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SITTING DAYS—2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 24, 25, 26, 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>2, 3, 4, 5, 23</td>
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<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>12, 13, 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 24, 25, 26, 27, 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>6, 7, 8, 19, 20, 21, 22, 26, 27, 28, 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>9, 10, 11, 12, 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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FORTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—FIRST PERIOD

Governor-General
His Excellency General the Hon. David John Hurley, AC, DSC, FTSE (Retd)

House of Representatives Office Holders
Speaker—Hon. Anthony David Hawthorn Smith MP
Deputy Speaker—Mr Llewellyn Stephen O’Brien MP
Second Deputy Speaker—Mr Robert George Mitchell MP
Members of the Speaker’s Panel—Hon. Kevin James Andrews MP, Hon. Sharon Leah Bird MP, Ms Sharon Catherine Claydon MP, Mr Steven Georganas MP, Hon. Dr David Arthur Gillespie MP, Mr Ian Reginald Goodenough MP, Hon. Dr John Joseph McVeigh MP, Ms Maria Vamvakinou MP, Mr Ross Xavier Vasta MP, Mr Andrew Bruce Wallace MP, Mrs Lucy Elizabeth Wicks MP, Mr Richard James Wilson MP, Mr Trent Moir Zimmerman MP
Leader of the House—Hon. Christian Porter MP
Deputy Leader of the House—Hon. Darren Chester MP
Manager of Opposition Business—Hon. Anthony Stephen Burke MP
Deputy Manager of Opposition Business—Hon. Mark Butler MP

Party Leaders and Whips
Liberal Party of Australia
Leader—Hon. Scott John Morrison MP
Deputy Leader—Hon. Joshua Anthony Frydenberg MP
Chief Government Whip—Mr Albertus Johannes van Manen MP
Government Whips—Mr Rowan Eric Ramsey MP and Ms Nicolle Flint MP

The Nationals
Leader—Hon. Michael Francis McCormack MP
Deputy Leader—Hon. David Littleproud MP
Chief Whip—Hon. Damian Kevin Drum MP
Deputy Whip—Mr Kenneth Desmond O’Dowd MP

Australian Labor Party
Leader—Hon. Anthony Albanese MP
Deputy Leader—Hon. Richard Marles MP
Chief Opposition Whip—Mr Christopher Patrick Hayes MP
Opposition Whips—Ms Joanne Catherine Ryan MP and Ms Anne Maree Stanley MP

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# Members of the House of Representatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<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>Allen, Dr Katrina Jane</td>
<td>Higgins, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aly, Dr Anne</td>
<td>Cowan, WA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrews, Hon. Karen Lesley</td>
<td>McPherson, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Andrews, Hon. Kevin James</td>
<td>Menzies, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Archer, Mrs Bridget Kathleen</td>
<td>Bass, TAS</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bandt, Mr Adam Paul</td>
<td>Melbourne, VIC</td>
<td>AG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bell, Ms Angie Marion</td>
<td>Moncrieff, QLD</td>
<td>LNP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bird, Hon. Sharon Leah</td>
<td>Cunningham, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowen, Hon. Christopher Eyles</td>
<td>McMahon, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadbent, Mr Russell Evan</td>
<td>Monash, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bachholz, Hon. Scott Andrew</td>
<td>Wright, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Burke, Hon. Anthony Stephen</td>
<td>Watson, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
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<td>Burney, Ms Linda Jean</td>
<td>Barton, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burns, Mr Joshua Solomon</td>
<td>Macnamara, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Butler, Hon. Mark Christopher</td>
<td>Hindmarsh, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Butler, Ms Terri Megan</td>
<td>Griffith, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Byrne, Hon. Anthony Michael</td>
<td>Holt, VIC</td>
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<td>Chalmers, Dr James Edward</td>
<td>Rankin, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Spence, SA</td>
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<td>Chester, Hon. Darren Jeffrey</td>
<td>Gippsland, VIC</td>
<td>NATS</td>
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<td>Chester, Ms Lisa Marie</td>
<td>Bendigo, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Christensen, Mr George Robert</td>
<td>Dawson, QLD</td>
<td>NATS</td>
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<td>Clare, Hon. Jason Dean</td>
<td>Blaxland, NSW</td>
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<td>Claydon, Ms Sharon Catherine</td>
<td>Newcastle, NSW</td>
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<td>Coker, Ms Elizabeth Ann</td>
<td>Corangamite, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Coleman, Mr David Bernard</td>
<td>Banks, NSW</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collins, Hon. Julie Maree</td>
<td>Franklin, TAS</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Conaghan, Mr Patrick John</td>
<td>Cowper, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
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<td>Connelly, Mr Vincent Gerard</td>
<td>Stirling, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conroy, Mr Patrick Martin</td>
<td>Shortland, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Coulton, Hon. Mark Maclean</td>
<td>Parkes, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
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<td>Dick, Mr Dugalid Milton</td>
<td>Oxley, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Dreyfus, Hon. Mark Alfred, QC</td>
<td>Isaacs, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Drum, Hon. Damian Kevin</td>
<td>Nicholls, VIC</td>
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<td>Dutton, Hon. Peter Craig</td>
<td>Dickson, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elliot, Hon. Maria Justine</td>
<td>Richmond, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Entsch, Hon. Warren George</td>
<td>Leichhardt, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Evans, Mr Trevor Mark</td>
<td>Brisbane, QLD</td>
<td>LNP</td>
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<td>Mackellar, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Hunter, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fletcher, Hon. Paul William</td>
<td>Bradfield, NSW</td>
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<td>Flint, Ms Nicolle Jane</td>
<td>Boothby, SA</td>
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<td>Macarthur, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Frydenberg, Hon. Joshua Anthony</td>
<td>Kooyong, VIC</td>
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<td>Gee, Mr Andrew Robert</td>
<td>Calare, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
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<td>Georganas, Mr Steven</td>
<td>Adelaide, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Giles, Mr Andrew James</td>
<td>Scullin, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gillespie, Hon. Dr David Arthur</td>
<td>Lyne, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Members</td>
<td>Division</td>
<td>Party</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Goodenough, Mr Ian Reginald</td>
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<td>Perth, WA</td>
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<td>Gosling, Mr Luke John</td>
<td>Solomon, NT</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Curtin, WA</td>
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<td>Mitchell, NSW</td>
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<td>Fowler, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hill, Mr Julian Christopher</td>
<td>Bruce, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hogan, Hon. 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>
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<tr>
<td>Hunt, Hon. Gregory Andrew</td>
<td>Flinders, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Husic, Hon. Edham Nureddin</td>
<td>Chifley, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irons, Hon. Stephen James</td>
<td>Swan, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones, Mr Stephen Patrick</td>
<td>Whitlam, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<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>KAP</td>
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<td>Kearney, Ms Gerardine Mary</td>
<td>Cooper, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Kelly, Mr Craig</td>
<td>Hughes, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keogh, Mr Matthew James</td>
<td>Burt, WA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Khalil, Mr Peter</td>
<td>Wills, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King, Hon. Catherine Fiona</td>
<td>Ballarat, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>King, Ms Madeleine Mary Harvie</td>
<td>Brand, WA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laming, Mr Andrew Charles</td>
<td>Bowman, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Landry, Hon. Michelle Leanne</td>
<td>Capricornia, QLD</td>
<td>NATS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leeser, Mr Julian Martin</td>
<td>Berowra, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leigh, Hon. Dr Andrew Keith</td>
<td>Fenner, ACT</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Ley, Hon. Susan Penelope</td>
<td>Farrer, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Littleproud, Hon. David Kelly</td>
<td>Maranoa, QLD</td>
<td>LNP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liu, Ms Gladys</td>
<td>Chisholm, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marino, Ms Nola Bethwyn</td>
<td>Forrest, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>Marles, Hon. Richard Donald</td>
<td>Corio, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Martin, Mrs Fiona Barbouttis</td>
<td>Reid, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>McBride, Ms Emma Margaret</td>
<td>Dobell, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>McCormack, Hon. Michael Francis</td>
<td>Riverina, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
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<td>Lindsay, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<td>McVeigh, Hon. Dr John Joseph</td>
<td>Groom, QLD</td>
<td>LNP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mitchell, Mr Brian Keith</td>
<td>Lyons, TAS</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Mitchell, Mr Robert George</td>
<td>McEwen, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Morrison, Hon. Scott John</td>
<td>Cook, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Morton, Mr Ben</td>
<td>Tangney, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mulino, Dr Daniel</td>
<td>Fraser, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Murphy, Ms Peta Jan</td>
<td>Dunkley, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Blair, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>O'Brien, Mr Llewellyn Stephen</td>
<td>Wide Bay, QLD</td>
<td>LNP</td>
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<td>O'Brien, Mr Ted Lynam</td>
<td>Fairfax, QLD</td>
<td>LNP</td>
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<tr>
<td>O'Connor, Hon. Brendan Patrick John</td>
<td>Gorton, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>O'Dowd, Mr Kenneth Desmond</td>
<td>Flynn, QLD</td>
<td>NATS</td>
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<tr>
<td>O'Neil, Ms Clare Ellen</td>
<td>Hotham, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owens, Ms Julie Ann</td>
<td>Parramatta, NSW</td>
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<tr>
<td>Members</td>
<td>Division</td>
<td>Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasin, Mr Antony</td>
<td>Barker, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payne, Ms Alicia Emma</td>
<td>Canberra, ACT</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pearce, Mr Gavin Bruce</td>
<td>Braddon, TAS</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perrett, Mr Graham Douglas</td>
<td>Moreton, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phillips, Ms Fiona Evon</td>
<td>Gilmore, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitt, Hon. 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>Price, Hon. Melissa Lee</td>
<td>Durack, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramsey, Mr Rowan Eric</td>
<td>Grey, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rishworth, Hon. Amanda Louise</td>
<td>Kingston, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Robert, Hon. Stuart Rowland</td>
<td>Fadden, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rowland, Ms Michelle Anne</td>
<td>Greenway, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ryan, Ms Joanne Catherine</td>
<td>Lalor, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sharkie, Ms Rebekha Carina Che</td>
<td>Mayo, SA</td>
<td>CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharma, Mr Devanand Noel</td>
<td>Wentworth, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shorten, Hon. William Richard</td>
<td>Maribyrnong, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Simmonds, Mr Julian Graham John</td>
<td>Ryan, QLD</td>
<td>LNP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Smith, Hon. Anthony David Hawthorn</td>
<td>Casey, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Smith, Mr David Philip Benedict</td>
<td>Bean, ACT</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Snowdon, Hon. Warren Edward</td>
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<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Warringah, NSW</td>
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<td>Stevens, Mr James William</td>
<td>Sturt, SA</td>
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<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Hume, NSW</td>
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<td>Wannon, VIC</td>
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<td>Templeman, Ms Susan Raye</td>
<td>Macquarie, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Thistlethwaite, Hon. Matthew James</td>
<td>Kingsford Smith, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Thompson, Mr Phillip</td>
<td>Herbert, QLD</td>
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<td>Thwaites, Ms Kate Lynne</td>
<td>Jagajaga, VIC</td>
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<td>Gellibrand, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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<td>Mallee, VIC</td>
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<td>IND</td>
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<td>Wilson, Mr Richard James</td>
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<td>Young, Mr Terry James</td>
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<td>Zappia, Mr Antonio</td>
<td>Makin, SA</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Members of the House of Representatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Party</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zimmerman, Mr Trent Moir</td>
<td>North Sydney, NSW</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PARTY ABBREVIATIONS**

