011 the then Labor government identified Calwell as one of the 10 neediest local government areas in Australia and, in doing so, allocated a pool of $30 million to address this issue across 10 electorates, of which mine was one.

The Better Futures, Local Solutions program was established in order to draw on local community expertise and knowledge so that all service providers could come together to work towards addressing unemployment in our area. Community Innovation Through Collaboration, which was one of four Better Futures, Local Solutions programs and measures, commenced in July 2011 with the appointment of the government action leader, Mrs Maria Axarlis Coulter, followed by the nomination and ministerial appointment of the local advisory group in February 2012 and the appointment of the community action leader, Mr Huon Damm, in March 2012. The Better Futures, Local Solutions fund was specifically targeted at providing opportunities for community members to gain skills and training in order to find employment. The idea was to give a wide range of agencies a platform to be able to come together to test and trial new ideas and to pool existing resources and know-how for meeting the needs of the local community. It also supported communities developing solutions to
address disadvantage in our area. The Calwell community has since operated 16 Local Solutions projects. Nine were achieved in round 1 of the three-year funding cycle and 11 were achieved in round 2. Five received funding for two years, and 11 received funding for one year.

The Better Futures, Local Solutions program was making significant headway in addressing the number and complexity of issues facing long-term unemployed people in my electorate. It was creating a very positive ripple effect in my community, jobs were created and people received training. Some of those people were single mothers going back to work, some were people with disabilities gaining employment and training, some were long-term unemployed youth, and many were people of non-English-speaking backgrounds. Young people were shown and encouraged into new pathways, including visits to university campuses.

The successful strengths-based servicing approach which we adopted in Broadmeadows has informed the ongoing provision of intensive services to vulnerable families and job seekers as part of the Department of Human Services operating model across all of its sites. And even though unemployment rates continue to be much higher than the national average, the fact is that the rate was dropping and in my electorate we were making progress. Unfortunately, thanks to the Abbott government's budget, the axing of the Local Solutions fund is one of the most significant and highly political community cuts in my electorate, bringing to a premature end programs that were making a difference to my community.

The Hume Local Advisory Group, which is the group that oversaw the work of Better Futures, Local Solutions, did not forward spend its entire allocation like a number of the other LAGs did across the country. Instead, it decided to stagger its funding applications and had planned for a third round of funding. Unfortunately, it has lost this opportunity as the cessation of the Community Innovation through Collaboration Program means that the money is now gone. As a result, 10 projects will conclude at 30 June 2014, with the remaining projects—and I want to speak about this one in particular, Bridgeworks, which is a local organisation that helps disadvantaged youth. It will see its project, which is very nicely called Flip the Script and is designed specifically to help Pacific Island youth, end at the end of this year, in December. In addition, the key positions of government action leader and community action leader will also be concluding on 30 June 2014, one year earlier than the other two complementary Better Futures, Local Solutions measures for supporting jobless families and helping young parents in the Hume area.

These are examples of successful government initiated and funded programs that were seeded as a result of the Better Futures, Local Solutions fund. Unfortunately, should these programs wish to continue to do their very important work, they will be forced to look for alternative sources of funding or face the prospect of ceasing to operate altogether. Of course this would be an outcome that would have devastating consequences in our local area. I am particularly disappointed—that is an understatement; I am appalled that programs that were making progress are being treated by this government as investments that are frivolous and pointless. I think the member for Hindmarsh made reference to some of these 'not-so-worthy investments'.

The Future Pathways project, which is run by a very important organisation in my electorate, the Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre, is a program that is aimed at engaging 40
of our residents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. It targets disadvantaged jobseekers, including single parents who are returning to work. Another one of the projects in my electorate that faces the chop is called the Brite Herb Farm project, which will also be forced to find alternative funding. This project is a particularly special one because Brite is a one-of-a-kind facility in my electorate: it provides training for people with a disability and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Another program that faces the chop is the Crossroads Indigenous Youth and Family project, which is run by the Salvation Army for Indigenous people aged between six and 25. It helps with training, it helps with child care, it helps people to focus on developing their strengths and it provides support to the family unit in order for participants to take up opportunities to gain employment. One other program that is very important, Imagineering, is raising aspirations in Hume. It is a project that is run by one of my local primary schools, the Holy Child Primary School. This project increases the aspirations of more than 400 students and parents in Broadmeadows by educating them about pathways to and the benefits of attending university.

I do not have much time left, but given that I have made reference to this particular program, Imagineering, I will just expand on it. It is focused on encouraging young children at primary school to think about going to university. This particular school, the Holy Child, has a very large number of students who are from refugee backgrounds. My electorate has a very large number of people coming to Australia from Iraq and it is very important that these young people understand the benefits of going to university. I think that we are making headway in helping them understand this. Of course there is a problem, because in this budget the deregulation of university fees means that these children in my electorate are likely to think twice about going to university if in fact it means that they are going to incur a higher cost and higher debt against them into the future.

