INTERNET


Proof and Official Hansards for the House of Representatives, the Senate and committee hearings are available at http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard

For searching purposes use http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au

SITTING DAYS—2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>9, 10, 11, 12, 23, 24, 25, 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>2, 3, 4, 5, 16, 17, 18, 19, 23, 24, 25, 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>12, 13, 14, 25, 26, 27, 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 15, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 24, 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>10, 11, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>7, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>12, 13, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>9, 10, 11, 12, 23, 24, 25, 26, 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RADIO BROADCASTS

Broadcasts of proceedings of the Parliament can be heard on ABC NewsRadio in the capital cities on:

- ADELAIDE 972AM
- BRISBANE 936AM
- CANBERRA 103.9FM
- DARWIN 102.5FM
- HOBART 747AM
- MELBOURNE 1026AM
- PERTH 585AM
- SYDNEY 630AM

For information regarding frequencies in other locations please visit http://www.abc.net.au/newsradio/listen/frequencies.htm
FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—SEVENTH PERIOD

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

House of Representatives Office holders
Speaker—Hon. Anthony David Hawthorn Smith
Deputy Speaker—Hon. Bruce Craig Scott MP
Second Deputy Speaker—Mr Robert George Mitchell MP
Members of the Speaker’s Panel—Mr Russell Evan Broadbent MP,
Ms Anna Elizabeth Burke MP, Ms Sharon Catherine Claydon MP,
Hon John Kenneth Cobb MP, Mr Patrick Martin Conroy MP,
Mr Ian Reginald Goodenough MP, Mrs Natasha Louise Griggs MP,
Ms Sarah Moya Henderson MP, Mr Stephen James Irons MP,
Mr Craig Kelly MP, Ms Michelle Leanne Landry MP, Ms Clare Ellen O’Neil, MP,
Mrs Jane Prentice MP, Ms Melissa Lee Price MP,
Dr Andrew John Southcott MP, Mr Michael Sukkar MP,
Mr Ross Xavier Vasta MP, Mrs Lucy Elizabeth Wicks 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. Malcolm Bligh Turnbull MP
Deputy Leader—Hon. Julie Isabel Bishop MP
Chief Government Whip—Ms Nola Bethwyn Marino MP
Government Whips—Mr Ewen Thomas Jones MP and Mr Brett David Whiteley 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

Printed by authority of the House of Representatives
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abbott, Hon Anthony John</td>
<td>Warringah, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albanese, Hon Anthony Norman</td>
<td>Grayndler, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander, Mr John Gilbert OAM</td>
<td>Bennelong, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrews, Mrs Karen Lesley</td>
<td>McPherson, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrews, Hon Kevin James</td>
<td>Menzies, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baldwin, Hon Robert Charles</td>
<td>Paterson, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bandt, Mr Adam Paul</td>
<td>Melbourne, VIC</td>
<td>AG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billson, Hon Bruce Fredrick</td>
<td>Dunkley, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bird, Hon Sharon Leah</td>
<td>Cunningham, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishop, Hon Bronwyn Kathleen</td>
<td>Mackellar, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishop, Hon Julie Isabel</td>
<td>Curtin, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowen, Hon Chris Eyles</td>
<td>McMahon, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Briggs, Hon Jamie Edward</td>
<td>Mayo, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad, Mr Andrew John</td>
<td>Mallee, VIC</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadbent, Mr Russell Evan</td>
<td>McMillan, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brodsmann, Ms Gai Marie</td>
<td>Canberra, ACT</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brough, Hon Malcolm Thomas</td>
<td>Fisher, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buchholz, Mr Scott</td>
<td>Wright, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burke, Ms Anna Elizabeth</td>
<td>Chisholm, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burke, Hon Anthony Stephen</td>
<td>Watson, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butler, Hon Mark Christopher</td>
<td>Port Adelaide, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butler, Ms Terri Megan</td>
<td>Griffith, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byrne, Hon Anthony Michael</td>
<td>Holt, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chalmers, Dr James Edward</td>
<td>Rankin, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champion, Mr Nicholas David</td>
<td>Wakefield, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chester, Hon Darren</td>
<td>Gippsland, VIC</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chesters, Ms Lisa Marie</td>
<td>Bendigo, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christensen, Mr George Robert</td>
<td>Dawson, QLD</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ciobo, Hon Steven Michele</td>
<td>Moncrieff, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clare, Hon Jason Dean</td>
<td>Blaxland, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claydon, Ms Sharon Catherine</td>
<td>Newcastle, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cobb, Hon John Kenneth</td>
<td>Calare, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coleman, Mr David Bernard</td>
<td>Banks, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collins, Hon Julie Marce</td>
<td>Franklin, TAS</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conroy, Mr Patrick Martin</td>
<td>Charlton, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coulton, Mr Mark Maclean</td>
<td>Parkes, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danby, Hon Michael</td>
<td>Melbourne Ports, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dreyfus, Hon Mark Alfred QC</td>
<td>Isaacs, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutton, Hon Peter Craig</td>
<td>Dickson, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elliott, Hon Maria Justine</td>
<td>Richmond, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellis, Hon Katherine Margaret</td>
<td>Adelaide, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entsch, Hon Warren George</td>
<td>Leichhardt, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeney, Hon David</td>
<td>Batman, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferguson, Mr Laurie Donald Thomas</td>
<td>Werriwa, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitzgibbon, Hon Joel Andrew</td>
<td>Hunter, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fletcher, Hon Paul William</td>
<td>Bradfield, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frydenberg, Hon Joshua Anthony</td>
<td>Kooyong, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambaro, Hon Teresa</td>
<td>Brisbane, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members</td>
<td>Division</td>
<td>Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giles, Mr Andrew James</td>
<td>Scullin, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gillespie, Dr David Arthur</td>
<td>Lyne, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodenough, Mr Ian Reginald</td>
<td>Moore, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gray, Hon Gary AO</td>
<td>Brand, WA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Griffin, Hon Alan Peter</td>
<td>Bruce, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Griggs, Mrs Natasha Louise</td>
<td>Solomon, NT</td>
<td>CLP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hall, Ms Jill Griffiths</td>
<td>Shortland, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hartsuyker, Hon Luke</td>
<td>Cowper, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hastie, Mr Andrew</td>
<td>Canning, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawke, Mr Alexander George</td>
<td>Mitchell, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hayes, Mr Christopher Patrick</td>
<td>Fowler, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henderson, Ms Sarah Moya</td>
<td>Corangamite, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hendy, Dr Peter William</td>
<td>Eden-Monaro, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hockley, Hon Joseph Benedict</td>
<td>North Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hogan, Mr Kevin John</td>
<td>Page, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howarth, Mr Luke Ronald</td>
<td>Petrie, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunt, Hon Gregory Andrew</td>
<td>Flinders, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husic, Hon Edham Nurreddin</td>
<td>Chifley, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hutchinson, Mr Eric Russell</td>
<td>Lyons, TAS</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irons, Mr Stephen James</td>
<td>Swan, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jensen, Dr Dennis Geoffrey</td>
<td>Tangney, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones, Mr Ewen Thomas</td>
<td>Herbert, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones, Mr Stephen Patrick</td>
<td>Throsby, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joyce, Hon. Barnaby Thomas Gerard</td>
<td>New England, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katter, Hon. Robert Carl</td>
<td>Kennedy, QLD</td>
<td>AUS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keenan, Hon. Michael</td>
<td>Stirling, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly, Mr Craig</td>
<td>Hughes, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King, Hon. Catherine Fiona</td>
<td>Ballarat, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laming, Mr Andrew</td>
<td>Bowman, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landry, Ms Michelle Leanne</td>
<td>Capricornia, QLD</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laundy, Mr Craig</td>
<td>Reid, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leigh, Hon. Dr Andrew Keith</td>
<td>Fraser, ACT</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ley, Hon. Sussan Penelope</td>
<td>Farrer, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macfarlane, Hon. Ian Elgin</td>
<td>Groom, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macklin, Hon. Jennifer Louise</td>
<td>Jaga-jaga, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MacTierman, Hon. Alannah Joan Geraldine Cecilia</td>
<td>Perth, WA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marino, Ms Nola Bethwyn</td>
<td>Forrest, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markus, Mrs Louise Elizabeth</td>
<td>Macquarie, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marles, Hon. Richard Donald</td>
<td>Corio, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matheson, Mr Russell Glenn</td>
<td>Macarthur, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCormack, Hon. Michael Francis</td>
<td>Riverina, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McGowan, Ms Catherine AO</td>
<td>Indi, VIC</td>
<td>IND.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McNamara, Mrs Karen Jane</td>
<td>Dobell, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell, Mr Robert George</td>
<td>McEwen, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morrison, Hon. Scott John</td>
<td>Cook, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neumann, Hon. Shayne Kenneth</td>
<td>Blair, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikolic, Mr Andrew Alexander AM, CSC</td>
<td>Bass, TAS</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O’Connor, Hon. Brendan Patrick John</td>
<td>Gorton, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members</td>
<td>Division</td>
<td>Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O’Dowd, Mr Kenneth Desmond</td>
<td>Flynn, QLD</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O’Dwyer, Hon. Ms Kelly Megan</td>
<td>Higgins, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O’Neill, Ms Clare Ellen</td>
<td>Hotham, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owens, Ms Julie</td>
<td>Parramatta, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palmer, Mr Clive Frederick</td>
<td>Fairfax QLD</td>
<td>PUP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parke, Hon. Melissa</td>
<td>Fremantle, WA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasin, Mr Antony</td>
<td>Barker, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perrett, Mr Graham Douglas</td>
<td>Moreton, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitt, Mr Keith John</td>
<td>Hinkler, QLD</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plibersek, Hon. Tanya Joan</td>
<td>Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porter, Hon. Charles Christian</td>
<td>Pearce, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prentice, Mrs Jane</td>
<td>Ryan, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price, Ms Melissa Lee</td>
<td>Durack, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pyne, Hon. Christopher Maurice</td>
<td>Sturt, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramsey, Mr Rowan Eric</td>
<td>Grey, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ripoll, Hon. Bernard Fernando</td>
<td>Oxley, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rishworth, Hon. Amanda Louise</td>
<td>Kingston, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robb, Hon. Andrew John AO</td>
<td>Goldstein, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert, Hon. Stuart Rowland</td>
<td>Fadden, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rowland, Ms Michelle Anne</td>
<td>Greenway, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roy, Mr Wyatt</td>
<td>Longman, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruddock, Hon. Philip Maxwell</td>
<td>Berowra, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan, Ms Joanne Catherine</td>
<td>Lalor, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott, Hon. Bruce Craig</td>
<td>Maranoa, QLD</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott, Ms Fiona Meryl</td>
<td>Lindsay, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shorten, Hon. William Richard</td>
<td>Maribyrnong, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simpkins, Mr Luke Xavier Linton</td>
<td>Cowan, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith, Hon. Anthony David Hawthorn</td>
<td>Casey, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snowdon, Hon. Warren Edward</td>
<td>Lingiari, NT</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southcott, Dr Andrew John</td>
<td>Boothby, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stone, Hon. Dr Sharman Nancy</td>
<td>Murray, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudmalis, Ms Ann Elizabeth</td>
<td>Gilmore, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sukkar, Mr Michael</td>
<td>Deakin, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swan, Hon. Wayne Maxwell</td>
<td>Lilley, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taylor, Mr Angus James</td>
<td>Hume, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tehan, Mr Daniel Thomas (Dan)</td>
<td>Wannon, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thistlethwaite, Hon. Mr Matthew James</td>
<td>Kingsford Smith, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomson, Hon. Kelvin John</td>
<td>Wills, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truss, Hon. Warren Errol</td>
<td>Wide Bay, QLD</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tudge, Hon. Alan Edward</td>
<td>Aston, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnbull, Hon. Malcolm Bligh</td>
<td>Wentworth, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vamvakou, Ms Maria</td>
<td>Calwell, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>van Manen, Mr Albertus Johannes</td>
<td>Forde, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varvaris, Mr Nickolas</td>
<td>Barton, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vasta, Mr Ross Xavier</td>
<td>Bonner, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watts, Mr Timothy Graham</td>
<td>Gellibrand, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whiteley, Mr Brett David</td>
<td>Braddon, TAS</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wicks, Mrs Lucy Elizabeth</td>
<td>Robertson, TAS</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Members of the House of Representatives

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

### PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

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

### Heads of Parliamentary Departments

Clerk of the Senate—R Laing  
Clerk of the House of Representatives—D Elder  
Acting Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—D Heriot  
Parliamentary Budget Officer—P Bowen
# Turnbull Ministry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Minister</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prime Minister</strong></td>
<td>Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Indigenous Affairs</strong></td>
<td>Senator Hon Nigel Scullion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Women</strong></td>
<td>Senator Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cabinet Secretary</strong></td>
<td>Senator Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service</em></td>
<td>Senator Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Digital Government</em></td>
<td>Senator Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Counter Terrorism</em></td>
<td>Senator Hon Mitch Fifield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister</strong></td>
<td>Hon Alan Tudge MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister</strong></td>
<td>Senator Hon James McGrath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister for Productivity</strong></td>
<td>Hon Dr Peter Hendy MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Cabinet Secretary</strong></td>
<td>Senator Hon Scott Ryan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development</strong></td>
<td>Hon Warren Truss MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(Deputy Prime Minister)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Resources, Energy and Northern Australia</strong></td>
<td>Hon Josh Frydenberg MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Territories, Local Government and Major Projects</strong></td>
<td>Hon Paul Fletcher MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister</strong></td>
<td>Hon Michael McCormack MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Foreign Affairs</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Trade and Investment</strong></td>
<td>Hon Julie Bishop MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for International Development and the Pacific</strong></td>
<td>Hon Andrew Robb AO MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Tourism and International Education</strong></td>
<td>Hon Steven Ciobo MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Minister Assisting the Minister for Trade and Investment</em></td>
<td>Senator Hon Richard Colbeck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attorney-General</strong></td>
<td>Senator Hon George Brandis QC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(Vice-President of the Executive Council)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(Leader of the Government in the Senate)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Justice</strong></td>
<td>Hon Michael Keenan MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister for Multicultural Affairs</strong></td>
<td>Senator Hon Concetta Fierravanti-Wells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Treasurer</strong></td>
<td>Hon Scott Morrison MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Small Business</strong></td>
<td>Hon Kelly O’Dwyer MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Treasurer</strong></td>
<td>Hon Kelly O’Dwyer MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister to the Treasurer</strong></td>
<td>Hon Alex Hawke MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Finance</strong></td>
<td>Senator Hon Mathias Cormann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(Deputy Leader of Government in the Senate)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources</strong></td>
<td>Hon Barnaby Joyce MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources</strong></td>
<td>Senator Hon Anne Ruston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science</strong></td>
<td>Hon Christopher Pyne MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(Leader of the House)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister for Science</strong></td>
<td>Hon Karen Andrews MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister for Innovation</strong></td>
<td>Hon Wyatt Roy MP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

vi
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Minister</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Immigration and Border Protection</strong></td>
<td>Hon Peter Dutton MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Multicultural Affairs</td>
<td>Senator Hon Concetta Fierravanti-Wells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for the Environment</strong></td>
<td>Hon Greg Hunt MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Cities and the Built Environment</td>
<td>Hon Jamie Briggs MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Health</strong></td>
<td>Hon Sussan Ley MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Health</td>
<td>Hon. Ken Wyatt MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Sport</strong></td>
<td>Hon Sussan Ley MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Rural Health</td>
<td>Senator Hon Fiona Nash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Defence</strong></td>
<td>Senator Hon Marise Payne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Veterans’ Affairs</td>
<td>Hon Stuart Robert MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC</td>
<td>Hon Stuart Robert MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Defence Materiel and Science</td>
<td>Hon Mal Brough MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Defence</td>
<td>Hon Darren Chester MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Communications</strong></td>
<td>Senator Hon Mitch Fifield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for the Arts</strong></td>
<td>Senator Hon Mitch Fifield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Manager of Government Business in the Senate)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Employment</strong></td>
<td>Senator Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Social Services</strong></td>
<td>Hon Christian Porter MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Human Services</td>
<td>Hon Stuart Robert MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Multicultural Affairs</td>
<td>Senator Hon Concetta Fierravanti-Wells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Education and Training</strong></td>
<td>Senator Hon Simon Birmingham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Vocational Education and Skills</td>
<td>Hon Luke Hartsuyker MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Deputy Leader of the House)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Tourism and International Education</td>
<td>Senator Hon Richard Colbeck</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each box represents a portfolio. Cabinet Ministers are shown in bold type. As a general rule, there is one department in each portfolio. However, there is a Department of Human Services in the Social Services portfolio and a Department of Veterans’ Affairs in the Defence portfolio. The title of a department does not necessarily reflect the title of a minister in all cases. Assistant Ministers in italics are designated as Parliamentary Secretaries under the Ministers of State Act 1952.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>SHADOW MINISTER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leader of the Opposition</strong></td>
<td>Hon Bill Shorten MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister Assisting the Leader for Science</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Kim Carr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister Assisting the Leader on State and Territory Relations</td>
<td>Senator Katy Gallagher*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Women</td>
<td>Senator Claire Moore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager of Opposition Business (Senate)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Cabinet Secretary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jacinta Collins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Hon Michael Danby MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Hon Ed Husic MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary Assisting with Digital Innovation and Startups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Manager of Opposition Business (Senate)</td>
<td>Terri Butler M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Hon Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Penny Wong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Trade and Investment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Trade and Investment</td>
<td>Dr Jim Chalmers MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Defence</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Defence</td>
<td>Hon David Feeney MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Veterans’ Affairs</td>
<td>Hon David Feeney MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC</td>
<td>Hon David Feeney MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Defence</td>
<td>Gai Brodtmann MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Infrastructure and Transport</td>
<td>Hon Anthony Albanese MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Cities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Tourism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Northern Australia</td>
<td>Hon Gary Gray AO MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Regional Development and Local Government</td>
<td>Hon Julie Collins MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development and Infrastructure</td>
<td>Hon Alannah MacTiernan MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Western Australia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Northern Australia</td>
<td>Hon Warren Snowdon MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for External Territories</td>
<td>Hon Warren Snowdon MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Treasurer</strong></td>
<td>Hon Chris Bowen MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Small Business</td>
<td>Michelle Rowland MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>Hon Dr Andrew Leigh MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Competition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation</td>
<td>Dr Jim Chalmers MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Productivity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Shadow Treasurer</td>
<td>Hon Ed Husic MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business</td>
<td>Julie Owens MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TITLE</td>
<td>SHADOW MINISTER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Finance</td>
<td>Hon Tony Burke MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager of Opposition Business (House)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Special Minister of State</td>
<td>Hon Gary Gray MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment, Climate Change</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Lisa Singh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Water</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Industry</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Lisa Singh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Vocational Education</td>
<td>Hon Sharon Bird MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Higher Education</td>
<td>Hon Amanda Rishworth MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Manufacturing</td>
<td>Nick Champion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Communications</td>
<td>Hon Jason Clare MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Attorney General</td>
<td>Hon Mark Dreyfus QC MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for the Arts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Manager of Opposition Business (House)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Justice</td>
<td>Hon David Feeney MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Shadow Attorney General</td>
<td>Graham Perrett MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Arts</td>
<td>Hon Michael Danby MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Education</td>
<td>Hon Kate Ellis MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Early Childhood</td>
<td>Hon Amanda Rishworth MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Early Childhood Education</td>
<td>Julie Owens MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for School Education and Youth</td>
<td>Senator Sam Dastyari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry</td>
<td>Hon Joel Fitzgibbon MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Rural Affairs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Resources</td>
<td>Hon Gary Gray AO MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Health</td>
<td>Hon Catherine King MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Ageing</td>
<td>Hon Shayne Neumann MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Mental Health</td>
<td>Senator Katy Gallagher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Sport</td>
<td>Dr Jim Chalmers MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Health</td>
<td>Stephen Jones MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Health</td>
<td>Tony Zappia MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Aged Care</td>
<td>Senator Helen Polley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Families and Payments</td>
<td>Hon Jenny Macklin MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Disability Reform</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Housing and Homelessness</td>
<td>Senator Katy Gallagher*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Human Services</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Doug Cameron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Carers</td>
<td>Senator Claire Moore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Communities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Families and Payments</td>
<td>Senator Carol Brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Child Safety and Prevention of</td>
<td>Terri Butler MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Violence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Immigration and Border Protection</td>
<td>Hon Richard Marles MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Citizenship and Multiculturalism</td>
<td>Michelle Rowland MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration</td>
<td>Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TITLE</td>
<td>SHADOW MINISTER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs</td>
<td>Hon Shayne Neumann MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Indigenous Affairs</td>
<td>Hon Warren Snowdon MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations</td>
<td>Hon Brendan O’Connor MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Employment Services</td>
<td>Hon Julie Collins MP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Shadow Cabinet Ministers are shown in bold type.

* Senator Katy Gallagher’s appointment to the Shadow Ministry is effective from 1 November 2015. Senator the Hon Jan McLucas will serve as Shadow Minister for Housing and Homelessness and Shadow Minister for Mental Health, and represent the Shadow Minister for Northern Australia, the Shadow Minister for Health, the Shadow Assistant Minister for Health, the Shadow Minister for Sport and the Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs in the Senate until 31 October 2015.
MONDAY, 19 OCTOBER 2015

Chamber

PETITIONS—
Climate Change .......................................................................................................................... 11483
Marriage .................................................................................................................................. 11483
Multiple Sclerosis: Sativex ...................................................................................................... 11483
Native Fauna and Flora ........................................................................................................... 11484
Asylum Seekers ....................................................................................................................... 11484

PETITIONS—
Responses .................................................................................................................................. 11485
Asylum Seekers ....................................................................................................................... 11485
Lombok Treaty .......................................................................................................................... 11486
Akamin: Mandatory Warning Labels .................................................................................. 11486
Intercountry Adoption Programs ............................................................................................ 11487
Marriage .................................................................................................................................. 11488
Myxomatosis Vaccine ............................................................................................................. 11488
Marriage .................................................................................................................................. 11489

PETITIONS—
Statements ................................................................................................................................. 11489

BILLS—
Social Security (Administration) Amendment (Consumer Lease Exclusion) Bill 2015—
Second Reading ...................................................................................................................... 11490
Fair Work Amendment (Prohibiting Discrimination Based On Location) Bill 2015—
First Reading .......................................................................................................................... 11492
Second Reading ...................................................................................................................... 11493

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ BUSINESS—
Iraq and Syria .......................................................................................................................... 11495
Industry Innovation and Competitiveness Agenda ................................................................. 11500
Payday Lending and Consumer Leases .................................................................................. 11513

COMMITTEES—
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters—
Reference ................................................................................................................................... 11519

BILLS—
Customs Depot Licensing Charges Amendment Bill 2015—
Customs Amendment (Fees and Charges) Bill 2015—
Import Processing Charges Amendment Bill 2015—
Australian Immunisation Register Bill 2015—
Australian Immunisation Register (Consequential and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2015—
Social Services Legislation Amendment (Cost of Living Concession) Bill 2015—
Statute Law Revision Bill (No. 2) 2015—
Tax and Superannuation Laws Amendment (Better Targeting the Income Tax Transparency Laws) Bill 2015—
Social Services Legislation Amendment (Low Income Supplement) Bill 2015—
CONTENTS—continued

Returned from Senate...........................................................................................................11520
Education Services for Overseas Students Amendment (Streamlining Regulation) Bill
2015—
Education Services for Overseas Students (Registration Charges) Amendment
(Streamlining Regulation) Bill 2015—
Second Reading..................................................................................................................11521
Third Reading......................................................................................................................11521
Education Services for Overseas Students (Registration Charges) Amendment
(Streamlining Regulation) Bill 2015—
Second Reading..................................................................................................................11522
Third Reading......................................................................................................................11522
Tax Laws Amendment (Combating Multinational Tax Avoidance) Bill 2015—
Second Reading..................................................................................................................11522

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS—
Live Animal Exports .........................................................................................................11541
Western Australia: Local Government Elections ............................................................11542
Indi Electorate: Broadband..................................................................................................11542
Tangney Electorate: McHappy Day 2015 .........................................................................11543
Lalor Electorate: Broadband...............................................................................................11543
Moorebank Intermodal .......................................................................................................11544
Great Australian Bight: Oil Drilling ..................................................................................11544
Broadband ..........................................................................................................................11544
Telstra Women in Business Awards ..................................................................................11545
Capricornia Electorate: Exercise Wallaby ..........................................................................11545
Parliamentary Friends of Aussie Fashion ............................................................................11546
Reid Electorate: Adult Migrant English Program .............................................................11546
Folvig, Mrs Wendy, OAM ...................................................................................................11547
Mental Health.......................................................................................................................11547
Broadband ..........................................................................................................................11548
Vitale Barberis Canonico Wool Excellence Award ...........................................................11548
Hunter Manufacturing Awards ..........................................................................................11549
Women in Sport ..................................................................................................................11549
Domestic and Family Violence .........................................................................................11550

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE—
Asylum Seekers....................................................................................................................11550
New Zealand .....................................................................................................................11551
Taxation ..............................................................................................................................11552
Innovation ...........................................................................................................................11553
Higher Education ..............................................................................................................11554
Business .............................................................................................................................11554
Economy ..............................................................................................................................11555
Higher Education ..............................................................................................................11556
Economy ..............................................................................................................................11556
Budget ................................................................................................................................11557
Trade ..................................................................................................................................11559
Health ................................................................................................................................11560
CONTENTS—continued

Infrastructure ...................................................................................................................... 11561
Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme .................................................................................... 11562
Trade ................................................................................................................................. 11562
Budget ............................................................................................................................... 11563
Economy ............................................................................................................................ 11564
Climate Change ................................................................................................................. 11565
Medicinal Cannabis .......................................................................................................... 11566
Economy ............................................................................................................................ 11567
Higher Education ............................................................................................................. 11568
Infrastructure .................................................................................................................. 11569
Illicit Drugs ......................................................................................................................... 11572

DOCUMENTS—
  Presentation ...................................................................................................................... 11573

COMMITTEES—
  Treaties Committee—
    Report .......................................................................................................................... 11573
    Reference to Federation Chamber ............................................................................... 11576

BILLS—
  Tax Laws Amendment (Combating Multinational Tax Avoidance) Bill 2015—
    Second Reading ............................................................................................................ 11576
    Third Reading ............................................................................................................... 11633

COMMITTEES—
  Membership .................................................................................................................... 11634
  Membership .................................................................................................................... 11634

BILLS—
  Superannuation Legislation Amendment (Trustee Governance) Bill 2015—
    Second Reading ............................................................................................................ 11635

ADJOURNMENT—
  Mobile Black Spot Program ......................................................................................... 11652
  Israel: Terrorist Attacks ................................................................................................. 11653
  Building Community Resilience .................................................................................... 11654
  Hume Electorate: Broadband ........................................................................................ 11655
  Australian Public Service ............................................................................................... 11657
  Broadband ....................................................................................................................... 11658

NOTICES .......................................................................................................................... 11659

Federation Chamber

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS—
  Petition: Medicare Benefits Schedule .......................................................................... 11661
  Gilmore Electorate: Cancer ............................................................................................ 11662
  Deafblindness ................................................................................................................ 11663
  Dunkley Electorate: Mornington Peninsula Youth Hub .................................................. 11664
  Federal Circuit Court of Australia ................................................................................ 11665
  Housing Affordability .................................................................................................... 11666
  Family Court .................................................................................................................. 11667

CHAMBER
CONTENTS—continued

Petrie Electorate: Roads ................................................................. 11667
Childhood Cancer ....................................................................... 11668
Griffin, Miss Erin ......................................................................... 11668
Carmichael Mine .......................................................................... 11669
PRIVATE MEMBERS’ BUSINESS—
National Week of Deaf People ...................................................... 11670
BILLS—
Marriage Legislation Amendment Bill 2015—
Second Reading ........................................................................... 11677
PRIVATE MEMBERS’ BUSINESS—
Breast Cancer ................................................................................ 11679
Australian Defence Force .............................................................. 11689
Domestic and Family Violence ....................................................... 11697
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS—
Live Animal Exports ..................................................................... 11703
Hindmarsh Electorate: Sport ........................................................... 11703
Calwell Electorate: Stepping Stones Program ............................... 11704
Marine Pollution: Tangaroa Blue Foundation ............................... 11704
Petition: Asylum Seekers ............................................................. 11705
Petition: Infrastructure ................................................................. 11705
Solomon Electorate: National Carers Week .................................. 11706
Richmond Electorate: Ballina ........................................................ 11707
Hughes Electorate: Diwali ............................................................. 11707
Environment: Tibet ........................................................................ 11708
Bushfire Action Week ................................................................... 11708
Shortland Electorate: Nords Wharf Public School ....................... 11708
Domestic and Family Violence ..................................................... 11709
Asylum Seekers ........................................................................... 11709
Eye Health .................................................................................... 11710
ACT Australian of the Year Awards .............................................. 11710
Herbert Electorate ......................................................................... 11711
Micah Challenge .......................................................................... 11711
Calare Electorate: Orange Wine Festival ..................................... 11712
Noble Park Community Art Show ............................................... 11712
Lindsay Electorate: Breast Cancer ............................................... 11712
Fraser Electorate: Braddon Studio and Capital Angels ............... 11713
Lyons Electorate: Ouse and Highlands Festival .......................... 11713
Indi Electorate: Friends of Lacluta ................................................. 11713
Robertson Electorate: Higher Education ..................................... 11714
Richmond Electorate: Stone & Wood Brewing Company ........... 11714
Energy ......................................................................................... 11715
Shortland Electorate: Valentine Hydrotherapy Pools ................. 11715
Dobell Electorate: Koala Publishing ............................................. 11715
Middle East .................................................................................. 11716
COMMITTEES—
Joint Select Committee on Trade and Investment Growth—
CONTENTS—continued

Report........................................................................................................................................11717
GRIEVANCE DEBATE—
Child Labour ...............................................................................................................................11720
Moore Electorate: Infrastructure .................................................................................................11723
Environment.................................................................................................................................11725
Page Electorate: Community Activities .......................................................................................11727
Arts...............................................................................................................................................11729
Forde Electorate ..........................................................................................................................11731
Education Funding .....................................................................................................................11733
China-Australia Free Trade Agreement .......................................................................................11736
Palmerston Regional Hospital .....................................................................................................11736
Tasmania: Economy ....................................................................................................................11738
Banks Electorate ........................................................................................................................11741
Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption ............................................11743
National Broadband Network ....................................................................................................11745

Questions In Writing
Murwillumbah: Medical Practitioners—(Question No. 826)......................................................11748
Greenhouse Gas Emissions—(Question No. 836) ......................................................................11749
Live Animal Exports—(Question No. 846) .................................................................................11749
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade: Staff Contracts—(Question No. 870)....................11750
Department of Agriculture and Water Resources: Casual Staff Contracts—(Question No. 874) ........................................................................................................................................11750
Department of the Environment: Casual Staff Contracts—(Question No. 883) .......................11750
Department of the Environment: Contracted Services Payments—(Question No. 901)........11751
Department of Education and Training: Office Space—(Question No. 911) .........................11751
Department of Finance: Office Space—(Question No. 920) .......................................................11752
Department of the Environment: Consultants—(Question No. 955) .......................................11753
Department of Agriculture and Water Resources: Advertising—(Question No. 1000) .........11754
Department of the Environment: Legal Services and Credit Cards—(Question No. 1045) ....11754
Department of Agriculture and Water Resources: Departmental Staff Redundancies—
(Question No. 1124) ..................................................................................................................11754
Department of Trade and Investment: Ministerial Staff Lost and Stolen Equipment—
(Question No. 1194) ..................................................................................................................11754
Department of Agriculture and Water Resources: Ministerial Staff Lost and Stolen
Equipment—(Question No. 1203) ..............................................................................................11755
Department of the Environment: Departmental Staff Domestic and International Travel—
(Question No. 1237 (amended)) ...............................................................................................11755
Department of Trade and Investment: Ministerial Staff Training—(Question No. 1298) .....11756
Department of Agriculture and Water Resources: Ministerial Staff Training—(Question No. 1307) ........................................................................................................................................11756
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade: Ministerial Media Events—(Question No. 1350) .11757

CHAMBER
CONTENTS—continued

Department of Education and Training: Ministerial Media Events—(Question No. 1360) ................................................................. 11757
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade: Ministerial Conferences—(Question No. 1402) ................................................................. 11757
Department of Agriculture and Water Resources: Ministerial Hospitality—(Question No. 1463) ................................................................. 11758
Department of Education and Training: Learning Potential App—(Question No. 1535) ................................................................. 11759
Australian Electoral Commission—(Question No. 1547) ................................................................. 11759
Personally Controlled Electronic Health Record: Review—(Question No. 1552) ................................................................. 11760
The SPEAKER (Hon. Tony Smith) took the chair at 10:00, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

PETITIONS

Dr JENSEN (Tangney) (10:01): On behalf of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Petitions, and in accordance with standing order 207, I present the following petitions:

Climate Change
To the Honourable The Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives

This petition of Australia's daughters and sons, parents, grandparents, godparents, aunts and uncles, draws to the attention of the House the damage to the earth's climate and its oceans from humanity's continuing and increasing carbon emissions and the consequent severe risks to the future health, safety and well-being of our children and our children's children and future generations.

We remind the House that it is the fundamental duty of parliament, including this House, to protect Australia's people, land and seas.

We therefore ask the House to respect the science and build a safe climate future for our children and grandchildren and generations to come by enacting immediate and deep reductions to Australia's carbon emissions. We also ask the House to commit to and actively promote and support global strategies for immediate and deep reductions to global emissions at every designated international forum.

from 8,489 citizens

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

The petition of certain residents of South Australia urges your honourable House to retain the true meaning of marriage as between male and female.

from 7 citizens

Multiple Sclerosis: Sativex
To the Honourable The Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives

This petition of Australian people living with Multiple Sclerosis, their families and supporters, draws to the attention of the House:

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is the most common neurological disease in the world for which there is no cure, and over 23,000 Australians have MS.

Sativex is a life-changing MS treatment which is proven to help people who suffer mobility issues, muscle spasms and pain, and urinary incontinence. MS Australia welcomed the listing of this treatment as an option for doctors to prescribe to people with MS, to help them to manage their disease.

There are no side effects from using it and is much more tolerable than other medications. MS UK published a survey of nearly 4,000 people living with MS and found that 82% of those taking Sativex considered it essential and a high priority. For these people, Sativex is invaluable and makes life worth living again.

Although Sativex is listed for use by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) it is not available on the PBS. In 2013, the Australian National Council on Drugs' reported that Sativex cost about $500 per month. This puts the drug out of the reach of most MS sufferers who struggle with daily living and are often restricted in being able to work.
We therefore ask the House to: Recommend the listing of Sativex on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) for the treatment of Multiple Sclerosis spasticity conditions. 

from 1,012 citizens

**Native Fauna and Flora**

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

This petition of certain citizens and residents of Australia draws to the attention of the House a request to the House to direct the Minister for the Environment to:

**PROTECT** our Vulnerable KOALAS, Endangered QUOLLS and Endangered vegetation MELALEUCA IRBYANA on the proposed North Maclean Enterprise Precinct (NMEP). There have been numerous sightings of Koalas, Spotted-tailed Quolls and other threatened species on and around the proposed industrial site, but NO DETAILED SURVEYS OR STUDIES PERFORMED. Industry at North Maclean will forever change a peaceful rural-residential environment to a treeless industrial wasteland, devoid of wildlife.

We therefore ask the House to direct the Minister for the Environment to: **CONSIDER** the impact of industry:

- on vulnerable/endangered species on and around the proposed 117 hectare NMEP site to be cleared. There have been NO DETAILED IMPACT ASSESSMENTS on these species including koalas and quolls, nor COMMUNITY CONSULTATION nor SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENTS.
- on pollution (noise, water, air, light). Most local residents have rainwater as their sole water source for drinking/cooking. There have been NO IMPACT STUDIES on these issues. The waterways on the site flow directly into the Logan River. There has been NO REPORT that considers the Impact on waterways, the Logan River or Moreton Bay and its fish/prawn breeding-grounds.

AND

**REJECT** the developers' application for Development at 4499-4651 Mt Lindesay Highway, North Maclean, QLD.

from 473 citizens

**Asylum Seekers**

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

This petition from concerned citizens of the Australian community draws to the attention of the House the need to enact a more humane response to asylum seekers, that properly reflects the UNHCR Refugee Convention to which Australia is a signatory; with particular regard to the following facts:

1. Seeking asylum, even by any means and without documents, is legal under the Refugee Convention.
2. Over 90% of refugees have proven to be genuine refugees fleeing persecution.
3. Asylum seekers are civilians fleeing persecution and nearly one fifth are children under the age of 18.
4. Comparatively few arrive in Australia, as we receive only 3% of the world's asylum applications.
5. There is no Queue to Jump: Asylum seekers are supposed to arrive in a safe country and then apply for asylum. Very few asylum seekers are able to register with the UNHCR, and there is no orderly queue.
We therefore add our voice to many other Australians and ask the House to;

- fast-track the processing time of asylum seekers' protection claims in order that they can effectively rebuild their life and reunite with their families;
- facilitate the right of asylum seekers to be part of the community;
- integrate people seeking asylum into our community by finding a place where they can live in peace and safety;
- immediately end offshore detention;
- completely end the mandatory detention of children.

from 169 citizens

Petitions received.

PETITIONS

Responses

Dr JENSEN (Tangney) (10:01): Ministerial responses to petitions previously presented to the House have been received as follows:

Asylum Seekers

Dear Dr Jensen

Thank you for your letter of 18 August 2015 concerning a petition recently submitted for consideration by the Standing Committee on Petitions (Petition Number 1053/1543), concerning the Australian Government's asylum seeker policies. I appreciate the time you have taken to bring this matter to my attention.

The Petition requested the closure of regional processing centres (RPCs), the release of all children from detention, a limit to detention of 90 days for health checks and processing of refugee status, as well as an end to Temporary Protection visas (TPVs).

In recent years the number of illegal maritime arrivals (IMAs) to Australia has significantly increased. This increase has undermined the integrity of Australia's migration and humanitarian programmes. People smugglers profit from the trade of people across borders throughout our region. It is for these reasons that the Australian Government is committed to working with other countries throughout our region to stem the flow of irregular maritime travel and to end people smuggling.

As a result of Operation Sovereign Borders, there has been a very substantial and sustained reduction in maritime ventures attempting to reach Australia. By focusing on detecting and intercepting IMAs, and supporting regional processing and resettlement of asylum seekers, people smugglers have been denied a product to sell, dramatically reducing the number of lives being lost and restoring integrity to the migration programme. The Government remains committed to its asylum seeker policies, including regional processing and the use of TPVs rather than Permanent Protection visas.

Updates on regional processing are provided monthly on the Department of Immigration and Border Protection's website at: http://newsroom.border.gov.au/channels/media-releases/releases/.

In regards to immigration detention in Australia, the Government views this as an essential component of strong border control. Detention is not limited by a set timeframe but is dependent upon a number of factors, including identity determination, progress with visa status resolution and individual circumstances relating to health, character or security matters.

Immigration detention is subject to both administrative and judicial review, and to full parliamentary scrutiny for accountability. The length and the conditions of detention are subject to regular review by senior Department officers and the Commonwealth Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is required by the Migration Act 1958 to assess the appropriateness of the immigration detention arrangements for each...
person detained for more than two years. The Department sends the Ombudsman a report relating to each person in detention for more than two years, and every six months thereafter.

The Government has reduced the detention population by approximately 90 per cent by placing eligible IMAs in the community on bridging visas or in community detention while they await the resolution of their status.

As at 31 July 2015, there were fewer than 110 children who arrived as IMAs in held detention in Australia, compared with a peak of 1,992 children in July 2013.

The Government is working to reduce this number even further, although in some cases there are national security or character issues that might be a barrier to the placement of their family in the community. Cases are reviewed regularly and further releases into the community are anticipated.

With regards to TPVs and the new Safe Haven Enterprise visa (SHEV) for people who arrived in Australia illegally, it is the Government's view that these visas uphold the integrity and efficiency of Australia's protection processing system. They also allow the Government to re-commence processing asylum claims from people who arrived in Australia illegally, while at the same time guaranteeing that people smugglers do not have a 'permanent protection visa product' to sell to those who are thinking of travelling illegally to Australia.

Thank you for bringing this petition to my attention.

from the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, Mr Dutton

Lombok Treaty

Dear Dr Jensen


Australia’s relationship with Indonesia is one of our most important in the region. Both countries cooperate on a broad range of interests including trade and investment, counter-terrorism and regional security, education and tourism. In 2010, the two countries elevated the relationship to a strategic partnership.

The Lombok Treaty entered into force on 7 February 2007 and under Article 10, remains in force until terminated. The Australian Government has no plans to negotiate any amendment to the terms of the Lombok Treaty or the 2014 Code of Conduct implementing the Treaty with the Indonesian Government.

I trust this information is of assistance.

from the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ms Julie Bishop

Akamin: Mandatory Warning Labels

Dear Dr Jensen

Thank you for your correspondence of 18 August 2015 regarding a petition on warning labels about benign intracranial hypertension for the medicine, Akamin, and all minocycline medicines.

I am advised that benign intracranial hypertension (also known as pseudotumour cerebri) is a known, rare, serious adverse event associated with the use of tetracycline antibiotics, such as minocycline, which is available on the Australian market under the trade names Minomycin and Akamin. Information about this adverse event has been provided in the Product Information (PI) and Consumer Medicine Information (CMI) documents for these products for many years.

PI documents are approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) which is responsible for the regulation of therapeutic goods in Australia. PI documents provide information to guide
prescribing, dispensing and administering decisions and assist health professionals to provide patient
education for prescription medicines such as minocycline.

The CMI documents, which are required to reflect the information in the PI, contain information to
guide consumers on the safe and effective use of the medicine, including advising patients on symptoms
they should report to their doctors. The CMI document for Akamin provides the following advice in
relation to benign intracranial hypertension:

"If you develop a persistent headache with one or more of the following symptoms nausea, vomiting,
blurred vision or dizziness; see your doctor immediately. These may be signs of a rare condition
associated with the use of minocycline called benign intracranial hypertension (increased pressure
within the skull)."

The PI and CMI documents are publicly available on the TGA website:


Information from the PI documents is incorporated into the prescribing and dispensing software used
by doctors and pharmacists.

The CMI document is made available to consumers either in the product pack or through the
dispensing pharmacist.

Information about minocycline for health professionals and consumers is also published on the
National Prescribing Service (NPS) website www.nps.org.au.

In December 2013, the TGA published a reminder about the possibility of benign intracranial
hypertension associated with minocycline use in the Medicines Safety Update (MSU) which was
published on the TGA website www.tga.gov.au/publication-issue/medicines-safetyupdate-volume-4-
number-6-december-201311minocycline and widely distributed to medical practitioners and
pharmacists as part of the Australian Prescriber.

The TGA keeps the safety of medicines and any necessary risk minimisation actions under regular
review. The TGA is currently considering further ways in which to ensure that information about the
risk of benign intracranial hypertension with minocycline is brought to the attention of prescribing
doctors, dispensing pharmacists and consumers. This will include consideration of possible product
labelling options.

I trust this information will assist the Committee in its consideration of the petition.

from the **Minister for Health, Ms Ley**

**Intercountry Adoption Programs**

Dear Dr Jensen

Thank you for your letter of 18 August 2015 (1067/1558), referring to me a petition from the
Ukrainian Women's Association of Australia, requesting the establishment of an intercountry adoption
programme with Ukraine.

My Department is investigating this issue and I will lodge a written response to the petition with the
Standing Committee on Petitions within the required timeframe (90 days from 17 August 2015, the date
of presentation).

Thank you again for writing on this matter.

from the **Attorney-General, Senator Brandis**
Marriage

Dear Dr Jensen

Thank you for your letter dated 18 August 2015, regarding two petitions submitted for the consideration of the Standing Committee on Petitions opposing same-sex marriage legislation. This reply constitutes my response to these petitions.

The Marriage Act 1961 defines marriage as 'the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life'. On 11 August 2015, the Coalition party room discussed the issue of same-sex marriage and decided that there would be no conscience vote on this issue. The Government supports the current definition of marriage.

Thank you for drawing these petitions to my attention.

from the Attorney-General, Senator Brandis

Myxomatosis Vaccine

Dear Dr Jensen,

Thank you for your letter of 18 August 2015 to the Hon. Greg Hunt MP, enclosing a petition submitted for the consideration of the House of Representative Standing Committee on Petitions on allowing a myxomatosis vaccine in Australia for pet rabbits.

I understand the expectation that, as Minister responsible for these matters raised in the petition under Standing Order 209(b), I will lodge a written response with the petitions committee.

The Australian Government remains concerned that wild rabbits have been implicated in broad scale land degradation, the near-extinction or extinction of small native mammals and plants and are a food source maintaining populations of other introduced pests. Pest animal control is complex and many factors—including technical, environmental, social and animal welfare issues—must be considered when developing appropriate policies and solutions. Biological control agents such as the myxoma virus are a necessary option for controlling some pest animal species so that native biodiversity can be protected. In this case, the myxoma virus remains an important measure in keeping wild rabbits under control.

There are no vaccines registered for use in Australia for protecting rabbits against myxomatosis. Historically, the vaccines available overseas have been live attenuated vaccines, also known as modified live vaccines, and these have not been allowed to be used in Australia. The myxoma virus can be present in the skin of infected rabbits and can then be spread from one rabbit to another via mosquitoes or fleas. When domestic rabbits are vaccinated with a modified live vaccine, there may still be enough of the vaccine virus in their skin for it to be spread by these insects into wild rabbit populations.

This potential spread could result in wild rabbits increasing their immunity to myxomatosis, which would allow wild rabbits to dramatically increase in number. Overseas, this has been seen as positive by some looking to conserve wild rabbit populations. In contrast, the potential spread of the vaccine virus is a concern in Australia because an increase in wild rabbit numbers would cause further damage to the environment and economic loss.

The CSIRO and the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre identified myxomatosis vaccines that might be suitable for use in Australia; however, these vaccines have not been developed beyond the experimental stage. If a vaccine was successfully developed the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority would require an application from a vaccine manufacturer to register the product for use in Australia. Only vaccine manufacturers can decide whether it is commercially viable for them to engage in this process to develop a vaccine. The relevant Government agencies would then need to consider whether to approve its use. The potential for the use of the vaccine to increase wild rabbit immunity to myxomatosis would be a key consideration in this process.


CHAMBER
Protecting domestic rabbits from myxomatosis in Australia must be done by means other than vaccination. As the virus is spread from one rabbit to another by mosquitoes and fleas, protecting rabbits from these insects can help prevent a myxomatosis infection. I encourage rabbit owners to ask their veterinarians for advice on how to do this.

I would like to draw your attention to a statement from the Chief Veterinary Officer on myxomatosis vaccine availability in Australia and also some frequently asked questions, which can be found at:

Thank you again for bringing your concerns to my attention.

from the Minister for Agriculture, Mr Joyce

Marriage

Dear Dr Jensen

Thank you for your letter of 20 August 2015 to the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion, in relation to a petition made by Aboriginal Australians opposed to marriage being redefined. The Minister has referred your letter to me, as marriage issues fall within my portfolio responsibilities. This letter constitutes my response to the petition.

The Marriage Act 1961 defines marriage as 'the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life'. On 11 August 2015, the Coalition Party room decided that there would be no conscience vote on this issue. The Government supports the current definition of marriage.

Thank you for drawing this petition to my attention.

from the Attorney-General, Senator Brandis

PETITIONS

Statements

Dr JENSEN (Tangney) (10:03): Today I will outline some important aspects of the committee's role and limitations. I have outlined the committee's role in previous statements to the House, so today I will focus only on a couple of pertinent areas.

Last week I spoke of the committee's public hearing process and of the hearing held in Melbourne in late September. These public hearings bring home to the committee the difference between the intent of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Petitions hearings on petitions and most general purpose and joint committee inquiry hearings: that is, when the committee conducts public hearings on petitions, it is not doing so in order to resolve the petition issue itself nor to make recommendations to government. It does not intervene or seek resolution with the executive government. The process does, however, provide more public information about the petition issue which may be explored during discussions at the hearing. This information is recorded in a Hansard transcript.

Similarly, no submissions or exhibits are received at Petitions Committee public hearings or afterwards, because the committee is not examining the matter further.

Another aspect of the committee's role which I have come to reflect on recently is the importance of its autonomy. The committee, as you are well aware, is independent of executive government. A key function of the committee is to act as an intermediary between the House and the executive on petitions presented in the House and responses to them. But it does not engage with the executive on the subject matter of petitions nor on the responses to them.
The committee has recently seen examples of misunderstandings of this independence and the committee's largely procedural oversight role. Some petitioners request the committee to assess and comment on petition subject matter or to follow up with the executive a perceived delay in a ministerial response—some with a prompt for a specific response. Some petitioners also request responses to their petition from specific ministers. Of course the committee has no influence over ministerial responses once the petition is referred. The manner in which a response is prepared, and from which portfolio area, is a ministerial decision—not a committee decision.

Petitioners may be dismayed at the House's petitioning process if they perceive the petitions process to be a simple 'ask and you shall receive' system. Of course some petition matters are resolved by changes in government policy, administration or regulation, but it is never easy to determine whether the petition itself, or alone, resulted in this outcome—and very few ministerial responses are able to provide advice of a resolution simply because the petition cycle, as outlined in the House standing orders, is relatively short. That is, the standing orders provide guidance for ministers to respond to petitions within 90 days of petition referral. This provides a timely turnaround, which most petitioners seek—however, this time frame is unlikely to result in the required research, review, organisational requirements or parliamentary actions to resolve the majority of petition concerns.

Petitioners should feel confident that their petition will be considered by the committee in an objective manner—but only against the standing order requirements of the House. If the petition meets the requirements, their petition issue may be brought before the House of Representatives and may be referred to the executive for a written response. The committee's decision on the compliance of a petition is completely independent of the executive and of any member's personal views on the subject matter. This independence—although some petitioners may find it an annoyance when they want action and would prefer the committee to have influence—is of immense value to them. The petitions system the House has established, which includes the non-resolution role of the committee, protects petitioners from being discriminated against on the basis of their petition's subject matter.

BILLS

Social Security (Administration) Amendment (Consumer Lease Exclusion) Bill 2015

Second Reading

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga) (10:09): I present the explanatory memorandum to this bill and I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Social Security (Administration) Amendment (Consumer Lease Exclusion) Bill 2015 is a private senator's bill introduced in the other place by my colleague Senator Doug Cameron. I want to thank Senator Cameron for his hard work in bringing this bill to the parliament and for his commitment to vulnerable and disadvantaged people, because this bill is all about protecting vulnerable and disadvantaged Australians. Labor will not stand by while low-income, vulnerable Australians are exploited or taken advantage of. Nothing goes to the core of our role in this parliament more than ensuring that vulnerable people are protected. I do hope that the government will join us and support this bill today, because it will, in a small
but significant way, ensure that vulnerable people cannot be taken advantage of, cannot be
exploited.

Let me explain how the bill will work. Centrepay is a free service through which
Centrelink clients may pay recurring bills and make other payments by a debit from their
welfare payment. It is a useful service when used appropriately. However, in recent years it
has become clear that Centrepay is being used as a tool by some companies to exploit low-
income and vulnerable people. Consumer leases are defined under the National Credit Code
as contracts for the lease of goods under which the hire is for domestic or household purposes.
Under consumer leases the hirer does not have a right to purchase the rented goods, and the
amount paid by the consumer is more than the value of goods, often by a very large amount.
Consumer advocates and financial counsellors regularly encounter significant numbers of
Centrelink clients who are under financial stress as a result of entering into one or more
consumer leases for household goods. The problem is widespread but particularly acute in
Indigenous communities. Of course, those with the lowest incomes or assets are at most risk.

For some time now the Consumer Action Law Centre, ACOSS and Financial Counselling
Australia have been campaigning to have consumer leases excluded from Centrepay because
of the financial harm caused to financially vulnerable Centrelink clients. It is clear that this is
a big problem. The Micah Centre observed in 2007 that consumer leases are not genuine
leases but ‘loans in lease clothing’. The reality is that consumer leases are fringe credit
products offered in the main to financially excluded consumers in the subprime end of the
financial services market. Many of the businesses offering consumer leases also operate in the
payday lending market and similarly cause significant financial harm to the most financially
vulnerable people in the community.

Yet movement by the government has been slow. In May this year the then Minister for
Human Services announced that consumer leases that are not regulated by the National Credit
Code will be excluded from Centrepay. To the extent that the announced change will exclude
any consumer leases from Centrepay, the number is likely to be negligible. In an ASX
announcement in response to the minister's announcement, Thorn Group stated that its Radio
Rentals business would be unaffected by the change. This is just not good enough. We must
do more.

Centrepay is used by over 600,000 Centrelink clients on whose behalf nearly two million
deductions are made each month. The annual value of all deductions is nearly $2 billion.
Thirty per cent of Centrepay users are disability support pensioners, a further 20 per cent are
Newstart recipients and 16 per cent are in receipt of parenting payments. Other users include
aged pensioners. And of course none of these people are rich. They struggle to make ends
meet as it is. While utility bills still account for a third of Centrepay deductions, household
goods leases now account for 14 per cent of all deductions, and their share of Centrepay
deductions is growing.

In a March 2015 investor report on Thorn Group, the parent company of Radio Rentals,
Credit Suisse found that over $200 million a year is deducted from the Centrelink payments
of almost 120,000 clients to pay for consumer leases. The concern is that these leases end up
stripping people of more and more of their income. According to the Financial Rights Legal
Centre, many of the clients end up paying 5 to 10 times the original value of the appliance by
the time their agreement ends, a view confirmed by ASIC Deputy Chair Peter Kell, who noted:

Of particular concern is that the most financially vulnerable consumers in Australia are paying the highest lease prices for basic household goods. For two year leases, half the Centrelink recipients in our study paid more than five times the retail price of the goods …

leaving them without assets and with less income.

Importantly, there is a better way.

Good Shepherd Microfinance, through its No Interest Loans Scheme (NILS) in partnership with NAB, aims to assist large numbers of people who are financially excluded to move away from crisis and hardship and towards financial stability, mainstream economic participation and financial resilience.

As they are a non-profit financial products, the No Interest Loans Scheme loans can be paid off through Centrepay.

Good Shepherd Microfinance offers no interest loans of up to $1,200 to people on low incomes for the purchase of essential household goods.

The data shows the potential benefits of such an approach.

In 2012-13, 22,349 NILS loans valued at $20.8 million were approved.

Ninety-two per cent of borrowers live below the poverty line and 22 per cent were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

An evaluation of the NILS loans by the Centre for Social Impact at the University of New South Wales found that around half of NILS borrowers experienced an overall improvement in their financial capacity as a result of taking out a NILS loan, while another quarter achieved a more stable financial position than before they took out the loan.

So there is a different model that we can look to, because the evidence is compelling.

Centrepay and the vulnerable Australians that rely on it are being exploited by consumer leasing companies.

Fortunately, Labor is taking action today.

Senator Cameron has introduced this bill for one reason: to ensure that vulnerable Australians are protected.

This bill will ensure that Centrepay should be prospectively closed to consumer leasing companies, for the same reasons it is closed to payday lenders.

This means low-income people—people on income support—will be protected from predatory behaviour by companies offering consumer leases.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

**Fair Work Amendment (Prohibiting Discrimination Based On Location) Bill 2015**

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Christensen.

Bill read a first time.
Second Reading

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson—The Nationals Deputy Whip) (10:18): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Australian culture dictates everyone deserves a fair go and that cultural belief is reflected in anti-discrimination legislation.

But what is happening now in the mining communities of Central and North Queensland is anything but a fair go.

The 100 per cent fly-in fly-out workforce practices at Daunia and Caval Ridge mines have devastated local communities.

Highly skilled and experienced local workers are locked out of local employment opportunities because they live too close to work.

For example, a search for Mackay and the Coalfields jobs on Seek this morning reveals a number of jobs available, such as this advertisement for a production superintendent, which is great news if you have all the right skills and experience, as long as you do not live anywhere near the work site because the ad stipulates: 'To be eligible to apply for this role you must reside within 100 kilometres of the Brisbane Airport'.

Such a secure lock-out of local workers has had a devastating effect on the regional economy, especially in towns like Moranbah and nearby centres like Mackay.

Firstly, we witnessed a spike in unemployment.

Secondly, we witnessed the fallout of that unemployment—depression, despair, family breakdown, suicide and then desertion.

In Mackay, where homes were once virtually unobtainable—you could not get one for love or money—this morning there are more than 1,200 vacant homes for rent, not to mention the empty homes not advertised or not for rent.

The resource industry downturn has been exacerbated by these 100 per cent fly-in fly-out operations—a situation that should never have been allowed in the first place.

Unfortunately, the Bligh Labor government in Queensland either failed to consider potential future scenarios—or just did not care—when they approved 100 per cent fly-in fly-out operations at Daunia and Caval Ridge mines.

It was also unfortunate that the Newman government failed to take action to counter this discrimination.

But worse was to come, because despite promising to end 100 per cent fly-in fly-out practices, the Palaszczuk Labor government has broken that promise.

Before the Queensland 2015 election, Labor's policy document on this issue specifically said it would end existing 100 per cent fly-in fly-out operations near regional communities within 100 days of government—no doubt attracting plenty of votes from the most affected regions.

But, more than 300 days after the election, they have walked away from that promise.

This bill seeks to restore the fair go for local workers by using the existing framework that is designed to ensure everyone has a fair go.
This bill will amend the Fair Work Act to specifically say that employers cannot discriminate against potential job applicants on the basis of where they live, other than in cases where living locally is an essential component of being able to perform the job.

The act already prevents discrimination on other grounds, such as gender, race and religion.

This bill is both simple and effective. It uses the same framework that has proven to be effective against other forms of discrimination.

This framework allows the flexibility to use FIFO where needed. When the resource industry recovers, workers may need to be sourced from elsewhere—but locals can never be specifically excluded.

This bill would not have been necessary had the employer shared our cultural ideal of a fair go.

BMA, which operate Daunia and Caval Ridge mines, were given approval by the previous Labor government to use 100 per cent FIFO, but that does not mean they have to use it.

If BMA wanted to share the ideal of a fair go, they would remove any requirement about where a worker must live from their recruitment ads.

They would also reconsider their policy of casualising the workforce, which goes hand-in-hand with FIFO.

The simple knowledge that locals are allowed to apply for local jobs would immediately inject some much needed confidence into local economies.

North Queenslanders and Central Queenslanders are a resilient bunch, capable of rising to any challenge.

They have the skills and experience to drive our national economy forward.

All they ask is that they get a fair go.

The SPEAKER: Is the motion seconded?

Ms LANDRY (Capricornia) (10:23): I second the motion. In Central Queensland there is an alarming issue at foot of which every MP should take serious note. As my colleague the member for Dawson has noted, workers living in the Capricornia coal belt, our nation's biggest coal production area, are being shut out of local jobs because of where they live. The blame lies fairly and squarely with the Australian Labor Party, backed by the powerful CFMEU. In Queensland, the Labor Party introduced a policy of allowing 100 per cent fly-in fly-out workers on two critical coalmines in Capricornia. Job advertisements for 100 per cent FIFO positions declare that applicants must live within 100 kilometres of Brisbane Airport or Cairns in order to obtain work west of Rockhampton and Mackay. That means any local worker trying to support their family at Moranbah, Dysart, Nebo and other Capricornia towns are not allowed to apply for jobs there, even though the mine may be as little as 15 minutes drive up the road.

This Labor Party law smacks of discrimination. It has the hallmarks of an apartheid system based on the postcode of where you live. If apartheid rules were not good enough for South Africa then they cannot be good enough for Central Queensland workers. Labor's policy means we have suitable, skilled people living next door to a worksite who are outlawed from applying for a job there. The impact of Labor's 100 per cent FIFO rule is hurting the survival of our local towns. If people cannot get work and live in local communities, they simply
leave. The consequence is that small business suffers, schools lose resources and other community services begin to dwindle. In short, our small mining towns are dying. The bill that we as LNP MPs present to the House today will help these communities.

Our bill aims to amend the Fair Work Act, prohibiting discrimination based on the location of your home. We support the motion to amend the Fair Work Act 2009 with amendment 351A, titled 'Discrimination based where a person lives'. It states:

An employer must not take adverse action against a person who is an employee, or prospective employee … because of where the person lives.

Last week the Queensland Labor government ended its inquiry into the 100 per cent FIFO policy. Queensland Labor is a state government that does not want to man up to the fact that it was Queensland Labor that introduced this despicable law in the first place under former premier Anna Bligh. The recent inquiry was led by union activist and MP Jim Pearce and overseen by several Labor Party mayors in Central Queensland. It suggested that 100 per cent FIFO is not accepted by anyone in regional Queensland. But they cannot unwind the mess their own party created because it is enshrined in contract legalities.

Ironically, the Queensland review recommended changing the antidiscrimination act so mining companies cannot refuse to employ workers based on where they live. It is ironic because I told the CFMEU and Jim Pearce that that is what the federal representatives were already actively seeking to do. When I spoke at a community forum on jobs and the impact of 100 per cent FIFO on Mackay, hosted by the CFMEU and Jim Pearce, I told them that I and the member for Dawson were already drawing up such a bill. Our bill today aims to make it illegal for companies to lock people out of jobs based on their home location. This bold private member's bill seeks to amend the nation's Fair Work Act 2009 to prohibit discrimination against workers based on where they live. This bill's intention is to ensure that Central Queenslanders can apply for Central Queensland jobs in our coalmining sector without discrimination.

I commend the bill to the House and I urge this parliament to stand up for what is right to safeguard families, small business, services and a person's right to at least apply for local jobs in our inland regional coal towns.

Debate adjourned.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS
Iraq and Syria

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (10:29): I move:

That this House calls on the Minister for Foreign Affairs to support a parliamentary debate during the current sitting on the Australian Government’s strategy in response to the crisis in Syria and Iraq. For over a year, Labor have offered bipartisan support for Australia’s involvement in the defence of Iraq. We agreed that responding to the call of the Iraqi government to protect its people and its territory from the evil Daesh was the right thing to do. From the beginning, along with this support, we have called for greater involvement and scrutiny by this parliament. On 9 September, Labor again called for the government to outline to the parliament its long-term strategy in Iraq and Syria and allow for proper parliamentary debate.
In 1991, parliament was specifically recalled for two days to debate the first Iraq war. All 150 members of the House of Representatives spoke. In 2003, Australia’s commitment to Iraq was again subject to significant debate in parliament. In that debate, the member for Curtin said:

…it behoves this parliament to consider the likelihood that the military action will be over quickly and the Iraqi regime that has so traumatised its own citizenry will be abandoned and in flight. What next? What does the future hold for a liberated Iraq?

We could ask a very similar question about Syria today. If Daesh is degraded and defeated, as we all hope it will be, and Assad himself is gone—again, as we all hope—what is next for the future of Syria? In 2015, as we have military forces once again deployed in Iraq and now also in Syrian airspace, the foreign minister should once again support that same parliamentary consideration she praised in 2003.

Today we see geopolitical complexity that is even more finely balanced, and the long-term strategic outcomes are even less predictable. Russia has dramatically escalated its involvement in Syria, yet its strikes to date appear more targeted at anti-Assad rebel forces than Daesh. The Russian air force’s use of cluster munitions and its rules of engagement risk civilian casualties in great numbers. Despite an increasing number of countries entering the conflict to attack Daesh, Daesh continues to control large areas of territory in both Iraq and Syria. The Syrian rebel forces themselves are proliferating and radicalising, leaving fewer moderate partners for a future inclusive Syrian national government.

The Iraqi government is increasingly reliant on Iran’s active support, a concerning trend for Australia’s longstanding objective to support a non-sectarian, inclusive government in Iraq. Without a clear and realistic strategy, we are talking about the potential for the consolidation of redrawn national borders, the intensification of sectarian violence, the escalation of geopolitical tension and increasing numbers of displaced people in the region and beyond.

Against this backdrop of heightened uncertainty, the Australian public deserve a clear outline of the strategy for our personnel who are being placed in harm’s way. Yet the messages that we receive are often mixed. The government has said that the objective and, indeed, legal basis for Australian air strikes in Syria is the collective self-defence of Iraq. And yet the foreign minister has also said that Australia’s involvement in Syria would be complete:

When the terrorist organisation is prevented from carrying out attacks on the civilian populations in Syria and Iraq.

The government has talked in the past about the illegitimacy of the Assad regime, which has killed hundreds of thousands of its own citizens. Yet, on 25 September, The Australian newspaper reported that the foreign minister’s position had changed and that Assad was now ‘part of the solution’.

Labor remain prepared to support a strategic plan which will address the humanitarian crisis in Iraq and Syria. But we need to know what it is, and, more particularly, the Australian public deserve to know. They are entitled to hear the debate in this parliament which would answer these long-term questions and to know how this increasingly complex scenario will be resolved, in the government’s view.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Broadbent): Is the motion seconded?
Mr Danby: I second the motion and reserve my right to speak later.

Mr NIKOLIC (Bass) (10:34): Most Australians would acknowledge that the terrorists in Iraq and Syria known as ISIL or Daesh are causing unspeakable harm to individuals, families and communities. Their barbarity has shocked the world. Daesh is trying to entrench itself in the Middle East and export its barbarous mayhem. The murder of Curtis Cheng on 2 October is the latest confirmation that the tentacles of resurgent terrorism have again reached Australia.

There have been many other disrupted attacks and actual attacks, and they are coming closer together. Warning times are reducing and, sadly, the perpetrators are getting younger. We have seen Australian suicide bombers in the Middle East. Over 120 Australians are currently fighting or engaged with terrorist groups in Iraq and Syria, a further 30 Australians have been killed and close to 160 people in Australia are actively supporting terrorist groups in Syria and Iraq. The fact that ASIO is undertaking 400 high-priority investigations indicates that there are many others at home that we need to be concerned about.

The point that I am seeking to make is that our fight against resurgent terrorism is as much a matter of domestic security as international security. That is why Australia is playing its part in the international coalition to disrupt, degrade and, ultimately, defeat Daesh. Our strategy has three pillars. First of all, we are using the military dimension of our national power to support the government of Iraq's response to the terrorist threat. We do this by training the Iraqi army and by striking Daesh targets with our Air Task Group. Secondly, we are applying the diplomatic dimension of our national power to advocate for political solutions. That includes supporting the efforts of UN envoy de Mistura and encouraging Syria and Russia to play a constructive role. Thirdly, we are responding to the pressing humanitarian needs generated by this conflict. Not only is this the right thing to do but it helps reinforce Australia's reputation as a good global citizen and prevents the refugee camps from becoming hotbeds of radicalisation.

With our Canadian, Turkish, American and Arab state partners, we are striking Daesh capabilities in both Iraq and Syria because we know that they cannot be defeated in Iraq alone. By limiting Daesh's freedom of manoeuvre and their ability to command, reinforce and sustain their murderous activities, we do support the collective self-defence of Iraq. Perhaps more importantly, we also subdue Daesh's narrative of success. Their failure to establish a so-called caliphate from western Syria to eastern Iraq is a powerful counter to their totemic appeal and ability to recruit, particularly amongst young people. Every time one of their brutal figureheads is killed, their territory is reduced or their freedom of action is curtailed, Daesh's aspiration for world domination are further exposed as a ridiculous pipedream.

So we have a strategy—and, I thought, a settled bipartisan strategy. Strategy is for the longer term. As someone who served on Australia's first deployment to Afghanistan in 2001, and as our first national commander in southern Iraq in 2005, our troops expect our strategy to be for the longer term. So I am puzzled by the call for another debate. Why would the Deputy Leader of the Opposition call for yet more debate on what was a settled bipartisan strategy? Who else speaks out against Australia's military contribution to the coalition in Iraq and Syria? The answer is that the loudest opponents are the Greens and the members of Labor's left faction, of which the member for Sydney is a prominent leader. So let's call this motion

---

CHAMBER

Monday, 19 October 2015      HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  11497
for what it is: a political bone designed to appease the hard-left members of the Labor left faction and their fellow travellers in the Greens party.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr NIKOLIC: I hear the interjections, but it is puzzling that the member for Sydney and her colleagues were not speaking up about national security when they were acting to cut defence spending to the lowest level since 1938. We apparently have debates only when it suits the member for Sydney.

Our troops in Iraq and Syria are putting their lives on the line. They need a parliament that backs a strategy for the long-term and with resolve. They will find this sort of ideological dog-whistling about strategy to the Labor left as a bitter pill indeed. I say to the member for Sydney, this is not about military strategy but about her 'kill Bill' strategy, which requires points of differentiation— (Time expired)

Mr DANBY (Melbourne Ports) (10:39): To return to reality, when Russia entered the Syrian civil war, Australia's Foreign Minister said that Russia's involvement in negotiations with Iran over their nuclear program had been positive, and:

If we use that as an example of Russia's preparedness to be part of a solution rather than part of the problem, then we can have some optimism that Russia's involvement is positive.

As the pattern of bombing of non-Daesh targets—just mentioned by the member for Bass—established, these comments look more and more silly. The foreign minister has mimicked the false dichotomy put out by Russia and Iran that the West has to choose between Daesh and Assad. To argue in favour of a dictator who has murdered 200,000 of his own people is unethical—and it will never work.

Russia's intervention on the side of Iran and Hezbollah cements in place Iran's Shiite crescent from Lebanon, through Syria and Iraq, to Iran. How is this in the Australian national interest? It is just one of the reasons why the Australian government must debate this sudden pro-Iranian shift in parliament. According to news reports, Iran, Russia, Hezbollah and Syria are, at this moment, about to begin a massive ground offensive against their non-Daesh enemies in Syria. Qasem Soleimani, the viceroy who commands the Iranian forces in Syria, is coordinating this ground offensive. Normally the Australian government would have said something. Now? Nothing.

Since the one-sided deal with Iran, the foreign minister has re-imagined Iran as the region's saviour. This is idiotic and must be debated in this parliament. Since 1979, Iran has sponsored terrorism in almost every Arab country, as well as in Israel, South America, Europe and Asia. Instead of shunning Iran, our foreign minister, in April, when she became the first western foreign minister to visit Iran in years, says: 'Trade with us. Take our unwanted refugees. Open consulates. Let's share intelligence!' In the last fortnight, however, when Iraq, Iran, Russia and Syria announced an intelligence-sharing centre based in Baghdad, US Deputy Secretary of Defence Robert Work said:

We were caught by surprise that Iraq entered into this agreement with Syria and Iran and Russia. Obviously, we are not going to share intelligence with either Syria or Russia or Iran.

Normally the Australian government would have said something—but again they did not.

The foreign minister must also explain the legalities to this House. Under autonomous sanctions legislation, Australia is not allowed to provide Iran, Syria or any of these countries
with 'technical advice, assistance or training if it assists or is provided in relation to a military activity.' I remind the government that Hezbollah, which is founded, funded, armed and trained by Iran, is proscribed by the Australian parliament. When concerned foreign ministers gathered in Paris back in June to discuss how to handle Daesh, it was our foreign minister who embarrassed us by suggesting that they should be involved in the US led coalition. It was a suggestion immediately dismissed by all the other western foreign ministers.

Last week, an emboldened Iran fired off ballistic missiles capable of carrying warheads—in flagrant violation of UN sanctions. The US described it as 'a complete violation' and condemned it utterly. Normally Australia would have said something—but again we were silent. In August an adviser on international affairs to the Speaker of the Iranian parliament said:

Our positions against the usurper Zionist regime have not changed at all; Israel should be annihilated and this is our ultimate goal. Australia in the past would normally have repudiated the Iranians. Instead we were shamefully silent.

Nothing the foreign minister says about the alleged benefits of cooperation with Iran is worth the dangers to Australian citizens of opening Iranian consulates in Sydney or Melbourne. If she wants intelligence, the foreign minister should just google 'Hezbollah, Iran and Argentina' or—instead of Argentina—Thailand, Lebanon, Singapore, Bulgaria, Egypt, or Saudi Arabia. In all of these places, Hezbollah has carried out or attempted to carry out terrorist attacks using the diplomatic cover provided by Iranian embassies and consulates to advance their shared poisonous ideology. Interpol has issued arrest warrants for senior Iranian officials. It is inimical to Australia's national security to allow Iran to establish a network along those lines in Australia.

We have no reasonable assurance that Iran is moving to stop its support of international terrorism. The government has become an unwitting, incompetent facilitator aiding and abetting the Iranian agenda. The foreign minister has been played for a fool and is clearly out of her depth. We need, as the member for Sydney said, a full debate on these matters.

Mr HASTIE (Canning) (10:44): This private member's motion is about the crisis in Syria and Iraq. The one organisation that unites both those countries is Daesh, so let us keep the eye on the ball and focus on Daesh, which is the threat to both the Middle East and countries around the world. Daesh are the ones exporting terror to Australia, Europe and other countries.

At the recent by-election, the people of Canning expressed to me that they were very concerned about the growing threat of Daesh to Australian security. They want resolve. They want policy that deals with this group, whose aims, methods and world view are inimical to the Australian way of life. So they are not to be taken lightly. Australians expect this government to approach this threat with clear eyes, resolve and coherent policy. The Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs are doing just that.

The member for Bass outlined the current contribution of both diplomatic and military power to the strategy against Daesh, and they were settled upon in a bipartisan spirit. Our ADF has been deployed within this agreed-upon framework. So why are we still talking about this? This is a time for action; it is not a time for flip-flopping, it is not a time for hand-
wringing and it is not a time for double-mindedness. The Prime Minister and the foreign minister are very single-minded about this strategy. As the member for Bass outlined, it is about disrupting, degrading and defeating ISIS. We are disrupting them with regular air strikes conducted by our Air Force. We are denying them freedom of action on the ground. We are degrading their command and control. We are degrading their logistics and their moral and material support.

Ultimately Daesh will be defeated by Iraqi forces led by the Iraqi government. We are building partner capacity, with an ADF contribution comprised of Australian regular forces and Special Operations Command. We are training Iraqi troops and counter-terrorism forces. The strategy is very clear. Those three words summarise it very nicely: disrupt, degrade, defeat. Within that there is operational and tactical flexibility. The ADF are pragmatic and they will work it out themselves. We are also conducting strikes in Syria under Iraq's mandate for collective self-defence. We are also contributing to the humanitarian crisis. Since 2011 we have contributed $230 million, and we have just offered places for 12,000 Syrian refugees in this country.

So the strategy is in place and it is working. But, ultimately, like with all wars, the solution must finally be a political one. Our military actions at present are creating space for political dialogue. Ultimately, we want an inclusive, nonsectarian Iraqi government. So why are we now talking about change? The Australian people and the Australian Defence Force expect a strategy that is both long-term and coherent and that gives them clear guidelines for their operational and tactical actions, and I believe that is in place.

Ms Brodtmann: Share it with us.

Mr HASTIE: I just have. So now is the time to move forward behind the current government. ISIS is a grave threat. They have a stronghold in Iraq and Syria. But the threat is spreading. As we saw on 2 October, with the execution of Curtis Cheng, now is not the time to take a backward step. These people are opposed to fundamental morality, to fundamental international law. They do not respect states; they do not respect governments. I ask members opposite: have you seen the videos that these people disseminate around the world via social media? I have, and I am very, very clear-eyed about the threat that Daesh pose to both the Middle East and the West. As you are well aware, when those 20 Coptic Christians were murdered on the beach in Libya, Daesh made it very clear their aims are beyond the Middle East.

Currently we are attacking Daesh with a root-and-branch strategy. We are fighting them in the Middle East, and our domestic counter-terrorism agencies are also taking care of the branches. We have 120 Australians currently supporting or fighting Daesh in the Middle East, and in the last year we have contributed more than $600 million to providing counter-terrorism agencies within Australia with the funding to do their job and protect the Australian people.

Debate adjourned.

Industry Innovation and Competitiveness Agenda

Ms MARINO (Forrest—Chief Government Whip) (10:49): I move:

(1) notes that the jobs of the future will require science, technology, engineering and mathematics skills;
welcomes the Government's ongoing investment of $9.7 billion in science, research and innovation; and

(3) acknowledges that the Government is:
   
   (a) delivering on its promised Industry Innovation and Competitiveness Agenda; and
   
   (b) putting science at the centre of industry.

There is an enormous opportunity in the modern world for those able to innovate and create, and it is essential that Australia is able to take advantage of these opportunities. To grow our economy and build the standard of living that Australians want to have, we will need to take full advantage and make use of our intellectual capital and our human potential, of which there is plenty in Australia. This government really understands the importance of innovation, and we are all excited by the challenges that the future holds. We know that innovation is central to this government's agenda for boosting economic growth and, as we know, it is the entrepreneurial culture that is critical in driving economic growth and into the future. The Prime Minister said:

If we want to remain a prosperous, first world economy with a generous social welfare safety net, we must be more competitive, we must be more productive. Above all we must be more innovative. We have to work more agilely, more innovatively, we have to be more nimble in the way we seize the enormous opportunities that are presented to us.

The energetic Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science, the member for Sturt, is certainly promoting innovation and excellence in science and research. He will be a catalyst in this space. We know that Australia is a preferred global partner for science collaboration, and trade agreements only strengthen this—the three new trade agreements as well. With 0.3 per cent of the world's population, Australia is ranked 10th globally for science publication and produces four per cent of the world's knowledge. Those are figures from 2013.

Over the last two years the government has steadily and systematically put in place a new framework, which we are now capitalising on—a new framework for Australian industry and science focused on building our areas of competitive strengths and supporting our industries as they transition to new opportunities and building industries of the future. We are committed to ensuring that Australian industry can make full use of the government's investment in research and science. The government's Industry Innovation and Competitiveness Agenda has set out a new paradigm for industry policy, with an emphasis on science to foster innovation and research. It has involved working closely with industry, universities, the research sector, the science community and business to encourage increased collaboration and to place science at the centre of industry in order to take advantage of the transitioning global economy. Over the last two budgets we have announced targeted investments of more than $230 million in science, including securing the ongoing operation of vital scientific assets, like the RV Investigator, and promoting science in the committee. Across government there has been an investment of more than $9.7 billion this year alone on science, research and innovation. This is above the OECD average.

We have consulted widely, have developed ways to boost our national science, technology, engineering and mathematics capability and are determined to increase the number of students studying STEM subjects in schools and universities and taking STEM skills into the workforce. Computer science is a critical part of this. I encourage students to pursue their passion in life and in their career but also to take computer science, which will enable the
creativity and of course the analytical processes that will be required in the future. This government is investing $12 million to improve the focus on these subjects in primary and secondary schools through the Industry Innovation and Competitiveness Agenda. The Assistant Minister for Science, the Hon. Karen Andrews, and Australia's Chief Scientist, Professor Ian Chubb, recently consulted across Australia on the vision for a science nation responding to science, technology, engineering and mathematics—Australia's future. It is a vision to enhance Australian competitiveness by supporting high-quality STEM education and training, maximising research potential and strengthening our international engagement.

As Australia passes through its once-in-a-century mining boom into a more normal long-term production phase in the resources sector, we are becoming far more innovative in delivering economic returns. Obviously business is involved as well as the university sector, and national institutes like the CSIRO and Questacon are part of this agenda. Universities conduct a significant proportion of the research done in Australia; we need to more closely align Australian universities and the industry, business and entrepreneurial world. While 70 per cent of Britain's researchers are in universities and 70 per cent of Australia's researchers are in universities, four per cent of Australian researchers are involved in business but in Britain that number is as high as 40 per cent. To remedy this the Australian government is continuing to work with the industry and science sectors—the engine room of national productivity—to generate economic growth and create new jobs. We are doing this by building on the major reforms that have been implemented since the coalition government was elected two years ago.

These achievements include an investment of over $2.2 billion into industry programs over four years, helping to deliver new jobs; a $225 million Industry Growth Centres Initiative focused on lifting competitiveness and productivity in areas of competitive strength, including greater rates of collaboration between industry and science; and an Entrepreneurs' Program with over $100 billion invested annually across the country to provide advice, support, connections, collaborations and assistance with commercialisation. This is a significant investment over the forward estimates—practical, quality advice and support for entrepreneurs to innovate and grow. There is a $50 million Manufacturing Transition Program to help Australia transition to high-value, knowledge-intensive manufacturing; an Industry Skills Fund which provides $664 million over five years, providing more than 250,000 training places and support services across Australia; new country of origin food labels which will give consumers access to clear, consistent and easy-to-understand food labelling information; a tougher antidumping regime that levels the playing field for Australian industry, including a greater onus on overseas businesses to cooperate and better assistance for Australian businesses. There has been record funding of $3.1 billion for CSIRO over the next four years, increasing year-on-year; the appointment of a new chairman and new CEO for CSIRO as the nation's pre-eminent science agency works with the new industry growth centres; the refocussed CRC program and the Entrepreneurs' Program to ensure a comprehensive, accessible and effective industry network that delivers outcomes for businesses; a $100 billion exploration development incentive which is now supporting junior exploration companies to conduct greenfields mineral exploration; and an energy white paper which provides a coherent, long-term energy policy framework to underpin competition, productivity and investment in the energy sector that will deliver competitive energy.
The coalition government is working with industry and science to improve our competitiveness, innovate our production and increase our reach into global markets. I spoke earlier about the $9.7 billion to support science programs, initiatives and specialised science and research agencies. Science is at the centre of industry policy and science, research and development boosts business productivity and is a major driver of our economy. We all know that scientific discovery is a critical underpinning part of innovation. The links between science and industry in Australia have to be strengthened even more so that more of the great research that I spoke about earlier in Australia can be turned into viable, profitable products. The government is investing more than $731 million over five years for CRCs, and that continues to advance a diverse range of research. The CRC program currently supports 35 industry-driven research partnerships between publicly funded researchers, businesses and the community to address major long-term challenges across all disciplines and industry sectors. The ongoing collaboration in this space is particularly important. I commend the government's intentions to the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Broadbent): Is the motion?

Mr Ramsey: I second the motion and reserve my right to speak later.

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (10:59): As someone with two sisters who are scientists—Meg, my middle sister, a former AIDS researcher and now a winemaker and is Australia's first female master of wine, and we are very proud of her; and Amy, my little sister, is a world renowned neurologist and is a particular expert in stroke—I have a very strong interest in science, research and innovation. As a result of living with my sisters for so long, watching their careers flourish, watching their expertise grow—in AIDS in the case of Meg, in viticulture and in neurology in the case of Amy—I do have a very strong interest in science, research and innovation, particularly in women in science, research and innovation. As we know, there is parity now between women doing undergraduate degrees and even postgraduate degrees in the field of science yet, when they get to the postgraduate level and are moving their way through the ranks, they tend to run into a plug at that middle-ranking level and we see very few if any women in the senior ranks of science. So I do have a very strong interest in these matters after sitting around the dinner table with them over many years talking about their areas of research and interest.

My experience with my sisters as well as my experience with my community here in Canberra where we have world-class research science and innovation institutions has highlighted to me the importance of science, research and innovation to Australia's future prosperity. It is quite ironic that we are standing here today debating the importance of STEM. With all due respect to the member for Forrest, those opposite have done nothing but attack science since the day they were elected. The scale of this government's attacks on science is breathtaking. It is quite extraordinary. When I was listening to the member for Forrest and listening to her talking about those figures, I was wondering where she was actually getting them from given that there have been substantial cuts in funding to the national science and research institutions—I will come to that later.

Under the Abbott government, for a year Australia did not have a science minister looking after the interests of science, research and innovation, which sent a very strong message to the science community—it certainly was not lost in my community. Those opposite may talk a good game when it comes to the importance of science, research and innovation to Australia's
productivity, to our prosperity in the future, to our growth but for some time there was no science minister, which just went to show how seriously they take STEM. The lack of a dedicated science minister was truly symbolic of the government's attitude towards STEM, science, research and innovation. After attending a number of events with the Chief Scientist, Ian Chubb, I got the impression that he was tearing his hair out about the fact that there was no science strategy for this country under the Abbott government. There was no science minister for some time and there was no strategic approach to science. The member for Forrest mentioned the strategic approach called Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics: Australia’s Future that was recently released and, reading about it, it is all good. It talks about the fact that science is infrastructure and is critical to our future.

Mr Chubb said we must align our scientific effort to the national interest with a focus on areas of particular importance or need and do it on a scale that will make a difference to Australia in a changing world. In this strategic approach, he has outlined his vision for developing better capacity and capability through strategic investment, through good planning and through long-term commitment. The paper focuses on building competitiveness, on supporting high-quality education and training, on maximising research potential and on strengthening international engagement. As he said, it gets back to the fact that he was tearing his hair out for so long under the Abbott government. We are the only OECD country without a science or technology strategy. Other countries have realised such a strategy is essential to remaining competitive in a world reliant on science and science trained people. The member for Forrest may have outlined through a number of points how this government is committed to science, research and innovation but, as Professor Chubb said, we are the only OECD country without a science or technology strategy and we are also, I imagine, one of the few if any countries around the world without a science minister for some time under the Abbott government.

I have highlighted the lack of a strategic approach on national science, research and innovation and also the fact that we did not have a science minister for some time but I also want to talk about the government's cuts to science research, cuts that had a significant impact on my community. This government, in its two budgets so far, has cut more than $3 billion from science, research and innovation. Canberra knows all about these cuts because this government cut $1.2 billion from science and research agencies in its first budget including almost $115 million from the CSIRO here in Canberra. These cuts saw nearly 1,300 jobs lost from CSIRO, the world famous, world renowned national science, research and innovation institution. The government maintains it is a big supporter of and advocate for science, research and innovation yet it has cut billions of dollars' worth of funds—a lot here in my electorate—and cut 1,300 jobs from CSIRO, which was the largest number of job losses in the organisation's history. And as we know, this organisation has been going for some time—for decades—going right back until the twenties, from memory. We also saw jobs lost from Geoscience Australia, from ANSTO and from the Bureau of Meteorology—all agencies that are really very lean and mean, so any job cut has a significant impact on them.

I know in the case of Geoscience that the job losses had an impact on the tsunami warning team. What a really bright idea—cutting jobs from science, research and innovation that not only have a significant impact on our nation's productivity, prosperity and growth but which
also have a significant impact on the safety of the Asia-Pacific region, particularly in the intelligence they provide on the tsunami warning system.

And the cuts did not stop there. Cuts were also made to the Australian Research Council and the Defence Science and Technology Organisation. The Cooperative Research Centre also had its funding slashed and NICTA had its funding cancelled altogether.

Under this government, we have also seen the abolition of the Innovation Investment Fund, the abolition of Enterprise Connect, the abolition of Industry Innovation Precincts, the abolition of Enterprise Solutions and the abolition of Researchers in Business. So, here we are: the member for Forrest, as I said—with all due respect to the member for Forrest—has put up this motion about how this government is a friend of science, research and innovation, and how it has made significant investment in science, research and innovation. But what have we seen? We have seen 1,300 jobs cut from CSIRO. We have seen $3 billion cut from science, research and innovation institutions and a range of other funds. We have seen $115 million cut from the CSIRO here in Canberra. We have seen NICTA funding cancelled. And we have seen the Innovation Investment Fund, Enterprise Connect, the Industry Innovation Precincts, Enterprise Solutions and Researchers in Business all abolished. So I just wonder how committed this government is to science, research and innovation when all it has done since it has been in government is to slash and burn in every way in this sector, not just in terms of funding and grants to the institutions but, most importantly, into the jobs and skills which will build our productivity and build prosperity for the future and which will enhance Australia's growth, both here and overseas. (Time expired)

Mr RAMSEY (Grey) (11:10): The march of civilisation is inextricably linked with the development of technology and its widespread adoption. Perhaps the height of man's productivity prior to the industrial revolution was the peak of the Roman Empire, but that of course is for the scholars to debate. However, it was the industrial revolution that changed forever the direct ties between man and the land. Successive waves of technological uptake have forever changed the ratios of those producing food, fibre, shelter and goods to those who consume those products. That is the dividend of technology. It is this efficiency that frees up the human mind and endeavour to provide the luxuries of life, and by 'luxuries of life' I mean anything that is not essential to sustain life. In terms of human development, it is technology that is the currency that underwrites our unparalleled standard of living.

Individual nations and communities have some choices. They can choose to resist change and try to protect and extend technologies and jobs that have been left behind by efficiencies, either in our local economies or abroad. They can sit back, let change wash over them and adjust to those changes as they happen. Or they can choose to be at the cutting edge of change, make the tough decisions to encourage investment and risk taking and accept the temporary downsides and risks as a part of the path to success. Whichever path a nation chooses, one thing is sure: change is both inexorable and inevitable.

The Australian government, under Malcolm Turnbull, has clearly signalled, with the appointment of Christopher Pyne as the Minister for Innovation and Science, that Australia is in the last group, seeking to be on the cutting edge. So while jobs in traditional areas are shrinking and this causes local anxiety, at the same time our nation has never supported more jobs
I had the privilege recently to lead a bilateral delegation to the US, where the benefits of a
dynamic and well-funded research sector are clearly demonstrated. From their highly-
sophisticated defence research and development platforms through to government owned, but
privately operated, research establishments—like the Lawrence Livermore National
Laboratory and the buzz that is Silicon Valley—the US is bursting with ideas and enthusiasm.
It is this path that the current government have chosen as the best for Australia.

Often we hear criticisms that Australia is underinvesting in scientific research when in fact
we are committing $9.7 billion of taxpayer dollars per year to research. That comes on the top
of a very significant history of delivering great scientific breakthroughs throughout the world.

The bigger question for Australia is: why we have been able to generate the breakthroughs,
but so often have been unable to develop the product? Why indeed is it so difficult to raise
sufficient capital in Australia to turn those ideas into finished product? After all, Australia
was responsible for most of the major science behind photovoltaic cells, wi-fi, spray-on skin
and black box flight recorders. We are 13th in the world for the number of patents registered
each year which, considering our population, actually puts us at or near the top of the tree.

Historically we have been responsible for some of the biggest innovations the world has
ever seen in agriculture: the Ridley strippers, followed by Sunshine harvesters revolutionised
grain harvesting worldwide and yet, tellingly, there is no longer a harvester made in
Australia—they are all imported.

During the wide-ranging meetings arranged for our US delegation, it became apparent that
there is a far higher appetite for risk in the US than here, and that there is a far greater
acceptance of the chance of failure. It is part of the conversation Australia must have as to
why this is the case.

It is a fact that in Australia our biggest pools of moveable and flexible capital lie within the
superannuation sector. And whilst overseas funds look to Australia to invest in a wide range
of industry it seems that our funds are move conservative. Is it caused by a difference in the
Australian character or is it caused by the rules and regulations within our superannuation
sector? While I am unlikely ever to support compulsory investment targets for superannuation
funds, we certainly must consider the incentives and disincentives for investment in our
development sector.

I am especially pleased to report that the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Industry,
which I chair, has just commenced an inquiry into technological opportunities and barriers to
adoption in our agricultural industries. Already we have received more than 80 submissions
and, while I have plenty of reading to do yet, there is no doubt that we are bristling with ideas
and enthusiasm, a new enthusiasm that is feeding off the excitement of the government's
progress on freeing up the trade barriers which have for many years denied our agricultural
access to some of the best and fastest growing markets in the world. Certainly the enthusiasm
and the innovative heart that I witnessed in Germany, the US and other places is due to be
reflected here in Australia. I support the government's drive on that path.