AG—Australian Greens; ALP—Australian Labor Party; CA—Centre Alliance;
IND—Independent; KAP—Katter’s Australia Party; LNP—Liberal National Party;
LP—Liberal Party of Australia; NATS—The Nationals;

**Heads of Parliamentary Departments**

Clerk of the Senate—R Pye
Clerk of the House of Representatives—C Surtees
Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—R Stefanic
Parliamentary Budget Officer—J Wilkinson
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>MINISTER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon Scott Morrison MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for the Public Service</td>
<td>The Hon Scott Morrison MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Women</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Marise Payne</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Cabinet</td>
<td>The Hon Greg Hunt MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Indigenous Australians</td>
<td>The Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister and Cabinet</td>
<td>The Hon Ben Morton MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development</td>
<td>The Hon Michael McCormack MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management</td>
<td>The Hon David Littleproud MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts</td>
<td>The Hon Paul Fletcher MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Population, Cities and Urban Infrastructure</td>
<td>The Hon Alan Tudge MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Regional Health, Regional Communications and Local Government</td>
<td>The Hon Mark Coulton MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon Kevin Hogan MP</td>
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<td>Senator the Hon Mathias Cormann</td>
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<tr>
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<td>(Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon Sussan Ley MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Resources, Water and Northern Australia</td>
<td>The Hon Keith Pitt MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Waste Reduction and Environmental Management</td>
<td>The Hon Trevor Evans MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Forestry and Fisheries</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jonathon Duniam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Marise Payne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham</td>
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<td>Portfolio</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for International Development and the Pacific</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Assistant Minister for Regional Tourism</em></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attorney-General</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Hon Christian Porter MP</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Leader of the House)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Industrial Relations</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Hon Andrew Gee MP</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Minister for Health</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Hon Greg Hunt MP</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Youth and Sport</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Regional Health, Regional Communications and Local Government</td>
<td>The Hon Mark Coulton MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Home Affairs</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Hon Peter Dutton MP</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Hon David Littleproud MP</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs</td>
<td>The Hon David Coleman MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Assistant Minister for Customs, Community Safety and Multicultural Affairs</em></td>
<td><em>The Hon Jason Wood MP</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Education</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Hon Dan Tehan MP</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business</strong></td>
<td><strong>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Decentralisation and Regional Education</td>
<td><strong>The Hon Andrew Gee MP</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Assistant Minister for Vocational Education, Training and Apprenticeships</em></td>
<td><em>The Hon Steve Irons MP</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Industry, Science and Technology</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Hon Karen Andrews MP</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Hon Angus Taylor MP</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Resources, Water and Northern Australia</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Hon Keith Pitt MP</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Assistant Minister for Northern Australia</em></td>
<td><em>The Hon Michelle Landry MP</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Defence</strong></td>
<td><strong>Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds CSC</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Veterans’ Affairs</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Hon Darren Chester MP</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Defence Personnel</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Hon Darren Chester MP</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Deputy Leader of the House)</td>
<td><strong>The Hon Alex Hawke MP</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Defence Minister</td>
<td><strong>The Hon Melissa Price MP</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Defence Industry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Families and Social Services</strong></td>
<td><strong>Senator the Hon Anne Ruston</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Manager of Government Business in the Senate)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Hon Stuart Robert MP</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Government Services</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Hon Stuart Robert MP</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Assistant Minister for Children and Families</em></td>
<td><em>The Hon Michelle Landry MP</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Assistant Minister for Community Housing, Homelessness and Community Services</em></td>
<td><em>The Hon Luke Howarth MP</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Shadow Ministry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Shadow Minister</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leader of the Opposition</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Anthony Albanese MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Cabinet Secretary</strong></td>
<td>Senator Jenny McAllister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deputy Leader of the Opposition</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Richard Marles MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Defence</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Shayne Neumann MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister Assisting for Defence</td>
<td>Mr Pat Conroy MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Defence Industry</td>
<td>Mr Matt Keogh MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Assistant Minister for Defence</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Dr Mike Kelly AM 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><strong>Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for International Development and the Pacific</td>
<td>Mr Pat Conroy MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Assistant Minister to the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</strong></td>
<td>Senator Jenny McAllister</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon. Kristina Keneally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Immigration and Citizenship</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Multicultural Affairs</td>
<td>Mr Andrew Giles MP</td>
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<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Industrial Relations</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Tony Burke MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Bill Shorten MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Carers</td>
<td>Ms Emma McBride MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Education and Training</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
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<td>Mr Graham Perrett MP</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Assistant Minister for Financial Services</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Climate Change and Energy</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Mark Butler MP</td>
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<td>The Hon. Chris Bowen MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Assistant Minister for Mental Health</strong></td>
<td>Ms Emma McBride MP</td>
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<td>Title</td>
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<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development</strong></td>
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</tr>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Cities and Urban Infrastructure</td>
<td>Mr Andrew Giles MP</td>
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<td>Senator Murray Watt</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Disaster and Emergency Management</td>
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<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Tourism</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon. Warren Snowdon MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Road Safety</td>
<td>Senator Glenn Sterle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Agriculture and Resources</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Joel Fitzgibbon MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Western Australian Resources</td>
<td>Mr Matt Keogh MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Special State</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Don Farrell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Sport</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Tourism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Attorney-General</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Constitutional Reform</td>
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<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for the Republic</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Communications</td>
<td>Ms Michelle Rowland MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Communications</td>
<td>Mr Tim Watts MP</td>
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<td>Senator Katy Gallagher</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for the Public Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Government Accountability</td>
<td>Senator Kimberley Kitching</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Families and Social Services</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Linda Burney MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Senator Patrick Dodson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Reconciliation</td>
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<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Australians</td>
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<td>The Hon. Warren Snowdon MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Ageing and Seniors</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Julie Collins MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Women</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Ms Clare O'Neil MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Minister for Innovation, Technology and the Future of Work</td>
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<td>Title</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Regional Services, Territories and Local Government</td>
<td>The Hon. Jason Clare MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Housing and Homelessness</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for External Territories</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Early Childhood Education</td>
<td>The Hon. Amanda Rishworth MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Youth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for the Environment and Water</td>
<td>Ms Terri Butler MP</td>
</tr>
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<td>Mr Josh Wilson MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Trade</td>
<td>Ms Madeleine King MP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each box represents a portfolio. **Shadow Cabinet Ministers are shown in bold type.**
CONTENTS

WEDNESDAY, 17 JUNE 2020

Chamber

BILLS—
Excise Levies Legislation Amendment (Sheep and Lamb) Bill 2020—
  First Reading ................................................................. 1
  Second Reading ............................................................. 1
Customs Charges and Levies Legislation Amendment (Sheep and Lamb) Bill 2020—
  First Reading ................................................................. 1
  Second Reading ............................................................. 2
Biosecurity Amendment (Traveller Declarations and Other Measures) Bill 2020—
  First Reading ................................................................. 2
  Second Reading ............................................................. 2
National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Amendment
  (Governance and Other Matters) Bill 2020—
  Second Reading ............................................................. 3
  Third Reading ............................................................... 6
BUSINESS—
  Rearrangement .............................................................. 6
BILLS—
  Therapeutic Goods Amendment (2020 Measures No. 1) Bill 2020—
    Second Reading .......................................................... 14
    Third Reading ............................................................ 20
  National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Amendment
    (Governance and Other Matters) Bill 2020—
    Explanatory Memorandum ........................................... 20
  Education Legislation Amendment (2020 Measures No. 1) Bill 2020—
    Second Reading .......................................................... 20
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS—
  Tobacco Plain Packaging .................................................. 39
  Infrastructure ........................................................................ 39
  Telecommunications ............................................................ 39
  Dental Health ....................................................................... 39
  Davies, Dr Will ..................................................................... 40
  Sheean, Ordinary Seaman Edward (Teddy) ............................... 40
  Cooke, Dr David ................................................................... 40
  Queen's Birthday Honours ..................................................... 40
  M1 Pacific Motorway ............................................................ 41
  Pensions and Benefits .......................................................... 41
  Kerr, Mr Laurie .................................................................... 41
  Whitlam Government ............................................................ 42
  National Bowel Cancer Awareness Day ..................................... 42
  Environment ......................................................................... 42
  Cairns: Captain Cook Statue ................................................. 43
  Australia Post ....................................................................... 43
  China .................................................................................. 43
  Morrison Government ............................................................ 43
  Road Safety .......................................................................... 44
  Employment ......................................................................... 44
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE—
  Child Care .......................................................................... 44
  COVID-19: Economy .......................................................... 45
  JobKeeper Payment ............................................................. 46
  JobMaker ............................................................................. 46
  COVID-19: Employment ....................................................... 47
  Donations to Political Parties ............................................... 47
  Trade .................................................................................. 48
  Hospitals ............................................................................. 48
CONTENTS—continued

Trade with the United Kingdom .......................................................... 49
Eden-Monaro Electorate: Health .......................................................... 50
Agriculture Industry ........................................................................... 50
Rural and Regional Health Services .................................................. 51
National Security ................................................................................ 51
Donations to Political Parties ............................................................ 53
Child Abuse ....................................................................................... 53
Aged Care ......................................................................................... 53
JobMaker ........................................................................................... 54
Pensions and Benefits ....................................................................... 55
COVID-19: Trade ............................................................................... 55
Sheean, Ordinary Seaman Edward (Teddy) ........................................ 56
JobMaker ........................................................................................... 56
Aged Care ......................................................................................... 57
JobMaker ........................................................................................... 57
DOCUMENTS—
Presentation ...................................................................................... 58
QUESTIONS TO THE SPEAKER—
Parliament ......................................................................................... 58
AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORTS—
Report No. 41 of 2019-20 ................................................................. 59
BUSINESS—
Rearrangement ................................................................................ 59
MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE—
COVID-19: Women .......................................................................... 64
BILLS—
Treasury Laws Amendment (2019 Measures No. 3) Bill 2019—
Returned from Senate ........................................................................ 73
Export Control Legislation Amendment (Certification of Narcotic Exports) Bill 2020—
Returned from Senate ........................................................................ 73
Treasury Laws Amendment (2020 Measures No. 2) Bill 2020—
Consideration of Senate Message ....................................................... 73
Education Legislation Amendment (2020 Measures No. 1) Bill 2020—
Second Reading ................................................................................ 78
Third Reading .................................................................................... 84
Health Insurance Amendment (Continuing the Office of the National Rural Health Commissioner) Bill 2020—
Second Reading ................................................................................ 84
Third Reading .................................................................................... 102
ADJOURNMENT—
Employment ..................................................................................... 102
Australian Made Campaign ............................................................... 103
Cybersecurity .................................................................................... 104
Queensland: Coal Industry ................................................................. 105
Child Care ........................................................................................ 105
Fairfax Electorate ............................................................................. 106
NOTICES ............................................................................................ 107
Federation Chamber
CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS—
Calwell Electorate: The Arts ............................................................... 108
Grey Electorate: Regional Airports Program ....................................... 108
COVID-19: International Travel ......................................................... 109
Ryan Electorate: Men's Sheds .............................................................. 109
Jagajaga Electorate: Queen's Birthday Honours ............................... 110
Canning Electorate: JobKeeper Payment .......................................... 110
Australia Post .................................................................................... 111
Australian Bushfires ......................................................................... 111
Sturt Electorate: Creative Industries .................................................. 111
The SPEAKER (Hon. Tony Smith) took the chair at 09:30, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