So it makes our job that little bit more difficult when young people say to you, 'You know, I have got to find a job.' I have not mentioned yet how this government has made no reference to how exactly it is going to help people find the jobs that it wants them to have, whether they are young people or those on the other side who are going to be working until they are 70. The question is: where are these jobs and what is this government doing about investing in programs that are actually going to create jobs?

My young people who are very concerned about their futures in terms of their ability to go to university also say to me that they face the whole issue of the unaffordability of buying a home. You have got young people who are still at primary school worried about the enormous amount of debt that they are going to incur in areas of their lives and their families look at this current government and see no understanding and no empathy from that government for their predicament. A lot of people in my electorate rely on government to help them—not to give them handouts but to actually help them—and to invest in their communities in order for some sort of progress to be made and for job creation opportunities. I am running out of time, but this budget is going to have devastating consequences for the people of my electorate.

Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson) (19:56): I rise to support these appropriation bills and the 2014-15 federal budget. The first Abbott budget is undoubtedly a contribute-and-build budget. It is in stark contrast to the many Labor spend-and-waste budgets we have experienced. It sets us on the path for a more prosperous future. It protects the support services we value like Medicare and the age pension by ensuring that they are sustainable in
the future. Yes, we are asking all Australians to make a contribution and, yes, we acknowledge that some of these measures will have an impact on household budgets. But this budget is really about taking some tough and, frankly, unpalatable decisions now in order to avoid greater pain down the track. The government has not taken these decisions lightly. We take no pleasure in having to pare back some payments and adjust the rate of increases in others, but we have been mindful of trying to address the challenges we face in a fair and balanced way.

In contrast, there has been nothing fair or responsible about Labor's budget response. Rather than setting out an alternative plan for tackling the deficit and reducing the debt burden they created, Labor has hysterically misrepresented the budget, creating fear in the community and, worst of all, they have indicated they will oppose key measures that save $40 billion.

When those opposite stand in this place and preach about honesty, you have to wonder how honest it is to pretend that we should do nothing to fix the budget deficit. How honest is it to say that there is no budget emergency when we are borrowing $1 billion every single month just to pay back the debt we currently have? How honest is it to say that we have no debt problem when the IMF found our debt was growing at the third-fastest rate of developed nations and, more worryingly, that our spending was growing at the fastest rate in the world? How honest is it to pretend that this growing debt and deficit path will not create a major problem in the near future?

There has been no acknowledgement from Labor about the need to make changes to the fiscal path that our nation is on, and that is either intentionally dishonest or wilfully irresponsible. The fact is that if the coalition had inherited the same economic situation that Labor did in 2007, a budget surplus of $20 billion and $50 billion in the bank, we would not have had to make the tough decisions we have in this budget. It is astounding that in less than six years Labor saddled us with five successive budget deficits totalling $191 billion and racked up a further $123 billion in deficits into the future. We are facing a debt of $667 billion, which will mean an interest bill every year of $32 billion. That is more than we currently spend on aged care, schools and child care combined. That money will be completely wasted—gone in interest payments.

But I am pleased to say that I have been quite heartened by the number of my own constituents who have been in contact and said, 'Yes, this budget will affect me. There are things that I don't like about it, but I recognise it is necessary.' They recognise that vital institutions like Medicare and our age pension, which we all support, require the changes the government has announced to ensure they are sustainable and affordable for future generations. They recognise that our historic nation-building infrastructure investment fund will create jobs, boost economic activity and generate lasting benefits.

They recognise that establishing the biggest medical research investment fund in the world will ultimately pay an enormous social dividend in improved health treatments and will help reduce pressure on our health system in the future. They recognise that our young people should either be earning a wage or learning new skills to facilitate them getting a job. Our youth are far too valuable to allow them to languish on unemployment benefits.

My constituents recognise that those who are studying for a diploma or a pre-bachelor course are just as deserving of Commonwealth support as someone currently studying a
bachelor degree at university. This is a fundamental shift in our approach to higher education, and an equity measure that I applaud. I think it is something that we really should be congratulating the education minister and also the assistant education minister for, for the historic extension of the Commonwealth funding for TAFE diplomas and a range of pathway courses to open up educational opportunities for the many young people who we have who may not want to or who may not be able to pursue a university degree.

Similarly, Trade Support Loans will offer assistance to those who are completing an apprenticeship, and will target occupations on the National Skills List, such as plumbers, diesel mechanics, electricians and fitters. This is a fantastic step forward. Having participated in and facilitated VET forums around the country I am very pleased that training and vocational education are being given the priority that they deserve.

My constituents also recognise that everyone who qualifies should have access to higher education but that those who reap the benefits of further study also have a responsibility to shoulder a little more of the cost of their education, to be paid back only when they are earning a decent wage rather than being subsidised by the 60 per cent of taxpayers who do not have the benefit of a degree.