Mr WATTS (Gellibrand) (11:15): I have to say that a wry smile crept across my face
when this PMB came across my desk: a coalition motion trumpeting the importance of
STEM, research and development and innovation to ensuring the jobs of the future in
Australia. It is pleasing at least that irony is not dead. A government that have spent two years
systematically gutting our nation’s STEM research infrastructure are now positioning themselves as the champions of the future; a government that kicked the science minister out of cabinet when they were elected; a government that cut $115 million from the budget of the CSIRO; a government that took the knife to research and development to the tune of $878 million; a government that proposed $5 billion of funding cuts to universities; a government that presided over an education review that proposed removing digital literacy from our nation's schools' curriculum; a government that have voted not once, not twice but three times to remove the R&D tax incentives that keep Australia a competitive and desirable place for large companies to undertake research and development; a government that took all of these actions ahead of their innovation review and tax white paper, as though STEM and R&D funding were somehow peripheral to these policy agendas; a government that listened to Labor's comprehensive package of policies announced in the 2015 budget reply, STEM policies designed to secure the jobs of the future, and did nothing; indeed, a government that literally laughed at our proposal to teach computational thinking, a crucial STEM literacy for the jobs of the future, in our primary schools. Yet they now come into this chamber with a PMB to acknowledge that the government are delivering on STEM.

The sad reality is that Australia is not currently delivering on STEM. We are not equipping our kids with the skills that they will need to compete for the jobs of the future with the kids growing up in our peer countries in the Indo-Pacific. We are not producing the specialist graduates with the skills necessary to make Australia a hub for STEM research and development and innovation. As Australia's Chief Scientist, Professor Ian Chubb, has said: As the economy becomes increasingly dependent on technology, our national competitiveness will be underwritten by our real-world capability in mathematics and science. Unfortunately, this real-world capability is going backwards. While our peers in the Indo-Pacific apply an ever-greater focus on building their STEM capabilities through schools and universities, we are stalling. Fewer than one in 10 Australian high school students now complete the advanced maths courses necessary for the increasingly fundamental workplace skills, like data analysis or data modelling. The percentage of Australian university students studying math degrees in Australia is only 0.5 per cent, roughly half the OECD average. In Victoria, the number of VCE students studying an ICT subject is at a 20-year low. Survey research undertaken by Microsoft suggests that around only a third of Australian students even have the opportunity of learning code in school. Unsurprisingly, this decline is flowing through to our universities in this area too. The number of Australians enrolling in tertiary ICT courses fell by 52 per cent in the 10 years between 2003 and 2013, from 8.1 per cent of all students to 3.9 per cent. We are simply not producing a workforce with the STEM skills needed to compete in the global economy for the jobs of the future. Labor recognise this and we are acting.

During the 2015 budget reply speech, the Leader of the Opposition unveiled Labor's plan for the jobs of the future. Under a Shorten Labor government, we will ensure computational thinking is taught in primary and secondary schools across the country. We will establish a national coding in schools centre, where business and industry can connect with teachers, giving our children insight into the real-world application of the skills that they are learning. We will establish a STEM teacher training fund to support 25,000 primary and secondary school teachers to undertake professional development in STEM disciplines, tackling the
chronic shortage of STEM-literate teachers in our education system. We will offer 100,000
STEM award degrees which will provide a financial incentive for students to enrol in and
complete a STEM undergraduate degree, in recognition of the significant benefit of growing
Australia's STEM capacity. There will be 100,000 STEM graduates instead of $100,000
degrees.

We will reverse the cuts the Liberals have made to university fees. We will establish a
$500 million smart investment fund that will partner with VCs and licensed fund managers to
co-invest in early-stage companies, providing a Commonwealth investment of up to 50 per
cent of the start-up capital needed to help Australian companies commercialise innovations.
We will work with industry on StartUp Finance, a partial guarantee scheme to improve access
to finance to microbusinesses. We will offer 2,000 graduates a 'Start Up year', fuelling their
entrepreneurial spirit by providing income-contingent loans to up to 2,000 students to support
their participation in university accelerators or similar incubators run by successful
entrepreneurs. This would be a government delivering on an innovation agenda. This would
be a government putting science at the centre of industry. But it will take more than a new
prime minister to realise it; it will take a new government altogether. At the next federal
election, whether it will be in the coming months or whether it will be late next year, the
Australian Labor Party will offer that choice to the Australian public.

Mr TAYLOR (Hume) (11:20): To think scientifically and to think mathematically opens
us up to solving some of the world's greatest problems. Having more and more people who
are able to think that way is crucially important for the future of this country and, indeed, for
the future of the globe. I was lucky enough to have great science and maths teachers through
my schooling. I learnt to think mathematically and scientifically. My undergraduate and
postgraduate degrees were in economics and econometrics, and applied maths was absolutely
essential to that work and to my thesis. During that time, it was absolutely imprinted on my
mind that precise scientific and mathematical thinking, forming hypotheses and theories and
testing those hypotheses, is a wonderful thing and, frankly, the world does not have enough of
it, and I worry deeply that our kids are not getting enough of it. There is no doubt that we are
behind where we should be in science and maths. We are falling down in the international
rankings. To correct the previous speaker, I note that much of that falling down in the
rankings occurred under the last Labor government. But, wherever it came from, we are
falling down in the international rankings and, whilst we can question how they are tested, there is no
doubt that other countries are getting ahead.

I was privileged recently to launch in Canberra, on behalf of the Minister for Education and
Training, Simon Birmingham, the National Intensive Program. This was an intensive
workshop and training week held in the school holidays to mentor science and maths teachers
from across Australia. It is part of the National Mentoring for Science and Maths Teachers
project, led by the University of Canberra. By complete coincidence one of the project
coordinators at UC is the sister of the man who was my greatest mentor when I worked in the
private sector. In July 2014, this mentoring project was awarded $1.4 million under the
Australian Maths and Science Partnerships Program, which aims to improve student outcomes
in maths and science by collaboration between schools and universities.

Making science and maths more accessible and meaningful to students is an absolute
national imperative. Our productivity and international competitiveness rests upon our ability
to innovate, through the fields of science and maths. A focus on STEM education has never been more important.

There has been a significant decline in students studying STEM at Year 12 and tertiary levels. That has been occurring for quite some time. Australian school students' performance in STEM subjects, measured by the OECD's Program for International Student Assessment, is declining. Australia's Chief Scientist has noted that participation in STEM subjects in Australian schools is at its lowest level in 20 years. When it is also estimated that 75 per cent of jobs in the fastest-growing industries require skilled workers in STEM subjects, this could be a lost opportunity for our young people and for our nation. If these trends continue, Australia's capacity to develop a high-technology, high-productivity economy will be severely limited.

The government, working together with the states and territories, is developing a long-term national strategy for STEM in schools, including programs to support our teachers and students across schools. The National Mentoring for Science and Maths Teachers project, which I just talked about, is one of 22 projects funded by the federal government under the Australian Maths and Science Partnerships Program.

Teachers at the intensive program came to Canberra from as far away as WA and the Kimberley and from as close as Mulwaree High School, at Goulburn, my hometown. They had the chance to be mentored in maths and science teaching and to learn through specially designed workshops. Judging by the level of energy and interest from participants, I know they will have taken every opportunity to expand their teaching repertoire. By building teacher confidence and enjoyment in maths and science, teachers in turn can inspire a passion for STEM subjects in their students.

I have four kids. They have been educated at a range of schools, and I, too, have been privileged to have a very good education. I cannot tell you how significant an impact great teachers have had for my kids and in my life. It is gold to have an inspiring teacher who is also able to mentor you in an area of particular interest.

STEM is a national agenda. In my own electorate I am looking forward to introducing new STEM awards for selected schools, and I hope to be able to kick-start those awards at the end of this school year. This government is committed to STEM and we will deliver.

Mr CONROY (Charlton) (11:25): To state the bleeding obvious, I think everyone in this House is in agreement about the importance of STEM, of the importance of encouraging students to study science, technology, engineering and maths, the importance of innovation support, support for research, support for commercialisation and support for technology. Unfortunately, the actions of the government do not match their rhetoric. This motion mentions a dollar funding figure, which is fine. It is an absolutely fine funding figure. What it neglects to mention is the $2 billion in cuts this government, since coming to power, has inflicted on support for innovation in this country. These cuts have been most egregious. In fact, they have targeted areas where we need more support and not less support.

What is the fundamental problem in this country around innovation? It is that we do great at blue-sky research, we are great at doing deep research—our universities and CSIRO are world leaders in some of these areas—but we get poor bang for buck for our applied research investment. Some people, such as Professor Goran Roos, have tried to develop figures about
our dollar pay-back for applied research and investment by the public sector, and it is quite low.

That is the area where we need to target investment and culture change, and where we need to turn universities away from focusing on themselves and instead support industry. Also, we need to turn industries towards universities and ask, 'How can we work together to commercialise great research ideas?' Unfortunately, the current government has withdrawn a massive amount of funding that was designed to do this work. The two best examples of this were two initiatives out of the 'Aussie jobs' package that the last government announced at the end of 2012, or early in 2013. Part of this was a $500 million precincts initiation—a precincts initiative that was driven by industry demand for such a program. It was a program that put together a pool of funding that was available for industry and academia to collaborate on to drive a cultural change where the two sides worked together to commercialise ideas and grow the jobs of the future. It was to develop the companies that would be our mass employers going forward. What happens when this mob get into government? They cut it. It is no longer a $500 million program—it is a $188 million program rebranded as the growth centres initiative. I am pleased they kept some of the money, but that very significant $312 million cut will limit the ability of the growth centres to do what they are designed to do.

Secondly, they have cut the $300 million venture capital fund that we put aside, through the tried and tested IIF model, where the government is a co-investor with the private sector, where money is made by the government and that money can be pumped back into venture capital. Ultimately, we will not get commercialisation in this country if we do not get investment in venture capital, and we have quite a shallow venture capital industry in this country.

We have seen cuts to Commercialisation Australia. We have seen them destroy the Enterprise Connect program, which was doing great work out there in the private sector. I have manufacturers coming up to me regularly bewailing the abolition of Enterprise Connect. They are pouring scorn on the poorly designed and poorly funded replacement program the coalition has put in place.

I am pleased that everyone in this place is supportive of STEM education. I am pleased that everyone in this place supports innovation in this nation. But we need to match rhetoric with action. So far, this government is sorely lacking. The new Prime Minister talks a good game. He talks about a positive vision for the economy. He talks about innovation. We have an assistant minister for productivity at the despatch table. He has a couple of other amigos talking about innovation. That is great, but they need dollars. They need well-designed programs and they need dollars to match this action, and so far we have not seen anything but bluster and rhetoric. The coalition side have form on this. One of the first actions John Howard took when he took power in 1996 was to cut the R&D tax concession in half. So I welcome this rhetoric, but they need to match it with action.

On my side, I am proud that the Labor Party—in the budget reply speech of our Leader of the Opposition, Bill Shorten—made great announcements around coding in schools, finance for start-ups and a half a billion dollar venture capital fund. That would be a great start to building innovation in this country and I welcome it. I applaud the Labor Party's commitment. I hope for more to be announced before the next election, because, so far, we cannot rely on the current government to do anything about this massive problem.
Mr WILLIAMS (Hindmarsh) (11:30): I want to start by examining what the CSIRO are doing because I think it is quite informative as to the new direction that their chief executive, a former Silicon Valley venture capitalist, Larry Marshall, is taking them in. He talked recently about the original spin-off on wi-fi. We have heard from other members in the chamber about the great innovations in Australian industry and coming out of the CSIRO and other organisations. Regarding wi-fi, Mr Marshall said that, if the CSIRO had invested in the technology, the return would have been greater and achieved faster. He said the original spin-off, Radiata, turned a $6 million investment into several hundreds of millions of dollars over four years. That was a great return in many respects—you would not deny that—but he also compared that with a US wi-fi company called Atheros, which had a $1.8 billion market value, ran for over a decade, made hundreds of millions of dollars and employed thousands of people.

This is what the member for Charlton quite correctly talked about—getting better bang for the buck and getting better return on an investment—and this is where the challenge lies. It is not in how much money; it is in our return and doing the best we can with the finite taxpayer's dollar. The member for Charlton also mentioned culture change, and that is something that the new CEO of CSIRO has alluded to—a change in approach, a change in mindset and a better outcome for not just that organisation but Australian inventors and the Australian commercialisation sector as a whole.

I want to move to where the government is currently at with some of its innovation policies. This is a very important motion, and I congratulate the member for Forrest on bringing it forward. In my home state of South Australia, we have organisations like the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute, SAMHRI, the biotechnology precinct and the Australian School of Petroleum, which is a close collaboration between the University of Adelaide and one of our largest companies, Santos. We have hundreds of millions of dollars going into these organisations, which is very important and needs to continue. In addition to that, there have been some new areas of policy debate. I applaud Universities Australia on their Keep it clever: policy statement 2016, which was recently released. It is designed to generate a national conversation about the role of university education and research and collaboration with industry in particular. At first glance, it has some worthwhile initiatives to consider that build upon the existing programs to achieve greater industry and university engagement and collaboration. I want to touch on a few because I believe they have merit: to invest in a major technology and innovation program, to establish an innovation board, to create a student innovation fund and to introduce a premium tax concession rate for business collaboration with universities on R&D. We are doing some of these things already, whether through government policy initiatives or existing policy. The Industry Innovation and Competitiveness Agenda is also important in this context with the way that it encourages industry and researchers to collaborate, creates a lower cost, business-friendly environment, and improves work skills and infrastructure investment. It is a sizeable program. There is over $200 million across those areas where we have a competitive advantage: advanced manufacturing, food and agribusiness, medical technologies and pharmaceuticals, mining equipment, technology and services, and oil and gas and energy resources.
On these areas, I want to talk briefly about the cooperative research centres because they often go unnoticed in our discussion about this. There are 34 active CRCs. I have visited one in my electorate, Deep Exploration Technologies, and seen the important work it does. It was established to address the most significant challenge to the future of the minerals industry in Australia: the reduction in inventory and achieving more mineral exploration success. It has collaborations with Boart Longyear, a company located near the CRC, BHP Billiton, CSIRO and University of Adelaide.

So there are some good things happening already. Yes, we have to work on changing the approach. I want to return to Larry Marshall's contribution here. He said:

So, when I look at Australia's innovation dilemma and I look at us measuring everything by science excellence and citations and publications, I think that is the wrong measure. He thinks that there needs to be a different measure that 'measures impact or collaboration'. I agree. We need a different approach and a different mindset where we aim to get a better return on investment. We have the right organisations and the right infrastructure. This is why the Prime Minister, Christopher Pyne and the Assistant Minister for Science, Karen Andrews, are all working along these lines—to make sure we optimise our investment.

Ms MacTIERNAN (Perth) (11:35): Today, I want to contest the claim that the government is delivering on its promised Industry Innovation and Competitiveness Agenda. I note in passing that the member moving this motion, whom I have a high regard for in a general sense, did, however, preside over the demise of a very innovative biotech industry in her own electorate—a business that was hounded out of this country by a witch-hunt orchestrated by a multinational company.

But that is not going to be my focus today. My focus will be on the very real prospect that, in Australia, we can in fact have an automotive industry. There is a very real possibility for not only an Australian but, indeed, a Western Australian car-manufacturing industry. What we need to do is move away entirely from the existing way in which we are delivering motor vehicles and take on board an entirely new, 21st century approach to manufacturing. That approach is one that focuses not on mass production—large production runs of a standardised product—but one that has a much more individuated production technique that allows for a greater degree of individuation and much smaller production runs. That, as we know, is the way in which manufacturing has to move.

Simmons Global is a Western Australian engineering outfit that has for the past 15 years been providing a great deal of engineering innovation to some of WA's largest civil and mining projects. This is a group of people who are out there doing innovation that has been solving many problems with big projects in Western Australia. Dave Simmons proposes that if we took a different approach to vehicle manufacturing, if we used the space frame construction techniques that are used in aeronautical engineering and in a number of construction processes, then we could manufacture vehicles on a much smaller scale and manufacture vehicles such as those that are especially designed for use in mining outfits or used in municipal settings, for emergency services, such as police vehicles, and that we could actually construct. We would not have to be constructing the sorts of volumes we have seen using traditional manufacturing techniques.

Dave has made a submission to the Senate Economics References Committee inquiry that is looking at the future of the automotive industry. He has set out the case for changing the
rules that regulate the automotive transformation scheme to allow new manufacturers of motor vehicles to come in and apply for financial assistance. We know we are not going to have a manufacturing industry in this country if it is a case of just getting out of the way. We need active engagement in R&D. We have to get involved there, providing these opportunities. Dave is very clear that he wants to have a partnership with government, bringing on board private sector equity to combine with resourcing under the Automotive Transformation Scheme to get this idea off the ground. This is going to provide an opportunity for all of those parts manufacturers who are facing a very bleak future to be incorporated into a new model of automotive manufacturing.

I strongly urge the government to review its position and to not rule out, as they have, out of hand, an engagement in a new automotive industry. We can do this. In my electorate I see the magnificent success of companies like Hofmann Engineering that are able to export around the world. We can do this. Here we have a smart 21st century company. Let's support it.

Debate adjourned.

Payday Lending and Consumer Leases

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (11:41): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) there is considerable evidence that payday lending and consumer leases are not properly regulated and that both financial practices are causing serious harm to low income Australians;

(b) irresponsible and immoral lending is endemic in the payday lending industry, which is growing rapidly and developing new online opportunities to encourage people to borrow with insufficient consideration of their capacity to bear the exorbitant and poorly regulated interest costs that payday lending involves;

(c) the Australian Securities and Investment Commission review of payday lending found that 24 per cent of loans were taken out by Centrelink customers and 54 per cent were taken out by customers who had two or more payday loans in the previous 90 days, a clear indication that they are caught in a cycle of repeat borrowing;

(d) consumer leases can involve an effective annualised interest rate of 240 per cent, and generally mean that vulnerable consumers pay three or four times the value of basic household items like refrigerators or washing machines;

(e) consumer leases operate with lower consumer protection standards under the National Credit Code, though such agreements are not materially different in effect from credit contracts;

(f) in 2013-14 nearly half of Radio Rentals’ $197 million revenue was received through the Centrepay system which allows payments to be directly debited from a consumer’s Centrelink account; and

(g) Senator Cameron has brought a private Senators’ bill that seeks to remove consumer leases from access to the Centrepay system; and

(2) calls on the Government to:

(a) ensure that the recently announced review into the 2013 reforms to payday lending focuses on securing the wellbeing and protection of low income Australians irrespective of the effect this has on the profits of companies that practice this kind of often predatory lending;
(b) act quickly to stop consumer leases being used to prey on vulnerable and low income Australian households by ensuring that consumer leases are subject to the same standards and controls as credit contracts, and by introducing stricter controls on the currently outrageous and indefensible costs involved in such arrangements, including the requirement to prominently disclose the total cost of all contracts; and

(c) support Senator Cameron’s initiative in removing access to Centrepay for consumer lease companies and amend section 123TC of the Social Security (Administration) Act 1999 to include a definition of consumer leases for this purpose.

I am very pleased to bring this motion forward for debate, and I want to start by acknowledging the work that has been done by my colleague and friend Senator Doug Cameron to lead the consideration of this issue and to push for change.

The essence of this motion is simple: no responsible government should allow, let alone enable, practices by companies that seek to prey on those who are financially vulnerable.

There is ample evidence to show that payday lending and consumer leases are forms of credit that are targeted irresponsibly at people who are experiencing financial hardship in order to extract a cynical and unfair profit from those who are least able to suffer that kind of gouging.

As the motion makes clear, the review by the Australian Securities and Investment Commission found that 24 per cent of payday loans were taken out by Centrelink clients and 54 per cent were taken out by people who had had two or more such loans in the course of the previous 90 days. In other words, payday loans are not being used by people who are in relatively stable financial circumstances to bridge an out-of-the-ordinary shortage of cash; they are being used by desperate people who are caught in a cycle of repeated borrowing, who are punished with borrowing costs that will inevitably deepen their already difficult circumstances.

This deeply immoral practice is expanding as a result of the ability to provide credit through online portals. That will only lessen the already insufficient care with which this kind of credit is extended, with exorbitant costs for people who do not have the capacity to meet them. In the case of so-called consumer leases, people who are at the very bottom of the income scale are being encouraged to acquire the use of household goods through a financing arrangement that involves an effective annual interest rate of up to 240 per cent. While the emphasis in the marketing material is on the weekly rental of, say, a television or a refrigerator, the truth is that desperate people are paying three or four times as much as it would cost to actually buy such household goods. It is, frankly, scandalous that the companies that operate in this sector are able to co-opt the Centrepay system to secure their profits in this vulture-like way.

Nearly half of Radio Rentals' 2013-14 revenue of $197 million was received through the Centrepay facility. It is bad enough that proper regulation does not prevent this kind of usurious practice, but it is outrageous that a social welfare framework like Centrepay, which is designed to ensure that essential costs like rent and power bills can be prioritised within a tight budget, can be misused to enable the exploitation of people who are reliant on welfare assistance. We can be sure that the additional costs that arise when consumer leases push a family or individual who is already struggling over the edge are ultimately met by other parts of the publicly funded safety net, while the consumer lease companies laugh all the way to the bank.
I note that the Western Australian government recently made the bizarre, counterproductive decision to strip funding from financial counselling services that support people who are on the brink of financial disaster. The Western Australian Council of Social Service made the point that every dollar invested in those services saves a cost of $5 that would otherwise be incurred. In the case of consumer leases, not only are welfare payments being siphoned away through arrangements that cruelly prey on people who have very little money, who are under very great stress and who are often at a clear disadvantage in terms of their financial literacy, but the impact of this practice, in aggravating or pushing over the edge a person's susceptibility to total financial collapse, then results in further costs to government.

I applaud Senator Cameron for his work to highlight the importance of this issue and to craft a sensible legislative fix to a regulatory blind spot that should never have been allowed to develop in the first place. I also want to thank those who prepared and supported the motion to better regulate payday lending that was passed at the WA Labor conference earlier this year. I acknowledge the very helpful input from Gerard Brody, CEO at the Consumer Action Law Centre. Gerard, his colleagues and all the people who work in the community legal and financial counselling sector know firsthand just how pernicious and damaging payday lending and consumer leases can be.

In parliamentary life and public administration, there are many vexed issues that can be difficult to balance or navigate. This is not one of them. It can be hard sometimes to properly define the problem before working out an appropriately effective solution. That is not the case here. These financial practices have nothing to recommend them and they are promoted through the use of misleading material to people who need financial help, not financial trickery. They deliberately cover up the outrageous scale of the impost they levy on vulnerable people and they make improper use of Australia's welfare framework in order to do so. They should be subject to urgent and sharply restrictive regulatory change in the best interests of people dealing with serious disadvantage and for the effective and proper functioning of Australia's social safety net.

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

Mr Laurie Ferguson: I second the motion and reserve the right to speak.

Ms HENDERSON (Corangamite) (11:46): I rise to address the issues raised by the member for Fremantle. I want to begin by saying that the government is committed to ensuring that vulnerable Australians have access to tools to effectively manage their money. However, I think, in this private member's bill put forward by Senator Cameron, he has really missed the mark.

This goes back to Labor's so-called reform in 2011 and 2012. I think it is important that it is well understood that when the federal Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation, the Hon. Bill Shorten, in 2011 passed amendments to the consumer credit and corporations amendment bill—and there were some further amendments—these amendments regulating payday lending were simply not good enough. I am looking at an esteemed academic, Ian Ramsay, in the Monash University Law Review. He says the amendments made by Labor:

… reduced protections for payday loan borrowers, indicates that the campaign undertaken by the payday loan industry was influential in shaping the final version of the Enhancements Bill.
We have seen some real failures from Labor in relation to regulating payday lending, and there is no doubt that some of these rip-offs are an absolute disgrace. I take great pride and reflect on the time when I was a consumer advocate working for the ABC's *The Investigators* program and it makes my blood boil when you see these lenders charging people who are desperate to buy household goods up to 240 per cent in interest rates.

So while we must tackle the problem—a problem that was not fixed by Labor, and that has been well recognised—Labor's proposal is not tackling the problem. That is the issue. The Centrepay system does give some credit access to those who are most vulnerable on welfare benefits. If they do not have access to Centrepay, they do not have access to any credit at all, because most welfare recipients may have trouble accessing a credit card. So Senator Cameron has faltered in the solution.

The Assistant Treasurer announced on 7 August that there will be a review of the small amount credit contract laws which will consider whether those laws should be extended to apply to regulated consumer leases. So the government is very alive to the issues and to Labor's failures in this area. It is sensible to consider options for further changes, including possible caps on and disclosure of effective interest rates. I ask the question: if these rip-offs are occurring, which they are and it is an absolute disgrace, why isn't Labor tackling the core of the problem? Why isn't Labor looking at the rip-offs and forcing these lenders to disclose how much they are ripping off Australians? That is what we are interested in.

We say that the government does not support Labor's bill. It is not the right solution. We are very open to helping to fix this issue, but the way in which Senator Cameron has proposed this is, as I say, not going to stop the rip-offs and that is fundamental.

On 1 July this year, there were a number of changes to Centrepay which will help protect the most vulnerable Centrelink customers. These changes will mean that Centrepay no longer supports consumer leases that are not regulated by the National Consumer Credit Protection Act, and that is very important. I understand some of those providers now excluded from Centrepay are now arranging to obtain an Australian credit licence and, by enhancing regulation, of course they will be subject to review by ASIC as the regulator.

ASIC has raised a number of issues in relation to the standards of conduct in the payday industry, and the department is currently seeking assurances from lessors involved in Centrepay that their consumer leasing practices comply with the responsible lending obligations set by ASIC. So there is now no doubt that we need greater standards. There is no doubt that we need greater regulation and that we are actively reviewing these issues: however, the proposal put forward by Labor, unfortunately, does not resolve the problem.

As I mentioned, the Assistant Treasurer announced a review of the small amount credit contract laws and the government, as I say, is very open to those solutions. Thank you very much.

**Mr Laurie Ferguson** (Werriwa) (11:51): I certainly do not wish to go into partisan polemics about the exploitation of some of the most desperate people in this country; however, I thought that was a pretty confused performance. The speaker decried Labor's failure to fully rectify the problem when in 2013 it moved to rein in the worst excesses by capping interest and establishment fees. Then it went on to say how horrendous the exploitation of these people was and how shocked the member for Corangamite was et cetera.
On a number of other occasions she said that Labor had failed to do anything and that the government was having a review.

Quite frankly, I think this issue is one in which both sides—we could equally go back to 2013 and see whether the then opposition was more intent upon criticising Labor's legislative initiatives from the view of defending these people or was it actually calling for further reforms. I doubt it was. As I say, I think people on both sides of this House really should look at the way in which these companies are exploiting people.

Senator Cameron first came across this development in the Penrith shopping centre. People were out there in the street actually trying to recruit single parents on low incomes, disabled people et cetera and persuade them to take out loans that they should not. This argument by the industry and others that, quite frankly, they are helping people with no other options in life has to be answered. If they were so interested in these people, they would not have a situation where people are paying 1,900 per cent in compound interest on some occasions. They should be counselling people as to whether they can afford within their long-term financial interest to undertake these loans.

It is not as though there are not other options out there. I agree that these people should be given far more finance by the banks and governments in this country, such as they are by NILS, established by the Presentation Sisters. It has operated in my own region of Sydney for 10 years. I have been at every national conference of NILS. For people living in the electorate for six months or more, it helps them with whitegoods, furniture, medical equipment et cetera. This is the kind of priority we should have, as well as clamping down very severely on what we have been talking about.

It is wrong that Centrepay access is given to exploitationist characters. No-one is saying for a moment that Centrepay should not operate for legitimate purposes so that the right kind of companies out there doing things for people can have access. But to argue that because of the need to have Centrepay we have to have these characters as part of it is really worrying.

In 2015 the Federal Court handed down a fine of $18.975 million against Cash Store, a failed payday vendor. Their role just typifies the problem out there. They operated until September 2013. They had 80 stores and wrote up 10,000 short-term loans of up to $2,200 a month. The court examined 281 randomly selected consumer credit insurance contracts arranged by that company up to 2012 but found only four of the 281 contracts did not involve some contravention of Australian legal requirements. Based on this, ASIC argued that 300,000 of the total 325,726 contracts arranged by the Cash Store were likely to have breached responsible lending laws.

A 2012 consumer action survey on the subject found that the demographics of those who took out these loans have remained stable since 2002. They are low-income borrowers in their 20s and 30s, slightly under half of which have a young dependent child or children and 45 per cent of whom are in full-time employment. Between 20 per cent and 30 per cent of borrowers are likely to receive some form of Centrelink benefit. Back in 2008, 28 per cent of borrowers were in part-time or casual employment, 22 per cent were unemployed and five per cent were full-time students. Seventy-three per cent of those in employment had below-average income earnings, with 23 per cent reporting incomes of less than $20,000.
This is so important to this country. It is so important to people who are struggling to make ends meet and being manipulated into these kinds of contracts where they often are not advised on the interest they will pay and are not told how in the long term it will absolutely destroy their already meagre lifestyle just for the benefit of these unscrupulous operators, many of whom then fly from the Australian legal system, close themselves down and move into another sector. I congratulate Senator Cameron for initiating this in this way. I would hope the way through is found by both sides of politics to rectify the problem rather than engaging in meaningless partisan politics.

Mr EWEN JONES (Herbert—Government Whip) (11:56): I am pretty much in direct concurrence with the member for Werriwa on these things, because I think there is a real issue here. It will be a great day when we all have enough money to pay our bills and buy the things we need for our families. But, until that day comes, there is a need for people to be able to access credit under sensible guidelines. I think we may be coming at these things from an ideologically different perspective, but we all want the same things. We want people to be able to move in this space with clear guidelines, understanding what is going to happen.

In the hands of the right people at the right time these facilities are an absolute lifesaver. Credit is a fantastic thing if you use it correctly. When I was a child, there was only a certain type of person who would avail themselves of hire-purchase. Your parents would look down the end of their noses at people who would turn up and take things on terms. You paid cash for things. The advent of Bankcard in 1974 changed all that—the way we access our funds, the way we move our funds and the way we do these things. That means that consumer credit is now part of our lives. When the member for Werriwa and I were kids, the saying, 'Look after your pennies and the pounds will take care of themselves,' was a creed by which everyone lived. Now we find that people tend to save by paying something off. They will borrow and then they will pay something off.

I spent 10 years collecting debt on consumer credit on Bankcard, MasterCard and those sorts of things for one of the major banks. This was from 1981 to 1990. It was painfully obvious to me that people did not understand what they were getting into. We still lack that basic education. We see the way we run our housing market. For people in Sydney, there is a rising housing market. If you have a housing market that is on fire, everyone jumps in and wants to buy. We do not do that with shares. We do not do it with anything else. We just do it with housing. So it comes down to that basic education.

The key to everything here is that if there was no market for a product there would be no product. For some people this is a vital way of doing things. Like the member for Werriwa said, this has been around for a while. In the previous parliament, in the six years of the Labor government, there were always politics at play. That is what the situation is here. But Centrepay and those consumer leases have been around since 1998. Where you have a system with a set of rules that are open to interpretation it is open to abuse.

Having been in consumer finance where you sell finance for motor cars and things like that, I know there is a certain type of person out there who is not particularly worried about the terms and conditions. They just want the loan to get the car, fridge or whatever it is they need because they are desperate. You will find that their eyes will roll back in their heads and they will just keep on nodding. The saying goes in the sales industry and the finance industry: 'If they are nodding, you are selling.'
But you still have to get it through, and you will find that your big four banks will preclude people because it is not possible for them to qualify for a loan, which opens them up to second-tier and third-tier lenders where access is easy but interest is very high. Used correctly, if you are repaying it over a month, high annual interest is not a big deal, because you are not talking about a substantially large amount of money. The member for Werriwa was incredibly correct when he talked about the establishment of loans and what happens when the people start to consolidate loans and roll them into other loans. You find that one loan may have been going for six months, and you have paid the interest and you are just rolling the principal over to start again. Those are the issues we have to deal with.

There is a sensible solution here. What we have to do in this space is understand that not all credit is bad, that not all operators are bad, that not all interest rates are bad. There is lending for risk, and if you are in there you have to make sure that you are available for that. But if we spend a little bit more time explaining to kids when they get to school and in their final six weeks of high school in year 12 what responsible service of alcohol is, what responsible lending, what a credit card can actually do to you, what consumer credit can do to you and how it can affect your life forever, you would not find nearly as many people getting into trouble with being bankrupted or having defaults against them for telephone bills and all that sort of thing. Consumer credit is a massive part of our lives, and there is a massive amount of work that we have to do.

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEES

Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters

Reference

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Craig Kelly) (12:01): The Speaker has received a message from the Senate informing the House that the Senate has agreed to a resolution referring the matter of the regulatory framework governing the financing of electoral activities undertaken by political parties and other participants in the political process to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters for inquiry and report.

The message read as follows—

That the following matter be referred to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters for inquiry and report by the last sitting day in March 2016:

The regulatory framework governing the financing of electoral activities undertaken by political parties and other participants in the political process, with particular reference to:

(a) how many of the recommendations made by the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters in its 2011 report (the report) on its inquiry into the funding of political parties and election campaigns were accepted by government, and how many have been implemented;

(b) what factors, if any, are contributing to any delays in implementing the accepted recommendations of the report;

(c) how much was spent on the last election in 2013 by:

(i) political parties or associated entities,

(ii) third parties,

(iii) candidates, and
(iv) Senate groups;
(d) what proportion of the expenditure at the last election in 2013 was provided by private sources, including:
   (i) what amounts were acquired from each source,
   (ii) the circumstances of the donation or contribution,
   (iii) whether third parties were involved in the donations or contributions, and
   (iv) what influence those sources had on the political process;
(e) the current level of public funding provided to:
   (i) political parties or associated entities,
   (ii) third parties,
   (iii) candidates, and
   (iv) Senate groups;
(f) how public funds are allocated to electoral activities, and whether the current levels of such funds should be increased or decreased or allocated differently;
(g) whether the status of the political donations as tax deductions should be maintained;
(h) whether any comparable democracies:
   (i) regulate electoral contributions from private donors, or particular classes of private donors, or
   (ii) have absolute limits on private funding on electoral activities, and, if so, what policy objectives underlie the regulation and whether those objectives are achieved;
(i) how the regulation of electoral funding is achieved in comparative democracies, and whether it is applicable in the Commonwealth sphere; and
(j) any other related matter.

BILLS

Customs Depot Licensing Charges Amendment Bill 2015
Customs Amendment (Fees and Charges) Bill 2015
Import Processing Charges Amendment Bill 2015
Australian Immunisation Register Bill 2015
Australian Immunisation Register (Consequential and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2015
Social Services Legislation Amendment (Cost of Living Concession) Bill 2015
Statute Law Revision Bill (No. 2) 2015
Tax and Superannuation Laws Amendment (Better Targeting the Income Tax Transparency Laws) Bill 2015
Social Services Legislation Amendment (Low Income Supplement) Bill 2015

Returned from Senate
Message received from the Senate returning the bills without amendment or request.
Cognate debate.

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

Mr HARTSUYKER (Cowper—Minister for Vocational Education and Skills and Deputy Leader of the House) (12:02): Under the Education Services for Overseas Students Amendment (Streamlining Regulation) Bill 2015, the Tuition Protection Service will be strengthened by enhancing the powers of its director. The TPS ensures international student's investments in their education is protected. These bills will amend the legislation to ensure that the TPS operates more efficiently and has a more direct role in supporting the quality and integrity of international education. Powers will now be vested directly in the TPS director to allow him or her to issue production notices. The TPS director will also be able to make a recommendation to an ESOS agency about the enforcement action that should be taken against an educational institution. These changes are about supporting quality, unambiguously to allow the regulators to take action quickly against poor practices in international education.

In conclusion, the changes to the ESOS Act will significantly reduce complexity and cut red tape without compromising Australia's strong student protections and our reputation as a world-class destination for international students. Extensive consultation on these reforms has reiterated the strong support from the international education sector and the benefits that will flow to providers and students. I thank the international education sector for their genuine and constructive commitment to improving the ESOS framework. Claims by the opposition and the National Tertiary Education Union that the government's legislative changes will water down international students' protections are wrong. The member for Kingston, in her speech, recognised that the measures have the support of many parts of the sector and will reduce unnecessary red tape. I would like to thank members who spoke on the measures in support of the government's plan, which will lead to a better and stronger international education sector and enhance the reputation of our country as a destination for students.

Question agreed to, Mr Wilkie dissenting.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Mr HARTSUYKER (Cowper—Minister for Vocational Education and Skills and Deputy Leader of the House) (12:05): by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.
Education Services for Overseas Students (Registration Charges) Amendment (Streamlining Regulation) Bill 2015

Second Reading

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

Third Reading

Mr HARTSUYKER (Cowper—Minister for Vocational Education and Skills and Deputy Leader of the House) (12:06): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

Tax Laws Amendment (Combating Multinational Tax Avoidance) Bill 2015

Second Reading

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

Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (12:06): I move the second reading amendment which has been circulated in my name:

That all the words after "That" be omitted with a view to substituting the following words:
"while not declining to give the bill a second reading, the House notes that its revenue impact is unquantified, and calls on the Government to adopt Labor's fully-costed multinational tax package to raise $7.2 billion over the next decade".

Labor's position is to support the Tax Laws Amendment (Combating Multinational Tax Avoidance) Bill 2015. Labor has been calling for more action on multinational taxation for over two years and we will not be standing in the way of significant action on multinational taxation—or even insignificant action, which may well be what this bill being debated before the House is. We are taking a constructive position on this and we are willing to work with those opposite. We hope that, in return, the hand of constructive bipartisanship might be returned, and the government might look seriously at Labor's $7.2 billion package tackling a different set of loopholes from those addressed in this bill.

The bill contains four schedules. Schedule 1 introduces a new concept into tax law, the notion of a 'significant global entity', which will potentially capture up to 1,000 companies with annual income of over AS$1 billion. Schedule 2 amends the existing anti-avoidance provision to counter instances where multinational firms use artificial arrangements to avoid paying corporate tax in Australia. Schedule 3 doubles the maximum penalties for firms involved in tax avoidance and profit-shifting scams. Those stronger penalties will not apply where the taxpayer has a reasonably arguable position. Schedule 4 implements the OECD's action plan on transfer-pricing documentation and country-by-country reporting.

Labor notes that this multinational tax bill takes an untested approach to corporate tax. There is no precedent for this approach anywhere in the world, and indeed not even the
Australian Treasury can say how much revenue it will bring in. It remains to be seen if this bill will protect even one dollar of Australian tax. The bill has its genesis in an initial thought bubble from the member for North Sydney. Last year the British government announced it would adopt a diverted profits tax, commonly known as the 'Google tax', and the member for North Sydney latched onto that approach. When it was pointed out that Australia already has anti-avoidance laws and that there are significant limitations with the British approach, including the fact that it may well breach a whole raft of European union and international tax treaties, the member for North Sydney dropped that idea. It remains to be seen whether the British 'Google tax' is enforceable or effective. There has not been one single case brought under it so far.

Following that flipping and flopping over the question of an Australian 'Google tax', the member for North Sydney released an exposure draft of this bill. That exposure draft, though, was heavily criticised by various outside groups. The Law Council of Australia stated, 'The bill should not be enacted in its current form.' So what we are debating today is the third attempt by the Abbott-Turnbull government to come up with a viable plan to tackle multinational tax avoidance—from the thought bubble of the 'Google tax', to the exposure draft, to the current bill. The new Treasurer must be hoping this is third time lucky. He cannot, unfortunately, say how much revenue will be protected by this package, because the Treasury has been unable to cost it.

If one looks at Budget Paper No. 2, page 14, there should be revenue estimates sitting next to this bill, but there are not; there are a set of asterisks. Just a handful of asterisks represent the revenue that should be added to the budget bottom line by a good multinational tax package. One can see the situation immediately by just imagining what would happen if the boot were on the other foot, if I were walking in here today and announcing on behalf of Bill Shorten's Labor opposition a tough multinational tax plan that would raise an unspecified amount of revenue. Commentators would rightly laugh at such a package, and that is the approach that many commentators ought to take in the case of the government's package. We will give the government the benefit of the doubt. We will pass this bill, because we believe that protecting Australia's revenue base is too important to let politics get in the way.

I should note that, while we were in opposition, the other side of the chamber did not give Labor the same constructive bipartisanship support in our efforts to stop multinational profit-shifting and crack down on tax avoidance loopholes. When we brought forward the Tax Laws Amendment (Countering Tax Avoidance and Multinational Profit Shifting) Bill 2013, which plugged loopholes in Australia's transfer-pricing rules and anti-avoidance rules, members opposite voted against it. When we introduced the Tax Laws Amendment (Cross-Border Transfer Pricing) Bill (No. 1) 2012, which cracked down on companies overvaluing assets in offshore jurisdictions, the coalition members voted against it. When we amended the Taxation Administration Act to bring better tax transparency and ensure huge companies are held accountable for their contribution to Australia, members opposite voted against it. And, what is worse, last Thursday the government rammed through the Senate changes that have gutted Australia's tax transparency laws, taking around half of the affected companies out of the tax transparency net, pushing the dial towards secrecy and away from transparency. It is the wrong approach at a time when we need more sunlight, not less. The Abbott-Turnbull
government has put a cloak of secrecy over the tax affairs of private companies earning more than $100 million a year. It has now ensured that Australians cannot have an open and informed discussion about how much tax big private companies really pay.

Labor introduced tax transparency in 2013 because we know that scrutiny and openness help make sure that everyone pays their fair share. Without transparency, dodgy dealings can flourish in the dark. We had evidence that around a fifth of those companies who are affected, who have been taken out of the tax transparency net, paid no tax last year. Labor has consistently fought the government's efforts to gut tax transparency. No party has argued longer or louder to keep transparency in place and make all companies with total income over $100 million publish what they pay. We took the lead in addressing multinational tax avoidance when we were in office and we have continued to take that lead from opposition. We remain the only political party in this parliament which has a carefully costed plan that adds significant revenue to the budget bottom line in the area of multinational tax avoidance.

That plan was announced in March this year—the first time since the early 1990s that an opposition has put forward a costed, significant revenue package in the first half of the parliamentary term. We have consistently argued that our package delivered in concert with the full implementation of the OECD's multinational base erosion and profit-shifting action plan would get our tax rules right for the future.

Labor's plan has several parts. First, we propose revising the current thin capitalisation rules to reduce the amount of debt that companies can claim deductions for in Australia. Companies will no longer be able to automatically claim deductions, up to a 60 per cent debt-to-assets ratio, for their Australian operations. Second, we propose to better align Australia's rules on hybrid entities and instruments with tax laws in other countries. Hybrid instruments are often classified differently around the world. Some jurisdictions treat the assets as equity, others as debt.

Standardising the rules reduces the opportunity for companies to double-dip and claim tax exemptions in one country and tax deductions in another. I am yet to meet a tax expert who thinks it reasonable that while tax advisers can look at how an international jurisdiction treats a hybrid instrument the ATO has not been able to do the same thing. While pursuing those reforms, Labor will invest new resources in the Australian Taxation Office. After big budget cuts under the Abbott government Labor will ensure that the tax office has the resources it needs to identify and investigate multinational profit shifting.

The thing about Labor's changes is they can be implemented alongside the changes in this bill. That is because this bill fails to address the practice of companies loading debt into Australia to artificially inflate their tax deductions. Even as the government is cracking down on GST compliance for small businesses they are turning a blind eye to how some of the world's biggest firms are using deductions. We do know, from things like the PwC Lux Leaks, that some big companies are transferring money into their Australian arms and dressing it up as a loan, even though it is really just shifting resources from one pocket to another. In paying back those artificial loans companies are, effectively, sending the profits offshore by pocketing a tax deduction in Australia.

We know that the problem of debt deductions is a real one, and that is the problem that Labor's package zeros in on. At the present, there are three debt-deduction rules but only one of those debt-deduction rules has good economic rigour behind it. Labor's proposal is to
remove the two debt-deduction rules that lack sound economic grounding and keep the one that has it. It is a worldwide gearing ratio approach, which allows companies to claim deductions against the average amount of debt they owe to banks around the world.

The worldwide gearing ratio is simple, in concept. If a company owes a lot of debt to the banks it can claim a lot of tax deductions but, if it does not owe the banks a cent, if all its debts are opaque internal loans at high-interest cost to offshore subsidiaries, then, no longer can a claim be the basis for debt deductions in Australia. We have to remember that every time we support a tax loophole that is a higher amount of tax other taxpayers need to pay. Importantly, the worldwide gearing ratio is already in the Australian tax law, so no-one can argue that what Labor is proposing is untested or unproven. Accountants for any large firm have, surely, already tested their firm's position against the three debt-deduction rules, so they will know their position under the worldwide gearing ratio.

I was surprised that under the member for Warringah and the member for North Sydney our $7 billion multinational tax plan was rejected out of hand. The cries of doom and disaster rang hollow to the many Australians who are unable to set up offshore entities in which they are able to claim debt deductions. I would urge the member for Wentworth and the member for Cook not to make the mistake of their predecessors, to look seriously at the Labor tax plan and to work constructively so that we can add to the budget bottom line, as this bill does not.

Australia needs a tax system that rewards the productive, the innovative, the resilient, the clever and the competitive. We do not need a tax system that rewards those willing to push the envelope the furthest. Loopholes in our tax system function a bit like the old-fashioned tariffs in the era of protection all round. McEwenism was grounded in special-interest pleading. The result was that others had to pay more. That is the way a tax system with loopholes operates.

Because Australia is an importer of capital, it needs investment from overseas. I spoke in the last sittings of parliament about the benefits of foreign investment for the Australian economy. We need firms to invest in Australia because they think Australia is a good deal, not because they think they can get a tax advantage from the Australian government. We need a plan that leverages the ingenuity of the Australian workforce to the strength of Australia's institutions and the quality of Australia's infrastructure. Our plan for winning investment from the world should be grounded on our fundamentals, not on having a tax boondoggle for big companies that lacks sound economic rationale. While the government attacks Labor's tax policy, it is attacking the only multinational tax plan that has been proposed, in this parliament, that will add to the budget bottom line.

We cannot let this bill mark the end of the government's efforts on multinational tax. In recent weeks the OECD handed down its final set of deliverables for its base erosion and profit-shifting action plan. This plan has been more than two years in the making and lays out a comprehensive 15-point agenda to close the loopholes that have opened up in the tax net due to changing technology and an increasingly global business environment.

The 15 items in the action plan tackle everything from the taxation of intangible goods to hybrid instrument rules and the creation of a multilateral tax instrument to allow more rapid coordination of rules between OECD countries in the future. Australia is making progress in some of these areas—for example, in the effort to extend the GST to digital downloads, which
was supported by both Labor and Liberal state and territory governments. But there is still a lot of work to do.

The Treasurer now has the OECD's blueprint and, with it, the chance to take positive, practical steps to fix more of the loopholes in our tax system. Yes, Australia should move with the OECD but now that the OECD's plan is on the table there should not be excuses and delays. Billions of dollars in tax revenue are at stake and Labor's plan tackles those loopholes in a constructive way, which is consistent with the principles of the OECD.

At next month's summit in Turkey, G20 leaders will decide on a time line for implementing the plan. The Prime Minister should push for its rapid and complete implementation and stand firm against efforts to water it down or delay it. If the Prime Minister comes home from Turkey with anything less than a clear commitment and time table for delivering the OECD's tax plan, it will show that nothing has changed in the Abbott-Turnbull government and that it remains a government that is tough with the weak but weak when it comes to the strong.

With this bill, Labor is demonstrating our willingness to work constructively with the government to tighten Australia's tax net. We would like to see the government do the same by focusing on Labor's tax package. If they would like briefings on any detail of Labor's tax package, our door is open. I am happy to sit down with members opposite to talk about how to make our tax system fairer and to make sure that we do not have loopholes and boondoggles left open in the tax net. For all their complaints about debt and deficits, we have seen the doubling of the budget deficit under this government. We have seen net debt projected to peak at around 13 per cent in the Pre-Election Economic and Fiscal Outlook; it is now projected to go to 18 per cent under this government.

If the Abbott-Turnbull government is really serious about closing the gap between taxation and spending, then they will work constructively with Labor. They will work constructively and engage with our tax plan, and add $7 billion to the budget bottom line over the next decade. I hope that the government will take up this offer, contribute to the budget bottom line with more than fine rhetoric and contribute real dollars.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Craig Kelly): Is the amendment seconded?

Mr Brendan O'Connor: I second the amendment.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The original question was that this bill be now read a second time. To this, the honourable member for Fraser has moved as an amendment that all words after 'That' be omitted with a view to substituting other words. The question now is that the amendment be agreed to.

Mr NIKOLIC (Bass) (12:24): I always listen with interest when the member for Fraser is speaking; but at the end of his contribution I heard him speak about debt and deficit, which is dangerous ground for the members opposite, given that when we came to government debt was on a trajectory to $667 billion a day, our country was borrowing hundreds of millions of dollars each week more than it was earning in revenue and we had spent the legacy that had been bestowed by the Howard government at the end of 2007.

Nevertheless, I appreciate the opportunity to contribute to the Tax Laws Amendment (Combating Multinational Tax Avoidance) Bill 2015. That is because the issue of multinational tax avoidance is one that hurts every country regardless of its size or the nature of its economy. Without fair and appropriate tax revenue, no government can progress its
agenda or provide the wide array of services that matter most to its people and which are amongst the hallmarks of a civilised society. These services include health, education, employment services, social security, research and development funding, defence and national security. Each of these, and a myriad of others, are both vital and expensive. Inevitably, too, they are the heartland of tax and tax related reform.

In Australia’s case, the issue of fair tax revenue is made even more important, even acutely so, by declining revenue from the most recent resources boom. Over the last decade or so, this boom has provided strong, reliable income for many Australian companies, delivering significant tax revenue to government. It is vitally important that a fair share of tax is paid on income earned.

Let me be very clear about this: those who, by whatever means, seek to avoid their taxation responsibilities are an unacceptable drain on our society. Those engaging in such behaviour are all too often short sighted. This is because, in an often futile effort to advantage themselves, they inevitably short change their own future opportunities and, on the balance of probabilities, will likely be caught anyway by a raft of increasingly sophisticated measures, technologies and ever tightening legislation, of which this bill represents a current case in point. When—rather than if—such individuals or organisations are identified, they will be appropriately dealt with by our laws. A wide range of penalties may be imposed, including those of a financial and punitive nature.

But let me start with a rhetorical question of sorts: where does this bill sit in the hierarchy of modern tax reform? It is, of course, not the be-all and end-all of tax control, legislation and/or reform, nor will it be the last such reform to warrant wide consideration, discussion and action in this House and in the Senate. But, nevertheless, it does constitute an important step in compelling large profit-making entities in Australia and further afield to pay their way and to contribute fairly to the betterment of the lives of all Australians.

I would like to provide a grassroots view of this matter, which strikes to the heart of why this bill is important, the extent of the community feeling it arouses and the way in which it reflects and may even assuage strong community sentiment. Each of us in this House is privileged to represent a unique part of the Australian federation. While each of our electorates is very different, I would hazard to say that they do have at least three things in common. This is the common ground of financial livelihood, a reality felt keenly in and across each and every Australian electorate from north to south and east to west.

First, each of our electorates is populated by a majority of people who might well describe themselves as being average, everyday Australians. They would also likely say that they are doing their level best to improve their family’s lot in life. This means keeping the most of what they earn to expend on their cost of living. Second, many of these Australians tell me that alleviating cost-of-living pressure is their key concern. I hear this all the time in calls, emails, survey responses and other encounters. It is a very strong message that everything seems to be getting more expensive everywhere. Third, again to a person, most would refer to their tax burden as being too high, particularly for those being paid average wages. The system of tax must address the conduct of those individuals and companies who try to avoid paying their fair share of tax. If anyone doubts these observations, come and join me in Launceston, Scottsdale, George Town or any number of beautiful places in my electorate of
Bass, and we can start a discussion along these lines. These views will be put often and often very forcefully.

This then is the overarching intent and point of this bill. It seeks to inject greater fairness back into the system, so that those who can most afford it are no longer afforded the dubious luxury of evading their tax responsibilities. To put it another way, it means that the future tax base will not be disproportionately borne by the mass of those who can least afford to do so. This is putting the fair fiscal go back into what it means to be an Australian.

To those who might say that this reform is late in coming, I would simply say that the issue of tax reform, like most other public policy or even life itself for that matter, remains a continual and often dynamic work in progress. To this end, this bill represents a constructive reform for all Australians. By its passage, it will exert a material impact on the schools, hospitals and other public facilities and infrastructure of the 21st century for all Australians.

In introducing further facets to this bill, the government has in fact employed a pragmatic carrot-and-stick approach. The carrot derives from the enhanced clarity which will be afforded through the introduction of new OECD standards on transfer pricing documentation and country-by-country reporting. Of course, the stick relates to the introduction of larger penalties for profit shifting and tax avoidance. Without the dual and complementary elements of this carrot-and-stick approach, it is unlikely that the desired rate of compliance would be achieved.

Allow me now to make a few additional observations about each of these carrot-and-stick measures. The issue of country-by-country reporting is a key plank in reducing and even closing existing opportunity for large multinationals operating in Australia to evade their tax responsibilities to this Commonwealth. The key weapon being used here is that of clarity, borne of the future lawful requirement for relevant high-earning multinationals to report annually by way of a statement to the tax commissioner with key information sufficient to enable that statutory officeholder to carry out transfer-pricing risk assessments. This information will likely include some or all of the following three key elements: first, a country-by-country report containing information on the location of the economic activity undertaken by that multinational group; secondly, a master file which provides a high-level description of the multinational group’s business operations; and, thirdly, a local file describing the Australian entity’s operations and cross-border related party transactions.

The absence of such annual information until now has in effect supported the ability of large entities to evade, at least in part, their fiscal responsibilities to Australia and its overall common good. In turn, the combination of both the omission of such a reporting requirement together with the natural tendency of large corporates of every kind and nationality to seek to maximise profit has cost Australia and its people significant revenue flow, shifting the tax burden elsewhere. In retrospect, such financial losses are significant, regrettable and even amoral. Accordingly, closing the administrative reporting shortfall that allowed them to occur in the first place does this government and this parliament much credit.

The government’s adoption of the OECD’s country-by-country reporting standards, starting after 1 January 2016, requires multinational companies to provide the ATO with a much more comprehensive picture of their worldwide operations, including subsidiaries wherever they are located. The new transfer-pricing documents will show the revenue, profit, tax paid and
the numbers of employees in each country the multinational operates in. The ATO can then use this information to assess the risk more effectively.

In addition to the future regime of the reporting just described, the other edge of this government's weapon against such revenue loss is punitive in nature; it enforces compliance. These amendments double the maximum administrative penalties for large companies that are found to have entered or to have engaged in tax avoidance or profit-shifting schemes. These increased penalties apply only to companies with annual global revenue exceeding $1 billion and that do not adopt a tax position that is reasonably arguable. Judgements about whether or not a multinational has a reasonably arguable position about a related party transaction turns on factors like whether the transaction is a genuine arm's length price and whether appropriate processes were followed.

It is worth noting that multinationals with revenue over $1 billion covers around 90 per cent of all multinationals' revenue in Australia which will be subject to the stronger anti-avoidance rule. This will capture artificial or contrived arrangements that are designed to avoid a taxable presence in Australia. We expect this new rule will apply to approximately 30 large multinationals. It is anticipated that significant diverted profits will be brought back into the Australian tax net. In so doing, the government, through this bill, seeks only to be fair and to achieve an equitable state of balance. This is a balance between the need to curb multinational tax avoidance whilst also continuing to encourage multinational business activity in Australia. Future business activity by multinationals will continue in so many ways to stimulate and support our economy, including, not least, the provision of employment opportunities, which are themselves the source of individual tax revenue.

It is worth noting that, in addition to the government's multinational tax avoidance agenda, we are also moving on other fronts to boost compliance. That includes efforts to ensure a level playing field for domestic suppliers of intangible services like movie downloads, which the member for Fraser mentioned, where we are applying the GST to digital services sold into Australia from offshore. This is expected to raise $350 million over the forward estimates—all of which goes to the states. This measure complements the work being done through the OECD and the introduction of similar rules in a range of countries, including Japan, South Korea and EU member states.

I also highlight the announcement in this year's budget that $128 million will be allocated to establish a new interagency task force to tackle serious financial crime. Agencies involved in this effort include the Australian Crime Commission, the Australian Federal Police, ASIC and the ATO.

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate to the House the importance of this bill, which is aimed largely at securing the lifeblood of Commonwealth expenditure for the future wellbeing and benefit of all Australians. This lifeblood is in fact the 'common wealth' of the Commonwealth of Australia. As such, it is only right and proper that every reasonable and prudent step be taken to garner and protect it now and in the future. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr KELVIN THOMSON (Wills) (12:37): I am pleased to speak to support the Tax Laws Amendment (Combating Multinational Tax Avoidance) Bill 2015 and also the amendment moved by Dr Leigh. The Labor opposition supports this bill. Before any government puts the tax bite on students, pensioners or the unemployed, it should make sure that multinational corporations are paying their fair share of tax.
The Tax Justice Network have revealed a lot of detail about this issue. For example, they have revealed how Volcafe, the world's second largest raw coffee trader, with a market share of 13 per cent, managed to minimise the tax it paid through the use of the tax haven of Jersey in the English Channel. It would buy coffee from small cooperatives in developing countries at the world market price and then sell the coffee beans to its own subsidiary, Cofina, at a similar price. In that way it made next to no profit in the developing countries and paid almost no tax to the governments of the developing countries it operated in, cheating them out of much-needed tax revenue. Cofina then sold the coffee beans to the final customers, such as Nestle or Starbucks. The money from the sale flowed into Jersey, where Cofina paid no tax on it. In 1998 Cofina sold US$408 million worth of coffee yet only made a gross profit of US$27 million. It was a post-box company with only one or two administrative staff. The coffee beans themselves travelled directly from the developing country to the final customer in the developed world. They never passed through Jersey. The company documents showed that the firm went out of its way to keep everything top secret, with Volcafe employees told to identify themselves as Cofina staff even though they were not.

This demonstrates the way in which this is a worldwide problem. I met with representatives of the Micah Challenge in Canberra in June last year and again just last week as part of their Voices for Justice campaign. I was briefed about the problems of tax evasion by multinational corporations, which deprived developing countries, on a significant scale, of vital revenue for poverty reduction and sustainable human development. Christian Aid has pointed out that, since 2008, developing countries have lost more than US$160 billion through multinational corporate tax evasion. This amount is actually bigger than the amount that these countries receive in aid, which amounted to US$120 billion in 2009. I want to congratulate Micah Challenge on their commitments to the world's poor and their ongoing commitment in raising these issues.

One of the main ways tax evasion occurs is through transfer pricing, which is when goods and services are sold between subsidiaries of the same parent company. These goods and services include things like intellectual property rights, management services, branding and insurance. The sales take place within the same multinational company. As long as the subsidiaries of the company charge each other a fair market price—known as an arm's length price—such transactions are perfectly legitimate. Tax is paid where it should be: the place where the business is actually taking place. However, by artificially altering the price, a company can increase its costs in a location with high taxes and transfer revenue to a location with low taxes—often a tax haven. This is known as transfer mispricing.

With 60 per cent of the world's trade now taking place within rather than between multinational corporations, there are substantial opportunities to manipulate transactions to reduce tax. This is especially the case for things like brands and management services. To detect if a company is distorting the price of a particular good, you can compare it with the normal price of the good traded between two unrelated companies. But, when it comes to things like branding rights and management services, it is much harder to determine if the price being charged is a fair one. It has been estimated that Australia lost 1.1 billion euros through transfer mispricing to the EU between 2005 and 2007 and US$1½ billion in tax revenue through transfer mispricing to the US in the same period.
This is not just happening in Australia; it is happening right around the world. In 2007 Bangladesh lost an estimated US$172 million in tax revenue as a result of trade mispricing of transactions with the EU and the US. Most of these losses occurred in the knitting and crocheting apparel industry. The Bangladesh government had invested technical and financial resources to facilitate the growth of this industry, yet lost out on much-needed tax revenue.

Micah Challenge believes that the government should require all multinational corporations registered in Australia to provide a worldwide combined report, including a country-by-country breakdown of their assets and their tax paid, and that we should have the G20 adopt this country-by-country reporting as standard.

The issue of multinational profit shifting is about fairly sharing the revenue burden. When a handful of big businesses shift their profits offshore, it hits the federal budget's bottom line and, when a small number of big firms do the wrong thing, it is the great majority of businesses, large and small, the self-employed and the pay-as-you-go taxpayers who end up paying more than they should. We do not need that kind of harmful economic activity which encourages firms to focus their energies on getting their accountants to play with loopholes that might allow debt-shifting within organisations, not in order to improve the productive capacity of the economy but in order to find the next loophole in the tax system.

We need to pay attention to the problem of financial inequality, which has been rising in recent times. A report in June last year called *Advance Australia Fair? What to do about growing inequality in Australia*, written by Bob Douglas, Sharon Friel, Richard Denniss and David Morawetz, found:

In the wake of a declining resources boom, there is a growing gulf between those in the top range and those in the lower ranges of wealth and income distributions.

That report warned that:

Inequality is increasing rapidly in Australia … and poses dangers to community wellbeing, health, social stability, sustainable growth and long-term prosperity.

Given that, we should not be giving away money to firms with multibillion dollar profits while taking money away from those who can least afford it. Australia's egalitarian values demand that we have a smarter approach on multinational profit-shifting.

The union United Voice, in collaboration with the Tax Justice Network Australia, released in September last year a groundbreaking report *Who pays for our common wealth? Tax practices of the ASX 200*. It revealed that 29 per cent of Australia's 200 largest listed companies pay an effective corporate tax rate of 10 per cent or less and that 14 per cent have an effective tax rate of zero per cent. This translates into an estimated loss in annual revenue of $8.4 billion, which is a matter of very considerable concern.

In 2013, 57 per cent of ASX 200 companies disclosed subsidiaries in tax havens. This figure could be higher as reporting is not mandatory. As Dr Mark Zirnsak, from the Tax Justice Network Australia, says:

The frequent use of subsidiaries in secrecy jurisdictions in combination with the shifting of debt and profits is resulting in lost tax revenue in Australia and overseas where it should be paying for essential services to help lift people out of poverty. Last financial year a massive $47 billion flowed from Australia to secrecy jurisdictions.
An internal Australian Taxation Office memo obtained under freedom of information and reported by Heath Aston in The Age in April said 10 companies had channelled a combined total of over $31 billion from Australia to Singapore in the 2011-212 financial year. An energy company operating in Australia transferred more than $11 billion to the low-tax jurisdiction of Singapore in that year. In the same year, an estimated $60 billion in so-called 'related party' transactions went from Australia to tax havens. Energy companies have established marketing hubs in Singapore, but their principal purpose appears to be as a destination to shift profits in order to pay less tax.

BHP and Rio Tinto reported $2.6 billion a year in profits in their Singapore marketing hubs, where tax rates are as low as 2½ per cent. These arrangements save the two companies more than $750 million a year in Australian tax. In 2005, the Singapore government registered a new company called BHP Billiton AG Singapore Branch and granted it Pioneer Service Company status, meaning it pays no income tax at all until 2020. Rio Tinto set up a string of Singapore companies in 2007 which were given development and expansion incentive status by the Singapore government, meaning they would only pay five per cent tax until 2022. It is deeply ironic that this blatant tax avoidance was going on at the very time the mining industry spending over $20 million, including $17 million from the Minerals Council, on advertising campaigning against Labor's Resources Super Profits Tax and making claims about how much tax they paid.

Large multinational companies have also used other devices to avoid Australian tax. Chevron Oil has been raising debt in the US at two per cent and lending the money to their Australian arm at nine per cent, with the interest payments cutting its Australian taxable income. US tech giant Apple has an Irish marketing arm, Apple Sales International, which takes ownership of Apple products manufactured in China while they are on the boat to Australia and Europe, adding a huge mark-up and reselling them to local Apple retailers before they reach port. It is a rort and we should not allow it.

The 2014-15 federal budget eliminated some 3,000 jobs in the Australian Taxation Office. Things like this greatly reduce the tax office's capacity to fight tax evasion by wealthy individuals and multinational corporations. Regrettably, what happens is that the employees who accept redundancies and leave are the ones the ATO can least afford to lose. Even worse, some accept private sector offers which see them put their skills an experience into increasing the budget deficit rather than reducing it. We should tackle debt shifting, close tax loopholes and resource the tax office properly to tackle artificial and contrived business structures. The tax office could help its own cause by revealing details of the worst corporate practitioners of tax avoidance. Taxpayer privacy for individuals is of course legitimate, but large corporations cannot make those same claims with a straight face. They are required to report much of their financial affairs to their shareholders and to the market already.

Michael West, writing in The Age, has drawn attention to the low visibility of the financial statements of foreign multinationals operating in Australia. He says that viewing the statements of a foreign multinational is expensive and not very informative. He says:

While proper audit procedures are in place in the sphere of ASX companies, there is a widespread failure of the audit profession and regulators in the foreign multinational space: accounts which don't stack up, myriad failures of disclosure, and a slew of failures to adhere to Australian accounting standards—and therefore the Corporations Act.
We need to have greater scrutiny in this area. We need to make sure that parliamentary committees like the Senate Economics References Committee hear from the real decision makers and make them account for their decisions. I think our parliamentary committees should make a point of explaining and examining the real decision makers.

A Labor government will shut down loopholes which allow big multinational companies to send profits overseas, ensuring that they pay their fair share of tax. According to the Parliamentary Budget Office, our plan will bring at least $1.9 billion back to Australia in tax from big multinationals over the next four years and raise $7.2 billion over 10 years as these tax loopholes are closed. This is the sort of approach we need. We need improved transparency and data matching, and we need a genuine commitment to tackling tax.

It is regrettable that the government has walked away from some of the tax transparency legislation which Labor passed in 2013. Without greater transparency, Australians will never know whether major corporations are paying their fair share of tax and, at a time when the government is talking about hitting low-income Australians by jacking up the GST, it is right to look closely at whether all taxpayers are making a fair contribution. Gutting tax transparency is the wrong move. Labor is supporting this multinational tax bill through the parliament. We believe that tackling tax avoidance and protecting Australia’s revenue base should be above politics. Under the former Prime Minister and the former Treasurer, the Liberals rejected our $7.2 billion multinational tax plan out of hand. They pursued tax transparency rollback, because it is popular with their mates, rather than for any sound public policy reason.

I hope that the new Prime Minister and the new Treasurer do not make these same mistakes. With this bill we are demonstrating our willingness to work constructively with the government to tighten Australia’s tax net. By way of response, I hope that the government does the same by taking up our $7.2 billion tax package and abandoning their attempts to gut Australia’s tax transparency laws.

Mr HUTCHINSON (Lyons) (12:52): I rise in support of the Tax Laws Amendment (Combating Multinational Tax Avoidance) Bill 2015. Indeed, this was Australia’s legacy in the presidency of the G20, in 2014. Australia led progress on the OECD’s base erosion and profit-shifting action plan for ensuring multinationals do pay their fair share of tax. It was under former Treasury Hockey’s leadership that the G20 delivered the first tranche of recommendations to address multinational tax avoidance. Of all the issues raised by members of parliament from time to time, in terms of multi-partisanship, of broad and wide-ranging support, I think this is absolutely morally the right thing for government to be doing. It is an important issue in the eyes of many people right across our country, including in my electorate of Lyons, that corporates, particularly multinationals, pay their fair share of tax. As has been highlighted here today, mums and dads, families, individuals and small businesses all pay their share and have much less capacity to be able to put in place sometimes very complex arrangements to avoid paying what should rightly be paid. There is a range of different taxes, from income tax, to company tax, to the GST and to various state based taxes. It is right and proper that multinationals profiting in Australia are paying their fair share of taxes.

In this country we already have some of the strongest taxation integrity rules in the world, but we as a government are determined to make these rules stronger. That is why with this bill
we are delivering on an election promise to set regulations in place to combat multinational tax avoidance.

What is also proper about this bill is that it enables a discussion to take place—one that often comes up from below the surface—about whether or not some multinationals avoid paying taxes on profits made in Australia to take place. If that is the case, it is simply right and proper that we do something about it. The public expects us to do that, because it undermines the public's faith in the tax system and leaves families and small businesses to unfairly carry the taxation burden.

Some multinationals are artificially structuring to avoid paying tax in our country, by booking offshore their revenue from Australian sales and profits. This means that they have an unfair advantage when it comes to Australian based businesses, often family businesses, sometimes small businesses and certainly Australian based corporates, with whom they are competing on an uneven playing field.

The new multinational anti-avoidance law will allow the Commissioner of Taxation to treat these large multinationals as though they have a taxable presence in Australia and are subject to Australian tax of profits generated locally. I think this is the right thing and a good thing for our country.

Country by country reporting is also part of this package, which will increase penalties—in fact it will double them—for those engaging in tax avoidance and profit shifting. The reporting will include identifying tax paid in every country in which they operate. Information is then shared with other tax authorities, and vice versa.

The government is also consulting on rules targeting hybrid mismatches, as well as taking action on harmful tax practices and treaty abuse rules. A voluntary transparency code that will be introduced by May next year will enhance public confidence in the taxation system and will provide better community understanding of the tax affairs of large companies, particularly multinationals. The Australian Taxation Office will have unprecedented resources to deal with international tax avoidance, with the government providing an extra $87.6 million to the ATO over three years to investigate tax avoidance, and act where appropriate.

The program so far has raised more than $400 million in tax liabilities, and it is estimated it will raise more than $1 billion in total. The tax office has identified around 30 companies to whom this law would likely apply. The revenue these big multinationals are earning in Australia is expected to be in the billions of dollars. They are being targeted because it is these companies that, through offshore activities, have the greatest opportunity to avoid paying tax, and they represent the highest risk to Australia's tax base.

The new law should not have an impact on Australian based businesses, because they are already taxed here in Australia and there are appropriate mechanisms by which they are checked, and the checks and balances apply to the payment of the appropriate amount of tax that is due.

This law focuses, absolutely and unapologetically, on foreign multinationals who are avoiding Australian taxation by booking their revenue overseas. The government has been working closely with academics, tax professionals and the business community for the past two years on the OECD's profit-shifting agenda. This new law was also released for public consultation on budget night. We have consulted with stakeholders such as business, tax
practitioners and the Australian Taxation Office to develop the legislation to ensure that the law will not have unintended consequences. This is aimed at targeting only the most complex schemes. Multinationals who are not artificially structuring to avoid paying taxes will not be impacted. Multinationals with annual global revenue of over $1 billion will need to consider whether they fall within this new law. Stronger penalties will apply, as I mentioned before, to those corporate entities that are found to be in breach of this rule. In fact, the penalties will be doubled for tax avoidance from profit-shifting schemes. It has been shown that deterrence is recognised as a key measure in tackling tax avoidance.

As I touched on, we made commitments in the 2015 budget. This legislation delivers on those but builds even more strongly on those things committed within the budget this year. In particular, the system will be broadened so that all significant global entities with revenues above $1 billion—estimated to be over 1,000 companies—will need to consider these rules. It means that, if you are structuring with a principal purpose of avoiding tax, the ATO will have the tools to catch you and ensure you pay your fair share. By removing the 'no or low-tax' requirement and relying solely on a principal purpose test, we are sending a clear message that, if you are deliberately and artificially avoiding paying Australian tax, this is simply unacceptable. Removing the 'no or low' requirement will also provide additional certainty and minimise disputes around whether a company operates in a no- or low-tax jurisdiction where it is clearly structured for a purpose of avoiding tax.

Mums and dads, families and hardworking Australians in small business, this legislation is for you. This is about responding to what the community clearly has demanded of us as a government—and, as a local member, I can certainly say that this issue is raised with me wherever I go around my electorate. It is right that we pay a fair share of tax. It is the role of government to fund a whole range of different services, and the priorities of government lie in delivering a welfare system that is a safety net for those Australians who have found themselves in hard times and are unable to support themselves. It is about paying for our infrastructure. It is about paying for our health system and our education system.

A question has been asked of me in recent times: how much revenue is this expected to raise? It is very difficult to estimate that. The revenue that these large multinationals are earning in Australia is expected to be in the billions of dollars, but, as to exactly what the taxation revenue from this measure will be, that will come to pass in time. I have touched before on who will be affected by the new law. The ATO has around 30 multinational companies in mind that could be targeted by this new law. It should not have an impact on Australian based businesses, because they are already taxed within this country. Another question that is asked quite frequently is: will the new law impact negatively on investment by multinationals in Australia? I think we all understand in this place how important foreign investment is to Australia. It has been thus since 1788. We have a big country with a small population, and the importation of capital into this country has benefited our nation and benefited the creation of jobs and opportunities for many Australians. The answer to the question is no. The risk that the targeted multinationals would scale back their Australian operations to minimise tax consequences is low. One other question, I guess, that should be addressed is: does this measure override any other bilateral tax treaties that we have in place? Again, the answer is no.
It is well-considered legislation—and, again, I pay due credit to former Treasurer Hockey and the work that he did in leading the discussion with the other members of the G20 during Australia's time in the role of president. We were able to achieve a result here that I think most Australians will see as a very positive step in the right direction in addressing tax avoidance by multinationals making profits in Australia.

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (13:06): If we want to have good schools and good hospitals in this country and a safety net that means people get a good income to retire on when they reach retirement age or are looked after if they fall through the cracks and find themselves falling on hard times through no fault of their own, government needs to raise the revenue for it. We also know that, increasingly, the government is not raising the revenue to fund those things. The coalition government's response to that is, firstly, to go out and talk about cutting some of those services—cutting education and cutting the pension. Its second response is to say, 'Perhaps we do need a bit more revenue, but let's ask everyday Australians to pay for it.' Their reaction, in their first budget, was to say, 'Let's address the growing revenue crisis by making people pay more'—to go and see the doctor, for example—or, 'Let's remove some other concessions that people might enjoy in this country.' That was their first response.

Quite rightly, this parliament and the Australian people stood up to them and said that not only was that not what they were elected on but also that they were breaking a fundamental point of principle in Australia, which is that we are an egalitarian country. Part of that means asking those who can most afford it to pay more tax so that we can continue to have those services. What became apparent then was that multinational companies who are operating here in Australia are not paying their fair share of tax. But it was not the government's first inclination to seek to remedy that. No: the government's first inclination was to turn on everyday Australians. The government has been dragged kicking and screaming to understanding that the only way we will secure the revenue base in this country will be by doing a number of things, including making multinational companies pay their fair share of tax.

Having been brought to that point, the government is wavering with this bill; the government is equivocating. What they are not doing with this bill is tackling one of the core problems in the legislation at the moment. We know that the general anti-avoidance tax provisions in our tax code are famously difficult to prosecute. The ATO has to be able to prove that a transaction was entered into for the dominant purpose of avoiding tax. How will the ATO be able to approve that without spending millions of dollars in courts? As we found out through the Senate inquiry, which I will talk a bit about in a moment, our big miners are setting up Singapore marketing hubs, for example. Miners will be able to argue that they set up these hubs to be closer to customers and because of the favourable business environment—nothing to do with being able to pay much less tax in Singapore. So, there is a hole in our legislation at the moment that makes it very, very difficult to prove that multinational companies are trying to get out of paying their fair share of tax in Australia, and this bill does nothing to address that.

There is another way in which this bill fails, and the government is clearly on notice about this. Thanks to the work of the likes of the Tax Justice Network, of Micah Challenge and of a number of journalists who have been drawing attention to the behaviour of multinational companies here in Australia, we know that one thing that could be done to help make
companies pay their fair share of tax is to be prepared to name and shame companies if they do the wrong thing. People in Australia have a right to know how much tax multinational companies are paying in this country and to have them outed and named if they are not paying the fair amount. The best way to dissuade companies from tax avoidance is to threaten reputational risk to prominent companies, who cannot afford to have their brand tarnished.

Opening financial details to public scrutiny of these big companies should be a strategic priority of this government and this parliament. With an international agreement to develop a uniform approach to tax avoidance, strong transparency changes are unilateral measures that Australia can take straight away without disrupting these multilateral discussions, while also showing that Australia is serious about confronting this global blight on governments. A strong suite of financial disclosure measures would be far more effective and less costly to the government than these proposed general anti-avoidance measures or the existing ones, which, as I have said, are notoriously difficult to prosecute.

Public dissemination of a company's financial accounts carries with it a severe reputational risk to many globally significant firms. Public exposure of tax arrangements in the UK has seen companies like Starbucks and Amazon announce that they will commence paying tax on UK sales, after the public outcry. Similarly, during the Senate inquiry that is the reason the government has been dragged into this—a Senate inquiry initiated by the Greens—Glencore announced that it would close its marketing hubs so that transactions can incur a tax in Australia. If we really do believe, as the economists tell us, that you need good information to be able to make good investment decisions, then efficient protection of the public interest and public revenue requires the removal of this information asymmetry where the corporations know exactly what is going on but the public does not. That means, through legislation and through the tax office, being prepared to let people in Australia know exactly how much tax these companies are paying.

What became clear during the Greens-initiated Senate inquiry was that the Public Service, the Senate and the general public have largely been kept ignorant about the depth and breadth of aggressive tax minimisation by globally linked companies. The significant public interest and outcry that we have heard around the inquiry and that we have read about in the papers can be largely attributed to the fact that there is not enough information available for people to know what is going on and how much tax is being paid by the companies that are operating here. Investigative financial journalism has a very important role to play in translating this information to the public. We have been grateful as an Australian people for the work done by journalists such as Michael West, Neil Chenoweth and Nassim Khadem.

But one thing needs to be made clear. When you think of the big multinational companies that operate in Australia, some of them are media companies. And when you think about our reliance on journalists at the moment, you have to also take into account something the Senate inquiry learnt during its hearings, which is that the ATO's most at-risk company for tax evasion was News Corporation. If they are on the ATO's watch list, then we cannot just leave it up to journalists to find out what is going on by these companies that are operating here; we cannot just leave it up to journalists. We have to empower the tax office, through legislation and through resources, to have all that information themselves and then make it available to the public. That way, it will be trusted and people will be able to vote with their feet and with their dollars on whether to support a company. Then we might see behaviour such as that in
the UK and the US, where large multinational companies, in order to continue their social licence to operate here in Australia, decide to pay tax in Australia. As long as we do not know what they are getting away with, they will continue to get away with it. Sadly, we have seen the government move the other way last week with their rich mates amendment bill that they passed to ensure that private companies, who are making enormous amounts of money here in Australia, do not have to disclose their affairs.

The government told us that there were concerns about people who operate some of these large companies being kidnapped, and that is why they could not tell us the information. What became apparent during the Senate inquiry was that the committee sought information from the Treasury and the Australian Taxation Office as to whether that advice had ever been provided. No evidence was provided to the Senate inquiry that the threats of kidnapping were based on information provided by any government agency. It was made up by the government to protect its mates, and that is why the government in this legislation, similarly, with large public companies is not being frank with the Australian people and saying, 'We will make large multinational companies tell you how much tax they are paying in Australia.'

The problem is that by carving out these kinds of exemptions, as we have seen with private companies and as this bill allows to continue to happen with public companies, there is a chance that that is in fact going to assist further tax minimisation.

The Uniting Church of Australia Synod of Victoria and Tasmania's submission to the estimate inquiry said:

... a document obtained from the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) under freedom of information has revealed that the private companies linked to Australian high wealth individuals have average profit margins lower than the other categories of companies … in the group that the legislation applies to. Almost half of these companies are foreign-headquartered and two-thirds have some form of international related party dealings. They account for most of all international related party dealings reported to the ATO, despite being only 21% of the businesses caught under the tax transparency measures of the Tax Laws Amendment (2013 Measures No. 2) Act. It is possible that the lower average profit is simply due to this category of companies performing worse on average than other categories of businesses. However, there is the possibility that the lower average reported profitability is due to aggressive tax practices.

In other words, when you do not tell people what is going on and you allow certain groups of people to keep large companies—not individuals—operating here to keep their tax affairs private, you provide an incentive for them to do things that most Australians do not have access to and most would find abhorrent. That is why, instead of going the way the government is going, we need to pass laws that allow us to name and shame these companies so that, if a multinational coffee company is not paying tax in Australia, people know and can threaten to go somewhere else and make them pay tax here in Australia.

One of the other things that ought to be looked at, if the government is serious about tackling this, is the publish what you pay bill. This is a bill that the Greens currently have before the parliament which would establish mandatory reporting requirements for payments made by Australian based extractive companies to foreign governments. It would require that companies disclose these payments on a country-by-country and project-by-project basis. We know that companies are operating and making payments to governments often with questionable human rights records, labour standards and environmental standards. Again, this
is another area where we need transparency because, if Australians know what companies are doing under their name, then they are going to be much more likely to bring pressure to bear on those companies.

The opposition has announced a separate measure around debt loading as a tax avoidance mechanism. Like the government's approach, it goes some way to addressing the problem but it will not go far enough until we name and shame these companies. The opposition's policy to tighten thin capitalisation rules, which limits the amount of debt deductions that can be claimed to the ratio of Australian equity in each company, is insufficient because it would be powerless against companies like Apple, which buys its products off itself at a price marginally below the retail price so its profits are artificially tiny. It is not about debt; it is about their pricing. That has to be tackled and it would not be tackled by the opposition's bill.

The opposition's proposal also would not capture our big mining companies that are using Singapore marketing hubs so that the sales are booked to those businesses instead of here in Australia. The only reason that companies like Glencore even said to the Senate inquiry that they were prepared to do it was that we called the Senate inquiry in the first place. We called them to front up and explain publicly what was going on. When public pressure is brought to bear and people are able to look down the lists and realise that multinational companies are paying tax rates sometimes of less than 10 per cent—sometimes in single figures—then Australians will say, 'Something is wrong here. Don't ask me to pay more to see the doctor, unless you're going to crack down on those multinationals. Don't tell me that we've got to take $80 billion out of money going to states, schools and hospitals while you are letting multinationals get away with paying tax rates in a number of per cent that you can count on one hand.'

Until we tighten that up, we are not going to see the egalitarian spirit of Australia reflected in our tax system. This government is being dragged kicking and screaming to do something about it. It is a bill worth supporting, because it makes a bad situation slightly better. Until we make it easier for the tax office to prosecute these companies and we out, name and shame these companies, this problem is only going to continue.

Mr WHITELEY (Braddon—Government Whip) (13:20): I rise today to speak on the Tax Laws Amendment (Combating Multinational Tax Avoidance) Bill 2015. As Australia competes on the global economic stage, it is absolutely essential that we take steps to ensure companies pay their fair share of tax. The government strongly believes that profits made in Australia should be taxed in Australia. That is why we are taking steps in this bill to implement three budget measures announced in May this year.

Currently, some multinational companies operating in our nation are avoiding paying the correct level of taxation through employing complex profit-shifting schemes. This not only leads to substantial amounts of forgone taxation but also substantially disadvantages our local and small businesses, families and individual enterprises who all pay their fair share.

Today this government is rectifying that disadvantage through strengthening tax compliance measures on multinational corporations with a global turnover of more than $1 billion. Businesses across my electorate of Braddon already compete on the global stage, and I am proud to be part of a government that is levelling the playing field when it comes to paying tax.
The coalition's multinational anti-avoidance law will stop multinationals using complex schemes to avoid paying tax in Australia through booking their revenue overseas. We are empowering our Commissioner of Taxation to treat those multinationals as taxable here in Australia. Our country-by-country reporting implements recommendations from the G20 and will ensure transparency in multinationals’ income and tax paid in each country they operate in, greatly enhancing our capacity to chase foregone revenue. Concurrently we are doubling the penalties applying to large companies engaging in tax avoidance or profit shifting. This government remain committed to delivering a fair share of tax back to the Australian people and are delivering on that commitment today.

The coalition government are leading the fight against multinational tax avoidance. It is an issue we pursued as president of the G20 last year. We fought to get it on the agenda of the G20 and are now delivering on our rhetoric in this space. Australia led the global response to tax avoidance and we continue to do so in this bill. This bill is consistent with this government's overall approach to this issue. In 2014 this government, under the previous Treasurer, strengthened our defences against multinational tax avoidance. We have already tightened our thin capitalisation rules, which will substantially limit the scope for multinationals to claim excessive debt reduction. We are also allocating unprecedented resources to the Australian tax office. We have provided an additional $87.6 million to the ATO over three years to investigate international tax avoidance; the program is estimated to have raised $1.1 billion.

Our side of politics is often accused of being run by big business. I echo the recent words of the Prime Minister in categorically refuting that claim. This bill stands testament to the unshakable commitment of the coalition to the Australian business sector. We govern with regard for the national interest, not the interest of some exterior body pulling the strings. That is why we have delivered free trade agreements with Japan, Korea and China. That is why we have delivered the Trans-Pacific Partnership. We are creating growth and jobs through freer markets. Yet, whilst on this side of the chamber we realise the importance of freer markers, we also have the national interest squarely in mind.

This multinational tax avoidance bill delivers on our commitment to the Australian people. It is this government and only this government that can achieve both a broadening and deepening of our market access whilst also setting the economic frameworks that will deliver effective taxation into the 21st century and beyond.

I think it is important to outline how this bill will result in better outcomes for the Australian people. I believe it best achieved in assessing how this legislation will operate once enacted. The coalition is committed to simpler taxes and that is why the process is so simple under this legislation. Under the multinational anti-avoidance law we first establish that a company is a foreign company. We then assess if it has a global revenue of over $1 billion. We then establish if Australian sales have been booked overseas and assess if the principal purpose of the scheme was to avoid tax. If it is found that a foreign large company has been engaging in tax avoidance, they will pay the income tax on profit that should have been booked in Australia, pay interest on unpaid taxes and pay a further 100 per cent of the Australian tax avoided in penalties.

This is a serious solution to a serious problem and will deliver foregone revenue for the Australian taxpayer. This government is taking a responsible and measured stance on
multinational tax avoidance in this bill. I am proud to stand against unfair tax avoidance by large multinational companies. I welcome the benefits this bill will bring to Australia and our citizens, and I commend this bill to the House.

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (13:26): I am pleased to speak on the Tax Laws Amendment (Combating Multinational Tax Avoidance) Bill 2015. I would like to start by picking up on a few comments by the member for Fraser, the shadow Assistant Treasurer, when he talked about what Labor believes is the importance of having private companies declare their taxation records and make them public. That simply shows why those who sit on the other side of this chamber are completely unfit for office. They do not understand business. They do not understand the risks that entrepreneurs take to create jobs and to spread wealth in this country.

Firstly, the other side propose a threshold of a $100 million turnover and that once you reach that turnover, even if you are a private company, you have to make all your taxation records open to the public. Why a $100 million threshold? Why not $95 million, $90 million or $50 million? What guarantee can the Labor Party give that they would not lower that threshold and make all private companies disclose their records?

Think of a company that has a turnover of $90 million. What a disincentive it would be for that company to go out there and expand their sales, expand their market and create new jobs if they knew that once they hit that magic turnover mark of $100 million they would have to make all their taxation records public. It is correct that a public company makes its records public. That is because the public can invest, buy and trade in those shares. That is why the taxation information, sales and profitability of that company need to be public. That is why private companies remain private—so that there taxation records remain between themselves and the taxation department.

The other reason why such records need to be kept confidential is negotiations—something that people on the other side do not understand. If you are firm negotiating with a Coles or Woolworths, the aim of that negotiation for those big buyers is to try to screw as much rebate and margin as they can from you. If you are company that has had to make your profitability records public, that information will be known to the person you are negotiating with. It will put you at a tremendous competitive disadvantage in those negotiations. It would be the same circumstance if you were making an offer to buy a home and the seller of the home was able to get hold of your tax returns to know what your salary was the previous year.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Goodenough): It being 1.30 pm the debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 43. The debate may be resumed at a later hour.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Live Animal Exports

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (13:30): David Weisbrot, former chair of Australian Law Reform Commission, said he thought animal welfare would be the next great social justice movement. That was well and truly demonstrated over the weekend, with mass rallies held across Australia, including in my electorate of Fremantle, where people demanded accountability in the live export trade. Last week on 7.30 we saw Australian sheep being thrown into the backs of cars and left to lie there on the baking aluminium, sheep slaughtered by people with no
training or experience—sheep that were supposed to be guaranteed humane treatment under ESCAS.

I especially want to acknowledge the work of those Animals Australia investigators for their courage in bearing witness to the most awful torture of innocent animals. They do this in the expectation that such evidence, when presented to the responsible authorities, will lead to consequences for the exporters involved. Yet, of the 40 extensive legal complaints brought by Animals Australia relating to serious ESCAS failures in 12 different recipient countries over the last three years, what is the result? There has not been a single prosecution, cancellation or even suspension of export licences. The question is: why are live export companies considered above the law when every other Australian industry knows it either complies with regulations or is prosecuted?

Last week, for the first time, one live export company, Wellard, has called for tough sanctions against those exporters routinely breaching ESCAS. Unfortunately, the reality is that there is no effective government oversight through ESCAS due to the complete lack of interest of the minister and his department in carrying out their duty to ensure animal welfare. That is why Labor is committed to the establishment of an independent office of animal welfare.

**Western Australia: Local Government Elections**

**Mr IRONS** (Swan) (13:31): On Saturday, local government elections were held across Western Australia, and I want to thank everyone who voted and participated in this important democratic process. The Towns Improvement Act 1838 was the first piece of legislation relating to local government in Western Australia. There are now 140 local governments across the state, including 29 in the Perth. In 1981 there were 1,396 elected members. This number was reduced to 1,382 in 2003, and in 2014 the number of councillors was further reduced to 1,214. Voting is not compulsory in local government elections in WA. Despite postal ballots being mailed to every voter over the last few weeks in WA, turnout was around 25 per cent in the state. It is interesting that Australia's states are split on compulsory voting in local government elections. Non-compulsory states are WA, Tasmania and South Australia. Compulsory states are New South Wales, Victoria, Northern Territory and Queensland. The ACT does not hold local government elections.

One of the highlights of these elections in WA was the return to an elected council for the City of Canning in my electorate of Swan. The City of Canning was suspended on 27 November 2012, following the recommendation of a departmental inquiry report into the council. A full council was elected on Saturday night, and there was a large field of candidates and a relatively high turnout from voters. Eleven candidates stood for mayor. Each ward elected two councillors, with 45 people standing in five wards. I thank the people across WA who voted and all those who participated in this process.