BILLS

Excise Levies Legislation Amendment (Sheep and Lamb) Bill 2020

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum to this bill, and to the Customs Charges and Levies Legislation Amendment (Sheep and Lamb) Bill 2020, presented by Mr Littleproud.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr LITTLEPROUD (Maranoa—Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management and Deputy Leader of the National Party) (09:32): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

It gives me great pleasure to move the Excise Levies Legislation Amendment (Sheep and Lamb) Bill 2020.

The success and competitiveness of Australia's primary industries is underpinned in part by the agricultural levy system. Levies and charges are collected by the Australian government at the request of primary industries, and disbursed to levy recipient bodies, including the 15 research and development corporations, for investment. The levy system allows producers to collectively fund research and development, marketing, animal health, emergency biosecurity response and residue testing for the benefit of their industry. The Australian government also provides matched funding to research and development corporations for eligible expenditure on research and development, up to legislated limits.

Within this framework, levies are imposed and collected on sheep and lamb sale transactions, and at the point of processing and export. Approximately $50 million is raised in levy funds each year and invested for the benefit of this sector by its recipient bodies. These are Meat & Livestock Australia, the Australian Meat Processor Corporation, the Australian Livestock Export Corporation Ltd, Animal Health Australia and the National Residue Survey.

The sheep and lamb industry contributes $4.5 billion to the Australian economy each year with around 31,000 agricultural businesses involved in sheep and lamb production. Australia is the largest exporter of sheepmeat and the second largest exporter of lamb and mutton in the world. The collection and investment of levy funds through the agricultural levies framework supports the sector's ongoing success and growth.

In July 2019, the Australian government changed the definition of lamb for export purposes to reflect a new definition developed by the sheep and meat processing sectors, following extensive consultation. The new definition is designed to bring Australia's definition in line with other international competitors and provide a definitive signal for producers about when a sheep is no longer a lamb. Under the new definition, a lamb is an ovine animal that is under 12 months of age; or does not have any permanent incisor teeth in wear.

This bill aligns the definition of lamb for the purposes of imposing sheep and lamb levies that are duties of excise with the new definition. A related bill aligns the definition of lamb for the purposes of imposing sheep and lamb customs charges.

Updating the levies definition of lamb reflects the intent of the industry in establishing a new definition, and has the support of the Australian Meat Industry Council and Sheep Producers Australia. It will support compliance with the levies scheme, and improve the clarity of the levy system for the benefit of sheep and lamb producers, processors and exporters.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Customs Charges and Levies Legislation Amendment (Sheep and Lamb) Bill 2020

First Reading

Bill presented by Mr Littleproud.

Bill read a first time.
Second Reading

Mr LITTLEPROUD (Maranoa—Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management and Deputy Leader of the National Party) (09:35): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the Customs Charges and Levies Legislation Amendment (Sheep and Lamb) Bill 2020. Levies and charges are collected by the Australian government at the request of primary industries. The levy system allows producers to collectively fund research and development, marketing, animal health, emergency biosecurity response and residue testing for the benefit of their industry.

Within this framework, levies are collected on sheep and lamb sale transactions, and at the point of processing and export. In July 2019, the Australian government changed the definition of lamb for export purposes to reflect a new definition developed by the sheep and meat processing sectors, following extensive consultation.

This bill aligns the definition of lamb for the purposes of imposing sheep and lamb customs charges.

Updating the levies’ definition of lamb reflects the intent of the industry in establishing a new definition. It will support compliance with the levy scheme, and improve the clarity of the levy system for the benefit of sheep and lamb producers, processors and exporters.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Biosecurity Amendment (Traveller Declarations and Other Measures) Bill 2020

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Littleproud.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr LITTLEPROUD (Maranoa—Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management and Deputy Leader of the National Party) (09:37): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

It is with great pleasure that I move the Biosecurity Amendment (Traveller Declarations and Other Measures) Bill 2020. This bill is about protecting Australian agriculture. Australia is a marvellous country—we produce the best agricultural products in the world. We have some of the most diverse and pristine natural wonders in the world. And we love visitors from all over the world coming to see what a great place Australia is.

But we need to be vigilant to protect Australia from an ever-increasing number of pests and diseases that threaten our industries, our country, and our way of life. Biosecurity is critical to Australia. Pests such as the brown marmorated stink bug, which has the potential to decimate our crops and do untold damage to our natural environment, pose a continual threat. Diseases such as African swine fever—some strains kill almost every pig infected—would cripple our $1.2 billion pork industry, as well as threaten our trade, environment and economy.

We are investing millions of dollars into preventing these pests and diseases entering Australia, but we need everyone to do their bit when they come to Australia.

Despite our information campaigns, our videos shown on incoming flights and our information at the airport, not everyone is doing their bit. We ask people entering Australia to accurately and carefully declare what they have in their bags. It’s not much to ask, and it’s really not very hard. Just declare it.

We have biosecurity officers at the airport to inspect what travellers have in their luggage and assess any biosecurity risk.

These same biosecurity officers continually see serious risk products not being declared on the incoming passenger card. We have seen a passenger arrive at Brisbane Airport with one kilogram of limes and another brought dried citrus peel with them. All of the products tested positive for the citrus canker pathogen. This pathogen would have a devastating impact on our multimillion dollar citrus industry.

Yula, one of the biosecurity detector dogs at Sydney Airport, detected the equivalent of a small shopping trolley worth of undeclared goods in a passenger's baggage: 3.5 kilograms of pork, 4.5 kilograms of millet, nearly a kilogram of dried fruit, almost 10 kilograms of rice and an assortment of fruit, vegetables and spices weighing about two kilograms. None of these goods were declared by the passenger. Pork can transmit African swine fever and foot and mouth disease, and rice can introduce khapra beetle—all of which would be devastating to Australian agriculture.
This bill will enable infringement notices with a higher value to be issued for goods that have not been declared on an incoming passenger card and that pose a high biosecurity risk. This is a response to travellers—whether they be Australian citizens, residents or international visitors—continuing to enter Australia with high biosecurity risk items, such those detected by Yula, and not declaring them.

We've made it as simple as possible: if in doubt just declare it. Having a biosecurity officer check your declared goods takes just a few minutes, and this doesn't necessarily mean you won't be able to bring your goods into Australia. Declaring doesn't always mean having the goods confiscated. It just enables the biosecurity officers to have a look and assess whether there is a biosecurity risk that needs to be managed. And it doesn't cost you to declare something.

The Director of Biosecurity will determine, using scientific evidence and risk analysis, what goods pose a high biosecurity risk and can therefore be subject to a higher infringement notice amount than currently applies. The goods will be listed in a legislative instrument. Before listing goods that have a high biosecurity risk, the Director of Biosecurity must be reasonably satisfied that there is a high level of biosecurity risk associated with the goods or the class of goods.

This tiered approach will highlight to incoming travellers how serious biosecurity is to Australia. This bill introduces sensible changes to help us protect Australia from biosecurity pests and diseases—all we ask of travellers coming to our country is that they take a few minutes to just declare it.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Amendment (Governance and Other Matters) Bill 2020

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

to which the following amendment was moved:

That all words after "That" be omitted with a view to substituting the following words: "whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading, the House notes that:

(1) the Government has damaged Australia's world-class vocational training system by:

(a) cutting funding for vocational education and TAFE by over $3 billion;

(b) presiding over simultaneous crises of skills shortages and youth unemployment; and

(c) failing to tackle falling completion rates, with more people dropping out of vocational training courses than finishing them; and

(2) this bill fails to deliver the reform needed to fix problems in the vocational training sector”—

The SPEAKER (09:41): The original question was that the bill be read now a second time. To this the honourable member for Cooper has moved as an amendment that all words after 'that' be omitted with a view to substituting other words. The immediate question before the House is that the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the question.

Mr TEHAN (Wannon—Minister for Education) (09:42): I thank all members for their contributions to this debate. Delivering excellence in training lies at the heart of the Australian government's skills agenda and that can only be achieved with a regulatory approach that is fair, transparent and effective and with a regulator that is willing to continually evolve, build organisational capability and engage with the vocational education and training sector.

This bill ensures that the national VET regulator, the Australian Skills Quality Authority, has a more effective, modern and fit-for-purpose governance structure. It responds to both the Braithwaite and Joyce reviews, which called on ASQA to adopt a greater educative role and improve its regulatory approach. Further, it aligns with findings from the rapid review of ASQA governance, culture and processes undertaken by regulatory experts and announced by the government in October 2019. The government released the final rapid review on 30 April 2020.

The reforms will ensure ASQA is well positioned to support the VET sector to navigate the current COVID-19 environment and, more importantly, to guide the sector's recovery and regrowth once the pandemic abates. In this context, on 12 April 2020 the Australian government announced measures that provide regulatory fee relief for the VET sector. Certain fees and charges between 1 January 2020 and 30 June 2021 will be waived and relevant fees already paid will be reimbursed. This will assist the financially viability of registered training organisations,
supporting business operations during the crisis and fostering recovery once travel and operational restrictions are relaxed.

The revised governance model in the bill will also assist in the drawing on best practice for Commonwealth regulators and will enable ASQA to better allocate and clarify operational roles and responsibilities and improve regulatory decision-making.

The existing three commissioner model will be replaced by a single agency head to be known as the Chief Executive Officer, or CEO, of ASQA who will lead ASQA's strategic direction and improve efficiency. Starting reform at the top and working down ensures a positive impact on the agency's culture and supports a revised and revitalised organisational structure anticipated as part of the agency reforms.

Further, the bill establishes a statutory advisory council consisting of diverse, multidisciplinary experts who will provide ASQA with access to strategic guidance and direction. For example, members of the council will be drawn from those with experience from public and private training organisations. Significant reform is anticipated in the VET sector over the coming years, and these changes will position the CEO to make the necessary changes to ASQA's internal practices, enhance its educative role and address future challenges.