I want to take some time during this debate to talk specifically about the higher education reforms, which are designed to make our universities more competitive and therefore improve the quality of our higher education system. I am delighted to have in my electorate of McPherson, just around the corner from my office, Bond University, one of Australia's private universities and, I believe, the most successful.

Bond is a not-for-profit private university, which has established a stellar record over the past 25 years for excellence in education. It is, in fact, a shining example of how competition can produce much better outcomes. As a private university that sets its own course fees, Bond has had to provide an excellent product in order to compete with public universities. The 2013 Good Universities Guide rates Bond University five stars, the most out of any university in Australia, for educational experience. Bond rates five stars across key performance indicators, including teaching quality, generic skills, graduate satisfaction, staff-student ratios and staff qualifications. In fact, Bond has the best student-to-staff ratios in the country. Many students are attracted to its accelerated learning, with three semesters a year. This means that students can graduate and begin earning sooner.

I am pleased to report that last September Bond University launched a five-year strategic plan, 2014 to 2018, that set out a vision and strategy to position high-quality and focused research as core to university business. Bond's success over the past 25 years is a testament to what can be achieved when a university has to be responsive to student, community and industry requirements.

I also very pleased that this budget extends Commonwealth funding to degrees at Bond and other private institutions. I am particularly pleased that our deregulation measures also provide more Commonwealth scholarships to reward excellence and assist those students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. I am also very supportive of the budget measure to remove all loan fees for FEE-HELP and VET FEE-HELP, meaning equal access to loans for students—no matter where they study. This will ensure that students who choose Bond University, or other private providers for that matter, will not be discriminated against in accessing HELP loans. This is another important equity change.
Australian universities have to be responsive to the higher education market, both the domestic and the international market. They cannot be responsive if they are lumbered with an outdated, restrictive funding model. I note that higher education provides our fourth largest export income, but sadly under Labor that income has fallen from $19 billion a year to $15 billion. Clearly we need to get in front of our competitors or that income will continue to decline.

I note that the budget changes announced in relation to course fees will not apply to students currently enrolled at university. I also want to dispel the myth that our reforms to higher education represent cuts to the sector. In fact, this government will spend $900 million more on higher education and research than would have occurred had Labor been re-elected. I also note that the education minister has indicated he will consult widely regarding the implementation of these reforms in 2016 to ensure an effective and fair transition. I have advocated that Bond University be included in that consultation process. Bond is a great example of how competition can result in high-quality outcomes and innovative approaches to service delivery. I do encourage others to look at the model of Bond. I certainly welcome and acknowledge the reforms in this budget that will provide equity for students who chose to study at Bond.

Earlier I spoke about those local residents who had contacted me to say, 'We understand you are doing the right thing,' in relation to the tough measures in the budget. It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge that there have also been many people who have contacted me with concerns about decisions that were taken in this budget. I am very, very mindful of those concerns. I understand that household budgets are very tight. My electorate of McPherson has a high proportion of seniors, pensioners and retirees who have worked hard all their life. It is sincerely regrettable that they, like every Australian, need to be asked to make a contribution.

I want to point out that we have kept our commitment not to change the age pension during this term. The pension will not change at all during this term of parliament. In fact, the amount of the pension will continue to increase twice a year, as it always has, at the rate it currently does. In March this year the base rate of the pension increased $14.30 a fortnight for single pensioners and $10.80 a fortnight for each member of a couple. The amount of the pension will increase again in September and age pensioners will also benefit significantly from the carbon tax being scrapped. Australians are living longer and healthier lives so the government has a responsibility to ensure that our pension system is sustainable over the long term. That is why from 2017, after the next election, pensions will be indexed to the rate of inflation rather than wages; however, the pension will still continue to increase each and every year.

I know that Medicare changes have also been a concern, particularly for our seniors. Again, while a co-payment is necessary to reduce overservicing, we have put a ceiling on the amount concession card holders can pay in any year, and that is 10 services or $70. That is the maximum. Doctors still have discretion to bulk-bill if they choose.

As I said earlier, other countries with universal health systems have much higher co-payments. New Zealand, for example, has a $17 co-payment. There are other countries that have higher co-payment levels. The national audit report recommended a co-payment of $15. So the government has been very moderate in its co-payment charge and has also ensured that
it is capped for concession card holders and children. That is all concession card holders, which includes Commonwealth seniors health card holders. In fact, it includes a very large number of Australians. In our country of 23 million people we have 8.6 million concession card holders.

While I understand that there is concern in the community for those who are most in need, the Medicare co-payment, as I said before is capped at $70 each year. That is about one-eighth of what the average household is expected to save in energy costs when the carbon tax is scrapped. I just want to put that in perspective, especially for those members opposite.