**Indi Electorate: Broadband**

**Ms McGOWAN** (Indi) (13:33): I rise today to say a huge thank you. Thank you to the former Minister for Communications and current Prime Minister. Thank you to the senator for Victoria, Mitch Fifield, the current Minister for Communications. Thank you on behalf of the people of Indi. Thank you for the new rollout schedule for the NBN, fixed line and wireless to 25,000 new premises, bringing the total up to 55,000 premises in Indi since I have been the
member for this electorate. Thank you from the 35 communities of Victoria. In particular, it is
great news for Rutherglen, Wahgunyah, Alexandra, Bright, Porepunkah, Benalla, Beechworth, Chiltern, Corryong, Eildon, Kinglake, Kinglake Central, Kinglake West, Mount Beauty, Tawonga South, Mansfield, Myrtleford, Tallangatta, Waldara, Wangaratta, Bandiana, Baranduda, Barnawartha North, Leneva, West Wodonga, Wodonga and Yea. This is a huge
achievement and acknowledgement, and I would particularly like to put into this a thank you
to the people of Allans Flat and surrounds. You guys really show how the Indi way works.
You got organised, you lobbied me, I came to Canberra, I advocated on your behalf, and I am
delighted to say we are going to get wireless to our community. I would like to finish by
acknowledging and thanking NBN. NBN Co, we know you get a lot of criticism, but you
have made a huge difference to the people of north-east Victoria. I know we are not yet
perfect, but we have come a really long way. I look forward to working with you to deliver
this wonderful result for my— (Time expired)

Tangney Electorate: McHappy Day 2015

Dr JENSEN (Tangney) (13:34): I wish to update the House on the annual McHappy Day
that I participated in over the weekend in my electorate of Tangney. McHappy Day is about
raising money and awareness for the Ronald McDonald House Charities. Now in its 25th
year, McHappy Day has raised over $28 million for Ronald McDonald House Charities. All
donations raised help provide programs and services for seriously ill children and their
families through the Ronald McDonald House Charities. Currently, there are 16 Ronald
McDonald houses in Australia which act as a home away from home for families while their
children undergo treatment for serious illness at nearby hospitals. This year's national
fundraising target of $3.4 million equates to over 25,000 nights of accommodation in Ronald
McDonald houses for families with seriously ill children. I commend the civic consciousness
of the McDonald's corporation and its many franchisees. Further, I look forward to serving
burgers and fries again in the future and I urge my colleagues to do likewise for the benefit of
sick children and their struggling parents.

Lalor Electorate: Broadband

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (13:36): I rise today to report to the House the
disappointment in the electorate of Lalor with the NBN announcement last week. There was a
lot of anticipation about the new rollout plan to be announced in my electorate. Many small
businesses, many medium sized businesses and thousands and thousands of residents were
hoping that, with this announcement, their homes and their businesses would have access to
the first-rate NBN that we had been promised. But unfortunately that is not the case for the
electorate of Lalor. In fact, there will be no fibre to the node before 2017 in the city of
Wyndham at all. The only rollout in 2016 will be hybrid fibre coaxial. There will be no fibre
to the node across Lalor until 2017. If you live in Point Cook, Wyndham Vale or Seabrook,
you will be waiting until 2018 to get off your ADSL—if you have ADSL, that is—or get
from wireless onto something that is reliable and of a speed that will allow you to conduct
your business, to complete your homework, to upload, to download. This is an incredible
disappointment for the people of Lalor. They thought that the ex-Minister for
Communications would make sure this was delivered. What we have got is an election
promise, not a delivery date. What we have got is more expensive and a second-rate NBN.
**Moorebank Intermodal**

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (13:37): I have long warned that the proposed intermodal at Moorebank is destined to be a complete white elephant. If that was not obvious in the past, then, with the latest developments, it certainly should be now, and it is time for a complete rethink. Firstly, the Enfield intermodal—what Infrastructure New South Wales labelled the 'test case' for the viability of Moorebank—is now years overdue, and its operator has pulled out. Secondly, we have had announcements from competitors to the Moorebank intermodal: we have had Toll and Japan Post planning an intermodal site at Villawood, and we have had Asciano's plan to expand their intermodal facility at Chullora, in addition to building a new facility at St Mary's, in close proximity to Sydney's major distribution centres at Eastern Creek. These will make Moorebank redundant. As CEO John Mullen said, the Asciano sites at Chullora and St Mary's:

"... were better located near the existing freight precincts where customers already have warehouses and distribution centres.

"The reality is that customers drive this, not us, ..."

He said that it is Asciano's customers:

that dictate how and where their freight moves and we are just responding to what those demands are."

When the pin is finally pulled on Moorebank intermodal, it will go down in history as a textbook case of a 'planning fallacy'—yet another example where government bureaucrats, with their central planning, think they are picking a winner but only end up picking a loser. It is time for a complete rethink on this project, for it is destined to be a complete and utter white elephant. *(Time expired)*

**Great Australian Bight: Oil Drilling**

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (13:39): Last week I attended a briefing provided by the Wilderness Society about BP's plans to carry out oil drilling in the Great Australian Bight in 2016. The Great Australian Bight is described as one of the most pristine ocean environments on earth. Eighty-five per cent of the species that live in the bight are found nowhere else on earth. Its economic and environmental value is significant, with fisheries and aquaculture industries worth around $440 million in 2012-13 and regional tourism worth around $1.2 billion in 2013-14 and directly and indirectly supporting around 10,000 jobs. Being located on the coast of South Australia, the Great Australian Bight is a major economic driver for the state. It also has significant Indigenous community interest in it. Oil drilling inevitably brings with it serious risks. Modelling commissioned by the Wilderness Society shows that an oil spill in the bight could devastate marine life, fisheries and coastal South Australian communities. If a well blow-out occurs, critical response infrastructure may need to come from Singapore or Houston, Texas, adding considerable delay to the response time. I call on the federal government to work closely with the South Australian government and commit to an open and transparent process, to consult with all interested parties and communities and to ensure that the Great Australian Bight's environmental and economic values are not placed at risk through any oil and gas drilling activities.

**Broadband**

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (13:40): There is no doubt that, all around the gallery, all around Australia, people want faster internet connection, and it is fascinating that Geoff Horth, the
chief executive of the M2 Group—soon to be the fourth-biggest telecommunications company in Australia—has come out today and said, 'Go steady and stick with fibre to the node':

"The reality is that a fibre-to-the-node deployment in time gives us a chance to go to fibre-to-the-premise if we think it is justified," he said. "[Connecting premises directly with fibre] would absolutely take longer to connect—there's no way they could build fibre to the premise at the rate they're proposing to build fibre to the node.

"NBN has been pretty good in the last 12 months and they have definitely got better timeliness and its provisioning has improved so we've definitely got more confidence in its capacity to deliver than we ever had."

Those are clear words from the telco—whose subsidiaries include Dodo and iPrimus—that they want fibre to the node. Why is that? It is because you put one $25,000 box on a footpath, and 200 houses lose their black spot and get speeds of 25 megabits per second. When we connect families, 90 per cent of them want the cheapest plan. They do not want the gold-plated plan. They say, 'I'll take the cheapest plan, please.' People hate black spots, but they do not need gold-plated solutions paid for by someone else—because ultimately we know it is the taxpayer who pays. In my area of Redlands, we want to see no more black spots. We are not going to wait six to eight years for a Labor slow plan. We want it done in the next two to three years. That is precisely what the coalition will deliver, with the best technology around the world deployed right here.

Telstra Women in Business Awards

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (13:42): I rise today to congratulate 19 inspiring, accomplished and all-round fabulous Canberra women who have been named as the finalists for the 2015 Telstra ACT Business Women's Awards. These awards show that ACT businesswomen are excelling in a broad range of sectors. They are leaders, they are innovators and they are mentors. So congratulations to Katie Doherty, Katie Geus, Jessica May, Claire Naidu, Joanna Richards, Nicole Damiani, Karen Porter, Jenni Tarrant, Jo Whithear, Philippa Moss, Tara Taubenschlag—hi, Tara; how are you?—Jan Harris, Professor Marnie Hughes-Warrington, Felicity McNeill, Linda Spurr, Georgeina Whelan, Melanie Andrews, Sue Levy and Sarah Valentine.

I have long championed small business and women in small business—being a former woman in small business—and I am proud to support these awards, which not only support tremendous women but also highlight the diversity and skills of the ACT business sector, which is growing every day, across a broad range of areas. The winner of this year's ACT Business Women's Awards will be announced this Friday, and I am looking forward to getting along there and saying hi to all these great women. They will then go on to the national finals in Melbourne, at the end of November. Congratulations to all these fantastic ACT women. Thank you for what you contribute to our community, and all the best of luck to this Friday.

Capricornia Electorate: Exercise Wallaby

Ms LANDRY (Capricornia) (13:43): Mr Speaker, the Singapore military have converged on Central Queensland armed with big weapons and big wallets. Up to 4,200 Singapore defence troops are expected to inject at least $35 million to $40 million into the
Rockhampton-Yeppoon economies during military Exercise Wallaby 2015 over the next two months.

This year's event marks the 25th anniversary of Exercise Wallaby conducted at Shoalwater Bay military training ground, considered one of the best in the Pacific. These troops are extremely important to the local economy and, as a result, I am urging local people to extend some hospitality and say g'day to a Singaporean if they see the troops about the city.

Last year Singapore defence spent $35 million in Capricornia. This year it is estimated that $24 million to $30 million will be spent with local contractors on logistics and supplies, $3 million to $4 million on accommodation and hospitality services and as much as $3 million to $4 million is expected to be spent by individual service men and women, on retail and tourism, when they get recreational leave in the area.

In addition, Singapore defence provides nearly $2 million to Australian Defence in support costs, including equipment support for operations at Rockhampton airport. This money is all spent locally in the electorate of Capricornia.

Parliamentary Friends of Aussie Fashion

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (13:45): It is time again to issue the ParlyFOF challenge—back, again, for the second year in a row and bigger than ever. November is Shop Small month, a month when we celebrate small business all around the country. In this House, each November, Parliamentary Friends of Aussie Fashion, known as ParlyFOF, come together to challenge each other to wear our local designers and local clothing manufacturers for the full month of November. The ParlyFOF police will be, once again, out of the doors checking your labels—even checking them twice—to make sure that you are wearing Australian made clothes. I expect all of my colleagues to do the same.

We know that many of them will never be caught out. We know that Anna Burke will never be caught out in something that is not Australian, nor will Michelle Rowland, Joanna Griggs, Jane Prentice or Adam Bandt—he was tested last year and found not wanting; he was wearing Australian clothes. There are many in this place who do it every day, all year. And there's another one, the member for Cowan, holding out the lapel of his Australian jacket—a proud ParlyFOF! We will be checking in November. We will be catching you at the doors and making sure you are telling the truth about this.

It is a great opportunity for us to support our great local businesses. I am wearing Ruth Fattal. Next Saturday there will be a stall in Parramatta where you will be able to buy Amalina, Wanyika, Ruth Fattal, Lesem, Bayvick, Cocoson and Suzan Mutesi. They are some great local designers, and I will make sure I wear all of them in November. ParlyFOF is on!

Reid Electorate: Adult Migrant English Program

Mr LAUNDY (Reid) (13:46): I can assure the member for Parramatta that this is Anthony Squires, so I am with her 100 per cent! One thing I love about representing my wonderful electorate of Reid is the opportunity it provides me for being involved with amazing community initiatives. One such program that I am proud to be involved in is a partnership between Navitas English and Dooley’s Catholic Club, who are working together to provide work experience and improve employability amongst migrant communities in Reid.

In this pilot program, participants complete a 10-week adult migrant English program, AMEP, hospitality course, and then complete two weeks of work placement in a hospitality
environment. From the first term, Dooley's accepted seven clients to undertake work experience at their various locations, and following those two weeks offered interviews and employment to suitable candidates. This is a great example of government and private sector collaborating for a great outcome for the community. English is, without a doubt, the most vital skill new migrants in this country can learn to enable them to engage with their new community. This particular program is targeted at not just learning English but learning how to use English in a workplace environment to secure employment.

A couple of weeks ago I had the pleasure of meeting Christine Tran and Cecilia Sandagon to discuss their successful completion of the course. To Christine and Cecilia, I say: 'Congratulations.' To Navitas English and Dooley's Catholic Club, I say: 'Thank you,' for not only this program but for all the community work they undertake in Reid and around the country.

Folvig, Mrs Wendy, OAM

Ms MacTIERNAN (Perth) (13:48): Last month Wendy Folvig OAM, a West Australian pioneer and volunteer extraordinaire, passed away after a life led with great grace, humour and compassion. Wendy Folvig moved from Perth to Yeelirrie Station, north-east of Wiluna in the Western Desert, in 1929, and made her life and family there until 1972, when the property was acquired for what was to be a uranium mine.

The pastoral lease was first established by her family, the Finches, in 1924. It would be hard to visualise how challenging life would have been in this rugged, remote terrain. Wendy loved the wild, beautiful country and developed a reputation as a great lady who spread kindness and courtesy to all.

Wendy received the OAM for her more than 60 years of active service with the Country Women's Association, serving as president and secretary of various branches and editor of the CWA magazine. She was also life member of the National Trust, being involved as a committee member and active volunteer for 25 years. My very special memory is when she attended a soiree at my place, at the age of 92, and absolutely refused a seat, saying that she was quite capable of standing up and mixing with the crowd.

To Gus, Richard, Kirsten and all the family, I know you will miss Wendy hugely. (Time expired)

Mental Health

Mr MATHESON (Macarthur) (13:50): It is with great pleasure that I attended Camden Community Connection's Mental Health Awareness Breakfast two weeks ago. Mental Health Week is a time for us all to raise awareness about issues surrounding mental health, promote good mental health and wellbeing and highlight the need to reduce the stigma associated with mental illness. Mental illness is far more common than most of us would believe. Approximately one in five Australian adults experience some form of mental illness each year.

Guest speaker at the event was Peter Langston who spoke about his personal experiences, in relation to mental health. Peter is also a volunteer speaker with the Black Dog Institute, which is a not-for-profit organisation and world leader in diagnosis, treatment and prevention of mood disorders, such as depression and bipolar disorder. The Black Dog Institute has partnered with the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners to develop an evidence
based guide for using e-mental health programs and tools and resources to treat mild to moderate depression and anxiety.

In Australia depression is one of the most common conditions in young people and increases during adolescence. Most people with mental illness recover well and are able to lead fulfilling lives in the community when they receive appropriate ongoing treatment and support. However, only about half of those affected actually receive treatment. We can all do our own bit to educate ourselves and one another about mental illness, the experiences of those who have suffered from it and the road to recovery, and the way in which each and every one of us can be supportive and helpful towards that recovery.

Please support the Black Dog Institute, which is a wonderful organisation helping to reduce the stigma of mental illness in the community.

**Broadband**

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (13:51): I rise to add my support the iLoddon Mallee group and their call for this government to speed up the rollout of the NBN. NBN in my electorate is yet to be a reality for so many households and businesses. Margaret O'Rourke, one of the consultants for iLoddon Mallee, said on Friday that this timetable, from this government, was an absolute joke. It is too slow and it is taking too long to roll out fast-speed broadband to businesses and households in my electorate.

Worse still, we have discovered that the reason for the delay for so many households is because they have to replace copper. They have to replace copper from the node to the premises in large parts of regional Victoria. What an absolute joke! Rather than doing fibre to the premises, like Labor's original plan, this government has grabbed that plan and is now saying that in vast parts of central Victoria they going to have to replace that old, rusted, out-of-date copper with new copper.

They are not adopting Labor's plan of fibre to the premises. We are still waiting for a decent rollout plan of the NBN to central Victoria. We have been knocked off the map. If this government had stuck to Labor's plan, we would have a fast-speed, reliable, fibre-to-the-premises network rolling out as I stand here today; but instead that plan has been scrapped and we are still left behind in the telecommunications void. *(Time expired)*

**Vitale Barberis Canonico Wool Excellence Award**

Mr HUTCHINSON (Lyons) (13:53): I take this opportunity to congratulate the Manning family from Lemont, in the Southern Midlands of Tasmania, which is in my electorate of Lyons.

In particular, I would like to congratulate my friend, Mr Des Manning, the 92-year-old family patriarch, on winning the Vitale Barberis Canonico Wool Excellence Award. Along with the honour of such a prestigious award, included in the award is a trip to Italy to visit the factory in Biella to see their own wool transformed into fabrics of the most exceptional quality, plus a $50,000 bonus payment based on the value of the 175 bails supplied to the company in the 2014-15 season.

Three generations of the Manning family work within the family business: Des; his son, Michael Manning; his daughter and wool classer, Marie Boadle; and his grandson—who is also a talented Mount Pleasant footballer—James Manning. Des and his enduring passion for
growing superfine Merino wool is well-served by this partnership with Vitale Barberis Canonico and their local representatives, Andrew Blanch and Andrew Raeber.

Mr Alberto Barberis Canonico is the patriarch this 350-year-young family business, which is also built on a tradition of dedication and passion for this most amazing of natural fibres. It is a noble fibre which I, Australia and the world owe so much to.

Hunter Manufacturing Awards

Ms CLAYDON (Newcastle) (13:54): On Friday, I attended the 2015 Hunter Manufacturing Awards in Newcastle. I would just like to take the opportunity today to recognise a number of the award winners. The awards are in their 11th year now and a terrific way to promote and recognise excellence in manufacturing in our region.

The manufacturer of the year award went to mining equipment manufacturer WEARX. The Hunter Manufacturing Awards' board award was presented to Portable Safety Cam for their innovative wireless safety camera system. Nicolas Percy from the Varley Group won the 2015 rising star award for being on the forefront of a range of significant projects and innovations. The apprentice of the year award was awarded to Brock Goodwin, who is employed by Hunternet Group Training Company.

The excellence in innovation award went to WRI Australia—Raptek—for their innovative approach to addressing dragline rope issues. Composite Cats were awarded the excellence in product design of their work amalgamating a caravan and a boat to design the CaraBoat. The excellence in manufacturing award went to DELTAwater Solutions for its water advisory program. The excellence in safety award went to OneSteel's Newcastle Rod Mil. Morris Technological Group was presented with the award for excellence in training. J&S Engineering and Maintenance was recognised with the excellence in environmentally responsible manufacturing practices award.

I congratulate these recipients, the HMA board and all of their members for an excellent night celebrating— (Time expired)

Women in Sport

Mrs McNAMARA (Dobell) (13:56): I rise to congratulate the Berkeley Vale Panthers women's rugby league team, who recently became the 2015 Sydney Metropolitan Women's Rugby League tier B minor and major champions. The Berkeley Vale Panthers, led by co-captains Melanie Sutton and Keri Tuatara, defeated the Beralta Bears in a convincing 32-16 win, which each side fighting desperately for the upper hand in a tightly contested first half. Berkeley Vale lead at half time with 16-12. The final 20 minutes saw Berkeley Vale pull out their strength and win the Sydney Metropolitan grand final. Congratulations to Isabelle Kelly, who scored five tries in the grand final and was named player of the match.

The women's team then entered into the Harmony Cup as the Central Coast Pink Panthers and played against teams representing Malta, Latin America, the Mediterranean, Africa, Fiji, Lebanon, the Cook Islands and Australian Indigenous communities, to name a few. The Panthers won, becoming the inaugural premiers over the Victorian Marvels in the grand final. A big congratulations to Charmayne Nathan, who was named in the Australian Jillaroos squad for the Auckland Nines tournament in New Zealand next year.
I am very proud of the Berkeley Vale Panthers for winning the grand final in the first season in the competition. Their spirit and passion for a usually male dominated game is to be commended. I look forward to watching them defend their title in next year's competition.

**Domestic and Family Violence**

**Ms Ryan** (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (13:57): I rise to highlight to the House an issue that is occurring in my electorate of Lalor and across the western suburbs of Melbourne, and to highlight some action on the ground that is coming from the community to address this issue. It is about domestic violence. It was highlighted in *The Age* on Saturday in an article by Miki Perkins. Domestic violence in the Indian community has caused some concerns for us locally and across the west of Melbourne. There have been, on record, some terrible incidents across the last several years.

But a young person in my electorate named Jasvinder Sidhu has taken action to ensure that our migrant communities are aware of the laws and have support and to ensure that networks are on the ground to support women and children living with domestic violence. The Indian community in Lalor now talk openly about the issue. They talk about the impact on their children and they talk about the assistance that they can get from Jagriti—a social awakening—which is a network established by Jasvinder and by state member Marsha Thomson.

The work that this group is doing is extraordinary. People now feel safer in their homes. I wanted to share this with the House and applaud those involved to their hard work.

**The Speaker:** It being almost 2 pm, in accordance with standing order 43, the time for members’ statements has concluded.

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

**Asylum Seekers**

**Mr Marles** (Corio) (13:59): My question is to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection. Can the minister please provide the House with information on government decisions taken in relation to the pregnant Somali asylum seeker who was recently transported between Australia and Nauru?

**Mr Dutton** (Dickson—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (13:59): Thank you very much to the member for Corio for his question, and I thank him very much for the way in which he has framed the question as well. This is a very sensitive issue and it is an important issue to all members of this House and to many people listening to this broadcast as well.

There has been a transfer of a lady from Nauru who made an allegation of rape on the island. We provided support to transport the lady from Nauru, initially to Brisbane. That followed some medical assistance and support obviously on Nauru. There was an initial delay in her departure from Nauru because of other, unrelated health issues which meant that she could not fly, and also a delay around getting into an appointment, as anybody would have, with a doctor at a hospital here in Australia.

The normal course of events would be that people would receive medical support on Nauru and, if it were not able to be met there, either the medical need could be met at the international hospital in Papua New Guinea or the person would then come to Australia at that
point. So the lady was brought to Australia and she was provided with the following assistance. On Sunday the 11th, the lady arrived in Brisbane and was reviewed by a primary health nurse. On the following day, the 12th, the lady was transferred to Villawood and was there reviewed by a mental health nurse, where an interpreter was present, and also consulted with a GP, and an interpreter was present for that occasion as well. On the following day, the 13th, in the morning, the lady was reviewed by a primary healthcare nurse, and an interpreter was used on that occasion. A mental health nurse again was present with an interpreter, and at another consultation with a GP, where an interpreter was used. In the afternoon there was a further consultation, reviewed by the GP. An interpreter was not available in the afternoon consultation. On the following day there was a review by nurse and a doctor at the clinic, and an interpreter was again used on that occasion. On the following day, Thursday the 15th, there was a review by a GP again. An interpreter was not used on that occasion. There was also a primary healthcare nurse present on that occasion. The lady, following the consultations, provided advice that she did not wish to proceed with the termination and, as a result, was then chartered from Australia back to Nauru.

The only additional point that I would make is that I made some guarded reference to this matter and the action the government was taking in relation to this very important issue a week or so ago when I held a press conference here at Parliament House. At that stage I did not want to go into the personal details and the personal medical situation of this lady. Medical situations should be discussions between the patient and the doctor. I regret to say that this lady's detail has been produced in some considerable way by people who are at the margins or are involved in this issue otherwise, which is not at all, in any way, a reflection on the individual involved in this case. The fact is that some of the detail that is out there is factually incorrect, and I thought it very important in my interview with Fran Kelly this morning to correct the record and provide advice about the assistance the government was providing.

New Zealand

Dr Gillespie (Lyne) (14:03): My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister update the House on what measures are being taken to build on Australia's relationship with New Zealand to make sure we are best placed to take advantage of the growth and dynamism of the major Asia-Pacific economies?

Mr Turnbull (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:03): I thank the honourable member for his question. Over the weekend, accompanied by my wife, Lucy, I was thrilled to make my first overseas visit as Prime Minister to New Zealand and especially pleased to spend some time with the New Zealand Prime Minister, John Key, and his wife, Bronagh, and to really see how we can make this very close relationship that much closer.

New Zealand is a great ally of ours. It is our closest friend in our history. The two nations are as close as two nations can ever be. We approach similar problems but often in different ways. I have to say that we have all been admirers, at least on our side of politics, of the leadership John Key has shown as the Prime Minister of New Zealand. He has taken a pragmatic and businesslike approach to reforming the New Zealand economy. He has constrained spending, he has driven strong economic growth and he has brought their budget into balance. He is a real role model, I think, for centre-right governments such as our own in Australia, and of course right around the world. He has absolutely projected the optimism that
New Zealanders were seeking. New Zealand is taking on the world, and it is taking on particularly the Asia-Pacific world.

New Zealand has had the benefits of a free trade agreement with China for seven years. They had the goal of doubling their goods trade with China by 2015; they are on track to meet that target. They have met key targets for all of their metrics in terms of their trade with China. John Key and I discussed the Trans-Pacific Partnership. He said, as we discussed this, that it would bring more jobs, higher incomes and a better standard of living for New Zealanders. Of course, the same applies to our country as well. We are absolutely of the same mind in that area.

There is a lot we can learn from the way they approach innovation and investment as well. We will be having meetings shortly with their economics minister, Steven Joyce, and the Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science, Christopher Pyne. They have taken a much more practical and effective approach on broadband, I have to say, than we did—or the previous Labor government did. They got into crowdfunding before us. They really are a role model.

All of us—and I say this very seriously—in Australia should pay a lot more attention to what the New Zealanders do. Yes, it is a smaller economy. Yes, it is more complex because it does not have a federal system; it does not have an upper house. But very often their efforts lead the way in showing how we can tackle economic problems efficiently and capably.

### Taxation

Mr **SHORTEN** (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:06): My question is to the Prime Minister. Today the Liberal government has legislation before the parliament which implements its inadequate multinational taxation policy. However, the government's own budget papers for this policy show an asterisk where the dollar figures should be. Prime Minister, exactly how much revenue will this policy raise?

Opposition members interjecting—

**The SPEAKER:** The Treasurer has the call.

Mr **MORRISON** (Cook—Treasurer) (14:07): I thank the Prime Minister for this opportunity. I refer to the comments of the Commissioner of Taxation, who said 'hundreds of millions'. The reason he is able to say that is he knows that since the introduction of the multinational tax avoidance legislation—actual legislation—in the parliament, the Australian Taxation Office will be enabled to sit down and work through with multinational companies the tax they need to be paying. That was 30 companies before we started—before the member for North Sydney introduced this legislation into parliament. And because we introduced that legislation it has now gone to 80. It deals with country-by-country reporting also. This was part of the OECD BEPS review, where this government and this country were at the forefront—the leading edge—ahead of the curve when it came to ensuring that multinationals pay their fair share of tax.

Those opposite like to boast about revenue that can be raised from taxes—those opposite, the architects of the mining tax that raised no revenue! Yet they want to come in here and lecture those on this side of the House, who have actual legislation that has been introduced and that will ensure hundreds of millions of dollars will be raised in additional revenue by getting it right.
Those opposite made an absolute track record of failure to launch. Failure to launch is what we saw from them on every occasion. What we know is that they would have the big press conference, and it always went downhill after that. There was cash for clunkers, and the list goes on and on—school halls and the rest of it. Usually, the worst thing that a Labor government can do is do something. If they just did nothing they would minimise the damage!

Our package of reforms to ensure that multinational tax avoidance is dealt with is in the House of Representatives, and it is on its way to assent. It is hundreds of millions, because we know that you have to work through the details. And the tax office know that they will be able to get that resource. If those opposite are so confident about their number, I ask them simply to release the assumptions behind their number. They are so interested in transparency: they should release their assumptions and explain why the proposal from those opposite will actually damage jobs and damage investment in this country.

The group-ratio-rule method that they want to use does not have the bespoke approach that the government's approach has, which enables us to look at individual investments and legitimate business activities. What those opposite will do will increase the cost of developing infrastructure in this country, particularly for overseas pension funds. It will cost jobs and it will cost important projects.

**Innovation**

**Mr HASTIE (Canning) (14:10):** My question is to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Will the minister update the House on the outcomes of her recent visit to the United States and the importance of global cooperation in innovation to create jobs and grow the economy?

**Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin—Minister for Foreign Affairs) (14:10):** I thank the member for Canning for his question. I take this opportunity to congratulate him on his election to this place and the contribution that he has already made to the House.

Innovation, commercialisation and entrepreneurship are key drivers of productivity, economic growth and job creation. It is vital that we encourage and support innovation within our nation. Indeed, the Prime Minister has already announced that innovation is a key priority for this government. And while my recent visit to the United States was centred on the annual Australia-US foreign and defence ministerial dialogue, AUSMIN, I also had the opportunity to meet leading entrepreneurs, innovators, scientists, designers, film and production professionals, and technology, social media and software experts. A good number of them were young Australians. Indeed, our young Australians are seizing opportunities to seek out new ideas and taking risks to pursue their goals, whether those are in New York, Boston, Los Angeles, Silicon Valley or the Bay area in San Francisco.

Australians have founded and, in some cases, are leading new technology companies, like Nitro or CloudPeeps, Kaggle and venture capital companies like Sequoia. These companies are revolutionising the way we live and the way we work—for example, in areas like document management and in transforming the nature of freelance work. Indeed, they are looking to the Australian government to create the environment that would enable them to bring these opportunities back here to Australia. They are employing literally hundreds of people as their businesses grow, and they include many Australians. They are at the cutting edge of innovation.
During my meetings I sought their views on what more this government could do to embrace and support an innovation agenda within this country, and to make ours a more creative economy that supports our innovative and creative thinkers. The suggestions ranged from changes to the education sector, more flexibility in workplace relations and easier access to venture capital to a culture of risk taking. Most importantly, was the embracing by the public and private sectors of the need to innovate and to pursue opportunities to change the way we do things.

This should apply across government, and I have established within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade an innovation hub called the innovationXchange. This is revolutionising the way we manage our aid budget and has solved the more difficult and enduring aid development problems in our region. This is bringing together the brightest and most creative minds not only from the private sector but from the public sector, and we have seedments from the World Bank and USAID. Through the innovationXchange we are transforming the way that we increase economic growth and reduce poverty in our region.

This government is determined to ensure that innovation will be the driver of new jobs and economic growth. (Time expired)

Higher Education

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:13): My question is to the Prime Minister. Can the Prime Minister confirm that he has only temporarily shelved his plans for university funding for a year? And is it still the Liberal government's policy to slug Australian students with $100,000 degrees? And will the Prime Minister join with Labor and commit to our university student funding guarantee?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:14): Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition's generous invitation to side with him on university funding would be unlikely to find acceptance on this side of the House, you would agree. But it would be more likely to be taken seriously by anyone if he were actually to set out how his proposals would be paid for.

Business

Mr PALMER (Fairfax) (14:14): My question is to the Prime Minister. Why is the Commonwealth the No. 1 petitioner of bankruptcies and liquidations in Australia, closing businesses down and moving people from productive employment to unemployment? Why does the government not introduce a chapter 11 provision similar to the US, where 85 per cent of companies that are in chapter 11 merge to keep people employed, exports going and government revenue flowing? Will the government lead the introduction of such a measure in Australia?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:15): I thank the honourable member for Fairfax for his question. The answer to the first part of the question, as to why the Commonwealth is a petitioner in bankruptcy proceedings, is of course that it is on account of the debts owed to the Australian Taxation Office, which clearly many companies find themselves indebted to, whether they are solvent or insolvent. The second part of the question, relating to chapter 11, raises a very good point. One of the great strengths of the American economy is its resilience—the way in which companies can hit the wall financially, dust themselves off, restructure and get going again. They have a great tradition of business continuity—there is no doubt about that. In Australia, by contrast, the position of secured
creditors—which more often than not are financial institutions, as the honourable member would be well aware—is much stronger relative to other creditors.

While the various changes and reforms to corporate insolvency have resulted in more flexibility, there are powerful arguments, I believe, for looking more closely at these issues of business continuity. The chapter 11 procedures in the United States are, I have to say, like most business practices in America, very legalistic and I do not think anyone would recommend taking a facsimile of the American law and inserting it into Australia. But certainly employing greater measures to ensure greater business continuity is a very good issue to discuss, a very good issue to consider. When I was the opposition leader many years ago I did canvass a proposal along these lines.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr TURNBULL: The gentleman opposite is harking back to that happy time, from his experience. It was not so happy for me, I can assure you. Nonetheless, the honourable member makes a very good point and if he has any proposals or thoughts in this area of course the government, and I am sure all members, would be very pleased to hear them. Business continuity is a very important consideration in terms of corporate insolvency, but that has to be weighed up against the rights of creditors and their ability to recover their entitlements. Business continuity is a very big issue and I am grateful to the honourable member for raising it.

Economy

Ms SCOTT (Lindsay) (14:18): My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer update the House on the recent meeting with state and territory Treasurers. How is the Turnbull coalition government working cooperatively with those who are genuinely committed to growing Australia's economy?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Treasurer) (14:18): The government is working collaboratively with all those who want to grow our economy and support jobs growth. That is what we are doing. We are working with everyone who has an investment in that, has a share in that and has a commitment to achieving that goal. The Australian people are responding to that with confidence—business confidence, consumer confidence and more general confidence in the government because they want to see the government continue to work with those who want to grow our economy and grow jobs. The government is establishing a strong platform, as we have over the last few years, to grow our economy and to grow jobs. We are promoting innovation for an agile economy and building infrastructure that unlocks our economic potential. We have a strong budget that protects our AAA credit rating and ensures that we can provide the services that Australians rely on. We are working to change our tax system so we can encourage Australians and reward Australians who want to work and save and invest to grow our economy, and we want to set up a strong competition policy agenda that will drive productivity and deliver greater choice for Australians.

This is a strong plan. It is a platform to grow our economy and to support jobs. We cannot achieve all of these goals without working collaboratively with those who have a key role to play in these outcomes. That is why we are working collaboratively with the states and the territories and their Treasurers, who are fully engaged in this agenda for economic growth and for jobs. We saw the statements from the Queensland Treasurer, the South Australian
Treasurer and others showing that they are interested in working with the Australian
government to grow jobs and to grow the economy. Those opposite have the opportunity to
get on board with this collaborative approach, to be part of the plan to ensure that we can have
a strong economy and we can grow jobs in this country. At the moment they, sadly, are being
left behind—they are being left behind with their very small and negative approach to the
government's agenda. They continue to frustrate the initiatives that we know are necessary to
support our economy and to support jobs.

Last week we saw them take a very diminished view—they diminished themselves in the
way they came into this House and were unable to deal with the big issues facing Australia.
We saw their very small attacks on the Prime Minister. But the Prime Minister has big
shoulders. What is disappointing is that they have a very small attitude about the aspirations
of Australians. They think the answer to the country's economic challenges is to jump into bed
and pull the doona over their head. That is not what this side of the House or what the state
and territory Treasurers think. We are working with Australians in business, in government, in
local government and in the community to grow jobs and to grow our economy. Those
opposite should stop their negative old politics attacks and get involved in the collaborative
agenda to grow jobs and to grow our economy.

Higher Education

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (14:21): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to the
Prime Minister's previous answer on funding higher education. Will the government support
Labor's policy on high income superannuation tax concessions which will raise $14 billion
over the decade?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:21): The answer to the honourable
member's question is no, the government is not going to support the opposition's policy. The
government will consider all suggestions, all ideas, on superannuation and tax. We are doing
that at the moment. We explained last week that we are carefully considering a lot of these
matters. But is the government going to take a sort of rubber stamp and stamp 'approved' on
every proposal from the opposition? Of course not, and the honourable member knows that.
The honourable member knows that—and, really, he is wasting question time by asking
questions to which he knows he will get a perfectly predictable answer.

Economy

Mr HUTCHINSON (Lyons) (14:22): My question, an important question for the people
in my electorate of Lyons, is to the Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science. Will the
minister update the House on the importance and benefits of innovation across the Australian
economy?

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House, Minister for Industry and Innovation and Science)
(14:23): I thank the member for Lyons—

Mr Perrett: Mr Speaker, I must have misheard. I did not actually hear the question that he
was asking.

The SPEAKER: Well, I heard the question; the rest of the House heard the question. The
member for Moreton can resume his seat.

Mr PYNE: I would like to thank the member for Lyons for his question, and I will talk
about a couple of businesses in his electorate very shortly. The Australian Food and Grocery
Council released their report *State of the industry 2015* today, and it has very good news for the food and beverages industry in Australia, which is our largest manufacturing sector. It shows a surge in food and beverages exports, in 2014-15, of 28 per cent. Now, this is particularly good news because it was not so long ago, if we cast our minds back, that there were closures and downsizing in the food and beverages sector across Australia—during the Rudd and Gillard governments.

The sector is recovering, increasing by 28 per cent to $26 billion and creating over the last 12 months an extra 2,200 jobs across Australia—and 40 per cent of jobs in food and beverages manufacturing are in rural and regional Australia. So this is a good-news story. It shows that, through the use of innovation, our firms can compete with the best in the world and can export. That is why the new government is so excited about innovation as a transformative driver of the economy to create jobs and grow the economy.

In the member for Lyons' own electorate, Tassal have recently established a state-of-the-art fish rendering and oil refining facility at Triabunna, on the east coast of Tasmania, built with $3.85 million.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**Mr PYNE:** Well, that is how the member for Lyons pronounces it. It is not a ski resort! It is not a snow ski resort! You certainly know the names of all of those, all the lodges at Mount Perisher—definitely!

**The SPEAKER:** The minister will resume his answer.

**Mr PYNE:** As for Tasmania, I will take the advice of the Tasmanians. This business, Tassal, established this refinery on the east coast of Tasmania with a $3.85 million grant from the Commonwealth Tasmanian Jobs and Growth Package. Through innovation, it is working with Australian pharmaceutical companies like Blackmores to develop new products that are innovative, traceable, sustainable and of high value, and that will lead to exports all around the world. It is through things like Tassal and their innovation that new jobs are being created. Yesterday, there was an example from the member for Bass's electorate which I cannot get to in the time available to me today.

This is a government that is determined to create jobs and growth, using innovation and industry to do so, while the Labor Party of course stands in the way of the government's policies to grow jobs and create a better economy.

**Budget**

**Ms PLIBERSEK** (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:26): My question is to the Prime Minister. Can the Prime Minister confirm that it is still his government's policy to cut $80 billion over the next decade from Australian schools and hospitals?

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**Mr Champion interjecting—**

**Mr Turnbull:** I could not hear the last part of the question.

**The SPEAKER:** Thank you; that was the request I was about to make. If the member for Wakefield can contain himself, we will all hear the question in full.
Ms PLIBERSEK: My question is to the Prime Minister. Can the Prime Minister confirm that it is still his government's policy to cut $80 billion over the next decade from Australian hospitals and schools?

Mr Husic: 'Now I will crowdsource the answer.'

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Treasurer) (14:27): Mr Speaker—

Mr Husic: There you go!

Mr Turnbull: Exactly. Very good ministering!

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Treasurer) (14:27): I am pleased to confirm, as those opposite would know—and I thank the Prime Minister for the opportunity to advise the House—that total Commonwealth schools funding increases from the 2015-16 budget year to $15.7 billion, a 7.4 per cent increase—

Ms O'Neil interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Hotham will cease interjecting!

Ms O'Neil interjecting—

Mr MORRISON: from 2016-17, $17 billion, an 8.1 per cent increase—

The SPEAKER: The member for Hotham is warned!

Mr MORRISON: in 2017-18, $18 billion, a six per cent increase; and, in 2018-19, at the end of the forwards, $18.8 billion. Education funding goes up every single year, and I can say the same thing about hospital funding. It increases from $16.4 billion to $18.9 billion over the budget and forwards.

What I find puzzling about the questions from the opposition is that they seem to be suggesting to the Australian people that the opposition are going to be committing to some other form of increased spending by the nature of their questions. But we know that they have given no commitment whatsoever, they have not talked anywhere, about the levels of spending that they are now suggesting, and they are trying this three-card trick with the Australian people by raising these issues. But what they do have a problem with is something very specific: they have more than a $50 billion budget black hole when it comes to their failure to identify savings and their failure to identify the revenue to pay for all these things they say they can do.

What people will get from us is complete transparency on these issues—complete transparency. We say what we spend and we say what we save, and we know we need to get greater control of spending. Those opposite are putting a great falsehood to the Australian people with their pretending in this area. They are saying that they will increase spending in these areas, but they have nothing with which to pay for it. That is what we saw when they were in government, as they dug Australia deeper and deeper and deeper into debt. Those opposite have learnt nothing, absolutely nothing, from their time in opposition. That is why they will never be ready to come back to government.

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:29): Mr Speaker, I seek leave to table a document. It is the budget overview, which says that the measures will achieve significant savings—
The SPEAKER: The member for Sydney will resume her seat. I have already made clear—

Mr Pyne interjecting—

Mr Brendan O'Connor interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the House will cease interjecting. The member for Gorton will cease interjecting. The member for Corangamite will resume her seat for a second. I have made clear on numerous occasions that I am not going to accept tabling of documents of this parliament, of which the budget is obviously one. It is already a document of the parliament.

Mr Nikolic: Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Right through that response the member for Sydney was using that document as a prop and continues to do so. Is that within the standing orders?

The SPEAKER: I ask the member for Bass to resume his seat. 

Mr Morrison interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Treasurer will cease interjecting. Members know the rules on props.

Mr Pyne interjecting—

Ms Butler interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Before I call the member for Corangamite, the Leader of the House will cease interjecting. He will contain himself no matter how difficult he finds it. I asked the member for Griffith to cease interjecting during the Treasurer’s answer. She interjected on multiple occasions. She is now warned. That will be the final warning. I call the member for Corangamite.

Trade

Ms HENDERSON (Corangamite) (14:30): My question is to the Minister for Trade and Investment. Will the minister inform the House on the vital role Australian aviation will play in taking full advantage of our historic free export trade deals. And how will the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement benefit our aerospace industry?

Mr ROBB (Goldstein—Minister for Trade and Investment) (14:31): I thank the member for Corangamite for her question and acknowledge her very strong support for the airport at Avalon near Geelong and its increasing role in the export of agricultural products, particularly dairy and horticulture. Aviation connectivity is a critical factor in growing trade in goods and services in the 21st century. We saw this dramatically brought home over the last couple of years when Qantas formed a strategic partnership with Emirates and Virgin performed a strategic partnership with Etihad. We saw the flights per week going from Australia through the Middle East go from 40 a week to 150 a week. As a consequence, we saw an increase in trade with Australia on goods and services to all of the Gulf states of close to 18 to 20 per cent in one year. It really demonstrates the connectivity and importance of airlines and it is why the CEO of Qantas, Alan Joyce, described our free-to-trade agreements with Japan, China and Korea and the Trans-Pacific Partnership as great breakthroughs. He said that a bilateral trade accord with Japan is lifting demand. He said, secondly, the TPP will be a boon as most of the Qantas and Jet Star international network covers TPP countries.
In addition, the TPP provides great opportunities for Australia’s aerospace industry, providing new opportunities for high-end manufacturing and also for job creation. We know that many of our world-class car componentry manufacturers are also beginning to expand into aerospace. We saw a four per cent increase last year in high-end manufacturing exports from Australia—four per cent. Aviation manufacturers believe the Trans-Pacific Partnership will be a boon to the high-tech industry and will help encourage innovation in Australia. The agreement is expected to mark increased sales of aeronautic parts and aircraft across the Asia Pacific. Aviation Aerospace Australian chairman, Adam Burford, said that the TPP would secure new levels of access to companies across a range of goods and services, leveraging innovation and expertise to increase market share and revenues. As we diversify our economy in this critical post-mining boom phase as we go for growth, Australian aviation has a fundamental role to play off the back of our trade agreements.

Health

Ms KING (Ballarat) (14:34): My question is to the Prime Minister. Can the Prime Minister confirm that it is still the Liberal government's policy to continue its GP tax by cutting $2 billion in Medicare rebates?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:34): I thank the honourable member for her question. The focus of questions seems to be entirely on the 2014 budget, which, while a matter of keen interest, no doubt, you would imagine the opposition would be focused more on this year's budget or, indeed, possibly leading into next year's budget. Can I just say that all of these questions relating to spending, whether it is in terms of social welfare transfer payments or health, have to be seen in this context: it is absolutely critical for the security of our economy, for the prosperity of our economy and for the jobs of the future to ensure that the government lives within its means.

Ms King interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Ballarat has asked her question. Do not interject.

Ms King interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Ballarat will cease interjecting.

Mr TURNBULL: The Labor Party inherited a budget that was in surplus. It inherited cash at the bank. It went on a spending spree that created, as honourable members know very well, a massive structural deficit which could not even be funded out of a cyclical surplus at the time of a commodities boom.

Mr Burke: Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order on direct relevance. The question had no preamble. It is very specifically on the Medicare rebate and on the GP tax—very specifically.

Mr Champion interjecting—

Mr TURNBULL: I again thank the honourable member for the question. The fact of the matter is, as she well knows, that this government, as indeed any responsible government would have to do, is seeking to ensure that we live within our means, that we continue to provide a generous social welfare net to those who need it, that we do so in a manner that restores the budget to balance over the cycle and that we do so in a manner that ensures the economy can grow to deliver the jobs and opportunity upon which our prosperity and, may I
say so, the revenues which enable the social welfare safety net. All of that depends on growth. It depends on responsible budget management. It depends on governments making tough and careful decisions to ensure that we get the best outcome from the public's expenditure. That is what we will seek to do. If the opposition wants to be credible on this issue, what it should be doing is presenting its plans to pay for the cuts that it does not approve of and to pay for the spending that it proposes. It fails to do that and, in doing so, undermines the credibility of every claim and every question. Government cannot any longer be a 'spendathon'. That was the Labor way. It is a way to ruin.

Infrastructure

Mr MATHESON (Macarthur) (14:37): My question is to the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development. Will the minister update the House on the delivery of the government's key infrastructure projects to ensure the ongoing development of Western Sydney? What is this government doing to ensure that they are delivered?

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (14:38): I thank the honourable member for Macarthur for his question, which I know he asks on behalf of all members from Western Sydney who want to see their area grow and prosper. Just over 18 months ago, the Australian government announced that Badgerys Creek would be the site for the Western Sydney airport, and we have been getting on with the job of bringing this project to fruition without delay. This morning, we have released the draft airport plan and the draft environmental impact statement, which is a key part of this development process and provides, for the people of the region, their opportunity to examine the plan and to consider the environmental impact questions. The EIS deals with a range of issues that have been flagged in community consultation, like air quality, water quality and, of course, aircraft noise.

The environmental impact statement itself says that there will be no houses—none at all—in the Badgerys Creek region which will experience noise levels which triggered the installation of insulation around the Sydney and Adelaide airports. It indicates that noise at major centres like Penrith will be roughly equivalent to a car travelling on a suburban street. There have been two previous environmental impact statements of the Badgerys Creek site—one in 1985 and the other in 1999—and both of those found that there were no insurmountable reasons why an airport could not be built at Badgerys Creek, and this report reflects similar views.

The plan also goes on to talk about the economic benefits to the Western Sydney region from having an airport in their area. In 2022, the peak year of construction, there will be over 3,000 jobs in the Western Sydney area. By 2031, there will be nearly 9,000 jobs, and by 2063 it is expected to increase to 60,000 jobs. This will be a major catalyst for employment, for industry and for opportunity in Western Sydney. We are getting on with the task, with the construction of road access. We are getting on with the task of developing the plan and negotiating the construction arrangements. Now is the time for the community to respond to the proposed plan. It will be open for public comment for the next 60 days, and then, on the basis of that, the environment minister will consider what appropriate conditions need to be placed on the construction. We are advancing the process, and we are determined to make
sure that the views of the community are properly considered as this important project moves to start of construction.

**Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme**

Ms VAMVAKINOU (Calwell) (14:41): My question is to the Prime Minister. Can the Prime Minister confirm that it is still the Abbott-Turnbull government's policy to increase the cost of medicine by up to $50 for pensioners this year?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:41): I thank the honourable member for her question. While I could not hear precisely the last few words of it, can I simply say that the government's policies are unchanged. Our policies will change often in the face of inability to get them through the Senate, and we will negotiate—and you have seen examples of that—and policies are reviewed and reconsidered. But all of our existing policies and proposals—whether they are before this House or in policy statements by ministers—remain on foot. If the honourable member is unhappy with them, as she plainly is, she should state the basis of her dissatisfaction and make a case for it.

But I want to make this very clear to the honourable member, and she has some shared responsibility for this: the budgetary situation that we were left with required the government to make some tough decisions. It required some tough decisions to be taken, and they have been taken. Not all of them have been able to secure support in the Senate. Not all of them have been popular. But bringing this budget—our budget; our nation's federal budget—back into balance over the cycle is going to be a very difficult challenge—a long-term challenge. We understand that. But honourable members opposite have got to bear in mind their share of the responsibility for this. The honourable member was sitting in this chamber when Kevin Rudd was Prime Minister and we begged him not to spend so much during the global financial crisis. We begged him not to, and he went ahead and spent so much so wastefully. He drove our budget into deficit and did so for no benefit for the Australian people or our economy, and that is the mess which we are cleaning up.

**Trade**

Mr COULTON (Parkes—The Nationals Chief Whip) (14:44): My question is to the Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources. Will the minister update the House on how the coalition's three free-trade agreements with Korea, Japan and China, combined with the landmark Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement, will help wine producers and exporters in my electorate of Parkes and elsewhere?

Mr JOYCE (New England—Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources) (14:44): I thank the honourable member for his question. As a person who has had 30 years experience in farming, he is well versed in knowing the advantages of new markets for agricultural product. As he is also a part of the famous alumni of Farrer college, he also knows about the future for people in the agricultural sector. I commend the work that he and Robyn have done over so many years not only in the agricultural sector as a former mayor but also in this place. He knows that you have to have a vision, you have to have a plan and you have to have delivery. It is no better seen than in the work that this government has done in the wine sector. Whether it is at Lazy River Estate at Dubbo, at Red Earth Estate at Dubbo, at the Robert Oatley Vineyards at Mudgee, at Lowe Wines or even next door at Stone Hill Vineyard at Merriwa, we are actually delivering a better outcome for people in the wine industry.
It has been tough times but it is getting better. There are good new contracts coming through, better prices and a much brighter future. We have seen in the last 12 months to September that total exports in value have gone up to $1.96 billion, which is an eight per cent increase, and up to 734 million litres, which is a five per cent increase. Of the top five export markets—United States being No. 1—we have got a better advantage through the TPP with the United States. Our third biggest market is China and we have signed a free-trade agreement with China. Our fourth biggest market is Canada and that is also covered by the TPP, with immediate removal of quota on entry into force. We have seen growth in all price segments. We have seen that no matter where we go, we can send bulk wine to Japan under the free-trade agreement, where we have seen a 388 per cent increase in bulk wine with a total value increase of 14 per cent. In South Korea, the total value has gone up by 16 per cent.

For the first time in a long time, there is a positive change in the value of Australian exports in wine and it is getting better. How has this happened? It has happened because it we have a plan, a plan in three free-trade agreements. We have the Trans-Pacific Partnership and lower interest rates. We have 100 per cent write-off on water infrastructure to help those in the wine producing areas. We are about to invest a half a billion dollars—$500 million—in new public water infrastructure. We have extra trade commissioners, which we put into place by reason of the agricultural white paper, and we have put more funds into research and development. This is a government that has vision, this is a government that has a plan and we are a government that is delivering.

**Budget**

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:47): My question is to the Prime Minister. Just to be clear, in light of the Prime Minister's earlier answers this question time, can the Prime Minister name one policy from the Liberal government's disastrous 2014 budget that he has changed since he became Prime Minister?

Mr TURNBULL (Wentworth—Prime Minister) (14:47): The honourable member will be well aware that there are many policies that have been changed or amended or varied since the 2014 budget.

*Mrs Griggs interjecting—*

The SPEAKER: The member for Solomon.

Mr TURNBULL: I am coming to the honourable member's specific question. In terms of my own leadership as Prime Minister, a very obvious example is that the federal government is more than ready to finance urban infrastructure—road and rail—and does not discriminate between the two. It would be wrong to say, with respect to the Abbott government, that there was no funding for passenger rail at all—that is not strictly correct—but, broadly speaking, it is fair to say that the position of my distinguished predecessor's administration was not to support urban rail in the same manner as road.

*Mr Albanese interjecting—*

The SPEAKER: The member for Grayndler.

Mr TURNBULL: As you can see, that is a very significant shift that has been very much welcomed across Australia. We are looking at urban infrastructure without discriminating as to whether it is road or rail, and I gather members opposite have welcomed that too.
Another factor that again has received greater emphasis since the change of prime ministership is clearly that of innovation and that is a very key priority for us and a significant one. I am sorry that the honourable members opposite are disappointed with the answers but sometimes the truth hurts.

**Economy**

*Mrs GRIGGS* (Solomon) (14:49): My question is to the Minister for Resources, Energy and Northern Australia. Will the minister update the House on the investment that is taking place in the Australian energy sector and how this is contributing to domestic economic growth, particularly in the electorate of Solomon?

*Mr FRYDENBERG* (Kooyong—Minister for Resources, Energy and Northern Australia) (14:50): I acknowledge the hardworking, energetic and dynamic member for Solomon and the great contribution she makes to the Northern Territory and to the members of her electorate.

*Mr Snowdon interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Lingiari is warned.

*Mr FRYDENBERG:* In global energy markets, Australia plays a dominant role. Australia is the second largest exporter of coal in the world. We have the largest low-cost uranium reserves in the world and, by 2020, Australia will be the largest exporter of LNG in the world, overtaking Qatar. With the International Energy Agency expecting the global energy demand will increase by a third by 2040, demand globally for Australia's energy exports will only increase. This is good news for the Australian economy because last year we saw more than $70 billion worth of export income earned from our energy exports. We saw more than $200 billion worth of investment in energy infrastructure here in Australia and we saw more than 100,000 people employed in the Australian energy sector. But it is also good news for people around the world because there are more than one billion people in the world without access to electricity and Australia's energy exports help lift them out of energy poverty, producing better educational, health as well as quality-of-life outcomes.

Just last week, in the member for Flynn's electorate, we had the first shipment of LNG from the Gladstone LNG project. The member for Groom, who was an outstanding minister for resources, was present there to see the product of his hard work.

That project is one of three—$80 billion worth of investment in Queensland's LNG sector. Just a couple of weeks ago I was with the member for Solomon in her electorate to see the $50 billion Ichthys LNG project, which has provided more than 6,000 local jobs and also, by the time of its completion, will provide around 10 per cent of Japan's gas demand. To give you a sense of the scale of that project, I was told that when they built the Eiffel Tower they used 7½ thousand tonnes of steel, but for the pipeline alone for the Ichthys project they used 750,000 tonnes of steel. This gives you a sense of the scale and the complexity of this engineering feat being undertaken by Australians here in Australia.

The Turnbull government stands ready to create the right environment for more investment, be it from Japan, China or anywhere else, in our vibrant energy sector which creates hundreds of thousands of jobs for Australians and those around the world.
Climate Change

Mr BUTLER (Port Adelaide) (14:53): My question is to the Prime Minister. Is the Prime Minister aware that not one company will be forced to reduce its carbon emissions under the government’s new Direct Action regulations according to a new report from RepuTex?

Mr Albanese interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Grayndler will cease interjecting. The Minister for the Environment has the call.

Mr Albanese interjecting—

Mr BUTLER: Mr Speaker—

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for the Environment) (14:53): I am delighted to take what would be the third question now in the third year of the government from the member for Port Adelaide—had he bothered to address it to the minister. Let me deal with a number of elements. Firstly, let me deal with the Emissions Reduction Fund; secondly, let me deal with the safeguards; and, thirdly, let me deal with RepuTex.

First in the order is the Emissions Reduction Fund. This same firm made predictions that the Emissions Reduction Fund would fail to achieve any significant reductions. It was out by a factor of 500 per cent. So the RepuTex report to which you refer comes from a firm which was out by a factor of 500 per cent. I understand they had troubles when they were framing budgets, but nothing like that. And so what did we produce? We produced 47 million tonnes of emissions reduction at $13.95 a tonne. This firm, at its best, on its most generous estimates—

Mr Butler interjecting—

Mr HUNT: Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order on direct relevance: it is two minutes—

The SPEAKER: The member for Port Adelaide will resume his seat. There is no point of order. The minister has the call. There is no point of order.

Mr HUNT: I am dealing with, frankly, the credibility of their previous reports—two fabulously wrong predictions to date. Now, in relation to the next element: the safeguards approach which I want to put forward is very clear. It is a long-term approach. The estimates that we have already set out are that approximately 200 million tonnes of emissions reduction will occur in the period between 2020 and 2030. That was put out at the very time that we set
our minus 26 to minus 28 per cent reduction. So we took a carbon tax which was failing to reduce emissions in any significant way and which was driving up—

Mr Dreyfus: Rubbish! Absolute rubbish!

The SPEAKER: The member for Isaacs is now warned.

Mr HUNT: electricity prices, and we offered Australia two things: lower electricity prices—

Mr Perrett interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Moreton is warned.

Mr HUNT: and lower emissions. They are for higher electricity prices, higher emissions—

Mr Thistlethwaite interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Kingsford Smith will cease interjecting.

Mr HUNT: and they are quoting people who have got it so badly wrong they should be utterly ashamed of themselves. Have you got any more?

The SPEAKER: The minister will resume his seat.

Medicinal Cannabis

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (14:57): A question for the Minister for Health: will the minister update the House on the government's plans to ensure controlled cultivation of cannabis for medical and scientific purposes?

Mr Perrett interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Moreton has been warned; that is his final warning.

Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for Health, Minister for Sport and Minister for Aged Care) (14:57): I thank the member for Bowman for his question and for his ongoing input through the various parliamentary committees in this place into health policy. I would like to thank colleagues who have worked hard on this issue, which I see as ultimately a bipartisan one.

On the weekend, the government announced that we would legislate to provide the missing link that would enable states to cultivate and supply cannabis for medicinal and scientific purposes. In effect, that missing link is from farm to pharmacy. Can I acknowledge the work done by the Senate inquiry—in particular, by Senator Di Natale and Senator Ian Macdonald. I do look forward to further engagement, and the government intends to introduce these amendments to the Narcotic Drugs Act by the end of this year.

We know that, for patients in extreme circumstances—those in pain, in palliative care; children with refractory epilepsy; some cases of multiple sclerosis—anecdotally, medicinal cannabis provides the only relief. And, while it is quite legal to import supplies and provide them—always, of course, with your doctor at the centre of your treatment—those supplies are very hard to get and they are very expensive, and we know that people cannot wait. The missing piece, as I come back to, is the ability for the states to cultivate and supply.

On the weekend, I was at Westmead Hospital with the New South Wales minister for medical research and for mental health, Pru Goward, with the primary industries minister, Niall Blair, and with Dr Nick Lintzeris, who is working at the University of Sydney, and it was interesting, as it always is, to talk to clinicians about further research and the building of
evidence. It was interesting to talk to the primary industries minister about the ability for the New South Wales government—and, I am sure, other governments—to cultivate a supply and actually create a pharmaceutical industry.

As I said, there is more work to do and we need to keep the Therapeutic Goods Administration, which is world-class in its ability to implement the arrangements about safe, sustainable and of course legal use. I know that the Special Access Scheme that operates inside the TGA is the one that is there now for patients who need help urgently. I am committed to making that Special Access Scheme work as effectively and as well as possible. The steps that we take in health must always be with the patients in mind, and this is very much a measure for the patients. Their advice, their input, their passion and their advocacy has helped bring this measure to the Australian parliament.

**Economy**

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (15:00): My question is to the Treasurer. In question time last week, the Treasurer said:

When we think about revenue, we think about how we are going to grow the economy ...

Was growth for this financial year revised up or down in the Abbott-Turnbull government's last budget?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Treasurer) (15:00): I thank the member for the question because it does go to the key issues that confront the budget, and that is: how will revenue grow and how will we be able to control expenditure? Revisions are made—

Ms Macklin interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Jagajaga is now warned.

Mr MORRISON: to economic growth. The shadow minister is at liberty to quote them from here until the end of time, but the issue is: what will revenue growth and what will economic growth be growing forward and what do we need to do as a country to achieve that? What the Australian people want to know is: what is the plan? The plan to ensure that we have economic growth going forward into the future is to ensure that we can inspire innovation for an agile economy. It is to ensure that we have the trade agreements in place to grow the revenue that is necessary for this economy to continue to grow. It is important that we have the budget strength to protect our AAA credit rating. It is important that we have a competition policy framework that can drive the productivity gains that we need in the states and territories and in the Commonwealth. It needs all of these—

The SPEAKER: The Treasurer will resume his seat. The member for Hotham on a point of order.

Ms O’NEIL: Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order on relevance. The minister was asked quite a specific question about revenue and he is yet to get to that question. If he does not know the answer, he should probably sit down.

The SPEAKER: The member for Hotham will resume her seat. If you listened to the question, it had a long preamble. The Treasurer has the call.

Mr MORRISON: I notice the member for McEwen is not troubling the Mensa membership list today with his interjections.

The SPEAKER: The Treasurer will return to the answer.
Mr MORRISON: The challenge here is: how are we going to grow the economy? We need to be growing it higher than we are now and higher than we were two years ago and one year ago, and we need to grow it more in the future, because that is the way that Australians can have confidence in their jobs. On this side of the House, we have a strong plan and a strong platform to grow the economy and to grow jobs. On that side, we have a very small view of Australia's future, a very small view of the aspirations of Australians, that they would somehow be indulged in the diminished rhetoric of those opposite—

The SPEAKER: The Treasurer will resume his seat. Before I call the member for McMahon, there can only be one point of order called on relevance. If it is a frivolous point of order, I will have to deal with the member for McMahon. The member for McMahon on a point of order, and he can state the point of order.

Mr Bowen: Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The answer is down. If the Treasurer does not know it, he should just acknowledge that.

The SPEAKER: The member for McMahon will leave under 94 (a).

The member for McMahon then left the chamber.

Mr MORRISON: The government is aware of the forecast and the government is even more aware of the challenges that we face to grow our economy going forward. Those opposite had the best commodity prices in the history of our nation, the best terms of trade in the history of our economy, and they could not balance a budget with the best conditions of all time. Those on this side of the House know that we have to grow the economy to continue to grow jobs. More than 300,000 Australians have a job today. Youth unemployment fell in the last figures released last week. We are seeing tens of thousands of extra young people getting into jobs in this country. That is what Australians at home are worried about. They are not interested in the negative politics of the opposition.

Higher Education

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (15:04): My question is to the Minister for Vocational Education and Skills. Will the minister please update the House on the government's reforms to improve the integrity of the VET FEE-HELP program?

Mr HARTSUYKER (Cowper—Minister for Vocational Education and Skills and Deputy Leader of the House) (15:04): I thank the member for Ryan for her question. The member for Ryan is a member who understands the importance of the VET sector to our economy and to our future. But I regret to inform the House that unfortunately we inherited a VET FEE-HELP system that was in a mess. We inherited that from Labor. Labor failed to put in place sufficient controls when they established the VET FEE-HELP program. In fact, the shadow minister, Kim Carr, admitted as much a couple of weeks ago. I quote:

... Labor introduced VET FEE-HELP with good intentions but the scheme contains "fundamental weaknesses" that need to be fixed.

We have a situation where unscrupulous providers were taking advantage of Labor's mistake, but it has been vulnerable students who have had to pay the price of that. Regrettably, we had a situation where residents in nursing homes were being signed up to courses that they did not want or need. We had a situation where people with an intellectual disability were being enrolled in courses that they could not possibly compete in, and we had job seekers at job
service providers and we had people at Centrelink being accosted by high-pressure salesmen attempting to sign them up to courses that were going to incur a debt.

This government has acted quickly. Minister Birmingham in March announced a series of eight reforms. He acted quickly to stamp out poor marketing practices to protect students from withdrawal fees and unfair invoices. No longer can people be bribed to undertake a course with the offer of a laptop or a gift certificate. No longer can people be forced to continue in a course simply because they cannot afford to pay the withdrawal fees that providers were charging for that course. The bill that I introduced last week further strengthens protections for consumers. It stops bad enrolments, it provides greater protection for people under the age of 18, it introduces a cooling off period to ensure that people do not sign up for a course on a whim and it sets literacy and numeracy requirements that are appropriate for a particular course. It also lifts the standards required of providers by requiring a longer trading history, and it hits providers with a fine if they do the wrong thing.

Labor introduced a scheme that was poorly thought through, much in the way of pink batts, green loans and cash for clunkers—the typical way Labor introduces programs. We, as usual, are cleaning up Labor's mess.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Chifley will cease interjecting.

Infrastructure

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (15:07): My question is to the Minister for Cities and the Built Environment. I refer to his statement that the Melbourne Metro has no business case and the costs are unknown and it has not been through Infrastructure Australia. Isn't it a fact that the planning for the Metro was funded in the 2009 federal budget? In 2011, the Victorian government completed the business case I have here, and this was the basis for funding in 2013. Given that $1.5 billion has been sitting idle for two years, will the government now support this vital infrastructure project?

Mr Pyne: Point of order, Mr Speaker. While I am certain the Minister for Cities and the Built Environment can answer the question, the senior minister for him is not the Deputy Prime Minister; it is the Minister for the Environment, in which case the question is misdirected and I would therefore offer that the transport minister might seek to answer the question.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for McEwen. The member for Throsby will cease interjecting. The member for Watson on the point of order.

Mr Burke: On the point of order, I can understand why they do not want the Minister for Cities and the Built Environment to come near the table. But it was a reasonable question. It is in order, and the fact that they have chaos in their ministerial arrangements is merely a reflection of them.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Minister for Immigration and Border Protection will cease interjecting. The member for Moreton will cease interjecting. The member for Grayndler will resume his seat. The Leader of the House on the point of order.
Mr Pyne: It is an important principle of government that the question should be directed
to the correct minister, otherwise members of the opposition will simply start asking questions
of anybody on this side of the House, misdirecting it if they feel they are going to get some
political gain out of that. This government is about building the economy of the future. It is
not about playing their silly political games. They messed up to whom the question was
directed. They are trying to make a political point. We are generously offering the correct
minister to answer the question. If they do not want the correct minister to answer the
question then the answer and the question should be disappeared.

The SPEAKER: The member for Grayndler will resume his seat. I am ready to rule. I
understand the technicality the minister is making. The member for Mayo is the minister for
cities. It is up to the executive as to who answers the question, if they want to redirect it.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr Albanese interjecting—

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

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: I have not ruled the question out of order and I have not asked for it to
be rephrased.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Grayndler will resume his seat. I have ruled on the
point of order.

Mr Albanese: I am raising a second point of order.

The SPEAKER: I will hear the member for Grayndler.

Mr Albanese: I accept totally that it is up to them who takes the question.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Herbert is warned.

Mr Albanese: I accept totally that your ruling is correct, in terms of their ability to
transfer questions. But if I as the shadow minister for cities cannot ask a question of the
minister for cities about a rail line in the city of Melbourne, then what is he responsible for?

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Lyons will cease interjecting.

Mr Albanese: I know he has no department and no staff—

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

Mr Albanese: Can I seek leave—

The SPEAKER: No, you cannot. You can resume your seat. That is what you can do. The
Deputy Prime Minister has the call.

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and
Regional Development) (15:11): Here we have the member for Grayndler again trying to put
his plaque on the Sydney Harbour Bridge, the pyramids and the Tower of Babel. How many
more projects does he want to claim as his own? How many more projects does he think he built? Where are all these invisible projects that should have the minister's plaque on them?

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Deputy Prime Minister will resume his seat. The member for Grayndler on a point of order, and he needs to state the point of order.

Honourable members interjecting—

Mr Albanese: Absolutely—

The SPEAKER: The member for Grayndler will resume his seat. The member for Dawson and the Leader of the House will cease interjecting. Whoever is interjecting up the back there will cease, too. The member for Grayndler no a point of order, and he needs to state the point of order.

Mr Albanese: Absolutely. It is a very specific question about the Melbourne Metro.

The SPEAKER: What is the point of order?

Mr Albanese: It is about a real project that had real funding and a real business case.

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

Mr Albanese: It goes to relevance.

The SPEAKER: The member for Grayndler will resume his seat. He is warned that that is an abuse.

Mr Albanese interjecting—

The SPEAKER: You did not state the point of order, and I asked you to.

Mr Albanese interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Now you have stated it for the first time.

Mr Albanese interjecting—

The SPEAKER: You did not. The Deputy Prime Minister has the call.

Mr TRUSS: To put it simply, he has not built the Melbourne Metro, either. It is not there.

Mr Albanese interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Grayndler will withdraw.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Minister for Immigration and Border Protection will cease interjecting.

Mr Albanese: I withdraw—

The SPEAKER: The member for Grayndler will resume his seat. The Deputy Prime Minister has the call.

Mr TRUSS: You do the planning and then you build it, but the reality is that the planning has not been done, either. Should we go out and start putting holes in the ground. That is not a plan. The reality is that the Victorian government acknowledges that it is at least two or three years away from having the Melbourne Metro at the stage where any kind of construction can begin. I stand by the statements that have been made. The reality is that there is no plan that
can be costed and put to the stage where it can be assessed by Infrastructure Australia. A couple of years, or more, work has yet to be done.

Mr Albanese interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Grayndler will cease interjecting.

Mr TRUSS: Sorry, Mr Shadow Minister, you do not need to start preparing the plaque for this one any time soon!

Illicit Drugs

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (15:14): My question is to the Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Counter-Terrorism. Will the minister please update the House on how the drug ice is impacting on communities right around Australia? What more can be done to tackle this problem?

Mr KEENAN (Stirling—Minister for Justice and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Counter-Terrorism) (15:14): I thank the member for Petrie for that question and the interest that he takes in this issue and other law enforcement issues within his electorate. As members would be aware, the government has received the final report from the National Ice Taskforce. I congratulate former chief commissioner of Victoria Ken Lay, Professor Sally McCarthy and Professor Richard Murray for the extensive work they have done shining a light on this issue. During the course of their deliberations, they received 1,300 submissions and they travelled all around the country, but included particularly remote and regional areas, hearing from individuals, families, community organisations, police and health workers, to get a complete picture of this epidemic.

The government welcome the report and we are now carefully considering our response, but what is very clear to us is that there is not going to be a quick fix; this is going to be a hard grind. This is a very complex problem and it will require attention from every level of government. It also requires a multifaceted national response led by law enforcement but helped by measures within education and health in particular.

The report is very clear that Australia has an ice problem, and it is driven by three factors. There has been an increase in demand that has resulted in a significant increase in supply and, of course, much greater harm. It is this trifecta that is feeding into this lucrative and deadly trade. We know that, proportionately, Australians use more ice than any other country in the world, and our dependence continues to grow. At $50 a dose in some parts of the country, it is cheaper to score a hit of ice than it is to go out for a night drinking alcohol. During the past three years, we have seen a significant increase in the purity of this drug, from 19 per cent in 2010 to 62 per cent in 2013. Organised criminals continue to take advantage of this increase in dependency, and they are making huge profits from the lucrative nature of the ice market in Australia.

Ice poses unique challenges for law enforcement, as it is both imported—we have significant importations—and also manufactured domestically. I will say that law enforcement has responded to this challenge magnificently. Seizures are up and arrests are up, and the weight of ice seized has grown a staggering 60 times in the past four years—60 times. Arrests related to amphetamine type drugs have increased by 88 per cent over the past four years.
We will continue to target supply and we will continue to disrupt the criminals that peddle it, and this will always be the most important part of what the government does to stop the ice trade. But we must coordinate it better with education, we must coordinate it better with health, we must make sure that we increase our intelligence sharing with the states in particular and we must make sure that we give people prevention and rehabilitation opportunities when they require them. This government has received the report. We will study it and we will do all we can to tackle this national scourge.

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

**DOCUMENTS**

**Presentation**

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House, Minister for Industry and Innovation and Science) (15:18): Documents are tabled in accordance with the list circulated to honourable members earlier today. Full details of the documents will be recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings*.

**COMMITTEES**

**Treaties Committee**

**Report**

Mr TAYLOR (Hume) (15:18): On behalf of the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties, I present the following reports: *Report 154: Treaty tabled on 17 June 2015*, incorporating dissenting reports and *Report 155: Treaties tabled on 11 and 12 August 2015*, incorporating a dissenting report:

Reports made parliamentary papers in accordance with standing order 39(e).


The China-Australia free trade agreement has generated significant public attention. China is currently Australia's largest trading partner, with two-way trade worth $160 billion in 2013-14. One hundred and seven billion dollars of this trade is exports, and that number is going up fast. Our exporters stand to gain greatly from reduced export costs from this agreement, just as we expect businesses and households to pay less for our $52 billion of imports. Together with the trade agreements with Korea and Japan, ChAFTA will open up the major Asian markets to Australia's consumers and industry.

ChAFTA has been described as a watershed—a transformative agreement—and it is expected to deliver significant commercial benefits to a wide range of sectors. The committee found that many industries, including dairy, beef, wine and fishing, are expected to benefit substantially from its implementation. Our service industries, too, are set to capitalise on the opportunities presented by China's growing middle class and its ageing population. The committee is acutely aware that Australia is losing market share in the burgeoning Chinese economy because of China's existing free trade agreements. Some of these FTAs are with Australia's biggest and most important competitors such as New Zealand, Chile and ASEAN. The negotiation of an FTA with China appears the most realistic option to combat Australia's
growing competitive disadvantage while getting ahead of other competitors like the US, Europe and Canada.

The labour provisions in ChAFTA have been the subject of much debate. The core issues involve Australia's immigration framework for temporary workers. This is an area of law where the detail really matters, and the committee was presented with often diametrically opposed views. Adding to the confusion, a number of separate issues tended to be conflated, both in the public perception and in the evidence to the committee. No-one is disputing the need to give priority to Australian workers and to be absolutely confident that foreign workers have the required skills to do a nominated job. The real question is whether the current framework achieves this, even with the overlay of ChAFTA.

After careful consideration, the committee is satisfied that the safeguards within Australia's existing immigration and employment frameworks will mitigate all concerns raised. The current framework ensures that companies that are sponsoring foreign workers demonstrate genuine labour shortages and that workers have the requisite skills to do the nominated job. It also ensures that foreign workers are subject to Australian wages and conditions. The additional layers of red tape that some are calling for are unnecessary and will simply make Australian businesses less competitive and less productive at a time when we need a competitive business sector.

The committee believes that the current safeguards are effective within the investment facilitation agreements or otherwise. However, we do make the proviso that the government organisations that are responsible for ensuring compliance must be adequately resourced. The committee wants to ensure that the full benefit of ChAFTA is realised by Australian businesses and industry. Our existing free trade agreements are underutilised, with only 19 per cent of Australian exporters making use of them. To achieve the promised economic growth and beyond, which we believe is possible, more steps must be taken to increase uptake. To this end we have recommended that work on alleviating non-tariff barriers be prioritised and accelerated. We also recommend that increased effort be made to educate and support Australian businesses and industry to understand and access free trade agreements. The committee supports ratification of the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement.

Turning to report 155, the committee also inquired into the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank Articles of Agreement. The primary purpose of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank is to address the need for infrastructure funding across our region. A multi-trillion-dollar shortfall for infrastructure spending in Asia is expected in the coming years. New infrastructure will drive growth and jobs, providing opportunities for Australian trade and business. If Australia becomes a founding member of the AIIB it will be able to influence key decisions and policies as the bank becomes established. The committee supports Australia's ratification of the treaty actions in this report and recommends that binding treaty action be taken.

Before I conclude I would like to thank the committee members and the previous chair, Mr Wyatt Roy, for their engagement and hard work during these inquiries. On behalf of the committee I commend these two reports to the House. I move:

That the House take note of report 154.

Mr KELVIN THOMSON (Wills) (15:25): I seek leave to make a statement in connection with the tabling of the report.
Leave granted.

Mr KELVIN THOMSON: Essential features of the Australian way of life—work for all who want it and a fair day's work for a fair day's pay—are today threatened as never before, and young people in particular confront an axis of financial evil: insecure work, housing unaffordability and student debt. One of the key causes of this threat is the proliferation of temporary migrant worker programs, which barely existed just 15 years ago but have mushroomed in the past 15 years to the point where we now have over a million people in Australia on temporary visas that give them work rights. While the downside of these programs has never been higher, this government is in the business of surrendering forever our democratic ability to regulate and reduce them. It is my strong conviction that trade agreements should be about tariffs and quotas; they should not be setting our migration policy, our policy on health and safety, our food labelling policy and so on. This is both the right and the obligation of democratically elected governments.

It has not been easy to get to the core of the China free trade deal. Misinformation from its advocates is everywhere. First we were told that the China FTA does not change existing protocols about labour market testing. That is rubbish. This FTA puts an immediate end to labour market testing for engineers, nurses, electricians, motor mechanics and a total of 215 occupations that are currently subject to labour market testing. It also puts a permanent end to labour market testing for a further 400 occupations. Then we were told that the China FTA is the same as other FTAs that have been signed, so it would be racist and xenophobic not to sign this one. But the China FTA is not the same as other FTAs. In the Chile FTA the definition of contractual service suppliers refers to 'high-level technical or professional qualifications, skills and experience'. This was watered down in subsequent deals to persons with 'trade, technical or professional skills and experience', with the words 'high-level' and 'qualifications' being omitted. The ASEAN and Malaysian FTAs, which Labor signed in government, provided labour market testing exemptions in the 457 visa program for very limited categories of foreign nationals. The China deal gives labour market testing exemptions to all Chinese nationals in the 457 program.

And there is more. The initial period of entry for contractual service suppliers in the Japan and Korea FTAs is one year. It is four years for the China FTA. The China deal has no labour market testing for Chinese 'installers and servicers' in the 400 visa program; other deals do not. The China deal has a memorandum of understanding on investment facilitation arrangements; other deals do not. The China deal has an investor state dispute settlement provision; the Chile deal does not, and the Japan deal does not. The China deal has no labour rights chapter; the China deal has no environment chapter. The China deal has a side letter that removes mandatory skills assessment for 10 skilled trades, including electricians, motor mechanics and carpenters; other deals do not. The China deal has a memorandum of understanding that provides young Chinese with 5,000 work and holiday visas each year; other deals do not—there is no reciprocal arrangement for young Australians to work and holiday in China. Rather than genuinely debate these serious concerns, the government seeks to shut down debate by throwing around offensive and inaccurate jibes like 'racist' and 'xenophobic'. The unions who have raised these concerns are much more multiracial and multicultural than this government will ever be.
The one lame argument we hear when we expose the truth that labour market testing is being removed is that labour market testing is not important and that temporary migrant worker programs are protected from exploitation by minimum salary requirements. But every second day we hear a tale of exploitation of temporary migrant workers which shows these requirements are worthless. Migrant workers get ripped off all day, every day, uphill and down dale. Now that Labor proposes to lift the Temporary Skilled Migration Income Threshold, the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry comes out and says, 'No, we don't agree to that!'

Each new trade deal undermines workers' positions and rights a little more than the one which preceded it. And make no mistake: if this deal is ratified without the protections which Labor has suggested, it will create a precedent for other countries such as India. Traditional allies like the US and the UK will not tolerate China and others getting labour market testing exempt 457 visas when their nationals do not get the same privileges—nor will other Asian countries. The discrimination line will be used to extend 457 labour market testing exemptions right around the world, and labour market testing will fizzle out and die.

So trade agreements are being used as a battering ram against the working pay and conditions of Australian workers, and greedy employers and agribusinesses are complicit in this attack. If the new Prime Minister is genuinely different from his 'Dr No' predecessor and genuine about a new era of glasnost and perestroika, he will agree to accept the measured and reasonable safeguards which Labor leader Bill Shorten has proposed. If he does not, the China agreement should not proceed.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): In accordance with standing order 39(c), the debate is adjourned. The resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Reference to Federation Chamber

Mr TAYLOR (Hume) (15:32): I move:
That the order of the day be referred to the Federation Chamber for debate.
Question agreed to.

BILLS

Tax Laws Amendment (Combating Multinational Tax Avoidance) Bill 2015

Second Reading

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

to which the following amendment was moved:

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

"while not declining to give the bill a second reading, the House notes that its revenue impact is unquantified, and calls on the Government to adopt Labor's fully-costed multinational tax package to raise $7.2 billion over the next decade".

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke) (15:32): The question is that the amendment be agreed to.
Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (15:32): Thank you, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker; it is good to see you back in the chair. Before question time and 90-second statements, I was commenting on the points in this debate raised by the member for Fraser where he indicated that it was Labor's position to force private companies to make their tax affairs public. It appears the member for Fraser has a complete misunderstanding of the difference between public and private companies.

Public companies make their taxation records, their sales and their profitability public because the average man on the street can buy and trade their shares on the stock market. So how profitable those companies are at any particular time is a very important factor that needs to be disclosed to the market so there is full transparency and people can invest or not invest in those companies.

However, private companies are not trying to raise capital from the public. Therefore the only people who need to know about their personal tax affairs—and a fundamental principle of our system of government and Australian society is that they can keep their affairs private—are the tax office and them. That should be a fundamental requirement of our system. It is quite disturbing that members of the Labor Party think that they want to force private companies to disclose their private taxation records to the public.

There are a few reasons why this is such a bad idea. Firstly, think of a company with a $90 million turnover. The member for Fraser suggested that a $100 million turnover should be the threshold for a private company to disclose their records. Take a company with an $80 million or $90 million turnover: if they get to that $100 million mark, all of a sudden, the records that they keep as private must be disclosed to the public. This becomes a disincentive for those companies to go out, invest, take risks, innovate and create new jobs. What absurdity and what nonsense—how could anyone suggest that that is in the interests of the Australian economy? That is what the member for Fraser suggests.

Secondly, another thing the member for Fraser clearly does not understand is negotiations between companies and sales. If you are a company and you are negotiating with a Coles or a Woolworths, the very last thing you want them to know is your turnover and profitability. We have very many highly concentrated markets here in Australia where there is a complete imbalance of bargaining and marketing power in these negotiations. If you were to enable these very large multinational companies to be able to determine the profitability and sales of medium sized Australian companies, you would be putting those companies at a serious disadvantage.

A similar scenario is: if you are negotiating to rent or purchase a house and the person that you are buying or renting that house from has access to your taxation records to know what you income and expenses were last year, no-one would think that that would be fair. However, that is exactly the policy that the Labor Party wants to impose on medium sized Australian companies.

Back to the specifics of the bill: it is very important that we have a taxation system that is competitively neutral between local companies and companies that deal overseas. Companies that have substantial transactions overseas can organise their affairs where they can artificially load up debt in their Australian subsidiary or overcharge their Australian arm for goods and services purchased or imported from overseas. Likewise, they can undercharge on goods that are being exported. That is why it is very important that we have good surveillance by the
Australian Taxation Office of large multinational companies that have this ability—so they are paying their fair share of tax.

I have also been hearing criticism from the Labor Party on this proposal. Profit shifting by companies that deal in different jurisdictions is nothing new, so I ask: what have the Labor Party done about this? What did they do in the six years they were in government? They complain about what we are doing and say it is not going far enough, but they had six years in government to do whatever they wanted on this issue, yet they did nothing. It is the coalition that is taking the lead.

Another thing is that I often hear members of the Labor Party say, 'If only we could get all these evil multinational companies to pay their fair share of tax there would be no need for us to take any tough measures.' We currently have a debt and deficit problem in this nation. After the Labor Party's six-year spending spree, the interest bill this country has to pay is more than $1 billion every month. That is the interest on the spending spree in the six years of the previous Labor government. That money has to come from somewhere. That is $1 billion every month.

There are no costing estimates of what this bill will raise, but we have heard the Taxation Office estimate it will be in the hundreds of millions of dollars. Let's say that it is $100 million that is raised in additional taxes paid by multinational companies, which would be fantastic. To put it in some context: that would pay the interest on Labor's debt for 72 hours. If it raised $100 million, it would pay 72 hours of interest on the reckless spending spree of the six years of the previous Labor government. That money has to come from somewhere. That is $1 billion every month.

The other issue when we talk about our tax system and multinational companies is that we need to have an internationally competitive tax system. The fact is that we currently do not. If we as a look at personal tax rates we can see that the top rate of personal marginal tax in this country is now 47c in the dollar, plus the Medicare levy. We are approaching the point where, once you hit that marginal tax rate, 50c in the dollar goes to the government and 50c goes in your pocket. Compare that to New Zealand where it is just 33c, Singapore where it is only 20c or Hong Kong where it is just 15c.

In maintaining this taxation system, especially as there is more globalisation, more Australians travelling overseas, more Australian companies doing business overseas and more opportunities for Australians overseas than ever before, we risk many of our talented Australians taking their ideas and entrepreneurial skills offshore where there is greater reward for their efforts and risk-taking. This is why we must be very careful with our taxation system.

Then there is the issue of our corporate rate of taxation. The 30 per cent rate of corporate tax we have is currently still one of the highest in the world. We need to aim to reduce our taxation rate. When I say 'reduce our taxation rate', I do not mean we should reduce the amount of tax flowing to the government. I believe it is possible to reduce the corporate rate of tax and increase the number of dollars flowing into the Taxation Office. Why do I say that? It is because history has shown that every time we have done that in the past that is exactly what has happened.

Over the last 40 years, every single time we have lowered the corporate rate of tax—from close to 50 per cent down to 40-something per cent, to 36 per cent, to 33 per cent and then to
30 per cent—we have not got less tax; we have got more. We have got more as a percentage of GDP. I believe that we are currently in the same position. I believe that if we reduce the rate of corporate tax in this nation we will see more tax dollars flowing into government revenue. It does not matter what side of the chamber we sit on or what our ideology is, we agree that it would be good if the government could get more taxation to pay for the things that we need. If we can do that by having lower tax rates that is what we should be aiming at.

The specifics of this bill is simply that it is aimed to stop multinationals using many of the complex tax schemes to avoid paying tax in Australia by booking their revenue overseas. We are doubling the penalties applying to large companies engaging in tax avoidance and profit shifting. This applies to only about 30 large multinational companies that have a global turnover of $1 billion. One of the provisions will require them to report their revenue and profits in all countries. The coalition are taking good, sensible steps to look at the issue of multinational tax avoidance after nothing at all was done in the six years of the previous Labor government. With that, I commend this bill to the House.

Ms MacTIERNAN (Perth) (15:43): I want to respond to a number of the comments that have been made today by the previous speaker and to a series of speeches that I have heard in this place not just in relation to this bill. Last week, the same issues came up in the discussions on social security legislation, legislation about our education system and fees for our education system. I think that when I listen to the contributions of the members opposite, I really do—

A government member interjecting—

Ms MacTIERNAN: Sorry?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): The member for Perth has the call and will not respond to interjections.

Ms MacTIERNAN: I was trying to be good natured. I am interested in having a debate. As I have been listening over the last week to these contributions, what struck me was how profoundly unaware members were of alternative models and visions of where our economy is going and, indeed, the sort of ways in which we might divide up the community pie.

The Tax Laws Amendment (Combating Multinational Tax Avoidance) Bill 2015 that is before us today is legislation that we do support. It is a modest measure to reduce tax evasion by multinational companies. We have noted that the government has been unable to give us any sort of estimate beyond an asterisk as to what, indeed, this might collect. Today we had the Treasurer being optimistic, talking about hundreds of millions of dollars. It will be really great, fine and good if we get hundreds of millions, but we are dealing with a problem where, in fact, we need to raise billions more dollars in revenue. We need to do that for a very good reason, and a number of measures that have been put forward by this side of the House have been rejected out of hand by the government.

I just want to reflect on one matter, and that is the growing inequality not just across the Western world but, indeed, across our country. Inequality is happening globally, and I think we have talked about this in the past. There was a period coinciding with the end of that very radicalising experience of World War I and going right up until the 1980s where we saw the historic inequalities in the spread of income and wealth in society changing. Over that period, basically from 1920 to 1980, we saw an economic democratisation take place where the share
of the overall return of an economy that went to wages versus that which went to profit changed. What we have been seeing since 1980—and, indeed, what I believe is now accelerating—is a reversal of that.

In fact, what we are seeing is societies, including our own, becoming more and more unequal in the way in which they reward effort. The reward you get out of profit is now increasing compared to the reward that you get out of labour and, in relation to the various types of labour, that reward is becoming more and more distorted. I will give you a couple of key facts. Over the past generation—in the last 30 years or so—Australia's top one per cent income share of wealth has doubled and the top 0.1 per cent income share has tripled. From 1975 to 2014, real wages have grown by a mere $7,000 for the bottom one-tenth and by $47,000 for the top one-tenth. If we look at actual wealth, I think that we will see that it is not just income, that this is actually compounded in terms of the spread of wealth.

This is a question of fairness, but it is also an economic question. Is this what is going to deliver us a strong and stable society into the future? I do urge members on the other side to look at the work of Nobel Prize-winning author Joseph Stiglitz. His work *The Price of Inequality* really shows that we do not only risk destabilising our democratic institutions by this growing sense of unfairness that we are seeing emerging around the world and that it is not just the radicals in the Occupy movement who are aware of this. People are becoming increasingly aware of this growing inequality and increasingly disillusioned that the political class appears to be unable and unwilling to do anything about this.

What we are seeking to do is try to balance the budget to get us out of the problems that fundamentally came from the global financial crisis, a crisis which emerged primarily because of the greed of large corporations. They created an absolute crisis. By and large, the people that were at the heart of that crisis have gone on to even greater benefit, and communities like ours and those across Europe and North America are now trying to deal with this catastrophe that has been created by those who pursued a philosophy of greed and the unbridled pursuit of wealth.

We are being told that we have to cut really important things like investment in education. I have heard member after member get up on the other side and say, 'There's no such thing as a free education. Someone has to pay for it.' Someone does have to pay for it. But what we are saying is that the proposition that university education should be largely the responsibility of government or that technical and further education should largely be the responsibility of government is not at all an unreasonable proposition.

We note that in some of these most successful economies—such as in the Scandinavian economies—they provide free tertiary and technical education. They do not find it absolutely preposterous that the bulk of that should fall upon the tax revenue, because they have a more sophisticated understanding of who is actually benefiting out of the system and how we create the social stability that we need for economies to prosper. I think this is an increasing problem that we have on the conservative side of politics—that they seem to profoundly misunderstand the nature of the social contract.

We have billionaires in this country who believe that somehow or other their innate value and their innate genius have been the things that have turned them into billionaires, rather than this being the result of a particular structure that we have in our society. The Gina Rineharts of this world in fact rely very much on there being a particular value placed on a
mineral for them to be able to generate the sorts of vast profits that they do. But there is nothing logical or in any way self-evident about the fact that a CEO of a bank, for example, should get $15 million, while an ordinary working person in that bank might get $50,000. These things are not self-evident. There are structures that have emerged that have enabled people to generate vast wealth.

It is really important to understand the trend line here. The trend line is taking us to more and more inequality, and that inequality feeds further inequality, because the people with this ever-increasing wealth are able to buy political influence, either directly or indirectly, and to mould media opinion. Just look at Rupert Murdoch. The reason why Rupert Murdoch wanted to run all of those red tops was not that he was particularly interested in exposing the private lives of people but rather that this gave him the mechanism for controlling. The fear that he generated within the political class ensured that he had a very high level of control over the decisions of government, to ensure that his particular interests were advantaged.

We need to get on top of the fact that we have to do something more about this growing inequality. I have heard members talking about the top taxation rate. The top taxation rate is somewhat farcical if we do not know what people are in fact paying in tax. Many of the people who may notionally fall within income brackets that require them to pay substantial amounts of tax actually are not doing that because they have the availability of tax havens—be it the Cayman Islands or elsewhere—and top tax advice that enables them to avoid or to minimise their tax, to a point where the ratio of tax that they are paying bears very, very little relationship to what people think should be paid by those people. Hence the Buffett principle was that there be an absolute limit on the amount of deductions that one could call upon, so that there would be a guaranteed minimum level of taxation paid.