The information-sharing provisions in the bill support the disclosure of data collected by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research to a range of bodies. It is the intention of the bill for the National Centre for Vocational Education Research to be able to disclose information to state and territory departments with responsibility for Vocational Education and Training even where they are also listed on the national register as a registered training organisation. Enhanced information-sharing helps governments and vocational and educational training regulators so the diverse needs and requirements of all Australians are considered in policy, funding and regulation.

This bill is further evidence of the government's commitment to VET sector reform. It is the next stage of measures that will strengthen ASQA to engage more effectively with stakeholders while continuing to improve its regulatory approach and enhance student outcomes. A strong national regulator supports access to quality vocational educational and training.

The Senate Standing Committee for the Scrutiny of Bills in its Scrutiny Digest 3 of 2020 requested the minister's advice related to a no-invalidity clause and significant matters in delegated legislation. In relation to the invalidity clause, the committee sought advice about section 157(6) of the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011. The act, which, when amended, would operate so that the failure of the national VET regulator to comply with advice provided by the new advisory council does not affect the validity of the performance of the regulator's functions. The minister advised the committee that the amendment is necessary to achieve the desired policy settings for the creation of the new independent expert advisory council.

New section 157(5)(a) makes it mandatory for the CEO of ASQA to consider the advisory council's advice, including reports. However, the amendment to section 157(6) proposed by item 34 in the bill ensures that the decisions of ASQA will not be invalid merely on the basis that the CEO did not have regard to a relevant advisory report or advice. The CEO of ASQA must consider, although not necessarily follow, that advice and information in specific circumstances which is the right policy setting for the advisory council's reports.

The committee also requested information regarding why in relation to schedule 2 of the bill it is necessary and appropriate to leave safeguards for the disclosure of information to delegated legislation. They asked for consideration of whether safeguards can be included on the face of the primary legislation or at a minimum provide that the minister must take the information safeguard rules rather than make them. The minister advised the committee that the information safeguard rules add an additional layer of protection to those already included on the face of primary legislation. The protection of personal information is a serious matter and, if unforeseen issues were to arise over time, the minister could quickly respond to emerging issues in an appropriate manner to the circumstances. The government committed to making the information safeguard rules following the passing of the bill, which also requires that the minister seeks agreement from the Council of Australian Governments skills ministers.

The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights in its Human rights scrutiny report No. 3 of 2020 requested more information to assess whether the information-sharing measure in schedule 2 of the bill is compatible with the right to privacy. The committee considered the gathering of identifiable student data to develop policies which respond to the changing needs of students within and emerging from the VET system as an important and legitimate objective with sufficient protections to safeguard the right to privacy. The committee considered it may be useful to update the statement of compatibility to include the information the minister provided in her response. This action has been taken with the tabling of an addendum to the explanatory
memorandum for the bill. I thank the committee and appreciate the time taken to review the bill. I commend the bill to the House.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the question.

The House divided. [09:54]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ...................... 59
Noes ...................... 46
Majority ................ 13

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Bandt, AP | Burke, AS |
Chalmers, JE | Coker, EA |
Conroy, PM | Dreyfus, MA |
Freelander, MR | Hayes, CP |
Hasic, EN | Khalil, P |
Leigh, AK | Mitchell, BK |
Murphy, PJ | O'Neil, CE |
Phillips, FE | Rishworth, AL |
Snowdon, WE | Swanson, MJ |
Thwaites, KL | Wilkie, AD |
Zappia, A |
Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER (09:59): The question now is that this bill be read a second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Message from the Governor-General recommending appropriation announced.

Third Reading

Mr TEHAN (Wannon—Minister for Education) (10:00): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

BUSINESS

Rearrangement

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (10:00): I seek leave of the House to move the following motion:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent the government business notice No. 2 standing in the name of the Member for Bradfield being called on immediately.

Leave not granted.

Mr ALBANESE: I move:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent the government business notice No. 2 standing in the name of the Member for Bradfield being called on immediately.

This is a matter of priority because right now, as a result of regulation changes that have been moved by this government without any consultation with the community, Australians are not able to get their letter services. Older Australians deserve to be able to receive letters more than twice a week—

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. The minister.

Mr TEHAN (Wannon—Minister for Education) (10:01): I move:

That the Member be no longer heard.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the Leader of the Opposition be no longer heard.

The House divided. [10:05]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes .................... 56
Noes ..................... 50
Majority ............... 6

AYES

Alexander, JG
Allen, K
AYES

Andrews, KJ
Archer, BK
Chester, D
Conaghan, PJ
Coulton, M
Dutton, PC
Falinski, JG
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hastie, AW
Hunt, GA
Kelly, C
Ley, SP
Martin, FB
McIntosh, MI
Morrison, SJ
O'Dowd, KD
Pearce, GB
Porter, CC
Ramsey, RE
Simmonds, J
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Tudge, AE
Vasta, RX
Wilson, RJ
Young, T

Andrews, KL
Bell, AM
Christensen, GR
Connelly, V
Drum, DK (teller)
Entsch, WG
Fletcher, PW
Gee, AR
Hammond, CM
Hawke, AG
Joyce, BT
Leeser, J
Littleproud, D
McCormack, MF
McVeigh, JJ
O'Brien, T
Pasin, A
Pitt, KJ
Price, ML
Robert, SR
Stevens, J
Taylor, AJ
Thompson, P
van Manen, AJ
Wallace, AB
Wyatt, KG
Zimmerman, T

NOES

Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP
Burke, AS
Burns, J
Chalmers, JE
Coker, EA
Conroy, PM
Dreyfus, MA
Freelander, MR
Gorman, P
Haines, H
Hill, JC
Jones, SP
King, CF
Marles, RD
Mulino, D
O'Connor, B PJ
Payne, AE
Plibersek, TJ
Ryan, JC (teller)
Snowdon, WE
Stegall, Z
Templeman, SR
Wells, AS
Wilson, JH

Aly, A
Bowen, CE
Burney, LJ
Butler, MC
Clare, JD
Collins, JM
Dick, MD
Fitzgibbon, JA
Giles, AJ
Gosling, LJ
Hayes, CP
Husic, EN
Khalil, P
Leigh, AK
Mitchell, BK
Murphy, PJ
O'Neil, CE
Phillips, FE
Rishworth, AL
Sharkie, RCC
Stanley, AM (teller)
Swanson, MJ
Thwaites, KL
Wilkie, AD
Zappia, A

PAIRS

Broadbent, RE
Buchholz, S
Coleman, DB
Evans, TM
Flint, NJ
Goodenough, IR
Hogan, KJ
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Laming, A

Bird, SL
Butler, TM
Byrne, AM
Champion, ND
Chesters, LM
Claydon, SC
Elliot, MJ
Georganas, S
Kearney, G
Keogh, MJ
Question agreed to

The SPEAKER (10:08): Is the motion seconded?

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (10:08): I second the motion. There's never been a Prime Minister so scared of debate. There's never been a character that was so brittle but with such an ego—somebody who cannot tolerate an opposing view being held.

The SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat. The Minister for Education?

Mr TEHAN (Wannon—Minister for Education) (10:09): I move:

That the member no longer be heard.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the Manager of Opposition Business be no further heard.

The House divided. [10:11]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

<table>
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AYES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Archer, BK
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Falinski, JG
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Gillespie, DA
Hastie, AW
Hunt, GA
Kelly, C
Ley, SP
Martin, FB
Mchintosh, MI
Morrison, SJ
O'Dowd, KD
Pearce, GB
Porter, CC
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Simmonds, J
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Tudge, AE
Vasta, RX
Wilson, RJ
Young, T

NOES

Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP
Burke, AS
Burns, J
Chalmers, JE

Aly, A
Bowen, CE
Burney, LJ
Butler, MC
Clare, JD
The SPEAKER: The question now is that the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition be agreed to. I call the member for Chifley.

Mr HUSIC (Chifley) (10:12): Members will remember that vote down the track. They deserve to have their jobs protected and they don’t deserve to be silenced at all.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Chifley will resume his seat. The minister has the call.

Mr TEHAN (Wannon—Minister for Education) (10:12): I move:

That the member no longer be heard.

The SPEAKER: The minister has moved that the member be no further heard.

The House divided. [10:13]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes .....................56
Noes .....................50
Majority ..............6

AYES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ

Allen, K
Andrews, KL

CHAMBER
## AYES

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## NOES

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Sharma, DN               Rowland, MA
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Wicks, LE                Smith, DPB
Wilson, TR               Thistlethwaite, MJ
Wood, JP                 Watts, TG

Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER (10:14): The question is that the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition be agreed to. I call the member for Kingston.

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (10:14): Older Australians deserve to get their mail. That is the truth of the matter—

The SPEAKER: The member for Kingston will resume her seat. The Leader of the House.

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Leader of the House) (10:15): I move:

That the question be now put.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the motion be put.

The House divided. [10:16]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ...................... 58
Noes ...................... 48
Majority ................ 10

AYES

Alexander, JG          Allen, K
Andrews, KJ            Andrews, KL
Archer, BK             Bell, AM
Chester, D             Christensen, GR
Conaghan, PJ           Connelly, V
Coulton, M             Drum, DK (teller)
Dutton, PC             Entsch, WG
Falinski, JG           Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA         Gee, AR
Gillespie, DA          Hammond, CM
Hastie, AW             Hawke, AG
Hunt, GA               Joyce, BT
Kelly, C               Leeson, J
Ley, SP                Littleproud, D
Martin, FB             McCormack, MF
McIntosh, MI           McVeigh, JJ
Morrison, SJ           O’Brien, T
O’Dowd, KD             Pasin, A
Pearce, GB             Pitt, KJ
Porter, CC             Price, ML
Ramsey, RE (teller)    Robert, SR
Sharkie, RCC           Simmonds, J
Steggall, Z            Stevens, J
Sukkar, MS             Taylor, AJ
Tehan, DT              Thompson, P
Tudge, AE              van Manen, AJ
Vasta, RX              Wallace, AB
Wilson, RJ             Wyatt, KG
Young, T

NOES

Albanese, AN          Aly, A
Bandt, AP             Bowen, CE
Burke, AS             Burney, LJ
Burns, J              Butler, MC

CHAMBER
Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER (10:17): The question now is that the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition be disagreed to.

The House divided, [10:18]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes .................58
Noes .................48
Majority..............10

AYES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Archer, BK
Chester, D
Conaghan, PJ
Coulton, M
Dutton, PC
Falinski, JG
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hastie, AW
Hunt, GA

Noes

Allen, K
Andrews, KL
Bell, AM
Christensen, GR
Connelly, V
Drum, DK (teller)
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Question agreed to.