I do acknowledge that changes to eligibility for family tax benefit B will impact on some families and this will be a concern for some households. Again, we have tried to be fair. The age eligibility changes where the payment is no longer available once the youngest child turns six and starts school have been grandfathered so that those currently in receipt of this payment for children over six will continue to receive it until 30 June 2017. The reality is that we cannot afford this supplementary payment and we do need all those who can work to do so.

Our changes to the disability support pension and our earn or learn plan for young people similarly sent a clear message: if you can work, it is reasonable to expect that you do so. Again, we have put reasonable exemptions and safety nets in place so that a young person who has done the right thing and has been working gets a reduced waiting period. Those with family responsibilities, similarly, will not have to wait six months. So a young family where the breadwinner loses his job will not be subject to the six-month waiting period.

However, again as I mentioned earlier, our young people are too important to allow them to languish on the dole. They need to know that our nation expects them to earn or learn. Sometimes that may mean that they have to take a job that is not exactly one that they would want. But as we know, employment is, of itself, an important step to improving skills and finding a better job.

In its totality this budget is about responsibility. This budget is about encouraging personal responsibility, ensuring that government support is given to those most in need, but asking people to make a contribution to ensure we can keep the universal health care and our welfare safety net in place for future generations. This budget is about taking responsibility for the challenges we face—not ignoring them and racking up more debt on the national credit card, as Labor is suggesting we should do.

Sometimes it takes tough decisions and sacrifice today in order to create a better tomorrow. The idea that you can have the fastest-growing spending in the world and one of the fastest-growing debts but you should wait until it hits a certain level before you do anything about it is nonsense. The time to act is now. This budget is about securing the future. I commend the budget to the House.

Mr SWAN (Lilley) (20:11): This is a budget which is built on a trifecta of trickery—a trifecta of trickery to justify smashing huge holes in the social safety net, which the government said, for three years before the election, that it would never, ever do. The first trick to justify this savagery is to claim that Australia faces an economic and budget emergency. That claim is laughable in an economy which has grown some 16 per cent since the end of 2007. Tomorrow, we will have the release of the March quarter national accounts and we will see that we have grown by much more than 16 per cent since 2007. That is not an
economic emergency. Sixteen per cent growth over 7½ years with a global recession in the middle is absolutely stunning because it is a performance not matched by any other developed economy. So how could we possibly have an economic emergency in those circumstances?

The second trick—this was mentioned by the member opposite—is to falsely claim that spending in Australia has been, and will be in the future, massively out of control. If you accept the Abbott government's pessimistic economic forecast, government spending will average 24.9 per cent of GDP over the four years to 2017-18. In the last three years of the Labor government, spending averaged 24.6 per cent of GDP. So the Abbott government is planning to spend more than the average of the last three years of the Labor government in every year of the forward estimates. This is despite all of those savage cuts which are hurting people out there, because all of those cuts are simply making room for more new spending from the Abbott government—spending such as their paid parental leave scheme.

The third trick, and perhaps the most damaging trick, is to irresponsibly claim that debt levels are large—unsustainable—and rapidly deteriorating through the decade. This claim is damaging to our international standing. It is completely inconsistent with our AAA credit rating, and it is not backed up with any analysis from international financial institutions. It is most certainly not backed up by analysis from the International Monetary Fund. It is not backed up with any credible private sector forecast. In fact, net debt over the forward estimates in this budget is higher than any forecast in the Pre-Election Fiscal Outlook. We heard today the honest view of the government that the Pre-Election Fiscal Outlook was the honest view of where finances were at the end of last year. In effect, a senior minister in the government repudiated the fiddled MYEFO forecasts, which were setting up the claim that debt and deficit was unsustainable.

So how can the government continue to go ahead and claim there is some form of economic emergency?—although I would note that the Prime Minister in the House, last Monday week, changed his language and said that we had a strong economy but a weak budget. Whatever that means, it is from the Tea Party universe.

But to justify all these exaggerated and extreme Tea Party claims about the state of our economy and the state of our budget they seek to provide International Monetary Fund endorsement, and claim that figures from the International Monetary Fund back up their claims. I believe they do not have that backing from the International Monetary Fund.

* A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

**Sitting suspended from 20:15 to 20:31**

**Mr SWAN:** I was saying before the break that the purpose of the government talking about the IMF in the way it does is to delegitimise what Labor did during the global financial crisis to support employment and to save our country from recession. The IMF has repeatedly made the point that what Labor did during that period was correct. The G20 has made that point. The OECD has made that point. And the IMF continues to say that our public finances are in good shape. So what we have here is a government which is intent on demonising deficit and debt and to portray any spending from the former government as wasteful.

The fact is that we have had a rapid decline in our revenues. They are slowly coming back to normal levels. Had we not borrowed during the global financial crisis we would have experienced far higher unemployment and far higher capital destruction, and that would have led to even further and higher levels of deficit and debt. The fact is that during the global
financial crisis the previous government did the right thing about supporting jobs. The current government are out to demonise all those actions. They try to use IMF data to do that and it is hard to disprove some of the things they are saying because of the state of the current budget papers.