We are going to have to deal with these things. I agree with welfare reform. I think that there are a lot of unintended consequences that come out of creating a welfare system that can foster intergenerational dependence. But there is an incredibly strong argument here that we are cutting back our social safety nets while at the same time operating a protection racket that has seen the top 10 per cent, the top one per cent, the top 0.1 per cent, of our communities getting richer and richer.

I note that Stiglitz says here:

... if we were serious about deficit reduction, we could easily raise trillions of dollars over the next ten years simply by (a) raising taxes on people in the top—because they get so much of the nation's economic pie, even small increases in tax rates raises substantial revenues ...

He goes on and advocates a number of provisions like this. So I just urge the members opposite to think a bit more broadly, to think a bit more deeply, about these matters and to reflect on these profound changes in economic structures that are coming across the world. I have referred in the past to Thomas Piketty's book *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. He points out that, across the globe, we are now pretty much back at the position that we were in in the 1890s, in the Belle Epoque, in terms of inequality. If we want to prosper as a society, if we want to see this broad commitment to our democracy, if we want to see our economy thrive and have a deeply engaged, stable community, then we need to address these issues. We have got to get beyond the very cliched representations that we have been seeing from the government members over the last week. We support this legislation, but in no way does this
go anywhere near far enough in addressing the massive issue of how we get a decent tax response from the wealthiest in our community.

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (15:58): I rise to offer my support for the Tax Laws Amendment (Combating Multinational Tax Avoidance) Bill 2015. I am always pleased to support legislation that fulfils three key criteria: firstly, it is necessary; secondly, it is considered; and, thirdly, it is proportionate to the problem it seeks to resolve. This bill ticks all three boxes. It is in keeping with the government's broad and determined commitment to ensure that companies that earn income in Australia and benefit from the Australian economy pay their fair share of tax here. It is a simple principle but, for reasons that I will outline, it is increasingly difficult to administer in the modern, global, connected community.

This is fundamental question of fairness and equity. Companies that earn income in Australia should pay their fair share of tax in Australia. Most are happy to comply with their obligation, in this regard. Small- and medium-sized Australian businesses or businesses with a significant bricks-and-mortar presence in Australia do not, generally, have the ability to significantly reclassify revenue for the purposes of tax avoidance. Small- and medium-sized companies do not fall within the scope of this bill. Instead, it specifically targets revenues earned by large multinational corporations, companies that conduct business in Australia and overseas.

With advances in technology, in recent decades, the geographical location of a company and where it does business has become blurred. For example, 30 years ago it would have been rare for customer service and support to be provided by an overseas call centre. Twenty years ago it was rare for an Australian, living in Australia, to purchase retail goods from an overseas retailer. Ten years ago we could not have envisaged using mobile apps based overseas to book car journeys or private accommodation in Australia.

The increasingly globalised and digitalised economy is a net benefit for relatively small, modern, open, trade oriented countries, such as Australia. The downside is that these market conditions make it easier for companies to use convoluted accounting tricks to minimise their tax obligations in relatively high corporate-tax jurisdictions, such as Australia. By way of example, in recent months the political lexicon has been treated to a profit-shifting measure known exotically as the 'double Irish Dutch sandwich'. I will spare the House the complexities of this arrangement but, suffice to say, it is a method by which multinational corporations engage in channelling profits from Australia and elsewhere through a variety of Irish and Dutch subsidiaries. The profits then end up in a tax haven beyond the reach of the Australian Taxation Office.

This sort of creative accounting by multinational corporations fails the fairness test. It allows them to dramatically reduce their overall corporate tax rate, which denies revenue to the Australian government to fund necessary services for Australians. This means that more of the burden of taxation must be borne by other companies and individual taxpayers. It also gives multinationals operating in Australia an unfair competitive advantage over smaller competitors that either lack the multinational reach to engage in similar practices or are unable or unwilling to do so.

The coalition government made a clear commitment to address tax avoidance as part of the 2015-16 budget. This bill delivers on that commitment. Schedule 1 to the bill defines the bill's scope. It targets large foreign multinationals. The bill defines these as 'significant global
entities' with a global turnover of more than $1 billion dollars per annum. The Australian Taxation Office has identified about 30 companies that are targeted by this law. In total, about 100 companies may need to review compliance with the new laws.

Schedule 2 to the bill introduces the multinational anti-avoidance law. This law will take effect on 1 January 2016 and will target artificial or contrived arrangements to avoid the attribution of business profits to Australia—arrangements such as the double Irish Dutch sandwich earlier described. Multinationals found to be avoiding Australian tax under the new anti-avoidance laws will not only have to pay back the tax they owe but also will face additional penalties of up to 100 per cent of the value of the tax owed.

Schedule 3 to the bill doubles the penalties for tax avoidance and profit shifting. Schedule 4 to the bill implements Australia's commitment to country-by-country reporting under the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's action plan for base erosion-and-profit-shifting.

This has been a multilateral effort, over several years, to achieve a coordinated approach to monitoring and reporting transfer pricing. The extent of transfer pricing undertaken, across national boundaries, by multinationals is not fully understood by governments, which limits effective monitoring. With the implementation of these new documentation standards, governments will have more visibility over transfer-pricing practices, which will aid enforcement and improve compliance.

As has been the case, previously, the ATO will retain a policy that rewards proactive disclosure and will look favourably upon companies that take positive steps towards complying with the new laws. The former Treasurer noted, in introducing this bill, that the tax office has already been contacted by some companies seeking information about how they might restructure their activities to improve compliance. This is a good sign that the proposed changes are well targeted and will achieve the intended effect.

The contents of this bill will not come as a surprise to industry and other stakeholders. Exposure drafts covering the contents of this bill have been released publicly and stakeholder comments invited. Feedback from the consultations has been taken into account and is reflected in the contents of the final bill. This bill is just the next step in the coalition government's ongoing reforms of Australia's taxation system. The government is pursuing tax reform to make our system more competitive and efficient and to reduce its complexity.

Already, we have introduced a suite of small-business-friendly measures, including tax cuts, extensions to tax write-offs and other initiatives to reduce red tape for small businesses. We have also secured in-principle agreement from the states and territories to apply the GST to products purchased online from overseas—another initiative that will level the playing field for small- and medium-sized businesses in Australia.

In closing, I reiterate that this bill should be supported because it is necessary, it is proportionate. That it ticks all three boxes is a credit to the former Treasurer, the member for North Sydney, who has long been a champion for reform of taxation relating to multinational entities. If this legislation is to form part of his legacy then it is a fine legacy, indeed. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (16:07): The nation faces some significant economic challenges. One of those significant challenges is restoring fiscal balance to the way
the economy grows and the way that the nation grows. We have a large and growing budget deficit. The levels of debt that this Liberal government has undertaken have increased since it came to government. Many Australians would not understand this or know this, but this government has in fact made the budget deficit worse.

Over the course of the last two years, the Liberal coalition government has doubled the budget deficit. The deficit has gone from approximately $26 billion to $52 billion. There has also been an increase in the level of debt. They are figures that most Australians would not be aware of, but they are facts. The levels of debt the government has introduced need to be paid for and they will be paid for by future generations of Australians if we do not restore some balance and an even keel to the fiscal position of the nation. We need a sensible approach to restoring sustainability and balance to the budget. That requires governments to make savings and also to look to measures to raise additional revenue to fund important social services, in particular those safety net services that many Australians rely on to be able to participate in our society.

Labor is acutely aware of this challenge. That is why, over the course of the last two years, there has been a great effort from the Labor Party—and in particular the economic team, led by Chris Bowen—to consult with Australian businesses, with Australian tax experts and with organisations that work in the field of fiscal responsibility to put together a set of policies that are responsible, that restore sustainability to the budget and are balanced and fair. These policies also promote growth within our economy, promote growth in jobs and provide additional revenue to fund programs that are vitally important—for instance, the Gonski reforms to education, which are necessary to ensure that our nation has a competitive education system, and funding programs that are providing incentives for people to take on more education, particularly at the higher education levels through university and TAFE colleges.

Labor has developed a set of policies that are balanced and fair. We have done this in a different manner to a coalition government. We have taken a different approach to those opposite. Those opposite—in the first budget and the following budget of the Abbott government—attacked pensioners, attacked the sick by attempting to introduce a co-payment for visits to the doctor and attacked students by attempting to introduce $100,000 university degrees. In many respects, those opposite attacked the most vulnerable in our community. They attacked the people who, really, we should be giving the incentives to and a leg up so that they can prosper, establish businesses and grow our economy into the future.

Not only have they attacked the most vulnerable in our community but they have also given tax breaks and tax savings to some of the most profitable and wealthy businesses and individuals in our economy. A classic example of this is removing the minerals resource rent tax, allowing the biggest mining companies in the world a tax break whilst putting a tax increase on the lowest paid women in the country—those earning less than $38,000 a year—by removing the low income superannuation contribution. That has been the philosophy of this government when it comes to looking at restoring fiscal balance to our budget. That is the point: there is no balance. It is unfair and is unbalanced.

That is why Labor undertook this process of consultation, working with experts and looking to areas within our economy where additional revenue can be raised while still promoting growth and promoting jobs. We did that through two policies. One tackles
superannuation tax concessions by taxing those who have more than $1 million in their superannuation fund and are earning an income of interest based on that capital value in the superannuation fund. Anyone earning more than $75,000 per year as income off their superannuation balance—so we are not talking about reducing the actual capital balance in the superannuation fund, but about earning that income of that—will have to pay a little bit more tax. That is because the experts say that superannuation tax concessions are going to consume the budget and they are going to overwhelm, particularly, the amount of expenditure that we afford to the age pension.

We have also looked at this issue of multinational tax avoidance. We have come up with a policy that is balanced and fair. It looks to raise $7.2 billion of additional revenue by asking some of the most wealthy multinational companies—which earn super profits in Australia off their operations but pay very little tax in Australia—to pay a little bit more tax. When you have average employee Australian taxpayers paying an effective rate of tax of 21 per cent, as workers and as employees, and multinational big businesses paying less than 10 per cent effective rates of tax, then there is an imbalance in the system. The government needs to rectify that.

But the government has not done that and it has been up to Labor to develop a policy which does just that: it raises $7.2 billion worth of additional revenue to ensure that we can fund those important educational programs and other programs. Labor believes when it comes to multinational profit shifting and corporate tax avoidance that really enough is enough and the time has come for real action, particularly given the deteriorating state of the budget and the increase in the deficit that is being undertaken by the Abbott-Turnbull government.

Whilst it is difficult to accurately determine the true scale of corporate tax dodging, it has been brought to light in particular in recent years, leaving many in the community rightfully outraged. Earlier this year, we saw that the Senate inquiry into corporate tax avoidance highlighted the size of the problem when it revealed that the nine largest global pharmaceutical companies—which made $8 billion in sales in 2014 in Australia and received $3.5 billion in subsidies from Australian taxpayers through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme—had paid collectively just $85 million in income taxes. That is one per cent of their revenue. Now most Australian PAYG taxpayers, workers and employees would love to pay just one per cent of their earnings as income tax but they do not; they pay a lot more. The average Australian wage earner pays a standard 21 per cent of their income in taxes, and small businesses and small corporated businesses in Australia pay 30 per cent. It is clear just how unbalanced the taxation system is and why there is a need for reform.

Other examples include: Apple, which paid just $80 million in Australian tax in 2013-14 despite earning local revenue of over $6 billion; James Hardie, which, despite average annual profits of over $200 million, operates at a net taxable loss in Australia allowing it to claim tax deductions on annual payments to the compensation fund for victims of asbestos products; and Glencore, which, depending on who you believe, either paid zero dollars or $400 million on local revenue of $15 billion.

In its submission to the tax inquiry, the Australian Tax Office reported that, of Australia’s $300 billion in cross-border trade, more than $150 billion was made up of companies transferring money from their Australian operations to international jurisdictions, many of which featured very low tax rates. We believe that, when it comes to tax, Australians and
Australian companies should pay their fair share. That is why in March this year Labor released the policy I mentioned earlier, which will raise $7.2 billion for measures to stop multinational profit shifting out of Australia. I contrast that to this policy and the bill that is being debated here. Under this bill here, the government cannot say how much revenue will be raised by this suite of measures. In fact, when you look at the budget papers, on the revenue side for this particular measure, there is an asterix. It is unacceptable that the government do not know how much a particular measure is going to raise. It really does highlight the fact that in many respects their hearts are not in it when it comes to restoring balance to the budget.

Our approach is multi-faceted and seeks to ensure tax deductions are based on a company's entire global operations, not just their operations here in Australia. It will stop the issue of shifting profits overseas and will stop a company claiming that the profit that they make here that they send to another division of that company in another country as a loan cannot be used for income purposes and therefore cannot be taxed. We are not just looking at what they do in Australia but at what they do internationally. We will also standardise our tax law with other countries so that companies cannot double dip. We will improve compliance with the Australian Taxation Office by: providing effective funding to ensure that the tax office has the necessary means, the staff and the personnel to crack down on these avoidance schemes; and we will start third-party reporting and data-matching early to improve compliance.

We have repeatedly called on the government to adopt a bipartisan approach to this issue. We got out early on this particular measure and said in the lead up to the last budget: here is a way you can raise $7.2 billion of additional revenue; it sits well within the OECD guidelines for base erosion and profit shifting; and it could have been adopted on multipartisan approach. We could have said that this parliament is serious about tackling this issue but, no, the government has said they will not even look at the measure. A cooperative approach would have plugged the holes through which Australia is losing millions and billions of dollars in forgone tax revenues and would have been particularly beneficial given that, as I said, the deficit is getting worse and debt is increasing under this government.

Of course Labor has worked for a number of years now to ensure large firms pay their tax bills. In 2013 Labor passed laws requiring the Australian Taxation Office to publish information about the income tax paid by companies earning more than $100 million. This law applied to around 2,000 companies. But again we have seen this particular Liberal government remove some of that scrutiny, remove some of that transparency that Labor put into the system. The government now wants to exempt about 800 of those companies to allow them to keep their tax affairs confidential. They argue that private firms should not be held to the same standards as public companies.

The government has introduced this bill despite the fact that it was uncovered, through a freedom-of-information request, that there had not been one complaint received by the Treasurer or Prime Minister's office about the law that Labor introduced to improve taxation transparency and to ensure that these companies publish their taxation records. This just proves that this is a completely ideological approach that this government is taking, which is not in the best interests of Australians, which does not restore fairness and balance to our taxation system and that is why it deserves condemnation for the approach that it is taking.
Nonetheless, Labor takes a constructive approach to these issues and that is why we have offered support for the government in the passage of this bill.

The bill does introduce significant new concepts to our taxation law—the notion of a global entity. It seeks to clamp down on multinational firms using artificial arrangements to avoid paying to corporate tax in Australia, it does double the penalty for firms involved in tax avoidance schemes and it implements some of the OECD’s action plan for transfer price documentation and country-by-country reporting. However, as I said, the government still does not know how much revenue this measure will raise. When it comes to ensuring we restore balance to our taxation system, the government should be working with Labor on the proposals that we have put forward.

Mr HAWKE (Mitchell—Assistant Minister to the Treasurer) (16:22): I rise to support the government’s Tax Laws Amendment (Combating Multinational Tax Avoidance) Bill 2015. It is a great bill that shows the government is committed to ensuring Australians have a fair and sustainable taxation system.

I was pleased to see that the member for Kingsford Smith got the memo from the member for Fraser that the opposition is indeed supporting the government’s measures, as they recognise that these will add extra integrity to the Australian tax system, and indeed will provide for more revenue and ensure that there is not tax evasion by multinational companies in Australia. I do want to take up the member for Kingsford Smith on a couple of the points that he made, because I think it is important in the context of this debate to understand why it is that the government has not put a figure on the revenue to date. Not only is that the expert advice from the ATO; the approach of the government has been to have the ATO working with the multinational companies and working with the government to ensure this legislation has been drafted correctly and ensure that we meet our international obligations under BEPS with the OECD on base erosion. All of that process has meant that we will not make fanciful claims about the amounts of revenue that the government is seeking to get from these changes to this law. I think it is fanciful for the opposition to say it would be $7.1 billion, given that they will not release any of the assumptions made or the modelling relied on to make that claim.

So it is just like it was with the MRRT, and I was stunned to hear the member for Kingsford Smith mention the dreaded MRRT, the minerals resource rent tax—a tax that was implemented by Labor in government that did not actually raise any revenue—as an example of anything that Labor would be putting forward. Really that shameful episode ought to be put back in the drawer and never mentioned or heard of again. This parliament and this country would be better off if we never heard about the MRRT, that foolish proposal, ever again.

It does go to show that they may not have learnt the lessons here: that you do not make overinflated and hyperventilating claims about the amount of revenue you are going to book in the budget. The budget line item in relation to this measure, which comes into place on 1 January 2016, does not have a figure attached to it at this point in time because that is the expert advice—that it is very difficult to assess exactly how much revenue will be raised by the measures that are proposed in this bill. That does not mean we should not proceed with them. That does not mean that we should not listen to all sides of the debate here. The government has said on many occasions: if the Labor Party has amendments that they wish to put up in relation to this legislation, they should put them forward. The government has said
that, if there are loopholes that Labor believes it can help close that will deliver revenue, and
if there are shortfalls in the tax system, we are prepared to consider those sorts of proposals.
So I do think it is odd for the opposition to say that they will book $7.1 billion in revenue
without being willing to say: 'Here are the assumptions; here is the modelling; here is exactly
how we believe it can be done.' I think everybody who would consider this matter, given that
they would not release those figures, would come to the same conclusion—that you really
could not claim anything like that, and you really could not claim that of course you could
produce that revenue. And I think that is the case. I think when you hear members of the
opposition talking about terms like 'super profits' again—and we heard that return to the Rudd
era: 'super profits'—you kind of get the sense that they are missing the point about the
significance of these measures to combat multinational tax avoidance that we have here.

There are several schedules here that I think are relevant to this debate. We have the
multinational anti-avoidance law in schedule 2. In schedule 3, we have stronger penalties,
importantly, penalties being a significant part of the government's agenda in relation to
combating multinational tax avoidance. In schedule 4 we have country-by-country reporting,
which of course is critical when you consider what the OECD is doing in relation to base
erosion; that reporting is absolutely vital for different tax jurisdictions to share and to consult
with each other on to ensure that tax is booked in at least one jurisdiction.

The schedules that the government has put forward in this bill make sense. They are good
measures. So it is welcome that the member for Fraser and the opposition have come on board
because, working with the OECD, it is essential that immediate action is required so that the
Australian tax system is fit for purpose—fit to deal with the most egregious tax avoidance
arrangements, recognising some of those things.

So, while I accept some of what the member for Kingsford Smith says about the rate of
multinational tax avoidance and while we want to make these changes to ensure that more tax
is paid here in Australia where profits are booked, he did of course then move on to a typical
Labor agenda of conflating the income tax system with the company tax system and tried to
convey to people that the PAYG system is somehow related to the rates of company tax and
that there is some one per cent or something he was talking about, versus the effective 21 per
cent of income tax providers.

I think it is important to remind people at this juncture that we are not a competitive tax
jurisdiction internationally at this point. We are not competitive on income tax levels. But we
are also not competitive on company tax rates, and this is a dual problem. While it is very
important to bring down the rates of tax for income pay-as-you-go earners, it is also important
to clearly articulate in debates such as this on multinational tax avoidance that we are talking
about the design of our laws for a new phenomenon in world history—that is, the
multinational and the international nature of the jurisdictions, given the digital age and the
new era that we live in. I am talking about company tax which is just as high and just as
anticompetitive for Australian companies as it ever has been—in fact, 30 cents in the dollar is
a very uncompetitive rate, given all of the comparable economies in our region, and, indeed,
that is why the government has moved to lower the small business tax rate to 28.5c, and that
is a welcome step by all my colleagues in ensuring the company tax burden is reduced,
because, by reducing the rate of company tax and the company tax burden on small
businesses, we will create more jobs, more prosperity and of course deliver a stronger growth in our economy, which will deliver more revenue.

But in particular this bill is about producing more revenue from multinational tax avoidance, and I want to commend the former Treasurer and our current Treasurer for the work that has been done here that is ahead of what has been happening in the OECD, but also in sync with what is happening in the OECD, and I think it is important to remember that the measures in this bill will only apply to large multinationals with annual global revenue of more than $1 billion. That is why I think the member for Kingsford Smith fails when he talks about super profits—he is talking about companies that are under $1 billion—and says that somehow they are super profitable or that we should be doing more in this space, when we have a very high rate of company tax.

It is not responsible for a national government in this time, in this era, in the climate that we find ourselves in, in the competitive nature of that digital age that we live in, to be talking about super profits and tax. We know that global growth is on a trend downwards. We know that China's growth is on a trend downwards. We know that we have to compete not just for foreign investment; we have to compete for brains, for people and for people wanting to establish their businesses—for start-ups and venture capital. That is why the Prime Minister is so focused on running the economy and the government of the 21st century. It does require laws such as this—multinational tax avoidance laws—but it also requires an understanding that high rates of tax, uncompetitive rates of tax, both company tax and individual tax, make our economy less attractive to that international flow of capital, that international flow of ideas and that international flow of people and brains that Australia must be in the hunt for if we are to replace the loss of revenue in commodity prices and in particular in iron ore. That is why I welcome the measures.

I think it is important to talk a little bit about what we are doing in schedule 2 with the multinational antiavoidance law. For significant global entities with revenues above $1 billion—and it is estimated that about 1,000 companies will need to consider these rules—our approach has been to have the ATO working with each of the multinational companies to ensure that we can bring in the revenue. We do not necessarily take the stick approach in full swing to these companies without allowing for a change in the law and allowing them to comply with the new law, recognising that with most of the arrangements there has been a failure in legislation and a failure of parliaments to legislate fast enough for a changing and emerging economy rather than illegal behaviour. That is something that emerged from the Senate inquiry in this area. If you are considering this matter, it is important to understand that the stronger penalties regime will of course mean that the government does have a stick in relation to this and we are significantly strengthening the stance against tax avoidance in the legislation. The bill doubles the maximum administrative penalties that can be applied by the Commissioner of Taxation to large companies that enter into tax avoidance and profit-shifting schemes. It will deter multinationals from entering into contrived tax avoidance and profit-shifting schemes. Deterrence is a key element, as we have recognised in the past, in the fight against tax avoidance behaviour.

You might also know that the government has made changes to the thin capitalisation rules, understanding that the nature of the economy is changing and those thin capitalisation rules reflect a pretty deep understanding by the government of the nature of modern arrangements
and structures. Combined with those measures, you will see the resources that are dedicated to tax minimisation and opportunities to avoid tax through the offshore activities and larger potential gains that were there. The stronger penalties will help deter any major taxpayers from taking aggressive tax positions, given the government's approach.

Recognising that tax is a very complex area, particularly in Australia, if there is a reasonably arguable position then they will not be affected. That is an important part of the government maintaining confidence in our economy and the way our laws are designed and constructed. There are those who have sought to do the right thing, have obtained the right professional advice and can reasonably argue their position in a multinational context, understanding that the world and the economy are different than they were even five years ago. It is a recognition that tax law does not always provide certain tax outcomes—something that we have failed to grasp from the opposition time and time again.

Returning to my earlier points, I am glad to hear that the opposition will be supporting the government on these measures. That is welcome. As I said earlier and as I think the Assistant Treasurer said earlier today, we welcome any idea that the opposition might have for an amendment or a tax loophole that could be closed. We will consider those ideas in the context that they are put forward. If they are positively framed, if the opposition genuinely believes there is opportunity for billions of dollars of revenue to be recovered in a legitimate way from multinationals, then the government certainly wants to hear about it and will work with the opposition in that regard.

It is, however, a misnomer for the government to repeat the mantra that there is a figure of $7.2 billion available to the government when they will not release any of the assumptions or any of the modelling and will not discuss how they arrived at that figure. We have heard this all before when Labor has talked about the revenue that they can make from a tax. The member for Kingsford Smith spoke about the minerals resource rent tax—the single greatest example of tax design failure, arguably in world history, not just in Australian history. It is the single greatest failure in tax design by the Australian Labor Party—a new tax on a 'super-profitable mining sector', in their words, that did not raise a single cent in revenue. It is obviously a tax design failure. So we certainly will not listen to the architects of the minerals resource rent tax in designing our bill to combat multinational tax avoidance, but we will accept any idea and will consider it carefully in the context that it is put forward. That is a good approach from the Turnbull government.

This is a serious issue and the Australian government has moved in a serious way to ensure that we have fair and sustainable tax system. We have some of the strongest integrity rules in the world and we have changed some of those rules in relation to critical areas, like thin capitalisation. We know that some multinationals are structuring to avoid Australian tax by booking revenue from Australian sales offshore. That is why the government is adopting the measures that are in this bill and that is why the government will continue to work with the OECD and will continue to comply with the base erosion and profit-shifting program of the OECD. In particular, there is schedule 4—country-by-country reporting—which ensures that we are working and cooperating with every international tax jurisdiction, especially within the G20, to ensure that nobody is evading tax by jurisdiction-hopping. That is another worthwhile measure in this bill.
That is what it is all about: well designed tax laws that prevent tax evasion and profit-shifting offshore, recognises that Australia has a lot of work to do in the taxation space, both in the individual income tax space, where our rates uncompetitive, and in the company tax space. We still have one of the highest rates of company tax in any comparable economy in the world. That is something that we do need to look at and it is something that, over time, we need to ensure reduces so that we can be internationally competitive. In relation to this bill, I strongly recommend it to the House. I welcome the opposition's support on this important measure. This will be good for Australia and good to work with our OECD friends to ensure that tax evasion is reduced.

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (16:37): I support the position outlined earlier today by the member for Fraser, on behalf of Labor, on the Tax Laws Amendment (Combating Multinational Tax Avoidance) Bill 2015. The issue of tax avoidance by multinationals—transnationals—is a matter that I have raised previously in this place. Indeed, it is a matter that I have some serious concerns about.

Whilst we on this side of the House will support this legislation I made the point, to reiterate the point made by other speakers from this side of the House, that we see this as a tokenistic effort being made by the government in order to appease voters about a matter that most people I speak with feel very angry about. Last week we saw the government reverse the tax payment disclosure laws that Labor had put into place, which meant that any entity that earnt over $100 million would have to have the amount of tax they paid disclosed. That clearly indicates to me, and to people I speak with outside of this place, that this government is clearly on the side of big business and it is there to protect big business in whatever way it can. It is also clear to me that while this legislation may go some way towards reining in the amount of tax that is being avoided by companies, it goes nowhere near far enough.

Can I say to the member for Mitchell, who spoke just a moment ago, that with respect to the $7.2 billion that was part of the package that Labor announced it would introduce to stop multinational companies from shifting their profits out of Australia—and in turn $7.2 billion would be returned to the Australian government in the years ahead—those figures were costed by the Parliamentary Budget Office. Even if members opposite want to question the figures, the real question is: why do they want to question and oppose the initiatives that Labor would have put in place? In other words, even if you do not believe how much tax is likely to be collected, isn't the real question that needs to be addressed when responding to Labor's proposal one of whether the measures are fair and reasonable and should be implemented—and time will tell how much money they will raise—rather than simply saying, 'Because we don't trust your figures, we won't even consider your measures'?

According to an article written by Peter Martin in the The Sydney Morning Herald on 30 April this year, there were 55 people in Australia who earnt over $1 million in the year 2012-13 and paid no income tax. Their combined earnings were almost $130 million. Forty of those people paid a combined amount of $42.5 million in costs for managing their tax affairs. It begs the question as to whether it would have been better for them to have simply paid their fair share of tax than to manage their tax affairs. But, be that as it may, they were prepared to spend a huge amount of money in order to minimise or avoid paying tax.

In 2011-12 the figure was even higher, with 75 people each earning over $1 million—and they had combined earnings of $195 million between them—paying no income tax. It is no
wonder that people in the community feel angry with the government for not doing something about that, when the truth is that people in ordinary homes around Australia pay their fair share of tax while others are not paying their fair share of tax. Indeed, the only people who do pay their full rate of tax up-front and on time are lower-income wage earners, who have their tax deducted from wages each pay period, and that tax is then remitted straight to the Australian Taxation Office. They have no opportunity to minimise or avoid paying their fair share of tax, through either negative gearing investments, questionable business expenses, transfer pricing schemes, asset depreciation or any number of other lawful means used to minimise tax.

Avoiding or minimising tax would be one of the most attractive and easy ways of building wealth, because few investments that I can think of provide a return of 20 per cent, or 30 per cent or at times even perhaps 40 per cent, which is the rate that most tax might be applied at. So, when you are getting those rates of return, effectively, on your money by avoiding tax, it quickly makes sense as to why it has become a major industry not just here in Australia but around the world. Tax avoidance is legal, but if it occurs through manipulation—or, as it is more kindly referred to, ‘through the use of loopholes’—it is unethical and should be made illegal. When dealing with multinationals operating in a world where countries have very different tax rates, very different tax laws and very different tax enforcement regimes, the use of loopholes is made easier, more justifiable and more difficult to track or control.

The world appears to be increasingly influenced by the agenda of multinationals. As the influence of multinationals spreads across more countries, more of the global wealth is owned by fewer entities. I note that one per cent of the people of the world own 48 per cent of global wealth. I also note that 80 of the richest people in the world doubled their wealth between the years 2009 and 2014, and those 80 people have the same amount of wealth as the bottom 50 per cent of the entire world’s population. It certainly highlights the growing inequity that is occurring throughout the world, and it is only made possible through countries not closing tax loopholes that currently exist, and through multinationals using the global system for their benefit. It is also contributing to government budget problems in so many countries, including Australia. I suspect that if all Australian companies and all Australian taxpayers paid their fair share of tax we would not have the current government debt we have.

Last week when we were debating the shipping legislation, I did a bit of research into where most ships are registered and who owns them. I found out that, when it comes to the deadweight tonnage of ships, Greek entities are the largest and most dominant owners of global shipping in the world. But their ships are all registered and flagged in low-cost tax jurisdictions, including the Marshall Islands and Malta. I imagine that the finances of those fleet owners are also centred in those jurisdictions or other low-tax, low-cost countries. I do not know how much tax Greek shipping owners contribute to the Greek government, but I suspect that, if they all paid their fair share of tax, the Greek economy, which has been at the centre of global discussion and debate, would not be in the difficulty that it currently is in.

The issue of transfer pricing by international companies has long concerned me. This is the practice by which international entities manipulate their accounts and business affairs so as to ensure that all the profit is made in the lowest tax jurisdiction. This should be described not simply as tax loopholes but, quite frankly, as tax fraud. In fact, it is interesting to note how the language used in tax avoidance is softened to create the impression that the law is at fault, not
the tax avoider. Perpetrators are even applauded as being smart business operators rather than referred to as crooks and scoundrels, cheating on society and their fellow citizens. The tax that they do not pay—the tax that they avoid—is shouldered by the low-income people of the world, who do not have the ability, as I said earlier, to employ shrewd accountants and lawyers or to put their money in international financial schemes that, in turn, reduce their tax liability. They simply pay their tax every week or every fortnight, whenever their payday is, directly to the ATO before they even receive the money.

When I spoke about this matter last in this place, it was about a year ago. I want to quote one of the passages from the speech I made then because I believe it applies equally now. I said at the time:

Tax Justice Network, a UK-based global non-government social justice organisation, estimates that between $21 trillion and $32 trillion—
I repeat that: between $21 trillion and $32 trillion—is hidden by the world's wealthiest people in around 70 global tax havens. The tax that would be paid on the earning of that money is estimated at between US$190 billion and US$280 billion annually. Unethical multinationals and wealthy individuals use transfer pricing to rort the tax system, and then stash away funds in secretive bank accounts within low-tax regimes.

That goes to the heart of this issue. It is occurring right now across the world, and I am sure that there are entities and individuals within Australia that are part of these global tax avoidance schemes. And it is only made possible because of countries that are not prepared to disclose the incomes of the people who invest their money there and, in fact, that maintain a very high level of secrecy about who invests in their countries. That is what has to be stopped. I note that the matter was raised at the G20 conference last year. Hopefully, we will start to see some global breakthrough with respect to all of this—because the truth is: it is not just Australia that is being affected; it is the rest of the world as well. If all companies paid their fair share of tax, I have no doubt that the global debt that is being created around the world and the debt position of most governments of the world would be far, far lower. More importantly, whilst the money is being stashed away, it means that governments do not have the funds to provide the social support systems that they would like to provide in each of their own countries.

My concern is also that, even if we do reach agreement with some countries, unless there is agreement reached between Australia and all countries which provide tax havens or financial havens for people who want to stash their money in those countries, we will still not be able to get to the bottom of this problem because, whilst there are opportunities for people to avoid tax, they will find them and they will use them. This is not a case of closing the loopholes in one particular country and that solving the problem; we will only solve the problem if we are able to do it across the world. The issue of investing in some of the 70 countries that I referred to where people have been investing their money is also not necessarily fixed simply because those countries are prepared to disclose the amount of income to Australia of, say, an Australian national who has invested there. Whilst countries maintain secrecy, again, we do not know just how many other accounts are held by Australians in those countries under names that will never be disclosed.

Lastly, I want to make this point: one of the justifications for using those countries has been that, by doing so, they avoid what is referred to as double taxation. My view is that, if
people were genuine about wanting to pay their fair share of tax and act ethically, investing through an Australian based entity here in Australia would also avoid double taxation. They would only ever be taxed once if their money was invested through an Australian firm. That is what I would like to see occur.

I said at the outset that this is a matter that makes people very angry, and rightly so. People see that pressure is being put on them and their family budget each and every week by the Australian government—and, in particular, by the current coalition government—using the argument that the government needs to restore the budget position and get the budget back into the black. They also see that most of the pressure is on them and most of the money that will restore the budget appears to be coming from them when there are other people in this country, and multinationals who operate from this country, who, every year, make millions and millions of dollars and yet pay very little tax, if any tax at all. It is wrong. Quite frankly, it is a fraud and it ought to be stopped.

Ms PRICE (Durack) (16:52): I am very pleased to rise today to speak on the Tax Laws Amendment (Combating Multinational Tax Avoidance) Bill 2015. The Turnbull government is building an innovative and sustainable economy for a safe and secure Australia, and this bill is an important element of that. The bill implements three 2015-16 budget measures delivered by the former Treasurer, Joe Hockey: multinational anti-avoidance law, country-by-country reporting and new transfer pricing documentation standards, and stronger penalties to combat tax avoidance and profit shifting.

If there is one thing the people of Durack loathe it is unfairness, and I would like to note the comments by the member for Makin that perhaps we should be using words like 'thieves' and crooks'. I happen to agree with him, because, as we know, currently there are some multinationals operating in Australia who are not paying their fair share of tax, and I think 'thieves and crooks' is indeed a better description for them. These measures are part of a package of domestic measures announced in the 2015-16 budget to strengthen Australia's existing laws to ensure that active multinationals in Australia pay their fair share of tax. This bill is consistent with the government's, the Liberal Party's and my values of making a fairer tax system. With multinationals avoiding paying their fair share, it has created an unfair playing field for local businesses, who, unfortunately, lack the reach of these much larger organisations. Families and small businesses in Durack are therefore forced to shoulder more of the tax burden, which undermines confidence in the tax system. I personally would like to see tax rate cuts across the board, and I look forward to seeing recommendations from the tax white paper.

The bill we are debating will allow the Commissioner of Taxation to treat these large multinationals as though they have a taxable presence in Australia and make them subject to Australian law. It applies to large multinationals with annual global revenue of $1 billion or more. This bill is expected to claw in billions of tax dollars, and the Australian Taxation Office has about 30 companies in mind that it will target under this law once it is passed. We are targeting the largest multinationals not only because it is fair but because it is these companies that have the greatest opportunities to avoid tax through offshore activities and represent the highest risk to Australia's tax base.

This bill goes to the heart of a key Liberal core value, and that is strong financial management. Despite the iron ore price more than halving and the weakening of other
international economies, Australia remains on a credible path to surplus. As a new government we inherited a $48 billion deficit, but the good news is that we are set to reduce this deficit by $10 billion this year. Directly as a result of our actions, gross debt in a decade will be $110 billion lower than what we inherited two years ago.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Minister for Trade, Andrew Robb, on negotiating Australia's participation in the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement. The TPP, as we call it, is the largest global trade deal in the past 20 years. It will improve Australian trade across 12 different nations which together make up 40 per cent of the global economy. It will be of enormous benefit to my electorate of Durack in many industries but particularly in the cattle industry. This will be on top of the free trade agreements Minister Robb has signed with Korea and Japan since coming to office.

Additionally, if we can get the Labor Party to drop the politics and follow the advice of former Labor icons such as Bob Hawke, Kevin Rudd and Martin Ferguson, the China free trade agreement will also be passed by the end of this year, growing the important industry of agriculture, as one example—an incredibly important industry in my electorate of Durack—by an estimated $300 million. It is these deals that have led the way to the creation of 12,500 new jobs in Durack since I was elected and, very pleasingly, over 335,000 new jobs throughout Australia since this government was elected to office back in September 2013.

As I said earlier, the people of Durack loathe unfairness. There are more than 13,000 hardworking small businesses in Durack. It is simply not fair: these hardworking local small businesses do the right thing and pay their fair share of tax, unlike the large multinationals that we are discussing today, which have enjoyed an unfair advantage.

I am particularly proud that Australia has led on this global issue. As president of the G20 last year, Australia led the way on the OECD's BEPS action plan to ensure that multinational entities pay the right amount of tax. Under our country's leadership the G20 delivered the first level of an action plan to address multinational tax avoidance. Following this work, this government announced a package of domestic measures in the 2015-16 budget.

I would like to take this opportunity to put on record and fully acknowledge Joe Hockey's work with this particular matter. Mr Hockey worked hard to ensure that these multinationals operating in Australia start, at last, to pay their fair share. Pleasingly, the Turnbull government is going beyond the OECD recommendations. We are planning a voluntary transparency code by May next year. This code will enhance public confidence in the tax system and the community's understanding of the tax affairs of large companies. I am pleased to say that this government is ensuring that the ATO has unprecedented resources to deal with international tax avoidance. We are providing an additional $87.6 million to the ATO over three years to investigate international tax avoidance.

To date it is estimated that the program will raise over $1 billion in total, and I am pleased to say that this is $1 billion that is going to help to start to pay down the debt we inherited from those on the other side. Under this bill, the government will prevent multinationals from using complex schemes to avoid paying tax in the country by booking their revenue overseas. The stronger penalties measure of the tax laws amendment will double the penalties applying to large companies that are engaging in tax avoidance or profit shifting. Businesses in Durack and indeed throughout Australia will not be impacted, but for those who are operating
illegally: be aware; we are coming for you. And just remember, if you are not doing anything wrong, you will have nothing to fear from this new legislation.

The government has been working closely with the business community as well as tax professionals and academics for the last two years on the OECD's profit-shifting agenda. We have consulted with stakeholders, including business, practitioners and the ATO, to develop the legislation to ensure the law will not have unintended consequences.

To those opposite, I would be surprised if you do not support this bill as I know that you too would like to crack down on multinational tax avoidance case. Let's be clear: it is this government which has an effective policy for direct action in this area.

Only the Turnbull government can cut down on large foreign multinationals not paying tax in Australia. What we have heard today during this debate is that this bill will further minimise the tax burden, already decreased by this government, especially for the hardworking businesspeople of Durack and for the rest of Australia. It will end the unfair advantage that large multinationals, who are avoiding tax, have over local businesses and create a standard of fairness not seen when the others were in charge.

As I outlined earlier, we are targeting the largest multinationals, because it is these companies that have the greatest opportunities to avoid tax and represent the highest risk to Australia's tax base. This is a very fair piece of legislation, and I commend the bill to the House.

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (17:01): I rise to speak on the Tax Laws Amendment (Combating Multinational Tax Avoidance) Bill 2015. Benjamin Franklin said:

In this world nothing can be said to certain, except death and taxes.

With medical advances, I think death can be deferred but it is still pretty certain; however, when we come to tax, it is not quite as certain as it was in Benjamin Franklin's day.

The way business is conducted has fundamentally changed. The way we consume products has fundamentally changed. We live in a global digital society where we purchase products that can be delivered to us in digital formats. There are no cassettes in my Sony Walkman when I go for a walk; instead it is an iPod where I can access music from around the world. It is much less certain today where those products, even songs, are made or where a company's transactions are taking place. Companies have been able to take advantage of the transient nature of modern corporate business ventures to structure their corporate affairs and shift profits to low-tax or no-tax regimes—and we heard a little bit about that last week in this place.

This is a very real problem for modern governments where nation states' boundaries are much blurrier than they were 100 or even 50 years ago. Three of the five biggest companies in the world today are making revenue from trading—not something tangible like a cassette but something that we cannot see and measure: they are trading their intellectual property. Previously, these companies would have been major contributors to their country's taxation system. In our global economy, those companies are now at liberty to transfer revenue from their Australian operations to an international subsidiary located in a low-tax jurisdiction—located being a term in inverted commas. Those low-tax jurisdictions have always been around—whether it is Switzerland, Luxemburg, the Bahamas or even the Cayman Islands—and this has implications for the Australian government.
The Australian Taxation Office has reported that, from the $300 billion a year in cross-border trade, over $150 billion is channelled to very low-tax jurisdictions. This is quite simply lost revenue for Australia. Our society operates by each of us contributing through the taxation system—paying the fair amount. It is how we pay for our roads, schools, justice system and other services. The state and Commonwealth governments spend about $150 billion on health budgets a year—the Commonwealth budget is about $65 billion, about 61 per cent. So think about that: that money could go into health, and think of the good it could do.

If these multinational companies are not contributing to our taxation system but shifting revenue to low-tax havens, then the rest of us—be it private individuals, small businesses or Australian registered corporations—have to pick up the slack. This is particularly important in 2015 as we are an ageing Australia. It is the first time ever that we have two generations in retirement. It is good that we have improvements in health and we are able to live healthier lives; however, it is obviously a challenge for a system such as the pension. When the pension was established, the life expectancy of a male was 62 and there were about seven workers for every person on the pension. That ratio is going down and down and down, and it will not be long before we have two or three workers per person on the pension. That has implications for us as a nation, if we want to be a nation that recognises a fair go and offers a helping hand for people in difficult times.

Most Australians live quite simply. They work or run a business in Australia and pay their fair share of tax. For the average Australian, it is about 21 per cent of their income. If they are a wealthier Australian, we have a tax system that means they pay more. If they are a small business, they pay about 30 per cent. Of course they might have write-offs and the like. Obviously, many small businesses do not make a profit so they do not have to pay the full 30 per cent.

If we were all able to shift our income to and arrange our tax affairs in low-tax havens, Australia, as we know it, would fall apart. Support in the nation would come to an end. There would be no money for our wonderful education system that recognises need, whether it is state or private schools. Our world-class Medicare—something that is the envy of the world—would fall apart. Our judicial system, where we provide access to justice for all, would come to a screaming halt. Other important social frameworks—such as child care, that make our wonderful society what it is; the glue that holds the Australian community together—would start to fall apart.

The social contract we have as Australians is to contribute our fair share—that is what makes this country prosper. There are legitimate ways to minimise our taxation burden. A common deduction that most people from time to time claim is a charitable donation, and we are a generous nation when it comes to private individuals. It is sad to see that in the context of a coalition government that has slashed $11.3 billion from the budget at a time when we should be reaching out to the world. Instead, we have a foreign minister that has overseen that obscene slashing of our foreign aid budget.

But, as private individuals, Australians are always happy to put their hands in our pockets and help out our neighbours or people around the world or even domestically who need a helping hand. We saw that when the tsunami hit our neighbours back at the start of the last decade. I am sure many people here have put their hands in their pockets—and I know the
member for Kingsford Smith has done to financially help the surf lifesavers—to help the Red Cross, Oxfam or Diabetes Australia. I am sure the member for Hasluck would have done the same to help the cause of diabetes. I know he is passionate about that. I have even seen it in my electorate with local groups setting up charities to help not only locals but people around the world who are experiencing hardship. There is a common good to the government forgoing some tax revenue and allowing people to give that money to worthwhile charities.

Often constituents come in and say they want to set up a charity or a local service organisation. One of the first things I always ask them is, 'Have you looked at what is available now? Is the service you intend to provide already being undertaken by an established charity?' If it is money that the government is forgoing, as in a tax deduction, then it is important that it is spent wisely. Otherwise, the money would be better spent by the government when it is collected as tax.

As politicians we need to be ever vigilant to the constantly changing techniques being utilised to minimise tax legally. I am not talking about criminal endeavours here. Where these techniques eventually become not in the national interest, measures should be taken to make sure they are made to be in the nation's interest, perhaps even to the extent where such techniques, arrangements or loopholes become illegal. If companies are utilising Australia's great laws and protections for their own prosperity, they should contribute their fair share. They are getting the benefits of the Australian system, so they should put in their fair share.

Evidence was presented before the Senate's corporate tax inquiry that one big multinational firm may have paid as little as two per cent tax on the billions of dollars of revenue it earned. That does not pass the pub test. It is just not fair. As I said, these multinational companies benefit from the protections, safety and services offered by Australia, so they should pay their fair share of tax, as individual Australians do and as Australian businesses do, be they small or medium or one of the larger companies that stride around the world.

For instance, these multinational companies are more likely to be utilising our judicial system than most ordinary Australians yet they are contributing very little to maintaining that judicial system which, at the moment, is struggling from a lack of resources. Australia cannot afford to let these very prosperous multinational corporations avoid paying their full share of taxation. Tax reform for multinational companies is vital to close the loopholes that currently exist that allow these companies to avoid tax. As I said, we are not talking about them doing something illegal—but we have to have a focus on the national interest.

Labor supports any measures that will close such loopholes and protect revenue from taxation that should be staying in Australia and benefiting Australians. Labor announced a $7.2 billion package of measures to prevent multinationals from avoiding tax by moving their profits offshore. That package was costed by the Parliamentary Budget Office. Sadly, the Abbott government rejected the measures proposed by Labor for what could only be short-sighted political reasons.

The measures contained in this bill, while welcomed as at least something, are untested. The government has no idea how much revenue these measures will save. In fact, in the budget papers there is only an asterisk. We saw the Treasurer floundering when asked this question today. Labor has taken a bipartisan approach to this important issue and will not stand in the way of these measures. It is important that these companies contribute as they
should. It is also important that all measures necessary to ensure that multinational companies pay their fair share of taxation in this country be put in place.

More measures are needed to ensure that this occurs. The government needs to be serious about this issue and not tear down the measures put in place by the Australian Labor Party in 2013. Those measures required the Australian Taxation Office to publish details of the income and tax paid by companies earning more than $100 million. When it comes to taxation, transparency is important. Public companies are obliged under the Corporations Act to make sure shareholders know what is going on. Companies earning more than $100 million should be paying their fair share of tax in Australia. If they are not, surely Australians are entitled to know that. Australians are handing over their hard-earned, fully taxed dollars to these companies on the expectation that those companies will support our Australian economy by paying their fair share also.

These transparency measures apply to only about 2,000 companies in Australia. The government wants to reduce that number by about 800 companies. One has to wonder why these companies are so keen to keep their taxation expenditure secret. The government's argument is that private companies should not be held to the same level of accountability as publicly listed corporations. In fact, publicly listed corporations already have significant reporting requirements and the measures put in place by Labor evened the playing field between private companies and publicly listed corporations. If a private company is paying very little taxation, it should be called to account; it should explain why that is the case. There are sound public policy reasons for keeping these transparency measures in place.

We heard that ridiculous claim by the now minister for mining and then Assistant Treasurer Josh Frydenberg that there were real concerns about the implications of the publication of the tax data of private companies. In The Sydney Morning Herald article by the Nassim Khadem and Gareth Hutchins on 17 March he said:

...there were safety concerns because it made those individuals potential kidnap targets.

By this logic, the BRW Rich 200 list should be closed down in the interests of safety. The article goes on to make the point:

The decision to wind back the laws comes amid intense lobbying by business groups for the laws to be scrapped…

I cannot see how Mr Frydenberg could come to that conclusion. Transparency measures are important. The measures in this bill are welcomed. The measures Labor proposes in our $7.2 billion package of measures would go further to ensure that multinational companies are fully contributing to the economic wellbeing of Australia.

It is sign of a lazy government that has already run out of ideas when they take the easy road when it comes to taxation reform. We have seen a hiking up of the GST flagged by a couple of backbenchers opposite already. This is an unimaginative, simple solution that hits the poorest hardest. If the tax is broadened to fresh food, that would particularly attack communities that are struggling with their diet. You could not avoid such a hike unless you did not consume, and we cannot all sit around and grow our own vegetables. A rise in GST would hit low-income Australians, Australians who can least afford to pay more tax. Obviously we cannot structure our arrangements to send our finances off to Luxembourg, Switzerland, the Bahamas or even the Cayman Islands. Low-income Australians do not have
Mr PASIN (Barker) (17:16): I rise today to speak on the Tax Laws Amendment (Combating Multinational Tax Avoidance) Bill 2015. This bill seeks to address the challenges and the increasingly globalised market created for sovereign taxation collection. It is often said—indeed, the member for Moreton said it himself—that two things in life are certain: death and taxes. But it is becoming increasingly clear that some multinational companies are effectively avoiding the latter.

Taxes are a fundamental prerequisite for effective governance. Without tax, governments cannot fulfil their roles. Taxes have been with us since ancient Egyptian times and were formalised under the Roman Empire. These taxes initially were raised to aid the state in arming various militias and armies in defence of the state. The Greek historian Herodotus claimed taxes in Egypt provided a better standard of living, based on overall health of the people, than most other civilizations he had seen. Documentation dating back the first dynasty in Egypt, between 3000 and 2800 BC, shows evidence that pharaohs appeared before the people to collect taxes. The royal tour, called the Following of Horus, made it clear that tax revenues were due to the Pharaoh as the head of the state. Unable to handle the process themselves, pharaohs appointed ministers called viziers who acted as tax supervisors. The viziers kept records of taxes collected and ensured that the needs for labour and grains were met.

‘No taxation without representation’ was the cry which unified the forefathers of our close ally the United States to seize their independence from the British. Tax, indeed, has quite a long and chequered history.

Tax avoidance is a problem that has confronted authorities since taxes were first imposed by authorities. In ancient Egypt, the Pharaoh had to send auditors to ensure that people were not seeking to avoid their tax on cooking oil. In modern times, it is essential that we, too, ensure that taxes are paid. The rapid globalisation of the world economy has delivered new mechanisms for those that wish to avoid their responsibilities. This is especially true of large multinational corporations who can leverage their size and multinational structure to manipulate profits and artificially minimise those tax liabilities.

Taxes have always been a mechanism to redistribute resources to fund the governance of a given nation, and taxes are often a reflection of the values of a community. I am in agreement with Herodotus that effective taxation coupled with responsible government delivers better outcomes for all citizens. An effective taxation system is, indeed, a fundamental requirement in the governance of any nation. It is, of course, a finite and precious resource. Indeed, in the coalition we understand our obligation to apply these finite resources wisely. Whilst this government is cutting back on unnecessary spending, we must also address the issue of multinational tax avoidance. This government treats this issue with the utmost seriousness, as each and every dollar that is forgone through tax avoidance is a missed opportunity. We are opening our markets through our free trade agreements with China, Korea and Japan, alongside the recently announced Trans-Pacific Partnership. Australia is firmly situated in an enviable global position. Part of ensuring that our businesses are not disadvantaged in this new and freer market is to police multinational tax avoidance.
The coalition is committed to lower and simpler taxes. Australians understand the importance of tax, and the vast majority of taxpayers pay their fair share. Australian taxes enable our comprehensive social welfare and healthcare systems. Australian taxes deliver capabilities which ensure our national security through our potent Defence Force and our profession national security community. It is Australian taxes that deliver our world-class education system through funding for the early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary education sectors. It is Australian taxes which enable this government to unlock the potential of each and every Australian citizen.

Australians families pay their taxes, Australian farmers pay their taxes and Australian small businesses pay their taxes. It is only fair that we ask large multinational companies to pay their fair share. Currently, large corporations simply are not doing enough, and that is why we have taken measures in this bill to enhance the government's response to this important issue. Whilst there has been much rhetoric on this issue, especially from those opposite, we are taking the necessary action to deal with this issue. This bill delivers on our commitment to deal with this issue.

At this point I would like to reflect on the member for North Sydney and his time as Treasurer. He delivered a budget in 2014 and another in 2015 and he took a leading role in this space in the G20. I spoke in my maiden speech about political courage. I would like to acknowledge the political courage of the member for North Sydney in his time as Treasurer of this nation. We see some of the dividends of that courage in this bill and in the way that he has led the globe in addressing this issue of multinational tax avoidance.

Some multinationals are artificially structuring to avoid Australian tax by booking revenue from Australian sales offshore. This means they have an unfair advantage over local businesses, families and small businesses, who have to shoulder more of the tax burden, and it undermines confidence in our overall tax system. We are committed to ensuring Australia has a fair and sustainable taxation system. That requires a steady, constant and consistent approach. Whilst we have delivered lower taxes for Australians, we must also ensure consistency in the manner in which businesses are taxed. The current system benefits big business and ultimately hurts the Australian taxpayer.

This bill implements three 2015 budget measures to level the playing field and ensure multinationals pay their fair share of tax: the multinational anti-avoidance law, to encourage entities to book their revenue in Australia when they have significant sales activity here; stronger penalties to combat tax avoidance and profit shifting, to deter taxpayers from taking aggressive tax positions; and country-by-country reporting and new transfer-pricing documentation standards, to give the Australian Taxation Office a greater ability to assess transfer-pricing risks. These measures will apply to large multinationals with annual global revenue of $1 billion or more. It is these large multinational companies that represent the highest risk to the Australian tax base.

If we do not take the action required and deliver the measures in the bill, we are missing an opportunity and letting down our citizens most grievously. This bill is utterly consistent with the government's commitment to levelling the playing field for small business. These actions will strengthen Australia's taxation system, but further effort is still required. We acknowledge that there is more work to be done in this space and we are working towards
innovative and effective tax reform. Yet it is absolutely evident that we must take measures to combat multinational tax avoidance.

The multinational anti-avoidance law will allow the Commissioner of Taxation to treat these large multinationals as though they have a taxable presence in Australia and subject them to Australian tax. The package implements a new multinational anti-avoidance law from 1 January 2016, to stop multinationals artificially avoiding a taxable presence in Australia. This bill delivers on our 2015 budget commitment to target major entities with Australian activities who avoid booking profits in Australia. Whilst we made this undertaking in the budget, this bill, introduced on Wednesday, 16 September 2015, is an even stronger piece of legislation. This should highlight the government's resolve in ensuring tax is correctly calculated and paid.

The multinational anti-avoidance law will be broadened so all 'significant global entities' with revenues above $1 billion will be included. That is over 1,000 companies that will need to consider these rules. This means that, if you are structuring with a 'principal purpose' of avoiding Australian tax, the Australian tax office will have the tools to catch you and ensure that you pay your fair share. By removing the 'no or low' tax requirement and relying solely on a 'principal purpose' test, we are sending a clear message that it is not acceptable to deliberately and artificially avoid paying Australian taxes. Removing the 'no or low' requirement will also provide additional certainty and minimise disputes around whether a company operates in a 'no or low' tax jurisdiction where it is clearly structured for the purpose of avoiding tax. The new law targets the specific behaviour of around 30 companies that are believed to be artificially booking revenue in 'no or low' tax jurisdictions and avoiding Australian and foreign taxation. These companies are undertaking significant work in Australia, selling to Australians but using contrived structures to book revenue overseas and avoid paying Australian taxes. It is simply wrong for those companies to take advantage of the stability and affluence of the Australian market without paying their fair share of tax.

There is a strong moral and economic imperative to paying adequate taxation. Taxation fundamentally enables this government's capacity to govern this nation, further facilitating the prosperity of this nation. Without adequate tax revenue, government cannot govern and prosperity will be negatively influenced. It is crucial that multinationals pay their fair share. This bill and the measures within it complement the existing general anti-avoidance rule by clarifying that the specific arrangements used by multinationals selling into Australia are considered to be tax avoidance and will make it easier for the ATO to establish a case by catching arrangements that are designed to obtain both Australian and foreign tax benefits, and lowering the purpose test from 'sole or dominant purpose' to 'one of the principal purposes', making it easier to apply. This effectively delivers a better outcome for the taxpayer. This measure will allow the Commissioner of Taxation to treat these large multinationals as though they have a taxable presence in Australia and are subject to Australian tax. Multinationals will now be required to pay tax on profits from Australian activities. The legislation will also protect Australia's tax base by acting as a deterrent to companies from engaging in complex schemes.

The coalition understand the importance of responsibility. We understand the importance of delivering adequate and proportional penalties across the legislative space. The status quo is simply not good enough when it comes to large multinational companies and tax
The government has taken a hard but necessary stance in strengthening penalties. It is a stance completely consistent with our values. Consistent with the government’s position on tax avoidance, this bill doubles the maximum administrative penalties that can be applied by the Commissioner of Taxation to large companies that enter into tax avoidance and profit-shifting schemes. We take tax avoidance seriously and we know that these penalties will deter multinationals from entering into contrived tax avoidance and profit-shifting schemes. Deterrence is recognised as a key element in the fight against tax avoidance behaviour. It is crucial that we impose significant costs on doing the wrong thing. Currently, doing the wrong thing delivers a financial benefit to big business. It is through measures such as strengthening and doubling the penalties that we shift the cost-benefit analysis and change the status quo. Multinationals have dedicated resources for tax minimisation, greater opportunities to avoid tax through offshore activities and larger potential gains to be made if they are successful in avoiding tax. Stronger penalties are required to help deter major taxpayers from taking aggressive tax positions.

As always, this government is not seeking to punish those doing the right thing. Companies that are not engaging in illegal tax avoidance will not be affected. This government is not looking to punish those who have sought to do the right thing and obtain professional advice that can be considered reasonable. This government is committed to a safe, secure and prosperous Australia. This bill delivers on that commitment. Through claiming forgone revenue we strengthen our revenue base and secure it against disruption caused by the globalised economy. This bill levels the playing field and ensures that big business multinational companies are paying their fair share. This bill takes steps toward bringing our tax system into the 21st century.

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (17:30): I note the words of Dave Arthur, a security guard from Melbourne who came to parliament not that long ago to talk about this very issue. He and his union, United Voice, were talking about the issue because the government at the time were not. They commissioned the report *Who Pays for Our Common Wealth? Tax Practices of the ASX 200* into what is going on with the top 200 companies in Australia. Dave’s words feature in the report and are something many in this place would agree with, yet it has taken the government over two years to act. He said:

Australian people aren't stupid. If you show them the facts and figures, that we’re losing so much money because of loopholes in the tax system … I think the Australian people will come around. We’re not after jet planes for ourselves; we’re not after penthouses or anything like that. All we’re asking for is the money that rightfully should go to the government that can be then spent on the community.

Dave Arthur is earning just above the minimum wage as a security officer in Melbourne. He, like other hardworking people of Australia, particularly those who are paying their fair share of tax and are on small to medium incomes, agree that it is time we had action on this issue.

This report that Dave helped write, through the comments he made and through the work of United Voice, exposed this issue. It is great to see that the government has caught up with United Voice and its members and I congratulate Dave and others for speaking out. I know it is not common for a union to speak out about tax avoidance. It is great that they have caught the attention of this government and that the government is now taking their concerns seriously.
The report's executive summary highlights 200 of Australia's largest listed companies on the ASX and what they are currently paying compared to what average Australians are paying. It shows that some of the multinationals, such as Apple and Google, are paying less of a percentage in tax than some United Voice members pay. It found that cleaners of Westfield's shopping centres pay more in income tax, as a percentage of their income, than Westfield itself pays the government in tax. This is a demonstration of the loopholes in our system. If anybody has met Westfield's cleaners, including cleaners of the Westfield Doncaster shopping centre, you would know they work very hard, happy to pay their fair share of tax. But, as they highlight in this report, it is about time Westfield also paid its fair share of tax.

The Australian budget is more dependent on corporate tax than other OECD countries. In fact, it is the second most dependent after Norway. After personal income tax, company tax is the second largest source of federal government revenue in Australia. Tackling corporate tax avoidance is an urgent priority; Australia does not have a spending problem, it has a revenue problem and it must be fixed. That is why the report commissioned by the union—and reports since—highlight how much, in the way of revenue, this country is missing out on. It is because we have not tackled this critical area of tax reform.

The report found that approximately $8.4 billion in corporate tax is being avoided, every single year, because of loopholes that have not been closed. Other key findings include: nearly one-third have an average ETR of 10 per cent or less; 57 per cent of the disclosures have been subsidiaries in secrecy jurisdictions; a combination of 1,075 disclosed subsidiaries registered in secrecy jurisdictions; and 60 per cent reported debit levels exceeded 75 per cent of equity, suggesting that the higher levels of debt may be artificial to lower taxable profits. This report was done to highlight the loopholes and what is going on with the top 200 Australian listed companies.

Let us talk about some of the case studies on who is avoiding paying their fair share of tax. Apple paid just over $80 million in Australian tax, in 2013-14, despite earning local revenue of over $6 billion. By comparison, the Australian retailer Harvey Norman paid $89 million in tax compared to $1.5 billion in revenue. That is the problem we have. Harvey Norman pays more tax than Apple despite the fact that their revenue is very different.

James Hardie, a construction firm:

… operates at a net taxable loss in Australia despite average annual profits of over $200 million. In the past two years the company has paid out almost $600 million in dividends to its shareholders, and its CEO is currently paid over $12 million. It operates at a loss because it claims tax deductions on annual payments to the compensation fund for victims of its asbestos products.

Let's just reiterate how this company is avoiding paying its fair share to the Commonwealth: it operates at a loss, because it claims tax deductions on annual payments for the compensation of victims of its asbestos products. Is that fair? Many in Australia, including good, hardworking people like Dave Arthur would argue that it is not. Let's just go back to the beginning of that case study as well. It is paying $600 million in dividends to shareholders and it is currently paying its CEO $12 million, yet it is operating at a net taxable loss. The only people not getting their fair share from the profits of James Hardie are the Australian taxpayers—the Australian people—and therefore this government.
Case study No. 3, Glencore:

A 2014 Fairfax Media investigation alleged the mining giant had paid no tax in Australia over the past three years despite earning revenue of $15 billion, by using a complex series of intra-company loans. Glencore disputed this account by claiming that it had, in fact, paid $400 million in tax on this revenue.

So who is right? Yes, there needs to be transparency, we need to make sure that we can investigate this and we need to expose what is going on within these multinationals. These multinationals have a lot of incentives to lower their tax bill and have the resources available to them to investigate the best way to do it. This is why the role of government is so critical when it comes to tax reform. It is up to the government to set the rules and to make the rules as tight as they can so that companies who have the resources cannot avoid paying their fair share of tax in this country.

Some of the recommendations in the United Voice report that I first mentioned include:

Greater transparency on the purpose and function of subsidiaries in secrecy jurisdictions.

We need to know how much money exists and how much money is being hidden so that we can know how much is the fair share that they should be paying. Another recommendation that I support is:

Voluntary reporting of revenue, profits, staff levels and taxes paid in each jurisdiction until such a measure is implemented by law…

They are calling on people to do it until we set the laws in this place. They say:

Some companies, particularly in the mining sector, have already taken steps towards increasing disclosure.

But not all of them will and they only will if we make them. That is the role of government. They say we need to ensure that companies are:

Avoiding setting up subsidiaries in secrecy jurisdictions.

Again, these are tax dollars that the Australian people and taxpayers should be getting.

Remembering back to the early days—and I know this government loves to harp on about the mining tax—the core principles of the mining tax were because Australian people were saying, 'We aren't getting our fair share of our resources. Where's our fair share of our resources?' This sits with the Australian people to say it is not fair. This is another way that we are trying to make these big mining companies pay their fair share of tax. For anybody that you bump into in a regional area, it sits with them and it annoys them that they are paying their fair taxes—and they have the ATO constantly offering to do audits, helping them, and they are the ones having to pay their tax—yet we have big multinationals that are not paying their fair share.

Taken together, the four schedules that have been proposed in this legislation before us today do make some progress towards combating multinational tax avoidance; however, they do not deal with the issue of debit deductions, which is the primary focus of Labor's multinational tax package. This bill focuses on companies that artificially avoid booking revenue in Australia so that they do not have to pay tax on their profits. That is an important issue to tackle and we hope this bill will force companies to restructure their operations so that profits made here stay here. That is a critical thing that Australian people want to see: profits made here must stay here so that our government can then use those resources to help
fund our schools, to help fund our hospitals and to help build the infrastructure that this country needs.

This bill, however, does nothing to stop companies from using debit reductions to send money offshore, whereas Labor's proposal does. It goes to the heart of what Dave Arthur and the United Voice report were calling for. Companies can easily transfer money between their subsidiaries to dress it up as a loan even though it is just transferring money from one pocket to the other. This is where the government's bill fails; it fails to tackle these issues. If the government was serious about this issue and if they supported the Labor proposal that we put forward, then in essence there would be an extra $7.2 billion that would come into the revenue for this country and for this Commonwealth that could be spent on government programs.

If this government was committed to ensuring that major corporations paid their fair share of tax, then what they would do is make sure that they move on transparency and that they introduce better transparency rules into the legislation that is before us—yet we have not seen real action on this issue. If the government was serious about making sure that they would get the fairest share for Australians, then they would adopt Labor's package, which would see an extra $7.2 billion coming in for our government.

This is an important issue. I would like to commend the work of people like Dave Arthur, a security officer, who stood up, raised this issue and got this parliament talking about the importance of making sure that multinationals pay their fair share of tax. Ordinary working people like Dave Arthur expect this government to have robust and rigid tax laws in this country to make sure that everybody pays their fair share. It is how we ensure that our country does not continue to have a revenue problem.

I know this government likes to talk up having a spending problem, but the fact remains that it is actually a revenue problem. By taking real and serious action on multinational tax, making them pay their fair share, we can start to address some of those tax loopholes that exist. Just because a company has the means to know how to avoid tax does not mean they should get away with it. It is up to all of us in this room to make sure that the legislation before the House is not just window-dressing, that it is not just to silence people like Dave Arthur and all the other constituents concerned about this issue. If the government is serious about real tax reform it will vote up the amendment that has been moved today to make sure this legislation will address the real issue that we have in this country—a revenue issue—and to make sure that all companies, multinational or local, pay their fair share in tax.

Mr SUKKAR (Deakin) (17:45): I listened intently to the member for Bendigo's contribution to the debate on the Tax Laws Amendment (Combating Multinational Tax Avoidance) Bill 2015. I think if I had a dollar for every time she said 'fair share' and I donated it to the ATO, we actually would not have a revenue problem anymore. That was the incessant cry from that side of the chamber.

I am not going to go through in detail, like every speaker previous to me, the specific provisions in this bill. I want to speak a bit more broadly. Tackling tax avoidance, however it is formed, has been a role for government since time immemorial, and it will continue to be. Like any tax law, there will be taxpayers who try to find the most advantageous way to interpret or to structure their affairs within those rules. There will also be cases where
taxpayers deliberately contrive arrangements to get around those rules. That is ultimately what we are talking about here when discussing combating multinational tax avoidance.

The Labor Party have all of a sudden discovered tax avoidance because it enables them to address one major problem. They have no savings measures, they have not released the costings on their so-called changes to multinational tax avoidance, and they can pluck this $7 billion figure out of the air and it fixes a few other issues for them. While in government, the Labor Party never spoke about multinational tax avoidance, even though our tax base was being eroded by an ever-changing economy. All of a sudden, in opposition, they discovered multinational tax avoidance. But for six years we saw nothing from them.

Inevitably our economy has moved from the old anvil industries of manufacturing. We still have good advanced manufacturing in this country. But, increasingly, our economy will be based on high-tech R&D, intellectual property. That poses a major problem for our tax system. A hundred years ago when we were manufacturing widgets, they may have been manufactured in one country and sold in another. It was very easy to ascribe the profit margin to a particular item, because it was manufactured in one country and it was marketed and sold in another. It was relatively simple. What are the inputs that go into the manufacture? What is the skill, the time and effort that goes into the manufacture? Whatever we ascribe to that, that is the profit attributable to that jurisdiction. What is the profit attributable to the jurisdiction in which that particular item is sold, where it is marketed, where the contractual arrangements are entered into? What are the profits we ascribe to that part? It was always in some senses a difficult task for governments, but the laws were in pretty good shape in determining what profit we would attribute to one jurisdiction and what profit we would attribute to the other.

That changes and becomes a lot more difficult when we involve multiple jurisdictions that may have many tens of inputs that come into one final product and, more importantly, where the inherent value in that product is not in the physical product itself. The member for Bendigo mentioned Apple and Google. Nearly all of us have an iPhone. We pay a fortune for them; they are expensive but they are extraordinarily valuable, and that is why we buy them. The cost attributable to the physical material of that phone is only a miniscule proportion of its actual cost, because the value of that phone is in its intellectual property in its components—how it works, the amount of time and value that people put in to developing that technology. That is where it becomes a lot more difficult for our tax system. Where do we attribute that value? Therefore, which jurisdiction has a right to claim that taxable amount?

While that was increasingly occurring when the former Labor government were in office, they did absolutely nothing and said nothing, but then, in opposition, they had a conversion on the road to Damascus. All of a sudden we hear them carping about combating multinational tax avoidance. If combating multinational tax avoidance were just the low-hanging fruit that the Labor Party suggests it is, every Western jurisdiction and First World economy would not be having this problem. It is extraordinarily difficult. That is why I commend the former Treasurer for his work with the G20—because one jurisdiction on its own cannot and should not purport to be able to fix this problem. Inevitably, we have to work with comparable jurisdictions to ensure that there is not anywhere that these multinationals, who operate across many, many jurisdictions, can hide or shelter income inappropriately.
There are inherent incentives for any economy—and we saw it in the last decade or so—to attract investment by trying to put in place extraordinarily attractive tax rates or extraordinarily attractive tax incentives. Whenever you have that inevitable contest between countries, there will be corporates, multinationals, that seek to get the best outcome. What we are doing through this legislation is attacking those companies that contrive structures purely for the tax advantage.

If, for example, you are a multinational company that operates in 100 jurisdictions—and it makes sense for you to do so because of your particular industry, for the particular service or product you are providing—it might make complete sense for you to be in Timbuktu or you name it and you will not be attacked by these rules. But what we will get to are the contrived arrangements, with companies trying to utilise double-tax treaties for their own advantage. That is when it gets really tough, because the reality is that historically we have had competition between jurisdictions. For every extra dollar that the Australian Taxation Office laid claim to, that was one dollar less that another jurisdiction got. So there was inevitable tension between nations.

But it is not a zero sum game. Unfortunately, what has happened in recent years is that income has been sheltered from both jurisdictions. Take the case of arrangements with, say, a US multinational that sells products into Australia. They might contrive a structure by utilising European tax treaties, which means that not only does Australia not get the tax that should be attributable to the profits but the US does not either. So we actually now have a real incentive. That is why I commend the former Treasurer for really leading the charge at the G20 to bring these first-world economies with robust tax systems together to actually try to address these issues.

Let us remember that we do have an extraordinarily robust tax system. But, as I said at the beginning of my contribution, tax laws are not set and forget. The minute you come up with one law there will be a creative way to structure your investment differently, to get a different tax outcome for that taxpayer. So governments must be nimble.

Today is not the end of it. Last year we did a great job in reducing the debt that was allowable under the thin capitalisation rules. That was one piece of the puzzle. Today we are debating this bill—and I am glad that we have bipartisan support—which has a range of measures to combat multinational tax avoidance. These will not be the panacea at all. It would be disingenuous for anyone to say that they would be. But I am very confident that these rules will have a material impact, most importantly, on the future behaviour of multinationals that have income over $1 billion and that are operating in, in many cases, in tens of jurisdictions.

Again, I say that I am very pleased that Labor has had the conversion on the road to Damascus. It is now supporting this legislation, although if I were a person in the gallery listening to the contributions from those in Labor, I would walk out of parliament and say, 'I'm sure they must be voting against that legislation. I'm sure they must be voting against it because I just heard 15 minutes from the member for Bendigo about how little we've done and how disappointed she is with this so-called inaction.'

Well, she might want to look at what was done for six years under the Labor Party. Our tax system and our tax base were being eroded and they were asleep at the wheel. It is very easy to discover these problems in opposition. I am very proud to be part of a government that is actually trying to address these things in a methodical and sensible way. Let's remember why
we have to be methodical, consultative and sensible—it is not just for the relationships with our trading partners. In some cases, as I said, every extra dollar of tax that we put our hands on means a dollar less for someone else. But we do not want to discourage investment in this country. We want people to invest by the rules.

I say to some people in the community that, as PAYG taxpayers, we do not have the ability to structure our affairs or to reduce our tax. We get our paltry tax deductions each year on various little bibs and bobs, but by and large we do not have those opportunities, and nor should any multinational. But it is a bit like grasping sand at the beach—the tighter you hold it, the more it slips through your fingers. And so we have to be very careful here that we structure arrangements in a way where multinational companies will have certainty in their investments and, provided they have not entered into those contrived arrangements, that their structures and their investments in this country will be respected.

As I said earlier, let's remember that in a world where increasingly our wealth will be embodied in intellectual property and investment in research and development—not in hard commodities, like they were 100 years ago—it is more difficult for any jurisdiction to actually point to the point in the chain of what value is attributable to that, like in the example of the iPhone that I used earlier. In Australia we import the iPhones; they go into an iPhone store—that is where I bought mine—and they are sold for a few hundred dollars. What part of that profit is attributable to Australia? Should more be attributable here because this is where the purchase is made? Or should more be attributable to the jurisdiction which had the hundreds of highly-skilled people working for Apple to come up with all the component pieces of the iPhone? I am talking about the software here.

In my view, that is where the value is embodied in an iPhone. It is not the physical plastic or the physical metal; it is not the components on the inside. It is a bit of a lump of plastic and metal, if you ask me. But its value is in the intellectual property. That is why these rules are so important. It is so much more complex in the way that we need to do that.

But we have to strike the right balance. For years Australian taxpayers have been struggling under the weight of transfer-pricing documentation. I would not want to see any proposals put into this parliament that increased those requirements. In many cases—and I saw it in practice—it was an exercise done to tick a box with the ATO rather than trying to achieve a substantive outcome. I think, having read through this bill, that it will strike that balance.

I also think the country-by-country reporting is important as well, and I think anything that adds more accountability to these large companies will hopefully mean that they do stick to those sensible investments, to structures that make sense rather than the contrived arrangements that this legislation is trying to attack. We do not want to see companies structuring their investments into Australia in such a way as to get a benefit from either our tax system or, quite frankly, the tax systems of our trading partners. Unfortunately, if that happens, it will only end up being a race to the bottom. I congratulate the former Treasurer and the current Treasurer on this bill and I commend it to the House.

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (18:00): Those of us on this side obviously support the Tax Laws Amendment (Combating Multinational Tax Avoidance) Bill 2015. The bill was motivated by information that suggested that multinational companies worth billions of dollars were operating in this country—trading, selling, making a profit—but not paying their
fair share of tax. Like most Australians, I was surprised to learn that this could be the case. This issue arose at a difficult time for the government, in the wash-up of its 2014 budget—at the height of the debate about that first budget. That budget was focused on cutting spending, with lots of rhetoric about cutting spending to pay down the debt and deficit and then, lo and behold, it is exposed by journalists that we have multinational companies in this country not paying their fair share. Like all pay all PAYG taxpayers, I was appalled. The debate quickly moved from spending and most Australians started to look to a review of revenue—to the revenue side of the country's balance sheet, if you like.

The time of the national debate following the 2014 budget was an interesting time because it brought our attention sharply to spending and what revenue we should count on. We had a government that was telling us that there was debt and deficit after they had doubled the deficit, and they have now become the highest taxing government since John Howard was Prime Minister. This exposure of the fact that multinationals were not paying their fair share in this country really did sharpen that debate, and the brouhaha caused by the multinational tax avoidance practices has left many Australians very interested in the international tax system—much more interested than they would have been in the past. It falls to this chamber to ensure that transparency in taxation is what the Australian public gets every time we debate taxation. The question of who is paying their fair share is left simmering in the minds of the public. The situation was not helped by the case studies that came out of the Senate inquiry, with the Lux leaks—documents released in 2014 showed that over 300 firms had been involved in routing money through Luxembourg and other low-tax jurisdictions to minimise their Australian tax bills. Firms named in media reports included AMP, Macquarie Group and Lend Lease. The amount of tax avoided through these schemes potentially reaches into billions of dollars.

This raises the question of transparency. This government has just passed legislation to limit transparency around millionaires and the details of the tax they are paying. I want to speak on this bill today because I want to speak for the people of Lalor; I want to represent them here by saying that what they want is transparency. They want to know when companies are not paying appropriate tax. The only thing the man in the street can do about it is hear the name of that company and determine that they do not want to do business with them. It is important that through this process, through the Senate inquiry, we have heard some of those names—and some of those names are household names, as I have just said. There are discussions about iPhones and which piece of them should be paid tax on in this country. The people of Lalor believe that Australia is more than a marketplace for big business—they believe it is a community. Of course every one of us who pays tax knows that we are making a contribution not just to the country but to the community. At the very core, Australians believe that everybody should pay their fair share.

Australians also understand that the tax they pay, whether it be personal tax or company tax, should go to running the country—that our taxes pay for our roads, rail and other transport, for schools, for the justice system that we rely upon, for the public service, for defence and for the universities that train our next generation. Our taxes pay for infrastructure like the NBN, and the simplest test that most Australians would apply to the question of multinationals making a contribution in this country is pretty simple—do these companies utilise these nationally-provided systems?
If we go through them, of course they do. Do they utilise our roads, our rail, our transport systems? Of course they do. Do they get value from our school system? Of course they do. If they are employing Australians, then they are relying on that school system to deliver them quality students who become quality workers. Do they rely on the justice system? Most definitely. If multinationals have an issue, they have redress through our court system. In fact, many people would argue they make better use of it than most of the Australian citizenry. Do they make use of the Public Service? Of course they do. Do they make use of our universities? Of course they do.

All of the things that our taxes go towards paying for, the multinationals have access to and make use of, so it is absolutely reasonable that they be expected to pay their fair share for doing business in this country. I do not think there is one person in Australia who does not believe that should be the case. So, in terms of this piece of legislation and what it might do to ensure that, obviously this side supports it. But, in the spirit of that same bipartisanship, we would ask that those opposite take into consideration the measures that we have put forward in our policy to stop multinational tax avoidance, and introduce legislation that would ensure those loopholes are closed.

In Australia, the average taxpayer, the average wage earner, pays tax to the tune of 21 per cent of their income, and small businesses pay 30 per cent in corporate tax. It is absolutely unreasonable that, by comparison, multinational corporations, through the way they have been able to use both the tax system in Australia and tax systems in other countries, have paid less than that. In fact, the Senate Economics References Committee’s recent inquiry into corporate tax avoidance heard evidence that one big multinational firm may have paid as little as two per cent tax on billions of dollars in revenue. If the average Australian wage earner paid tax at that rate instead of at the standard 21 per cent, they would be paying almost $15,000 a year less. So it is perfectly reasonable that we ask those multinationals to pay their fair share in this country. Without strong action to tackle multinational profit-shifting and corporate tax avoidance, Australia will continue to lose millions or even billions of dollars in forgone tax revenue. With government debt continuing to rise under the coalition, we cannot afford to let tax revenue drain away offshore.

That brings us back to this chamber, where we hear day in, day out about spending from a government that has demonstrated for the last two years that it is prepared to break the social compact with the Australian public and to punish the disadvantaged, and suggests that all the issues with our national accounts come down to spending, when clearly here we can see that there are revenue issues. We see a government that is prepared to do some things to change that balance but not enough to come to a bipartisan agreement with Labor in terms of the introduction of our policy.

Labor are taking forward a positive policy on multinational tax avoidance and we are asking for a bipartisan approach to this important issue, and it is in that spirit that the government should adopt our $7.2 billion tax package and tackle all the loopholes that let companies send their profits offshore. This is a reasonable thing to ask—a very reasonable thing to ask. We also note that it is costed, at $7.2 billion, while those opposite are bringing in this legislation and the budget papers indicate what it will save or what it will accrue with a few asterisks. Today in question time the Treasurer said that it is hundreds of millions of dollars. I take little comfort in a Treasurer who talks in terms of hundreds of millions of
dollars rather than a specific figure while we are actually debating this legislation in the parliament. So I was aghast in question time today, after the question was asked, that we did not get an answer that provided a clear costing.

Nonetheless, we will support this legislation. We will support this multinational tax avoidance bill through the parliament because we believe tackling tax avoidance and protecting Australia's revenue base should be above politics. We are disappointed that the $7.2 billion multinational tax avoidance plan that we have as policy has not been adopted, but we are hopeful that, rather than have Australians taken for mugs, the government will come on board and implement that as well.

I finish by saying that the question of transparency is at the heart of this for the Australian people. We should not be relying on journalists to determine where we have missed picking up revenue from multinational companies doing business in this country. This government should act to ensure transparency around tax arrangements so that Australians can feel confident that, when they hear about spending, they have a government that is equally committed to ensuring the revenue streams that Australians are entitled to.

It is critical that this legislation be passed quickly and acted upon quickly, and I would also suggest it is critical that those changes be monitored. As we have heard throughout today's debate, tax is complex—earlier, someone likened it to shifting sands or trying to hold sand in your hand—so it is important that the Australian Taxation Office remain nimble and alert, and watch the way the tax system is used by multinationals, so that we can continue to change the laws as required and ensure that revenue stream for Australians.

I make one further comment, which is that, if those opposite argue that for six years the Labor government did nothing to stop this occurring, it belies their own assessment that these things occur because multinational corporations are changing so quickly because the way our markets work is changing so quickly.

It is important that we work together in a bipartisan way so that we remain agile and so that the tax office is given the appropriate resourcing to ensure that it is delivering to the Australian public all tax revenue that is due to this country.

Mr JOHN COBB (Calare) (18:14): I rise today to speak about the Tax Laws Amendment (Combating Multinational Tax Avoidance) Bill 2015. This bill is about ensuring multinationals and probably a few others that have activity in Australia pay tax in Australia and are on the same playing field as the Australian businesses which they compete with. We live in a global world and so obviously companies that operate out of multiple countries is that they are able to do this. While I hope the amendment legislation which we are talking about this evening goes a long way towards dealing with some of those issues, it certainly will not deal with them all. I believe that only cooperation between most of the major trading countries in the world will be able to deal with it in a fully meaningful way. I know that the former Treasurer did talk—and I am quite sure the current Treasurer, Mr Morrison, will also be talking—with his counterparts overseas, because whether it is the G8 or the G20 or whoever, they do have to have common laws to deal with the problem fairly.
Currently, some multinationals are avoiding paying up through artificially structuring to avoid Australian tax by booking revenue from Australian sales offshore. It obviously gives them an unfair advantage over our local business, families and small business who are shouldering more of the tax burden. This undermines confidence in the system whether or not they are exporters. While Australia has some of the strongest integrity rules in the world, certainly more needs to be done. As the previous speaker, the member Lalor, said: this is not a problem about politics; it is problem about trade and business.

The coalition government is determined to maintain the integrity and fairness of the Australian tax system. Multinational tax avoidance is unacceptable and we are committed to leading the fight against it. In 2014 the government strengthened our already robust defences against tax avoidance by tightening our thin capitalisation rules and limiting the scope for multinationals to claim excessive debt deductions. The legislation that we are debating tonight now builds on those changes, with it implementing three 2015 budget measures to level the playing field. The first is the multinational anti-avoidance law to encourage entities to book their revenue in Australia when they have significant sales activity here. This piece of legislation has been further strengthened from that announced at budget. It has been broadened so all global entities with revenue above $1 billion—which is estimated to be over 1,000 companies—will need to consider these rules. The Australian Taxation Office will now have the tools to catch out those structuring with a principal purpose of avoiding tax, ensuring they do pay their fair share. The removal of the 'no or low' tax requirement and relying on the 'principal purpose' test sends a clear message: tax avoidance is unacceptable. It will further minimise disputes around whether a company operates in a 'no or low' tax jurisdiction where it is clearly structured for a purpose of avoiding tax. These changes specifically target around 30 companies that are believed to be artificially booking revenue in 'no or low' jurisdictions to avoid Australian taxation. This will also protect our country's tax base by acting as a deterrent to companies from engaging in complex schemes.

These changes ensure that people avoiding will be held accountable, with this bill doubling the maximum administrative penalties. The introduction of stronger penalties will not only hold companies to account but act as a deterrent to multinationals from entering into contrived tax avoidance and profit-shifting schemes. Deterrence is an effective measure and response to tax avoidance behaviour. Those who are doing the right thing will not be impacted under these changes. Those who have sought to do the right thing and obtained professional advice that can be considered reasonably arguable will not be affected. This recognises that tax law does not always provide certain outcomes—and I am sure we have all seen that.

The measure will require multinationals to report to the ATO on income and tax paid in every country in which they operate. This was one of the key recommendations of the G20 action plan. As I said earlier, this has to be an international solution as well as an international problem. We expect these measures to be implemented broadly by other jurisdictions, but we, Australia, look to lead the way. These amendments will see entities provide a statement to the Commissioner of Taxation through a three-tiered approach, including a country-by-country report containing key information on the location of the economic activity undertaken by the multinational group of which the reporting entity is a part. A master file is a high-level description of multinational group's global business, and a local file is an analysis of the reporting Australian entity's operations and cross-border related party transactions. This
marks the first time the veil will be lifted on major multinationals. For the first time, we will be able to have an understanding of aggressive taxpayer behaviour beyond our shores.

Multinationals doing the right thing have nothing to be worried about. However, those avoiding will now be scrutinised and penalised. This legislation will not impact negatively on investment by multinationals. Rather, it will make sure they are playing by the rules. The government has a responsibility to Australian companies to make sure it is a fair marketplace and they are not being forced to bear a tax burden that multinationals avoid. Our government is sending a clear message: it is unacceptable to enter into tax avoidance and profit shift schemes. Australia will now not be taken advantage of, and multinationals must comply.

Australia is particularly vulnerable, I think, because we are such a big trading nation. It is what we do best. Whether it is agriculture, whether it is mining or whatever it is, trade, obviously, is the way in which opportunity arises for a multinational company or a big family company—it does not just have to be a multinational company. The way in which they operate is, obviously, on the basis of trade. We are one of the big trading nations, per capita, in the world. We might not be the biggest producer, but we are a very big trader. That is why we are more susceptible than, probably, most countries to tax avoidance by large companies. I commend the bill.

Mr CHAMPION (Wakefield) (18:23): Deputy Speaker Kelly, I heard your contribution on this debate earlier on. I will resist the temptation to reflect on it. I would not want to anger the Deputy Speaker in any way. It is interesting that we are talking about these matters. I got married in Gibraltar about a year ago, and Gibraltar is a very, very lovely place.

The interesting thing about Gibraltar is that it has been accused of being a tax haven, and one of the election policies that the Labour Party in Britain had was to force Britain's overseas territories, such as Gibraltar, to declare, for transparency purposes, all of the companies that are listed there as shell companies for taxation purposes. It is interesting that a place as lovely as Gibraltar—and I cannot recommend it enough both as a place to get married and also a place to visit—

Mr Feeney: I think that Spain wants it back.

Mr CHAMPION: With all due respect to my Spanish friends, as the member for Batman helps me out there—but it is a really wonderful place but a place where there is this tax haven issue. I guess that that is why this bill is before the House and the opposition's amendment is before the House. When we were in government, we were pretty much the only people talking about this. I remember the Assistant Treasurer—the former member for Lindsay, out Penrith way—David Bradbury, being really a lone voice, in many ways, taking on this issue and talking about it. His work goes on, as he is now working with the OECD.

We know that workers, on average, pay about 21 per cent tax; we know that small businesses pay around 30 per cent tax. All of the workers and the small businesses that I meet in my electorate want to do their fair share, because they live and work in the community.
Often they do more than their fair share. They go out and do civic works. Many small businesses donate their time and money to good causes in the electorate. You see these Australians wanting to give back to the local schools and to the local hospitals to make sure that this is a strong country. I do not think that it is unreasonable to expect that those multinational companies, whether they be Australian or internationally based, do the same thing—that they do not just pay what they miserly reduce out of the system, but that they pay their fair share. There have been many, many examples given. Apple has been a notable example. They have $6 billion worth of revenue, and they are paying $40 million of tax or something like that—about the same amount as Harvey Norman. You think to yourself that that clearly does not make sense, and you know that there is something wrong when that can occur.

During the mining tax debate—we have had that debate many times in this chamber, so I will not till salted ground—we had mining companies out there, through the Minerals Council of Australia, bragging about the contribution that they make in terms of taxation, yet we find that they are often engaging in taxation arrangements that would make you blush. The reason why they have been so aggrieved, behind the scenes, about the economics committee of the other place, led ably by Senator Dastyari, and the reason why there are so many complaints about the good senator is that he is doing a good job. He is revealing to Australians some of the egregious practices that have been going on for decades.

We only have to look to James Hardie to know that that is true. There was a company that made a terribly toxic product, the consequences of which we are seeing even today and which we will go on seeing for years. I think what happened with asbestos is a matter of bipartisan condemnation. Of course, what happened with James Hardie is that they went to the Netherlands seeking not just to evade their liabilities but also to find a more allowable taxation culture. To give you the extent of the problem, the Taxation Office thinks that about half of the $300 billion a year that is transferred in and out of the country—some $115 billion—might be subject to these arrangements. So you can see an extraordinary amount of money sloshing through an economy that is internationalised, and we want it to be internationalised. We want these companies to come here and we want them to make a profit, but we also want them to pay their fair share of tax.

The government has done some good things in this bill. I think my predecessor in this debate has talked about, and probably the member for Hindmarsh, who follows me, will talk about the descriptions of the measures in the bill, the significant global entity provisions aimed at some of these big entities and the multinational avoidance law allowing the taxation office to see through complex taxation arrangements that are set up as a shell game—pea and thimble trick—in order to reduce taxation. The penalties are doubled, which is a good thing, and country-by-country reporting of course is a critical part of the OECD's action plan on base erosion and profit shifting. We think they are useful things to do so we are supporting the bill.

But we also want the government to adopt Labor's plan to raise about $7 billion worth of taxation off of multinationals to close down some of the loopholes around interest deduction. We all know that, with the intangible nature of the digital economy, payments between Australian subsidiaries and the international parent company have been allowed to grow exponentially and unreasonably because of the values associated with licensing, intellectual
property and the like. We want them to do a very simple thing—that is, come to the table. We are supporting them; they could support us. The Australian taxpayer and the Australian community would be the victor. They would be the ones to get better schools, better hospitals. Of course every dollar not paid by a multinational—and we only want them to pay their fair share—is a dollar less that the average pay-as-you-earn taxpayer has to pay or the small business has to pay or it is one more brick in a school or hospital that we want to see.

To conclude—I will not delay the House's time any longer—we want to visit places like Gibraltar and, I guess, Ugland House, if you are tempted to go there, in the Cayman Islands because of their intrinsic beauty and maybe their lax marriage laws—I do not know; Gibraltar is a great price to elope to. As I said before, I recommend it to anyone. We want them renowned for their marriage laws and not for being tax havens. Again, we want these places not to be famous for being the recipients of all of this money sloshing around the world. We want that money to work as it normally would. It is important that companies make profits but it is also important that companies pay a fair share of tax office off of that, not just simply for this country but for every country around the world, so that we can progress the cause of humanity.