**BILLS**

Therapeutic Goods Amendment (2020 Measures No. 1) Bill 2020

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

to which the following amendment was moved:

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

"whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading, the House:"

(1) notes Australia's substantial reliance on global supply chains for medicines and medical devices;

(2) further notes the supply issues that Australians have experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly for common medicines; and

(3) calls on the Government to consider stronger domestic supply capabilities as part of Australia's post-COVID-19 response—

Mr HILL (Bruce) (10:21): I want to make some remarks—this is a non-controversial bill; I'll say that at the outset, as you can tell by the fact that I don't think anyone else is speaking on it—but I want to firstly make some remarks about schedule 5, which piqued my interest. It gives medical practitioners greater flexibility to prescribe unapproved therapeutic goods. In response to that, I asked some questions. The minister's office—and I thank them for this—set up a discussion with Professor Skerritt, the head of the TGA, which was very informative.

What I discovered—which is not apparent from the bill, because it's incredibly arcane, technical, pharmaceutical regulatory architecture—is that in essence this is a very sensible schedule but it introduces a form of off-label prescribing. That is when a drug has not been approved by the TGA for a purpose for which it's prescribed by a medical practitioner, with very clear requirements for informed consent. I want to spend a little bit of time talking about this. In essence, just to explain the schedule, there's a group of medications, I think they're called special access C medications. They're often either: old drugs that have been taken off by the sponsor because they don't want to pay the annual fee, because there's only a few of them prescribed each year and it's not commercial; or they're drugs which, for whatever reason—usually because they have very small markets and are very rarely used—might have been approved in larger markets such as the United States or the EU, but have never actually been approved for use in Australia. But they have, importantly, been approved somewhere else in the world in a comparable country with similar oversight to the TGA.

What this bill does is, effectively, tidy up the arrangements whereby medical practitioners can get access to these drugs. Currently, a doctor can just prescribe them, but the authorised prescriber scheme doesn't allow for it. What the bill does is allow an authorised prescriber for a certain patient group. They still have to go through ethics committee approvals in their respective specialist colleges and apply to the college. They can go to the TGA and then get an authority, effectively, to prescribe these rarely-used drugs for a particular patient group. But, importantly, the requirement then is that the patient—or, in the case of children, their parents—has to provide written informed consent, which stays on the file of the medical practitioner. I think it lasts for about three years, or something of that order. That all seems quite sensible. It cuts red tape, effectively, for the prescriber, who currently has to fill in a special access form for each individual patient. So that all makes sense.

However, what it raises for me is a really important example of the government actually acting on the requirement for informed consent for off-label prescribing. So I use this opportunity to renew my call to the House for an inquiry into off-label prescribing. Off-label prescribing is, in essence, when you go to the doctor and the doctor gives you a script for a drug for a condition. You might have something wrong with you, whatever it may be, and they're recommending a drug for you for a purpose other than that which the TGA has approved it for. It happens every day, and it's enormously beneficial to many patients. There's no fundamental concern about clinical discretion. But it's also clear that there is a higher risk—I confirmed this with the head of the TGA and I've seen scientific studies—in aggregate where there's no rigorous scientific proof that's been undertaken for the drug to treat a particular condition. The medical negligence lawyers know this and they've been warning medical practitioners for years that they run a high risk of medical negligence in the case of off-label prescribing. There was a study of adverse drug reactions on off-label uses without strong scientific evidence of benefit with over 45,000 patients which found high rates of harm with off-label use compared to on-label use. In one sense it's a small difference—around 20 people per 10,000 versus 13 per 10,000—but when you scale up that to a population level it's very material. Indeed, the TGA's own warnings in Australia say very clearly that they recognise off-label prescribing may be appropriate in some circumstances but recommends that such use only be considered where
'other options are unavailable, exhausted, not tolerated or unsuitable'. The TGA has written to me a number of times confirming that off-label prescribing is not endorsed by the TGA, yet anyone and everyone knows that it's widespread.

My point is not to restrict clinical discretion, despite what some of the response to this in the media has been. I'm not hunting the doctors. My dad was a doctor. I think it's great we don't have lawyers sitting in doctors' surgeries like we do in America and that we've got a pretty high bar. Doctors don't set out to harm people. I get that. But I do believe we should look at a requirement for informed consent in Australia. In essence, with an off-label prescription, a patient in Australia is being subjected to an experiment by their doctor. There have never been any scientific rigorous tests. Drug companies have not run the gauntlet of the TGA to get a drug approved for a particular purpose. The doctor is conducting an experiment on them. It may be an experiment they've conducted many times or that doctors across the country have conducted many times, but it is still not approved, and I believe that Australian patients have a right to be told when that experiment is being conducted on them. That's all. There should be a positive duty on a clinician to tell a patient, 'The script I'm giving you now is for a purpose other than which the drug's been approved in Australia.' I've spent a lot of time with medical practitioners, with the Pharmaceutical Guild, with the PSA, with Medicines Australia and with others, and I think in many quarters there's quiet support for this proposition to at least be tested through a proper inquiry into off-label prescribing. That would promote better quality conversations between medical practitioners and patients. It would allow the patient to decide whether they want to accept that risk and, particularly, to look at the side effects.

I got into this issue in a personal way. My daughter almost died three years ago from a near-fatal blood clot from her ankle to her hip from an off-label drug. I've spoken previously about this and I won't repeat it at length. It was a drug called Diane-35. She'd been prescribed it—and she's asked me to talk publicly about this; I'm not disclosing her medical history—to regulate irregular periods. It's a very common issue for young women. She was prescribed this drug which is only approved for excessive acne and to treat excessive body hair in the case of androgyny, but its side effect is as a contraceptive. It would never be approved as a contraceptive in Australia because it's got a higher risk of blood clots than other more modern contraceptives, but it's widely prescribed by doctors. Anyway, I've spoken elsewhere about that.

More recently, there's the case of antidepressants and youth suicide. There was a study released Monday last week, which I spoke on in the Federation Chamber and which was reported on in the media last week. In essence, it points out that not one antidepressant is approved in Australia to treat depression in children—kids under 18—in effect—yet nearly two per cent of Australian kids are now taking an antidepressant. Correlation is not causation, but in the case of that massive epidemic of off-label prescribing we see over 100,000 Australian kids taking antidepressants, none of which have been approved, and over the last 10 years we've seen the suicide rate per capita in young Australians rise by 49 per cent correlated with a rise in antidepressant prescribing of 66 per cent. The US FDA in 2004 and 2007 looked at the risk of suicidality and suicide ideation and behaviours in antidepressants, and they issued their highest form of warning, black box warnings, in 2004 and 2007 for antidepressants prescribed for young people. In Australia, the TGA decided to not take that action, and they took much softer action in 2005. I think this is a problem. I think after 10 years of data heading in the wrong direction, it's time that we actually had a proper inquiry into this.

For the first time, actually, in the decade or so, this issue has been raised by some—and it's quite controversial; it's disputed within the mental health community of Australia. The paper was co-authored by the professor of psychiatry from the University of South Australia. These are not fringe dwellers or nutters. They have a fundamentally different view of this issue to the doyens, the mental health establishment professors McGorry and Hickey, and Beyond Blue, headspace and Suicide Prevention Australia—all the people who've been recommending this epidemic of prescribing. And that's fine; the scientists should contest it. I'm not an expert. But the point is that, with 10 years of data heading in the wrong direction, the suicide rate going up and the prescribing rate going up, to the point where Australia now has the second-highest rate of antidepressant use across the whole population of any country in the world—second only to Iceland—it's time that we had a proper look at this.

In that regard, I'm really pleased with the health minister's response to the speech that I made last week and to the paper. The health minister indicated to The Sydney Morning Herald that he'd asked his department to review the results of the study and have an inquiry into this matter, though the extent of that inquiry is as yet unclear. The study raised issues not just in regard to the dispute about prescribing; it also raised significant issues in regard to the quality of prior research that had influenced the TGA's response to the issues raised in the FDA warnings and challenged the veracity of the advice of the prominent Australian suicide prevention experts and mental health organisations.

So I welcome the health minister's inquiry, but I would also welcome his advice, whether to the House or shortly, as to what the terms of reference for this review are, what the time frame of the review is, what age
demographic is to be analysed, and whether antidepressant use and suicide data is to be analysed. Since I made the speech and since the media reporting last week, I’ve been contacted by many people across Australia from all age groups reporting concerns around this issue. Will the review consider the quality of research that informed the prior TGA responses to the FDA warnings? Will the review consider the veracity of the advice of prominent Australian suicide prevention experts and prominent mental health organisations? Who will be conducting the review? Will there be an opportunity for public submissions to the review? How, if at all, will the authors of the study be consulted in the review? They stand ready to assist, contribute their views and explain their paper. I note that it was a peer reviewed paper in a proper psychiatric journal. What’s the reporting deadline for the review, and will the review report be made publicly available? I’d welcome the minister’s advice on that.

I’ve previously outlined other examples of off-label prescribing which are of concern. Shamefully for this nation, one example of off-label prescribing is the use of sedatives in aged-care settings. I understand the difficulties around informed consent with dementia patients and emergency settings and all that kind of stuff, and of course you can provide for sensible exemptions, but there have been calls for some time for this kind of examination of off-label prescribing and of whether we can do a better job of regulating it. Given that the minister announced in, I think, November last year that medicines would be the ninth or 10th national health priority, this broader issue of off-label prescribing is an important issue that could easily be looked at through an expert inquiry.

In closing, I make the point that I welcome the minister’s commitment to review the issues raised about suicide in young people and the link, or possible link, with antidepressants. But I do think there’s a broader issue around the regulation and oversight of off-label prescribing in Australia. Ultimately, I don’t think the TGA is responsible for this. It goes to an issue of clinical practice, and current clinical practice. Before I spoke about this in the previous parliament, I actually consulted with former member Dr Kerryn Phelps, who was in cautious agreement with some of the propositions I was putting forward but did agree that they should be tested through an inquiry and that there was enough of an issue to merit a proper examination.

Current clinical practice in Australia encourages doctors to discuss medication risks, but, as I said, there is no duty to tell patients when they’re being given an off-label prescription. I think this is wrong. I think Australians should have the right to be told. That’s what I would want to be told if I went in to see a doctor. What I think most people would like to be told is that the drug they’re being offered or asked to take is not approved by the TGA for the purpose for which it’s being prescribed. In that regard, one approach would be to have AHPRA, the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency, look at the basic medical law and strengthen the requirement on clinicians to provide that informed consent. Other countries do this. It’s important to note that several European countries, including France, Spain, the Netherlands and Sweden, require doctors to advise patients when they’re being given off-label drugs so that they get that informed consent and, I would hope, have those better-quality conversations. I don’t see any reason why we couldn’t adopt a similar model here in Australia. As I said, you’ve got to carve out sensible things for emergencies, although there are particular issues with paediatrics because of the difficulties in getting ethical approval to conduct clinical trials on children. But, for example, in the case of the antidepressants, you’ve got 10 years of real-world data. If you’re collecting the right data, after some years you can do a retrospective analysis which goes close to approximating a clinical trial. I spoke to Medicines Australia about that, and they agreed that, if the right data was there, that real-world data can be looked at.