It is almost impossible to find any explanation in the current budget papers of what the government is up to. They are chaotic and they look like they have been put together with Clag glue. The fact is we do not have the supporting analysis of trends and economic impacts that we have had in previous budget papers. The budget papers this year are something like half the size they were last year. All of this demonisation of deficit and debt is all about the Abbott government seeking to get permission from the Australian people for the savage cuts they are imposing that they said they would not impose.

What does not stand out in the budget papers very clearly when all of these cuts are done in the name of reducing debt is that barely any of the saves in this budget over the forward estimates are reducing debt—they are not going to pay down debt at all. Instead, these new savings have been used to plug the $28 billion revenue hole left by the abolition of the mining tax, the carbon tax and the removal of measures to stop multinational profit shifting and a whole lot of other kickbacks to the top end of town. The government have not use their savings here to pay down debt.

This budget does not put its money where its mouth is. It does not in any way pay down debt significantly. Compared to the Pre-Election Economic and Fiscal Outlook statement, which we have been told by the government today is honest, the levels of debt are higher, and they are higher over the forward estimates than they were in the PEFO. So, stunningly, net debt has not gone down. It has gone up from 12.5 per cent in September last year to 14 per cent in September 2017-18. Net debt is going up, despite the savagery of the cuts. In my view, the real GDP forecast and the nominal GDP forecast on which these budget outcomes are predicated are in fact government forecasts; they are not Treasury forecasts and they are deliberately pessimistic. The nominal GDP forecast upon which the revenue figures are based are significantly below trend and therefore revenue forecasts are likely to be exceeded in future years.

In practical terms, what does this mean? The government has deliberately depressed its revenue forecasts to give itself the headspace to upgrade its revenue forecast in the years ahead. This gives them the flexibility to come back to surplus earlier and to set the scene to cynically deliver tax cuts to people before the next election. The truth is the deficits as forecast are modest; their growth forecasts are very conservative and designed to pull the tax rabbit out of the hat in a couple of years' time. In the face of these outcomes, the government has been desperate to deflect attention by exaggerating future levels of deficit and debt.

Their latest trick has been to misuse IMF data on spending, deficit and debt to justify their savage cuts. Claim No. 1 is that among IMF advanced countries Australia had the second highest real expenditure growth per person between 2005 and 2010. That is simply untrue: Australia was around the middle of the pack. The second claim is that Australia's rate of fiscal consolidation is only modest when compared to other countries. That is simply untrue: again, Australia is around the middle of the pack. Between 2012 and 2018 it is around two per cent of GDP—just marginally above the average for IMF countries. The third claim, and perhaps the most damaging claim, is that Australia has the highest real increases in forecast real
expenditure growth between 2012 and 2018 for IMF advanced countries. That is also absolutely untrue. Then we get to the clanger of them all: that our debt levels are unsustainable and out of control. Our rate of increase between 2012 and 2018 is lower than a number of advanced economies and in 2018 Australia’s net debt is forecast to still be amongst the lowest of all advanced countries. In 2018 our gross debt is forecast to be the sixth lowest out of 35 IMF economies.

As I said before, the purpose of this trifecta of trickery and all the trash talking of our economy is ideological. The government wants to slash the role of government; it wants to shrink government. Of course, it seeks permission so that it is excused for not delivering on its commitments to: no cuts in education, no cuts in health, no change to pensions, no change to the GST and no cuts to the ABC or SBS. In addition to all the savagery that it has imposed on low-income earners, there is in this budget an intergenerational war being waged on young people. It is not just what is done to unemployment benefits for young people—as bad as that is—but also what it is doing to young people for the future, because they are the ones who will have to work to 70. They are the ones who will be building up very high levels of debt as they attempt to get their degrees. It will affect this country for decades. If these measures are passed, I regard them as an intergenerational war on young Australians.

What is particularly troubling, given all of this, is the way the government has been using its megaphone to trash talk our economy. We have a great future. We have had 23 years of uninterrupted growth—something that has not been achieved in any other developed economy, but we have a government going out there talking the economy down, hitting confidence and that is gradually flowing through to investment. We are seeing that in all of the data. When you join that with the attack on education, it is all proving to be a real risk to our economic prospects into the future.

On top of that, we had the completely incompetent answer from the Treasurer in the House earlier this week about our levels of debt. He prattled on about how the country was not living within its means. What he did not say was that our savings ratio is about average in the OECD and our investment ratio is one of the highest in the world. It is our attractiveness as an investment destination that means we do run a current account deficit in this country and we do it to make our economy more prosperous. We borrow to develop our economy, as we have done for over 100 years. So to run modest deficits in the appropriate situation is entirely appropriate to protect jobs and future security. But it is silly statements like that and the talking down of our prospects which impacts upon confidence, not just here but internationally. It damages the standing of our government and the belief that people want to have that it has the competence to run a $1.5 trillion economy.