Mr WILLIAMS (Hindmarsh) (18:33): Before the member for Wakefield disappears, I look forward to the ongoing dialogue he has with the officials of Gibraltar. I will be most interested in how that relationship goes and I am sure they will appreciate his promotion of their fine part of the world.

We are here today to discuss and debate the Tax Laws Amendment (Combating Multinational Tax Avoidance) Bill 2015. We are committed to making sure that multinationals pay their fair share of tax. We are committed to ensuring Australia has a sustainable taxation system in particular. We already have some of the strongest integrity rules in the world but we know that some multinationals are artificially structuring their operations to avoid Australian tax by booking revenue from Australian sales offshore. We have heard plenty of examples of this over the last year or so through the media and other forums. The coalition government is continually on the search for ways to ensure that Australian individuals and companies pay their fair share of tax, probably even before the late Kerry Packer went to a parliamentary hearing and made his famous statement that Australian individuals and companies have been trying and will continue to try and minimise their tax.

This year, the ATO has stated that there are over 4,600 high-worth individuals. The ATO is again targeting those who try and cheat the system, as they do, and the government is very happy to support the tax office in this. The ATO is also chasing explanations from people who have had large one-off or unusual transactions or a history of aggressive tax planning and lifestyles not supported by after-tax income. The tax and revenue committee talks to the ATO about these matters and know it is committed to pursuing these with all its resources.

Speaking of something done in recent years, there is also Project Wickenby, a cross-agency task force that plays a role in the government's fight against tax evasion and avoidance. It was established in 2006 by the Howard government to protect the integrity of Australia's financial and regulatory systems. The task force consists of eight federal agencies and became necessary because of the scale of the tax avoidance. As an example of the success of the government and the ATO, just last financial year there were some 33 convictions for tax crime and, importantly, some $10 million was recovered. The most significant of those was a
Queenslander sentenced to seven years jail with a repatriation order of over $1 million. So the government is serious about this. We have taken some action, had some success and will continue to have more success as time goes on.

As I mentioned before, there has been a great deal of press about multinational corporations minimising their tax. Companies like Apple and Ikea have been in the spotlight among others. This is not a problem unique to Australia. Governments around the world that are challenged by the new economy, the digital economy, international operations, the use of the internet and intellectual property laws, we find that they can restructure their corporate and financial activities. Great Britain are onto this as well; they have come up with a diverted profits tax to counteract contrived arrangements used by large groups—typically, multinational enterprises—that had resulted in the erosion of their tax base in the United Kingdom. With this bill, the government is taking another step to ensure that multinationals that have activity in Australia pay tax in Australia, and we understand from the tax office that this amount will be hundreds of millions of dollars, so it is not insignificant.

The multinational anti-avoidance law will allow the Commissioner of Taxation to treat large multinationals as though they have a taxable presence in Australia and are subject to Australian tax. The government is determined to maintain the integrity of the system, and we have led the fight in this. This is not something we have just looked at over the last few months. We did this last year at the G20 where Australia was President. We have led the global response, and other countries have responded, quite rightly. Last year the government strengthened the already robust defences against tax avoidance by tightening our thin capitalisation rules, limiting the scope for multinationals to claim excessive debt deductions. This measure is only one part of a package.

This same bill will also implement country-by-country reporting, which was a recommendation of the OECD and the G20, and increase penalties for those engaging in tax avoidance and profit-shifting. If we have a look at the resources that the government is providing to the ATO, they are considerable—around $90 million to the ATO over three years. I also know that they have targeted at least 30 multinationals, and I think that number has increased just recently. To date, the program has raised over $400 million—a considerable amount—in tax liabilities and is estimated to raise $1.1 billion in total.

So there are significant things that are being undertaken. We will work closely with academics, tax professionals and the business community in ensuring the OECD's profit-shifting agenda is carried out as well. It is one of these things on which international collaboration is important in getting a result. That is because, as I said before, every country faces these problems, so we are not alone in this area. It is consistent with work being progressed by the OECD, importantly, on the Action Plan on Base Erosion and Profit Shifting that will be finalised later this year, and the government will consider what steps need to be taken to strengthen Australian laws at this time. The OECD has expressly asked countries to look at their domestic laws; we are doing so, and we are strengthening our anti-avoidance laws.

In closing, this law will affect entities with annual global revenue of $1 billion or more, so it is very targeted. The G20 countries have all agreed that the country-by-country report will only be shared between tax administrators. So we are taking a lead internationally and taking correct action in Australia so that multinationals pay their fair share of tax. So the federal
government is taking action. The ATO is delivering and we look forward to results to help increase the sustainability of our tax system.

Ms BUTLER (Griffith) (18:40): If multinationals do not pay their fair share of tax, that means that Australian businesses and households bear more of the tax burden, have reduced services or both. That is why global firms earning billions of dollars in revenue in Australia should give back to our community. Our roads, our schools, our justice system and the other public services that are publicly funded go towards making this country a great place to do business—and we are a great place to do business. We are a low-corruption country. We are a very modern and progressive country. We are a country that is prosperous. And part of the reason for that is that we do have robust publicly-funded public services and infrastructure.

That infrastructure and those public services cost money. Multinational firms should not be able to avoid contributing to those costs via fair taxation just like everyone else does—just like domestic businesses do and just like households do in Australia. Someone earning the average Australian wage pays about 21 per cent in tax. A small business pays the corporate rate, if they are incorporated, of 30 per cent on their profits, but in the past few years there have been increasingly regular reports about huge companies paying just a fraction of that.

Deputy Speaker Wicks, as you know, the Senate's recent corporate tax inquiry heard evidence that one big multinational firm may have paid as little as two per cent tax on billions of dollars in revenue. If the average Australian wage earner paid tax at that rate instead of the standard 21 per cent, they would be paying almost $15,000 less a year. Wage earners pay their tax. They do not get a choice about whether to pay their tax. Wage earners generally cannot afford sophisticated tax avoidance measures. We pay our tax. Everyone in this place should be paying their tax—and I can only assume that they are. But multinationals, it seems, are doing what they can to avoid paying fair taxation through the use of things like tax havens—places like Ireland, for example, and Luxembourg and others.

In its submission to the tax inquiry, the Australian tax office reported that more than half of Australia's cross-border trade, over $300 billion a year, is made up of companies transferring money from their Australian operations to their international arms. Over $115 billion of this revenue was channelled to very low tax jurisdictions. For example, documents leaked last year showed that over 300 Australian firms had been involved in routing money through Luxembourg and other low tax jurisdictions to minimise their tax bills. Firms named in media reports included AMP, Macquarie Group and Lend Lease. The amount of tax avoided through those schemes potentially reaches into billions of dollars.

I, like many people across the world, was very concerned about what was happening in Luxembourg and also was concerned about the ability for people to blow whistle in Luxembourg about tax evasion—because of course tax evasion does not just affect Australians. Tax evasion is not something that just affects developed countries. Tax evasion also affects developing countries, and there are some estimates that suggest that the value of tax evasion globally actually exceeds the amount of aid paid out globally. Of course, if we had tax justice and if we had transparency around the world, and if everyone paid their fair share of tax in all jurisdictions, then that would take some of the pressure off aid and would help developing countries with their economic development. I think everyone in this place would agree that it would be a positive for our globe if in fact developing countries were able
to develop more quickly and provide for their own economic prosperity, thus taking pressure off the rest of the globe.

Another example of a case study of multinational tax evasion is of course Apple. Apple paid just $80.3 million in Australian tax in the 2013-14 financial year, despite earning local revenue of over $6 billion. By comparison, the Australian retailer Harvey Norman paid $89 million in tax on revenue of $1.5 billion—more tax on just a quarter of the revenue. It is not a level playing field and it is not fair on domestic companies who are trying to do the right thing in Australia.

Another example is James Hardie. The construction firm operates on a net taxable loss in Australia despite average annual profits of over $200 million. In the past two years, the company has paid almost $600 million in dividends to its shareholders and its CEO is currently paid over $12 million, but it operates at a loss because it claims tax deductions on annual payments to its compensation fund for victims of its asbestos products. In other words, Australian taxpayers are subsidising James Hardie's compensation to asbestos victims. The final example is Glencore. A 2014 Fairfax Media investigation alleged that the mining giant had paid no tax in Australia over the past three years despite earning revenue of $15 billion by using a complex series of intracorporate group loans. Glencore disputed this account by claiming that it had in fact paid $400 million in tax on this revenue.

Of course, those sorts of revelations undermine public confidence, not just in whether corporations are paying their fair share of tax but in the corporate tax system as a whole. Of course, the consequence for the revenue is that, if people think that other people are getting away with not paying their tax, if they think that it is okay not to pay tax and if there becomes a societal norm that says that it is acceptable to seek to avoid and minimise taxation, then that of course discourages voluntary compliance in the wider community. Why would anyone pay the right amount of tax if they thought no-one else is paying the right amount of tax? You would have significant difficulty in the cultural norm around taxpayer compliance.

Deputy Speaker Wicks, you would be aware that the Taxation Commissioner and his leadership team in the Australian Taxation Office are moving to transform the Australian Taxation Office to the sort of office that engages well with taxpayers, seeks to engender a spirit of voluntary compliance and avoids more coercive ways of seeking compliance unless absolutely necessary. It is better for everyone if people voluntarily and willingly pay their taxes in the appropriate way and in the appropriate share, but, as I said, if people think that big companies are getting away with paying little or no tax on the amount of money that they are making in Australia, then that is counterproductive to the move towards voluntary and willing compliance.

Without strong action to tackle multinational profit shifting and corporate tax avoidance, Australia will continue to lose millions or even billions of dollars in forgone tax revenue. With government debt continuing to rise under the coalition, we cannot afford to let tax revenue drain away offshore. Tax reform for multinational companies is a priority today because of globalisation and the digitisation of the world economy. Today, three of the five biggest companies in the world are companies that make their money primarily on the basis of intellectual property. This has greatly complicated the task for traditional tax regimes. They assume a firm has a permanent establishment in a physical place where its product is made. None of that applies in a digital business and this has greatly increased the scope for firms to
profit-shift to low-tax or no-tax regimes, regardless of where their profit is really produced. Our tax laws have to keep up with changes and close the loopholes that allow larger firms and globalised businesses to avoid tax.

This multinational tax bill takes an untested approach to closing some of those loopholes. There are no precedents for this approach around the world. Not even Treasury can say how much revenue it will bring in. The Treasurer today in question time was also unable to say how much revenue it will bring in. It remains to be seen if the bill will protect even one extra dollar of Australian tax. If you look at the budget papers and turn to the page featuring this measure, you will see that there is no revenue amount; there is just a set of asterisks where there should be revenue estimates, because the government does not know how much this tax evasion bill is purportedly going to raise. The government cannot tell us. As I said, the Treasurer was completely unable in question time today to tell us. If we had turned up with a tax and said, 'We've got no idea how much this is going to raise,' people would have laughed at us and rightly so.

Mr McCormack: Does the minerals resource rent tax ring a bell?

Ms BUTLER: Instead, we are entitled to be laughing at the coalition's multinational tax evasion package that raises asterisks.

Mr McCormack: How much money did that raise?

Ms BUTLER: In fact, I do not know if you have ever tried to take an asterisk or any other punctuation mark to the bank, Assistant Minister, but I do not think that one of the banks is going to give you much in return for the punctuation marks that you truck down to the teller at the local branch, and why would they? It is ridiculous. Fancy turning up with a federal budget and saying, 'We've got a revenue measure here. We've got no idea what it's going to raise, but this is the centrepiece of our multinational tax evasion policy.' It is just embarrassing. We were the president of the G20 in 2014.

Mr McCormack interjecting—

Ms BUTLER: The G20 agenda was about cracking down on base erosion and profit shifting, as the assistant minister is well aware. As the president, you would think that we would have been at the forefront, at the vanguard of multinational tax evasion policy, cracking down on base erosion and profit shifting—

Mr McCormack interjecting—

Ms BUTLER: but, as the assistant minister knows, we were not even amongst the early adopter countries for the common reporting standard. How embarrassing for Australia that so many countries around the world signed up as early adopters of the CRS and what were we doing? We were saying, 'We're not sure about that,' dragging the chain and kicking the can down the road, just as this government likes to do on all sorts of difficult policy issues. Just look at what they are doing on marriage equality. That is all a bit too hard for this term, isn't it? We are not going to have a free vote on that, are we? 'We're not going to have a free vote on marriage equality. We're not going to bother getting that done now,' and so it was with the common reporting standard in the year that we were the president of the G20, when one of the major parts of its agenda was dealing with base erosion and profit shifting. One of the major parts of the G20's agenda was cracking down on multinational tax evasion, not just for the benefit of the developed countries and the G20 but for the benefit of the entire world. Those
developing countries are missing out on their entitlement, their fair share of taxation revenue, and as a consequence they are relying more on aid than they ought to.

The idea that you are just going to raise some asterisks as revenue is ridiculous and it stands in stark contrast to Labor's multinational tax evasion policy. As the assistant minister is well aware, in March this year we announced a PBO costed, carefully considered $7.2 billion package of measures to stop multinational companies shifting their profits out of Australia and avoiding paying their fair share of tax. I have never said our policy was the last word on tackling multinational tax—of course not. We know that work is being done across the world, in the G20, in the OECD, to tackle what is a global phenomenon of base erosion and profit shifting. We have regularly called on the government to adopt our measures alongside their own.

The bill before us focuses on companies that artificially avoid booking revenue in Australia so that they do not have to pay tax on the profits. That is an important issue to tackle and we hope that this bill will force companies to restructure their operations so that profits made here stay here.

Mr McCormack interjecting—

Ms BUTLER: I don't think it is funny. The assistant minister at the table seems to think it is a funny bill. I don't think it is a funny bill. I think it is important.

Mr McCormack interjecting—

Dr Chalmers interjecting—

Ms BUTLER: The assistant minister is very fortunate that my friend the shadow minister for superannuation is leaping to his defence. The shadow minister is a kind man and certainly very kind to the assistant minister.

We do need to make sure that companies are paying their fair share of tax. It should not be left to Australian companies and Australian households to bear a burden because multinationals are shifting their profits elsewhere. So this is an important bill. We do hope this bill will force companies to restructure their operations so that profits made here will stay here.

But this bill does nothing to stop companies using debt deductions to send money offshore, unlike our policy. Companies can easily transfer money between their subsidiaries and holding companies and dress it up as a loan, even though it is just a transfer of money from one pocket to another. Just like other business expenses, interest costs on loans are tax deductible. These artificial loans become a way for companies to shift their profits into tax havens at the expense of the bottom line here in Australia. This is a loophole that we need to close.

We are not going to stand in the way of this attempt by the government to tighten Australia's tax net, no matter how small or insufficient or unknown it may be, in terms of revenue to be raised. We are taking a positive and bipartisan approach to this important issue. In that same spirit, the government should adopt our $7.2 billion tax package and tackle all the loopholes that let companies send their profits offshore.

If this government is committed to ensuring that major corporations pay their fair share of tax, they also need to drop their push to gut Australia's tax transparency laws. Transparency is
one of the most effective tools we have available to combat profit shifting and tax avoidance. In 2013 we passed laws requiring the Australian Taxation Office to publish information about the income and tax paid by companies earning more than $100 million. Unfortunately, this government has mounted an attack on those laws.

Having said that, we are supporting this multinational tax bill through the parliament, because we believe tackling tax avoidance and protecting Australia's revenue base should be above politics. Under the former Prime Minister, the member for Warringah, and the former Treasurer, the member for North Sydney, there was just a blunt rejection of our package. It was very negative. It was typical, unfortunately, of this coalition's track record. It was just a political refusal. They did not want to talk about our idea, just because it was our idea. I hope that this government will take a different approach. I have to say that it would be beneficial and in the national interest if, instead of just rejecting things out of hand, the government actually considered the policies and ideas that we raise, and I look forward to a much more constructive and fruitful set of discussions on this and all other issues into the future.

Ms MARINO (Forrest—Chief Government Whip) (18:55): I rise to support the Tax Laws Amendment (Combating Multinational Tax Avoidance) Bill 2015. I cannot ignore the comments by the member for Griffith. They were quite embarrassing when you consider it. She spoke about a range of issues around this policy but totally ignored the absolute failure of the Minerals Resource Rent Tax. When discussing what could or could not be earn, we know that Labor not only made some incredible projections with the mining tax, which basically did not raise anywhere near what Labor said it would. Not only that, they actually spent the money before they got it. Therein lies one of the challenges that face this government.

The member also made reference to debt. I know what debt and deficit are, and they were left to us by Labor. Looking at what Labor left us with, I came across this quote by Dwight D Eisenhower—and this is what Labor did:

As we peer into society's future, we—you and I, and our government—must avoid the impulse to live only for today, plundering for our own ease and convenience the precious resources of tomorrow. We cannot mortgage the material assets of our grandchildren without risking the loss also of their political and spiritual heritage. We want democracy to survive for all generations to come, not to become the insolvent phantom of tomorrow.

Labor basically spent our grandchildren's inheritance. They left intergenerational debt for children in this country. That is what they left us with.

As we know, with tax there is a conflict as old as civilisation. As long as there has been both money and government, there has been a fight conducted by those who make it to keep it from the government, which both wants and needs it—perhaps these two in differing amounts. It was Einstein who said:

The hardest thing in the world to understand is the income tax.

We have heard about the tax system going back to ancient Egypt. Early taxation is also described in the Bible. It was in Genesis, I think:

But when the crop comes in, give a fifth of it to Pharaoh. The other four-fifths you may keep as seed for the fields and as food for yourselves and your households and your children.

But as long as there has been tax there has been tax avoidance. In fact, many historians have suggested that tax avoidance played a role in the collapse of major civilizations.
As we know, 70 per cent of Commonwealth revenue in Australia comes from personal and corporate income taxes. The ATO notes that 69 key taxpayers, with a turnover of more than $5 billion annually, represent 42 per cent of the entire corporate tax base, and that financial services and the mining industry represent over half of all corporate tax revenue. Our 30 per cent corporate tax rate is similar to the average corporate tax rate of that of the 10 largest economies.

As we know, there are major disrupters to Australia's tax system, as well as international tax systems—disruption caused by the exponential improvements in the reach and efficiency of the internet, as well as significantly increased globalization. All mean that we have an interconnected marketplace in which multinational companies operate.

The bill before the House today implements the government's 2015 budget commitment to combat multinational tax avoidance. This delivers on our promise to ensure that Australia is at the forefront of the international fight against tax evasion. We already have some of the strongest taxation integrity rules in the world, and we are determined to make these rules stronger still. We know that some multinationals continue to try to avoid paying tax on Australian profits. This undermines the public's faith in the tax system and leaves families and small businesses to unfairly carry the taxation burden.

Australia has been at the forefront of the global response to multinational tax avoidance. Under this government's leadership, the first of the OECD-G20's base erosion and profit-shifting recommendations were delivered. Australia is continuing to work with the OECD and G20 to promote greater integrity in the international tax system and ensure that entities pay tax where they have earned their profits. The OECD will report to the G20 finance ministers in October 2015 on the outcomes and final recommendations of its action plan on base erosion and profit shifting.

While our international efforts are important, it is vital that we take appropriate action now, as this government has done, to better protect Australia's tax base. Last year, the government took action to tighten Australia's thin capitalisation rules to limit the scope for multinationals to claim excessive debt reductions. In the 2015 budget, the government announced a package of measures that will level the playing field for local businesses and ensure that competitors pay their fair share of tax. This bill represents part of that package and implements a new multinational anti-avoidance law, stronger penalties for large companies that engage in tax avoidance and profit shifting, and country-by-country reporting to give tax authorities greater visibility of multinationals' tax structures. These three measures will apply to over 1,000 large multinationals operating in Australia with an annual global revenue of $1 billion or more. The measures are consistent with the government's commitment to deregulation and our support of small business.

Schedule 1 to this bill amends the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997 to include a standard and centralised set of concepts that can be used to determine whether an entity is a 'significant global entity'. An entity is a significant global entity for a period if it has annual global income of A$1 billion or more. It may be a significant global entity as well if it is a member of a group of entities that are consolidated for accounting purposes as a single group and the global parent entity of the group has an annual global income for the period of A$1 billion or more. A global parent entity is one that is not controlled by another entity according to accounting principles or, where accounting principles do not apply in relation to the entity,
commodiously accepted principles related to accounting. A global parent entity will usually be
a member of a group of entities where the global parent is the one that is not controlled by any
of the others. Subsidiaries of the global parent may be located in other jurisdictions. However,
it is possible for a global parent entity to be a single entity that does not control any others.
So, if a global parent entity is a member of a group that are consolidated for accounting
purposes as a single group, the global parent’s annual global income for a period is the total of
the annual income amounts of the consolidated group as shown in the total or disclosed in
parts in its latest global financial statement for that period.

Schedule 2 of this bill implements a new multinational anti-avoidance law from 1 January
next year. This will stop multinationals artificially avoiding a taxable presence in Australia,
delivering on our 2015 budget commitment to target major entities with significant Australian
activities that avoid booking profits in Australia. The tax office estimates that around 30 large
multinationals are engaging in commercial activities in Australia but use contrived structures
to book billions of dollars of revenue overseas and avoid Australian tax. The new
multinational anti-avoidance law will allow the Commissioner of Taxation to force those
companies to pay tax in Australia on profits from economic activities undertaken here. This is
the right and fair thing to do, as Australian taxpayers and small businesses would say. We
have strengthened the law by removing the condition for multinationals to operate in a no-tax
or low-tax jurisdiction. All significant global entities with revenues over $1 billion that book
their revenue offshore will need to consider these rules and may need to review their
structures. This simplifies the law and makes it easier for the tax office to apply, removing the
need to prove an additional requirement. As a result, if a multinational has a structure with a
principal purpose of avoiding tax, the tax office will have the tools to catch it and ensure it
pays its fair share.

By removing the no-tax or low-tax condition and relying solely on a principal purpose test,
the government is sending a very clear message that, if a company deliberately and artificially
avoids paying tax in Australia, this is not acceptable. This rule will complement our existing
anti-avoidance rules for multinationals by clarifying that the specific arrangements used by
multinationals selling into Australia are considered to be tax avoidance. This new measure
will make it easier for the ATO to establish a case by catching arrangements that are designed
to obtain both Australian and foreign tax benefits, and by lowering the purpose test from 'sole
or dominant purpose' to 'one of the principal purposes'. This new measure will force entities to
book their revenue here, in Australia, where they have significant sales activity. Where a tax
avoidance scheme is identified, the Commissioner of Taxation will be able to apply the tax
rules as if the multinational had booked the profit from Australian sales in Australia. The
company will have to pay the tax they owe on these profits, plus interest, and double the
existing maximum penalties for tax avoidance and profit-shifting schemes. This new measure
will protect our tax base by acting as a deterrent to companies to engaging in complex
schemes. Companies that pay their fair share of tax will no longer be at a competitive
disadvantage.

Schedule 3 to this bill doubles the penalties for large companies that enter into tax
avoidance or profit-shifting schemes. The maximum penalty applicable will be 120 per cent
of the amount of tax avoided under the scheme. Schedule 4 implements country-by-country
reporting from 1 January 2016. Australia is leading the way, and we expect the country-by-
country measures to be implemented by other jurisdictions around the world. Country-by-
country reporting will require large multinationals to report to the Australian Taxation Office
their income and tax paid in every country in which they operate. This will be exchanged
between tax authorities to assist in the assessment of transfer pricing risk and targeting of
audit inquiries.

Consistent with the OECD's guidance, this schedule will also require two more reports to
help manage transfer-pricing risk. Companies will be required to lodge a master file, which
will require detailed information on the multinational's organisational structure and financial
activities. Companies will also be required to lodge a local file, which will focus on specific
information on transactions between the reporting entity and related entities in other
countries. This will include the entity's detailed analysis of the transfer pricing determinations
they have made.

The government's measures are well-considered and balanced and will effectively
strengthen our tax system to ensure that it is fair and sustainable. The government will report
to G20 finance ministers in October 2015 on the outcomes and final recommendations of our
tax avoidance agenda. This government will continue to take the lead in the OECD and the
G20, and the final recommendations will provide a strong platform for even further action
towards strengthening the integrity of our tax system and making sure that those entities that
earn profits in Australia pay tax in Australia.

Dr GILLESPIE (Lyne) (19:08): I rise to speak on the Tax Laws Amendment (Combating
Multinational Tax Avoidance) Bill 2015, and I commend it to the House. Everyone has heard
of the 'Who's on first, What's on second and I Don't Know's on third' routine of the famous
Abbott and Costello, which has been seen on YouTube by millions of people. Before
YouTube, I saw it when I was a child, and even then I understood: that is humour. But when
you look at this bill, that is what comes to mind—when you hear of the double Irish-Dutch
sandwich, the mechanism by which multinational tax corporations have avoided tax by
shifting money between corporate identities that bear no relationship to where products are
made or sold. But it has been a legal way of avoiding tax, which, as one prominent Australian
outlined at an inquiry many years ago, is Australia's national pastime.

But really the things you have heard about tax avoidance in Australia look quite mickey
mouse when you see some of the tricks that very clever accountants and tax lawyers have
been up to in avoiding tax, not only in Australia but around the world. And because of this
very issue the OECD has been very active, and we have been leading the pack. But as well as
the double Irish-Dutch sandwich, there is the use of hybrid securities and various forms of
thin capitalisation whereby, in essence, equity in a company is dressed up as massive debt,
which then generates a massive interest payment that then goes offshore to the parent
company via various other entities in other countries and, funnily enough, it might even end
up in a low-taxing or no-taxing country.

There is frequent use of intellectual property fees, whereby a company operating in
Australia is charged a massive IP fee which, coincidentally, matches the amount of income or
profit that the local Australian identity is due to pay. Hence they avoid paying tax in
Australia, and the tax is then transferred as a fee to another entity in another country, and it
might do the merry-go-round as well, in the sandwich formation, and again end up in a low-
or no-tax-paying entity and/or country. The old chestnut is trading hubs, whereby a product
made in Australia or produced in Australia is sold for a low-profit fee but the same product, without any value adding or value creation, is resold in and out of a trading hub in another destination, or a low-tax, no-tax destination.

These are all legitimate manoeuvres, but the whole aim of the exercise is to have Australian companies that generate their profits in Australia pay tax on those profits in Australia. It is ultimately morally imperative and justifiable to have a system in place that achieves just that. We are not being mean, tricky or nasty; we are simply applying common sense, because this very issue occupies the minds of many treasurers, not just the Australian Treasurer. The OECD and the G20 have had many meetings on many occasions, quite recently, and Australia has been at the forefront. The former Treasurer, the member for North Sydney, led this agenda at the G20 meeting and its subsequent meetings. The aim of the exercise is to raise money through the Australian company tax rate on profits that are made here.

Transfer pricing, trading hubs, IP fees, thin capitalisation and other forms of hybrid securities—there are a few other little tricks that they employ. It is a bit like 'Who's on first, What's on second and I Don't Know's on third' all over again. That is, you can be an entity and be resident in two countries, and when you go to pay tax in one country you say, 'No, we'll pay it over there', but then when you go over to the other country you do not pay it there, and you might even move it around. All these manoeuvres need to be addressed by multiple nations. We cannot just jump on board and do things by ourselves.

That is the whole idea of the base erosion and profit shifting conventions the OECD is employing, which they have brought to bear, and we are leading the pack. Recently, 30 multinational companies have been observed by the Australian tax office. If they are earning more than A$1 billion in revenue, they are being observed to make sure that they do not employ structures that have a principal, sole or dominant purpose for avoiding tax being paid on their profits in Australia.

With this bill, tax rules will be applied if they fail that test—or what might better be described as passing that test. If they have set up structures that have a principal, sole or dominant purpose for avoiding tax on profits on products or services made in Australia, tax rules will be applied. The tax will be levied in Australia, and there will be an interest payment and/or a fine of up to 120 per cent.

You would be surprised to hear that the lot of these things were not enforced. They make so much common sense. In the world of legislation, a complex issue often takes hours to get your head around, but this is a pretty straightforward issue. I do not think there is much objection on either side of the House or in the community—this passes the pub test, the sniff test and barbecue conversations. People are in universal agreement: that is, people should pay their fair share of tax.

I do not think we will have any objections to these rules being applied, having these treaties in place with enforcement of country-by-country-reporting transparency and a common reporting standard across all these countries. Having them enforced in Australia is existentially and financially a very sound thing for the Australian tax office to do.

I am surprised we have not had a common reporting standard before. If you have all these rules in various entities in various countries, I am surprised that people have not ventured down this avenue before. It seems like the logical thing to do so that there is one rule for all. I
am sure the Australian tax office will be pleased to achieve these simple, straightforward measures as $1.1 billion is a lot of money that could be applied to reducing our debt, balancing our books, providing services like Medicare or pharmaceutical benefits, providing equipment for our Defence Forces or building parts of the Pacific Highway.

One of the first things you have to do as a government is defend your nation. Two, you have to supply security for the nation. You have lots of other commitments in Australia. In Australia, we have a massive social security safety net, which takes over $140 billion of our tax revenue. What we are hoping to do is not overtax people; just make sure that these corporate or private entities using these manoeuvres are compliant with a tax regime, particularly, a tax regime in Australia when they are operating in Australia. So $1.1 billion raised from this is the estimate, but it may be much more and that would be great. It is a lot better to get some tax than a lot of nothing, which is what happened in the past.

Coming back to where I started: I hope this is the end of the double Irish-Dutch sandwich, the subway of tax accounting. We want fair and reasonable taxes paid in this country. If transparency and simple uniform procedures are achieved around the world, it would be a great thing for all countries but, in particular, Australia leading the way is a very good outcome and something that we can be proud of. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr McCormack (Riverina—Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister) (19:19): The Tax Laws Amendment (Combating Multinational Tax Avoidance) Bill 2015 implements three 2015-16 budget measures: the multinational anti-avoidance law; country-by-country reporting and new transfer pricing documentation standards; and stiffer penalties to combat tax avoidance and profit shifting.

Whilst I have been listening intently to my colleagues and those opposite on this bill, I must say it was an excellent contribution, as always, by the member for Lyne. I have been reading a couple of documents: one, The Financial Review's Smart Investor November 2015 publication talks about the search for growth, where to find it and how to get on board; and the State of Regional Australia 2015—an inaugural report in which Mike Mrdak, the Secretary to the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, in his foreword says:

An evidence based understanding of a region’s performance should underpin community development initiatives, policy settings and investment strategies which can enable a region to prosper and harness the opportunities associated with its own unique advantages.

This got me thinking about my own unique electorate—the Riverina—and the opportunities that could be harnessed, are being harnessed and will be harnessed in the future. Those opportunities are enhanced when everybody—taxpayers, businesses—is paying their fair share of tax. In the Riverina, I would like to think that everyone who is earning an income, be it a taxpayer or indeed a company, is paying their fair share of tax.

This legislation goes to the heart of those multinational corporations which are not paying their fair share of tax. Before I discuss the substance of the bill, I will just talk about a few of the contributions made, particularly, by those opposite. The member for Wakefield, in his speech, talked about the revenue that could be raised from this bill being one less dollar that Australian taxpayers and businesses have to pay. That is not correct. It is not one less dollar that Australian taxpayers and businesses will have to pay; it is one more dollar that we will
collect, that should be being collected and that should have always been collected. It is not one less dollar that is going to have to be paid; it is one more dollar that will be paid.

The Minister for Immigration and Border Protection last Wednesday, 14 October, asked how many members opposite had been involved in a small business and just one put up their hand—the member for Melbourne Ports. I appreciate that the member for Parramatta may well have been involved in a small business in her past before she came to this place, but this goes to the heart of the matter. When the same question was asked of the coalition, just about everybody put their hand up. We understand business. We understand the need for tax collection. We understand the need for equitable distribution of that tax which is collected. But the member for Wakefield just does not get it. He said that Senator Dastyari is doing a good job in this space. I can tell you that the good senator is running around at the moment claiming that he understands the Murray-Darling Basin—that is far from the truth.

This particular bill is important. Australia has been a world leader in ensuring that we get on top of multinationals avoiding paying their tax. The key driver of this was the member for North Sydney, the former Treasurer, who led the way during Australia's presidency of the G20. Last year at a doorstep interview on 9 December, he was asked: 'Do you think it's a risk that Australian companies that are operating overseas in other jurisdictions could face a backlash from other agencies or countries that are not as proactive on base erosion and profit shifting?' He talked about this being a challenge. He said that there were large number of Australian companies that operated overseas and emphasised that that is why we need to work collectively and globally to address this. We did that at the G20. We started the process off. Australia's reputation on the international stage is very good. It follows our excellent presidency of G20. The head of the International Monetary Fund, Christine Lagarde, spoke very highly of the work of the member for North Sydney, Joe Hockey, in heading G20.

The member for North Sydney spoke in an interview with David Speers of Sky News three days after that initial interview on 9 December. On 12 December he said in answer to a question about the Google tax of measures to tackle multinationals which do not pay what they ought to in Australia:

It has got to be coordinated global response and this is why the previous Government failed. They had announcements that they never legislated and they never had any coordinated global action. We are determined to work with other countries. We have used the leadership of the G20 this year to get that coordinated global action. We have got a number of fronts that we are dealing with. Firstly, we are working with the OECD on what is known as the Base Erosion and Profit Shifting Plan. We are half way through that, which means there are common rules around the world, particularly in tax havens that ensure that people do start to pay their fair share of tax.

The good work done by the member for North Sydney was certainly front and centre of the G20 in Istanbul, Turkey, which I attended on 9 and 10 February. In session 6 on international tax—

Mr Bowen: Did you go?

Mr McCormack: I did go, actually, Member for McMahon. I did go. I attended that. You were not yet in the chamber when I was speaking earlier about the excellent reputation that the member for North Sydney forged as far as our G20 presidency was concerned and the high elevation that he gave Australia's G20 presidency.
The Turkish G20 presidency priority for 2015 included a section on international tax that stated:

We will be monitoring the implementation of the 2014 deliverables of the Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) Project. We will also work to ensure a smooth transition to the 2015 deliverables of the BEPS project to secure progress in this field. To enhance inclusiveness of the international tax system improvements, we will continue to incorporate the developing country perspective to the G20 tax agenda, with an increased emphasis on bilateral and multilateral cooperation between tax authorities.

As I said, Australia's reputation at G20 was highly regarded and certainly Turkey was continuing on the good work started by the member for North Sydney and that is now being adopted by the member for Cook, the now Treasurer. That is because this is important.

We have heard during this debate Labor talking about how much this would make. If we look at the second reading amendment that Labor has put forward, it says:

... "while not declining to give the bill a second reading, the House notes that its revenue impact is unquantified, and calls on the Government to adopt Labor's fully-costed multinational tax package to raise $7.2 billion over the next decade".

We know about Labor's ability to get it so wrong when it comes to estimating how much money might be raised by a particular project. We know that under the Labor government when it was in power the original resource superprofits tax announced by Kevin Rudd and the member for Lilley was estimated to raise $49.5 billion from 2012-13 to 2016-17. The revised mining tax announced by the former member for Lalor, Julia Gillard, and the member for Lilley was originally estimated to raise $26.5 billion over the same period.

Net revenue from the mining tax in the 2014-15 budget was expected to raise over $300 million in total, but we know how wrong Labor got it. The fact is that Labor then spent the money they did not have in typical ALP fashion. They spent it on a whole range of projects and drove our good economic situation that they inherited in 2007 into something that just went from bad to worse. I admit that we did have a global financial crisis. I admit that that knocked our expected revenues about. But we did not need Labor to then run around and spend money that we never had a hope of raising. That was just typical of Labor, spending money it did not have, spending money we never had a hope of raising and tearing the forward estimates asunder.

This is an important piece of legislation. It is good that Labor is actually getting on board with us, despite the amendment. These measures are part of a package of domestic measures announced in the 2015-16 budget to bolster Australia's existing laws to ensure that multinationals pay their fair share of tax. We know that a fairer tax system is one in which all taxpayers meet their tax obligations, and that is why we are committed to addressing tax avoidance by multinationals. If a company makes a profit in Australia, it needs to pay tax in Australia. We do not want individuals and small businesses unfairly carrying the tax burden, for all the reasons that I spoke about earlier. We need to ensure that regional Australia maximises its opportunities. We need to ensure that we are able to roll out and can continue to roll out the infrastructure plans and policies of this government, because we are a road and rail government. We are a government that is investing in ports. We are a government that is investing in valuable infrastructure, ensuring that we protect, preserve and support regional Australia.
In the 2015 budget, the government announced a package of actions to further strengthen Australia's tax laws and level the playing field for domestic business. We are introducing a multinational anti-avoidance law right here tonight to stop multinationals using complex schemes to avoid paying tax in this country by booking revenue overseas. We are also closing the digital tax loophole to ensure that the goods and services tax applies to digital products and services that are downloaded in Australia, and that is important as well. We are also introducing new OECD country-by-country reporting requirements to strengthen the Australian Taxation Office's capabilities to identify profit shifting. Country-by-country reporting will ensure that multinational companies with global revenue exceeding $1 billion need to annually report to tax authorities the amount of revenue, profit, income tax and economic activity that they are generating for each jurisdiction in which they do business.

We need to make sure that there are suitable penalties for large companies engaging in tax avoidance and profit shifting. We need to make sure that there is deterrence for those companies to make sure that they do not try to risk it. This is important legislation. It is good that Labor is getting on board with this legislation, because it is important that we get that revenue base and that we ensure that our base is not continually eroded by those tax avoiders who should be paying their fair share. I commend the legislation to the House.

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Treasurer) (19:34): Firstly, I want to thank all those members who have contributed to this debate on the Tax Laws Amendment (Combating Multinational Tax Avoidance) Bill 2015 and I want to thank the opposition for their support for the bill. The government will not be supporting the amendment to the second reading, and I will come to those matters shortly.

Multinationals need to pay their fair share of tax in Australia. We all agree with that. That is an important principle. It is one that is being pursued through multilateral forums. For some years Australia has been in the vanguard of that approach. It has led that approach, and the former Treasurer, who introduced this bill to the House, was the principal driver of that agenda for the government. I acknowledge his contribution in bringing this bill before the House because it brought to a head the matters that he had been championing through the G20 and other forums.

This bill implements the government's 2015-16 budget measures to combat multinational tax avoidance. These measures will force multinational companies with significant activities in Australia to pay their fair share of tax. This is what it does, this is what this bill is, and that is why it is a bill worthy of support. This will level the playing field for taxpayers and ensure that families and small businesses are no longer unfairly carrying a greater tax burden because those large multinational companies are not carrying theirs.

The new, broader multinational anti-avoidance law will target, at this stage, 80 large multinationals that the ATO has identified as having significant activities in Australia and as potentially using contrived structures to book billions of dollars of Australian sales overseas to avoid Australian tax. Before this bill was introduced there were only 30 such companies that were actually working with the ATO. Now that these measures are being put in place, this has more than doubled the net that the tax office has been able to put out in terms of ensuring multinational organisations will be paying their fair share of tax. So it has already had a significant impact and it is yet to pass this place. The Commissioner of Taxation will be able
to force them to pay tax on profits from economic activities undertaken here in Australia. Multinationals will no longer be able to justify contrived schemes to avoid paying tax.

This rule will strengthen our anti-avoidance rules for multinationals by catching arrangements that are designed to obtain both Australian and foreign tax benefits to stop companies claiming they are only seeking to avoid foreign tax and by lowering the purpose test from sole or dominant purpose to one of the principal purpose, making it easier to apply. This means that they will now pay tax on profits from their Australian activities. That is the objective, and that is what this bill is designed to address and will address. Penalties for large companies that enter into tax avoidance or profit-shifting schemes will be doubled from 1 July 2015. These are measures with teeth.

Country-by-country reporting, a key recommendation of the BEPS process that has been worked through by the OECD, will be required, where large multinationals will need to report additional information to the ATO about what tax they are paying and where. This is a significant improvement in transparency and will help the ATO undertake targeted assessments of transfer-pricing risk. While we have not put a figure in the budget—and I note that that is one of the issues raised in the opposition’s second reading amendment—I have been advised by the Commissioner of Taxation that the amount of revenue to be raised is in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

Contrary to the unfounded accusations of those opposite, this approach is actually consistent with responsible budget practice in respect of measures that are not readily quantifiable. I note that the opposition took this approach when they amended part IVA of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1936 in the 2012-13 budget, when they amended the transfer-pricing rules in 2013 and when they introduced the petroleum resource rent tax in 1987. In each instance, those opposite, when they were in government, put no revenue in the budget. That is a standard practice for these types of measures, and the government is following the same practice. But those in opposition are seeking to score, I think, quite cheap political points about this, when at the end of the day the government is following exactly the same practice that those opposite followed when they were in government.

Another thing they did when they were in government was, when they first published the mining tax measure, in the 2010-11 budget, they put a revenue figure in. They were very proud about the revenue figure. They budgeted for $12 billion of revenue over the first two years of its operation. Twelve billion dollars was going to come from the mining tax measure outlined in the 2010-11 budget. But they did not just put the revenue in; they booked the spending off the back of the revenue as well. They irresponsibly locked in billions of dollars of spending against revenue that vanished before their eyes. This government does not operate like that. This government actually carefully considers these measures. We do not get ahead of ourselves and look for the grand big press conference where they stand there and thump the table and say, ‘This will raise X billion dollars.’ They tried that and they got themselves into awful trouble, and this government has had to unpick these things since we came to office. The actual revenue was not $12 billion from the mining tax. Before the measure was repealed, it had raised a mere $200 million, creating a significant budget shortfall.

We are not going to repeat the folly of those opposite when it comes to these very important measures. The government is taking a strong and balanced approach to dealing with multinational tax avoidance. These measures are not about plugging a budget hole but are
about achieving meaningful behavioural change around corporate tax avoidance. I want to commend the Commissioner of Taxation on the positive approach he is taking with these multinational companies domiciled in Australia. They are engaging. They are working the issues through. With the advancement of the broader multilateral approach to this issue, multinationals are recognising that it is time to bring it to account—it is time that they will have to pay tax where they earn the revenue—and they are working with tax authorities, particularly working here with our tax authorities, to ensure that these matters are resolved.

The opposition have proposed a number of measures which they claim will deal with multinational tax avoidance. That is principally by limiting interest deductions by applying worldwide gearing ratios to all multinationals. This is a very blunt instrument for the opposition to apply, and I would encourage them to think through the implications of what they are putting forward. Unlike the government's actions, these proposed changes to the thin cap rules will deter investment and cost Australian jobs. That is not just the view of the government; that is the advice I have received—that they will actually deter investment and cost Australian jobs. Investors who are principally equity funded would be particularly affected. Investors such as large pension and infrastructure funds, who invest in critical sectors such as infrastructure and are typically debt funded at the project level, would be unfairly impacted and disincentivised from investing into Australia because of the very blunt approach that the opposition are proposing, as opposed to the bespoke approach which the government is actually following, where you look at the actual project, the actual investment and the actual nature of the business activities being pursued by that company and then you tailor the tax treatment to reflect what they are actually doing.

The opposition do not do that. They just want to apply a blanket, broad based rule which takes no account of the sensitivities and nature of the investments and will, frankly, scare pension funds and others off from investing in Australian infrastructure and scare off the jobs that come with them. I do not know why they are so wedded to this particular proposal, when the measures that the government is already following deal with exactly the same issues that they are raising around thin cap rules around the world. We are leading the world on these issues. Why would they seek a point of difference on this? The only point of difference is: what the opposition are proposing to do will actually deter projects and investments and jobs. This would clearly adversely impact the legitimate activities of many multinational companies headquartered in Australia and could actually drive them offshore from where they are currently located here in Australia. Their policy on multinational tax avoiders does not really go to the heart of the issue either. The policy primarily targets debt deductions while ignoring the fact that the government has already taken action to significantly tighten Australia's defences in this area, as I just mentioned. As such, the opposition's policy does not focus on areas where there is the greatest potential to address profit shifting by multinational companies.

Our encouragement is: stay focused on the ball. You have got to follow the ball, not the man. Playing the man is what the opposition are trying to do. They played the man very much here in this very chamber the other day, raising questions about this issue and drawing links to the Cayman Islands and the Prime Minister. They are playing the man, not the ball. The ball is: ensuring that we are going after the tax revenue of multinational companies, which is what our measures do. Those opposite want to play the man. They want to play the politics of envy.
and they want to play the politics of xenophobia when it comes to foreign investment. They can do that, but it demonstrates that they are not being part of a constructive agenda. I recognise that they are going to support the measures in this bill—as they should, because they are good measures and they will do the job—but I would encourage them to stop their process of playing the man rather than playing the ball when it comes to the issues of tax and broader economic policy in this country.

The government's measures as outlined in this bill are well considered and balanced and will, effectively, strengthen our taxation system to ensure it is fair and sustainable. We are closing the digital tax loophole also to ensure that the goods and services tax applies to digital products and services that are downloaded in Australia, and this government has taken action to tighten Australia's thin-cap rules to limit the scope for multinationals to claim excessive debt reductions.

We have asked the Board of Taxation to work with businesses to develop a voluntary code for greater disclosure by companies of their tax information. I met with the chair of the Board of Taxation today to discuss these very measures. As G20 president in 2014, the former Treasurer led the global response to tax avoidance by multinational companies. Under Australia's leadership, the first of the OECD G20's base erosion and profit shifting, also known as BEPS recommendations, were delivered last year. The OECD finalised last week its report to G20 finance ministers on the outcomes and final recommendations of the BEPS action plan.

The multinational anti-avoidance law, which is being debated here in this House this week, is entirely consistent with the final OECD report and recommendations, and the final recommendations provide a strong platform for further action to strengthen the integrity of our tax system and ensure it is fair and sustainable. We will continue to take the lead in the OECD and G20 to restore fairness in the international tax system and ensure entities pay tax where they have earned their profits. I commend the bill to the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Irons) (19:46): The original question was that this bill be now read a second time. To this the honourable member for Fraser has moved as an amendment that all words after ‘That’ be omitted with a view to substituting other words. The question now is that the amendment be agreed to.

Question negatived.

Original question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Mr McCORMACK (Riverina—Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister) (19:47): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.
COMMITTEES

Membership

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Irons) (19:47): I have received advice from the Chief Government Whip that they members have been nominated to be members of certain committees.

Mr McCORMACK (Riverina—Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister) (19:47): by leave—I move:

That:

(1) Mrs McNamara be appointed a member of the Standing Committee on Health;
(2) Mr van Manen be discharged from the Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs and that, in his place, Mr Entsch be appointed a member of the committee;
(3) Ms Marino, Mr Pitt, Mr van Manen and Mr Williams be appointed members of the Standing Committee on Infrastructure, Transport and Cities;
(4) Mr Goodenough be discharged from the Standing Committee on Tax and Revenue and Mr Hastie and Mr Irons be appointed members of the committee;
(5) Mr Baldwin and Mr Pitt be appointed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade;
(6) Mr K. J. Andrews be appointed a member of the Joint Standing Committee on Migration;
(7) Mr Matheson be appointed a member of the Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme; and
(8) Dr Jensen be discharged from the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties and that, in his place, Mrs Wicks be appointed a member of the committee.

Question agreed to.

Membership

Mr McCORMACK (Riverina—Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister) (19:48): by leave—I move:

That:

(1) Mr Watts be appointed a member of the Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts;
(2) Dr Chalmers be discharged from the Standing Committee on Economics and that, in his place, Ms O’Neil be appointed a member of the committee;
(3) Mr Watts be discharged from the Standing Committee on Health and that, in his place, Mr Zappia be appointed a member of the committee;
(4) Mr Giles be discharged from the Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs and that, in his place, Ms Claydon be appointed a member of the committee;
(5) Mr Thistlethwaite be appointed a member of the Standing Committee on Infrastructure, Transport and Cities; and
(6) Dr Chalmers be discharged from the Joint Select Committee on Trade and Investment Growth and that, in his place, Ms T. M. Butler be appointed a member of the committee.

Question agreed to.
Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (19:49): This bill represents the latest instalment of the Liberal and National parties' long-running war with superannuation and long-running war with industry superannuation, in particular. This is not a bill that will receive the support of the opposition.

The Liberal Party and the National Party have never believed in Australia's compulsory universal superannuation system. They opposed it at its inception, they opposed it continually, they have opposed every addition to it and they have, particularly, been opposed to industry superannuation. What we see here is a continuation of that prejudice from the Liberal and National governments. This is a process that began under Prime Minister Abbott and, like in so many other areas, has continued untouched, uninterrupted, under the Turnbull administration.

What we have here is a solution in search of a problem and a very bad solution—a botched solution—at that. What is the malfeasance that we are trying to fix here? What is the problem we see in industry superannuation? Is it that there is some sort of systemic problem the government has identified that they have rushed urgently to fix? Is it that the government has identified that industry super is underperforming compared to the rest of the superannuation sector? Have they found conflicts of interest rampant, throughout, in the industry superannuation system?

If they have done that, they are invited to present some evidence to the House. They are invited to present some case for their actions. They will not be able to, because none exists. Industry superannuation has been providing good returns for its members. What we are seeing, on the contrary, is the Liberal and National parties old-style divide-and-conquer prejudice against industry super.

This is some sort of problem for the Liberal and National parties that they never seem to have been able to overcome. Industry super employers and unions—working together for the best interests of the members of the industry super funds—is something that just does not compute with those opposite. They cannot quite process that this is something that would work in a cooperative fashion. As a result of the way industry funds have operated over the last several decades, many working Australians have better retirement incomes than they would if superannuation did not exist and if they were not members of industry superannuation funds. Of the top 50 performing superannuation funds over 10 years, 19 are industry funds. Of the bottom 50, only seven are industry funds. Of the top 10 funds over 10 years, none are retail funds. Retail funds and the retail sector play a very important role in our superannuation system, but industry funds are not the issue that should be this government's urgent priority when it comes to structural and institutional reform.

I note that this is a recommendation of the Murray inquiry. I note that and I freely knowledge that, but I also point this out: the government is yet to respond to the Murray inquiry. The response to the Murray inquiry, we are told, is being delivered tomorrow and this
legislation is in the House tonight. Of all the recommendations in the Murray inquiry and of all the things that the Murray inquiry has decided to recommend, there is one that this government has decided to implement—one that they have picked out and said, 'This is most urgent for us, not all the other recommendations of the Murray inquiry.'

I have been at pains not to make a political football of the Murray inquiry and to provide bipartisan support wherever possible to the Murray inquiry, but we have got government addicted to playing cheap and dirty politics and we have got a government addicted to saying, 'We're not going to accept that bipartisan support. What we're going to do is cherry pick the Murray inquiry and we're going to play good, old-fashioned wedge politics.' That is what this government is addicted to. We were used to that under previous arrangements and we are told that everything is changed and everything is better now that we have a new Prime Minister.

Well, nothing has changed. This Prime Minister has changed not one jot when it comes to this government's actions. He is proceeding with this old style, divide and conquer, prejudiced approach to policy.

We have seen this in the government's approach to financial services regulation across the board. What was the government's first priority when they came to office, when it came to financial services regulation? What did they rush to do first? It was to unwind the previous government's Future of Financial Advice reforms. Those reforms were a solution for real problem. They were a solution for a problem that had been identified, which was people being ripped off by poor and conflicted advice. The Labor government stepped in and provided appropriate and well-calibrated regulation to minimise the chances of that happening again. This was regulation in response to scandals—not just one scandal and not just two scandals but continual scandals and rip-offs of good, hardworking Australians. It was legislated painstakingly by the previous Labor government because there was a problem to fix.

Where there was a problem, the Liberal and National parties came to office and rushed to undo the solution. They took reforms to both houses of parliament to unwind the Future of Financial Advice reforms. They urgently prioritised it and, for a time, they succeeded. Thank goodness, the Senate—after the strong representations from the Labor Party—eventually reversed their approval of the government's watering down of the Future of Financial Advice reforms and insisted that they be reinserted. But here, again, we have the government playing the same old games. Here we have them now rushing to pick one Murray inquiry recommendation for a problem which does not exist. Where is the problem in industry fund regulation that the government has identified that this proposed legislation is designed to fixed? It is not poor returns and it is not conflicts of interest.

The other point is this: not only is this a solution in search of a problem but it is also a botched solution in search of a problem. This is very poorly drafted legislation. This is legislation which goes much further than what the government claims is its intent. They claimed that their intent is a third—so a third are independent for directors of industry super funds. In fact, it is a third that are independent and the rest is open slather. The longstanding requirement that 50 per cent of the representatives of industry funds be employers and 50 per cent be employee representatives is no longer extant in this legislation. Instead, there is a requirement that a third be independent and the rest are open slather. Employer representatives could be removed and union representatives could be removed in their
entirety. Either the government is trying to do more than they are saying they are trying to achieve or, in fact, they have been incompetent as they set out to do this.

Instead of trying to divide superannuation between industry funds and the rest, and instead of trying to divide the superannuation sector and concentrate on the things which some elements of the superannuation sector disagree with each other on, the government could instead be concentrating on strengthening superannuation. They could be concentrating on taking the superannuation guarantee from nine per cent to 12 per cent. In fact, they have done the opposite; they have frozen it at 9.5 per cent. They could be actually tried to strengthen superannuation for low-income earners by actually giving low-income earners a tax concession to their superannuation, which was in place under the previous government and which this government—to the eternal discredit—has abolished. That is, the low-income superannuation contribution.

That is because this government does not believe that low-income earners deserve any tax concessions to their superannuation. They certainly believe in very generous tax concessions for high-income earners and they very clearly believe that high-income earners deserve very, very generous concessions. But what they cannot stand is the fact that low-income earners get any tax concessions. They could not stand for it and they abolished it. Here we have that same sort of old, cheap prejudice, which is driving this change—I will not call it a reform, because it is not— to see the longstanding fifty-fifty model of representation for industry super being abolished under this legislation.

If there was a one-size-fits-all regulation for corporate governance—and if it was appropriate—the Labor Party would be prepared to consider it. But, of course, no such thing exists. What we see is that industry super funds are being overly regulated by a government which tells us that they believe in getting rid of red tape, not having too much regulation and being an anti-red-tape government. But here we have them prescribing that a third of directors should be independent when funds already have that capacity. They can already appoint independent directors if they think it is in the best interests of the fund.

What is important is not whether a director is necessarily independent. It is the skills that director brings, the expertise they bring and the experience they bring. The fact of the matter is that there is already significant regulatory oversight of superannuation funds. The government might have us believe otherwise, but that is not the case. APRA has the power to set and supervise compliance and enforce credential standards so that funds meet the financial promises they make to beneficiaries. APRA funds are required to continuously report on the composition of their boards and whether boards and individual directors have the required mix of expertise and skills. Boards are also required to conduct ongoing performance reviews, manage conflicts of interest and make sure directors are fit and proper.

Many of these requirements were only introduced in July 2013 but this government just could not help itself. Instead of just seeing how those reforms play out, seeing whether they meet the objectives set out for them by the previous government, no, they go down the old-fashioned route that they have engaged in since the early 1990s of opposing superannuation and opposing industry superannuation in particular. There has never been an industry super fund that a Liberal National Party MP did not see and want to damage and to punish. And we see that long-standing process continued in this legislation.
I again invite the government to provide one piece of evidence that there is a problem with industry funds which needs to be fixed and fixed by this legislation. Show us the evidence that industry funds are underperforming. Show us the evidence that there are systemic conflicts of interest in industry funds. They will not be able to do so because no such evidence exists. This government, which claims to have an evidence based approach to policy, simply cannot have such an evidence base because this evidence does not exist.

The fact of the matter is that there will be costs imposed on funds as a result of this imposed overregulation, this heavy-handed regulation, this red tape that is imposed on industry funds by this interventionist government, who seek to impose their will on the trustees of industry super funds, who think they know better from Canberra than the employer representatives who are experienced and well qualified, and the employee representatives with their member's best interests at heart who are also well experienced a well qualified. This government thinks they know better than all of those. They know better than all the industry super fund trustees that have done such a good job for their members over the years that industry super has existed.

I do not mind saying industry super has done very well for many millions of members including many members of this House over the years and that has continued so I have full confidence in the particular directors of many of the industry funds both employer representatives and employee representatives. I see very little case for this overly heavy-handed form of regulation, which is hard to reconcile with this government's alleged zeal to reduce red tape—because they only do that when it suits them. They only do that when it suits their prejudices. I hesitate to call it an ideology because an ideology implies some sort of coherent set of logical parameters to their thought process and I do not see any evidence of that. I just see prejudice when it comes to this government's approach to superannuation, prejudice against lower-income earners and against industry funds. Such is this government's hatred of trade unions that they are prepared to say that they will overly regulate industry funds because they happen to have union representation on them as well as employer representation on them. And that just shows was what is wrong with this government's approach.

We have seen the danger of a one-size-fits-all approach. It has been highlighted by many commentators in this debate and in other debates. The danger of a one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to governance systems and structures which are overly prescriptive was highlighted as long ago as in the HIH royal commission by Justice Owen. In that commission he pointed out that it can be very dangerous to impose governance systems or structures that are overly prescriptive and are one-size-fits-all. The fact of the matter is that is exactly what this government is doing. As David Whately, chief executive of Industry Super Australia, has said in relation to this, 'It is a solution in search of a problem … It is not because of any systemic performance within the sector.' The fact of the matter is that Mr Whately in this regard is right. Ian Ramsay, Professor at Melbourne University, is right when he says skills, expertise and experience were more relevant criteria than independence per se. Peter Swan, Professor at University of New South Wales, was right when he said what is important is independence from management, not the owners—the owners being the members of the fund.

There are matters of independence of directors which governments can and should from time to time consider, not singling out industry funds but looking at the independence from
management. The separation of management and directors right across the superannuation sector is something which is worthy of debate in this House, but of course we do not see that from this government. They always go the cheap and easy route, which, in this case, involves an attack on industry super because that is a very obvious play for this government to embark on. If this Prime Minister was fair dinkum, he would change the approach. If this Prime Minister was fair dinkum, he would actually go back and say, 'Well, let's have an evidence based approach. Let's take the Murray inquiry as a whole. Let's respond to it in one go.'

The opposition are being fair dinkum. The opposition are not playing politics on the Murray inquiry. We will not abuse that but of course this government has not done that because they cannot find it within their wit to do any better than what they have delivered to the Australian people for the last two years, and what a very poor government that has been indeed.

Mr JOHN COBB (Calare) (20:05): I rise to support the Superannuation Legislation Amendment (Trustee Governance) Bill 2015 and the bringing in of measures to improve the governance of the superannuation industry. Obviously superannuation has become one of the biggest money funds in Australia—probably is the biggest by far. It does need improving, it does need modernising and it does need to be more efficient. We just heard the shadow Treasurer say it was so perfect but it quite obviously was not. What the government is doing is meeting a need to improve the governance, to improve the efficiency and to make it a competitive industry. We have a responsibility to ensure that superannuation boards have the most experienced members and those with the right expertise to get the best outcomes for fund members. I must stress this amendment is not singling out any one sector; in fact, the changes equally apply to corporate industry public sector and retail funds. The modernisation of superannuation is necessary considering superannuation is already the second-largest asset held in Australian households. There is currently $2 trillion in super and this is projected to grow to $9 trillion by 2040. This increase is no surprise, with Australia's ageing population; in fact, it would be a worry if there were not this increase. By 2055 the number of Australians aged 65 and over is expected to double. It does require the government to ensure that the industry is going to be capable of meeting these needs and be well run in the meantime. In this case, action has been well overdue, as the current requirements are outdated and no longer reflect the size and the structure of that industry.

The changes come in response to independent reviews of the superannuation system. The Cooper review and the Financial System Inquiry recommended that superannuation trustee boards include a higher number of independent directors. The proposed changes will require all superannuation funds to have a minimum of one-third independent directors on their trustee board and an independent chair. An independent director is a person who is not a substantial shareholder of the super funds trustee or who does not have a material business relationship with the licensee and has not had one for the past three years. This definition has been broadened to take into account a person's wider personal circumstances. APRA will enforce the changes and hold the ability to determine if a person is independent. This will enable APRA to respond to situations where a person's circumstances or their capacity to exercise independent judgement is clear, but for reasons such as timing, restructures, mergers and acquisitions. This gives trustees a three-year period to make the necessary changes from the time the legislation receives royal assent.
The purpose of these changes is to ensure that Australians have the best people governing their retirement savings. The current system does not mean independent directors will provide boards with an external perspective, and it is quite obvious to all advisors that this needs to happen. Independent directors will be able to provide a check on management and conflicts of interest, and will act as a safeguard to related party interests being put ahead of member interests.

The new governance arrangements will replace existing requirements of equal representation of employer representatives and member representatives on the boards of standard employer-sponsored superannuation funds of five or more members. The 2014 Financial System Inquiry final report recommended these changes to ensure efficiency and best practice. Given the diversity of fund membership—and I think this is the whole point of this—it is more important for directors to be skilled, to be independent and to be accountable than to be representative. Their job is to make the members money, not to be representatives of the members. I think there is a not-so-subtle difference there. These changes will promote strong governance through the power of an objective source. The bill does not restrict the composition of the remaining two-thirds of board members. Boards can continue to structure themselves in a manner they believe will serve the best interests of their members.

After a lot of consultation—I know they came to see me—these proposed changes have been welcomed by various members of the industry. CHOICE echoes the government's sentiment—that having higher standards of governance will mean consumers have a secure retirement. Suncorp believes it will ultimately benefit customers as it supports competition, while the Association of Superannuation Funds says it reflects community expectations and is a positive outcome for the whole industry.

I will stress that at the moment the current system is lagging behind, and industry realignment is necessary. It is important that superannuation boards are not exempt—I stress: not exempt—from standards reflected in corporate governance principles that apply to all successful companies. It brings it into line with domestic and international best practice. The current system is largely out of step—it is based on history rather than need, and that is: the need and the interests of those who have funds within the funds system—with other corporate sectors including listed companies, banks and general insurers. All of these at a very minimum recommend a majority of independent directors with an independent chair.

There is no intention for this to be and nor is it an attack on industry funds. In actual fact, quite a number have already moved to a model that is similar to what is being proposed here today, while others have taken a constructive approach towards the changes—unlike the opposition, who seem to think that what they do cannot be fixed. Well, it can certainly be improved, and that is what is happening.

The bill delivers on the government's superannuation election commitment to align governance in superannuation more closely with corporate governance principles applicable to ASX-listed companies. The current model does not allow for accountability or transparency—in fact, it prohibits this and allows for decisions to be made that may not be in the best interests of members. The changes will ensure a stronger superannuation system to support the future retirement of Australians.

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (20:13): Quite simply, the effect of the Superannuation Legislation Amendment (Trustee Governance) Bill 2015 and the coalition
government's approach to superannuation retirement incomes is that Australians will save less for their retirement. That is the crux of the matter of this bill and the suite of other reforms that have been introduced by the Abbott-Turnbull governments to ensure that the incentives for Australians to save more for their retirement are removed, and the effect will be that they will have less in their superannuation accounts than they otherwise would have under a Labor government. Quite simply, this is dumb policy. In an environment where there are big questions about Australia's fiscal sustainability, and an environment where we have an ageing population putting more pressure on our aged-care services and more pressure on the age pension budget, to be cutting back on the amount that we are encouraging Australians to save for their retirements is simply dumb politics, and it represents this government's obsession with their ideological views being put before the interests of Australians and the Australian economy. It completely demonstrates how out of touch the Abbott-Turnbull government is.

In 2013, the Financial Services Council did the most comprehensive study and qualitative analysis of Australians' views of superannuation. It was the largest survey that has been conducted of Australians about their views of our superannuation system. The results are quite interesting. They show that a whopping 83 per cent of Australians support an increase in compulsory superannuation contributions from nine to 12 per cent. Of course, this was Labor's plan when we were in government. Labor developed a plan to ensure that Australians save more and that we take pressure off the age pension, off the aged-care system, by encouraging Australians to save more by increasing the compulsory level of superannuation contributions from nine to 12 per cent. It was a staged increase; it was not an immediate increase. It would have been completed by 2020.

What was this government's approach to that very positive policy that would have resulted in Australians having more money in their superannuation balances by 2020? The Abbott and Turnbull governments and those opposite all voted to stop that scheme going ahead. They voted to halt the increase in superannuation from nine to 12 per cent. They say they have put it on hold, but, to the Australians out there who may be listening or watching: that is complete garbage. If you think that the government is going to increase superannuation from nine to 12 per cent at any time into the future, you have rocks in your head. The government have form on those sorts of issues. Which was the last Australian government that also put a halt to compulsory superannuation contribution increases? That would be the Howard government. They encouraged Australians to save less and the Abbott-Turnbull government took up the cudgels when they came to office, once again demonstrating how out of touch they are.

The most common type of fund that Australians support and place most of their superannuation contributions into is an industry fund—a super fund that is managed cooperatively by workers and employers. The Financial Services Council survey demonstrated that 59 per cent of Australians have their superannuation savings invested in an industry fund. Why is that? Why would most Australians have their superannuation in an industry fund? There is one simple answer to that question: they are the best performing funds. They are also the ones with the lowest fees and are managed cooperatively by people who understand their circumstances—most notably fellow workers and employers from that particular industry or that particular business. They have served our economy and workers well. The result of the encouragement of industry funds in Australia has resulted in $2 trillion being invested in Australia's superannuation system, the fourth-largest pool throughout the
world of investment saving funds. For workers who may lack particular expertise in managing retirement incomes and managing investment funds, it has provided access to the best quality advice at very reasonable cost. That has proved very effective for the management of workers' retirement incomes, but it is also very effective for Australia's economy because, as I said, it has built up a very large pool of investment funds, which of course can be used, subject to trustee obligations under particular funds, as a source of investment funds for other projects throughout the country—most notably infrastructure, which is productivity-enhancing and ensures that our economy is growing. We know that industry funds are the best performing funds, we know that they are the cheapest and we know that most Australians have their retirement savings in an industry fund.

What did the mob over there do when industry funds performed so well? What did the Abbott-Turnbull government do? They introduced legislation such as this that seeks to tear that system down. They seek to meddle in the management of the most successful and best performing funds and the cheapest sector in the superannuation industry. That is the subject of this bill. That is why they are doing what they are doing with this bill. They are changing the governance of the most successful sector of the superannuation industry. Under this bill, registered superannuation entities must have a minimum of one-third independent directors and an independent chair on their board. That is something that the coalition has been pushing for many years. It is an ideological push that could harm the performance of superannuation funds and affect the retirement incomes of thousands and thousands of Australian workers. It represents, once again, the Abbott-Turnbull government putting their ideological interests ahead of the interests of Australian workers and, indeed, ahead of the interests of the health and growth of the Australian economy.

The question that needs to be asked is: why is this needed? Why has the government come up with this reform? Why is this needed when industry funds are the best performing? Why is this needed when industry funds have the lowest fees? Why is this needed when industry funds have the best returns? Recently, independent expert advice proved that, in terms of returns for members and investors, industry funds returned on average 10.2 per cent growth compared to retail funds of 9.6 per cent growth. They are also some of the safest funds in the world when it comes to the management of members' funds. There is no justification whatsoever for these reforms. At the heart of this is an ideological obsession with the fact that the coalition have never been comfortable with the notion of workers managing their own retirement incomes. They have had an ideological bent against it from the moment Paul Keating established the compulsory superannuation system in this country. It is sad and it demonstrates how out of touch the government really are. In many respects it just shows that this bill is unnecessary, because in 2013 the then Labor government introduced new governance obligations for industry superannuation funds. Those obligations require all funds, using an independent third party, to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of their board and directors, to manage and disclose conflicts of interest, to ensure all directors are fit, proper and capable of making decisions expected of them, and to regularly review their board renewal processes. APRA, the industry watchdog has robust enforcement powers and has admitted that these reforms that were introduced by Labor in 2013 are yet to be bedded down. They are still in the process of putting these reforms into action.
So there is no justification for these reforms. This bill represents a heavy-handed intervention and a 'one size fits all' approach, regardless of the superannuation fund's business model and the circumstances of its membership. It does not exactly fit with the traditional Liberal philosophy of not intervening in a market, particularly in a market where the funds that are being invested are performing very well and getting great returns for the members, and are safe.

The bill also ignores some of the major issues that exist in Australia with respect to funds management. I can recall as a senator in the past sitting on Senate committees that looked into the collapse of investment funds in Australia—investment funds such as Trio Capital, Opes Prime and others—where many workers who established their own self-managed super funds on the advice of so-called independent financial advisers lost all of their savings, with no recourse at all for any compensation or actions that recovered that lost capital, because they were outside of the industry superannuation fund system and they did not have the protection of the Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Act.

Those self-managed super funds and that poor financial advice resulted in thousands of Australians losing their retirement income. I can recall going to Wollongong and taking evidence from many of the people who lost much of their retirement savings in Trio Capital. Many of these people had worked in the coal mines or steel mills around Wollongong for their whole life and were just at the end of their working life. They received advice from so-called independent financial advisers to re-mortgage their homes so that they could invest in these schemes. So, not only did they lose their retirement savings but they lost their kids' inheritance as well. Once again, there was no recompense because they were outside of the system.

This was an issue Labor was well aware of when we were in government. That is why we instituted the Future of Financial Advice reforms. It was to tackle some of these problems of poor advice to vulnerable people. Again, what was the response of the Abbott/Turnbull government? When they came to government they sought to water down the Future of Financial Advice reforms, particularly the 'best interests' rule for ensuring that financial advisers were acting in the best interests of their clients.

That is a real issue that is still ongoing in Australia. One would think that if the coalition government were in touch they would look at it. But, once again, they have ignored it. We have had these big scandals in a number of the big banks throughout Australia in respect of their wealth management practices and the advice that has been given to individuals through their banking and finance advice services. Again, the government has ignored many of the recommendations of some of the inquiries into these issues, and instead has sought to attack the best-performing and safest aspect of the wealth management and retirement incomes investment advice system.

Finally, I want to deal with the issue of the gender gap. At the moment the average superannuation payout an Australian woman will receive when they retire is $112,600. The average for a man is $198,000. There is a massive difference in Australia at the moment in the retirement incomes of men and women. In Australia, 35 per cent of women have no superannuation at all. Furthermore, 55 per cent of women will retire with less than $25,000 in their superannuation fund.
So, what does this Liberal government do when it comes to looking at this issue of the gender imbalance in retirement savings in this country? They seek to legislate to make the problem worse. They seek to get rid of the policies that were meant to address this issue, in the low-income superannuation contribution. Low-income earners have a disincentive to save. It is built into the taxation system. The taxation system ensures that if you are a low-income worker—someone typically on less than $38,000—you will pay more tax on your superannuation that you will, effectively, on your marginal rate for earnings. That is a disincentive to working people. So, Labor introduced an effective tax credit to ensure the disincentive was removed. This government has scrapped that tax credit: they have gotten rid of the low-income superannuation contribution.

Effectively, what they have done is put a tax increase on three and a half million of the lowest paid workers in the country, two million of whom are women. So what we are going to see is women and low-income workers save less for their retirement, putting more pressure on the budget in the future and more pressure on the aged care system. It is dumb politics and that is why this bill must be opposed.

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (20:28): I rise to support the Superannuation Legislation Amendment (Trustee Governance) Bill 2015. The bill delivers on an election commitment to improve governance in the superannuation industry. It updates laws enacted at an earlier time in the evolution of Australia's superannuation system, when the industry was far newer and far smaller than it is today.

These days, the superannuation industry has more than $2 trillion in assets under management, a figure equivalent to 120 per cent of Australia's GDP. As the former minister noted in introducing the bill, this figure is expected to grow to $9 trillion by 2040. It is an industry in which most of us have a stake. For many Australians, their superannuation fund is their largest single investment outside the family home. This bill affords the protection of a governance regime that will better safeguard the superannuation accounts of all Australians. In light of the current size and anticipated future growth of the industry, it is both reasonable and necessary to bring governance requirements for all superannuation funds up to best-practice standards and, importantly, in line with those expected of corporate superannuation funds and Australian Stock Exchange listed companies.

This bill does just that. It modernises board requirements to ensure that super fund boards represent the broad range of skill sets required to manage a sophisticated investment vehicle. At present, corporate and industry super funds are required to have equal numbers of employers and employees or member representatives. However, the number of independent directors is currently limited to one in the absence of Australian Prudential Regulation Authority one-off approval. This bill will ease limitations on the number of independent directors and will instead require superannuation trustee boards to have a minimum of one-third independent directors as well as an independent chair. This is not an unreasonable requirement. Indeed, other corporate sectors such as listed companies, banks and general insurers all require, as a minimum, a majority of independent directors with an independent chairman. It is also international best practice in many countries overseas. No one particular sector of the industry is targeted by this bill, as the changes apply equally to all corporate, industry, public sector and retail funds.
The origins of this bill can be traced back several years to the recommendations of the 2010 Cooper review, commissioned by the former government. That review recommended that superannuation trustee boards include a higher number of independent directors. The findings of the Cooper review were reflected in the more recent financial system inquiry, which came to similar conclusions. The superannuation industry has had several years to consider the merits of this proposal.

Positive feedback for the reforms has come from a diverse range of organisations and industry bodies such as Choice, National Seniors Australia, the Association of Financial Advisers, the Association of Superannuation Funds of Australia, the Financial Services Council, the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Australian Institute of Company Directors, the Business Council of Australia, chartered accountants, the Council of Small Business Australia and the Governance Institute. Industry players themselves have also been supportive, including BT Financial Group, Qantas Super, First State Super, LGsuper, Mercer, Suncorp, Sunsuper, UniSuper and VicSuper—to name just a few.

It is clear that the proposed reforms have support from a broad cross-section of the industry and from organisations representing interest groups that would be affected by this change to the industry. Indeed, in some respects this bill merely represents government catching up with a position that the industry has already embraced and is moving towards. Industry super funds such as Catholic Super, First State Super, Hostplus, Prime Super, UniSuper and VicSuper are already moving constructively towards incorporating the changes. In doing so, there is broad recognition that improving corporate governance is a goal worth pursuing. Irrespective of performance, independent of any consideration of investor return, super funds are recognising that their board structures need to evolve. They recognise that everyday investors need to have full confidence that the board has their best interests at heart and has the skill and capacity to act in their interests.

I note with interest that other commentators have recognised the need for change. Members opposite may be interested in the comments of former Australian Workers' Union boss Paul Howes, who noted:

Equal representation has been a success but the evolution of the super industry is important and I can't see anything negative in having more independents on boards.

We know from experience that the parliamentary Labor Party has a long record of heeding the words of Mr Howes. In fact, I remember a certain evening back in 2010 when a mere appearance by Mr Howes in a late-night ABC interview was enough to bring down a Labor administration. To those opposite, I urge them to heed his words again. This time, I can assure them they will not live to regret it. Mr Howes's support serves to further highlight the point that unions have nothing to fear from these reforms.

Industry super funds with a commitment to good corporate governance have nothing to fear from these reforms. The reforms contained in this bill protect the interests of everyday Australians with superannuation accounts. They will improve confidence in the corporate governance arrangements of superannuation funds, and they bring Australian superannuation funds in line with national and international best practice. This bill is worthy of the support of all members in this place and I encourage them to get behind it. I commend this bill to the House.
Mr SUKKAR (Deakin) (20:35): It is wonderful to be able to speak in favour of the Superannuation Legislation Amendment (Trustee Governance) Bill 2015 tonight. We have heard a lot of contributions from those opposite and it is quite embarrassing, really, that what should be an uncontroversial change to our superannuation arrangements is being vehemently opposed by those opposite because it does not accord with the wishes of their union paymasters. All we want to do is improve the governance arrangements for super fund boards to ensure that they meet the highest standards of governance. With $2 trillion under management, rising to $9 trillion under management, why wouldn't we want the highest governance arrangements applying to those funds?

The amendments in this bill, as highlighted by previous speakers, are not about singling out any one sector. The changes apply equally to corporate, industry, public sector and retail funds. The changes will not apply, though, to self-managed super funds. As I said, superannuation represents $2 trillion and is the largest asset held by Australian households. In our view, the appropriate provision of independent directors on trustee boards is a vital step towards strengthening the super system. In our view, independent directors bring to a board a dispassionate perspective, enabling the board to benefit from a diversity of views and of course providing a check on management recommendations and conflicts of interest. Therefore, the presence of a greater number of independents on super fund boards will increase the accountability of management and strengthen the oversight of funds, helping to ensure that related party interests are not put ahead of members' interests.

The new governance arrangements in schedule 1 will replace the existing requirements in part 9 of the SIS Act that require equal representation of employer representatives and member representatives on the boards of standard employer sponsored superannuation funds of five or more members. In this respect, the previous government's 2010 super system review, the Cooper review, recommended that the SIS Act be amended so that equal representation should no longer be mandatory. In addition, the Cooper review noted that the presence of independent directors on boards is best practice in corporate governance. The Cooper review examined equal representation and found that:

... changes in the industry over time and certain implementation practices mean that equal representation no longer seems to achieve its original ... objective.

The 2014 financial system inquiry's final report concluded that independent directors on all superannuation trustee boards promote good governance by bringing an objective perspective to issues the board considers and holding other directors accountable for their conduct. In addition, independent directors allow for an increased accountability of decisions made by other directors who may have conflicting interests.

This bill delivers, therefore, on the government's superannuation governance election commitment to align governance in superannuation more closely with the corporate governance principles that we all accept and that are applicable to ASX listed companies, for example. The bill does not restrict the composition of the remaining two thirds of board members. The government considers that it is appropriate to leave its boards to structure themselves in a manner they believe will serve their members' best interests. Relevantly, to support the reforms, the bill provides APRA with the power to make determinations as to whether a person is independent or not. This will enable APRA to respond to situations in which a person's circumstances and his or her capacity to exercise independent judgement is...
clear but, for reasons of perhaps timing, restructures and mergers and acquisitions, that has changed.

The amendments will take effect from the date of this bill receiving royal assent, with a three-year transition period to allow existing super fund boards to comply with the new requirements. Any new fund licensed by APRA after the date of royal assent will need to comply with the new requirements from the time they are licensed.

A number of stakeholder groups support these proposed changes. As I said at the beginning, these should be uncontroversial, and I would think they should receive support on both sides of the House. For example, the Association of Superannuation Funds of Australia said:

The government's release of draft legislation, which will require boards of superannuation funds to be comprised of at least one-third independent directors … is a positive outcome for superannuation.

That is the Association of Superannuation Funds of Australia. They also said:

As a minimum, there must be the flexibility to appoint directors who have the right skills, experience and knowledge, as well as cultural fit.

Also, the Council of Small Business Australia said:

The fact that the directors are, in the great majority, chosen firstly on where they work rather than what skills and experience they have creates question marks around whether the best model of governance is in place. This proposed change creates improved transparency and an opportunity for the boards to improve their approach to collecting funds and dealing with people in the supply chain.

It is therefore our view that these changes, if they are good enough for governance arrangements for our top ASX listed companies and good enough governance arrangements for all listed companies around the world, then they should be good enough for our superannuation industry. It does not stop any fund from appointing directors with relevant experience who are the best people to be entrusted with the decisions to properly invest Australians' superannuation savings.

I repeat: with our superannuation savings pool reaching $9 trillion, there is no room for errors. The government has to take an abundance of caution in ensuring that the composition of all our boards has the best interests of their members at heart but, more importantly—because I am sure they do have the best interests of their members at heart—that there is the requisite balance of skills on those boards to make the best investment decisions. With a pool of savings that large, it is incumbent on government to ensure that Australians are getting the best return for their retirement. I therefore will not repeat the contributions of those who have gone before me, and I commend the bill to the House.

Dr CHALMERS (Rankin) (20:44): Thank you for this opportunity to speak on the Superannuation Legislation Amendment (Trustee Governance) Bill 2015. Superannuation is a subject that I have long held an interest in, and I am pleased now to be able to represent this policy area from our side of the House.

The government tries to claim that this bill is about improving the performance and accountability of superannuation funds, but in actual fact the bill represents nothing more than a change to our superannuation system, which is badly motivated, ideologically driven and unwarranted.
I have personally the greatest respect for the retail funds and the banks, but it is an observable fact that the industry super funds are among the most successful and highest-performing funds in the sector year on year. I think it is important when we debate these important issues that we do not descend into two warring tribes—the retail funds on one side; the industry funds on the other—replicated in this House and in the other chamber. It is important that we deal in the facts.

I am just as interested in the academic and independent analysis of this situation as I am in either side of the argument. I am interested in Ian Ramsay from Melbourne university who said:

Skills, expertise, and experience were more relevant criteria than 'independence' per se.

I am interested in Sam Wylie from the Melbourne Business School who said:

The industry fund sector as a whole has been well governed and has delivered tremendous value to its members.

I am interested in what Fiona Reynolds had to say from the Australian Institute of Superannuation Trustees. She said:

We think there should be flexibility in the system that allows you to appoint independents if you want, but you are not forced to.

The sad reality here is that the government is attacking a model that works. It is seeking to dismantle industry super funds' successful representative model of governance, which has seen them have higher returns for their members who retire more comfortably as a result—and that is the most important thing. In other words, as my colleague the member for McMahon said, they are proposing a solution to a problem that does not exist.

This ideological crusade was started by the member for Kooyong in his time as Assistant Treasurer, and it has been disappointing to see the new Assistant Treasurer continue in this way. Labor will support policies that make our superannuation system stronger, fairer and more sustainable. This bill will achieve none of those goals. For this reason, as my colleagues have indicated, we will be opposing this bill in its entirety. We call on other members—particularly, those on the crossbench in the other place—to support the representative model for industry super funds as well, because it works.

Members here know that Australia's superannuation system is the envy of the world—not just a proud Labor achievement but a proud national achievement. The total assets of Australian superannuation funds, as my colleague on the other side of the House mentioned, are more than $2 trillion as at the end of June this year. This was a 9.9 per cent increase on the same time last year.

Millions of Australians will rely on these funds to fully or partially finance their retirements. This fact alone is enough for us to take the issue of superannuation governance very seriously. We must ensure that our superannuation funds continue to perform and provide for Australian people as they entire retirement.

That is why we already have very strong regulatory oversight of superannuation funds by APRA. APRA has the power to set and enforce prudential standards for superannuation funds. They have set minimum foundations for good governance of superannuation entities, requirements for super funds to make sure that directors are fit and proper and manage conflicts of interest effectively.
The existing prudential standards are relatively new, having come into effect from July 2013. Importantly, super funds are required to continuously report on the composition of their boards, and whether boards and directors have the required mix of expertise and skills—something that both sides can agree is important. These regulatory requirements are what APRA has determined to be appropriate for superannuation funds to ensure good governance, and we strongly support their efforts and these measures.

Most industry super funds go above and beyond APRA's regulatory measures. In addition, the Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Act 1993 requires super funds to have equal representation of employer and employee groups among their trustees, or to have a policy committee comprising equal numbers of employer and member representatives. That is the so-called representative model.

Many analysts point to the representative model of super fund governance as one of the key factors of the success of our superannuation system. Funds with representative directors perform substantially better than retail funds, as I have said. That is a fact that cannot be disputed by anyone in this debate. By the numbers, the average performance of industry funds for the year was 10.2 per cent compared to 9.6 per cent for retail funds. Industry funds are also more likely to change asset allocations more often and put more money into unlisted investments like infrastructure—another welcome practice.

According to APRA, in March this year industry funds had six per cent of their funds in unlisted equity, seven per cent in infrastructure and seven per cent in unlisted property. In comparison, retail funds had three per cent in unlisted equity, one per cent in infrastructure and two per cent in unlisted property.

One of the main reasons given for this disparity is that representative industry funds' trustees are more likely to feel obliged to their members to get the best possible returns. The representative model has been proven a success for Australian industry funds, and there has been no cause to make substantial changes to the model.

The government has proposed changes which will radically change the face of the Australian superannuation system. There are a few key components of the government's amendments. Others have dealt with them in detail; I will mention them briefly: one-third of super boards must fit their definition of an 'independent director'; the chair must be independent; the equal representation requirement has been entirely removed; and they have introduced an 'if not, why not' disclosure of majority independent directors.

As I said, we will be opposing all of these amendments to the act for these five reasons: one, there is no evidence in favour of independent directors; two, the current representative model is working well, as I said; three, there are governance safeguards in place already; four, the proposed changes are overly prescriptive; and, five, the amendments will cost millions of dollars for fund members.

When it comes to no evidence for independence, the government has not been able to stack up the claim that maintaining independent directors on not-for-profit superannuation funds would improve fund performance. A study looking at the governance and performance of APRA-regulated funds found no evidence that board independence and chairman independence affect that performance.
Empirical research on American public pension funds indicates that the proportion of outside trustees on the board has no significant relationship with funds’ excess outperformance. The government have just asserted that independent directors are better. They have made an ideological case but not a case based on fact or observation or in the best interests of the members of the funds, which should be our main concern. They have not provided evidence in their speeches or in the explanatory memorandum that these changes are necessary.

That is because, as I said before, the representative model is working. This is a solution to a problem that does not exist. Of Chant West's top 10 performing superannuation funds for the last financial year, eight of them were not-for-profit funds. These are under attack. The Grattan Institute found that not-for-profit funds have lower fees and higher returns across a variety of investment options. There is so much evidence of this. The McKell Institute found a direct relationship between the representative boards—the model that is being attacked—and higher returns. Why would we legislate to ban a model that is working for the Australian people?

There are already substantial safeguards and regulations in place in the hands of the good people at APRA. Superannuation fund members are already protected by a system of APRA regulation. APRA have the power to intervene where they do not believe that a super fund has the ability or willingness to rectify serious weaknesses. They have the power to suspend or remove a director of a superannuation fund. There is just no reason to mandate a fixed regulatory structure when APRA already have the power to intervene when there are issues.

These changes are overly prescriptive. They do not take into account the differences between superannuation funds. They do not give superannuation funds the ability to determine the ways that best fit their model and their members. Super funds are not all the same. They should not necessarily be treated in the same way either.

Governance experts around the world agree that there are a complex set of factors that determine what makes up a good board. In 2012, the Productivity Commission said in their report on default superannuation funds in modern awards that there is 'a lack of compelling evidence to suggest that any one model of board structure should be viewed as clearly preferable in all cases'. Those opposite come in here and quote the PC to us all the time. This is the Productivity Commission saying that there is no evidence that one type of board structure is better than another in all cases.

On top of that, a whole lot of qualified and experienced people could be disqualified from being independent directors under the government's model. For instance, directors would be unable to serve on the boards of wholly owned subsidiaries of super funds, even where the subsidiary is established only to serve the interests of the fund and for the profit of members. No employee or employee representatives will be able to serve as a chair of a board at all, even when they are the most qualified and suitable person for the job. That is not just a thing about employee representatives but about employers as well. They will be disqualified, even if they are the best for the job. This bill seeks to make radical changes to the superannuation legislation which deprive APRA and individual funds the right to determine the suitability of boards.

Finally, the changes will be costly. The amendments to the superannuation legislation will be costly for governments but also for the individual members of a superannuation fund. The
explanatory memorandum to the bill suggests that these measures will cost government $8.5 million in start-up costs and a further $12.3 million in ongoing costs annually. These costs understate the real impact that the amendments will have on the broader superannuation sector. Immediately after this legislation is in force there will be costs associated with finding new directors, including search costs, due diligence, induction and training. Industry data has also found that the premium for independent chairs, which is something like $41,000 on average, is 70 per cent higher than for representative chairs, averaging something like $24,000. These salary costs could be even higher, with some professional directors currently on the boards of retail funds being paid in excess of $100,000.

Industry Super Australia has calculated that the director churn resulting from the government's new rules for super boards, if they get up, could be up to $168 million. These costs will have to be borne by fund members, meaning the changes will cost the retirement funds of average Australians. Average Australians out there in Middle Australia should not have to pay higher fees on their super because of this government's ideological bent against representative super funds.

As I said, this side of the House will be opposing the Superannuation Legislation Amendment (Trustee Governance) Bill 2015. The representative model used by industry super funds today is part of what makes them the largest and most successful funds around the world and in a superannuation system that is, as I said, the envy of the world. It was an economic policy creation and innovation of the Australian people that was proudly made by the Australian Labor Party, which represented them at the time and represents them now. We are proud of this creation. We should be looking for ways to make it stronger, fairer and more sustainable, not conducting this kind of ideological crusade that says that anything that involves employee and employer organisations working together is somehow bad.

This legislation is badly motivated and poorly designed. We want to make policy. We want to work with anyone who wants to work with us to make the superannuation system better and not with people who want to divide and diminish it, with the ultimate costs being borne by the Australian people. The bill fails to acknowledge the real differences between super funds and their ability to determine their own governance procedures in the interest of members, under the watchful eye of APRA. Labor is taking the view on this issue, 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it.'

Mr Fletcher interjecting—

Dr CHALMERS: The cranky member for Bradfield sits at the table and makes our arguments for us, as so many others on that side have made our arguments for us. Every time he looks up from his comics and opens his mouth he reveals what this is. It is just a cranky, ideological crusade by a government that is a leopard that has not changed its spots. They are still the same as they were before their leadership changed hands. They still have the same policy to diminish super in this country and to use the Australian government in the House of Representatives to conduct this ideological crusade. My message to the government is that the ideological crusade that they are pursuing should be ditched. They should own up to the evidence that the representative super model is working and does not need to be changed. (Time expired)

Debate interrupted.
ADJOURNMENT

The SPEAKER (20:59): It being almost 9 pm, I propose the question:
That the House do now adjourn.

Mobile Black Spot Program

Mr MITCHELL (McEwen—Second Deputy Speaker) (20:59): I rise to once again discuss an important issue affecting a large number of people in the electorate of McEwen. This is the issue of mobile black spots. This is not the first time I have talked on this issue and it will not be the last, unfortunately. A number of communities in my electorate of McEwen have been identified as high-risk areas for bushfire in the state of Victoria. A large part of my electorate has felt the brunt of bushfires over the 10 years, as has yours, Mr Speaker. We have identified more than 70 mobile black spots in these areas, and when we say ‘mobile black spots’, we are talking about the areas that have little or no mobile reception. We are talking about people being unable to receive the urgent emergency messages the CFA sends out.

Within the last few weeks, communities in McEwen—in Lancefield, Benloch and Cobaw—have already experienced the devastation and terror of bushfires, and we are not in the worst part of the season just yet. I spent time at Benloch the other weekend helping people get information they needed while they were at the evacuation centres. One of the things that people repeatedly told me was how the lack of real-time communication in these areas meant they were not sure when or how to put their fire escape plans into action.

The FireReady app, a bushfire awareness tool put in place following the Black Saturday bushfires, could not be used by some of the residents of Lancefield. Despite what the Minister for Communications tries to get everyone to believe, this is because of the mobile black spots. The minister told ABC News last week that the communities I have consistently been fighting for—the communities where houses burnt down in the bushfires in the last two weeks—did not qualify for funding under the Liberal government's Mobile Black Spot program. Basically, he is telling these residents and those in surrounding communities that have also been affected by fire—and are continuing to rebuild from the Black Saturday fires, in particular—that their safety and their communication needs do not matter.