My colleague the member for Dobell is a pharmacist, and pharmacists have a critical role also in that chain of events before a person actually takes a medication. They’re often the last check in that chain, and so, as part of a proper look at off-label prescribing, I would suggest that we consider a requirement to notify pharmacists when a prescription is off-label, at least for the first time, so that at the pharmacist’s counter they can have that extra minute or so talking about the side effects. I know that if my daughter had had the opportunity to be warned about the higher risks—she’s like Saffy from AbFab: she’s very sensible; far more sensible, they say, than her parents—I think she would have made a different decision about whether to put that drug in her body before getting on a long-haul flight, and she’d be in a very different situation now.

Mrs WICKS (Robertson) (10:36): I rise to speak in support of the Morrison government’s amendments to the Therapeutic Goods Act 1989 contained in this bill, the Therapeutic Goods Amendment (2020 Measures No. 1) Bill 2020. The coalition government has a proud record of prioritising the health and wellbeing of all Australians, which has been particularly evident in our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The government has also listed over 2,400 new medicines, worth around $11.6 billion, on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. This has only been possible because of the coalition’s prioritisation of the health of Australians and our responsible economic management since 2013. The fact that 30 new or amended medicines are listed each month is indicative of the coalition’s focus and commitment to improving the health of all Australians, including people in my electorate of Robertson. This bill strengthens Australia’s ability to list medicines on the PBS.
It strengthens Australia's ability to list medicines on the PBS, reducing delays for Australians who are trying to access new medicines and navigate regulatory hurdles.

One of the key features of this bill is the harmonisation of the key medical device definitions in Australia with those recently adopted by the European Union. These changes will assist in minimising the delay for Australian consumers in accessing new medical devices as our standards will now be in line with the EU. This means Australians can access world-class and affordable health care sooner. In April 2017 the EU introduced significant reforms for medical devices and in-vitro medical devices. These reforms better address technological and scientific advances in the medical industry over the past 20 years. In considering these new regulations, the Department of Health's expert panel for the review of medicines and medical devices regulations recommended that the regulation of medical devices in Australia should align whenever possible with the EU framework. This bill will support the expert panel's recommendation by updating key medical device definitions, which will clarify regulatory requirements for industry sponsors and manufacturers.

Another significant change this bill will make is to allow the secretary of the Department of Health to provide early, non-binding specific advice to sponsors of medicines about the safety, quality or efficacy of their products. These registerable medicines are typically classified as higher-risk medicines, which are mostly dispensed by prescription and over the counter. As there may not be enough guidance available on these complex medical products, this bill provides a mechanism for sponsors to seek early scientific advice about certain aspects of a medicine before they formally apply to register the medical product on the PBS. This will mean that the time taken to register higher-risk medical products on the PBS, some of which will assist Australians with complex medical needs, will be reduced. It will also provide greater certainty and clarity for sponsors looking to list a promising new medicine.

The bill will also introduce a targeted data-protection regime for access listed medicines, to encourage innovation in Australia's complementary-medicines industry. This provision supports another recommendation of the Department of Health's expert panel. This recommendation suggested that incentives be introduced for medicine sponsors to invest in innovation, which will in turn increase the competitiveness of complementary medicines in Australia.

In my electorate of Robertson I've witnessed firsthand how the Morrison government's strong economic management has benefited those suffering from medical conditions, with them able to access new medicines listed on the PBS. I've also seen why it's important for us to make it easier for Australians to access the medicines they desperately need and to reduce the barriers for sponsors of medicines by applying for their registration on the PBS.

In August last year I was pleased to welcome the Minister for Health, the Hon. Greg Hunt, to the Central Coast to announce the delivery of a third linear accelerator at the Central Coast Cancer Centre. During the minister's visit there we met with a patient receiving treatment for brain cancer. He told us how the Morrison government's listing of Avastin on the PBS dramatically reduced his treatment costs. This is a medication that blocks a cancer cell protein which allows cancers to grow in blood vessels. It starves the protein. Over 900 Australians living with this aggressive form of brain cancer now benefit from Avastin being listed on the PBS. Without the subsidy, it would cost up to $31,200 per course of treatment. Instead, cancer patients like the one that the minister and I met at the Central Coast Cancer Centre now receive prescriptions at the cost per script of only $6.60 for concession card holders and $41 for general patients.

The coalition government's strong record on the economy to date has ensured the continued investment in lifesaving medicines on the PBS. This stands in stark contrast to the last time that Labor was in office, when they deferred listings of new medicines on the PBS. This bill will make it easier for medicines to be listed on the PBS and to ensure Australians receive access to new medical devices sooner. In concluding, I would like to thank the Minister for Health, who I notice is in the chamber, for his ongoing support for the people in my electorate of Robertson who are suffering from severe health conditions. I particularly commend him for his leadership in strengthening Australia's healthcare sector, especially during the current global pandemic.

In closing, this bill makes important amendments to the Therapeutic Goods Act 1989 to support the delivery of the highest quality health care for Australians. This bill will assist in decreasing the waiting times for Australians to receive new medical devices as well as reduce the regulatory barriers for medicine sponsors in listing promising new products on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Cabinet) (10:45): I want to thank all of those who have spoken on the Therapeutic Goods Amendment (2020 Measures No. 1) Bill 2020. The member for Bruce made important points about antidepressants, and I have referred that matter to the TGA, and I also look forward to receiving the response. It's about making sure that
people have access to medicines that can help protect them and help them through what can be the most difficult
times in a way that is safe and not merely a default which avoids the necessary therapy, cognitive behavioural
support and mental health support necessary to deal with so many cases. It's about getting the appropriate
treatment for the appropriate condition.

I also want to thank the member for Robertson. She, in particular, has been a great advocate for the
Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. As she noted, over 2,400 medicines—approximately one per day—have been
listed on the PBS during our time in government. They're medicines such as Avastin and Tecentriq. They're
medicines for spinal muscular atrophy. They're life-saving medicines for conditions. These have been immensely
important. She mentioned Avastin, which would have cost up to $31,000 per treatment over the course of time. It's
now available for $6.60. We will continue to list all of the medicines that the PBAC approves.

One of the things which I do want to highlight to the House is that from time to time there will be companies
that seek to astroturf. Astroturfing is where a company refuses to abide by the legal requirements and conditions
set out by the PBAC. They will attempt to support a patient group with funds to try to pressure the government to
bypass the legal requirements. The government cannot bypass the legal requirements. One such case that I do
want to call out is the improper practice of Eli Lilly. Their practice has been improper and inappropriate. They are
deny patients access to Emgality, a medicine for migraines. This is Migraine Awareness Week. Their
behaviour is improper and inappropriate, and they're seeking to avoid the legal requirements. Today I am calling
on that company to stop denying patients access to this medicine and to meet the legal requirements, which are
mandatory. They are mandatory because of safety. They are mandatory because of efficacy. On this day, this
company must abide by the legal requirements and should stop their practice of denying their patients access to a
medicine which has been approved by the PBAC but for which they refuse to meet the legal requirements. It is, in
my view, unethical and inappropriate and we are calling it out.

Against that background, this is landmark legislation. This bill amends the Therapeutic Goods Act to
implement a range of fundamental measures to support the health and wellbeing of Australians. In particular, the
bill introduces measures to improve access to therapeutic goods for Australians, encourage innovations, reduce
regulatory burden and enhance patient safety by removing barriers to efforts to alleviate medicine shortages.

In relation to improving access to therapeutic goods, the bill amends a number of medical device definitions to
more closely align Australia's regulatory framework for devices with the European Union framework. As most
devices supplied in Australia are manufactured overseas, reducing differences between the two frameworks is
designed to minimise delays in device sponsors and manufacturers seeking marketing approval in Australia after
European approval.

The bill enables the secretary to provide early scientific advice to sponsors of registrable medicines, mainly
prescriptions and over-the-counter medicines, about prescribed aspects of the medicines' safety, quality or
efficacy—exactly the things which I referenced in relation to the work of the PBAC in approving medicines for the
PBS—to assist sponsors to understand the level of information needed to support a successful application for
marketing approval. This measure will reduce delays in access to new medicines that stem from industry
uncertainty about aspects of supporting information for such products, particularly for generic medicines in
relation to bioequivalence studies. The advice will guide sponsors and help them reduce the incidence of
rejections and the time and cost of developing evidence that is not needed.

The bill also removes a barrier for promising new medicines to access the new provisional registration
pathway, which was introduced in 2018 to provide access to medicines that provide a major therapeutic advance
over existing treatment options for very serious conditions. Other measures in the bill address issues of delay and
interruption for operators of clinical trials who need to make variations to the terms of their approvals and
improve flexibility for authorised prescribers seeking to supply unapproved goods to their patients, and the
measures encourage investment through the introduction of a targeted data protection regime for the clinical trial
data for assessed listed medicines.

It is my view that, in addition to the legislative amendments, we have a unique opportunity in Australia.
Australians have done it hard through the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, but they have been magnificent. As
a result of those successes in helping to flatten the curve, not only have we saved lives and protected lives in
Australia but we have still further enhanced the standing of Australia's medical system, health system and medical
research system. As a consequence, there is a unique opportunity for Australia to further advance our clinical trial
capacity. The world wishes to practise clinical trials in Australia whenever possible. So we are seeking to work
with the states on a one-stop-shop for clinical trial approvals. If we can expedite that pathway, we can give more
Australians earlier access to breakthrough new therapeutic medicines, build jobs in Australia and build the
medical sector still further.
The bill also enhances patient safety by removing a criminal offence that has been the subject of concern that it may be a disincentive to sponsor some potential alternative products to a medicine that is in shortage by identifying if they are able to arrange for the supply of their products to help alleviate the effects of the shortage. It is part of the general process of making drugs, devices, medicines, therapeutic procedures and implantables available to more Australians at an earlier time. It wouldn't have happened without the work of the TGA, the department, the Medical Technology Association of Australia, Medicines Australia and my office. I particularly want to thank my medicines adviser, Sam Develin; my budget adviser, Belinda McEniery; and my legislative adviser, Chantal D'argaville. Altogether, they've played a very important role. I thank the members for their contribution to the debate on this bill, and I commend the bill to the House.

**The SPEAKER:** The original question was that this bill be now read a second time. To this the honourable member for Dobell has moved as an amendment that all words after 'That' be omitted with a view to substituting other words. The immediate question is that the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the question.