A lot has been said about the spending of the previous government, but the last budget we brought down had in it two of the biggest reforms in our history—the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the Gonski school improvement program; one to lift productivity and the other to deliver fairness—fully funded over 10 years. What all of this has been about is unwinding support for those two important programs, because this government do not believe in them, they do not want them and they are trying to wriggle out of implementing them. That is what so much of this trash talk has been about.

Good budget management is the foundation of a strong economy and a pathway to surplus is critical, but that is not what this government has been about. It has taken on board more
It is spending more than the previous government because it has an entirely different agenda. Its agenda is to reorder priorities, to smash programs that it calls 'entitlement programs', which impacts a whole lot of lower income earners in our community, and to see a switch towards corporates and away from individuals. That is what it is all about. But, most importantly, it has been about trying to create an environment where the electorate would give it permission to wriggle out of all the commitments that it gave consistently for three years—no cuts in education, no cuts in health, no cuts in the social safety net, no cuts in pensions; there isn't a need for all of those things.

We do need to have sensible fiscal policy in this country, but what we have from this government is an ideological statement that is seeking to change the basis of the Australian way, which is a prosperous economy with a fair go.

Mr HARTSUYKER (Cowper—Deputy Leader of the House and Assistant Minister for Employment) (20:42): I welcome the opportunity to speak after the architect of the mess in which we find ourselves—Australia's worst Treasurer, who delivered the largest deficits that this country has ever seen. If action were not taken, we would be heading towards 16 years of deficits. I did hear the member for Lilley claiming that our forecasts are too pessimistic. He has left the room now, but the reality is that he missed every forecast in his own budgets. He got every forecast wrong. He came into the House as Treasurer at the time, saying—I can still remember it, and I am sure you can too, Deputy Speaker—'The four surpluses I announce tonight'. That is how he opened his budget speech, but the reality was very different. He never delivered a surplus. He delivered deficits year on year on year and left us with a mess. If action were not taken on it, we would be having deficits as far as the eye could see.

The budget that this government has introduced is one that is all about setting up Australia for the future. The great challenge for this parliament is to support the changes needed to be made to build a stronger, more prosperous and more secure nation, with new opportunities for the next generation. This basic principle is behind this budget: to redirect tax dollars away from unaffordable consumption—which was the Labor way—towards investment for the future. The budget contains a range of difficult measures, and there is no running away from that. However, it needs to be done because the previous government left such a mess. Not only did the Labor government leave a mess; they booby trapped the budget with promises of significant unfunded spending increases outside the forward estimates. We had the member for Lilley repeating the insult before he left, talking about the fact that a range of programs were fully funded. They were not fully funded, they were just hollow promises with no financial basis to back them up.

To understand this budget, you need to understand the context. When Labor came to office, they inherited a budget on track for a $20 billion surplus. The government had no net debt and $45 billion in the bank. From that starting point, Labor delivered deficits totalling $191 billion and the prospect of another $123 billion of deficit to come. Treasury forecasts predicted that the budget would be in deficit for the next 10 years if we do not change direction and, as I said earlier, a total of 16 years of deficits. Labor left Australia heading towards a debt burden of $667 billion. Every month, Australian taxpayers are forced to pay $1 billion just to cover the interest on Labor's debt. That interest bill will continue to climb as a result of Labor's mismanagement and waste. Each Australian's share of Labor debt is currently $13½ thousand and, unless we take action, this will grow by $1,100 every year and reach $24,500 within a
decade. That is $100,000 of debt for every family of four. To put that in perspective, the $12 billion we are paying in interest on Labor's debt would be enough to complete the duplication of the Pacific Highway, with billions of dollars left over.

It is not just the nation's finances that went backwards under Labor; almost every area of policy suffered under Labor's mismanagement. Despite explicitly promising not to do so, Labor introduced a carbon tax, which was a $7.6 billion hit on the economy in its first year. Abolishing the carbon tax would save the average household around $550 next year alone. In health, hospital waiting times for elective surgery grew from 34 days to 36 days. Labor promised 64 GP superclinics but only delivered 33, and they presided over $4 billion in cuts to private health insurance. Labor's border protection failures resulted in more than 50,000 illegal arrivals, cost blow-outs of over $11 billion and, tragically, over 1,000 deaths at sea as people attempted to reach our shores. Defence spending fell to the lowest level in real terms since 1938. In education, despite spending billions of dollars on overpriced school halls and computers in schools, student results dropped, with Australia's education system dropping from eighth best in the world to 23rd, according to the World Economic Forum. In my portfolio of employment, under Labor another 200,000 Australians joined the unemployment queue. Long-term unemployment almost doubled and youth unemployment grew by almost three per cent. Under Labor the number of days lost to strikes more than doubled and productivity decreased by an average of 0.7 per cent.