Let's take a look at the government's Mobile Black Spot program. In its consultation phase, this program was all about mobile coverage—extending the existing coverage in regional areas and increasing competition between the telcos by giving regional consumers a choice of provider. In terms of black spots, though, Australian communities have been sold out. When the program rolled out, we saw a change in name from the mobile coverage program to the Mobile Black Spot program. It probably sounded really good to the new Prime Minister and his departmental executives, but it has done nothing but mislead the people who need it most.

Out of the $100 million set aside for this program, $80 million is for existing mobile network expansion and $20 million is for mobile black spots. But before we get excited about the money for mobile black spots, it is important to know what the Department of Communications considers a black spot to be. According to its own discussion paper, the $20 million would be spent on base stations to:

… improve mobile coverage in locations with unique coverage problems such as areas with high demand for services during seasonal holiday periods.

You know where I am going with this: there are black spots, and then there are black spots.
This means that the Liberal government's Mobile Black Spot program is just weasel words. Without even considering the unique circumstances of terrain and topography that create black spots in my natural-disaster-prone and bushfire-prone electorate, the Liberal government believes that mobile base stations for ski fields are more important. In the meantime, real black spots in electorates like McEwen struggle to be included and recognised in both the Mobile Black Spot and NBN rollout programs. Instead, this government believes that rolling out a large number of base stations in electorates held by National and Liberal representatives is, compared to other electorates, a great return for the community.

The recent Lancefield-Cobaw bushfire was not of the same scale as other ones that we have had, thankfully. But we expect this year's bushfire season to be pretty bad. So what are we doing about it? The communities in my electorate can rely on me to keep working with the telcos, the CFA, local government and businesses—and even the insurance agencies—to try to prepare our communities for the fire season ahead. Unlike the Liberal government, I know these communities and the risk they are facing. Whether it is the use of cells on wheels or other infrastructure options, I will be investigating options to ensure that the bushfire warnings and any evacuation messages can be received by the people who need them most.

If I could provide some advice to the Minister for Communications, it would be this: do not try to hoodwink the Australian public. You cannot have a program on mobile black spots and then turn a blind eye to where they really are. If you do, call the program what it is: base stations for ski field selfies.

Israel: Terrorist Attacks

Mr SUKKAR (Deakin) (21:04): I rise this evening with the grim duty of drawing the attention of this House to a disturbing speech recently delivered in the Gaza Strip at the Al-Abrar Mosque. On 9 October, a Palestinian cleric stood at the pulpit and delivered his sermon following the usual Friday prayers. But this was no ordinary sermon. The cleric, Muhammad Salah, was brandishing a large knife throughout his speech. He was urging his followers to go out and kill Jews at random—men, women and children—not only in the West Bank but also in Israel itself, including Jerusalem.

'Form stabbing squads,' he cried out. 'We don't want just a single stabber. … Attack in threes and fours. Some should restrain the victim, while others attack him with axes and butcher knives. … Cut them into body parts.' He listed Israeli cities where they are to strike: Afula, Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

Almost immediately, the people of Israel felt the full impact of these chilling words. In Afula, a city in the Galilee region, a young woman stabbed a security guard at a bus station. In Jerusalem, ghastly footage has emerged of a Palestinian man driving at full speed, mounting the curb and ramming his car into two traditionally dressed religious Jews standing at a bus stop. The impact is quite horrific. The driver then exits the vehicle armed with a cleaver and proceeds to hack one of the men to death.

Also in Jerusalem, a 13-year-old Jewish boy was filmed by security cameras leaving a convenience store and getting on his bike to return home—a scene that could be depicted in any Australian city or town. Then we see two Palestinian boys, just teenagers themselves, attack the boy and stab him repeatedly until he collapses. The boy remains in hospital in a critical condition.
It would be foolish to pretend that the words of Muhammad Salah can be dismissed as empty rhetoric. For his followers they were commands to be obeyed with merciless and fanatical brutality. His words are not the only words of incitement that have poisoned the minds of the Palestinian people. Palestinian President Abbas, who supposedly represents the more moderate Palestinian factions, told his people:

*Every drop of blood spilled in Jerusalem is pure, every shahid [martyr] will reach paradise, and every injured person will be rewarded by God.*

After Abbas uttered these vile statements, a young Jewish couple travelling in a car were ambushed on the road by Palestinian terrorists and shot dead in front of their four terrified children, who were in the back seat. We have seen in our own country the terrible impact of radicalisation and incitement. It poisons the minds of our youth and fills their heads with lurid fantasies and conspiracy theories, which are then backed by calls to commit ghastly crimes. In times of trauma and crisis such as this, it is imperative that opinion makers, be they journalists or politicians, speak the truth and demonstrate moral clarity. Those who seek to justify the deaths of innocent Israelis by blaming them on settlements or events in Gaza should be utterly ashamed of themselves.

Muhammad Salah, standing at the pulpit with his knife in Gaza, is a disgrace to men and women of the cloth everywhere, a disgrace to religion and a disgrace to humanity. His motivations are clear. He does not speak of settlements or blockades. No political outcome or policy change or concession by the Israelis will satisfy him. The issue is religious supremacism—the perverse, violent and lethal ideology which men like Salah espouse and boys like Farhad Jabar in Parramatta and the young men in Jerusalem take as their creed.

Given these terrible atrocities, I want to take this opportunity to convey my sincerest condolences to the people of Israel and their grieving families in the Australian Jewish community. They can certainly count on the compassion and understanding of this government at such a difficult time.

**Building Community Resilience**

**Mr DREYFUS** (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (21:09): I rise to speak on the importance of effective Building Community Resilience programs to keeping Australians safe and secure from the threat of terrorism. It is the first duty of the Commonwealth government to ensure the safety of Australian citizens from all threats, both foreign and domestic. In pursuing this duty, unlike other nations, Australia has a strong history of bipartisan cooperation on matters of national security and counter-terrorism. Matters relating to the safety of our citizens should remain above the cut and thrust of political debate and free of partisan rancour. Considered, measured debate has been—with some exceptions—a feature of our parliamentary democracy when it comes to national security, and I hope that this tradition continues.

We have been reminded by the tragic events last year in Endeavour Hills in Melbourne and in Martin Place, as well as the recent murder in Parramatta, that we must as a nation remain vigilant to the threat of terrorism. Programs which attempt to prevent radicalisation are as important as the operations carried out by our law enforcement agencies to keep Australia safe. It is critical that our response to the threat of terrorism does not seek to divide the Australian community or leave any particular racial, religious or social group to feel
marginalised or isolated in their own nation. Our strength and success as a country have always been drawn from our multicultural character—we are one, though we are many.

I am honoured to represent one of the most culturally diverse electorates in Australia. Recognition of, and pride in, the vibrancy of Australian society must remain a foundational principle in the design of any policies which aim to reduce the threat of domestic terrorism. Regrettably, recent years have borne witness to occasional bursts of inflammatory language or gestures which have only heightened tensions at a time when it would have been more responsible to reassure the community and promote harmony. The government's attempt to repeal section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975, in the name of protecting free speech, was misguided and unnecessary and only reinforced perceptions in the Muslim community of an 'us versus them' mentality having been adopted by the Liberal government. Assertions that 'people have a right to be bigots' and calls to 'join Team Australia' by the Attorney-General and the former Prime Minister respectively only did further damage.

We were pleased, on this side of the House, to see the Liberal government drop its plans to repeal section 18C, as a consequence of a protracted community-led campaign. Despite the protestations of ideological purists, section 18C has for more than 20 years embodied Australia's condemnation of racial vilification and given protection to our society from the poisonous effects of hate speech. Section 18C implements Australia's obligation under international human rights law to prohibit racial hate speech. It has served Australia well and is part of a framework of laws and social norms which have contributed to our success as a peaceful, multicultural nation. It is unfortunate that there remain a group of backbench Liberal senators who are persisting with a parliamentary attempt to weaken section 18C.

While the change in leadership of the government has largely been a change of style and not substance across the overwhelming majority of government policies, we have been pleased to see a change in tone from our national leadership. Labor welcomes the less confrontational and less aggressive approach that has been adopted by the Prime Minister. In responding to the recent shooting in Parramatta, the Prime Minister stated:

Respect for each other, respect for our country, respect for our shared values, these are the things that make this country one of the most successful countries in the world, as a multicultural country in particular.

Labor wholeheartedly agrees with the Prime Minister's sentiments in this respect.

Families, in particular, are central to an effective solution for preventing radicalisation. As the Leader of the Opposition has previously stated, we cannot expect our police forces alone to arrest their way out of this challenge. We have to work alongside the families of those who risk being exposed to dangerous ideologies if we are to design a comprehensive strategy. I hope the government will make strengthening our communities a priority, harnessing our nation's cultural diversity as an asset in the fight against radicalisation, rather than unnecessarily exploiting divisions. It is only by reaching out and building community cohesion over the long term that Australia can avert the horrors of domestic terrorism.

Hume Electorate: Broadband

Mr TAYLOR (Hume) (21:14): In regional communities, there has been healthy scepticism about the National Broadband Network. Will it ever arrive? Is it any good? What about the small centres and more remote properties? With the announcement of the NBN
three-year rollout I, like many other regional MPs, am able to outline to local communities not only when it is coming but also exactly the type of technology it is, what it means and how many people will benefit.

For communities in Hume the next three years will deliver access to fast, reliable broadband internet for everyone. Satellite broadband will be a crucial part of the technology mix, and I will get to that in a moment. The fixed line and fixed wireless network will deliver fast access to broadband for 42,000 premises in Hume in the next three years, both businesses and homes. Fixed wireless towers have already been activated in many locations across the Cowra and Young districts and coverage from these towers is stretching into parts of neighbouring shires, including Boorowa, Weddin, Harden, Cootamundra and Upper Lachlan.

John Roberts, near Darbys Falls, connected to the NBN via the Mount McDonald tower, which was switched on last month. He said his family has not looked back and the speeds are incredible. In Yass and Bowning, towers will be activated next month—November—two further towers are being built at Mount Manton and Binalong will be switched on early next year. NBN towers are also being built at Coota, Marulan, Tallong and Wingello, north of Bundanoon, and towers in the Wollondilly shire will provide access to a huge number of small communities.

In total, fixed wireless will bring fast broadband access to almost 4,000 Hume residents. The fixed line fibre rollout will start happening in Goulburn in December this year. Goulburn will be the first Hume centre to have NBN fibre fully installed. In Bundanoon, Colo Vale, Yerrinbool, Hill Top, Willow Vale and a number of other parts of the Wingecarribee shire fibre will be laid late this year and early next year, allowing 5,500 premises to connect to fast broadband.

The NBN Co website shows the Wingecarribee and Goulburn areas lit up green, indicating build preparation is underway. In Wollondilly, fibre is rolling out to The Oaks, Oakdale and Belimbla Park in the first half of 2016, connecting 1100 premises. Later next year it will come to Bargo, Buxton, Couridjah, Picton, Tahmoor, Thirlmere and Yanderra, allowing almost 7,000 premises to connect. Wilton receives fibre in the following year. Further west in Hume, Crookwell receives fibre in 2017, as does Harden Murrumburrah, Coota, Boorowa and Grenfell. For Cowra, Young, Yass, Murrumbateman and many places in the Wingecarribee shire, fibre will be laid next year.

For almost half the electorate of Hume, the fixed line and fixed wireless network will deliver access to the NBN. For the areas where fixed line and fixed wireless do not reach, the brilliant news is that new satellite connections, including satellite Sky Muster, which is now in orbit, will be available from May next year. Across the more remote, outlying areas of Hume and many farming areas, satellite broadband will be the way we deliver fast internet.

Satellite broadband is fast and reliable and, unlike past experience, we will be providing enough capacity for regional users. We have just successfully launched, as I said, the first of two new NBN satellites and these will revolutionise access for so many people in remote areas. This is the most exciting part of the NBN technology mix for me—bringing fast internet to families and businesses who had virtually given up because of their location.

Important to mention, but not part of the NBN, is 4G small-cell technology and 4GX. They have been activated to benefit a number of smaller communities across Hume, including
Dalton, Bigga, Crookwell, Tirrannaville, Couridjah, Tahmoor, Bargo and many others. The 4G small cells can boost the signal from an existing Telstra exchange. It is a relief to be receiving positive feedback from constituents who are welcoming the technology that is finally arriving. This government, as it has promised, is bringing the bush up to speed—quite literally—with the big smoke.

**Australian Public Service**

**Mr GILES (Scullin) (21:19):** I have found it a real privilege, in the two years I have been doing it, engaging with members of the Australian Public Service, encountering them in their workplaces and through the work of my office and gaining a real appreciation of the varied work they do and what it means. These are important roles, supporting members of the community—and I am most concerned with the work they do in supporting members of the communities that make up the Scullin electorate—and in building community, more generally, in sustaining our society.

It is important that those of us who hold public office recognise this and value it. This is, surely, an important consideration when we are thinking about the bargaining processes that have been underway, for quite some time, in the Australian Public Service where we have seen a stalemate seemingly unaffected by the change in Prime Minister and responsible minister. It is surely an important consideration in the community but this government, it seems, sees things differently.

Senator Cash, the new employment minister in the other place, the other day responded to questions from Senator Gallagher. In doing so, she spoke derisively of the gap between what she called the real world and the experiences of APS employees. These remarks were both deeply offensive and completely wrong. Minister, and this is important: public servants work and live in the real world. In their working lives they deal professionally with real problems and their consequences in human services, the ATO and the Australian Border Force.

The minister went on to speak of a place she referred to as 'voter land', another alleged point of distinction from the experiences of members of the Australian Public Service. Of course, public servants are voters. So are their spouses, children and parents. This is a disconnect between the minister's hard ideology and people out there doing their best to earn a living and support their families. To the Tories, it appears, or the conservative government that we have in Australia, there are good earners and bad earners to go with the leaners and the lifters. I thought the new government had done away with this language. Always, this government is dividing Australians.

While it is all well and good for the minister to speak blithely of productivity offsets—or rather her governments incapacity to engage constructively and cooperatively with its employees, if we are to be honest about it—let's place this in its context. That is not just the nature of the work in question but also, as Nadine Flood of the CPSU, has said: We're up for talking with Minister Cash about productivity in the real world, because no other Australian company would cut 17,700 jobs, expect the workers left to pick up much of the work, go through massive restructuring and then tell them that doesn't count …

The couch the attitude to the bargaining process as 'wage moderation', in the words of the minister, is much like the 'wages explosion' her predecessor imagined. Both these rhetorical
devices are equally heedless of the human—or one might say 'real world'—impacts of their decisions.

Let's think about the context and let's think about the challenging work, which is often enforcing unpopular decisions—whether it is in relation to individuals or wider public policy—and which is sometimes done at personal risk. I think of those staff engaged in work through their employment by the Australian Border Force. These are human beings who have very real concerns, having regard to the parlous state of the economy and the labour market moment, and who are living under real pressures.

These pressures are unfortunately compounded by an attack on their morale as well as their wages and conditions. These attacks are comprised by two forms: the direct attack, in the form of cuts and in the form of this regressive approach to bargaining, and attacks on the very ethos of public service. This is an attack not just on the individuals presently engaged but on the public realm. This is a deeply ideological approach that is at odds with commitments given before the election—once again. It carries broader consequences for our society if it is not turned around.

In this regard, I remember meeting a group of graduates who have recently joined the APS. I want to assure them that they have made a good choice. They are some of our best and brightest graduates. I want to give them confidence in their future prospects. On this side of the House, we do so. We do want to see, of course, a vibrant and exciting private sector. But we also want to support our world-class public service. Both sectors are part of the real world.

I take this opportunity, in this place, to acknowledge the importance and the quality of the work of the Australian Public Service and to express and place on the record my support for all who do it, often—unfortunately—in the absence of the appreciation and the respect they deserve. This appreciation and this respect could start with a fair bargaining policy.

**Broadband**

**Mr TEHAN** (Wannon) (21:24): As you know, Mr Speaker, this government is delivering different types of infrastructure right across Australia. I have spoken about what we are doing when it comes to road funding, which is a very important issue when it comes to rural and regional Australia. But what I want to talk about is what this government in doing when it comes to NBN and when it comes to delivering broadband across this great nation of ours and, in particular, into regional and rural areas.

Superfast broadband is coming to more than 42,000 homes and businesses in Wannon under an accelerated three-year rollout of the NBN—great news for the constituents of Wannon. The coalition's plan for the NBN not only will deliver the necessary speeds for businesses and homes but is proving to be a far quicker and cheaper rollout than what would have occurred under Labor. Our plan will mean homes across Wannon will have NBN in years, not decades, and at a cost which is competitive.

In two years, every section of the NBN will be either starting construction or have already begun construction in Wannon. This will mean that homes and businesses will begin to see the impact of having broadband internet access. Thanks to the accelerated plans, we are going to see the build beginning in Warrnambool in March 2016. That is 13,700 premises where the construction will start in March 2016. We go to Portland: in the third quarter of 2016, we are going to see the construction on that part start for 5,300 premises. In Hamilton, it will start in
the first quarter of 2017. In Maryborough, 4,300 will begin in the first half of 2017. This is a
great outcome for my electorate and for our nation. It is very welcome news that NBN
construction right across Wannon will have started by 2017 at the latest.

The release of the plan is a huge step forward for nbn as the company works to speed up
the rollout and make the build as cost-efficient as possible. The coalition government
understands that internet access is important for our community and will transform education,
health care and other critical online services. The coalition government recognises that
consumers want fast broadband as soon as possible. All services over the NBN will give
Wannon businesses, agricultural producers and consumers a brighter future with the potential
to be more efficient and productive. Families will also benefit from the vastly higher
bandwidth available, delivering greater access and choices for educational resources for
homework, study and entertainment.

What does this mean for people in Wannon? It means that producers can start to integrate
wireless technology with greater reliability into their production line. This will mean faster
time frames in which they can work and a stronger supply chain that can reach out to
consumers. In an age where speed in business is everything, this will mean that our farmers
and small businesses can truly harness technology to access customers in Melbourne or
Macau.

It will mean more open classrooms for our schools. Faster internet speeds will provide
access to better tools for teachers and parents. Students will be able to fulfil the demands they
have on information and harness technologies to collaborate and interact with knowledge
online. Access to opportunities, particularly for rural and regional students, will be available
more than ever before thanks to the way broadband internet speeds shrink the tyranny of
distance.

This will mean better standards of communications infrastructure for our health system.
With better access to information and an ability to share between communities at the same
speed and reliability, the NBN will provide a more mobile and responsive healthcare
system—education, health and entertainment. They are all better outcomes for the electors of
Wannon and also for our nation. I am proud to be a member of a government that is
delivering vital infrastructure to our whole nation and, in particular, regional and rural
Australia.

The SPEAKER: It being 9.30 pm, the debate is interrupted.

House adjourned at 21:30

NOTICES

The following notice was given:

Mr Irons: to move:

That this House:
(1) recognises that thousands of Australians received a spinal injection of the chemical dye
iophendylate (marked as Pantopaque and Myodil) and that many now suffer from the painful disease
adhesive arachnoiditis;

(2) acknowledges the recommendations in the report Living with the pain of adhesive arachnoiditis:
Report on the roundtable into adhesive arachnoiditis presented by the Standing Committee on Health
and Ageing on 11 February 2013 and calls for all recommendations to be implemented; and
(3) encourages all Members of Parliament to be aware of the condition and support members of their community suffering from adhesive arachnoiditis.
Ms BURKE (Chisholm) (10:30): I am extremely pleased to be here today with members of the optometry community to present this very large petition, with 18,000 signatures in all. I have had experience firsthand with optometry, obviously, with the ageing process. Also, my grandfather ran a very large optometry firm, and I am very happy to be part of this today. Optometry is a vital part of health care, providing essential primary health care and vision to an Australian population that is both ageing and experiencing an increased prevalence of eye and vision conditions. Optometrists provide the majority of primary eye and vision care in Australia. In fact, outside general practice, more Australians visit an optometrist than any other healthcare service.

For many people, a comprehensive eye assessment by an optometrist often results in the prescribing of glasses or contact lenses to restore functional sight, but optometrists contribute so much more to the prevention of vision loss and to vision health across Australia. For example, optometrists regularly detect and initiate management of a number of progressive eye conditions such as cataracts, diabetic retinopathy, macular degeneration and glaucoma. These are eye conditions which are degenerative and, without early detection, can result in permanent vision loss.

Optometrists also work closely with ophthalmologists, referring patients for eye surgery and often providing post-operative care. Optometrists also monitor and refer patients with general health conditions, such as diabetes and hypertension, which they pick up when they are doing eye checks. Many optometrists also are able to prescribe and administer scheduled medications. Despite the broad scope of practice optometrists provide and the fact that 80 per cent of all eye and vision conditions are preventable with early detection through a comprehensive eye assessment, unmanaged eye and vision conditions cost about $16 billion each year across the Australian economy.

At the beginning of 2015, there were significant changes to the optometry Medicare Benefits Schedule. These changes included a five per cent cut to all optometry consultations under Medicare and an extension to the existing freeze on indexation of the optometry Medicare Benefits Schedule through to July 2018. This disinvestment in Medicare for optometry is having a significant impact on both optometrists and patients, especially in areas of social disadvantage. For many patients who experience disadvantage, any increase in out-of-pocket costs for health care is an excessive barrier to access, and many are just not going to see the optometrist. The five per cent cut to optometry consultations is universal. There are no exemptions for the more vulnerable patients such as low-income earners, children and those in the aged-care sector. Coupled with the extensive freeze on the MBS indexation, the Medicare patient rebate for an optometry consultation is now about $10 less than it should be.

These cuts are placing many pressures on optometrists and on patients, and people are not getting the eye care they need. This will result in the future in some optometry practices
having to close, particularly in low-socioeconomic areas. I present the petition today and call on the government to reverse these cuts. I thank the Deputy Speaker for her patience.

The petition read as follows—

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

This petition of Optometry Australia, the peak professional body for optometry and with a membership base of over 90% of all registered optometrists within Australia, draws to the attention of the House the:

(i) 5 per cent cut to all scheduled optometry items under Medicare, introduced by regulation and effective 1 January 2015; and

(ii) Extension of the optometric Medicare Benefits Schedule freeze on indexation through to July 2018.

This 5 per cent cut to all optometric Medicare items threatens patient access and sustainable service provision, especially in areas of socio-economic disadvantage. Under this 5 per cent cut to scheduled fees, optometrists are now faced with the predicament to either absorb a cut in their remuneration under Medicare, despite rising practice costs, or ask their patients to pay higher out-of-pocket expenses. For many patients who already experience disadvantage, out-of-pocket costs are a significant barrier to accessing health care. Combine this with the ongoing freeze on indexation to Medicare rebates and this situation is becoming untenable for many optometrists and their patients. As optometrists are the pillars of eye care within Australia, playing a key role in the prevention and early detection of many eye and vision conditions, this disinvestment in Medicare significantly jeopardises the eye health of the broader Australian community.

We ask the House to reverse the 5 per cent cut to all scheduled optometry items under Medicare and reinstate annual indexation of the optometric Medicare Benefits Schedule.

from 18,510 citizens.

Petition received.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Griggs): I note that the Petitions Committee has approved the petition. I would also just like to acknowledge one of my constituents, Helen Summers, who is in the gallery there. Welcome, Helen.

Gilmore Electorate: Cancer

Mrs SUDMALIS (Gilmore) (10:33): Code C for cancer is such a significant term. Last week was Carers Week, and the weekend was a great follow-up. On 10 October, one of our most well-known breakfasts, Party in Pink, was once again organised by Carla Balfour, ably assisted by her husband, Scott. Around 350 pink-clad men and women joined Compassionate Hearts to fundraise for breast cancer. Natalie Donnelly from the Sutherland shire shared her inspiring cancer journey. This week, the Shoalhaven Breast Cancer Support Group’s Denise Davy is again having her fundraising breakfast in pink.

On Friday, one of the local Nowra businesses that will gain from the NBN switch-on in the CBD is Knickerboxers, owned by Rita Sullivan, who sells a whole range of products online to help mastectomy and lumpectomy breast cancer sufferers.

On Saturday night there was not one but two significant cancer fundraising events. Wilga Crehan, who for more than five years has been the driving force of the Pink Night Out in Sussex Inlet, along with help from Sussex Inlet volunteers and the dragon boaters, completely pinked the auditorium to raise money for the Sussex Inlet breast cancer support group coordinated by Robyn Lang. The MC extraordinaire was, of course, none other than Todd
Barkley, who will give any politician a hard time, but it loses its edge when he is wearing a pink dressing gown, a glittery pink wig and work boots. Todd, you're a legend!

Dick Manwarring again held the Code C for Cancer fundraiser, which is always well attended. It is a fancy dress night, and everyone gets into the spirit of giving. After Saturday night's St Georges Basin community effort, Dick will have raised more than a quarter of a million dollars, which is truly amazing.

But the most poignant part of the day was at Ulladulla Macca's for McHappy Day. While collecting donations for Ronald McDonald House I had the honour of meeting Kieren Thomas Thompson, a young seven-year-old who is having his first weekend home after four months treatment and will have to return for another eight months. This bright eyed, friendly young man has a brain cancer that is unique—so unique that this aggressive tumour does not even have a name. The family is amazing. Warren and Sue, Kieren's mum and dad, are just plain wonderful. His sister, Emily, and brothers, Jason and Tiger, gather around him, shining like a beacon of courage and hope. Code C is not just for cancer; it is about courage for the patient, the family and the community all caring enough to have courage to do something about it, to raise money, to be there to support their family members.

This weekend was also the Ulladulla Relay for life. Congrats to Cas Bollen, David Johnson and the whole of the committee for all of their work. They had dressed up people doing races. They had a number of great bands there. Everybody was having a good time raising lots of money for this amazing cause.

This coming weekend if the Kiama Relay for Life, where we will have a team on the ground. Coral Barrott, Mardi Cross and their committee have done a fabulous job getting it all together, and I can only say to every person who has anything to do with cancer at all: it is the most amazing experience trying to help somebody.

Kieren, I wish you and your family well, because it is just very hard for them all.

Deafblindness

Ms ROWLAND (Greenway) (10:37): I rise to recognise the dignity and resolve of all people living with deafblindness in Australia and to renew our nation's promise of equality and opportunity for all our citizens.

According to the Australian Deafblind Council, deafblindness is defined as 'a unique and isolating sensory disability resulting from the combination of both hearing and vision loss or impairment which significantly affects communication, socialisation, mobility and daily living'. It is estimated that there are currently over 330,000 Australians with deafblindness, of whom 98 per cent are 65 years or older, and it is projected that by 2050 over one million Australians will be deafblind. They are our sons and daughters, our parents and grandparents, and our friends and neighbours, and we must do all we can to empower them in all aspects of their lives.

I recently met with a deafblind constituent of mine, Mr Carleeta Manser, and was struck by her courage and determination to obtain her fundamental right to full inclusion and participation in our society. The day that she came to see me in my electorate in Seven Hills was very hot, and she explained to me through interpreter that she would love just to be able to go to the pool, but to be able to go to a public pool she needs not only an assistant but also an interpreter just to be with her, as well as how debilitating it is for her to feel trapped. Her
husband passed away some years ago, and her situation with regard to being able to get out into the community has simply deteriorated.

I share her frustration at our nation's failure to recognise the specific needs of her condition. This has resulted in the continued marginalisation of deafblind people. Indeed, although the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities gives recognition to deafblindness as a unique and isolating disability in its own right, for far too long in Australia it has been poorly understood and viewed as simply the combination of vision and hearing loss. What makes it even worse, as Carleeta explained to me, is that, because she cannot talk, people assume that she has a mental disability rather than deafblindness. This just compounds the frustration.

Consequently, Australians who are deafblind have been largely supported by generic or single-sensory disability services which are ineffective in meeting their complex needs. It is worth noting that, in other developed nations such as the United Kingdom, governments provide support to develop specialised and structured advocacy systems to assist with and address the barriers affecting deafblind people in order to maintain their independence and enable community engagement. In contrast, here in Australia, despite the enormous promise and potential of the NDIS, the Australian Deafblind Council was moved to note earlier this year:

The Australian Government has not engaged with ... the deafblind community ... to have access to advocacy services and enable quality standards of service delivery within the NDIS.

If we reflect on these realities, I ask: can we honestly say that as a nation we are meeting our obligation? Can we claim that we are all doing everything we can to give Australians a fair go?

Dunkley Electorate: Mornington Peninsula Youth Hub

Mr BILLSON (Dunkley) (10:40): I rise to share my optimism, hope and aspirations for the young people of the Dunkley community. As I move around the electorate, I cannot help but be inspired by young people. There is this delicious world of possibilities out there, but it is our task to help them navigate, prepare for and take advantage of those changes. You might be aware of my education in a former housing commission area; I am surrounded by gifted people in all walks of life, in all parts and in all facets of our community. But not all have the aspiration, the confidence and the support to achieve their best selves. That is something I continue to focus on.

Your postcode does not determine your potential. You are able to make the best of this great world out there, wherever you come from, whatever your life's journey and wherever you sit—on the good fortune side of the street or otherwise. But it is important for people to turn up. I always emphasise the point: the world is run by people who turn up. You need to get involved, to contribute, to show what you are capable of doing and to learn and benefit from those around you. That is why I am so excited that, in a few short weeks, I will be opening the Mornington youth hub, a focal point for the northern Mornington Peninsula, where all service providers can come together—a one-stop shop, a welcoming place for young people not only to draw out what the opportunities might be for their future but also to overcome some challenges and obstacles they may face.
One of the organisations that will be making use of this very exciting facility is headspace, the National Youth Mental Health Foundation. They do great work, and I love what they do. They have the Timebank program, where young people who might be detached from the mainstream can go out and get amongst volunteering opportunities, to expand and explore their own capacity, and as a result of turning up they are rewarded with points, and those points go in the bank. Those points can be redeemed for a number of things—cheaper visits to Maccas's, maybe the cinema, bowling—all those sorts of things that are socially and in a leisure sense quite attractive. But most are not using the points for that purpose; what they are doing is warehousing those points for the ultimate prize, the ultimate reward—that is, a work placement.

Young people want the chance to show what they are capable of doing, to develop their capacity and what they have in their kitbag and to be able to validate and verify that for others. That is why this program is so important. That is why Citibank, the US financial services firm, has come to Frankston, to bring some money, in US dollars—so we like the exchange rate being where it is—to help work with those that are detached from the mainstream of our community, to give them the foundations and confidence to make the very best of their lives. This is the story of our community. This is the ambition for my work as their local advocate. But we are looking for more people to help us.

Local businesses, come on! Come forward and offer a work placement opportunity. Big corporates wanting to do something worthwhile and virtuous, get behind these programs. I am on the hunt for sponsors. I am happy to talk to anyone. This is about giving our young people their very best chance to be their best selves. That is what gets me out of bed every day.

Ms CLAYDON (Newcastle) (10:43): The Federal Circuit Court is under considerable stress across Australia. There are 65 Federal Circuit Court judges, but currently there are only 61. As judges retire, they are not being replaced. This has major implications for the judicial system and for my electorate of Newcastle in particular. On 30 June this year Judge Coakes retired. He was one of three Federal Circuit Court judges in Newcastle, where the bulk of cases are family law matters.

Make no mistake: the government was well aware of the judge's plans to retire at least 18 months prior, yet the Attorney-General has consistently failed to name a successor, despite ongoing pleas from the legal profession and the broader community of Newcastle. With just two judges left, delays for cases to even be mentioned in the Newcastle court have stretched from six weeks to eight weeks to more than four months. This has enormous impacts for families trying to make arrangements post separation. The Newcastle registry has a particularly heavy caseload, with many complex cases. Newcastle families are facing unacceptable delays. For women and children fleeing family violence, these delays can place them at even greater risk and cause added distress.

I first raised my concerns about the failure to replace Judge Coakes in February this year, and made formal representations to the Attorney-General in July, again highlighting with him the issues faced in Newcastle, and calling on him to appoint a judge to the Federal Circuit Court as a matter of urgency. Regrettfully, he had his chief of staff write to me instead, suggesting that it was an issue for the Chief Judge of the Federal Circuit Court, Mr John Pascoe, to decide how best to manage the judicial resources of the court on an ongoing basis.
It would seem the Attorney-General has abandoned his responsibilities. Last week, the Chief Justice of the Family Court, Diana Bryant, took the extraordinary step of speaking publicly about the impact of court delays on families and children. She expressed concerns about the ongoing impact that failing to replace judges will have, and about the fact that courts will never catch up on the backlog of cases. With the Attorney-General abdicating his role as first law officer, last month I wrote to the new Prime Minister, asking him to intervene as a matter of urgency. I still await his response. The government has had over 18 months to act, and we are now at crisis point. A replacement judge must be appointed to the Federal Circuit Court immediately. It is in everyone's interests for our legal system to be adequately funded and resourced—just as our frontline services assisting victims of family violence must be adequately funded, so too must our courts dealing with family law disputes, and parenting disputes involving family violence in particular.

**Housing Affordability**

Mr ALEXANDER (Bennelong) (10:46): Housing its people is a fundamental responsibility for government. The current instability in Australia's housing market is disturbing, and the time has come for change. It is our duty as policymakers to ensure the Sydney and Melbourne bubble does not burst the foundations of our nation's economy. A median price of close to $1 million for a house in our nation's biggest city is unsustainable and, while some people benefit personally from the surge in property prices, this is not good news for the broader community and the next generation of prospective home buyers. The Reserve Bank's charter contains a duty to ensure its policy is exercised in such a manner as 'will best contribute to … the economic prosperity and welfare of the people of Australia'. This duty is exercised with success through adjusting the prime interest rate to control inflation within a prescribed range. Unfortunately, this is done regardless of the social impact on housing affordability or the capacity for a low-income family to make their mortgage repayments. As Australians overwhelmingly express their wealth through property ownership, it is my contention that it is the RBA's duty to maintain housing inflation within a prescribed level.

Earlier this year, as Chair of the House Standing Committee on Economics, I commenced an inquiry into home ownership. This inquiry has performed incisive research into the demand and supply drivers in the housing market and the impact of the current tax policies at all levels. Receiving submissions from our nation's leading academic and industry experts, the inquiry has identified a range of opportunities for reforming the current system. It is my personal belief that this reform needs to occur now. To do this, everything must be on the table and must be considered without fear or favour. A lever on negative gearing to make fine adjustments can be viewed as a dynamic tool. Superannuation could be harnessed to assist homebuyers to cross that threshold making ownership more affordable than renting. Deductibility for the owner-occupier and the creation of a home hedge fund could offer opportunities to protect our economic prosperity. We will not achieve the best results for our nation if the response to these opportunities is an ideological one. All the facts and all the options must be comprehensively assessed in order for an informed course of action to be taken. Only then can the RBA fulfil its charter responsibility to 'best contribute to … the economic prosperity and welfare of the people of Australia', by effecting a counterbalance to establish stability in the housing market.
Family Court

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (10:49): Last month I spoke about domestic violence. Today, I refer to a matter which I believe is often linked to domestic violence. I refer to relationship breakdowns and divorces, the often-messy property settlements and the acrimonious child custody disagreements that follow. Whilst property settlements can be bitterly fought, it is the child custody issues that seem to cause most of the ongoing tensions, because they continue well after these separations have occurred.

I understand that, in over 80 per cent of separations, women get custody of the children. I am told, all too frequently, of fathers who feel unfairly treated. Of course, I do not always hear both sides of the story but what I do hear, often collaborated by other family members or friends, or from my personal knowledge of the family situation, is that the current system is failing many people and, in turn, failing society. To quote one father who recently wrote to me about this issue: 'I feel let down by the system.' Sadly, as I have seen on two separate occasions this year, the situation ended in tragedy.

I speak with or hear from fathers who are refused access to their children or who have unreasonable access conditions imposed on them as a result of false allegations made against them. It seems that this is a common problem. As well, loving grandparents are often unfairly denied access to their grandchildren. Even when custody orders do appear even-handed, there seem to be too many instances of noncompliance with those orders.

Earlier this year, I wrote to the Minister for Social Services about the issue, and I thank the Attorney-General for the reply provided to me last week on behalf of the minister. In particular, I note the statement in the Attorney-General's response that he has asked his department to undertake a scoping study to see how the courts might improve the way disputes relating to the variation and contravention of parenting orders are dealt with.

Given that almost one in two marriages end in divorce and children are involved in around half of all divorces, to what extent is the relationship breakdown contributing to domestic violence, suicide, mental health problems and drug and alcohol abuse? Just as importantly, what are the long-term effects on children when the bitterness continues long after the separation, and what is the real and total cost to society? Understandably, when differences cannot be amicably resolved and mediation and counselling have not helped, it is left to the courts to adjudicate. The dilemma with the court system is that it is expensive and adversarial and leads to further tensions between the parties involved. I know this is an issue that succeeding governments have been grappling with for years.

I also note that the evaluation of the 2012 amendment to the Family Law Act found that little has changed as a result of these amendments. We have to find a less complex, less costly and less adversarial process to deal with these separations and we need to do so urgently.

Petrie Electorate: Roads

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (10:52): It is in frustration that I rise to draw attention to the crippling impact of traffic congestion in my electorate of Petrie—specifically, the traffic that banks up every morning and afternoon around the Rothwell intersection, more commonly known as the Rothwell roundabout. First, I want to thank the hundreds of locals who have completed and returned my biggest survey; your feedback to me is so important, and I hear you loud and clear: the Rothwell roundabout is an issue locally. I also want to mention the
local papers, the Redcliffe & Bayside Herald and the North Lakes Times newspapers, and local journalist Amy Hutchinson for their coverage of this important issue.

Congestion on the roundabout is detrimental to people trying to get to and from work, and for too long it has impinged on economic growth and productivity for local businesses. The North Lakes-Mango Hill area is one of the fastest growing residential areas in Australia, and when the Moreton Bay Rail Link opens next year the traffic will only get worse.

For months I have been calling on the state Labor government to not just find a long-term solution but give locals surety that state money has been allocated for an upgrade of the roundabout and that a time frame for the upgrade has been set. So far, the state Labor government have done none of these things. They have no long-term solution; they have not allocated any funding; there is no time frame; and, like federal Labor, they have no plan.

On behalf of the people, the residents and businesses of Rothwell, North Lakes, Mango Hill, Redcliffe and Deception Bay, I say: enough is enough. I have stressed time and time again that the Rothwell intersection is a state government responsibility. The state government needs to find a solution and pay for it, but this is obviously not happening, and I simply cannot let the residents and businesses in my electorate suffer because of the incompetency and short-sightedness of the Queensland Labor state government. So I am putting on record that I will be lobbying anyone and everyone that I can to ensure that a long-term solution is found and implemented as soon as possible.

Childhood Cancer
Griffin, Miss Erin

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (10:55): Last month was Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, and I know that many on both sides of the House wore yellow pins to recognise what I think is an incredibly important month. Many of us here have met families that are affected by childhood cancer. We have heard many stories—some of resilience, some of sadness and some of hope. These are stories that are inspiring and that remind us what is most important. All of the stories encourage us as politicians to do more to support those affected by childhood cancer.

I would like to take this opportunity to talk about one special girl who did battle childhood cancer, and that is Erin Griffin, an inspirational girl from Aldinga in my electorate. Erin sadly lost her battle with brain cancer last year at the young age of 14. Erin spent the last years of her life campaigning and raising awareness for other children and families affected by childhood cancer. Her actions were selfless. Erin wanted people to know that there is a child diagnosed with cancer every nine hours in Australia. She wants people to know that, although many children survive cancer, the sad fact is that one in five will die within five years of a diagnosis.

Since Erin's passing, her mum, Amanda Griffin, has bravely continued to do Erin's work, raising awareness about this issue. Amanda continued to pursue Erin's vision of bringing CureFest to Australia. Thanks to her hard work and the hard work of many others, this has been a reality. CureFest was held in Sydney last month and was a huge success. It brought together children, families, charities, researchers and health professionals in the hope of raising awareness and beating childhood cancer.
That is not all Amanda has been working hard on in memory of Erin. With help and support, Amanda has put together a moving documentary to raise awareness and share the personal stories of the families and children affected by childhood cancer. Indeed what she has been able to do with this ensures that Erin’s voice continues to be heard. The campaign is called The Truth 365 Australia. I strongly recommend people to watch and share this documentary on social media. You can check it out on their website or on Facebook. The web address is http://www.thetruth365aus.org. I strongly urge the government to continue to make childhood cancer a priority and to ensure that childhood cancer research is funded properly.

**Carmichael Mine**

**Mr EWEN JONES** (Herbert—Government Whip) (10:58): I want to thank Minister for the Environment Greg Hunt for by re-approving the Carmichael mine. Rarely has anyone ever faced such ill-informed, vitriolic and personal attacks as this man and his staff. It was completely undeserved. The Carmichael mine will provide low-ash, low-sulphur thermal coal to India for the next 50 years. It will provide jobs from the Port of Townsville, along the roads and bridges out to the mine, and back along the railway line to Abbott Point near Bowen.

To develop the North, we need energy and we need water. We have fantastic opportunities to develop our renewable sector, including hydro, wind and solar. Using the $5 billion concessional loan facility, we can build the poles and wires to connect these renewable sectors into the national energy market. But none of this can happen without coal as the anchor tenant. A supercritical or ultracritical coal fired baseload power station in the Galilee Basin underpins our energy needs in North Queensland for the future. We can be a centre of excellence for pollution reduction and renewable energy science, but, without coal, it simply will not happen.

Claims that coal is dead are blatantly untrue. There are over 1,000 coal fired power plants—with an average size of 275 megawatts—planned or under construction across 10 Asian countries as we speak. This will provide an extra 672 gigawatts of extra electricity—24 times that which is produced in Australia. They need our quality coal. This is a vast country. The north receives most of the rainfall, and we have the nation's largest river systems. We need to develop our land so that we can take our place in the Asian century and provide the goods, services and innovation to the fastest growing part of the world. A large part of that will be the science underpinning the water and energy resources that we have. Everything we do impacts on our environment. It is how we handle those impacts which is important.

In Greg Hunt we have a minister who understands the issues and the needs of the environment. He is the man who has insisted on over 300 conditions to operate Abbot Point. He is the man who ensures, with this government, the environment is a first order of business. With over 85 per cent of Australia's needs being met by coal fired power plants, I would suggest that those people, so vehemently opposed to the north developing its infrastructure, protest the dirty, brown coal fired power plant which supplies Melbourne—shut that thing down. Rail against Victoria having a dirty, coal fired power supplier. Practice what you preach. But I bet we will not see it. Leave us alone, as we have always been the environment's best friend and we always will be. I thank the House.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Southcott):** In accordance with standing order 193 the time for members’ constituency statements has concluded.
PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

National Week of Deaf People

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (11:01): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) National Week of Deaf People runs from 17 to 24 October 2015;
(b) one in six Australians are affected by hearing loss;
(c) there are approximately 30,000 deaf Auslan users with total hearing loss;
(d) projections for 2050 indicate that one in every four Australians will have hearing loss; and
(e) 90 per cent of people born with hearing impairment are born into hearing families;

(2) congratulates the deaf community and celebrates its outstanding contribution to the nation;

(3) acknowledges Auslan as the language of the Australian deaf community;

(4) reaffirms the need for deaf people to be fully included in the Australian community;

(5) recognises that significant challenges still exist for the deaf community when dealing with governments and government departments; and

(6) encourages the Government to improve communication with the deaf community by ensuring that information is translated into Auslan on its websites.

This week is Deaf Week—a time when the deaf community in Australia celebrate who they are, and they are a community worth celebrating. But Deaf Week is also a time for us all to reflect on how, as a community, we can ensure full participation for deaf people. I would like to concentrate on just one area where the government can do a better job at providing access to government information, and that is by providing that information in Auslan. It seems we are lagging a bit behind where we should be. Let us look at what we should be doing, not just because it is right but because we said we would.

The federal government ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in July 2008, so we have had a few years. The relevant article, in terms of access to information, is Article 21b:

Accepting and facilitating the use of sign languages, Braille, augmentative and alternative communication, and all other accessible means, modes and formats of communication of their choice by persons with disabilities in official interactions;

That is the legal wording of Article 21b.

Some organisations in Australia are pushing ahead. The Australian Human Rights Commission and the Australian Law Reform Commission both provide access to information in Auslan. In fact, the Australian Law Reform Commission provides it in 20 languages plus Auslan, but federal government departments are not doing so well and in many cases are not providing Auslan at all. My local deaf advocacy organisations, including the Deaf Society, have tried to encourage a number of federal government departments to provide material in Auslan on their websites, without much success.

It is noted that the NDIA, which is responsible for information on the NDIS, provides information on what is the NDIS in at least eight different community languages. It provides recorded spoken versions of those languages, but it does not provide information on the NDIS in Auslan. Another example is the Australian Tax Office, which has several community
languages available, including 42 documents translated into Arabic, yet it has only one document in Auslan. My Aged Care provides their information in at least 18 community languages and none in Auslan. I repeat that the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was signed in 2008, so this crosses more than one government—it has been quite a while.

I note too that the Australian parliament is not translated into Auslan either, but I do acknowledge my colleague Jane Prentice in the Federation Chamber today. Jane raised this with the Speaker early last year. I am aware that there has been action behind the scenes, and maybe today Jane will talk about that. But I am sure we will hear more about it in time.

I know a lot of people will be thinking: we do not need Auslan because deaf people can read print. And they probably think that captions are enough, or written English is enough, but this is not the case. I think we need to be clear about this: Auslan is not English. I spoke Auslan in the parliament recently, but I spoke English with Auslan words. A few people made remarks on that. It is not the same. It is grammatically different, and there are concepts in Auslan that do not actually have simple English translations. It is a different language. It grew organically in the community and has all the complexity of a language of its own. For many deaf people, English is their second language not their first; the language they prefer, because it is the language they are mostly likely to understand, is Auslan.

Many deaf people have experienced systemic disadvantage throughout their lives. So the level of English literacy among the deaf community is less than desirable and, in many cases, less than adequate for them to be able to understand the complexities of government information in a second language, which, for them, is English. When we start talking about translating information into Auslan, many people assume that there are certain kinds of information that you would do first in Auslan—this speech, for example, because it is about the deaf community. But I want to stress that people who are deaf need information on all things. They send their kids to school. They work, they get a job, they pay tax and they grow old. So the information that they need in Auslan covers the broad range of information that governments provide, and they do not just need it so that they can understand the government services that are provided; they need it so that—as people who do send their children to school, go to work, pay taxes and grow old—they can contribute to the debate that this country has about our policy. They can also contribute with an understanding of what it is to be deaf, but it is their general lives that we need in the debate.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Southcott):** Is the motion seconded?

**Mr Laundy:** I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

**Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (11:07):** It is great that we are all fighting to speak about this. It shows what a great topic it is! I rise to wholeheartedly support this motion from the member for Parramatta and the member for Reid regarding the National Week of Deaf People. Australia is recognised as being home to hundreds of native languages. Many Australians would be aware of the rich variety of Indigenous languages that existed in Australia prior to European settlement—with more than 100 of these languages still in use today. Fewer Australians would recognise that, much more recently, Australia has developed another native language. That language is Auslan, the sign language of the Australian deaf community.
I am pleased that people in my electorate of Ryan are leading the way in promoting the use of Auslan. Members will recall that last year I was privileged to give the first speech in the House in both English and Auslan, to mark my attendance at the Toowong state school Deaf Festival—although people listening on the radio thought that I had developed some speech difficulties; I was a bit slow. Toowong State School offers a bilingual and bicultural immersion program in Auslan and English. It is currently the only school in Queensland to offer such a program in Auslan. Auslan is taught to all children at the school, which is a wonderful way to encourage inclusiveness in children from an early age. The school has a bilingual resource room with a green screen, spotlights and a video camera to film lessons in Auslan. A native signer can then quickly and easily sign visual instructions for homework tasks and assessment instructions. It also allows for deaf students to have their assessments and tasks filmed. School assemblies are interpreted in Auslan, and all children sign the national anthem. There is a signing choir that is featured in television programs and special events throughout Queensland.

This motion reaffirms the need for deaf people to be fully included in the Australian community, as called on by the member for Parramatta. A broader understanding and proficiency in Auslan will go a long way towards building that inclusiveness. In conjunction with National Week of Deaf People 2015, Toowong State School will be holding a Hands and Hearts Fair this Saturday, 24 October. The event is sponsored by Deaf Services Queensland, who promise that the event will be a multicultural and multilingual extravaganza, with performances from the Hands Up Deaf Youth Theatre, the signing choir and a number of dance ensembles. Deaf Services Queensland advise me that the entire event will be Auslan-interpreted and that there will be Auslan students volunteering during the day to provide support and assistance to attendees. I encourage everyone who is interested in learning more about deaf culture to come along to this event. At secondary school level, Indooroopilly State High School has now developed its own support for Auslan in recent years. All classes with deaf students are delivered in Auslan and English and students are provided encouragement to develop and maintain their Auslan skills.

It is a common misconception that all sign language is the same. On the contrary; just like spoken languages, there are local variants of sign language all over the world. This was brought home to me very clearly when I was the manager for the international deaf congress with over 7,000 people from all over the world converging on Brisbane to learn sign language. Indeed, in America, they sign with just one hand! They explained that is so they can have a drink in the other hand!

Auslan has only gained prominence as a recognised community language in recent decades, and it is fair to say that some parts of government and society have been slow to catch up with providing appropriate resources in Auslan to cater for the deaf community. It is absolutely vital that learning Auslan is encouraged wherever possible. It is vital because it enables standardised communication within the Australia deaf community. But just as importantly, it acts as a language bridge between the Australian deaf community and the wider Australian community. National Week of Deaf People offers an opportunity to build upon these local initiatives and to celebrate deaf individuals and the deaf Australian community. The week offers a very important opportunity for deaf people to celebrate their community, their language, their culture and their history. It is a chance for the deaf
community to recognise how far they have come but also to focus on the challenges ahead. This motion provides the House with the opportunity to recognise National Week of Deaf People and to celebrate the outstanding contribution that the Australian deaf community have made to our nation. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (11:12):

Mr Perrett spoke in Auslan—

I commend the member for Parramatta for her motion. Obviously, we take verbal communication for granted as we go about our lives, but the deaf community face communication challenges every day—every day. Auslan is a language in its own right deriving from sign languages from Britain and Ireland and has developed naturally over time. Children born to deaf parents who use Auslan learn to sign naturally in the same way that hearing children learn verbal language from their parents. For a large part of the deaf community, Auslan is acquired as a second language during childhood, adolescence or even later in life.

I would like to thank Deaf Services Queensland for their instruction in Auslan for the first part of my speech, particularly Janelle Whalan. Hopefully, I got it right for you. As you can see, I am not very proficient at signing, but I have an enormous appreciation for the people who are proficient in Auslan signing.

Deaf Services Queensland are located in Moorooka in my electorate, the same suburb I live in. This wonderful organisation has been operating since 1903, and they are the leading provider of support services and information to the deaf and the hard of hearing community in Queensland. Currently, one in six Australians are affected by hearing loss and it is predicted that by 2050 it will be one in four. There are approximately 30,000 Australians who have total hearing loss who use Auslan. The services provided by Deaf Services Queensland include Auslan interpreting, culturally and linguistically diverse interpreting, Auslan translations, employment support services, Auslan classes, independent living support and deafness awareness training. They also provide a support service for children and families.

I can only imagine the challenges that having a hearing impaired child would create in a family. With 90 per cent of people who are born with hearing impairments from hearing families, there must be a huge need for that type of support. Hearing loss would be a challenge at any age, but for children and babies with partial or complete hearing loss it must be not only terribly frightening but also a frustration to normal childhood development. An incredibly large number of Australian children are affected by hearing loss. More than 12,000 children in Australia have a significant hearing impairment. On average one Australian child is identified as hearing impaired every day, one in one thousand babies is born with significant hearing loss and by school age two in every one thousand children have identified hearing loss. By the end of secondary school, more than three in every 1,000 children will require assistance because of hearing loss.

For these children and their families facilities like the Yeerongpilly Early Childhood Development Program provide a solid foundation from which to launch their educational experience. The Yeerongpilly Early Childhood Development Program is an Education Queensland facility for young children with hearing loss from birth to pre-prep. This free program is located on the campus of the Yeerongpilly State School—and I am visiting
Jennifer McKee and the rest of the team this Friday. The program offers a range of communication choices to families, including auditory—oral, spoken language in combination with Auslan, bilingual—bicultural.

Last week, at Parliament House I participated in a game of silent touch football—in recognition of the challenges facing the hearing impaired in everyday life. Rugby league legend Wally Lewis, who has had personal experience of the challenges of hearing impairment through his daughter Jamie-Lee was on hand. Jamie-Lee did not play this year; certainly Wally added a bit of class to the politicians running around.

Also, a few weeks back the principal of Calamvale Special School, Tom Byrne, brought some of his students to Canberra. The member for Rankin and I caught up with them because the school serves both of our electorates. Calamvale is one of the largest special schools on the south side—it has 130 students. All students have significant intellectual disabilities, but several students have multiple disabilities, including autism, cerebral palsy and hearing impairment. The students range from five to 18 years old. There are 22 classes at Calamvale with 80 teachers, including teacher hours and all the teacher aids, and all the students at Calamvale Special School learn Auslan. Incredibly, their senior class of eight students conducts all of its lessons bilingually using both English and Auslan. Principal Tom Byrne explained that some autistic children cannot verbalise, so learning Auslan gives those children a way of communicating and also allows those with hearing impairments to be included.

I particularly commend the member for Parramatta for bringing this motion to the House.

Mr LAUNDY (Reid) (11:17): Julie and Graham, the members for Parramatta and Moreton, have come at this from a community-based angle. I am so proud to be associated with this motion. Today, I want to put a personal angle. I see Julie is shaking her head. In my maiden speech I wanted to explain my passion for disability services, and I talked to my wife about it because of my personal involvement. I was conscious of using language that would be very vanilla, if you like.

Last year at this time, the member for Parramatta did a 90-second statement in the chamber. I was soon to follow and, by chance, I was in the chamber, which is not always the case with 90-second statements. At the end of the statement, I walked around the back of the Deputy Speaker's chair and I congratulated Julie for her statement, and I owned up to a little secret that I had been keeping. The reason that I had been careful with the language construction in my maiden speech was that my daughter Analise, who is now 13 years old, was born but not identified until 18 months of age with a severe bilateral sensorineural hearing loss. She is one of the 90 per cent of Australians who are born into hearing families with hearing loss, as we have heard today. I spoke to my daughter Analise, who at that stage was 12 years old, and asked her if she would mind if I told our story at different times—wanting to get her okay, I guess. She looked at me and, bold as punch, she said, 'Dad, if my story helps anyone, you feel free to tell it whenever you want.'

Coincidentally, the member for Parramatta and I share a border and we have overlaps into each other's communities. The member for Parramatta rightfully mentioned that we share an amazing part of Sydney through its multiculturalism and diversity. Through all the government services offered, we see the way that language is taken seriously—and she alluded to that. It should not stop in the disability space. The member for Parramatta is right: government should always seek to include all. There are 30,000 deaf people who use Auslan
at the moment and we should push to continually do more in this space—you are right, member for Parramatta. It is also correct that it is not because deaf people cannot read. You are right, member for Parramatta.

When there are state emergencies it is a very common thing nowadays to see Auslan interpreters. All state governments have stepped up their game by having Auslan interpreters sitting side by side with those disseminating critical information on matters of what could potentially be life or death. But it should not just stop at those situations. It should permeate and infiltrate every mode of life so that those 30,000 people can not only rise to the challenges they have been presented with; they can overcome the challenges. We should do all we can in government to assist that to happen. In whatever time I am given in this place, I will push, along with wonderful members like the member for Parramatta, in a bipartisan way, to do and deliver more, because that is when this parliament works at its best.

To finish where I started on a personal anecdote: life as the father of a hearing impaired child always gives you nice presents that you do not see coming. I got home last Thursday night from parliament unaware that my daughter Analise had just been fitted with new hearing aids. She does not use Auslan; she uses technology. Suzie, my wife, told me a story. Analise's hearing aids were being fitted and Suzie was sitting next to her in a chair. About half an hour into the fitting, Analise looked at her and said, 'Mum, what's that noise?' and Suzie said, 'What noise?' She could not work it out. Later on, Suzie moved in the chair, and Analise said, 'That noise! That noise!' It was the chair creaking. Analise is 13 years of age and had never heard a chair creak in her life. Technology helped her overcome that and rise to meet her challenges. We as government should enable those who use Auslan to also rise to meet and overcome their challenges and succeed. Thank you, Member for Parramatta.

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (11:21): We have heard excellent contributions to this debate. I thank the member the Parramatta for bringing this important issue to the House and the member for Reid for sharing his personal experiences with the House, including the challenges of being a father to a hearing impaired child and the challenges for a hearing impaired child.

From 17 to 24 October is National Week of Deaf People. It is important to note, as the member for Parramatta outlined in her motion, that one in six Australians are affected by hearing loss and that there are approximately 30,000 Auslan users. It is projected that, along with the ageing of our population, by 2050 one in four people will be living with hearing loss. I strongly support the issues that the member for Parramatta raised in her motion, particularly the issues around Auslan. I call on the government to do a little bit more in parliament in that space. We should regularly have an Auslan interpreter in the gallery during question time so that people who are hearing impaired can understand what is happening—not just if they are watching the text on their screens at home. If they are in the gallery, it can be hard to follow.

For a very long time in my previous life I worked as a rehabilitation counsellor. I worked with people that had hearing impairments. On Sunday I bumped into one of those people. She has had children and is now thinking of undertaking study to learn Auslan, teach others and work as an Auslan interpreter. But I want to concentrate a little bit today on the Tingira Centre—or the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children Hunter, as it is now been renamed.
The Tingira Centre, which was opened in 1991, has a number of programs and provides a lot of support for people in the Hunter who have a hearing impairment. It has a preschool program, which I will talk a little bit more about in a moment. It has five hearing impaired children and 10 other children from the community. It works very well and concentrates on integrating and promoting understanding of hearing impairment in the community.

The families who are part of the early learning program, which is what I wanted to talk about first—there are 27 children with a hearing impairment, and eight children in that program also have vision loss—have weekly individual sessions and they have input consultation with a transdisciplinary team. These teams concentrate on things like family education and home intervention because a lot more work is actually done in the home than at Tingira Centre, which is what I will continue to call it. It helps establish goals and to develop speech and language. This is an excellent program. It works with education and development psychologists, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and orthodontists.

This is a vital service, a vital program that is provided in my local community and I would like to pay tribute to everybody who works there and to the organisations who have given it support over a long period of time. There is also an early learning group, where the families have the opportunity to network and the opportunities extend to the children to set social goals. There are great forums for parents to sit down and talk about issues that have an impact on all of them. There is also a program where allied health provide support for students once they attend school. It is an opportunity for speech therapists and OTs and physios to work with them. Teleschool works with people outside the area. All up, the Tingira Centre, or the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children, is a wonderful organisation that operates in the Shortland electorate. (Time expired)

Ms GAMBARO (Brisbane) (11:27): I would like to also place on record my congratulations to the member for Parramatta, and thank her for her thoughtfulness and her care in bringing this motion to the House. I also want to thank all of the previous speakers who have spoken on this very important motion.

It is indeed National Week of Deaf People, which runs from 17 to 24 October. When you see the figures that the member for Parramatta has listed in this motion—that one in six Australians are affected by hearing loss and there are 30,000 deaf Auslan users with total hearing loss—they are absolutely staggering. I was very interested to see that recently Hear and Say Centre in my electorate put out a press release celebrating Loud Shirt Day on Friday, 16 October. All of our communities got together and rallied around Loud Shirt Day and raised money for Hear and Say. In their press release, they said that three in every 1,000 Australian children are diagnosed with significant hearing loss, one in every 1,000 babies are born deaf, and around 23 children per 10,000 will acquire a hearing impairment by the age of 17 through accident, illness or other causes.

I want to pay tribute to the people at Hear and Say, particularly the CEO, Chris McCarthy, and of course its wonderful founder, Dr Dimity Dornan AO. The Hear and Say CEO said that the organisation, in conjunction with First Voice—the national alliance of organisations providing listening and spoken language to children who are deaf—raises funds and they all got together on this day to provide deaf children with hearing, listening and speaking opportunities.
We are indeed blessed in the electorate of Brisbane to have such a wonderful organisation. It was started some years ago, by Dimity Dornan AO, as I have mentioned, and they have an incredible mission: to enable families to achieve optimal outcomes for their children with hearing loss by teaching them to hear, listen and speak using world-leading and end-to-end service delivery models. Their vision is to provide provision of access to listening and spoken language for children with hearing loss and their families worldwide. They have a number of principles that they adhere to. They have an auditory verbal approach and promote newborn hearing screening and end-to-end programs for children with their families, and auditory verbal therapy and full parent involvement and spoken language through listening. The most important things that the Hear and Say centre does are early intervention, diagnosis of appropriate hearing aids and one-to-one therapy sessions with a parent or caregiver. There is the use of current research data to support those outcomes. We heard from the member for Reid the incredible experience that he had recently when his younger daughter was fitted with a new type of hearing aid.

I want to place on record the incredible work that they do and thank Hear and Say. They are doing some phenomenal, world-leading research. They see over 600 families each year and have a team of 50 people across Queensland in six centres and in rural areas in particular. Rural areas are the ones that are most impacted by the lack of services. Ninety-two per cent of children with hearing loss have parents who can both hear. Those figures are absolutely extraordinary.

The member for Parramatta has also reaffirmed many things, including the outstanding contribution that the deaf community has made to this country, and I want to reaffirm that and thank everyone who has contributed enormously across all areas of endeavour, whether it is IT, academia or any of those areas throughout the community. I thank them for what they have done to contribute to our great nation. She acknowledges Auslan, and indeed I and other members from this side absolutely support her in reaffirming her support for and acknowledgement of Auslan and trying to integrate that more in the dealings that occur in the Australian community. In particular what we need to do as a government is make sure that that challenge that is faced is integrated across government departments. I support her wholeheartedly, as we all do, and look forward to working with her further to include Auslan. I thank her for her wonderful motion.

Debate adjourned.

**BILLS**

**Marriage Legislation Amendment Bill 2015**

**Second Reading**

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

**Mr LAURIE FERGUSON** (Werriwa) (11:32): At the outset I congratulate Australian Marriage Equality, PFLAG, other members who have played a greater role than I in putting this bill forward and, in my own electorate, Jeff McGill, a proud Catholic who as Editor of the Campbelltown Advertiser has done so much to ensure that the discrimination toward and marginalisation of people around same-sex inequality has been exposed to the public.
I am not the archetypal person to be here co-sponsoring this bill. Whilst you might often find me at demonstrations and meetings for Kurds, Palestinians, Rohingyas, Copts, Karens, Ukrainians, Bosnians, Timorese, West Papuans and Tamils, I have never found myself at the annual Mardi Gras, but there is no contradiction. In the same manner as I campaigned for those people's human rights, it is crucial that we change these laws to end the marginalisation of people in our society.

I want to say on a personal note that I have experienced my very opinionated granddaughters, who are particularly active on this issue. One of their best friends, who they describe as a 'gayby', was raised by same-sex parents. When I see people decry the supposed negative impacts of how children will be raised if we change these laws, I can only say that many of the dysfunctional heterosexual couples I see raising children in my electorate would be well served to see the love and nurturing that is provided by these parents to their daughter. She is a well-adjusted human being—an Australian actress of some renown—and her example, her lifestyle and her raising has been very informative to my grandchildren and thereby me.

Marriage is not owned by any religious group nor, more succinctly, by religious interpretations within those religious groups. It is not stagnant. It is not a thing that has been in stone for centuries. It was only, in actual fact, when the Roman Empire in 342 AD went over to Christianity that same-sex marriages were formally banned. It was only in 1967 that the United States, in the case of Loving v Virginia, allowed miscegenation—people of different racial groups could marry. Sixteen states in the United States, even in 1967, banned an African descended person from marrying a white. In 1959, in this very country, Mick Daly, a white drover, travelled with Gladys Namagu, an Aboriginal woman. As a result of this, the Northern Territory bureaucracy considered the matter and decided that Daly was not a suitable person to marry Namagu. He was convicted and placed on a 12-month good behaviour bond, and she was moved to another settlement. If we go back to colonial Australia, only convicts described as 'those of soberness and industrious' were allowed to marry. So it is not as though these things have been unchanged over centuries.

I want to say that, in the manner in which I say that you fight for human rights around the world, it is equally necessary to fight to change people's rights to marry in this country. This is upheld by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which indicate that reference to sexual orientation and bias and discrimination against people in regard to gender are a protected ground for action.

I want to say that we have not seen the dire consequences that have been warned about. In two of the early countries to move on this front, Belgium and the Netherlands, we see that 85 per cent of Dutch citizens in a poll in 2013, 12 years after these laws were changed, were supportive of the change. We know that in Canada, where it was done by court action, the support in the population rose from 43 per cent before that change to 57 per cent by 2012. Returning to Belgium: 71 per cent of Belgians supported same-sex couples 10 years after legislative change.

It is not necessarily that the majority of people are right, but there is an international trend that stretches now through the United States, Canada and western Europe as far as Iceland and Greenland, and we have seen it in this country. The same people who came to me a few years
ago and said, 'Laurie, you've got to vote with what the majority of Australians think,' are now saying: 'Ignore them. Follow your conscience.'

I want to finally quote briefly from a letter from one of my constituents that makes it so clear about south-west Sydney and the need to change attitudes there. It says:

As I'm sure you can imagine, growing up as gay in South-Western Sydney can (at times) be rather difficult. While I have mostly been lucky to not be on the receiving end of discrimination or harassment—with a few rare exceptions—many of my friends who live in the area have not been so fortunate and have been the victims of violence or have been kicked out of home simply for revealing who they were.

To have our local member proudly stand up against this, and indeed strongly in support of our dignity and equality, I think is a really great thing.

I very much commend this legislation. *Time expired*

Debate adjourned.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

**Breast Cancer**

Ms VAMVAKINOU (Calwell) (11:38): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month and that Monday, 26 October 2015 is Pink Ribbon Day; and

(b) breast cancer remains the most common cancer in Australian women and the second most common cancer to cause death in Australian women;

(2) calls on the Government to:

(a) support Breast Cancer Awareness Month;

(b) promote early detection; and

(c) encourage women, especially women aged 50 to 74 years, to have a mammogram every two years; and

(3) acknowledges:

(a) the invaluable work done by the National Breast Cancer Foundation and the Breast Cancer Institute of Australia, especially in supporting important research into treatment and a cure;

(b) the fundraising efforts of the broader community and pays tribute to the significant contribution the Australian public makes to the overall fundraising effort; and

(c) the heroic efforts of the women, men and their families who have experienced the breast cancer journey.

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. With breast cancer remaining the most common cancer diagnosis amongst women and one that affects men also, albeit to a lesser extent, it is important that we continue to raise awareness about this prevalent disease.

As the co-convenor of the parliamentary friendship group for raising breast cancer awareness, I have very much pursued this cause throughout my entire parliamentary career. In this time I have met some of the most amazing people, who are totally dedicated to raising awareness, improving treatment and eventually finding a cure. I am also constantly inspired by the women, men and families who have been through the breast cancer journey, people
who have risen to the challenge and used their experience to help and support others. I am also inspired by the fundraising, advocacy and research efforts of the National Breast Cancer Foundation, the Breast Cancer Institute of Australia and the Australian public in general, and I want to sincerely thank them for all their efforts.

Since October was declared Breast Cancer Awareness Month, it has grown into a worldwide phenomenon, giving Pink Ribbon Day an iconic global recognition and spurring an entire fundraising and awareness industry branded by the symbolic pink woman, taking in many forms, such as the morning teas, and also including a diversity of food retailers who have participated in the fundraising efforts. Retailers from Bakers Delight to Mount Franklin water and countless other household item brands are allocating a portion of their sales to breast cancer research. It is only through action that positive change can occur. The survival rates of breast cancer have increased and, undoubtedly, the Australian community has played a significant role in making this possible, through promoting awareness and raising funds.

One passionate advocate who contributed a great deal to this cause was my dear friend, Roz Hill. Roz passed away earlier this year, on 26 February, after a decades-long battle with breast cancer—something which she dedicated most of her life to raising awareness about, especially for young people. Roz would have turned 70 last week on 8 October. She was a courageous woman, a quiet achiever who had a very matter-of-fact, no-nonsense approach to life. In one of her last texts to me, she said:

Hi ladies, hope u both had a super Christmas and New Year. Sadly my news is not the best but inevitable I suppose! I have been taken off all treatment and given 2 to 6 months and now placed under Palliative care. Still have my mobile handy and loved getting your messages on it or facebook.

Roz was first diagnosed with breast cancer at 29 years of age, after she had already lost both her parents to cancer. The loss of her parents and her own experience propelled Roz into advocacy work. Roz founded the Young Adults Program known as YAP, a not-for-profit organisation. Roz, with her son the late Peter Hill, who also died from cancer, developed the YAP app to inform young people about breast cancer and to encourage them, male and female alike, to conduct monthly breast examinations. Roz was an inspiration. She did not want attention or commendation; she wanted to make a difference, and that she did. I first met Roz in 2002 when she was campaigning at Parliament House to have breast prostheses put on the Medicare rebate for those women who had to have mastectomies. This passionate advocacy continued until she passed away.

Roz's main focus was promoting early detection and raising awareness amongst young people, especially men. The YAP app provided a self-examination guide for both males and females. It is important to acknowledge that breast cancer knows no gender. Both men and women can be diagnosed with breast cancer. Breast cancer is approximately 100 times more common in women than it is in men, which is why it is widely considered a woman's disease. It is this perception that breast cancer is solely a woman's disease that ultimately impacts on late detection in men, because men frequently do not consider that their symptoms could be a sign of breast cancer, resulting in late diagnosis. Late diagnosis has a huge impact on survival rates. Indeed, men's survival rates are much lower. Roz introduced me to her American friend, Will Roth, a breast cancer survivor who has now taken the awareness and fundraising cause for YAP to the United States. I want to acknowledge Will, and thank him for continuing Roz's work. Will is a very active advocate and I want to quote him:
Yapstuff is creating a generation of people aware breast cancer knows no gender. All people have the same breast tissue (some more than others) but all are subject to risks of breast cancer.

So all power to Will's grassroots fundraising efforts and campaigning, especially the much-loved Busking for Boobs. I also want to thank Sue Purnell, a close friend of Roz Hill's who now heads the YAP program, and I want to say: Sue, yes; we all miss her. *(Time expired)*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Southcott):** Is the motion seconded?

**Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (11:43):** I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

**Mrs McNAMARA (Dobell) (11:43):** I thank the member for Calwell for bringing this motion to the House, particularly with the month of October being Breast Cancer Awareness Month and next Monday being Pink Ribbon Day. Most of us are aware of the devastating impact breast cancer has on our community, and most would know a friend, a loved one, or a community member impacted by this devastating disease. We all have a role to play in minimising its impact.

Breast cancer remains one of the most common cancers for Australian women and the second-most common cause of cancer death in Australian women. On the Central Coast, latest figures indicate that breast cancer is just short of 12 per cent of all cancer cases. This is the second-highest, behind prostate cancer, which is closer to 16 per cent. I join with my colleagues in supporting Breast Cancer Awareness Month and, in doing so, encourage women to recognise the successful remission cases as a result of early detection. I also acknowledge that men can be impacted by this disease. Early detection significantly increases survival rates, with one in eight women developing breast cancer in their lifetime. So it is important that women undergo mammograms and ultrasounds. Women aged between 50 and 74 in particular are encouraged to undergo a mammogram and ultrasound every two years. In highlighting the importance of mammograms for this age group, I do note that BreastScreen NSW provide free mammograms to women aged between 50 and 69.

The fight against breast cancer is one that is coordinated nationally and implemented locally, and a number of charities have become household names in raising awareness of breast cancer. One such organisation is the National Breast Cancer Foundation. The National Breast Cancer Foundation is the leading community-funded organisation in Australia raising money for research into the prevention and cure of breast cancer, and this group has delivered a number of well-publicised research projects in recent years. Since its establishment in 1994, the National Breast Cancer Foundation has awarded over $155 million to over 400 research projects Australia-wide.

Today's motion also acknowledges the Breast Cancer Institute of Australia. This organisation was also established in 1994, as the fundraising and education section of the Australia and New Zealand Breast Cancer Trials Group. The Breast Cancer Institute of Australia reflect proudly on their achievements with their mention that 'more women survive breast cancer today than ever before'. Specifically, the 30 per cent decline in deaths from breast cancer over the previous 20 years is a huge achievement.

Research is of course a huge component of combating breast cancer in our community. However, fundraising efforts by a number of organisations also play a key role. To this end, the National Breast Cancer Foundation are currently running their 'Real Men Wear Pink'
campaign—and congratulations to all the men proudly supporting this initiative by wearing bright pink work gear. Over a quarter of a million dollars has been raised so far, with the foundation hoping to reach half a million dollars by the end of the campaign.

The National Breast Cancer Foundation are joined in their fundraising efforts by the Breast Cancer Institute of Australia. The institute holds a number of ongoing fundraising initiatives, including assistance to host workplace or community morning teas where small donations are made, as well as a Mother’s Day Research Appeal. The Mother’s Day Research Appeal provides participants with Mother’s Day cards in either physical or email form, and the purchase of the cards assists in the fundraising efforts of the institute.

The broader community also play a huge role in assisting fundraising efforts for research as well as care of breast cancer patients. For many years I have been actively supporting breast cancer awareness and research fundraising activities within my community. In my electorate of Dobell, our community generously undertakes and supports numerous fundraising activities to support women and men afflicted with breast cancer. At the end of this week, the pink tractor will be arriving on the Central Coast to mark the event, and a fundraising event is being held at The Entrance, with the NRL community taking a prominent role.

Further south on the coast, Stacey Saul and her amazing committee have organised a Halloween themed Cancer Council pink ribbon event. Money raised will go to women with breast and gynaecological cancer on the Central Coast. Tickets for this event alone have already taken them to $10,000. Thank you to the local businesses who have donated around $5,000 in sponsorship and other donations. Whilst the event is not being held in my electorate of Dobell, members of the Dobell community will benefit from the funds raised.

Congratulations to everyone who is involved in breast cancer awareness. I congratulate you all on your efforts.

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (11.48): Firstly, I would like to congratulate the member for Calwell on bringing this motion to the House. She has been a longstanding advocate of breast cancer awareness within this parliament. She has international connections in relation to breast cancer, not just within Australia, so there could be no person more important in this parliament to raise this issue than the member for Calwell.

As set out in the motion, October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and members on both sides of the parliament support that, with 26 October being Pink Ribbon Day. Despite all the efforts, despite all the research, breast cancer still remains one of the most significant cancers in Australia and is the second largest killer of women. We must continue to raise awareness of breast cancer. We must all support this awareness month, promote early detection and encourage women between the ages of 50 and 74 to have mammograms. They are the core group that we are encouraging to have mammograms. But, once you turn 74, you should not cease having a mammogram; it is just that you do not get the usual reminders. I encourage women that are over the age of 74 to continue to have mammograms.

The support for women that are undergoing testing, and who are actually diagnosed with breast cancer, is much better than it used to be. I had an experience myself where I had to have a second mammogram. All I thought was that, because I had moved house, I had been called to do it again. When I went in to have that second mammogram I was greeted by a consultant who told me that she was my support person for that day. When you go in, you are
supported through the whole process. You have an ultrasound—and that is where it finished
with me—but, if it is identified that there is a lump, you then have a lumpectomy to have it
checked. From there, if it is found that you do have breast cancer, the support you are given
throughout that day continues.

In the Hunter we are very fortunate to have Professor John Forbes. He has been heading up
the Australia and New Zealand Breast Cancer Trials Group. It is one of the most successful
and respected, and longest established, breast cancer research groups in the world. It has been
going for more than 35 years. Each year, I hold a breast cancer morning tea, and Professor
Forbes has come along on many occasions and spoken to women about the need to have
regular checks and what to look for, and settled the concerns of many women who might have
a family history of breast cancer. As well as being a leading academic and a person that heads
up trials, he has that common touch where he goes and talks to groups of women in a
community setting. He was awarded an AM and he richly deserved it.

My breast cancer morning tea this year is on 31 October and it will be held at the Belmont
Bowling Club. We will have Paula from the Breast Cancer Foundation in attendance. We will
have a speaker from the Breast Cancer Trials Group. As well as that, we are going to have a
little bit of fun. We are going to have a fashion parade; Uproar fashion will be presenting their
latest range. The wonderful Carolyn Bear, who produced a number of bracelets that members
of this House wore in relation to ovarian cancer, will be up there supporting breast cancer.

We must never forget that women with breast cancer need support. We must never forget
that early detection is the most successful treatment for this cancer—(Time expired)

Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt) (11:53): What an outstanding contribution. I also congratulate
the member for Calwell on her initiative in bringing forward this motion. I certainly
appreciate the opportunity today to add my voice in support of the motion. There is no doubt
that breast cancer is an insidious killer that is widespread in our communities. In Australia,
one in eight women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime and seven women
will die from breast cancer every day. In Queensland, this year alone almost 4,000 women
will be diagnosed with breast cancer or gynaecological cancer, and more than 750 will die
from these women's cancers.

It is the personal stories of the mothers, the grandmothers, the aunts, the daughters, the
granddaughters, nieces and the female friends and colleagues that sadly bring these statistics
to life. My next-door neighbour had both breasts removed in what has been a terrible journey
for her. My neighbour across the street is undergoing treatment for breast cancer at the
moment, and my long-time friend in Cooktown survived breast cancer but has had a breast
removed. It just goes to show that it can strike anywhere and that it is far more prevalent in
our community than you might think.

Fortunately, there is a weapon of mass destruction, if you like, in the battle against breast
cancer and women's cancers. Together, Breast Cancer Awareness Month and the Pink Ribbon
Day are painting the town pink in their efforts to raise awareness about women's cancers,
promote early detection, fund vital cancer research and support women undergoing a cancer
journey.

The Far North Queensland community always impresses me with how the people come
together to help those in need, and this month a whole range of activities and fundraisers are
taking place. On 10 October, the Pink in the Tropics breast cancer support group held a breakfast buffet at Port Douglas supported by about 80 locals and many Port Douglas traders. The funds raised will go towards information packs and useful items for newly diagnosed breast cancer patients. The Walk for Women’s Cancer will kick off in Cairns this Sunday morning, where women of all ages—and, of course, men—are invited to don a quirky pink outfit and take part in the fun walk and raise vital funds to help beat these women’s cancers. On 28 October, the Pullman Reef Hotel Casino in Cairns will host a Pink Ribbon event with a breakfast, door prizes and guest speakers. There will also be a reflection room where people can remember loved ones lost to cancer, or simply reflect on what cancer means to them.

In the Northern Peninsula Area, the charity Jog for Jugs is holding its second fundraising fun run, finishing at Pajinka, which is right up on the far northern tip of the Australian landmass. This year's event is a non-competitive beach jog for all ages, supporting the Breast Cancer Network Australia and the National Breast Cancer Foundation. I had the pleasure of flying back to Cairns from Horn Island in the Torres Strait on QantasLink a couple of weeks ago with an all female crew. The pilots were wearing pink epaulettes as part of the #weflypink campaign in support of breast cancer awareness and research. Money was raised through the crews to contribute to this charity. What a great initiative—a big thumbs up to QantasLink and the Captain Alana Curtin, First Officer Shelly Groves and flight attendants Janaye and Juliana for their participation.

It is also not too late to volunteer to help the Cancer Council Queensland sell Pink Ribbon merchandise from 22 to 26 October. You can volunteer as an individual or in a group, such as with friends and work colleagues, and you can even get your school involved. If you cannot volunteer then why not order a box of merchandise and sell it at your workplace? Full details of these events and fundraising activities are on my website and I encourage people to check them out.

Finally, I would like to pay full credit to those who have been actively involved in these campaigns. They are doing a fabulous job in raising awareness and much-needed funds. The money raised will go towards critical research, the promotion of preventative activities and providing meaningful support to people who are going through the cancer journey. I also congratulate the corporate partners who have come on board, raising the amount of awareness and exposure to another level. There is much that we can take out of the pink campaign when it comes to building awareness for a whole range of men’s health challenges, in particular prostate and testicular cancers. I commend the motion.

Ms BURKE (Chisholm) (11:58): I congratulate the member for Leichhardt for his discussion on this very pertinent issue, and the member for Calwell for bringing this motion before the House. Tragically, 42 Australians are diagnosed with breast cancer every day. More tragically, seven Australians die every day as a result of breast cancer. I am sure there is not a person in this parliament who has not been touched by this disease. Breast cancer is the most common type of cancer diagnosed among women, and the second most common cause of cancer-related deaths amongst women.

The National Breast Cancer Foundation and the Breast Cancer Institute do an exceptional job supporting clinical research of treatments, raising awareness about breast cancer risks, encouraging early detection and supporting breast cancer survivors, their families and carers.
Cancer is an insidious killer in our community and it will eventually be beaten through the sort of extensive research which is funded because of the work of these organisations.

I would also like to mention at this point the contribution of my friend Maxine Morand, who recently retired her position as the CEO of the National Breast Cancer Foundation. Maxine is known to many people in my electorate as the former state member for Mount Waverley, which sits within my electorate of Chisholm. I have known Maxine for many years. Maxine was also Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development in the Victorian government led by John Brumby. She previously worked for the Cancer Council of Australia and is a nurse by training. Maxine is also a breast cancer survivor herself. After she left parliament, not of her own choosing, she thought she would have a holiday—but no, she was diagnosed with breast cancer. At the end of that she took on the challenging role of CEO of the Breast Cancer Foundation in November 2011. She did so after undergoing her treatment, to give back from her experiences both in the state government and in research and, more importantly, as a survivor. I thank Maxine for the role that she undertook there, because it was a great foundation—Lyn Swinburne did a phenomenal job and is a tireless worker in this area—but Maxine brought much to it. I, as I said, have been touched by the ravages of breast cancer—not personally but, sadly, because I lost my mother-in-law to it at the tender age of 65. She had it, was treated and was fine but got one of those insidious secondaries in a lung and did not survive. She only met one of her many beautiful grandchildren. She died too soon.

While the importance of finding a cure for breast cancer and doing everything we can to prevent it cannot be undervalued, there is also an enormous amount of work that needs to be done to support people diagnosed with breast cancer and those who have survived the illness. A large number of organisations devote their energies to supporting these women and men and their families. My electorate is home to an amazing organisation called Knitted Knockers Australia, which was co-founded by Cheryl Webster at the Burwood Neighbourhood House.

Knitted Knockers is a wonderful organisation that has grown out of a community project. It has become a national operation that supports women after they have had a mastectomy by providing free knitted 'knockers'. That is right—free knitted implants. Knitted Knockers Australia's motto is 'Communities helping women'. Inspired by Knitted Knockers in the United States, where it began, the Australian organisation now has over 7,000 registered volunteer knitters. Each is provided with a kit that includes everything they need to make a knitted breast prosthesis. The kit includes a ball of 100 per cent cotton, hobby filler and the knitting pattern. They come in various shapes and sizes, as do women's breasts. These kits are produced and distributed by Knitted Knockers head office out of the Burwood Neighbourhood House and distributed to a growing network of smaller branches across Australia—indeed, you might be surprised to find that there is one in your electorate—that supply them to knitting volunteers. The volunteers return the completed prostheses to the head office or the local branch. They are then distributed free to registered prosthesis recipients. There is a rigorous production and delivery schedule, with all products going through a national quality control check before they are provided for free to registered recipients. The only cost is postage.

There are many issues facing women who undergo a mastectomy, including issues of self-esteem and self-consciousness. There is also a three- to six-month wait time before silicone
prostheses can be fitted after surgery. For many women a silicone prosthesis, or reconstructive surgery, is simply too expensive, and many find the prostheses too heavy or too hot to deal with. Knitted Knockers provide an amazing selection. They are very hygienic, very soft and very serviceable. They are light and made of natural fibre. This is a community activity inspired by individuals who have also been touched by this insidious disease. Unsurprisingly there is a very high demand: over 3,500 prostheses have already been given out in 12 months alone, and the biggest issue is keeping up with demand. I congratulate Cheryl Webster and Julie Weaver, who have founded this amazing group that is providing so much emotional support to women in need in my community.

Mr SIMPKINS (Cowan) (12:03): I welcome the opportunity to speak on this motion, as in Cowan and all the way round this country this is unfortunately a very big issue for Australian women and their families. Before speaking specifically about breast cancer awareness, I note that the reality is that the most commonly diagnosed cancers, excluding non-melanoma skin cancers, are prostate cancer, followed by bowel cancer, then breast cancer, melanoma and lung cancer. Although there are more than 100 different types of cancers, these five most common types account for 60 per cent of all cancers. It is hard to see a positive side to these issues but it is true that progress is being made.

When I think of this form of cancer, I think it is important to acknowledge that breast cancer awareness and its advocates have achieved great progress in that awareness, and I say that about all the forms of cancer. So many more people are talking about cancer and contributing towards fundraising for research. I really do believe that it has been the campaigns regarding breast cancer awareness that have led the way in the conversation about cancers. Really, the legacy of Jane McGrath and our cricketers wearing pink together with Pink Ribbon Day demonstrate the high level of awareness that has been achieved for breast cancer; also that success has encouraged so many more to talk about the other forms of cancer. Most Australians would now know that about one per cent of breast cancer diagnoses occur among men, and that would not have been the case before.

I will go now to the facts that surround breast cancer, and it is sobering. The statistics show that one in eight women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime. Worse again is that seven women a day in Australia die from breast cancer. Again, when I think of such figures, the impact on families is profound. Across the country, these figures mean that in this year there are expected to be 15,600 women diagnosed with breast cancer and it is predicted that in 2020 the figure will be 17,210—or 47 a day. On a personal level, I am grateful that there is, to the best of my knowledge, no history of this type of cancer in my family. Sadly, that is not the case for many other families; therefore, the need for research must always be there.

In preparing for this speech, I have become better informed myself. I know that the strongest risk factors are increasing age, with more than two-thirds of breast cancer cases occurring in women aged between 40 and 69 years. The figures also underline that Australian women diagnosed with breast cancer have an 89 per cent chance of surviving five years after diagnosis, and that is certainly good news. This motion is about awareness and now more women survive breast cancer because of earlier detection through regular mammograms and, of course, the developments and improvements of treatments.
With regard to the awareness of the disease, most Australians would be able to say that breast cancer is in fact a malignant tumour that originates in the cells of the breast. These cells grow abnormally and multiply, developing into cancerous growths and can spread or metastasise to other areas of the body. There are, of course, different forms of breast cancer. There are several types and subtypes. The main types are non-invasive breast cancers, which are contained within the milk ducts or lobules in the breast. Invasive breast cancers are cancers that grow in the normal, healthy breast tissue, the nipples and even in the blood vessels. These types often spread to the lymph nodes and elsewhere around the body, as in the insidious stage 4 or advanced breast cancer.

Apart from early detection, the other point I will make in conclusion is the reduction of risk. Although age and, to a lesser degree, family history are the main risk factors, it is generally considered that the reduction of alcohol intake is beneficial. Research says that there is a strong link and that no more than two standard drinks a day is recommended. Maintaining a healthy weight throughout one's life is also recommended. Research also shows that even moderate exercise is beneficial in the reduction of the risk. Even breastfeeding for the first three months is considered to be a way to reduce the risk. Finally, it is recommended that you have five serves of vegetables and two of fruit a day. Of course, that should be everyone's aim, not only with regard to the scourge of breast cancer.

Certainly from my reading on this motion, I have found the figures for the number of women diagnosed each year and those who lose the fight each year disturbing. I am, however, encouraged by the profile and level of awareness that does already exist. Good research and better understanding of the risk factors allow more people to act to reduce the threat of breast cancer and to achieve early detection. That is certainly good news. There is, however, no time for complacency and I certainly support the great work of the National Breast Cancer Foundation and all those dedicated to the eradication of deaths from breast cancer by 2030.

Mr HAYES (Fowler—Chief Opposition Whip) (12:08): October is national Breast Cancer Awareness Month. I thank my colleague the member for Calwell Ms Maria Vamvakinou for raising this very important issue in the chamber today. We all know somebody who has been diagnosed with breast cancer. The prevalence of this invasive condition has swept the country at an alarming rate and, from the records over the last three decades, affects people of all ages and, surprisingly, all genders. While the condition is much less common in males, breast cancer is the most common type of cancer among Australian women. On average, one in eight Australian females will develop breast cancer, and one in 37 females will die from breast cancer before turning 85 years of age. If you put that into a broader context, it means that more than 12,700 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer each year and more than 2,600 will lose their lives to this malignant disease.

In 2011 there were a little over 14,500 new cases of breast cancer. Of them, interestingly, 103 were males. This year the National Breast Cancer Foundation has estimated that there will be 15,740 new cases, with this figure expected to grow to over 17,000 by the year 2020. This disturbingly high number is not only indicative of the epidemic of breast cancer that is becoming very significant throughout our communities; it also points to the need to raise awareness to reduce the impact of breast cancer on Australian women—and men, for that matter—and particularly to assist their families.
While the cause of breast cancer is not necessarily fully understood at the moment, we do know that age is a significant factor associated with the development of this disease. According to the study conducted by Cancer Australia in 2008, more than half of breast cancers in Australian females were diagnosed between the ages of 50 and 69, one in eight were diagnosed in ages 70 and over, while just under one in four were diagnosed in women under the age of 50. The risk of developing breast cancer can clearly be seen to be age related; however, approximately five to 10 per cent of breast cancers are due to genetic mutations arising from very strong family histories.

I learnt much about this disease earlier this year when my mother, who is 86 years of age, found, through a mammogram, that she had a cancerous growth. We went through the issues of having a lumpectomy and radiation treatment. Notwithstanding that her identical twin sister had had her breasts removed some 40 years earlier, Mum thought that at 86 she was past that. She was just having a periodic mammogram when the cancer was revealed. This shows that simply having reached a significant age is not something that should be used as an excuse for avoiding the unpleasantness of a mammogram. Irrespective of age, we encourage women to regularly attend mammogram screening, because it is early diagnosis and treatment that enhances survival rates.

Since the introduction of mammographic screening programs through BreastScreen Australia, approximately 4,500 breast cancer cases have been diagnosed each and every year. This early intervention has certainly improved survival rates. Eighty-nine out of every 100 women diagnosed with breast cancer survive five or more years beyond diagnosis. That is a pretty significant number that shows that we are getting on top of it. But it is only through early intervention.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Breast Cancer Foundation and the Breast Cancer Institute of Australia for all their endeavours in supporting this important research and their efforts to find a cure for this insidious disease.

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (12:14): I too rise to speak in favour of the motion that has been moved today by the member for Calwell. I want to take this opportunity to place on the record some of the amazing work that has been done in my electorate and in my community of Bendigo—not just for the women and the families affected by this disease, this cancer, but also what they are doing for women and families around the country. This is an important motion, and it is my privilege to stand here and speak to this motion today. Being Breast Cancer Awareness Month, it is an important time to put on the record not only the great work that Breast Cancer Australia does but also the great work that is going on in our communities and the great work that our health professionals provide to women and their families who find themselves in these circumstances.