The House divided. [10:57]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ayes</th>
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**AYES**

Alexander, JG  
Andrews, KJ  
Archer, BK  
Chester, D  
Conaghan, PJ  
Coulton, M  
Dutton, PC  
Falinski, JG  
Frydenberg, JA  
Gillespie, DA  
Hammond, CM  
Hawke, AG  
Joyce, BT  
Leeser, J  
Littleproud, D  
McCormack, MF  
McVeigh, JJ  
O'Brien, T  
Pasin, A  
Pitt, KJ  
Price, ML  
Robert, SR  
Simmonds, J  
Stevens, J  
Taylor, AJ  
Thompson, P  
van Manen, AJ  
Wallace, AB  
Wyatt, KG  
Zimmerman, T

**NOES**

Albanese, AN  
Bandt, AP  
Burke, AS  
Butler, MC  
Clare, JD  
Collins, JM  
Dick, MD  
Fitzgibbon, JA  
Giles, AJ  
Gosling, LJ  
Hill, JC  
Jones, SP  
Leigh, AK  
Allen, K  
Andrews, KL  
Bell, AM  
Christensen, GR  
Connelly, V  
Drum, DK (teller)  
Entsch, WG  
Fletcher, PW  
Gee, AR  
Haines, H  
Hastie, AW  
Hunt, GA  
Kelly, C  
Ley, SP  
Martin, FB  
McIntosh, MI  
Morrison, SJ  
O'Dowd, KD  
Pearce, GB  
Porter, CC  
Ramsey, RE (teller)  
Sharkey, RCC  
Steggall, Z  
Sukkar, MS  
Tehan, DT  
Tudge, AE  
Vasta, RX  
Wilson, RJ  
Young, T  
Aly, A  
Bowen, CE  
Burns, J  
Chalmers, JE  
Coker, EA  
Conroy, PM  
Dreyfus, MA  
Freelander, MR  
Gorman, P  
Hayes, CP  
Husic, EN  
Khalil, P  
Marles, RD

CHAMBER
NOES
Mitchell, BK
Murphy, PJ
O’Neil, CE
Phillips, FE
Rishworth, AL
Snowdon, WE
Swanson, MJ
Thwaites, KL
Wilson, JH
Mulino, D
O’Connor, BPJ
Payne, AE
Plibersek, TJ
Ryan, JC (teller)
Stanley, AM (teller)
Templeman, SR
Wells, AS
Zappia, A

PAIRS
Broadbent, RE
Buchholz, S
Coleman, DB
Evans, TM
Flint, NJ
Goodenough, IR
Hogan, KJ
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Laming, A
Landry, ML
Liu, G
Marino, NB
Morton, B
O’Brien, LS
Sharma, DN
Webster, AE
Wicks, LE
Wilson, TR
Wood, JP
Bird, SL
Butler, TM
Byrne, AM
Champion, ND
Chesters, LM
Claydon, SC
Elliot, MJ
Georganas, S
Kearney, G
Keogh, MJ
King, MMH
Mitchell, RG
Neumann, SK
Owens, JA
Perrett, GD
Rowland, MA
Vamvakiniou, M
Smith, DPB
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Watts, TG

Question agreed to.
Original question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading
Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme and Minister for Government Services) (11:02): by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Amendment (Governance and Other Matters) Bill 2020
Explanatory Memorandum
Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme and Minister for Government Services) (11:02): I present an addendum to the explanatory memorandum to the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Amendment (Governance and Other Matters) Bill 2020.

Education Legislation Amendment (2020 Measures No. 1) Bill 2020
Second Reading
Consideration resumed of the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney) (11:03): Labor won't oppose the Education Legislation Amendment (2020 Measures No. 1) Bill 2020. The bill amends the Higher Education Support Act and makes a number of changes to the legislation around higher education funding. While a lot of these are technical in nature, the bill does include a more substantive provision which waives the 25 per cent loan fee usually paid by full-fee-paying university students. It waives that fee for six months from April.
The bill also gives the Secretary of the Department of Education, Skills and Employment the power to determine certain students who due to an administrative error in the student identification system have exceeded their HELP loan limit. The secretary will be able to allow these students to repay the excess amount through the tax system. In light of the fact that an error has been made, this is a sensible way of dealing with that error. Labor has sought and received from the minister a commitment that each of the 475 students who fall into this category who've been affected by this overpayment anomaly will be contacted directly by the department and advised of the changes, how those changes will affect them and any relief or redress that is available to those students.

The bill also extends the Unique Student Identifier regime to all higher education students, requiring that all students commencing from January 2021 and all students from January 2023 have a unique identifier in order to be eligible for Commonwealth assistance. We have long supported the expansion of the Unique Student Identifier across higher education. We know that this should reduce the likelihood of future overpayment anomalies.

And of course Labor welcomes any relief a six-month loan waiver will provide to full-fee-paying undergraduate students, even if this relief only applies to a small group of students—it's better than nothing. Even if the relief is meagre and piecemeal of course we won't oppose it. It does amaze me, though, that in the context of this generational crisis facing our higher education sector that this is what the government is presenting to the parliament: a bill with the minimum possible assistance to students mixed in with technical changes and administrative clean-ups. It's a bill that doesn't even begin to acknowledge the enormous financial challenges facing our university sector, nor do anything—take any steps—towards addressing them.

It's not like the government is unaware of these problems. Universities Australia has been saying for many weeks now that 21,000 jobs are at risk in our higher education sector. For months Labor has been urging those opposite to support jobs in higher education, to keep the universities afloat and to keep Australians working. We're open to what that assistance might look like, but we are very clear that assistance is necessary. Sadly for those who are working or studying at university, and for every Australian who benefits from our universities—from their teaching and their research—the government has chosen to ignore these problems. It's chosen to let our fourth-biggest export earner fend for itself. In fact, the Prime Minister has gone out of his way to exclude universities from the assistance available to other businesses and other sectors during the COVID-19 crisis.

The government has repeatedly changed the rules to make sure that universities are not eligible for any assistance and to make sure that university staff, uniquely, are blocked from accessing wage subsidies. And we've seen those terrible forecasts playing out now. What we see before us is a slow-burning catastrophe, with universities shedding jobs, closing campuses and shuttering courses. Some of the worst consequences of course are being felt in regional Australia. We've already learned that hundreds of jobs are going in Geelong and Warnambool. Deakin is losing 400 jobs—so far. Central Queensland University has announced 280 job losses and three campus closures: Sunshine Coast, Yeppoon and Biloela, and jobs—hundreds of jobs—are at risk in Rockhampton as well.

Across Melbourne and Bendigo, La Trobe University is shedding jobs and, unfortunately, this is just the beginning of what will be a rolling crisis in coming months. The impact of these losses in regional communities is devastating. If we're talking about a small town or even a large regional centre, if we take out a few dozen jobs from, say, Rockhampton, people will feel that. They'll feel it right across that local community and that local economy.

Universities support 14,000 jobs in regional Australia and help to underpin the local economy in countless towns. Across the board, we're looking at tens of thousands of livelihoods being destroyed. We're talking about academics, tutors, administrative staff, librarians, catering staff, grounds staff, cleaners, security guards and many, many others. All of them have bills to pay and families to support. It is incomprehensible that the government has gone out of its way to exclude these workers, and it has continued to change the rules to make sure that these workers will not be covered by JobKeeper.

It is beyond me why the Prime Minister is so determined to abandon these workers. At this point it's hard to view this inaction as anything other than a deliberate attack on Australia's higher education system and at a time when we are relying on our brilliant university researchers to help us cope with the COVID-19 health crisis. We're relying on these researchers to help us find a vaccine or treatment for COVID-19, yet the same people we're relying on can't rely on their Prime Minister to help them keep a job. The Prime Minister's $60 billion stuff-up with JobKeeper means that there is absolutely no excuse not to support people in the higher education system. University jobs can be saved, but only if the government comes to the table, sits down with universities and treats university staff with the same respect with which it would treat people in other sectors. If I were in government right now, I wouldn't want to look back in coming months and think about the thousands of jobs I could have saved but chose not to.
This bill also has some measures that relate to our vocational education and training sector. Again, these are generally sensible changes, but they really only work around the margins of the system. And of course our vocational education system is absolutely critical to our economic success as a nation. Vocational education is more critical now than ever, as we enter the first recession in three decades. Minor adjustments, as we find in this bill, are just not going to achieve what we need in the sector, and there certainly needs to be a much more genuine commitment to proper resourcing for vocational education. You cannot rip money out of vocational education year after year and expect vocational education to improve in the face of that. You can't systematically underfund vocational education and then ask vocational educators to meet the complex and evolving skills challenge that a sophisticated economy like Australia's has.

But this is exactly what this government has been doing. It has spent seven years cutting TAFE and training budgets while also, on top of the cuts, underspending the money that has been allocated for vocational education. Since coming to office in 2013, those opposite have cut $3 billion from TAFE and training. And, as we learned earlier this year, on top of that $3 billion that was cut, almost $1 billion that had been set aside for vocational education and training has not been spent—$3 billion cut and $1 billion underspent. You cannot remove that sort of funding from a sector and expect it to thrive. You can't remove that sort of funding and not expect standards to fall.

This was happening already, before COVID-19 made this crisis even worse. In fact, according to a survey by the Australian Industry Group, three-quarters of Australian businesses were already struggling to find the skilled workers they needed to expand and grow. That was three-quarters of businesses that wanted to employ Australians but could not find the qualified workers they needed in order to expand their operations. What a tragedy that is: before COVID-19 we had almost two million people unemployed or underemployed, yet three-quarters of businesses said they couldn't find the skilled staff they needed in order to expand.

We're in a recession now, and what was a serious problem before has become a crisis. Nowhere is this more serious than in the collapse of apprenticeship numbers. Even before COVID-19, Australia had lost 140,000 apprenticeships and traineeships since those opposite came to government. And, according to new modelling from the National Australian Apprenticeships Association, we're set to lose another 100,000 by December. We are talking about losing 2,000 apprentices and trainees every week for the rest of this year. That is 2,000 Australians, most of them young Australians, who will not get the opportunity of getting the skills they need to have a secure, decent job that can put a roof over their head, that can support a family in years to come. But it's also 2,000 skilled workers that we are taking out of our economy as it begins to recover, as we hope it will in the not-too-distant future. We cannot afford the loss of these skilled workers if we want to repair our economy.

If the Prime Minister does nothing about this crisis and lets the training pipeline collapse without support, we could lose a generation of apprentices and trainees. It's already beginning to happen. Between January and April this year we saw a 73 per cent decline in apprentice job ads. We know from past recessions that a five per cent increase in unemployment results in a 30 per cent decrease in apprenticeship commencements. That would be a disaster for young Australians and it would reverberate through our economy for decades to come. It's all very well to talk about renovations and construction projects, but you actually need the tradies and the apprentices to build them.

So what is the Prime Minister's response to this crisis? Well, we heard it at the National Press Club last month and, sadly, it's just another exercise in marketing and spin. The Prime Minister's so-called JobMaker scheme involves no new funding, no time line and no new detail at all. In fact, the speech involved pretty much no new substance at all. Like other recent policies from the Prime Minister, it is a shallow response to a serious problem. It is a marketing-led recovery that he is relying on. It is certainly not enough to address the crisis in apprenticeship numbers or to revive our TAFE system.