This is Labor's legacy. It is a legacy of waste and mismanagement. We did not create the mess that Labor left, but we are certainly determined to fix it. This budget make substantial steps towards setting the nation back on a sustainable growth path. Because of this budget, gross debt will be almost $300 billion lower than what it would have been under Labor. This means our interest bill will be $16 billion per year lower in 10 years. This frees up money to spend on important infrastructure projects and programs that the country needs. By 2017-18 the deficit will have been reduced to just $2.8 billion. The medium-term projections show strong surpluses of above one per cent of GDP within a decade. Importantly, this budget improves Australia's structural position. Under Labor the budget was expected to remain in structural deficit for more than a decade. As a result of this budget the structural position will be balanced by 2018-19 and in surplus in the following long years.

It is important to recognise that getting the budget back under control is not an end in itself. As a government, we want to build a strong and prosperous economy. A strong economy means more jobs. A strong economy means more opportunities for our young people, higher wages and a better standard of living. But you cannot build a stronger economy until you fix the budget, which is what these appropriation bills are all about.

In my portfolio this budget includes programs to build on the work done since MYEFO. We have previously introduced the job commitment bonus to reward those young Australians who demonstrate a commitment to the world of work rather than the world of welfare. We introduced the Tasmanian Jobs Programme to provide an incentive for Tasmanian employers to take on new staff. We also introduced new relocation assistance to provide long-term unemployed job seekers with the opportunity to move to where the jobs are, with assistance of up to $9,000 for a job seeker with dependants.

In this budget we introduced a program called Restart, offering up to $10,000 to encourage employers to put on mature age workers so that their businesses can gain the benefits that
older workers can bring to an enterprise. As a nation we need as many workers participating in the workforce as possible, and these measures will help job seekers get into the workforce.

Last week I announced the details of phase 1 of our new Work for the Dole program. Some $14.9 million has been allocated to fund this measure. Starting in July, young long-term unemployed job seekers in receipt of Newstart or youth allowance will be required to do work for the dole of around 15 hours per week. This will apply in 18 selected locations around the country. Employers are telling me that many young job seekers are presenting at the gates of their business without the necessary basic skills that would allow them to get by in the workforce. Work for the Dole has the potential to provide these skills that so many young people desperately need.

A recent survey by my department has revealed that employers believe improvements in basic things, like attitude, appearance and communication skills, would improve the employment prospects of young job seekers, and I could not agree more. Work for Dole equips young job seekers with these skills and often provides a link to the local labour market. Last week I visited a Work for the Dole project in the electorate of Dobell and spoke to several participants. Two of the participants have now secured jobs, and they credit Work for the Dole with giving them the motivation and attitude needed to get into the workforce.

The budget also introduces tough new measures to ensure that young job seekers are earning or learning. There are too many young people who are falling prey to the welfare trap. Fit, capable young Australians should not have the option of becoming welfare dependent and descending into the despair that comes with a life on welfare. It is in no-one's interests to have our young people not participating in the workforce. Under the changes within the budget, young Australians need to be either working or studying. Leaving school and becoming welfare dependent is not an option.

To ensure that young people have every opportunity to study or train, we have introduced new support for apprentices, expanded the range of courses subsidised by the government and deregulated our university system. These changes will give young Australians greater choice, and in most cases there will be no up-front fees for those who choose to study.

I would now like to turn my attention to the impact of the budget on regional Australia, particularly my electorate of Cowper. This budget will see works continue on key Pacific Highway projects, and we are aiming to complete the duplication by 2020. The federal government's commitment to deliver $5.6 billion to complete the upgrade, working in partnership with the state, provides sufficient funding to allow the project to be completed on the 80/20 basis that was always envisaged.

More than $4 billion in Pacific Highway works are either now under construction or tenders have been awarded. This is great news for our local area. Since September last year the federal coalition has announced almost $2.5 billion in additional Pacific Highway works. Make no mistake: we will get this job done, so vital to the people of the north coast, to ensure that people can travel between Brisbane and Sydney in a safe way, to provide safer motoring, faster travel time and a more efficient transport system.

Drivers in Cowper will also benefit from the millions of dollars in Roads to Recovery funding. Nationally, Roads to Recovery will be doubled for 2015-16, allowing local councils to properly fix roads they often cannot afford to maintain.
The budget also includes $565 million for black spots funding and $248 million for heavy vehicle safety projects. A $300 million program for bridges renewal is so vitally important, with so many councils in my area having a long list of timber bridges which require urgent repair or replacement.

This budget also delivers on our election commitment with regard to the Community Development Grants fund, which is supporting 300 projects around the country. In Cowper, we are delivering our commitment to the South Kempsey Recreational Parklands Project, the Clarence Valley Airport upgrade, the McLachlan Park upgrade and the Wherrett Park upgrade. These are all important pieces of community infrastructure and I am proud to have delivered these projects for my electorate. Next year our Stronger Regions Fund will be up and running, delivering funding for important community infrastructure around regional Australia.