What many may not know is that the Otis Foundation, a foundation that provides respite opportunities and quality care for women who are suffering from breast cancer, is based in my electorate. Its home is in Bendigo. The Otis Foundation was inspired by Judy Burley, who passed away at a very young age of breast cancer. She was 29 when she was diagnosed. She had a vision that she wanted to deliver places of peace, nurturing and comfort for those who were in similar circumstances. Otis, the name of the foundation and of the first home where women could go seeking an opportunity to have respite, is named after her much beloved puppy dog. So it is that local story that we all know too well.
The Otis Foundation provides retreats for anybody living with the challenges of breast cancer for a non-accommodation charge, and they currently have retreats in Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia. They provide time to relax, reconnect and regroup. Families, friends and partners are also welcome. I can remember speaking to a single mum about how important this was for her during her pre-operation and post-operation treatments and how important it was for her young family to be able to have that space just to escape, free of charge, to be able to reconnect, come together and help to really bond and share stories during this tough time.

The facts about breast cancer we have all heard during this debate. One in nine Australian women in their lifetime is at risk of developing breast cancer. The average age for the first diagnosis of breast cancer in women is 60 years of age, and that is why, as previous speakers have said, it is so critical that we have early testing and early support programs, early diagnosis for women and for their families who are dealing with the issue and the health-related issues associated with breast cancer.

What we are also learning though is that as time goes on more and more younger women are developing and are being diagnosed with breast cancer, including one woman and her family who I would like to highlight. They are part of the Otis Foundation's focus for 2015, which is called Kez's Hideaway. Kez's Hideaway is an amazing homestead that is being built by the Otis Foundation near Bendigo in memory of Kerri Gray. In March 2011, local builder Paul Gray lost his wife to breast cancer, and she was young. Kerri, or Kez as she was known, planted the seeds for Kez's Hideaway with Paul, telling him that he should do something for Otis and to perhaps build a home for the Otis Foundation, recalling fondly how important it was to have the time away together that they had when she was quite ill with breast cancer. Paul and generous land donors the Campbell family have teamed up with the Otis Foundation to start fundraising. The good news is the building of Kez's Hideaway is well under construction and will be complete this year.

This month, being Breast Cancer Awareness Month, I would like to acknowledge not just the great work for Kez's Hideaway, but also the great work of the Otis Foundation, which is proudly at home in Bendigo. It is important that we not only tackle this disease and make sure there are resources for research but also, more importantly, that we make sure there are support services and great opportunities and respite services, which is what the Otis Foundation offers to women and their families from across Australia.

Debate adjourned.

**Australian Defence Force**

Mrs GRIGGS (Solomon) (12:19): I move:

That this House:

(1) recognises that:

(a) the Government is investing in significant new capabilities for the Australian Defence Force (ADF);

(b) these capabilities include but are not limited to the acquisition of Boeing P-8A Poseidon aircraft, Northrop Grumman MQ-4C Triton unmanned aircraft, 58 more Lockheed Martin F-35 Lightning II joint strike fighters and two new Boeing C-17A Globemaster III transport aircraft; and
(c) the former Government’s cuts to Defence funding led to 119 projects being delayed, 43 degraded and 8 cancelled; and
(2) notes the importance of providing our ADF personnel the equipment and capabilities they need to perform their roles.

As I have said many times in this place, the men and women of the Australian Defence Force make incredible sacrifices in the interests of our country. Members of the Royal Australian Navy, the Royal Australian Army and the Royal Australian Air Force willingly take on risks and burdens that no other employee in any other workforce sector would ever have to deal with—frequent relocations, long periods away from home, physically gruelling work and of course the risks that come with combat operations. Because they give so much for Australia, because they sign up knowing they may be called upon to put their lives on the line, we owe them a duty.

A big part of that duty is making sure they have the tools and equipment they need to do the job. In the last term of government, the Labor Party spectacularly failed in this area, treating Defence as a piggy bank that they could break open again and again to cover up their general economic mismanagement. They cut $16 billion from the portfolio, sending Defence spending to its lowest level since 1938. As a direct consequence of that, 119 Defence projects were delayed, 43 were reduced and eight were cancelled completely. I am pleased to note that, since the coalition government came to office in 2013, the men and women of the Defence Force are once again getting the equipment they need to do their jobs. Over the 2015-16 period, $7.2 billion is being invested in Defence. This is great news for our Defence Force.

The coalition government is committed to a continuous shipbuilding program and the building of future frigates in Australia. This is in contrast to the Labor Party, who sat on their hands and did nothing for four years after a new submarine was listed in the 2009 Defence white paper. The coalition government has brought forward the Future Frigate program by three years and the offshore patrol vessels by two years. These two measures alone will sustain around a thousand jobs in the short term and guarantee around 2,500 shipbuilding jobs over the longer term. Not only is this good news for our Navy, providing them with the state-of-the-art vessels they need when they need them, this is good for our economy. By committing to a continuous build process, we have provided investment surety to investors and workers in our national shipbuilding industry. It is worth noting that the last time a Labor government commissioned a major naval vessel in an Australian shipyard, the Berlin Wall was still standing. This is proof that only under a coalition government do our ADF capabilities prosper.

Australian defence capabilities are being upgraded by this government. The coalition government announced earlier this year the acquisition of an additional two Boeing C-17A Globemaster aircraft, taking the total size of that fleet from six to eight. This is important because the C-17s are known for their assistance not only in Operation Queensland Flood Assist but in Operation Christchurch Assist and in Operation Bring Them Home—just to name a few. Other capabilities that the coalition government has invested in include two additional KC-30A Multi Role Tanker Transport aircraft, an additional eight joint strike fighter aircraft—which are due for delivery in 2018—and eight P-8A Poseidon maritime surveillance aircraft, as well as the acquisition of the highly capable Triton unmanned aerial
vehicle. Most recently, Prime Minister Turnbull, along with Defence Minister Payne, announced a $1.3 billion agreement for 1,100 locally built Hawkei protected military vehicles to be manufactured in Bendigo—I note the member for Bendigo was here earlier. This long-term investment helps further secure the industry in Australia.

Just as our soldiers, sailors and airmen will look after this equipment, this government is looking after our Defence personnel. I am proud to stand here as a member of the coalition government which is delivering for our nation and for the men and women of our armed forces. Madam Deputy Speaker Prentice, I know that you are also a very strong advocate for our Defence Force and that your son is a member of the Defence Force. Thank you very much.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Prentice): Is the motion seconded?

Mr Simpkins: I second the motion.

Mr CONROY (Charlton) (12:25): I rise to speak on this motion with regret and sadness that yet again the coalition are politicising Defence. They cannot help themselves. I do submit that the member for Solomon is a repeat offender in this affair of politicising Defence. We saw the now member for Canning trying to do that during his by-election, and that was most unfortunate. I do not question the commitment to the Australian Defence Force of anyone in the House of Representatives or in the Senate, but yet again we hear it. Unfortunately, it is based on a house of sand. The facts do not support their criticisms of Labor in power in terms of supporting ADF capabilities. In fact, despite all the trumpet-blowing on the other side, the coalition governments have been very poor managers of capability acquisitions. You only have to look at history, you only have to look at ANAO reports and you only have to look at DMO statistics to see it. That is the truth. Of the top 30 acquisition projects as listed in the DMO Major Projects Report, 87 per cent of the schedule slippage in those platforms occurred in projects approved by coalition governments—87 per cent, which is a cumulative 81 years of deferred capability for those platforms, occurring in projects approved by the coalition government.

The coalition have been awful procurement managers. Unfortunately, it is the ADF who suffer, because these capabilities have been deferred by 81 years. I could give you example after example, and, luckily, I have three minutes to do so. Of the 10 projects that are on the Projects of Concern list administered by the Department of Defence, all 10 were approved by coalition governments. They were approved by coalition governments in such a way that doomed them to delays in capability and doomed them to cost overruns. The poster child of this poor policymaking is the Seasprite. It was approved by the John Howard government in 1997 at a cost of $1.4 billion. Ultimately, it had to be scrapped because the program was based on trying to implant 2000 avionic systems on 1960s platforms and marry them with a missile system completely foreign to that platform. It is an acquisition that was doomed from the start, and it took a Labor government to realise that and say that $1.4 billion had been spent and enough was enough.

The Wedgetail project is another example where the Howard government signed up to a project for which the specifications detailed—as the Department of Defence freely admit—broke the laws of physics. That project was delivered 6½ years late. The project was delivered, and the Wedgetail is a fine platform, but it is not the platform that was signed up for, and it was 6½ years late. The FFG upgrade is another example where the specifications
signed off by the Howard government exceeded the laws of physics. It was only a Labor
government—which got the contractors, DMO and Navy talking—that were able to resolve
the problems, because ultimately it is Labor governments that are serious about Defence
reform and serious about delivering those capabilities. I am glad that the previous speaker
talked about the Hawkei project. It is a great project, and I am glad that the coalition
government came on board, finally, on this project, but it was a Labor government and
Minister Combet who stood up to entrenched interests that wanted the army to accept the US
JLTV platform and not give the local option a serious go. Labor made sure that Thales at
Bendigo had a serious go at bidding for it. They won, and that is great news. I stand by
Labor’s record on Defence reform, on reforming the DMO, and on instituting the projects of
concern process. All of these things have fundamentally improved Defence acquisition and
sustainment in this country.

In the time remaining, I just want to refute some claims made by the previous speaker. We
did start work on the Future Submarine project. We spent over $200 million de-risking the
project, investing in the early planning work necessary to make sure that the platform can be
delivered. On the shipbuilding valley of death, the coalition government did nothing in two
years. They have finally been dragged, kicking and screaming, to the table. We had a plan in
2013 that would have solved the problem. We awarded major AWD module contracts to BAE
Systems in Williamstown and Forgacs in the Hunter Valley, which were delivering work
courtesy of a Labor government. I do not diminish the commitment of the coalition members
to the ADF; I just wish they would spend less time politicising this issue and more time
supporting the troops.

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (12:30): Madam Deputy Speaker Griggs, I thank you, as the
member for Solomon, for putting this motion on the Notice Paper and, importantly, for your
ongoing advocacy and support for the men and women of our Australian Defence Force, who
are tasked with protecting Australia’s interests here and abroad. They perform a difficult and
challenging role. In doing so, they uphold the traditions of courage, professionalism and
mateship that have characterised the men and women of our defence forces for more than a
hundred years.

However, in order to continue to provide effective defence of our nation, our ADF
personnel need to be equipped and resourced to deal with contemporary threats. Those threats
are continually evolving. In this year, the centenary of the Anzac landing at Gallipoli, we
reflect not only on the sacrifice of those men and women 100 years ago but also on how
different our defence forces look today. When the world changes, the ADF needs to change
with it. Investment in new capabilities is needed. This requires foresight and planning, but,
importantly, it also requires appropriate resourcing by government. It is on this particular
point that the former government was found wanting.

As the motion notes—and as you point out, Member for Solomon—the former
government’s cut to defence funding led to 119 projects being delayed, 43 degraded and eight
cancelled. In a time of evolving global threats, Labor cut $16 billion from defence, with
defence spending as a percentage of GDP falling to its lowest level since 1938. In 2012-13
alone, Labor cut the defence budget by 10.5 per cent. Cuts of this magnitude have profound,
long-lasting effects. Due to long lead times in defence project development and procurement,
year-to-year funding uncertainty can have severe effects on the wider defence industry. Under
Labor, the Australian defence industry were forced to cut more than 10 per cent of their workforce. Much of this was due to budget cuts, deferrals and the lack of opportunity for Australian suppliers.

Defence spending requires patience and a steady hand. Sadly, Labor delivered neither. The new Minister for Defence has inherited some big challenges, and I have every confidence that she can rise to the challenge. As a government, we are taking action to right the resourcing and procurement wrongs of the former government. This year, we are investing $7.2 billion in defence equipment, double the amount Labor spent in 2012-13.

Part of this spending will fund the acquisition of an additional two C17 Globemaster transport aircraft, and I am pleased to note that, by the end of this year, these aircraft will join 36 Squadron's existing fleet of six C7 Globemasters, based at RAAF Base Amberley, in Brisbane. Recently I had the chance to inspect the new base at RAAF Base Amberley on committee business, and I was very impressed by the new facilities there. C17 Globemasters are versatile aircraft and have provided valuable support for our military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as humanitarian missions closer to home.

In a boost to Army capability earlier this year, an open request for tender was released for phase 2 of the Defence project known as LAND 400. This project will not just replace and upgrade Australia's fleet of armoured fighting vehicles but also introduce new levels of protection, firepower and mobility for our soldiers. Once procurement is complete, our military will have a fleet of vehicles that is more modern, better equipped and more flexible in responding to the challenges of modern conflicts.

Earlier this month we saw further investment in ADF capability with the announcement of a $1.3 billion agreement to procure Hawkei protected vehicles. Over 1,100 vehicles and 1,000 trailers will be purchased under the agreement. This decision will directly benefit the men and women at Gallipoli Barracks, in my electorate of Ryan. The Hawkei offer increased protection from the improvised explosive devices that are such a ubiquitous and devastating part of modern warfare. Despite their improved shielding, however, they are light enough to be transported by ADF helicopters. In a boost for Australian manufacturing, the vehicles will be built in Bendigo.

In the words of the Prime Minister: the government has no higher responsibility than the protection of the nation—and it is a responsibility that we take very seriously. I pay tribute to the men and women of the Australian Defence Force and, in particular, to the more than 5,000 living and working in Ryan. They put their lives on the line to keep us safe. In response, we have an obligation to provide them with the resources to do their job. The investments this government is making will ensure they have the equipment and capabilities they need to do just that. I commend the motion to the House.

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (12:35): I rise today to speak about Australia's defence force and what a world-class defence force it is. I too pay tribute to their professionalism, their dedication and their commitment and say thank you. I note that members opposite are speaking about defence equipment and its role in supporting our Australian Defence Force. I acknowledge that high-quality hardware capability is essential, but what this private member's motion fails to recognise is that the ADF's biggest asset is not its Joint Strike Fighters or its Globemasters. The ADF's single biggest asset is its people—the men and women of the
Defence Force. It is their courage, their dedication and their bravery that makes our Defence Force what it is today.

There are currently more than 2,000 ADF men and women deployed overseas. We have personnel deployed to the Middle East, the Sudan, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Afghanistan and the southern Indian Ocean. These men and women often spend months, sometimes years, away from their families and their loved ones. Often they are risking their lives to protect us and our national interests. We owe them so much. One of the most fundamental ways that a government can acknowledge and thank our ADF members is to ensure that they and their families are treated with respect and provided with decent pay and conditions. That is particularly the case, I believe, when Australia has personnel deployed overseas. That is why I was so outraged, that is why Labor was so outraged, when this government—those opposite—tried to cut the pay and conditions of ADF personnel last year. It was not just me or the Labor Party who was outraged; it was also the crossbenchers, it was defence associations and it was community members. Everyone was outraged.

Thankfully for ADF personnel, the government, after much pressure from this side of the House and from those community and defence organisations, reversed its unfair decision to cut their wages and conditions. However, we still have the issue of paid parental leave. Those opposite are looking at cutting paid parental leave for ADF men and women. So, in the tradition of what those opposite did with the pay and conditions of ADF personnel, I implore them to reverse their decision, on paid parental leave. These people are not double-dippers, as has been suggested by some ministers in the government. These people are hardworking ADF men and women, serving our nation. This is a condition they have fought hard and long for, and I urge those opposite to reverse the decision, as they did, at Labor’s behest, when they reversed the decision on pay and conditions.

I now go to the member’s motion on the importance of providing our ADF personnel with the equipment and capabilities they need to perform their roles. This is vitally important. So let us look at some kit. Let us talk about some capability. For starters, let us look at Australia’s future submarine fleet. While those opposite stand here praising the government for its acquisitions, how about we look at the largest defence procurement program in Australia’s history—the Future Submarine Program. Before the last election, Liberal and Labor both promised that the submarines would be built in Australia. Yet, now we are seeing the Liberal government walk away from its commitment to build 12 submarines here in Australia, and that is despite the fact that defence experts have come out in support of an Australian build—experts like Dr John White, who earlier this year said:

… if we truly analyse all aspects of the project we will have a lower cost to the government from an all-build in Australia …

Under this government, more than 1,000 workers have lost their jobs at shipyards around the country, and thousands more jobs remain at risk. Those opposite must act to support workers and ensure that these skills and capabilities are not lost forever. It is vital that we have these skills in this country to sustain this capability. It is in our national interest. It is a national security issue. Even the former defence minister has criticised this government’s track record to date saying:

… defence is meant to be a ‘natural strength’ for a coalition government. During this government, that has not always been the case.
I urge the government to stand up for Australia's defence industry, to back Australia's defence industry and to commit to building our 12 future submarines here in Australia.

I also want to take this very brief opportunity to commend the government on its decision to buy 1,100 Hawkei vehicles and 1,000 trailers made by Thales in Bendigo, and I commend the member for Bendigo for the great work she has done on that front.

I refute the part of this motion that aims to trash Labor's track record; instead, I call on the government to back Australia's defence industry and build our submarines here. (Time expired)

Mrs SUDMALIS (Gilmore) (12:40): Everyone knows that the world we live in has increasingly become an area of concern. Australia needs to have a continuing program of investment in our defence resources. This is of significance in terms of both personnel and equipment. Over time, some governments have chosen to see the defence budget and forward estimates as a revenue piggy bank and have cut allocations to shore up growing debt levels, removing $16 billion from the defence budget. This, however, is not the action of a responsible government. The former Labor government's cuts to defence led to 119 projects being delayed, 43 downgraded and eight cancelled. The wheels, the wings and the propellers of our defence force—that is, strategic equipment—can be up to 10 years in the planning and execution phases. It really is an ineffective government that chooses to ditch essential strategic planning for our defence capability. Whilst personnel in defence are always extremely reluctant to put their opinions forward in terms of policy advice, unless in a formal setting, many less formal conversations have indicated a level of frustration that could and should be avoided by a strong level of bipartisanship. After all, defence should be separate from politics and not used as a policy football or a debt reduction piggy bank.

The coalition government's investment of $7.2 million for defence equipment, with some specific projects worthy of note, needs to be outlined to reflect just how seriously the coalition views the need to build and maintain our capability. On 5 August 2015, the Prime Minister and the Minister for Defence announced that the Australian government will purchase 1,100 locally built Hawkei protected vehicles and over 1,000 trailers to strengthen that force. Under the $1.3 billion agreement, the vehicles will be manufactured at Thales, Australia's production line in Bendigo, creating 170 jobs there and another 60 also in Victoria. The Hawkei will improve the protection of our soldiers, and the relatively lightweight construction will enable them to operate in high-risk areas. It is the only protected mobility vehicle in the Australian Defence Force that can be transported by ADF helicopters. The coalition government continues to invest in the skills and knowledge base of the defence industry. This long-term investment has helped secure this important industry's future here in Australia.

In April, this year, the coalition announced the decision to acquire two additional Boeing C17A Globemaster III aircraft, taking the total size of the fleet to eight. The aircraft purchase and the associated equipment and facilities represent a $1 billion investment in Australia's security and our ability to respond to events rapidly. Some $300 million dollars of this investment will be spent on new and upgraded facilities at their home base at RAAF Base Amberley in Queensland, generating significant opportunities for local industry. The C17 is a heavy transport aircraft that allows the RAAF to rapidly deploy troops, supplies, combat vehicles, heavy equipment and helicopters to anywhere in the world. They have a maximum carrying capacity of 77 tonnes, or three times as much as the C130 Hercules.

FEDERATION CHAMBER
The aircraft can carry an M1 Abrams main battle tank or four Bushmaster vehicles or three Black Hawk helicopters operating medical evacuation capacity or deliver a significant amount of humanitarian aid. C17s were the backbone of the air link for Operation Slipper in Afghanistan, delivering supplies and equipment to our troops. The versatile aircraft is capable of operating to and from relatively short dirt airstrips. Together with the Super Hornet and the Growler electronic warfare aircraft, the Joint Strike Fighter will ensure Australia maintains a regional air combat edge. It will also provide a major boost to the Australian Defence Force intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities. These first two aircraft were delivered late in 2014. Australia’s first Joint Strike Fighter pilot completed training in April this year and has now been joined by Australia’s second pilot, who commenced F35 flying training in June.

The next eight joint strike fighters are due for delivery in Australia in 2018. By 2020 Australia’s current fleet of 71 classic Hornets will be over 35 years old, and the coalition government will not allow a capability gap to occur. Around $1.5 billion in new facilities and infrastructure will be constructed at the RAAF base at Williamtown in New South Wales and the RAAF base at Tindal in the Northern Territory. Australian Defence Industries has been awarded over US$480 million as at April this year and stands to win in excess of another $1.5 billion for joint strike fighter-related production and support work over the life of the program, creating long-term advanced manufacturing and engineering jobs. We need to ensure this continuity of defence expenditure from both sides of government and be truly bipartisan. The coalition has a vision for long-term defence capability and the political will to allocate and confirm investment to give confidence to our essential personnel to do their best.

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (12:45): It is great to hear members of the government acknowledging the top work that goes on in Bendigo at the Thales manufacturing facility. It is great to hear them recognise the hard work of so many men and women at the Bendigo Thales facility, where we have proudly built the Bushmaster and now have the opportunity to build the Hawkei defence vehicle. Everybody acknowledges what this vehicle will be able to do. I agree with one part of this motion—where it notes the importance of providing ADF personnel with the equipment and the capability they need to perform the ir roles. We need to acknowledge from the beginning the importance of ensuring that our ADF personnel have the equipment and the capability to do one of the toughest jobs you can be asked to do in this country.

I do want to set the record straight on a few things, particularly when it comes to Hawkei. This contract to develop the prototype was first awarded under the former Labor government. Defence manufacturing is not simply ‘Let's go to a shop and buy a product off-the-shelf.’ In defence procurement, first and foremost the Defence Materiel Organisation makes a decision about what product or vehicle they wish to purchase. The opportunity to develop the Hawkei vehicle prototype and do the testing was first awarded to the Bendigo Thales facility by the former Labor government. The prototype was developed, tested and handed over to Jason Clare, who was the Minister for Defence Materiel under the former Labor government. After the change of government, it took two years before this government would sign the Hawkei contract which would give the men and women of Bendigo the opportunity to continue to build the vehicle. Unfortunately this does not create 170 new jobs but it does secure the existing jobs that we have in Bendigo—high-skilled, high-paid defence manufacturing jobs.
Now that we have this $1.3 billion contract we are hoping that we will have some new apprentices in the factory, because that is what we have missed out on the last two years. The delay in this government putting a signature to paper has meant we have had no new apprentices at the Bendigo Thales facility for the last two years. This is a shame. Many people in Bendigo did their apprenticeship at the old ordnance factory, today known as Bendigo Thales. We are hoping that, with this contract finally being locked in, apprenticeships will start up again at the facility.

This government has also failed with uniforms. At the Australian Defence Apparel facility in Bendigo we also manufacture the uniforms that the men and women of our ADF wear overseas. The former Labor government awarded contracts solely to Australian manufacturers. When the contract came up for the utility belt—again, something that has been designed and tested at the Bendigo ADA facility—rather than having it manufactured here in this country this government signed a contract so ADA could import the belt. They were to have it manufactured overseas in Vietnam and import it. Even although we had the capability in Bendigo and Coburg, this government said they would go for option three—100 per cent import with manufacture overseas. That is a disgrace when we have the capability to manufacture here in this country.

That is not the only case where this government has dropped the ball when it comes to defence procurement and locking in good quality manufacturing jobs in this country. We have to mention the debacle around submarines. Both parties committed before the last election to manufacture subs in Australia. Yet one party is continuing to drag its feet. Labor is committed to what we committed to at the last election—to have these 12 subs built in this country. Delays by this government are costing jobs. We have heard that a thousand workers have lost their jobs in shipbuilding yards. Every day this government delays on defence manufacturing, we see more jobs lost.

I will finish where I began. I am relieved that this government finally signed the Hawkei contract—at five minutes to midnight—before we saw job losses in Bendigo. It is great news for us, but other towns should have the same opportunity for defence manufacturing and procurement.

Debate adjourned.

Domestic and Family Violence

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (12:51): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) inconsistencies exist between federal and state court procedures in relation to the direct cross examination of a victim by an accused person;

(b) specific state laws are in place to prevent an accused person from directly cross examining their victim in sexual offence cases and, in some states, family violence protection order cases—in such cases, an accused person must have legal representation to cross examine the victim;

(c) in family law cases nationally, there are no legislative protections to prevent an alleged perpetrator of violence who is unrepresented, from directly cross examining their victim; and
(d) intimate partner violence is the top risk factor for death, disability and illness in women aged 15 to 44—the added fear and trauma of cross examination by an alleged or known perpetrator of violence is a continuation of violence; and

(2) calls on the Government to amend family law legislation to ensure that in situations of family violence, an unrepresented litigant alleged or known to have perpetrated violence is unable to directly cross examine the victim.

There are three issues I will speak about today. The first is that victims of family violence, when giving evidence in the Family Court, must be protected from direct cross-examination by the alleged perpetrator. The second is the devastating impact on victims such cross-examination can have. Thirdly, I call on the Attorney-General to act swiftly in this matter and to amend the Family Law Act to protect these victims.

Many victims are living in fear in their own homes. Imagine a victim of such violence, having finally got out of such a situation and having got the children out as well, then being exposed to further violence from their abuser in the Family Court system. The approach is inconsistent between state and federal jurisdictions in this regard. For example, a victim may be protected from cross-examination in Victoria when applying for a protection order but not be protected in the federal Family Law courts in Victoria in relation to essentially the same issues. This is the situation that faced Eleanor, a woman who was put in the terrible situation of being directly cross-examined by her partner in court. She said:

I am someone who has had direct experience when escaping a perpetrator of violence, then having to deal with the complexity of the system in keeping my children and myself safe from my abuser … My perpetrator was a self-litigant and was allowed to directly cross-examine me in our family law hearing.

Eleanor, sadly, is not alone.

The Women's Legal Service Australia and many other support groups have long been advocating for vulnerable witness protection to be included in the Family Law Act. In June this year, the Women's Legal Service Victoria made a submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence. It recommended the federal government amend the Family Law Act to include legislative protections for vulnerable witnesses from direct cross-examination by a perpetrator of family violence. The concerns from these advocacy groups have largely been dismissed due to a belief this anomaly affected only a small group of people.

The Women's Legal Service Australia commissioned a survey to catalogue the experience of women—survivors and victims of domestic violence—being personally cross-examined by their abusers in Family Court proceedings. The survey was distributed nationally through their networks and social media in September this year and has provided some valuable insights into the issue of personal cross-examination. As of today, they have received 270 responses. The survey remains open until 31 December and I encourage people to contact their state women's legal service if they would like to contribute.

I will quote from the draft survey report. Victims have been saying: 'It felt like he was given a stick to beat me while everybody watched'; 'I was absolutely paralysed, fearful with anger'; 'I could not talk at all'; 'overwhelmed by feelings of fear, stress and anxiety'; 'the whole process was incredibly disempowering and exhausting'; 'it destroyed me'; 'I was physically ill on the side of the road on the way to the court'. Here we have traumatised and broken victims of family violence being exposed to violence all over again. COAG has made domestic violence a national priority. Governments are acting. I commend the Prime Minister for his
recent announcement of a $100 million package of measures to provide a safety net for women and children at high risk of experiencing domestic violence.

While the funding is welcome, there is a simple and powerful action the government can take now. The government can legislate to protect victims when giving evidence in the Family Court. When he made this announcement, the Prime Minister stated:

Women and children in Australia have the right to feel safe and live without fear of violence.

I agree. All victims have this right. Today I call on the government to move on this issue, to take immediate and urgent action to ensure that the Family Law Act includes specific protection for vulnerable witnesses, to stop direct cross-examination by a perpetrator or alleged perpetrator.

Finally, I would like to say thank you to Eleanor for her courage in sharing her story. And I take her call with pride to this House. Thank you.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Prentice): Thank you, Member for Indi. And I thank you for your proposal. Is there a seconder for the motion?

Mr Conroy: I second the motion.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Charlton. I call the member for Dobell.

Mrs McNAMARA (Dobell) (12:56): I thank the member for Indi for bringing this motion to the House. My support for the victims of domestic violence is well-documented both in this House and in my local community on the Central Coast. Many within this place and within my community would know that I am a strong advocate for the need for the government and the legal system to have policies and procedures in place that are responsive to the needs of the victim.

It is horrifying to acknowledge that intimate partner violence is the top risk factor for death, disability and illness in women aged 15 to 44. This blight on our community can and must be acted upon, and it must cease immediately. There is nothing more confronting for a victim than having to interact with the perpetrator in a formal court room setting. In my opinion, this is a continuation of an abusive relationship.

The strength and courage found by victims when they leave an abusive relationship is incomprehensible. As much support as possible needs to be provided to ensure the move they have made and the follow-on outcomes are not made any more traumatic. For an abuser to have the opportunity to cross-examine their victim in a formal court setting is unacceptable. This is why Commonwealth state and territory governments worked with the community to develop the 12-year National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children. The plan includes within its vision that Australian women and their children are able to live free from violence in safe communities, and that a significant and sustained reduction in violence against women and their children is actioned.

The Second Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children was launched on Friday 27 June. One of the main outcomes of the plan was to drive continuous improvement in systems across the Commonwealth and the state and territory governments through reviewing domestic and family violence related policies. Within the plan are actions to improve information sharing across court processes. Commonwealth state and territory governments are continuing to explore and implement methods to improve
collaboration and information sharing between court processes to achieve the best outcomes possible for victims.

The plan also involves initiatives that concentrate on the impact of victim-focused court practice reforms. I strongly support the call within this motion to amend family law legislation to ensure that in a situation of family violence an unrepresented litigant alleged or known to have perpetrated violence is legally prohibited from directly cross-examining a victim.

Improving the efficiency and the relevance of the justice system in response to domestic violence is an important aspect of the new reforms that form part of the national plan. I acknowledge the efforts of the states and territories in recognising that this is a problematic area, and solutions are being implemented to combat this issue.

With state modifications, complemented by Commonwealth government changes, it will soon be evident the issue of intimidation and confrontation in court rooms as a result of the cross-examination of a witness by a perpetrator has been taken seriously and remedied. Key initiatives such as specialist court responses, services and projects will help complement and support victims as they go through this difficult time. I am particularly supportive of the need for specialist services for child witnesses. The support of child witnesses in court proceedings is paramount, and it is pleasing to see that priority 3, action 16 of the plan specifically reiterates building support for children who have experienced, witnessed or been exposed to violence.

National priority 4 of the plan specifically addresses improving perpetrator interventions. This section reiterates that systems, including police, justice, corrections and community services, need to work together to increase the effectiveness of perpetrator interventions. It is important that this applies to all victims in the courtroom setting as well. Preventing and reducing violence against women and children requires strong legislation that is efficiently administered and holds perpetrators to account. We cannot provide an accused person with the opportunity to examine a victim in a court case. The implementation of strong legislation is a means of preventing this from occurring.

Violence against women and children can be defined in many different ways, with each state and territory having their own definition under their respective legislation. I am proud to be part of a government which takes the eradication of violence against women, children and in some cases men seriously. This is demonstrated in the recent announcements of over $100 million to fight the issue of domestic violence. As part of this announcement I will be campaigning to have a legal assistant service provider allocated to the Central Coast in the coming year. I commend everyone who is fighting against domestic and family violence.

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (13:01): I rise to speak on the motion put by the member for Indi and commend her for her interest and initiative in this area. Domestic violence is an enormous problem in this country and around the world. In Australia this year we have seen at least one woman dies every week at the hands of a current or former partner. We have seen some particularly troubling scenes in Queensland. One woman in three experiences physical violence. One woman in five experiences sexual violence. And men are not immune from experiencing this horrible scourge. Be they heterosexual or GLBTIQ, nobody is invulnerable, not even—it is horrible to say—the young students from FCJ College at Benalla who are here hearing the motion of the member for Indi debated.
A Family Law Council report released in August identifies data suggesting that over 60 per cent of parents experience preseparation violence and almost 20 per cent of parents report that they are concerned for the safety of themselves or their children as a result of ongoing contact with the other parent.

This year I have spoken to many family lawyers, community legal centres and litigants from Cairns to Perth, Adelaide, Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. I am constantly told of the ability of perpetrators of domestic and family violence to continue the abuse through the legal process. This can take many forms, including using delaying tactics; not providing disclosure as required by the court; not turning up at court as required; not cooperating with any attempts at settlement, forcing both parties into the court process, a process which is intimidating for anyone but even more so for someone who is fleeing family violence; and attempting to use the process of cross-examination as another weapon to inflict pain, as detailed in the motion of the member for Indi.

Cross-examination is and has always been a part of the court process in contested trials, and this obviously can be a very traumatic part of obtaining judicial guidance. I do note that cross-examination is not part of the process for interim hearings, when matters first come before the courts and decisions need to be made on a temporary basis until the trial can be heard—that is, when the facts are tested by the judiciary. In those hearings the evidence is by way of affidavits from each party and is not tested through cross-examination. I do note, thankfully, that most matters do not actually go on to a trial. If matters have not been resolved by the time a court can hear the trial then it will be heard by a judge in a contested hearing and all the evidence will be tested through cross-examination. The time frame in between the interim hearing stage and a trial is getting longer and longer, with the Chief Justice of the Family Court, Diana Bryant, stating in an interview on ABC Radio last week that it is now likely to be 12 months delay—a year of stasis. A year can be an eternity for a child and even for parents.

No-one wants to see a victim of family violence being cross-examined by the perpetrator of that violence. The prospect of that happening is much more likely now than it was some time ago. Self-represented litigants are increasing in number in our courts. The increased number of self-represented litigants is overwhelmingly due to the decrease in funding for access to justice.

The Attorney-General, Senator Brandis, has shown complete contempt for access to justice by ripping $15 million from legal aid commissions in last year's budget. That cut followed $43 million of cuts in late 2013 to legal aid, to community legal centres—which are already incredibly lean organisations—to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services and, worst of all, to family violence prevention legal centres. It is vitally important that victims of family violence be represented in their family law hearings. With cuts to legal aid and legal assistance services, this is increasingly unlikely to be the case.

Apart from the immense protection that representation provides in court both legally and emotionally, representation aids the court process by ensuring that only relevant issues are aired in court and only relevant questions are put to witnesses. Court time is very, very valuable. Waiting times are increasing not only due to the huge number of matters being listed in courts but also due to the Attorney-General failing to replace retiring judges. There are six vacancies in the Federal Circuit Court and one in the Brisbane Family Court. The Attorney-

---

FEDERATION CHAMBER
General took 560 days to replace a judge in the Sydney registry of the Family Court, and I know that there are also delays in Newcastle. The Chief Justice said last week that the courts will never make up the time from the delay in replacing retiring judges.

With court time so precious, making the court process more efficient by providing representation for litigants would assist not only those litigants but also our entire family law system. Women who have experienced family violence should not be left to negotiate the family law system alone.

Ms CLAYDON (Newcastle) (13:06): I spoke earlier today on some of the implications of having a judicial system that is not adequately resourced and staffed. In my electorate of Newcastle, that is having a profound impact at the moment. We simply are not having judicial replacements appointed in a timely manner, leaving women and children in particular—but everybody who is seeking to get parenting disputes settled—in an unsatisfactory and unacceptable state of limbo. I thank the member for Indi for bringing this important motion before the House today and acknowledge her strong advocacy for victims of crime and, in particular, victims of family violence.

There is a 12-year National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children in Australia. It was launched in 2010 under the former Labor government, and it brings together the efforts of governments across the nation to make a real and sustained reduction in the levels of violence against women. It was the first plan of its kind to coordinate across jurisdictions and to focus on the prevention of violence. While there is progress being made—and I certainly welcome the government's commitment to continuing that national plan—there are indeed many areas where so much more work has to be done.

I acknowledge the Prime Minister's recent commitment to the Women's Safety Package to help try to stop some violence. Again I put on record that this is a welcome first step but it is just a first step. As the motion before us brings to light, there are some glaring inconsistencies that currently exist across legal jurisdictions, and the accessibility of legal aid and representation in court proceedings is emerging as a very strong issue. Victims, advocacy groups and even the former Chief Justice of the Family Court are on the record describing the situation as being unacceptable and in need of remedy.

At the inquest into her son's death the 2015 Australian of the Year, Rosie Batty, said that she suffered vicarious trauma caused by dealing with the court system over several years to negotiate custody arrangements with her former partner. Every time she went to court, she would experience heightened levels of anxiety. She talked about feeling desperate, alone and afraid in trying to deal with her violent ex-partner. She represented herself in court because, in her words, 'the system is too expensive'. The Chief Justice of the Family Court of Australia, the Hon. Diana Bryant, I note, in fact refers to this phenomenon of self-representation as 'unrepresentation', noting that, from her perspective, that accurately describes the status of those people acting without legal assistance.

I also draw the House's attention to an ABC news report that was featured on the PM program back in 2013 and that looked specifically at this issue that the member for Indi is bringing to our attention today: the cross-examination of victims by the perpetrators of violence. In that report, a victim described what she experienced when faced with the prospect of being cross-examined by her former partner, who allegedly raped her, when he refused to have a lawyer. She said:
I was standing outside in the foyer and I was shaking from head to toe and I couldn't breathe properly, I was hyperventilating. At that point I could have easily … just … thrown myself in front of the first bus. I could not believe that he had been allowed to do this to me.

Former Chief Justice of the Family Court Alastair Nicholson said the situation is unacceptable. His words were:

Not everyone realises the degree of fear that's engendered in cross examining them in court, and in affect putting them through the ringer. I think the effects on them are profound and it just shouldn't happen.

In closing: it is clear that people at perhaps their most vulnerable times should expect more from our justice system. It is unacceptable that victims of family violence can be, even perhaps unwittingly, retraumatised by a process that in effect seeks justice and redress for those victims. I commend the motion before the House.

Debate adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 13:12 to 16:02

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Live Animal Exports

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (16:02): On Saturday I attended a rally on the steps of Parliament House, Adelaide, aimed at drawing public attention to animal cruelty and in particular to the ongoing cruelty which Australian sheep and cattle destined for the Middle East markets still endure. The rally was well attended, reflecting the widespread public criticism of the live export trade. In particular there was anger at the government's weak response to ongoing ESCAS breaches by exporters and move to stop the exposure of animal cruelty by imposing ag gag laws.

Existing laws are already adequate to deal with trespass and vandalism, so there is no justification for ag gag laws being introduced. Furthermore, exposing bad practice wherever it occurs should be applauded, not punished. No industry argument as to why the animals cannot be processed in Australia prior to export is convincing. The underlying reason why most live export trade occurs is because it is cheaper to slaughter stock in overseas markets than in Australia.

The government appears to be indifferent to the fate of animals once they leave Australia yet simultaneously talks up the ESCAS conditions as leading the world in animal protection. I also note that the government has not sought to abolish the conditions since coming to office. The conditions may lead the world but they only provide any protection if they are enforced. I call on the minister not only to enforce them but to ensure that his department is adequately resourced to do that.

Hindmarsh Electorate: Sport

Mr WILLIAMS (Hindmarsh) (16:03): Over the weekend it was a pleasure to attend the Edwardstown junior football club and the Flinders Park football and netball club end-of-season events with my wife, Leanne. On Friday the Flinders Park football and netball club held their end-of-season ball in Glenelg, and the netballers were in full swing, celebrating their 2015 B-3 premiership. The C-graded footballers, unfortunately, lost the division 3 grand final in a low-scoring match, but it did not dampen their presentation ball. It was great to meet
and speak with a number of players, volunteers, members and community people. It was wonderful to see the special acknowledgement for Trevor and Loretta, who sat at our table and helped out at the kitchen, bar and barbecue of the club. They are great members and supporters of the club.

Congratulations to all award recipients as well as the A-grade players Brett O'Hara and Justin Keatley, who were selected in the 2015 division 3 team of the year. Thanks also to President Grant and Chairman Trevor for their hospitality as well as to Josh and Jess, who were the event organisers and did a terrific job.

Yesterday I presented the Matt Williams Best and Fairest Award to the under-8s, 9s, 10s and 11s at the Edwardstown junior football club. What I was most impressed with was the celebration of improvement at lower age levels. The encouragement provided to the young future stars by the coaches was great to see and I wish them all the best for their future sporting endeavours. I would like to congratulate junior president Mark Vella, Brandon McNichol and Ben Kitto, and thanks to the number of parents and supporters who gave up so much of their time for the young players. As a proud supporter of both clubs, I look forward to seeing success in 2016.

**Calwell Electorate: Stepping Stones Program**

*Ms VAMVAKINOU* (Calwell) (16:05): I am very pleased today to speak about a Brotherhood of St Laurence initiative, the Stepping Stones program, which has worked to empower refugee and migrant women towards entrepreneurship since its inception in 2011. A couple of weeks ago I met some of the current Stepping Stones participants, all of whom reside in my electorate. The women I met come from many different countries, including Japan, Papua New Guinea, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Sudan, just to name a few.

Their skills and business plans are just as diverse. From opening an Afghan restaurant to importing clothes, food or handicrafts from a number of different countries, the range of ideas presented by these women was very broad and impressive. One participant, Nafisa Nazari, hopes to import a native vegetable of Afghanistan called gandana. Gandana, I am told, is used in many different dishes and is not available in Australia.

Nafisa's business plan to import gandana reminded me very much of the Greek migrants from the inner cities of Melbourne, my parents included, who would go to Broadmeadows to pick and eat horta, which is a wild weed growing in abundance in Broadmeadows. Today, it is on the menus of many Greek restaurants in Melbourne and elsewhere. All the women I met are entrepreneurial. There is no victim mentality in this group of women. They are all talented, confident and intelligent women who want to contribute. I want to thank Kathy Kroes, the coordinator of the wonderful Stepping Stones program. I congratulate her and all the women for the work that they do.

**Marine Pollution: Tangaroa Blue Foundation**

*Mr ENTSCH* (Leichhardt) (16:06): Around eight million tonnes of plastic rubbish, the equivalent of 16 full plastic shopping bags per metre on the world's coastline, finds its way into the world's oceans each year. It is an issue that all of us should be alarmed about and desperate to fix. That is why I was recently pleased to meet up with the co-founder of Tangaroa Blue Foundation, Heidi Taylor, and members of her team in Cairns. In 2004, the
Tangaroa Blue Foundation established the Australian Marine Debris Initiative, and since that time nearly 50,000 volunteers have been not just picking up marine debris and beach litter but also recording what they have found. Last week they reached a huge milestone, having picked up and logged five million individual pieces of rubbish from our beaches.

By logging each piece of rubbish, they have been able to build an impressive database that is now helping organisations at every level, from local government to international, better identify where the rubbish is coming from and create strategies to stop the pollution of our oceans. Last weekend the foundation held its inaugural Great Barrier Reef Clean-up off Townsville. This weekend they are holding more clean-ups across Queensland. In my electorate, I would like to encourage locals to help them out at Cape Kimberley on Saturday and at Fitzroy Island or Walker Bay on Sunday. I would like to thank Heidi and the Tangaroa Blue Foundation team for their outstanding service to our environment and to our community.

**Petition: Asylum Seekers**

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (16:08): I rise to present a petition from Dr Penny Vine. Dr Vine is petitioning the government to legislate time limits in detention for asylum seekers, with a maximum of 30 days for adults and five days for children. This petition contains 14 signatures, which brings the number of signatures in the series to a total of 529.

*The petition read as follows—*

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

This petition of concerned citizens of Australia:

Draws to the attention of the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives our deep concern about the proven physical and psychological damage of indefinite and arbitrary detention of asylum seekers.

We therefore ask for legislated time limits of detention with a maximum of 30 days for adults and five days for children.

from 14 citizens

Petition received.

**Petition: Infrastructure**

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (16:08): I present a petition from Mr David Wortmann, from Granya. It contains 324 signatures. Mr Wortmann is petitioning the government to contribute $2.6 million for infrastructure improvements, as outlined by the Towong Shire Council's National Stronger Regions Fund application, Destination Tallangatta, to create a prosperous and sustainable Tallangatta for the next 60 years and beyond.

The right of petitioning is a long-established, fundamental right of citizens. It is the only direct means by which an individual or group can ask the parliament to take action. All other processes involved communication either through a member or a senator. Since being elected as the member for Indi I am privileged to have presented 12 petitions to this parliament across a range of issues, including the two I present today. I congratulate my constituents and thank them for their work. I am proud to have these petitions tabled.

*The petition read as follows—*

This petition of: residents, ratepayers and supporters of the Shire of Towong,
Draws to the attention of the House: that 2016 marks sixty years since Tallangatta was relocated to accommodate the expansion of Lake Hume.

Tallangatta has enormous potential to be a vibrant, sustainable town however much of its infrastructure is in poor condition due to a lack of investment at the time the town was relocated.

In 2012 Towong Shire Council undertook an extensive planning project called 'Tallangatta Tomorrow' to identify how Tallangatta could secure a vibrant future and reach its potential as a prosperous regional town. To date, Council has delivered several projects from 'Tallangatta Tomorrow' totalling $10m.

The final stage of 'Tallangatta Tomorrow' will secure Tallangatta's long term viability. 'Destination Tallangatta', a $5.3m project will deliver key infrastructure, create links between new and existing infrastructure within the town, drive business investment and reinvigorate the central business district. Council has committed $2.52m to the project.

'Destination Tallangatta' will deliver significant economic benefits to the region, including almost 100 full-time jobs and an economic boost of over $10m during construction. Post-construction economic benefits will total over $5m annually plus 51 new full time jobs.

We therefore ask the House to: request the Australian Government to contribute $2.66m for infrastructure improvements, as outlined in Towong Shire Council's National Stronger Regions Fund application "Destination Tallangatta" to create a prosperous and sustainable Tallangatta for the next sixty years and beyond.

from 324 citizens

Petition received.

Solomon Electorate: National Carers Week

Mrs GRIGGS (Solomon) (16:09): I rise today to speak about National Carers Week, which actually ran last week from 11 to 17 October.

National Carers Week is about recognising and celebrating the outstanding contribution that unpaid carers make to our nation. Anyone at any time can become a carer, and National Carers Week is an important opportunity to raise community awareness among all Australians about the diversity of carers and their caring roles. To celebrate National Carers Week I attended the launch of National Carers Week here in Parliament House, and on Friday I held a morning tea in my electorate with some invited guests to say thank you to them for the work that they do.

I would also like to place on record my thanks to John Trezise from National Disability Services, Cerise Sherwell and Margaret Moore from carer support and respite services and Sheena Baillie from Carers NT, to say thank you to them for their involvement and for the extraordinary number of events that we actually had in the electorate.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I have taken the pledge and I encourage you and every other colleague in here to make the pledge at www.carersweek.com.au—to acknowledge the ongoing contribution of Australia's 2.7 million unpaid carers and to pledge help to build a carer-friendly Australia. This issue is important to me, and one that I will continue to advocate for, particularly in my electorate of Solomon.
Richmond Electorate: Ballina

Mrs ELLIOT (Richmond) (16:11): We have just had draft changes announced to the boundaries of federal electorates in New South Wales. In Richmond, this is really exciting as Ballina will now be included in the electorate.

Ballina is an exciting, vibrant coastal town, with a very strong community. I warmly welcome Ballina residents to the Richmond electorate. I am committed to working hard with them to make sure we always get our fair share from Canberra. I am proud to have delivered more than $2 billion for our local roads, schools, health and community resources on the North Coast. And, as a local Labor MP, I am fighting hard against Malcolm Turnbull and the National Party's unfair cuts to the age pension, cuts to family payments and cuts to health services.

All these cruel cuts are hurting so many locals on the North Coast. Our region has such great potential, but the reality is that every school and every hospital in our region is worse off because of the National Party cuts to health and education. I will always stand up for local families against the National Party's plan to cut penalty rates, which will threaten directly the living standards of many workers, their families and our community.

Our region is such a unique and special place to live. Together we can make it an even better place. The fact is that Malcolm Turnbull and his National Party candidates just cannot be trusted on the things that are important to the future of the residents of Ballina and the New South Wales North Coast.

Hughes Electorate: Diwali

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (16:12): After last year's successful Diwali event, I will again be hosting the Hughes Diwali celebrations on Sunday, 1 November between 1 pm and 4 pm at Moorebank High School. Diwali is a festival of lights, and one of the most important events on the Hindu calendar. I am proud to be hosting this event, given its importance to my Australian-Indian constituents.

This year we have the Liverpool City Champion as a major sponsor and we are also proud to showcase fashions and accessories from B Designs, Kumar Tailors, Madhavji Pala Jewellers & Fashions, Alathea Designer Collections, Heena Collection and Poshak. This free public event will be jam-packed with activities for the whole family to enjoy. There will be lots of cultural exhibitions, including a Bollywood-style fashion parade, traditional sari displays, Bollywood dancing and a henna stall. There will be singers, dancers and musicians from the Natraj Academy to provide live entertainment throughout the event.

This year we are also especially pleased to have a special guest at our event—Anupam Sharma—the director and producer of the new movie, unINDIAN, starring Brett Lee, who I was pleased to meet recently during the Starry Sari Night event in Liverpool.

Riverside Indian Restaurant in Moorebank will again be there, offering traditional Indian dishes. I look forward to enjoying the delights of the Indian food, especially that butter chicken. I am sure that this year's Diwali celebrations at Moorebank High School will be lively and have something for everyone.

I will also quickly add that this is exactly the type of multicultural celebrations we want, where people from all backgrounds in Australia can get in and enjoy this Indian cultural festival.
Environment: Tibet

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (16:14): Last Tuesday the Australia-Tibet Council released their report, *Tibet—an environmental challenge*, at Parliament House. The report highlights the cultural, environmental and geostrategic significance of Tibet to Asia as a whole, and it makes the case that if the international community is interested in acting on climate change and if it is concerned about food and water security then it is in every country's interest to see a peaceful resolution of the Tibetan situation.

Situated between the two emerging regional and global powers, China and India, Tibet has traditionally acted as a peaceful buffer. Tibet is the source of Asia's major rivers, upon which an estimated 1.4 billion people across 11 large downstream nations depend. The Tibetan plateau, the world's largest and highest, has a significant impact on the region's climate. Known as the 'third pole', Tibet's glaciers are melting, with implications for global climate change. Known in China as 'the western treasure house', Tibet is rich in 132 different mineral resources which are presently being exploited by a resource hungry China. Unfortunately, the benefits are not flowing to Tibetans, whose traditional livelihoods have been taken from them and whose civil liberties have been suppressed and abused.

The report details the lack of sustainable and transboundary water management, the overextraction of minerals and the forced resettlement of more than two million nomadic Tibetans from grasslands—and the significant impact this is having on the environment and on local communities and their culture. As we witness greater international cooperation to achieve the recently agreed sustainable development goals and to address climate change, all nations, including Australia, should concern themselves with the situation in Tibet.

Bushfire Action Week

Dr SOUTHCOTT (Boothby) (16:15): Next week is Bushfire Action Week in South Australia. I would like to remind the thousands of my constituents who live in areas of bushfire danger that they should know their risk, prepare their properties and stay informed. We have had persistent warmer-than-average conditions recently, meaning that fuel loads across the state are drier and there is a greater risk of bushfire. Just a few hours ago, the CFS announced that summer fire restrictions will be brought forward by two weeks in nine South Australian fire districts, including those in my electorate of Boothby. Also today, we have heard that the Bureau of Meteorology is warning the outlook for fires this summer does not look good and that the El Nino is likely to result in 2015 being the hottest ever recorded year for the globe.

Bushfires are an inherent part of the South Australian landscape and bring with them the potential for life-threatening consequences. Preparation is the key to surviving a bushfire. For the next two weeks, local residents living in areas of bushfire risk will be receiving my bushfire action plan checklist in their mailbox. I encourage them to put it on their fridge as a reminder both that they need a comprehensive bushfire plan and of specific local issues which have been flagged by the Sturt CFS. There are simple and familiar things you can do that may ultimately save the lives of you and your loved ones.

Shortland Electorate: Nords Wharf Public School

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (16:17): The week before last I attended Nords Wharf Public School. When I visited that school, I presented them with two new flags—an
Australian flag and an Aboriginal flag. They had just had two flagpoles erected and they needed the new flags to hang from them. The students of that school were particularly excited about the fact that they had these new flags and they told me all about the flags, their histories and what they stood for. In addition to presenting the flags to the school, I took along some of the Anzac medallions that I am giving to every student in the Shortland electorate. That was funded under the Centenary of Anzac grants that the government approved—each of us had $150,000 for our electorate. One of the proposals that was successful in Shortland was to present every schoolchild with an Anzac medallion. This was a proposal brought to the local committee by the Pelican RSL Club. I thank Pelican RSL Club for sponsoring these medallions. I know that the students really love the medallions and that they will be keepsakes that they will have for the rest of their lives.

**Domestic and Family Violence**

**Mr HOGAN (Page) (16:18):** Sexual and domestic violence is a heartbreaking reality in the lives of many people on a daily basis. With one in three women targeted for sexual violence, the odds are high that we all know someone who has been in a sexually or physically violent relationship. On the night of 29 October, women and men will take to the streets of Lismore with one simple message: domestic violence is never okay. They will be doing so with good reason: the statistics are alarming. Some 57 per cent of Australian women experience physical or sexual abuse. In Australia, one woman is killed every week by a current or former partner. Domestic and family violence is a cause of homelessness for both women and children.

The government has recently announced increased funding to help women experiencing domestic violence gain access to legal assistance and other services. This is part of the Australian government's $100 million Women's Safety Package. The Reclaim the Night committee in Lismore this year made the decision to invite men and children to the rally as well, and this year I will certainly be there. I thank them for organising it and I encourage everyone to get along. I thank ACON, Women Up North, Lismore Women's and Children's Refuge, On Track Community Programs, the Kadina High School welfare officer, Interrelate family services and the women's health and research centre for organising this.

**Asylum Seekers**

**Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (16:20):** Over the last couple of weeks we have heard about the horrifying experience of 23-year-old Abyan, a Somali refugee being held on Nauru. She says that, while on Nauru, she was raped and, as a result, she is now pregnant. Abyan has written:

> I was raped on Nauru. I have been very sick. I have never said that I did not want a termination. I never saw a doctor. I saw a nurse at a clinic but there was no counselling. I saw a nurse at Villawood but there was no interpreter. I asked but was not allowed to talk with my lawyer. Please help me.

Abyan reached out to Australian authorities and asked to be brought to Australia so that she could get a termination. Long after her request was made, the Turnbull government finally bowed to immense public pressure and brought her to Australia for medical treatment. But, just days later, the government forced her back to Nauru, she says without her having received the medical treatment or counselling she had asked for.

This is a new low for this government in their relentless persecution of the world's most vulnerable people. Abyan, traumatised, scared and pregnant from being raped, did not receive...
the care she asked for and now she has been sent back to Nauru—the very place she was brutally assaulted while under Australia's care. Tens of thousands of people around Australia have stood up and shown that they are horrified by this government's endless cruelty to refugees. Minister Dutton must now allow Abyan to access the counselling and medical treatment that she requires. Minister Dutton's first response is to say whenever he is challenged that the other person is lying. He has been shown up to have misled the public before, and if he really believes that that is the case then he should let the media in and show them what is going on in those hellholes.

Eye Health

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (16:21): In Australia's world-class eye health and vision care system, ophthalmologists and optometrists have not always had that love affair that the Prime Minister spoke about on the weekend, but increasingly both professions realise that they are indispensable parts of an interlocking system. It was with some concern that optometrists visited Parliament House today with some reservations about cuts to the Medicare rebates and also the five years of Medicare-CPI freezes to come. We should be watching very closely to make sure that four key groups are not affected by these changes. We all recognise how important the sustainability of Medicare is but we need to look particularly at those with chronic and complex eye conditions; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations in general—we need to make sure that get the eye care they need; older Australians; and those in residential and aged care—particularly those who do not speak English as a home language. We need to make sure that these groups have full access to eye care, because we know that 85 per cent of all eye disease is perfectly treatable and avoidable. It is with some concern, then, that optometrists feel that their practices may not be viable and accessible and their services in remote Australia may not be delivered if they cannot get adequate compensation, and with the removal, finally, of the Indigenous processing unit within Human Services there is a great concern that if you have the wrong Medicare number for an Indigenous Australian because they had to be sent a second card, those rebates are not paid. It is a great concern and there is a lot of administrative burden. I seek leave to table the documents from the optometrists.

Leave granted.

ACT Australian of the Year Awards

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (16:23): I rise to congratulate the 17 Canberrans who have been named as finalists in the 2016 ACT Australian of the Year awards. These awards highlight the breadth of talent we have in Canberra, with the finalists having backgrounds in science, animal welfare, social entrepreneurship, medical research, charity work, human rights, music and sustainable agriculture advocacy. I congratulate these 2016 ACT Australian of the Year finalists: Dr Alison Taylor and Dr Michael Archinal; David Morrison AO, who many in this chamber would know; Dr Brendan Nelson, who many would also know; and Dr Helen Watchirs OAM. The 2016 ACT Senior Australian of the Year finalists are Yvonne Gusehieri, Major General the Hon. Michael Jeffery AC AO (Mil) CVO MC, Professor Chris Parish and Professor Greg Tegart AM FTSE. The finalists for ACT Young Australian of the Year are Dr Kate Eisenberg, Sophie Hope, Leonard Weiss and Nipuni Wijewickrema. I saw Nip yesterday at the Step Up! for Down syndrome walk. In the ACT Local Hero award we have Peter Cursley, Fiona Kirk, David Richards and Yanping Zhang.
Congratulations to all these extraordinary Canberrans. We are lucky to have you. Thank you for your contribution to our community. I am looking forward to cheering you on early next year out the front of Parliament House at the annual awards.

Herbert Electorate

Mr EWEN JONES (Herbert—Government Whip) (16:25): What a weekend it was for Townsville and North Queensland. If you were not at the launch of the Adani India Fest on this weekend in Townsville, you would have been sitting on The Strand having coffee and enjoying the beautiful Townsville. If you were not there, you would have been participating in McHappy Day, raising funds for Ronald McDonald House at the Townsville, or you might have been getting ready for the Townsville Hospital Foundation ball, where they raised tens of thousands on Saturday night to redevelop the paediatric wing of the hospital.

Or perhaps you were walking along The Strand for the Walk For Freedom to stop human trafficking or you were with the Cowboys as they took the Provan-Summons Trophy to Mackay, to Cairns and to Mount Isa with a plane load of players and staff, who were all on holidays and came back to do this special thing. Or you went to see the Townsville Fire jump back into the winners circle in the WNBL with a commanding win over the Canberra Capitals as we defend our national title. Or you were cleaning the truck to go in the Camp Quality convoy, which saw trucks driving up and down Townsville honking their horns, and people on motorbikes and cars all over the place. Whatever you did on the weekend, including mow the lawn, read the paper and have a bit of a sleep in, Townsville is a great place which values its people and whose people take pride in participating in and supporting their community. I thank the House.

Micah Challenge

Mr GILES (Scullin) (16:26): Last week, I was visited in my office in Parliament House by representatives of Micah Challenge, a global movement of Christians committed to speaking out against poverty and injustice around the world. While I am not a person of faith, in my engagement with faith based groups like Micah Challenge, who I have met on several occasions, I have been struck by the power of their advocacy and their deep commitment to working with elected decision makers and the community to build a better world on an ecumenical basis.

I was struck by the passion and commitment of those I met—Ryan Kallmier, Tony Dawson, Phillip Johnson, Rhonda Johnson and Andrew Miller—to real action on alleviating poverty in our region and around the world and the essential moral calling that we face to take action on climate change, particularly in relation to our neighbours in the Pacific. Their comments reflected a real challenge for me, for all elected representatives and for our new Prime Minister, particularly when it comes to his credentials on climate change. But, of course, it is more than that; it is about our moral commitment to those less fortunate than us around the world. We know in this place that the greatest cuts made by the Abbott-Turnbull government went to foreign aid, affecting those who are voiceless in this place, except when we choose to give them a voice—so I do so now. I thank those involved in Micah Challenge for their selflessness. I look forward to doing justice for their vision for a socially just and peaceful world.
Calare Electorate: Orange Wine Festival

Mr JOHN COBB (Calare) (16:28): I rise to speak to about the Orange Wine Festival that is happening in my electorate over the next fortnight. This was formerly known as wine week but it has become so successful it had to be extended. It gives community the opportunity to celebrate the thriving wine industry and extraordinarily high-quality wines that are produced in the region. It kicked off on 16 October with a black tie dinner. That was just one of more than 80 events that will be run over the two weeks. It includes the Orange Wine Show dinner, Orange Wine Show tasting, and the very popular wine and food night market next Friday. This will see Robertson Park pack out with thousands of locals and visitors. They will enjoy not only enjoy fine wine but gourmet local fine foods.

Congratulations to Carillion Vineyard as Carillion white, a chardonnay grown near Mt Canobolas, won Most Outstanding Wine at the 2015 Orange Wine Show! We really do have some of the best wine in the country, and I encourage anyone passing through Calare to stop off at one of a local wineries, as they will not be disappointed and they will have a very good time.

Noble Park Community Art Show

Mr GRIFFIN (Bruce) (16:29): I draw the attention of the House to the recent Noble Park art show, which had its 10th birthday celebration at the Noble Park Community Centre. The opening was on Friday, 9 October, but it was an exhibition over that weekend. This is a really impressive local exhibition of art work within the local community, and it has been growing over that 10-year period in a very impressive way. I have had the privilege of attending on several occasions now and seeing just how talented many of the people in the local area are with respect to art.

It is not only schools that are involved; it is also individuals, and some of those individuals have gone on to exhibit professionally. It really highlights the fact that there are a lot of people locally who are very skilled. I, for one, who basically have no skills when it comes to art, was in awe of many of the presentations there.

In total, there were nearly 150, I think—no, more than that. At the end of the day, there were somewhere in excess of 300 actual presentations as part of the overall display. It was a great opportunity to meet local residents and a great opportunity to see the skills on display, and it is something that the community of Noble Park should be very proud of.

Lindsay Electorate: Breast Cancer

Ms SCOTT (Lindsay) (16:30): On Saturday I had a fabulous day with the Penrith Pendragons. These spectacular ladies are breast cancer survivors. They have taken to their dragon boat, and up the Nepean River they go. This weekend, the Penrith Pendragons will join the National Paddle Day on Darling Harbour.

This vivacious crew is made up of ladies who are mostly cancer survivors, all of them supporting each other. The paddling action does two wonderful things for these ladies. Firstly, it is symbolic of these women moving forward; but, secondly, it has therapeutic benefits. The actual activity of paddling has an effect on the lymph nodes which is positive and beneficial for the body's recovery.
Breast cancer is a serious issue that affects so many women right across the world and here in Australia, affecting one in eight women in their lifetime. Over 15,000 women are predicted to be diagnosed with breast cancer in Australia. Sadly, almost 10 women a day die from this horrible disease, but 90 per cent of women diagnosed will live at least five years. It is wonderful that we are supporting breast cancer so much. Locally, we are also holding two morning teas, one in St Mary's and one in Penrith, on 19 and 20 November.

**Fraser Electorate: Braddon Studio and Capital Angels**

Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (16:32): It was my great pleasure last Thursday night to attend not one but two innovation events in the ACT. In Braddon, just across the road from my electorate office, The Studio Braddon is opening—a bright, beautiful and bold space hosted by Maylee Thavat which provides working opportunities for NGOs, for innovative businesses and for women returning to work. The Studio benefits from getting the National Broadband Network, but, alas, my electorate office, a stone's throw away, does not. It is again a testament to the great benefits that the National Broadband Network is bringing to Australia. The Studio Braddon complements a similar space that exists in O'Connor.

I also had the pleasure of speaking at the 10th anniversary of Capital Angels, an ACT based network of 'angel' investors, who talked about many of the important start-ups here in the ideas city. I would like to acknowledge Michele Troni, Nick McNaughton, Stephen Hardy, Ian Cox, Doug Stuart, Keith Ayotte, Bob Quodling, Uwe Boettcher and the indefatigable Anna Pino for their support of innovative businesses here in Canberra.

Canberra is not just the national capital but also the social capital and the creative capital of Australia, and it was terrific to be inspired by those two groups of innovators last Thursday.

**Lyons Electorate: Ouse and Highlands Festival**

Mr HUTCHINSON (Lyons) (16:34): I have pleasure in talking about what a privilege it was on the weekend to open the Ouse and Highlands Festival. I acknowledge in particular the work done by Fran Macdonald in organising a wonderful event, as well as Anthony Franklin from Central Highlands Rural Youth; Lynn Brown from the Lachlan Hotel; and Wendy Smith, who owns the post office there, as part of the committee. But, really, it was an effort by the whole town—for example, the cooperation that was shown from the school through the children's art competition. There were 21 entries in the main art competition. I had the pleasure of putting in a bid for the winning entry in the art competition and sponsoring the photography contest on the day. Tremendous support was received from the online centre, the ladies guild at the church and the Lachlan Hotel. I want emphasise that it was a whole town event. It brought loads of visitors to the very small community in the upper Derwent Valley of Ouse. It is the fifth year that it has been in operation and I am sure that, with the commitment of the community and the organising committee, they can only go on to greater success in the future.

**Indi Electorate: Friends of Lacluta**

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (16:35): Recently, I had the real privilege of celebrating 10 years of friendship between communities in Indi and East Timor. Today, in this place, I would like to particularly acknowledge the work of Friends of Lacluta. In September 2005, a delegation from the rural city of Wangaratta visited of Lacluta, a subdistrict in Timor to sign a friendship agreement. A section 86 special committee was formed and it has been in action ever since.
On 26 September, we celebrated in Wangaratta with a wonderful dinner with the Timor-Leste ambassador, Abel Guterres, and Rae Kingsbury from the council for East Timor in Victoria and her husband Damien Kingsbury, who was the guest speaker. Friends of Lacluta do fantastic work. They provide scholarships—tertiary, vocational and school assistance—school supplies and they help mothers and babies. They provide tools, equipment and seeds for gardens. Of course, they provide the most important thing of all: friendship. Today, I would like to offer warm congratulations to all three of Indi's friendship groups, particularly the Wangaratta Lacluta group. To Heather Redmond and your team with Andy Kimber, thank you for a lovely night and thank you for everything you do.

**Robertson Electorate: Higher Education**

**Mrs WICKS** (Robertson) (16:36): I was privileged to be able to address the Central Coast education summit at the Impact Centre in Erina this morning. Organised by the University of Newcastle, the summit was a great opportunity to explore potential strategies and priorities for higher education on the Central Coast and help shape the workforce of the future. I would like to recognise the leadership of Vice-Chancellor Caroline McMillen, who along with the board of the university have got a really strong vision and determination to see the Central Coast become a region of world-class educational excellence. I am a huge personal supporter of the plans that the University of Newcastle is currently exploring, plans that would see an outstanding Central Coast medical school and possible medical research institute located on the grounds of Gosford hospital. It is a plan that has attracted a strong groundswell of support, including from the Central Coast area health service, already a leader in its own field. And no wonder there is such strong support, when you envisage what the opportunities would do for our local students to study a medical degree—studying not just in Sydney, not just in Newcastle but in Gosford. There are so many pieces of a puzzle and we are working together to make possible more huge opportunities and innovation for our region, which include our commitment for 600 new jobs in to Gosford and the possibility of a strong graduate pathway for our local young people from this centre of excellence. Whether this takes one year, five years or 20 years, one day I believe we will see more opportunity— *(Time expired)*

**Richmond Electorate: Stone & Wood Brewing Company**

**Mrs ELLIOT** (Richmond) (16:38): I am always thrilled to see businesses in my electorate thrive and today I am so excited to talk about the Stone & Wood Brewing Company, a fantastic local business making fantastic local beer and an outstanding player in my area. The founders, Jamie Cook, Ross Jurisch and Brad Rogers started brewing beer out of a small brewery in Byron Bay in 2008. They wanted to make beer that reflected the lifestyle of Byron Bay and the New South Wales North Coast. Before long, the incredible success of Stone & Wood meant that the brewer literally could not brew beer as quickly as they could sell it. Last year, they opened up a new factory in Murwillumbah to keep up with the huge demand. Beers such Pacific Ale, Stone & Wood Lager and Jasper Ale are now firm favourites. They have won many awards and last year Stone & Wood was named the regional winner in the prestigious Telstra Business Awards. They were the only New South Wales business among the national winners.

Also, Stone & Wood have an impressive track record in supporting local causes such as the Far North Coast Disabled Surfers Association, the Lismore Soup Kitchen and Bay FM Community Radio. They have also demonstrated a very impressive commitment to
environmental sustainability by reducing and recycling plastic waste and continuously working towards minimising the environmental footprint of their brewery—so, a great result. They are now recognised as one of the finest beer brewers in Australia. Stone & Wood have a great beer and also a commendable business philosophy. They are making a huge contribution to the community in my electorate of Richmond.

**Energy**

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson—The Nationals Deputy Whip) (16:40): When the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, visited this place a year ago, he spoke about the growing energy demands of his country. In particular, he spoke about the need for clean energy and then listed where that clean energy was going to come from—hydro, nuclear and clean coal. A vital link in the chain that will bring more than 100 million Indians out of energy poverty is the Carmichael mine in Queensland. Our clean coal will be used in modern generators in India to provide cheap electricity, with lower emissions. The alternative, if the Greens were successful, would be dirty coal from another country.

I will be visiting Mr Gautam Adani, chairman of the Adani Group, in India next week to deliver thousands of messages of support from people in my electorate—people who want to see the job-creating Carmichael mine go ahead, as well as the expansion of the Abbot Point coal port and the connecting rail line that will open up the Galilee Basin. I will also impress upon Mr Adani the value of using the regional workforce and service industry to build and operate these projects. Mackay and Bowen, in particular, have the skilled and experienced workforce needed for the project as well as the infrastructure and services needed to support the Galilee Basin. Just as coal can be and will be sourced from elsewhere, so too can workers and services. But, with the support of the community, I want to ensure that Australia and North Queensland are seen as the best alternatives.

**Shortland Electorate: Valentine Hydrotherapy Pools**

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (16:41): Yesterday, I attended the 50th anniversary, or birthday party, of the Valentine Hydrotherapy Pools and swimming centre. The Valentine Hydrotherapy Pools and swimming centre is built on council land and is a wholly and solely community supported pool. It is staffed by volunteers and has been a core part of the Valentine community for a very long period of time. It was very pleasing to catch up with a number of old friends. I thank Paul Turton from the ABC for being the MC on the day. At the presentation, Gabby Cosgrove, Geoffrey Neumann, Ken March, Yvonne Wellings, Susan Sanders, Raelene Pearce and John Moore were all made life members for the enormous contribution they have made to Valentine Hydrotherapy Pools.

Many, many people have attended the pool and been able to get relief from aches and pains. People who are paraplegic, quadriplegic or recovering from accidents have been able to get into the pool and become mobile. In addition to that, thousands of children within the area have learnt to swim and have swum in the competitions that are run there.

**Dobell Electorate: Koala Publishing**

Mrs McNAMARA (Dobell) (16:43): Earlier this month, I visited Koala Publishing—successful producers of quality greeting cards in my electorate of Dobell. I would like to thank Reuben Machin and Julie-Anne Goodman for taking the time to show me around. This year, Koala Publishing were awarded the Business of the Year Award as well as Employer of
Choice at the Central Coast Business Excellence Awards. After meeting with both Reuben and Julie-Anne, it was evident why this business is recognised as an employer of choice. Whether it is the installation of a new gym, changing the vending machine to healthy products or any number of other initiatives, Koala Publishing takes care of its employees.

On top of commenting on their success, I would also like to congratulate and thank Koala Publishing for being 100 per cent locally owned and operated. Koala's product ranges are designed in Australia by award winning designers and the cards and wrap are also produced in Australia, further supporting Australian jobs. When I met with general manager, Reuben Machin, I was impressed by his personal commitment to the local economy. As Reuben's states:

Supporting local jobs in a struggling region has always been a passion.

And for this he should be commended. I congratulate Koala Publishing for their commitment to a variety of charities, a number of which are supported due to personal circumstances of staff members. The following quote from Reuben highlights the emphasis placed on employee wellbeing at Koala Publishing. The quote reads:

Regardless of your type of business, and the products or services you sell, if you don't believe in your people, then you don't believe in your business.

Congratulations to Koala Publishing.

**Middle East**

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (16:44): Last week I joined with others to welcome to Parliament House John Salisbury. John is a Melbourne man who walked all the way from Sydney to Canberra over 10 days to deliver a petition calling on the House of Representatives to formally recognise the state of Palestine. John received a lot of support on his travels and over 1,000 people signed the petition. Today I support the call for Australia to formally recognise Palestinian statehood.

Over recent weeks, we have seen once again the horror and sadness of the ongoing conflict in Israel and Palestine. More than 40 Palestinians and seven Israelis have died in recent street violence in occupied East Jerusalem and the West Bank. A little more than a year has passed since the horrific escalation of violence that led to the deaths of over 2,000 Palestinians and over 70 Israelis. This violence is to be condemned in its entirety, but we must also recognise the disproportionate death toll—over 2,000 Palestinians. There can be no path to peace without a recognition of the legitimate rights and aspirations of the Palestinian and Israeli people to live in peace and security in their own independent sovereign states.

Australia is falling behind the rest of the world in our refusal to seek a pathway to peace through the recognition of a Palestinian state. Already 136 countries around the world recognise Palestinian statehood. The UN General Assembly has voted to recognise Palestine as a non-member observer state. This year Sweden, France and the Vatican have joined those states around the world recognising the Palestinian state. By recognising the Palestinian state, Australia can play a part on the pathway to a just and lasting peace.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Landry):** In accordance with standing order 43, the time for members' statements has concluded.
Debate resumed on the motion:
That the House take note of the report.

Mr O’DOWD (Flynn) (16:46): by leave—Our committee, the Joint Select Committee on Trade and Investment Growth, has conducted an inquiry into business experiences utilising Australia’s existing FTAs. Our committee looked at six FTAs that have been in existence for some time and the experiences that Australian businesses have had in embracing the benefits of the FTAs—or the obstacles they encountered with these FTAs. The findings of the inquiry were useful in informing the government’s efforts to promote utilisation of our North Asia FTAs as well as the future use of FTAs currently under negotiation. The six countries we looked at were New Zealand, Singapore, Thailand, the USA, Chile and Malaysia. The inquiry did not focus too much on our last three FTAs—Korea, Japan and China—but in some cases there were common issues. We did not look at the Trans-Pacific Partnership, or TPP, currently agreed but still under negotiation and formal acceptance.

Whilst government processes have been very successful in conducting these FTAs, our committee, after reviewing about 45 submissions—either on paper or through evidence given at hearings—came up with 13 recommendations. The first was that DFAT should, in future negotiations, include financial service regulators—we thought that was important. The second recommendation was that the Department of Agriculture should continue to negotiate the fruit fly-free status of particular regions of mainland Australia. In other words, some parts of Australia are considered fruit fly free but this is not recognised, apart from Tasmania, which is an island state with much cooler temperatures. We thought that was a very important recommendation.

Our third recommendation was that the Tasmanian Freight Equalisation Scheme should include all exports that go via sea or air. Our fourth recommendation was to conduct reviews and seminars with target audiences across FTA regions to deliver quicker and more effective communications. We found there was a breakdown in how quickly the information got out, how quickly people could get information, and that was slowing down the process.

Our fifth recommendation was that DFAT ensures that a FTA dashboard is designed for easy access to all FTAs. The thing with that was that with the existing FTAs, the three new FTAs and the 12 countries under the TPP, we thought it will be a maze of confusion if there is not a dashboard set up to handle the inquiries, handle where potential exporters are going to go to for advice. DFAT is working really hard on that dashboard and it will be available very soon. We also thought that 24 hours, seven days a week access to the export document hub was important. Our exporters do not work eight to five, five days a week; it is an around-the-clock enterprise and we thought we, as a government, should have the documentation available for them to use at any time of the day or night.

We recommend that the Export Market Development Grant recognises anti-counterfeiting measures as an expense. Anti-counterfeiting is an issue. People like to purport to have a product that is not entirely what the label says. We recommend DFAT to provide assistance to partner countries to build their capacity to access sanitary and phytosanitary risks. Prior to
FTA negotiation by government, industry assistance should be targeted towards exporters who may want a presence in that particular market. For instance, if the cherry growers of Tasmania wanted insight into what our FTA with India might bring in the future, then they should be a very important part of that task force that looks at the free trade agreement with India. The department should develop a workforce strategy to take advantage of these agreements. And we should develop a recognisable Australia brand logo depicting our clean, green energy status. We found that some countries are only too willing to label a product to look similar in colour and packaging to our successful exports. We found this could be addressed by having a specific Australian brand logo to counter that.

We also recommended that DFAT and the trade commission conduct before and after modelling to be made available to the public. In other words: do not keep the public in the dark; bring them in, embrace them in the negotiations so that everyone knows what is going on. Finally, let DFAT involve Australia's peak industry bodies; both employer and employees should be involved in negotiations. I commend this report to the House.

Mr ALEXANDER (Bennelong) (16:53): I am delighted to speak on the Joint Select Committee on Trade and Investment Growth's inquiry into business utilisation of Australia's free trade agreements, and the opportunity this provides to highlight the amazing achievements of the coalition government in negotiating free trade agreements that are unrivalled in size, scope and opportunity. Under the stewardship of my colleague the member for Flynn, the Joint Select Committee on Trade and Investment Growth has performed vital work inquiring into measures to further boost Australia's trade and investment performance.

This report looks into a wide range of existing free trade agreements. This includes FTAs with New Zealand, Singapore, Thailand, the United States, Chile, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and Malaysia. Importantly, the report includes a chapter on informing future free trade agreements, which includes identifying and accessing priority markets, positioning business to benefit from agreements and prenegotiation modelling. This research goes all the way through to market access negotiations, occurring post agreement, followed by post-implementation evaluation to ensure we learn from our experiences for future agreements. This is a most comprehensive approach, and the member for Flynn, together with his committee colleagues, deserve our appreciation for the contribution this work will provide to government for many years to come.

In the chair's forward, the member for Flynn states:

This inquiry investigated the experience of Australian businesses using these FTAs. While the business community strongly supports the policy of pursuing FTAs, this inquiry has also identified potential reforms which could increase the ability of business to realise the benefits of FTAs.

Current Government processes have clearly been very successful in conducting and finalising FTA negotiations with partner countries. There is potential, however, to make these processes more transparent and open to involvement from business.

Interestingly, the report goes on to look in detail at the impediments faced by Australian businesses when trying to access markets with which we have signed free trade agreements and ways to work with domestic regulations around customs to ensure transactions are expedited whilst our standards and protections are in no way affected. The report also advises on options to further improve our processes of negotiating free trade agreements. However, I must take issue with this, considering the Minister for Trade and Investment's performance
over the past two years. I would question whether there is any chance of improvement. It is a little bit like being Roger Federer, for instance!

Since the coalition took office in September 2013, Minister Robb has done what many previous trade ministers have tried but failed to achieve. He has signed free trade agreements with Japan, Korea and China. If that was not enough, he has recently stared down the US negotiators to sign the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement—the largest trade agreement of its kind, covering 40 per cent of global GDP. These agreements usher in a new era of economic growth and opportunity across our region. We are witnessing significant economic transformation across the Asia-Pacific, and these agreements will allow us to harness these enormous opportunities whilst also strengthening our economy to face future challenges.

The Korea-Australia Free Trade Agreement has already delivered 84 per cent tariff reductions on Korea's imports. On full implementation 99.8 per cent of Australia's goods exports will enter Korea duty free. The Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement will provide improved access to Japan's growing markets, with more than 97 per cent of Australia's exports receiving preferential or duty-free access when fully implemented. The minister describes the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement as:

...by far the best FTA Australia has done with any country—from the perspective of goods, services and investment.

This agreement will see more than 95 per cent of Australia's goods exports entering our biggest trading partner tariff free. Finally, the TPP will eliminate over 98 per cent of tariffs across 12 countries that comprise 800 million people and one-third of Australia's total trade.

The TPP will remove import taxes on around $9 billion of Australia's trade. Clearly, these agreements will deliver an unrivalled amount of benefits to Australians and have provided heavy-duty foundations for our economic prosperity. This will be even further strengthened by the work of the Joint Select Committee on Trade and Investment Growth in this inquiry.

In conclusion, I wish to pick out one particular recommendation for closer analysis—that is, recommendation 11, which states:

The Committee recommends that Austrade, in consultation with Australian business, facilitate:

• the development of a recognisable Australia brand logo and signage for exported Australian goods and services; and

• the development of anti-counterfeiting measures for exported Australian goods.

Whilst I understand the committee's focus, I believe it is important that this recommendation for a recognisable brand Australia logo and marketing campaign should be extended to include the promotion of our sporting and performance art events to attract tourists to Australia.

As chair of the coalition policy committee on tourism, I have worked on a concept entitled 'Australia, The World's stage', which brings together our policy approaches to tourism, sport and the arts, to cross-promote Australia as a world-class destination for sport and the performing arts, combined with our current campaign of 'Restaurant Australia' as a food and wine destination.

While the FTA agreements usher in a new age of trade and clearly demonstrate that Australia is a sophisticated trading partner, we are also a more sophisticated tourism destination than just beaches and a big rock. But I digress.
Madam Deputy Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak to this report, and thank you again to the member for Flynn, his committee colleagues and the committee secretariat for producing an excellent report on the inquiry into business utilisation of Australia's free trade agreements.

Debate adjourned.

GRIEVANCE DEBATE

Debate resumed.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Henderson): The question is:

That grievances be noted.

Child Labour

Mr GRIFFIN (Bruce) (17:01): I stand today to grieve on the issue of child labour, an issue that affects many nations in the world, including our own. It affects millions of children and leads to great suffering. I do this on the basis of information provided through World Vision, and in particular World Vision's Australia youth movement—VGen—which focuses on educating young people on global issues. We would all agree that children should be free to play, learn and grow. However, for some 10 per cent of the world's children over five years old, that is not an option. And that is truly an international disgrace.

Here are some facts. Child labour is work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity. It is often physically or mentally dangerous and, therefore, harmful to children. It interferes with schooling and development. It is estimated there are some 168 million children world-wide who are forced into child labour, and 85 million child labourers are found in hazardous work, the worst form. There are 73 million child labourers between five and 11 years of age; some 44 per cent of the total. As I said earlier, more than 10 per cent of the world's children aged five years and over are child labourers.

Interestingly, 58.6 per cent of the world's child labourers are engaged in the agricultural sector. More than 63 percent of employed children work in conditions that are classified as child labour. Eliminating child labour is estimated to contribute more than US$5 trillion to the global economy.

The largest number of child labourers are found in Asia and the Pacific region, approximately 78 million. Children in sub-Saharan Africa are most likely to enter child labour, with more than 21 per cent of children in the region engaged in some form of child labour—that is one in five. Latin America and the Caribbean has fewer; however, the region has the highest proportion of those involved in hazardous work—77 per cent of the 12.5 million. More child labour equals lower national income. The G20 cannot meet its targets of strong, sustained and balanced economic growth without ending child labour. It is something that is needed internationally to be taken up as a real issue.

World Vision has produced a range of fact sheets and information with respect to child labour. One which I am going to go through now is '13 myths about child labour'.

Myth 1: Child labour is necessary if children are going to survive extreme poverty.

In fact the reverse is often the case. Child labour often exacerbates the problem:

If children are engaged in hazardous work that impacts their physical or mental health and development, this may affect their ability to work in the future.
Often, we will be dealing with extreme poverty, but what we need in extreme poverty is for adult wages to increase. In that situation, parents can then afford to send their children to school. And we all know that education is the way we need to deal with the development of our young people, in order to ensure that they are able to contribute to society. If we do not deal with that then we will not deal with that issue.

Myth 2: I worked as a child; child labour does not do any harm. Child work is different to child labour. Child labour refers specifically to work that deprives children of their childhoods, their potential and their dignity. It is often mentally or physically dangerous and harmful. Of the 265 million children in employment, 168 million are child labourers doing jobs that impact negatively upon their long-term development. It is not about getting a job after school and it is not about doing a few hours at McDonald's; it is about the sort of work which people live with the implications of for the rest of their lives.

Myth 3: most child labourers are almost adults anyway, so it is okay. Not so. Alarmingly, 44 per cent of all child labourers are aged between five and 11 years—that is somewhere in the region of 77 million children. Of the 85 million children estimated to be in hazardous forms of labour, 37.8 million are aged between five and 14 years—with more than half that number under 12.

Myth 4: child labour is an inevitable consequence of growth and development. In fact, it is the reverse. It is more likely to be an obstacle to achieving growth. There is a strong negative correlation between the existence of child labour and per capita GDP. In other words, more child labour equals lower national income. It serves also to depress adult wages and ensure that technological progress is slow, and it also produces difficulties around attracting foreign investment. We need to invest in human capital, and that does not mean investing in children working, it means investing in developing a nation.

Myth 5: child labour is working in sweatshops. In fact, that is not the case, as I mentioned earlier. Some 58.6 per cent work in the agricultural sector. Only some 7.2 per cent of child labourers are working in sweatshop-like conditions, as we have come to know them in the way that they are often portrayed with respect to the industrial sector. But that does not mean that it is not dangerous. In fact, it is the reverse. There is exposure to pesticides and carrying heavy loads, often without protective clothing—all of these have a serious effect on the development of children.

Myth 6: some countries' economies could not survive without child labour. In fact, again, it is the reverse. Child labour actually hurts a country's economy. It drives down wages and increases adult unemployment, especially among younger adult workers, because children are doing the same jobs for less pay. This means that adults are not able to contribute to the economy productively, which is essential to ensure ongoing economic prosperity.

Myth 7: all businesses that use child labour should be shut down immediately. Well, no—that is actually not the answer either. We need to look at the question of developing industries and we need to ensure that industries that use child labour actually are encouraged and—as much as possible—forced to move away from that. We need to be in a situation where we actually ensure that those industries develop: allow for a situation where they are able to employ adult workers; ensure that business, civil society and government work together to address those root causes; and ensure that there are alternative solutions that are safe and
which actually provide an opportunity for people to get work and for them to be able to sell their produce without the abuse of children.

Myth 8: the work that child labourers do is not very hard, so it is okay. In fact, as I said earlier, often they are working in hazardous conditions and often they are in a situation where they have long-term exposure to chemicals, abuse and exhaustion. They will often use dangerous blades and tools and, if we look at mining, are even often in a situation where they are exposed to explosives. The fact of the matter is that the work they are doing is often having a lasting impact on the development of those children, and that impact will last all their lives.

Myth 9: it is a cultural practice to start work younger overseas than it is here, so it is not so bad. Once again, that is not what we are dealing with here. We are dealing with a situation where parents often have to provide an opportunity to use their children, and that exploitation has an impact. But if we actually had a situation where there was a decent labour market in some of these countries then there would be the situation where parents could choose to withdraw their children from work, ensure that they got an education and give them the opportunities for the future.

Myth 10: children can go back to school later, once they have made a bit of money. Again, it just does not work that way. Once you have been out of school and in a situation where you have been required to work in order to ensure your family can survive, it is very hard to go back. This is not to mention the whole question of developmental issues and the impact that that has on those who have been out of a learning environment for a long period of time.

Myth 11: parents do not care about their children if they let them be exploited. Again, it is often the only choice these families have. They do not want to send them to work but they do not have a choice. Those are the circumstances they face in terms of the economies they are part of.

Myth 12: it is not Australia’s job to end child labour. I am afraid it is all of our jobs. It is something that the international community has to take a lead role in to ensure that it is an issue that is dealt with internationally. The fact is that, with all the international organisations that we are part of, we have taken a view as a nation that those organisations should be used for the collective greater good. There is absolutely no doubt that more can and should be done with respect to addressing this issue in the international community. I think Australia plays a positive role; but, again it is a role that we have to build on into the future.

Myth 13: there will always be child labour and it is too big a problem to end. Again, that is not the case. The number of child labourers around the world has declined by one-third since the year 2000. That is 78 million children who are no longer working in exploitative conditions. Economies move on, society moves on and there is an opportunity as we move forward for this to be an issue in the past. One of the great things about humankind is the capacity over time, with respect to disease and a range of issues, for succeeding generations often to be in a situation where they can deal with problems of the past and ensure they are not problems for the future. Internationally we have a responsibility to ensure that this issue is dealt with.
Moore Electorate: Infrastructure

Mr GOODENOUGH (Moore) (17:11): In contributing to the grievance debate I take this opportunity to advocate for further federal government assistance in four key areas within my electorate. Firstly, there exists an urgent and compelling need to upgrade the telecommunications infrastructure by implementing the National Broadband Network. Currently, several homes located in the older, more established suburbs in my electorate, including Craigie, Duncraig, Edgewater, Joondalup, Padbury and Marmion, have inadequate access to even the most basic of broadband internet services. Timely provision of this essential telecommunications infrastructure will help build the digital economy by connecting people in residential settings with access to information, services and networks on a global scale.

Investment by government in opening up the information superhighway will connect the community at a number of levels. For instance, it will provide global access to the vast knowledge base contained in the Joondalup Learning Precinct, which includes Edith Cowan University, the West Coast Institute and the police academy. Similarly, the Joondalup Health Campus will also be able to utilise the high bandwidth to facilitate telemedicine, specialist medical imaging and robotic medical procedures and to promote interactive, experiential learning in conjunction with remote universities.

The communications network will extend to further link local industry and commerce in the Joondalup CBD, the Winton Road business park, with global markets and supply chains via e-business and e-commerce. According to research by Deloitte Access Economics, it is estimated that the value of Australia's digital economy generated $79 billion in the current financial year, representing 5.1 per cent of gross national product. The city of Joondalup was the first local government in Western Australia to launch a digital city strategy which advocates for an expansion of technological infrastructure platforms and content. It aims to create an educational city and attract new business in innovative sectors. The new digital economy will be the driver of innovation and growth for knowledge based activity, incorporating new ways and opportunities to access knowledge, information and services and creating opportunities through teleconferencing, telecommuting, computer aided design and manufacturing, and exciting new business models. Joondalup is already home to several leading research institutes and dynamic business clusters, such as the collaborative sixty27 working space based at Edith Cowan University, which leads to the next issue of extending federal government support for research and innovation.

With an enrolment of 24,000 students, Edith Cowan University is the cornerstone of the Joondalup learning precinct. A leader in the field of research, innovation and enterprise initiatives, the university has a number of leading research institutes based on campus. The Security Research Institute is one of the leading cybersecurity and digital forensic groups in the world, recognised for expertise in human, physical and aviation security. Similarly, the university's Electron Science Research Institute has developed into a world leader in fundamental and applied research on nanophotonics and material science. The Health and Wellness Institute houses an innovative multidisciplinary research team in exercise medicine dedicated to investigating the extent of how exercising can be deployed in cancer management to materially improve patient outcomes.
Continued support, recognition and investment by the federal government will allow these exciting fields of research and innovation to flourish, creating a wide array of career pathways and providing the highly skilled and educated workforce required to build a stronger economy. I acknowledge the exemplary work of Vice-Chancellor Steve Chapman, Professor Margaret Jones, Director of the Office of Research and Innovation, and Neil Butler, Community Partnerships Adviser, in promoting the ECU's research capabilities to industry and to government.

Professor Daryoush Habibi, Head of School of Engineering, recently hosted me on a comprehensive tour of the engineering faculty, which covered the complete range of civil, mechanical, chemical and electrical engineering disciplines. Working in close collaboration with industry, the university has demonstrated an emphasis on practical research, innovation, entrepreneurship and commercialisation. I viewed a range of projects, including a bushfire detection system, environmental monitoring systems and practical applications of technology involving hydraulics, robotics, materials science and automotive engineering.

The third issue relates to attracting federal government support for the Ocean Reef Marina redevelopment project to match the contributions by the WA state government and the City of Joondalup towards planning and environmental consultancy costs for the project. I have worked with the city's mayor, Troy Pickard, the chief executive officer, Gary Hunt, and the state member for Ocean Reef, the Hon. Albert Jacob MLA, to make a strong case for extra federal government assistance.

This represents one of the most significant economic development projects within the Moore electorate with the site covering 57.8 hectares of land based development and 33.6 hectares of development off the coast. A mix of residential development combined with hospitality, tourism and recreational facilities will deliver lifestyle amenities for the community that include the provision of 850 boat moorings. Overall, it is reasonable to expect that the transformation will have a positive impact on real estate values in surrounding suburbs. More timely delivery of the project will yield considerable taxation and revenue benefits for all levels of government as well as creating new jobs and promoting local employment and self-sufficiency. Furthermore, diversification into tourism and hospitality will make the local economy less susceptible to economic downturns in other industries.

Finally, I support the City of Joondalup's plan to develop a regional performing arts and cultural centre in the heart of Joondalup on a site adjacent to Central Park. A report identified the primary catchment area for cultural and arts patrons as being primarily 330,000 residents, essentially drawing from my neighbouring federal electorates of Cowan, Pearce and Stirling. The main facilities will comprise a lyric theatre with capacity for 850 seats and a smaller 200-seat black-box theatre for more specialised theatre staging. The objective is to attract high-profile and renowned performers and artists to our regional city by staging popular and sought after musical performances. This initiative will boost local economic development in the surrounding precinct, particularly by attracting patrons and tourists to bars, restaurants, cafes and retailers.

Recently I facilitated a meeting between City of Joondalup representatives and staff from the office of the Deputy Prime Minister and infrastructure minister to provide a project briefing to initiate the application process for federal funding. On behalf of my constituents, I
seek greater and more timely federal government assistance to further the very worthy causes I have just outlined.

Environment

Mr BUTLER (Port Adelaide) (17:20): I rise to speak on the state of national debate at the moment in my portfolio areas, the areas for which I have responsibility in the opposition—namely climate change, the environment and water policy. I think it is now open to say, given the change of leadership in the coalition, there can be no doubt that there was a general sense of despair in the nation about the state of national policy around climate change, around renewable energy, around environmental protection and around water policy. That deep sense of despair was on solid foundations. There had been a substantial attack by the former Prime Minister on the renewable energy target and on the renewable energy industry in general, including financing bodies like the renewable energy agency ARENA and the Clean Energy Finance Corporation.

Now, five or six years after the first announcement of the Direct Action Policy, the nation, the business community and environmental stakeholders have had some lived experience of that policy of the former Prime Minister, the member for Warringah. They very reasonably had a great sense of despair about the ability of that policy to achieve any meaningful reductions at all in carbon pollution levels. We also saw the former Prime Minister hell-bent on handing over Commonwealth environmental protection powers, powers that were first put in place under the Whitlam prime ministership but nurtured under every single Prime Minister who followed Gough Whitlam—Fraser, Hawke, Keating, Howard, Rudd and Gillard. He was hell-bent on handing over those powers to state governments and, in some areas, to also hand them over to local councils, giving them responsibility for the stewardship of World Heritage areas and a range of other very precious national environmental icons.

We saw the attack by the former member for Warringah, the continuing Attorney-General and a number of others on the ability of farmer groups and environmental groups to take their own government to court in the event of an allegation that their own government has not complied with the law. And we saw over the last couple of years the trashing of the Tasmanian forests agreement, the marine reserves network and so much more in this portfolio area.

I think it is fair to say that many Australians held out a very deep hope that, in the event of a leadership change—particularly a leadership change that saw the leadership move to the member for Wentworth—there would be substantive change in these areas, that the member for Wentworth, on assuming the prime ministership, would drag his party back to the sensible centre in these policy areas. The past several weeks have seen it become increasingly clear that the member for Wentworth was willing to pay a very high price indeed in terms of policy credibility in order to achieve his personal ambition of assuming the prime ministership.

There has been a real opportunity over the last five or six weeks to inject confidence back into the renewable energy industry, but this is an opportunity that the member for Wentworth has simply missed. He has missed it deliberately because he had to pay the price to the right wing of his own party, and to the National Party, to continue in substance the policy direction set by the member for Warringah in this area. The past 18 months under the member for Warringah was a period of utter devastation in the renewable energy industry. Large-scale
investment in renewables collapsed by almost 90 per cent in 2014. We went from being the 11th largest investor in renewables in the world to the 39th in just 12 months.

When we left government, we were the fourth most attractive country on the face of the earth in which to invest in renewable energy—after China, Germany and the United States. We have since plummeted to 13th and are now seen as a very, very bleak area in which to invest. This was not academic. We lost billions of dollars of potential investment during that period and lost hundreds of thousands of jobs directly in the renewable energy industry, as I think you are aware Madam Deputy Speaker Henderson, being from that part of Victoria, and in many of the supply parts of the industry as well. Even after a deal was finally struck between the government—led then by the member for Warringah—and the opposition, still the member for Warringah and the then Treasurer, the member for North Sydney, and so many other members of the government did everything they could to talk the industry down.

By contrast, the Labor Party have staked out a bold ambition. After that deal, we talked to the industry and the broader community about how we would move forward as a nation and build on a foundation that we had achieved in that agreement to have real ambition in the 2020s. We staked out an ambition to have 50 per cent renewables, that we would put in place policies to ensure that 50 per cent of our electricity, at least, was sourced from renewable sources by 2030.

When the member for Wentworth became Prime Minister—I think, in his first week—the Leader of the Opposition asked him squarely in question time in the parliament whether he would join Labor in that policy. He did not do what he has done recently in relation to a number of other policy areas like superannuation, tax and some others and say that he would consider it, that it was on the table and open to a mature discussion. Instead, he completely dismissed it and described our policy as 'reckless'. He stated that he would be looking at achieving carbon abatement through clean coal and more gas-fired generation instead of what he described as a 'reckless' policy around expanding renewable energy.

We have also seen two very different messages projected by the same government over the financing bodies to which I referred—the Clean Energy Finance Corporation. We saw front-page in *The Australian* only a couple of weeks ago where the Minister for the Environment talked about a new dawn in renewable energy because ARENA and the CEFC had been placed under the umbrella of his department. Yet, on the same front page, we also saw a report from the Minister for Finance about a speech he was giving that evening that confirmed the government's intention to continue its prosecution of legislation to abolish ARENA entirely.

We have also had it confirmed by the Minister for the Environment himself and others that it is still government policy to abolish the Clean Energy Finance Corporation, in spite of some new dawn, resulting from it being brought into the Department of the Environment. The Minister for the Environment himself confirmed that the directive that was issued under the member for Warringah's stewardship of this nation—the directive that the CEFC, in the meantime, could continue but was not allowed to invest in rooftop solar or in wind power—would also continue. Though, apparently, under the new Prime Minister, the CEFC will be able to consider offshore wind projects—not that I have heard in my number of years in this portfolio anyone actually propose an offshore wind project. Again, there was so much hope that this new Prime Minister we would lead a change in policy around renewable energy. We
have seen nothing but a change in the veneer, a change in the language; certainly no substance behind it.

We have also seen exactly the same thing happen in relation to water policy. Prime Ministers from John Howard right through to Tony Abbott understood that the implementation of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan was primarily a matter of environmental policy—without healthy rivers there will be no sustainable communities, there will be no sustainable industries. That is why from John Howard right through to Tony Abbott, all of our recent have Prime Ministers, have understood that the implementation of that plan should be overseen by scientists and officials from the Department of the Environment. Instead, as the member for Wentworth tried to scrabble together the numbers to become Prime Minister, we saw the Murray-Darling Basin Plan become a plaything of the new Prime Minister to get support not only from members of his own party but also from the National Party. As in the infrastructure area, we now have an utter dog's breakfast in water policy, where any number of ministers, we understand, have some level of responsibility for one of the outstanding achievements of the last 10 to 15 years.

The Prime Minister, of all people, should understand the importance of this. He was the water minister at the start of putting together this plan under the Water Act.

It is important also, in the very short time I have left, to mention climate policy more broadly. Very few people have nailed Mr Abbott's policy on climate change more forcefully than the member for Wentworth did back in 2009 when he called it 'a fig leaf to cover a determination to do nothing' and 'a recipe for fiscal recklessness on a grand scale.' Yet this Prime Minister now appears committed to continuing with a policy that he himself, very rightly, called out six years ago. The lived experience of this policy has confirmed that it has been as bad as the member for Wentworth predicted six years ago.

Page Electorate: Community Activities

Mr HOGAN (Page) (17:30): You may not be aware, but Lismore is the home of the oldest Lions services club in Australia. It was founded on 29 September 1947. To mark the club's 20th anniversary on 29 September 1967, the club gave the Lismore community what is known as the Lions Fountain. To this day it sits outside City Hall and over the years has been the backdrop for many things—wedding photos and the like. To mark its 50th birthday in 1997, the Lions paid for the fountain to be fully refurbished. Unfortunately time, and its associated wear and tear, does not stand still and the future of the fountain is again in doubt. But the Lismore City Lions Club and many others across the community are determined not to lose this iconic landmark. A Support the Fountain rally and barbecue will be held on 25 October to raise funds to repair and restore the fountain.

I would like to thank the members of the Lismore City Lions Club for the work they are doing to save the fountain. This includes Nancy Casson, Phil Budgeon, Murray Cooper, Doug Daymond, John Gable, Debbie Grant, Linda Irons, John Jacobson, Marnie Johnston, Michael Krueger, Christine Lewis, John Lynch, Donna Needham, George Puvinayaragam, Bruce Sheaffe, John Slater, Bill Watts, Jacky Wells, Noel Wilson and Suzanne Warmerdam. I acknowledge and thank the Lismore City Lions Club.

I would also like to acknowledge Matt Tresise who has done a lot of work building support for this project from Lions clubs across Australia. Matt is the son of Bill Tresise, the founder
of Lions in Australia and the person who presented the fountain to council all those years ago. Well done, Lismore City Lions Club.

Last weekend in the coastal town of Yamba, the not-for-profit organisation Live Prawn held the Coldstream arts and cultural festival. It attracted over 3½ thousand locals and tourists. It was a great success and all accommodation providers have told me that demand was extremely high. As part of engaging with the community, all the primary schools of the Lower Clarence were represented in various performances. Aside from sporting events, it is the only time you would see all the Lower Clarence schools together as one.

This no-alcohol family day was first held in 2005 and has been held ever since. After this year's successful event, organisers now plan to make it an annual event that not only targets locals but also tourists as a way of benefiting local businesses and the town's economy. More than 150 volunteers freely gave of their time to make the festival the success it is. I would particularly like to acknowledge Phil Nicholas, the festival's producer and director; the treasurer, Grant Jennings; the production site manager, Gary Brisbane; and the community liaison officer, Kira Muegee. Congratulations to everyone involved with the festival.

Last week I had the pleasure of attending the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience at Southern Cross University in Lismore, where I presented student Mitch Kirby with the organisation's Mentor of the Year award. AIME is a terrific organisation that mentors Indigenous high school students, encouraging them to stay on at school and progress to university. Its underlying message is that education can give you a future. We have all heard the depressing figures about the very high rate of dropouts from high school. But let me share with you two of AIME's success stories. Alec Barker and Karri Williams, who both go to Evans River K-12, started the program three years ago when they were in year 9. This year, they are their school's captains, a wonderful achievement. Alec's sister, Teela, said: 'AIME had a real impact on Alec. He's grown up, become a real leader and is making his people proud. I wish I had AIME when I was at school.'

Programs like AIME are a very practical way that we can help to close the gap between our Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. About 90 students from Southern Cross University mentor 300 Aboriginal high school students studying on the Northern Rivers, and I would like to thank the mentors, who give up five days to get training to talk to their younger counterparts about kindness, resilience, goal setting and expressing their dreams and aspirations. I would also like to congratulate Patrick Orme, who is the local regional manager of the program after being one of the first volunteers to complete the program a few years ago, as well as the AIME staff: Tom Wensley, Teela Barker, Tom Avery, Jake Thomson, Pat Templeman and Richard Mockler.

I would also like to acknowledge seven local students who were selected in the top 50 for AIME's Got Game competition. Over 2,000 Indigenous students across Australia participated. The competition encouraged students to showcase a hidden talent, whether it be hip-hop, dancing or singing. There were a massive seven contestants selected in the top 50 from the Northern Rivers and another two selected from Grafton: Maddy Ellem, from South Grafton High School, and Travis O'Connor, in the Coffs program. If these students get voted in the top 10, they will be flown down to Sydney to perform at the AIME gala ball in November and be involved in the 2015 AIME anthem, written and performed by the students. The students are George Johnson, from Southern Cross in Ballina; Taita Thaiday, from Nimbin Central...
School; Jasmine Laurie, from Alstonville; Khawana Roberts, from Alstonville; Iesha Torrens, from Alstonville; Luke Clague, from Maclean; and Emily Anderson, from Maclean. Special mention should also be made of Isaachar Fraser, of Casino High School, who read her speech outlining her vision for Australia as the first Indigenous Prime Minister, which I heard, and an inspiring speech it was.

Later this month, the Lismore train station will be brought back to life with a spectacular outdoor theatre event, Railway Wonderland, created by our local theatre company, NORPA. NORPA regularly stages high-quality theatre productions at its home, the Lismore City Hall, over two or three nights, but Railway Wonderland is very different. It will run over three weeks with 15 shows, a very significant run for a regional city. The creation of NORPA artistic director Julian Louis and Janis Balodis, Railway Wonderland was first produced in a short, sold-out run in March 2012, and now is back with a much longer run due to strong public demand.

This production is employing 60 people, including 55 locals, and was initially assisted with funding in 2012 by the Australia Council, Regional Arts New South Wales and Arts New South Wales. But Railway Wonderland really started in 2009 with a call-out to local writers to submit short stories about train stations, which were then performed at the Byron Bay Writers Festival. Local historians, university researchers, RailCorp staff, the local community, train enthusiasts and lobby groups have all contributed to the show’s development. NORPA have created an entire experience around the show, with the station platform acting as a stage and the audience sitting on the train lines.

It is show season. It is wonderful that, as part of all the agricultural shows in our region, we have showgirls who put themselves up to become Miss Showgirl. I would just like to acknowledge some of the showgirls in our region. In Lismore, Holly Cameron, Kelly Bryant, Catlin Jaeger, Lauren Curry, Gabriella Ellen-Robinson and Mikayla Bruggy put their hands up to compete in the competition. In Casino, there were Scout Symons, Laura Clapham, Ruby Webster and Caitlin Bailey. In Alstonville, there were Maddison Grey, Bethany Lock, Brooke Convery, Sarah Suvrack and Brodie Goodhand. In Grafton, there were Jacinta Davis, Kelsie Consadine, Martika Field, Fiona Green and Brooke Lancaster. In Kyogle, there were Jenna Jones and Kimberly Langley. In Maclean, there were Taylah Power-Casson, Lucy Essex, Aimee Martin and Amy Stephenson. I congratulate all these wonderful young ladies for putting their hands up and participating in such a wonderful event.

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (17:39): I rise to talk about the importance of being able to tell Australian stories, and I do so, unfortunately, in the context of the funding cuts which have occurred both to the Australia Council and to Screen Australia over the last two years. But I do so in the optimistic context of how important an Australian story can be when told and told well.

Last night, as part of the Greek Film Festival, I attended one of the first screenings of a movie titled Alex & Eve. Alex & Eve has been filmed in the suburbs of Canterbury, Lakemba, Glebe, Haberfield, Homebush, the Rocks, Croydon, Belmore, Auburn and Leichhardt. It has been filmed in the heart of multicultural Sydney, and it tells a multicultural story—a story to which, when they first went for funding to a number of different places, people responded with: ‘Well, that story would have no credibility. How could there be a story of a Greek
Orthodox young man falling in love with an Islamic woman?” And yet it is a story that should be told. It is a story that characterises much of what we see in Australia and indeed in my part of Sydney. It is a story that some communities will find challenging, but surely the arts are able to do that. It is a story that some in some communities will find challenging, and some people will not like different parts of the film. It is also the case that the story itself tells something as timeless as a love story—something as timeless as a story of two people who love each other and find that the barriers to their love are their family members who love them most.

When we had the audience Q&A at the end of the film last night, someone put up their hand and said, 'Is it possible to enjoy this film if you are neither Greek nor Lebanese?' I think the question could easily be asked: 'Is it possible to enjoy Romeo and Juliet if you are not from Verona?' These stories are timeless and need to be told, but they need to be able to be told in such a way that Australians can look at the characters, can look at the scenes and can look at the streetscapes and realise that that is their home on the screen. We should not only be taken through emotional stories or emotional journeys where the backdrops become various parts of LA. Our own suburbs, our own towns and our own communities can themselves provide the framework and the background to tell stories that are otherwise timeless.

The film itself began as a stage play. I think that it is an important reminder of that lower entry point in terms of cost. Being able to first initiate stories very often begins with live theatre. It allows a playwright to work with actors in a lower cost environment and to go to the first stage in telling stories that sometimes end up either on our television screens or, as I saw last night, on our cinema screens. The stage play, by Alex Lykos, started off in community theatre and became a smash-hit play, playing to packed audiences at the Enmore Theatre, and then spawned itself two stage sequels. Alex adapted the stage play, developed a film script and approached a friend of his—and indeed a friend of mine—Bill Kritharas, who formed the production company. The production company sought funding from Screen Australia for script development, and they did receive that assistance. They then engaged a producer, Murray Fahey, and an award-winning director, Peter Andrikidis, who has done a series of works for multicultural arts in Australia. He directed East West 101, Wog Boy 2 and other television productions. They then went out and found funding from private sources, some of which included interactions like the ones that I described the beginning of this speech.

The film takes a look at multicultural Australia and explores cross-cultural relationships in a humorous and witty way and, on many occasions, quite a touching way—aiming, in telling a timeless story, to also do so in a way that breaks down some of the barriers between communities. The original stage play was first performed in Sydney in 2006. Since then, over 35,000 people have seen productions of the play in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. The film is directed by Peter Andrikidis and stars Richard Brancatisano and Andrea Demetriades as star-crossed lovers whose parents forbid them to marry.

As I watched the story's scenes, I saw the streetscapes of Lakemba and Belmore in my electorate and the schoolteacher in Homebush high, as well as the more iconic Sydney scenes—those that are iconic for others; the ones I have mentioned are more iconic for me—of Sydney Harbour and those areas that are better known by people around the world as symbols of Australia.
I worry as we see the allocation for drama for SBS and the ABC continue to be put under pressure and the changes that have been made to the Australia Council and Screen Australia. What do we need to do to ensure that stories like this can always be told? It will always be easy for someone to stand up and ridicule arts funding and point to something else that is not getting funding and say, 'Surely, that's more important.' But we must always remember that at the heart of our country's arts policy is our national character. The arts, possibly more than any other area of policy, define how we see ourselves and how the world sees us.

I was frustrated when some years ago a young actor I know, Sachin Joab, found that he and all the other Indian characters who were in Neighbours were written out of the script. Originally the new producer's plan was that they were going home to India. The actors had to go back to the scriptwriters and say, 'Haven't you understood what's happening in the script here? Australia is the homes for these characters.'

In many ways, over the years, there have been some Australian stories that we have been good at telling on screen and in theatre. But the story of multicultural Australia remains undertold. I look at some of the challenges that we have with community engagement and some of the issues that ministers on both sides of politics have grappled with over the years on how best to engage with communities whom we feel might not be engaging with well enough. Part of that engagement is the validation of letting people know that their story is part of the Australian story and their character is part of the national character.

The film Alex and Eve does that. It is part of that story. I am not pretending for a minute it in any way characterises the Greek community or the Islamic Lebanese community. But what it does is allow an eternal story to be told against a background that people find familiar. We need more of this, not less. Every time one of these stories is told, some people will look at it and say, 'But that's not representative of us', and they will be right. No individual story ever is or could be. But the absence of multicultural Australia from our stories is not representative of this nation—and that is a challenge we continue to have to deal with.

I congratulate everybody involved in the film and, in particular, the screening I went to last night, which was organised by the Greek orthodox community for the Greek Orthodox festival—Harry Danalis, Nia Karteris and everyone involved with that particular film.

As part of the grievance debate, I plead to the government and everybody involved in policy making: the arts will always be an easy political tabloid hit. There will always be an argument to say, 'Let's cut it there.' Funding for the arts will always be an example of funding that is harder to justify. But the truth is that we make these cuts at our peril. If there is anything that has the capacity to unify our national character and let people know that their story and their journey matters to this country, it is the simplicity of us making sure—hopefully, in years to come, again on a bipartisan basis—that these stories are told. Part of the role of the Australian government is to help them be told.

Forde Electorate

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde) (17:48): It is always a pleasure to rise in this place and speak about the great things that are going on in our various communities. I would like to take this opportunity tonight to mention some of the terrific community events that I had the pleasure of attending over the weekend and the people and organisations who are doing great things in the electorate of Forde.
On Friday night we celebrated the 30th anniversary of Access Community Services. It was indeed a pleasure to attend what was, in effect, their inaugural gala dinner. Access Community Services is Queensland's leading provider in settlement, employment and training opportunities for our migrant communities. As Queensland's population has grown and we welcome more migrants to south-east Queensland, the team at Access Community Services are empowering individuals to take charge of their futures. Indeed, that was the theme of the night: 'access to the future'. Access Community Services helps young people train and find employment and provides vital support services to our migrants and refugees who have come to this great country to start a new life. Every day they are helping people realise their value and provide them with the opportunities to be the best version of themselves. In turn, the team at Access Community Services are building strong communities where people participate, feel valued and have a greater quality of life.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate CEO Gail Ker, whose constant support and dedication over the past 20 years to this organisation has played such a huge role in its success. Behind Gail there is a passionate, hardworking and committed team of individuals who have grown this organisation to be the success that it is today. It is thanks to support services like Access Community Services that we see the south-east of Queensland as such a fantastic place to live for our migrants and refugees. And we are continuing to see this growth in ethnic and cultural diversity throughout Australia. In Queensland alone, and in my local community of Logan city, we are home to people who speak more than 220 languages and hold more than 100 religious beliefs. I am very proud we come from a part of Australia where this cultural diversity is our strength.

I grew up in Waterford and I have seen the community change over those years. When I was growing up, I can remember that it was a community that reflected our European heritage; today you see faces from all parts of the world, from different cultures and ethnicities, and that is what brings such colour and vibrancy to our community today. As a member of the Logan: City of Choice leadership team, Access Community Services have also been extremely supportive as we have addressed some of the challenges that face our community from time to time. I look forward to continuing to work with Gail and the team at Access Community Services, and I wish them every success for the next 30 years at least.

On Saturday evening I had the pleasure of attending the Beenleigh Yatala Chamber of Commerce inaugural gala dinner to celebrate 150 years of business achievements in our region. Many thanks to the chamber of commerce team, including president Lawrie Dore, operations officer Michael Rose, and many others, including Anje Pieper, one of the board members, for the wonderful work she did in preparing the room for the evening. It was a tremendous event to celebrate that milestone of 150 years of business in our local community. I would also like to thank the team at Chef Express who prepared a fantastic menu, much of the produce coming from our region's local suppliers.

The Beenleigh region has a fascinating history, dating back to the 1840s when Brisbane stopped being a convict settlement and people were allowed to settle and farm the land. With the Logan and Albert Rivers providing the most convenient means of transport, the Beenleigh region became home to successful sugar plantations. During its prime, there were at least 12 mills in the immediate district, with some farmers also building their own mills. From this, and drawing on the production of molasses, Beenleigh also saw the creation of a successful...
rum industry. The Beenleigh Rum distillery is still operating today, making it the oldest operating rum distillery in Australia. Other industries included dairy and other farming activities. As the region's farming community grew, so did the township, with churches, a school, police barracks, a courthouse and eventually a hospital.

Today, the Beenleigh Yatala region is home to many successful and entrepreneurial businesses, from small businesses to large manufacturers, distribution, construction and, yes, still agriculture. The Beenleigh Yatala business community is the strength of our region, providing jobs and training and boosting our local economy.

I am proud to be part of a government that is working towards improving these trading opportunities for these businesses. The small business measures passed during the 2015 budget have helped and are continuing to help many of the businesses grow and prosper. In addition, the free trade agreements are opening doors for many of these businesses to expand their trade and business opportunities internationally, and this in turn provides more local jobs.

Finally, I had the opportunity to attend the celebrations at the South East Suns Australian Football Club annual presentation night. In their inaugural year it was a terrific opportunity to reflect on what was a tremendously successful season. The club are very proud of their achievements in the first year, with their senior side making it all the way to the grand final against Bond University and the reserve side finishing third on the ladder, also earning them a place in the finals. In 2014, the former club, the Logan Cobras, played their final season before changing to their new entity, the South East Suns. This was all part of AFL Queensland's major restructure to all SEQAFL competitions in September 2013. It is fantastic to see a club with their transition having been such a tremendous success.

I congratulate the South East Suns president, Ben Head, for his vision and hard work, as he and his committee have built two successful teams and a positive environment for families, children and friends to watch AFL. Building a successful club like the South East Suns requires a small army of volunteers, dedicated members, generous sponsors and passionate supporters. On Saturday night, I had the pleasure of seeing all of the above and can see why the South East Suns have had such a successful season.

This season the club reached every goal they set out to achieve, and they already have big plans for next season. They hope to build a solid core of junior membership, and I have no doubt that they will be able to achieve this too. Most hearteningly, the senior team coach came and spoke to me on Saturday night, saying that he wants to get the team members actively involved in the local community next year, most specifically getting involved with helping people who are homeless. It is a deliberate strategy of his to connect the players with the community rather than them just being a club that the community comes and visits. I would like to congratulate him on that initiative and look forward to working with him in the new year on that. My congratulations to the board, the players, the volunteers and the staff for an outstanding season both on and off the field. I look forward to following the club's successes in the new year.

Education Funding

Ms KATE ELLIS (Adelaide) (17:58): I rise today to outline to the House the situation facing each and every Australian school and to call on both the Prime Minister and indeed the
new Minister for Education and Training to abandon their pursuit of the biggest cuts to school education in Australia’s history. Both the Prime Minister and the education minister have a clear choice. They can listen to the experts and the community and scrap these cuts, or they can continue with the Liberals’ broken promise and cement the damage that they are doing to our schools.

Of course, we have seen over the last two years that the Liberal government not only have walked away from years 5 and 6 of the Gonski reforms but actually have gone further in the budget by linking school funding indexation to the consumer price index from 2018, a move that will result in the biggest cut to school funding that this country has ever seen. We saw again in question time today and continue to see members of the government try to tell the community that black is white, try to stand up and say that all this talk of cuts is nonsense and school funding is going up each and every year. Of course school funding is going up, but we know that, if it goes up just by indexation at CPI, it is so low that it will severely impact the capacity of our schools. That increase in indexation will not even keep up with the increase in school costs.

Money might increase in dollar terms, but it will not be enough to close the equality gap which we know faces Australians schools. It will not be enough to ensure that our schools have the resources that they need. It will not be enough even to let them keep up with running costs. It will see schools go backwards, and in real terms the $30 billion in cuts will mean an average cut of $3.2 million for each and every school, the same as sacking one in seven teachers. It will mean less individual support, less support for students with disability, and literacy and numeracy programs to be cut. It will mean that music and sport programs will be cut. It will mean that learning supports will be cut. It will mean less training, less support and less professional development for teachers. It will mean that principals are unable to plan and invest, because of the uncertainty in their school budget. This is what this government's actions included in their budget and recommitted to today by their Prime Minister will mean for each and every school across Australia.

Both the government and the non-government school sectors have issued serious warnings about the impact of these savage cuts. The National Catholic Education Commission in their pre-budget submission earlier this year said that, as a result of this moves, fees will increase, schools could close and the quality of education will be compromised. We know that the Education Council briefing in May this year said:

The impact for these cuts will be to compromise states' and territories' ability to provide high quality education to all students, regardless of their location or economic background.

The states have also made it clear that the impact of these cuts would be severe. As South Australian Minister Susan Close has said:

It means we won't be able to run the programs we want to run for literacy and numeracy in the low-socio-economic schools.

James Merlino, the Victorian minister covering two of the Victorian members I have here, has said:

We will see schools across the country—government and non-government—just go backwards.
But probably the most telling endorsement is that from the government's own Liberal-National colleagues in New South Wales, with New South Wales Minister for Education Adrian Piccoli saying:

Why was I the strongest advocate across all education ministers? I think it's because I'm the only National party minister. Our electorates benefit the most.

Despite the warnings and the evidence, the government continues to pursue these cuts, and only today in question time the Prime Minister had a clear opportunity to demonstrate that something had changed, but of course all he said was 'The government's policies haven't changed.'

The really sad thing about all of this—the really sad thing about each and every school facing a real cut and going backwards from the situation we are currently in—is that we had already come to a consensus that our school system needed improving and that we needed to be lifting results and cutting the equity gap in our schools. We know that Labor handed the government a blueprint to a better, more equitable school system, because we knew that something had to change. When we received the Gonski report, we found that schools and students most in need of resources were missing out and that Australia's educational achievement and our national skills base was being compromised as a result. We found—and it was unquestionable—that the gap between well-off and disadvantaged students is wider in Australia than the OECD average and it is growing. We as a parliament decide whether we choose to do something about that or put it in the too-hard basket—simply turn our backs and make the situation even worse.

The 2012 program for international school assessment results show that overall our results are declining, while relatively other nations in our region have improved. We know that the past decade has seen a five per cent increase in poor performing students and a corresponding decrease in high performance. We know that the gap between students in the most socioeconomically disadvantaged quartile and in the most advantaged group is equal to 2½ years of school—in some areas, this gap is as wide as three years.

Members in here representing regional areas should be concerned that regional students lag behind their city peers by almost a year. Remote students are almost two years behind. This is the reality of what is happening in Australia's schools and this is what this parliament is absolutely obliged to step up and address.

We know that, although there was a blueprint for reform, setting out the solutions and the way that we get there, this government tore this blueprint up, putting all of the hard-fought reforms at risk—failing to fund them from 2018 and taking a no-strings-attached approach to school funding.

Of course we know that the Gonski reforms were never given a chance to make a difference before the Liberals destroyed them, and previous Minister Pyne came out with the empty rhetoric that we have heard from this government. But now we have a new Minister for Education, and I know that many were hopeful that we would see a new direction. But sadly we have the same tired old messages. The Minister for Education seems to be reading out the member for Sturt's playbook, recycling his talking points. He has said: 'There is far more to getting better outcomes than just putting more money on the table'. I think everybody knows that. But what that fails to acknowledge is that the Gonski reforms were not just about money;
they were about making sure that the money reached those who needed it the most and that the money was used in the areas that we know bring about the biggest impact.

We know that ensuring that resources were making a difference, that states were not simply being given a blank cheque, was what was at the heart of the reforms. If the Minister for Education is certain that money does not make a difference he should perhaps try speaking to the parent of a child with a disability who has been told they can only be enrolled part-time because of a lack of resources. He might want to speak to classroom teachers who feel so stretched because they do not have the support staff they need to ensure that their students reach their full potential.

We know that that intervention programs and allied health specialists all need money, and these are all things that make a very real difference. Is the minister saying that teacher training does not require extra investment? It is investment and making sure that investment goes to where we know it can make a difference which is at the heart of the reforms we need to see.

Failing to complete the full years of the Gonski reforms would also see a funding inequality between states. And, as a South Australian, I know that my state will be particularly impacted upon. We know that this would be compounded by linking school funding to the consumer price index—the government's current policy, and the biggest cut to funding in our country's history. I will continue to call on the new Minister for Education and on the new Prime Minister, who seems to be adopting the exact same approach as his predecessor, to say that it does not make sense in anybody's playbook to discard our school reforms. To say that we are not investing in schools because we think that that is what is smart for this nation's economy is the most short-sighted thing that anyone can say before this parliament.

We need this school reform. We need to not turn our backs on the evidence and we need the government to step forward and say that they will reverse the biggest cuts to school funding in this nation's history, which have been included in this government's budgets in these members' watches.

**China-Australia Free Trade Agreement**

**Palmerston Regional Hospital**

*Mrs GRIGGS (Solomon) (18:08):* Anyone who has been following my speeches in this place over the last few months will have probably heard that I have been speaking about some of the same topics over and over again. I do not do that by choice. I do not do it so I can hear the sound of my own voice. Some of these issues need to be visited and revisited, time and time again, because whenever the debate has run its course or the issue has reached a natural conclusion, those opposite in this chamber throw some absurd curve-ball just for the sake of muddying the waters. The two examples of this I want to talk about today are Labor's approach to ChAFTA and their response to the construction of Palmerston Regional Hospital.

In regard to ChAFTA, the unions paid for a very expensive advertising campaign to tell the people of Australia, particularly those in my electorate, that vast hordes of immigrants would come to take their jobs. They went door to door in Darwin and Palmerston preaching about a secret deal. Brochures were dropped in letterboxes throughout the Top End warning that people with no trade qualifications would be allowed to come to Australia and work as electricians and diesel fitters. There were small groups of people under union banners
standing at intersections near the popular Nightcliff markets in Darwin, waving signs warning that our children's jobs would be taken away. Lies, lies and more lies.

Since then, through normal public discourse, debate in this place and analysis by journalists, it has emerged that we already have agreements with other countries that are nearly identical to ChAFTA. People have been quick to point out that some of these agreements went through under a Labor government and that Australia has never been swamped by workers from Chile, Japan or South Korea. People who were worried about the secret agreement could have punched the term 'China free trade agreement' into Google and seen the entire text of the official documents appear before them in both Word and PDF formats on the Australian government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade website.

Now we are seeing a face-saving exercise by the Labor Party. They stood up and beat their chests about the evils of free trade. They paid for TV ads. They rounded up people to go door to door dropping flyers and, as I said, spreading rumours and lies. Yet they still lost the debate. Nobody believed them—and rightly so. Labor are now engaged in this grand face-saving gesture, putting forward suggested amendments so that they can say they have done something. The trouble is that, as with most things Labor get involved with, they are more concerned about the appearance of action rather than the consequences—for example, take the latest suggestion to raise the minimum wage that can be paid to an employee on a 457 visa. Labor are calling it a 'safeguard' amendment.

Analysis by Sid Maher at The Australian shows that proposals put forward by Labor would, based on current figures, cut around 27 per cent of all 457 positions available. He goes on to show that many industries in the Northern Territory which are dependent on 457 visa workers will be pushed out of the scheme by these Labor amendments. By that I mean that a worker in retail, agriculture, forestry, fisheries, or arts and recreation who is being paid the average wage would not qualify for a 457 visa under Labor's thought-bubble idea. The story is similar in Queensland and Tasmania, where several industries would be cut out of the system because of their average wage.

The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry were quoted in the article as saying that raising the temporary skilled migration income threshold to $57,000 would have a 'profound impact on rural and regional areas' across the country. I wonder if the Labor Party is choosing to cut off these industries from a supply of skilled workers? Perhaps this is part of a plan to do the bidding of their union allies—the figures that they have chosen have been deliberate and targeted—or perhaps, in keeping with the fine Labor tradition of policy on the run, they were desperate to be seen to be doing something and did not think through the consequences. We often have to clean up the mess of unintended consequences from the legislation they have put through.

I would like to turn to the Palmerston hospital. It is really important that I set the record straight on another Labor Party whipping boy in the Northern Territory—the Palmerston Regional Hospital. For 11 years the Labor Party held government in the Northern Territory. For six of those years the Labor Party also held government federally. During that time a lot was said about building a hospital in Palmerston. Labor unveiled signs and showed off some blueprints for a small 60-bed hospital—and they did turn a couple of sods. What they did not do was build the hospital. The only tangible progress from 11 years in government in the Territory and, as I said, six years federally was a rented piece of temporary fencing around a
three-hectare site in Yarrawonga. Labor, as I said, promised a 60-bed hospital, not much more than the superclinic that is operating in Palmerston. It was what I consider a box-ticking exercise, and even that failed.

So, in the two years since the coalition took office in the Northern Territory, and indeed federally, we have started from scratch. We have begun to pour the concrete that will form the base of a 116-bed level 3 hospital on a 45-hectare site. Last Friday, I stood with my Northern Territory colleague the Hon. John Elferink, who is the Minister for Health; my good friend Lia Finocchiaro MLA, who, like me, is a fierce advocate for everything Palmerston; and also the member for Blain, Nathan Barrett MLA. We watched four truckloads of cement tipped into the base of what will be a stairwell in the main entrance of the Palmerston hospital. So the Palmerston hospital is literally now set in stone, and that is a fact. There has been a lot of work that has already been occurring over the past 12 months. Major infrastructure works including roads, water and sewerage have all been upgraded in the area, and now the hospital itself is under construction.

What do you think the reaction of the Northern Territory Labor Party has been? Well, I have to say, I was a little bit surprised that they would make these comments on what is probably the most significant piece of infrastructure for the people of Darwin and Palmerston and indeed the rural area. The Northern Territory's Labor member for Nightcliff, Natasha Fyles, said that the concrete pour was a stunt. Then we have one of Senator Peris's staffers, the candidate for Solomon, posting a picture on Facebook of several tonnes of concrete being poured into the foundation of the hospital and urging the government 'just to build it'. Well, I am not sure what this person thought several tonnes of concrete being poured into a hole was for if it is not being used for construction. But, anyway, wonders will never cease! The Labor Party are watching a building rise from the ground in front of their eyes and denying that it exists. Instead, they want to tell lies and do their typical scaremongering. They are saying that we are not building the hospital. Well, I have to reiterate: the Palmerston Hospital is being built. It is set in stone. The first of many pours has occurred.

So Labor no longer cares about good ideas and solid policy, and it no longer even cares about the truth. It cares about propping up union scare campaigns and pandering to its factions. Labor was wrong about the China free trade agreement, and it was wrong about the Palmerston Hospital. When all is said and done, the public are awake up to its lies and scaremongering, and the people of Darwin and Palmerston are absolutely sick of the lies and the scaremongering about these two very important issues. They know that they can trust a coalition government to work with the Giles government to deliver the Palmerston hospital for the greater Darwin area. It is a very, very important piece of infrastructure that is well and truly underway.

Tasmania: Economy

Ms COLLINS (Franklin) (18:18): There has been the Deloitte Access Economics business outlook for the September quarter out recently, and it is finally pointing to some good news for Tasmania. Indeed, some of those sectors where Labor invested when we were in government are showing signs of growth, such as tourism, agriculture, aquaculture and dairy. Labor of course invested $100 million in our jobs and growth plan when we were in government. It was a bit amusing to see the new Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science in the parliament today trying to claim credit for a particular project at Triabunna, at

---

FEDERATION CHAMBER
Tassal. Labor of course has invested heavily in the aquaculture industry at the state and federal level over many years, and it is wonderful to see the Tasmanian economy starting to turn the tide.

Labor invested in many areas in Tasmania, and one of those areas was infrastructure. We increased infrastructure funding in Tasmania from around $157 per person to $264 per person—that is, to $1.9 billion—over the six years we were in office and the further coming five years covered by Labor's last budget. That is $1.9 billion invested in road and rail in Tasmania under the Labor government. But what have we seen from the current government? There is a bit of concern in Tasmania that some of the investment in Tasmania is not going to be delivered. We cannot forget the debacle of the Cadbury funding. It was going to happen for two years, and then it did not happen. Now, apparently, it is being matched by the state government and being turned into a jobs fund—about which we do not have any criteria or guidelines announced yet and about which we as yet have no details.

We know about the cut of $100 million from the Midland Highway. Labor committed $500 million to the Midland Highway, the major highway connecting north and south Tasmania, and the Liberals cut $100 million from that. We have seen delays in works on the Midland Highway. The member for Lyons is trying to talk about the Perth to Breadalbane section upgrade, saying it was such a positive thing. Of course it is a positive thing. It would have been better, however, if it had not been over 12 months late. Being late with infrastructure and withdrawing infrastructure from Tasmania appears, sadly, to be all too common.

In estimates today, we had confirmed that the Tasmanian state government, despite the fact it was agreed under Labor that there would be a $240 million package for freight rail in Tasmania, only put up a package worth $119 million. Between the state Liberal government and the federal Liberal government, they are taking $120 million out of freight rail in Tasmania over five years. That is $120 million that will not now be invested in Tasmania. We have also seen cuts to health, hospital and schools funding in Tasmania—over $2.1 billion. Sadly we saw a report last week that said that Tasmania's elective surgery waiting lists were still the worst in the country. Indeed they are the only ones continuing to go backwards. Clearly there is a serious problem with the health system in Tasmania that needs to be addressed. The former state Labor government tried to address it. It is good to see the current state Liberal government is also trying to address it, but it is a bit hard to do that when the Commonwealth keeps ripping money out of the state health system—causing Tasmanians to suffer as a result.

The Hobart Airport project in my electorate was promised $38 million for an extension of the runway. I understand that to date only about $2 million of that $38 million has actually been paid out. We have seen no signs yet of a tender that apparently was supposed to be let this year for that construction to get underway and to get the masterplan completed. Labor invested very heavily too in buildings around Tasmania. There was the National Rental Affordability Scheme investment in university accommodation—which is now underway in Melville Street in Hobart—and we invested in an arts and cultural centre which is also about to get underway, again with the University of Tasmania. These latter two projects in the centre of Hobart were very large-scale investments worth over $100 million.

There is some concern that the Liberals are taking money out, but there is also concern about when the projects that are currently in the system cease. What will happen after that?
Will we continue to see the types of investments under the new Liberal government that we saw under the Labor government? We think not—because of all the delays coming from the state Liberal government and all the money being cut by the federal Liberal government.

We have seen a change of Prime Minister recently, but we have also heard a lot about how this has not changed any policies. It seems it has not changed very much in terms of policies in Tasmania either. But there is one thing that does concern me about the new Prime Minister with respect to Tasmania. I have gone back and had a look at the new Prime Minister's visits to Tasmania. Interestingly, I can only find one case of him visiting Tasmania since the Liberals have been in government. That was in November 2014—and there was a press release saying it was the first time he had come down as Minister for Communications. That might be because of his NBN failure and his fear of coming down and facing Tasmanians about the NBN promises that he had not delivered on. Alternatively he might have been sneaking in, not wanting anybody to know, because he is too embarrassed.

It is interesting that the current Prime Minister has only been to the state once since the Liberals have been in office. I am sure that Tasmanians will note with interest if he suddenly starts turning up. He has now been Prime Minister for five weeks. We saw on the weekend that he has made it to New Zealand. So he has had made it to New Zealand, but he has not yet visited Tasmania.

To Prime Minister Turnbull: 'Come on down. Don't be that embarrassed about your NBN failure, but we will, of course, talk to you about that.' It is interesting that he has managed to make it to New Zealand, which is close to Tasmania but he has not yet made it to our island state. Indeed, he does not seem to have been very committed to it over the time the Liberal Party have been in government. It will be interesting to see whether there will be any visits to Tasmania in the coming weeks. I would have thought most new Prime Ministers do try to get around the country and visit every state. I am sure Tasmanians will give him a welcome when he does come down and they will talk to him about the NBN failure, particularly in those areas that were to get fibre under Labor that are now no longer getting fibre—the north-west coast, the west coast and south of Hobart. I know there are many communities that are concerned that they are no longer getting fibre under the current government. It will be good to see the Prime Minister down in Tasmania.

I started out talking about jobs and the economy, but I also want to talk about the Tasmanian Jobs Program. The Tasmanian Jobs Program was the brainchild of the former employment minister, Tasmania's Senator Eric Abetz, who also happens to be one of my constituents. Senator Abetz's Tasmanian Jobs Program finishes at the end of this year. On the figures that are currently available, they have spent more on advertising than they have on wage subsidies as part of this program. I am hoping that when we get to estimates later this week, we actually hear some good news about these placements and this program, given that the former minister doubled the wage subsidy from $3,250 to $6½ thousand for employers wanting to put on Tasmanians. Clearly, the Tasmanian Jobs Program has been a failure under the former employment minister. I am hoping to see an improvement in those wage subsidy figures and I am hoping to see an improvement in employment in Tasmania.

There has been some great news for Tasmania in changes to the economy. We have even had Tasmania's own Saul Eslake talk about Tasmania in today's media and those growing industries. People are saying that the low Australian dollar and Tasmania's produce being
what the world wants, particularly the growing region of China, are the reason that Tasmania is doing a little better than we might otherwise be doing. But it is, of course, no accident that we invested in those growth areas when we were in government. It is no accident that projects are occurring around Hobart city and around Tasmania that were funded by the former Labor government. There is genuine community concern about what will happen when these projects are no longer under construction and there are no new projects in the pipeline.

There is genuine concern in the Tasmanian economy about what the government will do at the state level, where clearly they have serious issues about planning for infrastructure and making sure we make the most from Commonwealth investment, and at the federal level, where they continue to rip money from the state and continue to abandon Tasmanians. As I said, I can hardly wait for the new Prime Minister to come down to Tasmania to face constituents in Tasmania and explain his NBN failure and explain not living up to his promises for Tasmanians.

Banks Electorate

Mr COLEMAN (Banks) (18:28): I am pleased this evening to have the opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the work of a number of important local organisations in my electorate. Just yesterday afternoon, I was fortunate to visit the Lugarno Music in the Park organised by the Lugarno Progress Association. The Lugarno Progress Association has been in existence for nearly a century, since 1922, and is led by president Joan Curtis, who is ably assisted by treasurer Ken Mason. Ken is a musician of some repute. The LPA had the idea of making use of the natural amphitheatre that is Evatt Park and having a music event in the park. Yesterday was the first time that this event has been run and it was very successful. It was a free event for all the community to attend, and when I attended there were several hundred people there. We heard from lots of great local acts. Ken Mason's band, the Kenny Ansett All Stars performed, including Nick Jefferies, Tim Bowen, Paul Mason and Marcello Maio. Ross Ferraro performed. There was also a performance by the Lugarno Public School choir. They are a particularly good choir. Each year at local Anzac Day and Remembrance Day ceremonies, the Lugarno Public School choir do a wonderful job, and that was certainly the case yesterday. They sang a number of quite modern songs and provided a great contrast with all the other different musicians who performed. Also as part of the event, there were a number of different food stalls offering food from all corners of the globe. I do very much want to thank the Lugarno Progress Association. It is one of the strongest community organisations anywhere in my electorate. As a resident of Lugarno, it is something that I know a little bit about, and I certainly do appreciate their work very much.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank the efforts of the St George Football Association, and, specifically, the gold medal dinner that was held on 25 September. The St George Football Association is the single largest community organisation anywhere in my electorate, and across the St George district about 10,000 people play football—or soccer, as some of us refer to it—every single week. So 10,000 people across St George are playing football every week. To organise an event of that size is a massive undertaking, with literally hundreds of games taking place every single Saturday. On 25 September the annual gold medal dinner was held at Club Central, one of the finest venues in our region, and I would like to take the opportunity to thank the club, led by its chairman, Bernie Holdsworth. Club
Central puts an enormous amount back into our community, and was a very gracious host on this particular evening.

There are lots of terrific football teams in my electorate: Connells Point Rovers, Hurstville Zagreb, Oatley RSL, Forest Rangers, Hurstville City Minotaurs, Hurstville Glory, Lugarno, Peakhurst United and Penshurst West—to name just some. The football community is a very, very active community.

I want to highlight a few of the particular winners on the night. Jacky Finlay Jones won the gold medal award for her longstanding contribution to football in the region—that was a very well deserved award. The Stan Moses Shield, which goes to the club with the best A-grade team in the St George Football Association went to Connells Point 13A, which had a pretty stupendous record during the year. Connells Point is one of the biggest clubs in the region and Steve Matthews and everyone down there at Connells Point do a fantastic job. Connells Point also won the AS Tanner Shield, which is presented to the club that wins the most points in the premier league. Congratulations to them. I would like to acknowledge the efforts of the St George Football Association president Sok Mallios, the directors Angelo Bonura and Ivan Pavelic, the acting secretary Vicki Philips and everyone else who is involved. To run an organisation that is so large is a very large undertaking, and these people do that in a volunteer capacity. For that, we think them.

Also in September, I had the opportunity to visit Bridgeview Cottage in Beverly Hills. Bridgeview Cottage is run under the auspices of UnitingCare, who run a significant number of retirement villages, day care centres for the elderly, and many other important community services. One of Bridgeview Cottage’s most important programs is a seniors living program focused on people in the Hurstville, Kogarah and Rockdale local government areas. The centre provides information, support and care for seniors, activities such as health and well-being seminars, social participation and improving people’s daily lives. There are lots of activities: games, music and singing, reminiscing about earlier times and many other activities. I know that the activities that are run at Bridgeview Cottage mean a lot to the people who attend them, and I thank the Healthy Living for Seniors’ coordinator, Jennifer Fowler, and everyone else who is down there.

I also want to thank my friend Ricky Chu. Ricky runs the Chinese community programs at the same centre. My electorate has the largest proportion of Australians of Chinese background of anywhere in the nation. About 20 per cent of all people in my electorate are of Chinese background. Ricky runs a number of programs, particularly for seniors, in the Chinese community. To demonstrate the depth of his success in doing this, Ricky received the inaugural UnitingCare Inspired Care Volunteer Award for his contribution to the Healthy Living for Seniors program run for Chinese seniors. That UnitingCare award is not just for the Bridgeview Cottage, Beverly Hills; it was for across the entire state. So Ricky has been named as volunteer of the year across all UnitingCare facilities in our state, and that is a tremendous testament to his efforts. He provides a lot of social support to elderly people in the local Chinese community, and, Ricky, thank you again for all of your efforts.

I would also like to acknowledge another important community group in my electorate, the group Asian Women at Work. It is based in Bankstown but has a substantial number of activities in Hurstville, the largest centre in my electorate. The group provides advice for women on industrial and workplace issues, provides leadership development, training
programs and a whole range of other things. It is quite a list: art classes, English classes, a book club, drumming classes and a whole range of different activities. When I visited them recently, on 22 September, we had a really good discussion about issues and local community and things that could be better in Hurstville. One of the concerns in Hurstville has been the prevalence of crime in recent times, and I was pleased to hear directly from the members of Asian Women at Work on how we could take steps to reduce crime in the area. I want to thank St George local area command for their active efforts in this area, in particular meeting recently with the southern region Chinese Business Association to discuss concerns about crime in Hurstville.

When I was at the event, the Asian Women at Work group presented me with a really beautiful artwork. That artwork now has pride of place in my office. It was a very nice gesture. Angela Zhang runs the program and all of the activities in Hurstville, and Lina Cabaero has a broader management responsibility across the entire organisation in Bankstown and elsewhere. I am fortunate to have so many great organisations in my community. Those are just four of them, and I am pleased to have the opportunity to thank them for their efforts.

Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption

Mr DANBY (Melbourne Ports) (18:38): I rise to talk about the Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption, which perhaps we should now call the Prime Minister's Royal Commission into the Labor Party. After all, although we have recently seen Caesar blunder his way through to his own downfall, we are yet to see any actual shift in substance from Brutus. I, for one, expect the member for Wentworth to continue to cash in on his party's setting up of this loaded royal commission.

This royal commission is a piece of political theatre: nothing more; nothing less. Amidst their frenzied attacks on public spending, the government party somehow manages to find the time and an estimated $80 million of public money to cover the cost of this royal commission. The Australian public can now see this royal commission for what it is: a political production, produced by the Liberal Party of Australia. Its aim was to discredit the Australian Labor Party by attacking the Leader of the Opposition and trying to draw a link between us and union wrongdoing.

I want to recap some of the episodes of this drama. First, as with all good productions, you need to figure out your production team. Given the thousands of barristers all around Australia, it beggars belief that the commissioner, the chief counsel and the deputy counsel would all come from the one small chambers in Sydney. Second, you need to control who appears on the stage. And so we saw Dyson Heydon issuing decrees to control which witnesses could appear. Even more worryingly, we have recently come to learn of witness being coached by the staff of the commission. Then you have your actors, but what about their lines? It seems that commission staff have had a part to play in prepping people before they take the stage. The other thing with lines, of course, is that it is no good having them challenged—you say your line and then leave the stage. We have seen people allowed to say whatever they like, all in time for the next day's papers—never mind about having a chance to cross-examine salacious accusations. That just would not be in the script. Then there was Kathy Jackson and Dyson Heydon's decision to classify evidence relating to her fraud as irrelevant. Here was the first real example of corruption found in a union and it was deemed to be irrelevant. It was not irrelevant to a court in Victoria which subsequently convicted Ms
Jackson, I might add. Then we saw the Leader of the Opposition thrust onto the stage. This was supposed to be the main event, but it never quite materialised no matter how hard they dug. There were no briefings for Bill Shorten from staff who helped Kathy Jackson. Thousands of pages of material were dumped on him just days before, and he faced 800 questions. Imagine any other political party doing a similar thing. I would like to have seen Mr Downer talk about the Australian Wheat Board and the bribes to Saddam Hussein in answer to 800 questions before a royal commission.

This very evening our national broadcaster, on its flagship program, *Four Corners*, will have the unedifying spectacle of a quasi-judicial officer, Michael Lawler, one of the highest-ranking members of the Fair Work Commission—no less than a vice president of the Fair Work Commission, paid $450,000 per annum—attempting to explain his involvement in this corruption scandal. Most Australians, except for a few frightbats opposite, support the Fair Work Commission as a great Australian institution that has done much to minimise disruption in the economy by ensuring that disputes between employers and employees can be resolved, fairly and justly. Minimising disputes at work while maximizing fairness at work is its mission. But its mission is undermined by retaining Lawler as its second-most senior official. And, while it is a dangerous to review an operatic performance before it begins, this much we know: Michael Lawler has been called by some people an idiot savant of a powerful Liberal-aligned family; his father, as has been reported recently, is a close associate of the former Prime Minister, the member for Warringah. Michael Lawler is a beneficiary of a multimillion dollar crime-spree engaged in by his partner Kathy Jackson, then in charge of a union. We do not yet know the full extent of Lawler's benefit from her activities. We do know that he purports to own a house—which was the victim of a supposed arson attack that police rejected as arson—that had mortgage payments serviced by Ms Jackson. Jackson's sole source of funds, it appears, was money looted from her members' funds. It appears Mr Lawler also, apparently by his own admission, assisted Jackson's manoeuvring aimed at seizing control of the union—tactics that have now switched to desperately avoiding financial accountability for her large-scale embezzlement. Michael Lawler now appears to admit assisting Jackson in that legal defence while claiming full pay from the Commonwealth and lodging paperwork for various kinds of leave—long leave, sick leave or whatever.

Parliament has tarried too long in dealing with this morally bankrupt judge on the bench. He is, it is becoming clear, the Murray Farquhar of the Fair Work Commission. He has benefited from fraud, he has attempted to cover up that fraud by using multiple legal manoeuvres, he has attempted to gain first-mover advantage by reporting other, smaller-scale fraudsters and he seems to have fraudulently claimed leave while scandalously continuing to be paid as if he was still working. Lawler will inevitably be removed by this parliament from the Fair Work Commission. His behaviour means he does not deserve high judicial office. Accordingly, in light of what Lawler admits on tonight's *Four Corners*, I will be referring the commissioner himself to the Australian Federal Police for his involvement in this scandal and his involvement in and the benefit from the Jackson scams, in addition to his own leave claims, which appear to be in the multiple hundreds of thousands of dollars.

There was no reason to think this son of the Liberal aristocracy would go so horribly wrong and become such a profound embarrassment to the conservative wing of the Liberal Party, which prides itself on faith and piety. When the former Prime Minister appointed him, he had
no way of knowing he was about to appoint a person of Mr Lawler's nature, but that is what he did.

Indeed, lest we think that affection of the strongly conservative wing of the Liberal Party for the Lawler clan is a matter of distant memory, I refer the House's attention to the most recent edition of the historically significant organ *NewsWeekly*, which once fought the good fight in the Cold War and continues to formally represent the views of the National Civic Council, which many assumed was no longer with us. In its pages Peter Westmore, the President of the NCC, denounces the recent reporting of *The Australian* newspaper that links Sir Peter Lawler's presence at an audience with the Queen here in Parliament House with his son's high office. Mr Westmore even goes so far as to accuse the new Prime Minister of leaking Lawler's presence at this function to damage his predecessor—surely a scurrilous claim!

Mr Westmore goes on to insist that Sir Peter Lawler's own eminence justified his audience and suggested that, while Michael Lawler was guilty, this guilt ought not be transferred to his father. Fair enough. I do not seek to pass comment on Sir Peter's service, which appears to be illustrious. I seek nothing less than decisive action on his offspring. He must go, and those in this place willing to defend him must and will be held to account. Now we have a new Prime Minister who has his own colourful business past, including the annihilation of Solomon Islands forests, and who should maintain the high standards of public life that he talks about so often and agree to the removal of this rotten apple in the Fair Work Commission barrel.

In summary, for the removal of doubt, it is crystal clear that Michael Lawler has been the beneficiary of fraud, has engaged in bogus leave claims on his own and must as a matter of urgency be sacked by this parliament from the position of trust he is privileged to hold. The integrity of the Fair Work Commission and this parliament, the only body capable of removing him—he is not subject to any of the normal practices of an organisation, with superiors able to review someone's work—depend on it. It is very unusual that we have a person in high judicial office who cannot be removed by people in his own organisation, and it is very strange that the rules of this organisation were written so that he could only be removed by parliament. We must step up to our duty and see that someone who spends nine months on $450,000 at the taxpayers' expense in a private matter working on behalf of his partner ought to be removed by this parliament.

**National Broadband Network**

Mr SIMPKINS (Cowan) (18:47): Tonight I wish to take the opportunity to talk about broadband connectivity within Cowan and Friday's win for Cowan. Over the next three years 97 per cent of Cowan is going to be covered by the NBN. That amounts to 64,000 premises. I want to talk about the entire electorate, there is no doubt about it, but there is a particular win in this. For the last couple of years, I have been engaging with the now Prime Minister and former Minister for Communications, his staff, nbn co and Telstra as well about the needs of the Cowan electorate. I have made speeches in this parliament, I have had those meetings and I have written letters, all talking about the intricacies of the problems that exist within Cowan. Tonight I wish to go into those matters in some detail.

In particular, Friday represented an advance of a six-month build on three suburbs in need in Cowan: Landsdale, Madeley and Darch. It had been slated under the 18-month rollout
announcement that it would be more like quarter 4 of 2016 that Landsdale, Madeley and Darch would have the NBN commence building in those areas. So it is good to have a win.

I would also like to contrast how, in three years time, by the end of 2018, 64,000 premises will be linked up to the NBN—again, 97 per cent of the electorate of Cowan—with how, when we came to office, there were just 51,000 premises across the whole country that had been connected to the NBN. Indeed, two per cent of the premises in Australia were connected at the time of the election, at a cost of $6.5 billion—representing $3.25 billion just for one per cent of this country. How expensive is that? When we came to power, the workforce in WA were not up to the task. They have had to be retrained. I believe that something like three premises in Western Australia were connected at the time of the election.

So it was a win on Friday. I am glad that those meetings that I had with the now Prime Minister and the representations that I have made over the last couple of years have been effective and that we have had that win in Cowan. That is certainly good news. Fortunately, the delay—with six years of the Labor Party talking about the NBN, a very slow roll-out throughout the entire rest of the county, the inadequate workforce that was not up to the task in Western Australia, as well as someone’s plan to start the NBN in WA in Applecross—has made it very difficult for electorates like Cowan and for the northern suburbs. I do not know whose great plan it was that Applecross was just the right place to start, ignoring the needs of the northern suburbs, but things are back on track now. I am very pleased about the three-year plan, which will see 97 per cent of Cowan covered.

The trouble is that Telstra have been a major problem in the last 10 years. For so long they have been saying: ‘We can’t do any major rebuilds of exchanges. We can’t do any great work there because, if the NBN comes along, it will be redundant work.’ Telstra, unfortunately, have been hiding behind the eventual announcements of the NBN build to not do a whole lot. Where there have been upgrades to exchanges, they have been inadequate on many occasions. I will go through and talk about some of the issues regarding ADSL1, ADSL2 port availability, but I would like to start with a particularly problematic suburb with regard to internet connectivity, and that is Greenwood. I do not need to tell residents of the Greenwood suburb that, if you are talking about north of Blackall Drive, there are absolute problems. The problems are copper wire as well as distance from the exchange and also pair gains where, for approximately every second house, you just cannot get a connection.

I have been contacted by a lot of people all through that district on the north side of Blackall Drive where it goes in between Hepburn Avenue and Blackall Drive. In Tupelo Court, Bouvardia and a range of other streets along there—whether it is Terry or Anne-Marie—people have told me that they have these problems, and they have had these problems for a long time. People have talked about this for a long time. What is really required now is for Telstra to look at suburbs like Greenwood and say, ‘Here are all these who people crying out for an adequate service and who are prepared to pay a fair amount for that adequate service.’ For some reason, Telstra has been hiding behind this NBN roll-out and has not addressed those needs. It is very disappointing for me, but those people in those parts of Greenwood are despairing. Of course, it is not just Greenwood, although in Greenwood it has been a long-term problem for the people in the section that I talk about—adjacent to Hepburn Avenue, Blackall Drive and some other places in the north of Greenwood.
That is not the only place. There is no doubt about it. In Landsdale recently I was talking to Lauren. Lauren told me that Telstra had come around to connect up her internet, and they said, 'Oh, yeah, there are ports available'. But, because her reasonably new house—only three years old—was on a pair gain arrangement, they said, 'No, we can't do that anymore'. Telstra says, 'We're going to connect you up with a land line'. She did not want a land line; she wanted an internet connection. 'We'll connect you up with a land line and we'll charge you for that. Even though we aren't actually doing a service, we'll charge you for that.' Now they are trying to take action against her, because she does not want to pay for a service that she did not want. She wants to pay for a service she can actually use, like the internet. But that is not available. It is a tragic situation; no doubt about it.

I would like to thank my local state members for their great advocacy in this matter: Andrea Mitchell, MLA for Kingsley is certainly acutely aware of those problems I mentioned in Greenwood; and Paul Miles, the member for Wanneroo. We have talked on many occasions about the problems in Tapping. Up in Tapping there are no ports of any type available—not ADSL1, not ADSL2—there is nothing happening in those areas. There is no upgrade that is going to meet those demands. Again, it is a terrible situation for people in Tapping.

Telstra know there is that opportunity where people are prepared to pay. The tragic part is also that there are some people out there that look at what is going on, and Telstra say to them: 'We can provide you a wifi service for $175 a month. But there's no ports available.' And the allegation has been made: is this really about some sort of price gauging, where Telstra does not want to spend the big dollars to upgrade the exchange but instead they will take $175 a month for a very expensive wifi service? There is a lot of concern in these sorts of areas. And I have heard it said.

Of course, we are not just talking about those sorts of scenarios. There are many suburbs, like Pearsall, and Hocking to a degree as well, where there is the distance from the exchange, the copper wire—and pair gain scenarios in the more recent developments. And there are older suburbs, like Greenwood. A lot of people just cannot get a service of any kind. And someone like Telstra is just talking about the expensive wifi option. So these are the problems that certainly affect Cowan. There are many problems across all sorts of areas—Marangaroo, Warwick, Girrawheen, Malaga and even Ballajura, which unfortunately I do not have time to go into right now.

I am certainly glad that we have had this win on the NBN, but Telstra need to get their act together and provide the infrastructure that people are demanding. (Time expired)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Southcott): There being no further grievances, the debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

Federation Chamber adjourned 18:58
QUESTIONS IN WRITING

Murwillumbah: Medical Practitioners

(Question No. 826)

Mrs Elliot asked the Minister for Health, in writing, on 24 June 2015:

(1) In respect of the changes made to the rural and remote area health classifications under the Modified Monash Model (MMM), why is the New South Wales town of Murwillumbah now classified as MMM 2, thereby attracting no incentive payments for medical practitioners, when under the previous Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC) system it was classified as ASGC-RA 2 (Inner Regional), thereby attracting incentives

(2) Will she guarantee that this change will not lead to a shortage of medical practitioners in this region

(3) Given the caseload and workload for General Practitioners in Murwillumbah is vastly different from that of many other rural and regional areas, what incentives are available to General Practitioners, to attract them to the area

(4) Will she consider exempting or reclassifying Murwillumbah under the new classification system to provide incentives to General Practitioners

Ms Ley: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(1) The Government recently introduced a new geographic classification system for some health workforce programmes, the Modified Monash Model (MMM). It is a shift from the now outdated Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) classification, the Australian Standard Geographical Classification – Remoteness Areas (ASGC-RA), which was based on 2006 population census data.

The MMM overlays the ABS' most up to date classification, the Australian Statistical Geography Standard – Remoteness Area (ASGS-RA), which uses 2011 population census data. Through the MMM, road distance buffer zones are also applied around towns and cities to recognise the broader functional service areas available in a given area. As an ASGS-RA2 area, Murwillumbah has been categorised by the ABS as "Inner Regional Australia".

Under the MMM, all areas in Inner and Outer Regional Australia that are in, or within 20km road distance of, a city with 50,000 people are categorised MMM2. This is the case with Murwillumbah, which is less than 20km from the Gold Coast/Tweed Heads. While MMM2 is outside the "Major Cities" classification of MMM1, its proximity to a large city recognises that the area has significantly greater access to services than isolated towns of a similar size.

(2) The Government uses the District of Workforce Shortage (DWS) system as a mechanism to attract medical practitioners to areas experiencing below average levels of access to medical services.

Murwillumbah is not currently classified as a DWS for general practice, indicating that Murwillumbah currently has an above average level of access to general practice services.

Should Murwillumbah's level of access to general practice services fall to below average in the future, this will be reflected in annual updates to DWS determinations, and a classification of DWS would act as an incentive to attract doctors who are subject to section 19AB of the Health Insurance Act 1973, such as overseas-trained doctors.

Murwillumbah is currently classified as a DWS for the medical specialties of anaesthetics, cardiology, diagnostic radiology, general surgery and psychiatry.

(3) Should Murwillumbah's level of access to general practice services fall to below average in the future, this will be reflected in annual updates to DWS determinations, and a classification of DWS would act as an incentive to attract general practitioners who are subject to section 19AB of the Health Insurance Act 1973, such as overseas-trained doctors.
Under the MMM, the more rural classification of a number of more isolated nearby towns, such as the MMM3 classification of North Arm, Eungella and Byangum (which might currently be serviced by Murwillumbah doctors), means that medical practitioners are encouraged to take up practice in such areas with the support of the General Practice Rural Incentives Programme.

(4) Geographic classification systems are in place to provide a nationally cohesive measure of the true gaps that identify under-serviced areas of Australia that are most in need, particularly for those living in smaller and more remote communities.

Murwillumbah will retain its MMM2 classification.

**Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

(Question No. 836)

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Minister for the Environment, in writing, on 10 August 2015:

1. Is it a fact that in 2010-11, the Queensland Government calculated that 21.5 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions were released that year by approved land clearing of 90,000 hectares.

2. Is it a fact that in 2013-14 the Queensland Government approved 275,000 hectares of land clearing; if so, is it reasonable to estimate that this would release 60 million tonnes of greenhouse gases; if not, what is an accurate figure for the amount of greenhouse gases released by this clearing.

3. Is it a fact that the (a) Australian Government's Emissions Reduction Fund (ERF) has spent $660 million to purchase greenhouse gas abatements of 47 million tonnes; and (b) entire work of the ERF has been undone by one year of land clearing in Queensland.

**Mr Hunt:** The answers to the honourable member's questions are as follows:

1. The Department of Environment is not aware of the basis of the estimates attributed to the Queensland Government. However, as part of its National Greenhouse Accounts, the Department of Environment has reported an estimate of 88,000 hectares of land cleared in Queensland in 2011 and that there were 15 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions released in that year from that clearing.

2. There are no accurate estimates yet available for emissions from land clearing in Queensland in 2014. Estimates will be affected by several important influences including the actual amount of area cleared, the location of clearing, the biomass density of the forest cleared, previous disturbances (e.g. previous clearing or fire) and ongoing emissions from clearing in previous years.

The Department of Environment is currently processing satellite imagery to determine the area and location of clearing in 2014 and preparing estimates of emissions. These estimates will be published in the National Greenhouse Accounts and as part of the Government's annual submission under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in early 2016.

3. The first successful ERF auction was held over 15-16 April 2015, following which the Government contracted to purchase over 47 million tonnes of emission reductions from 144 projects. The total value of these contracts is $660 million. Estimates of emissions from land clearing in Queensland in 2014 are not yet available.

**Live Animal Exports**

(Question No. 846)

**Mr Kelvin Thomson** asked the Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources, in writing, on 10 August 2015:

1. Will he direct his department to act under Section 17 of the *Australian Meat and Live-stock Industry Act 1997* to compel exporters to retrieve sheep that are being sold illegally in a banned Kuwaiti market.
(2) Will his department be withdrawing from the exporter, any further export permits to Kuwait while this matter is being investigated.

Mr Joyce: The Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

(1) No, a direction to buy sheep which have been sold in a foreign market is beyond the scope of section 17 of the *Australian Meat and Livestock Industry Act 1997* (AMLI Act). The power to give directions does not extend to livestock which have already been exported.

(2) No. The investigation is currently ongoing. The Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System is not designed to stop trade; it is designed to remedy problems when they are identified. Additional conditions can and will be applied to markets as required.

**Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade: Staff Contracts**

(Question No. 870)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs on 17 August 2015

In respect of labour hire firms contracted by the Minister's department(s) in 2014-15 (a) how many positions were filled using casual staff from labour hire firms, (b) what sum was spent on the provision of these casual staff, and (c) what roles did these casual staff fulfil.

Ms Julie Bishop: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

No labour firms have been contracted to provide casual staff in Canberra for 2014-15.

**Department of Agriculture and Water Resources: Casual Staff Contracts**

(Question No. 874)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources, in writing, on 17 August 2015:

In respect of labour hire firms contracted by the Minister's department(s) in 2014-15, (a) how many positions were filled using casual staff from labour hire firms, (b) what sum was spent on the provision of these casual staff, and (c) what roles did these casual staff fulfil.

Mr Joyce: The Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

The department recorded 145 casual staff engaged from labour hire firms in 2014-15.

The approximate spend on the provision of casual staff was $6,525,000.

The casual staff performed various roles across the department, including assisting in the implementation of projects and systems, and providing administrative support.

**Department of the Environment: Casual Staff Contracts**

(Question No. 883)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for the Environment, in writing, on 17 August 2015:

In respect of labour hire firms contracted by the Minister's department(s) in 2014-15, (a) how many positions were filled using casual staff from labour hire firms, (b) what sum was spent on the provision of these casual staff, and (c) what roles did these casual staff fulfil.

Mr Hunt: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

For the Department of the Environment, during 2014-15

(a), (b) and (c) Under the Commonwealth Procurement Rules, Non-corporate Commonwealth entities must publish all contracts valued at, or over, $10,000 (inc. GST) on AusTender. The listing will include
contracts with labour hire firms. Details of these contracts including the business name, description of services and costs associated with the contract can be found at tenders.gov.au. Entities are not required to individually identify contracts valued at less than $10,000.

Details of the number of casual staff hired from Labour hire firms and roles filled are not routinely captured in information management systems of the Department, and could only be obtainable through consultation with individual teams across the Department. To attempt to provide this information would involve an unreasonable diversion of departmental resources.

**Department of the Environment: Contracted Services Payments**

(Question No. 901)

*Mr Conroy:* asked the Minister for the Environment, in writing, on 17 August 2015:

In respect of fees for late or delayed payment of contracted services or products by the Minister's department(s) in 2014-15, (a) which services or products do these fees relate to, and (b) what sum was spent.

*Mr Hunt:* The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

In 2014-15, a total of $2,550.45 (GST inclusive), as outlined in the following table, was paid for late or delayed payment of contracted services or products.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Fees</th>
<th>(a) Related Service or Product</th>
<th>(b) Sum Spent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Office Furniture &amp; Fittings</td>
<td>$14.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Business Catering</td>
<td>$12.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Recruitment &amp; Appointment Expenses</td>
<td>$33.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Counselling - Employee Assistance Program</td>
<td>$11.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Occupational Health &amp; Safety</td>
<td>$90.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Learning &amp; Development Registration Fees for Staff</td>
<td>$28.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Learning &amp; Development Activity Expenses</td>
<td>$606.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Staff Welfare Expenses</td>
<td>$18.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Consultants Fees</td>
<td>$984.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Professional Services</td>
<td>$427.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>General Legal Advice</td>
<td>$32.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Conference/Workshop Expenses</td>
<td>$42.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Repairs and Maintenance - Other Infrastructure</td>
<td>$13.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Repairs and Maintenance - Office, Field &amp; Lab Equipment</td>
<td>$28.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Repairs and Maintenance - Furniture &amp; Fittings</td>
<td>$133.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Computer Software - Annual Licences</td>
<td>$14.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Telephone Usage Charges</td>
<td>$13.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Freight of Goods</td>
<td>$16.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Vehicle Lease Payments</td>
<td>$27.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Department of Education and Training: Office Space**

(Question No. 911)

*Mr Conroy* asked the Minister representing the Minister for Education and Training, in writing, on 17 August 2015:

In respect of office space leased or owned by the Ministers department(s), (a) where are these offices located, (b) how much space (in square metres) is each office, (c) how much of this space is currently unused, and of this, what is the cost of (i) rent per month, (ii) utilities, including electricity and/or gas,
telephone and internet, (iii) office furniture and/or hired equipment, including artwork and plants, and (iv) any other associated services.

Mr Hartsuyker: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
(a) The Department of Education and Training has offices throughout Australia. All current tenancies are listed in Attachment A.
(b) Total nett lettable area of each tenancy and the percentage of space leased by the Department of Education and Training are listed in Attachment A.
(c) The nett lettable unused space and costs are listed in Attachment A including:
(i) Rent per month for unused space is listed in Column I.
(ii) Utility costs for unused space is listed in Column J. Costs for telephone and internet charges are not readily available and it would involve an unreasonable diversion of the Department's resources to ascertain such information.
(iii) Costs for indoor plant hire are listed in Column K. There are no costs associated with equipment or artworks hire. Costs for office furniture are not readily available and it would involve an unreasonable diversion of the Department's resources to ascertain such information.
(iv) There are no other costs associated with other services.

Since the 2013 Machinery of Government change the Department of Education and Training has rationalised office space (including unused) in state offices where leases are shared with Department of Employment and sought subtenancies where appropriate to reduce the overall liability to the Departments and Commonwealth. More recently the Department has also undertaken a review of unused office space in Canberra to accommodate the Early Child Care cluster which is due to move in November 2015 and is expected to occupy any remaining unused office space in 50 Marcus Clarke St. Copies of Attachment A can be obtained from the House of Representatives Table Office.

Department of Finance: Office Space
(Question No. 920)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Finance, in writing, on 17 August 2015:
In respect of office space leased or owned by the Minister's department(s), (a) where are these offices located, (b) how much space (in square metres) is each office, (c) how much of this space is currently unused, and of this, what is the cost of (i) rent per month, (ii) utilities, including electricity and/or gas, telephone and internet, (iii) office furniture and/or hired equipment, including artwork and plants, and (iv) any other associated services.

Mr Morrison: The Minister for Finance has supplied the following answer to the honourable member's question:
In respect of office space leased or owned by the Minister's department for Finance staffed tenancies in the ACT, see table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Office space leased or owned within the ACT by the Department of Finance 2014-15</th>
<th>Square Metres</th>
<th>Unused Space</th>
<th>Rent per month</th>
<th>Utilities</th>
<th>Leased/hired goods</th>
<th>Associated Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Gorton Building</td>
<td>King Edward Terrace, Parkes ACT</td>
<td>11,469.58</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasury</td>
<td>Parkes Place West, ACT</td>
<td>5,557.00</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

QUESTIONS IN WRITING
Monday, 19 October 2015   HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  11753

Office space leased or owned within the ACT by the Department of Finance 2014-15 *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Square Metres</th>
<th>Unused Space</th>
<th>Rent per month</th>
<th>Utilities</th>
<th>Leased/hired goods</th>
<th>Associated Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building Parkes ACT</td>
<td>40 Blackall Street Barton ACT</td>
<td>1,771.00</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hume Iron Mountain</td>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>2,932.00</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hume House</td>
<td>1 Johns Place Hume ACT</td>
<td>2,932.00</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burns Centre</td>
<td>28 National Circuit, Forrest ACT</td>
<td>2,200.00</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building 5</td>
<td>Wetlands House, Dairy Flat Road, Fyshwick ACT</td>
<td>726.00</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building 6 &amp; 7</td>
<td>Wetlands House, Dairy Flat Road, Fyshwick ACT</td>
<td>1,500.00</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Excludes domestic non-Defence portfolio properties, interstate Comcar sites, Commonwealth Parliamentary Offices and Parliamentary Electorate Offices.

Department of the Environment: Consultants

(Question No. 955)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for the Environment, in writing, on 17 August 2015:

In respect of the use of (a) consultants, and (b) contractors, by the Minister's department(s) in 2014-15, (i) what total sum was spent, (ii) what services were provided, and (iii) which firms provided the services.

Mr Hunt: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The Department of the Environment, during 2014-15 spent the following amounts on; (a) Consultants and (b) Contractors

(i) The Department's 2014/15 Annual Report will provide figures for total departmental and administered expenditure on consultants and contractors. The figures are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Consultants</th>
<th>Contractors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Departmental</td>
<td>7.982m</td>
<td>65.075m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administered</td>
<td>1.577m</td>
<td>54.546m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(ii) Under the Commonwealth Procurement Rules, non-corporate Commonwealth entities must publish all consultancies and contractors at or over $10,000 (inc. GST) on Austender. Details of these consultancies including the consultant's business name, description of services and costs associated with the contract can be found at tenders.gov.au

Under contract reporting requirements set out in the Commonwealth Procurement Rules, non-corporate entities are not required to individually identify contracts under the above mentioned threshold, and therefore the Department does not record this information centrally.

(iii) As per response to question (a/b) (ii) above.
Department of Agriculture and Water Resources: Advertising
(Question No. 1000)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources, in writing, on 17 August 2015:

What sum was spent by the Minister’s department(s) on advertising and associated services in 2014-15, and what policy areas did this relate to.

Mr Joyce: The Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question:

A total of $143,302 GST inclusive was spent on advertising by the department in the 2014–15 financial year. The advertisements were for the following programmes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Total rounded to the nearest $</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drought Concessional Loans, Drought Recovery Concessional Loans and Farm Finance Concessional Loans*</td>
<td>78,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm Finance Concessional Loans**</td>
<td>31,277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment</td>
<td>5,952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABARES Outlook Conferences</td>
<td>11,079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New regulations for illegal logging</td>
<td>8,611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science and Innovation Awards</td>
<td>8,383</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*where possible the department advertised the schemes together.

**these advertisements were placed by the states and this amount was the department’s contribution.

Department of the Environment: Legal Services and Credit Cards
(Question No. 1045)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for the Environment, in writing, on 17 August 2015:

What sum did the Minister’s department spend in 2014-15 on (a) legal services, and (b) credit cards.

Mr Hunt: The answer to the honourable member’s question is as follows:

The Department of the Environment, during 2014-15 spent the following amounts on;

(a) Legal services

The Department of the Environment (the Department) and its portfolio agencies are required each year to report on their legal services expenditure under the Legal Services Directions 2003. This information is provided to the Office of Legal Services Coordination within 60 days of the end of financial year and subsequently published on the departmental or agency websites.


In summary total legal expenditure was $12,127,966.90;

(b) Credit cards

(i) Departmental credit card $1,779,239.11

Department of Agriculture and Water Resources: Departmental Staff Redundancies
(Question No. 1124)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Agriculture, in writing, on 17 August 2015:
In respect of departmental staff (a) how many redundancies were made in 2014-15, and (b) what is the total cost of payments associated with these redundancies.

Mr Joyce: The Minister for Agriculture has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:
(a) Between 1 July 2014 and 30 June 2015, there were a total of 104 employees that accepted voluntary redundancies and ceased work with the Department.
(b) The total cost for these redundancies was $6,784,685.78.

Department of Trade and Investment: Ministerial Staff Lost and Stolen Equipment
(Question No. 1194)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Trade and Investment on 17 August 2015:
In 2014-15, what sum was spent on replacing lost, stolen or misplaced equipment of Ministerial staff, and what goods were replaced.

Mr Conroy: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
Nil

Department of Agriculture and Water Resources: Ministerial Staff Lost and Stolen Equipment
(Question No. 1203)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources, in writing, on 17 August 2015:
In 2014-15, what sum was spent on replacing lost, stolen or misplaced equipment of Ministerial staff, and what goods were replaced.

Mr Joyce: The Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:
Nil.

Department of the Environment: Departmental Staff Domestic and International Travel
(Question No. 1237 (amended))

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for the Environment, in writing, on 17 August 2015:
(1) In 2014-15, what sum was spent on (a) domestic travel, and (b) international travel, for departmental staff. (2) Of this, (a) on what dates, and to what locations, did the Minister travel, (b) how many departmental staff accompanied the Minister on this travel, and (c) for what purpose was the travel?

Mr Hunt: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
This is an amended answer. In the original answer, the Department of the Environment overstated international travel by $243,785 and understated domestic travel by $243,785.
The amended answer is as follows:
(1) In 2014-15 the Department spent:
(a) $5,006,415 (GST inclusive) on domestic travel, and
(b) $1,951,690 (GST inclusive where applicable) on international travel for departmental staff.
(2) The table below outlines international travel where departmental staff accompanied the Minister. To attempt to provide information for domestic travel would involve an unreasonable diversion of departmental resources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(a) Dates</th>
<th>(a) Locations</th>
<th>(b) Number</th>
<th>(c) Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13/9/2014 to 19/9/2014</td>
<td>Portorož, Slovenia</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>International Whaling commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zagreb, Croatia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>World Heritage Committee, Great Barrier Reef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Belgrade, Serbia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>World Heritage Committee, Great Barrier Reef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Berlin, Germany</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>World Heritage Committee, Great Barrier Reef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frankfurt, Germany</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>World Heritage Committee, Great Barrier Reef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/12/2014 to 21/12/2014</td>
<td>Manila, Philippines</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>World Heritage Committee, Great Barrier Reef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>World Heritage Committee, Great Barrier Reef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hanoi, Vietnam</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>World Heritage Committee, Great Barrier Reef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26/01/2015 to 31/01/2015</td>
<td>Lisbon, Portugal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>World Heritage Committee, Great Barrier Reef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Berlin, Germany</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>World Heritage Committee, Great Barrier Reef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Helsinki, Finland</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>World Heritage Committee, Great Barrier Reef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Warsaw, Poland</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>World Heritage Committee, Great Barrier Reef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/02/2015 to 21/02/2015</td>
<td>Port of Spain, Jamaica</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>World Heritage Committee, Great Barrier Reef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Santiago de Chile, Colombia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>World Heritage Committee, Great Barrier Reef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lima, Peru</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>World Heritage Committee, Great Barrier Reef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/03/2015 to 13/03/2015</td>
<td>Tokyo, Japan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>World Heritage Committee, Great Barrier Reef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seoul, Korea</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>World Heritage Committee, Great Barrier Reef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New Delhi, India</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>World Heritage Committee, Great Barrier Reef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28/06/2015 to 04/07/2015</td>
<td>Bonn, Germany</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>39th Session of the World Heritage Committee Meeting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Department of Trade and Investment: Ministerial Staff Training
(Question No. 1298)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Trade and Investment on 17 August 2015:

In 2014-15, (a) what sum was spent on training for Ministerial staff, (b) on what date(s), and at what location(s), did the training occur, and (c) what outcomes were achieved.
Mr Robb: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
Nil.

Department of Agriculture and Water Resources: Ministerial Staff Training
(Question No. 1307)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources, in writing, on 17 August 2015:

In 2014-15, (a) what sum was spent on training for Ministerial staff, (b) on what date(s), and at what location(s), did the training occur, and (c) what outcomes were achieved.

Mr Joyce: The Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:
Nil.

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade: Ministerial Media Events
(Question No. 1350)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Trade and Investment on 17 August 2015:

In respect of ministerial costs for media events and photo opportunities in 2014-15, what (a) date was each event held, (b) location was each event held at, (c) sum was spent on each event, (d) announcement and/or issue did the event relate to, and (e) was the expenditure for.

Mr Robb: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
Nil.

Department of Education and Training: Ministerial Media Events
(Question No. 1360)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Education and Training, in writing, on 17 August 2015:

In respect of ministerial costs for media events and photo opportunities in 2014-15, what (a) date was each event held, (b) location was each event held at, (c) sum was spent on each event, (d) announcement and/or issue did the event relate to, and (e) was the expenditure for.

Mr Hartsuyker: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
Data in respect of ministerial costs for media events and photo opportunities is not held centrally by the department.

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade: Ministerial Conferences
(Question No. 1402)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister for Trade and Investment on 17 August 2015:

Did the Minister host any conferences in 2014-15; if so (a) on what date(s) did each conference occur, and at what location(s), (b) what total sum was spent on each conference, and of this, what sum was spent on (i) meals and accommodation, and what are the details, (ii) travel, and what are the details, and (iii) social events, and what are the details, (iv) travel, and what are the details, and (c) what outcomes were achieved at each conference.

Mr Robb: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
The Minister for Trade and Investment hosts many roundtables and meetings with investors and businesses. To provide individual details of these would entail a significant and unreasonable diversion of resources.
**Department of Agriculture and Water Resources: Ministerial Hospitality**

*(Question No. 1463)*

**Mr Conroy** asked the Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources, in writing, on 17 August 2015:

In respect of catering and hospitality by the Minister in 2014-15, (a) what total sum was spent, (b) for what functions was the catering and hospitality, (c) on what date(s) did each function occur, and at what location(s), and (d) for each function, what sum was spent on (i) meals, (ii) drinks, (iii) hospitality staff, and (iv) other costs.

**Mr Joyce:** The Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question:

The following table details official hospitality for the Minister for Agriculture for the 2014-15 financial year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Purpose of Function</th>
<th>Venue hire &amp; Catering</th>
<th>Meals</th>
<th>Drinks</th>
<th>Total Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19 July 2014</td>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>Meeting of Australian and Japanese Agriculture ministers</td>
<td>$600.00</td>
<td>$0.00</td>
<td>$0.00</td>
<td>$600.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-22 August 2014</td>
<td>Darwin</td>
<td>Dinner and catering for the Agricultural Industry Advisory Council (AIAC) members prior to their third meeting.</td>
<td>$324.00</td>
<td>$1806.00</td>
<td>$912.00</td>
<td>$3042.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-31 October 2014</td>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>Dinner and catering for the Agricultural Industry Advisory Council (AIAC) members prior to their fourth meeting.</td>
<td>$788.00</td>
<td>$1776.00</td>
<td>$1291.40</td>
<td>$3855.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 March – 1 April 2015</td>
<td>Devonport Tasmania</td>
<td>Dinner, catering and networking for the Agricultural Industry Advisory Council (AIAC) members prior to their fourth meeting.</td>
<td>$495.00</td>
<td>$1651.00</td>
<td>$1770.00</td>
<td>$3916.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-22 May 2015</td>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>Agriculture Ministers' Forum (AGMIN) member's dinner prior to their meeting on 22 May 2015.</td>
<td>$676.50</td>
<td>$165.60</td>
<td>$79.20</td>
<td>$921.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$2883.50</strong></td>
<td><strong>$5398.60</strong></td>
<td><strong>$4052.60</strong></td>
<td><strong>$12 334.70</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** All figures are GST inclusive
Department of Education and Training: Learning Potential App
(Question No. 1535)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Education and Training, in writing, on 15 September 2015:

1) What number of registered (a) Apple, and (b) Android, users (i) downloaded the Learning Potential app, and (ii) accessed the companion website.

2) From which countries did registered (a) Apple, and (b) Android, users (i) download the Learning Potential app, and (ii) access the companion website.

Mr Hartsuyker: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

1) The number of registrations as at 15 September 2015:
   (a) 74,238 registered Apple / iOS users
   (b) 27,724 Android users

109,543 users had accessed the Learning Potential: (learningpotential.gov.au) website.

This information is based on app download stats collated from the app web stores.

2) Below is the registration breakdown by country, as at 15 September 2015:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Registrations</th>
<th>Access the companion website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>99.41%</td>
<td>97.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>0.07%</td>
<td>0.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>0.05%</td>
<td>0.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>0.04%</td>
<td>0.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other countries</td>
<td>0.43%</td>
<td>1.65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This information is based on Google Analytics data. The department does not collect any personal information on app users.

Australian Electoral Commission
(Question No. 1547)

Mr Conroy asked the Special Minister of State, in writing, on 15 September 2015:

In respect of the Australian Electoral Commission's $203,718.90 tender to Hammond Street Developments Pty Ltd for the 'Premises Inspection Tool' (CN3287231), (a) can he provide a description of the service, and (b) what is the purpose and benefit of this tool.

Mr Brough: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

(a) I am advised by the Australian Electoral Commission that this service is a technical solution for conducting and managing the inspection of premises temporarily hired to run specific operations during an electoral event.

(b) I am advised by the AEC that the purpose of this tool is to provide a technological solution which improves the AEC's premises inspection process, and allows the easy access and analysis of premises information from a central data repository. The tool will allow the AEC to meet ANAO recommendations associated with the assessment and retention of data for polling and scrutiny premises, and additionally, to meet its previous commitment to the Disability Advisory Committee (DAC) around improving the publishing of polling place accessibility information on its public-facing website.
Personally Controlled Electronic Health Record: Review  
(Question No. 1552)  

Ms King asked the Minister for Health, in writing, on 17 September 2015:

On what date did the Government receive the Review of the Personally Controlled Electronic Health Record and will the Government respond to the recommendations in this report; if not, why not.

Ms Ley: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The Review of the Personally Controlled Electronic Health Record (PCEHR Review) was undertaken in 2013. The PCEHR Review was received on 20 December 2013 and the report released publicly in May 2014.

Announced in the 2015-16 Budget, the Government's My Health Record Strategy responds to the key recommendations of the review. The Strategy includes:

- redeveloping the system to improve its usability and clinical utility;
- strengthening eHealth governance and operations by establishing the Australian Commission for eHealth to manage governance, operation and ongoing delivery for the national eHealth systems;
- trialling new participation arrangements including opt-out;
- reviewing GP incentives; and
- providing education and training to healthcare providers.

As part of this Strategy the Personally Controlled Electronic Health Record (PCEHR) will be renamed the My Health Record.

On 17 September 2015 I introduced into Parliament the Health Legislation Amendment (eHealth) Bill 2015 (the Bill). The Bill will implement components of the Government's My Health Record Strategy by renaming the system the My Health Record system, making way for new governance arrangements, and enabling opt-out trials to be conducted.