In conclusion, this is a budget that sets Australia up for the future. The $50 billion of infrastructure funding will set Australia up to be more prosperous, more efficient and more secure, and it will generate tens of thousands of jobs in the construction phase and countless jobs as a result of the efficiency of these infrastructure projects. The $20 billion medical research fund will find cures and treatments that will allow us to live longer and more enjoyable lives. The structural changes within the budget will set Australia on a sustainable growth path so that our children are not saddled with a national debt run up by the previous generations—run up by the member for Lilley, I must say, the architect, as I said earlier, of the mess we find ourselves in. After six years of Labor mismanagement and waste, Australia can finally look forward to a brighter future with opportunity and prosperity.

However there is a challenge in this budget and the challenge is the Australian Labor Party. Labor must accept that they lost the election. They were thrown out. Australia decided that another three years of Labor mismanagement was simply unacceptable. Now Labor is seeking to continue their mismanagement from opposition. They are continuing to stand in the way. They are continuing to prevent Australia from moving forward on repairing the budget. They are always there—lots of words, lots of hot air and no solutions. Labor created the mess. We are about to fix the mess. I commend the budget to the chamber. It is a budget that is going to set Australia on the path to a prosperous future.

Mrs GRIGGS (Solomon) (20:56): Following on from the minister, we know that they hate being over there—they hate being on the Opposition benches—and quite often we see them scowling and hear them sneering and grumbling. Their self-righteous indignation sees no boundaries. The Labor Party just cannot get used to the idea that they are back on the Opposition benches, and the Australian people had better get ready for the longest dummy-spit in political history. Now they are trying to dictate terms to the government duly elected by the Australian people to clean up the mess left behind after the wrecking ball years of the Rudd-Gillard administration.

I say to the members of the opposition: block our reforms at your peril. Stand in the way of debt reduction at your own risk. Ultimately, it will be you as a political organisation that will have to look the Australian people in the eye and explain why they are labouring under the burden of millions of dollars a month in interest payments, why we have failing infrastructure, why government funded services are under catastrophic pressure.
The 2014-15 budget is about future-proofing the Australian economy. The Labor Party is all about the past. Prime Minister Rudd and Prime Minister Gillard might have gone but their spirit still lives on within the parliamentary Labor Party. We have got Power Bill on the opposition benches. He is not interested in helping people and helping the nation in the long term. His focus is on trying to frighten people about key budget measures, about holding onto discredited Labor policies such as the carbon and mining taxes and also looking after vested interests like their dodgy union mates. His focus is getting back into government so he can spend more of the Australian people's money and can rack up more debt and more deficit and create more long-term pain for Australians and the national economy for his own short-term gain. As I said earlier, this budget is about future-proofing Australia and about honouring the commitments made before last year's election. In stark contrast, Treasurer Hockey's first budget deftly straddles the need for fiscal responsibility with delivering on its promises.

In terms of Solomon, the budget ticks the boxes towards building a stronger economy as well as establishing a safe and secure country for the people of Darwin and Palmerston. Last year while in opposition, shadow minister Keenan, now Minister Keenan, visited my electorate to announce that $300,000 would be spent as part of the coalition's safer street programs. For some time I had been lobbying the shadow ministers and the ministers for extra expenditure to tackle crime hotspots in my electorate, and I am delighted that as part of this year's budget we are going ahead with the community safety program and spending $300,000 on getting CCTV installed around Darwin and Palmerston.

**Federation Chamber adjourned at 21:00**
QUESTIONS IN WRITING

Royal Park
(Question No. 113)

Mr Kelvin Thomson asked the Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, in writing, on 13 May 2014:

Have any estimates been made of the value of Royal Park as an area of public open space for Melbourne residents, if so, have these estimates factored in the impact of current population growth rates on public open space, and the importance of maintaining treed areas in Central Melbourne to mitigate against temperature and summer heat waves?

Mr Briggs: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

These are primarily issues for the other levels of Government.

Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development
(Question No. 138)

Mr Danby asked the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, in writing, on 13 May 2014:

(a) how many occasions, and
(b) what date(s), has the Minister met with Australian Water Holdings Pty Ltd Chief Executive Mr Nick Di Girolamo, and can the Minister provide the nature of each meeting.

Mr Truss: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

Nil.

Minister for Industry
(Question No. 147)

Mr Danby asked the Minister for Industry, in writing, on 13 May 2014:

On (a) how many occasions, and (b) what date(s), has the Minister met with Australian Water Holdings Pty Ltd chief executive Mr Nick Di Girolamo, and can the Minister provide the nature of each meeting.

Mr Ian Macfarlane: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The Minister has not met with Mr Nick Di Girolamo or Australian Water Holdings Pty Ltd.