We on this side are happy to support sensible legislative change in this area, but we need to go much, much further than the tweaks that this legislation proposes. We need to offer our universities and our TAFE and vocational education systems much more than is proposed in these bills because this country is confronting its most serious economic crisis in a generation and education will be a critical feature of repairing our economy. We are, as all of us know, experiencing the greatest economic transformation of our lifetime. We need a well-resourced training system, offering meaningful skills and development to meet this future head-on. Unfortunately, after seven years of this government, the coalition seems very little interested in building the system that will help us respond to this crisis. We won't oppose these changes but, with the scale of our challenges, we need much, much more.

Consequently, I move:

That all words after "That" be omitted with a view to substituting the following words:
"whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading, the House notes that the Government has damaged the quality of Australia's world-class post-secondary education system by:

1. cutting billions from universities, slashing research funding and locking students out of tertiary education;
2. cutting billions from TAFEs and training, presiding over a dramatic decline in students undertaking vocational education; and
3. failing to develop a long-term policy for the Australian post-secondary education system".

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

Ms O'Neil: I second the amendment and reserve my right to speak.

(Quorum formed)

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Andrews) (11:22): The original question was that this bill be now read a second time. To this the honourable member for Sydney has moved as an amendment that all words after 'That' be omitted with a view to substituting other words. If it suits the House, I will state the question in the form that the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the question.

Ms MADELEINE KING (Brand) (11:22): I am pleased to speak on the Education Legislation Amendment (2020 Measures No. 1) Bill 2020 and to support the amendments moved by the member for Sydney. Education exports are an integral pillar of our economy, worth over $37 billion to the Australian economy in 2018-19. Australian exports dependent on international travel, such as tourism and education, have been hit particularly hard by the COVID-19 crisis due to the global recession and the ongoing travel restrictions aimed at flattening the COVID curve. International education in particular bore the brunt of the coronavirus outbreak, with the primary market of China cut off from Australia universities since 1 February, but also important markets like India, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia and all through our region.

International education, including universities, vocational education and English language schools are Australia's largest services export industry and fourth-largest export sector overall. The Australian Bureau of Statistics trade in goods and services figures for April this year show the catastrophic impact COVID-19 has had on Australia's education exports. Tourism related service credits, including the education exports, fell $730 million, or 18 per cent, in a month. If you look at the data, you can see that the international education sector has fallen off a cliff.

The university sector alone is anticipating revenue losses of between $10 billion and $19 billion from 2020 to 2023. Universities Australia has estimated that there will be around 21,000 jobs lost over the next six months. This will continue into 2021 if international students are not able to return at this point. Yet the government refuses to extend JobKeeper to the tertiary education sector. This government went out of its way to exclude universities from the JobKeeper package. Of course, not all universities were excluded. Some private universities got some assistance. Torrens University, Bond University, the University of Notre Dame and the University of Divinity were all granted an exemption and are able to access the JobKeeper program, but there was nothing for Australia's public universities, nothing for struggling universities in regional Australia or universities based in regional centres such as the University of New England, Central Queensland University, Southern Cross University and other unis such as La Trobe and Charles Sturt University with campuses all throughout the regions. There is nothing for those universities. In fact, there is nothing in the COVID response of this government for those public institutions which educate Australians as well as provide the means for our largest services export industry. There was some assistance, a very minor amount—$100 million—in this context of regulatory relief to be shared between the universities and the vocational education sector, but that, of course, will go nowhere to cover the shortfall being experienced by universities in this pandemic. All the government has done in substance to help is to simply confirm existing pre-COVID funding arrangements. It's like the Clayton's COVID response: the higher education package you want to announce when you don't really want to help the Australian university sector at all. And it's going to cost jobs. It's already costing jobs. The member for Sydney already mentioned this morning that 14,000 jobs in regional areas are going because of the inability of this government to get over its ideological bent against Australian universities.

We hear in this place, and outside of this place, constant refrains for increased local manufacturing capacity and Australian-made goods. The community at large want more things made in this country, as do I, as do people in this chamber. Of course, Labor will always continue to advocate for increased local manufacturing capacity that complements and builds upon our comparative advantages—in particular, high-end manufacturing through investment in research and development—instead of specific industry subsidies. However, any such R&D will depend on the strong higher education sector that this government is determined to see crash. University research, as many know, is heavily subsidised by international student revenue and will face significant cuts without government intervention. This government, as I've said and as we all know, has refused to intervene.
On top of this, the government's ham-fisted approach to our trading relationship with China has placed further pressure on our higher education export sector into the future. Letting rogue backbenchers speak without any measure and lead the debate in this place on China shows a shocking abrogation of their responsibility to lead by the Prime Minister and the foreign affairs minister.

The Prime Minister also took time out to tell international students to go home. This is going to have lasting reputational damage for Australian institutions. We had, at our feet, a chance to place higher education in Australia—and that export industry—as being the safest place in the world in the global recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. But international students around the world know that this Australian government will not hesitate to abandon them in a crisis. Such an erosion of trust is unforgivable. The Victorian and New South Wales governments have stepped up to help international students, but the lack of support here in Australia offered by our federal government to international students is sorely lacking compared to what national governments in Canada and the UK have undertaken to do. They are our competitors in a very competitive international education market.

These countries helped these income-generating international students, but this Australian government left international students homeless and hungry. It's a disgrace—and I don't like to use this word very much—and it's 'un-Australian' as well for international students who are stuck here. There are no planes; they can't simply go home. The nations they come from have restrictions as well; it's not as simple as just telling people to go home or to rack off, but that's what this government has done to the people who provide our largest services export industry with billions of dollars into our national economy.

Despite what the Chinese ministry might say, Australia is a safe place for international students, and we hope that international students come back. But, quite frankly, we can't count on that when, in a crisis, this mob simply tells international students to go home when there are no means to do that. I would call upon the government to immediately act to repair the damage they've done to our relationship with the international students and those communities overseas which want to send their children to study here in due course, when we've recovered from the pandemic and it's safe to do so. But a lot of work will need to be done on recovering our international reputation in this area.

I've spoken a bit in the last few months about the need for diversification in our export markets. Quite frankly, a lot of people have spoken about that. This is important, in particular, in international education. Earlier this month, of course, we saw the spectacle of the Prime Minister finally discovering India. Just at the point when our government would want to think about taking our relationship with India far more seriously than cricket, curries and Commonwealth, all we got was the Prime Minister making 'Scomosas' to patronise the Indian community with. Australia's 700,000-strong Indian-Australian diaspora must have been rolling their eyes in embarrassment; likewise the business community, with its strong Indian links.

The real shame of this is that the government was presented with a blueprint for serious economic engagement with India two years ago. Two years ago—that's when the distinguished former head of DFAT, Peter Varghese, presented his report, _An India economic strategy to 2035_, to the government. This report has since then been gathering dust, and only a handful of the 90 recommendations have been acted upon. Peter Varghese found that no single market over the coming decades offered more opportunities for Australia than India, and he stressed that a stronger productive Australia-India relationship would have education as the flagship of that bilateral relationship. It is a massive economy and will only become bigger in coming decades. We know that the demand is already there, that Indian parents are eager to send their children overseas for a quality education and that many are looking to Australia.

I have a few quotes here from the Varghese report. I don't think the government has read it, so I'm happy to read some of the recommendations into Hansard. As Peter Varghese has said:

- There is no sector with greater promise for Australia in India than education.
- Australia's future growth and prosperity will be driven by our ability to generate and attract the 'best and brightest'.
- Getting education right is also critical for India to maximise the potential of its demographic dividend.
- India cannot meet the demand for education on its own.
- As a world-class education provider, Australia is well placed to partner with India across secondary, university and vocational sectors.

And what have we seen? Very little.

And while I'm on the subject of international education and diversifying our markets, I want to make a bit of reflection on our relationship with our nearest neighbour, if you're from Western Australia: Indonesia. This week, I wrote to the Minister for Education and the Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment to express my grave
concern that the Australian Consortium for ‘In-Country’ Indonesian Studies, known as ACICIS, may soon be forced to close unless it receives urgent financial assistance. In my former role at the University of Western Australia and as chief operating officer of the Perth USAsia Centre, I saw firsthand the immensely valuable work of ACICIS in providing an accessible pathway for Australian students to study in Indonesia. ACICIS is also the backbone of the New Colombo Plan, as it sends Australian students to Indonesia.

Former foreign minister of this country the Hon. Julie Bishop would be absolutely appalled that the government is failing to help with the operating costs of ACICIS. ACICIS gets funding from the federal government, but that funding cannot be used for operating costs. It can only be used to facilitate the exchange of students, and, of course, that money does not become available at this time, because no-one is able to travel. So, in the meantime, this excellent organisation, which is a consortium of more than 30 Australian universities and which has run on a shoestring for 25 years, continues to run on a shoestring, yet this government will not help it make ends meet in this time of crisis.

More than 3½ thousand students have studied in Indonesia through the consortium since 1995. ACICIS alumni now hold significant positions in government, the academy and business. It would be astounding and it would be a scandal if this government failed to support this organisation just weeks before the Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement is set to come into force. It will do our relationship with Indonesia a terrible disservice to not support this important organisation in its time of need.

I have, of course, asked the Minister for Education to ensure that ACICIS receives the financial supports it needs. I have not yet received a response. I hope I will, and I hope ACICIS will receive a response to the request it has made for support from this government. You can hardly believe we could get to this position in a country where a government has expended enormous effort on its relationship with Indonesia—not before time, I might add. It was a Labor government that started the negotiations and the preparations for the IA-CEPA. We had some concerns, but we fully supported that agreement going through this parliament and being ratified as part of that important diversification of our markets.

We know the value of student exchange. The students of today are the leaders of tomorrow. Australian students going to Indonesia today will have a greater understanding of Indonesian culture, its educational outcomes that are needed in rural and regional Australia, even outside of the pandemic. I commend the government for doing this and I encourage them to continue to do this. People living in rural and regional Australia have much lower educational outcomes than our city cousins. We’re less likely to complete year 12, less likely to gain a qualification at certificate IV level or above, and less likely to apply for or accept a university offer. This is not because students from rural and regional Australia are less able; it’s because students from rural and regional Australia face so many more barriers.

(Quorum formed)

Dr HAINES (Indi) (11:40): I rise today to speak on the Education Legislation Amendment (2020 Measures No. 1) Bill 2020, with a particular focus on schedule 4, which forms part of the Higher Education Relief Package this government has introduced with the intent of supporting universities and other higher education providers throughout the coronavirus pandemic.

Even before the pandemic I was a keen advocate—I remain a keen advocate—for reforms in the higher education and VET sectors to ensure all Australians, and in particular rural and regional Australians, have affordable access to further study and skill development opportunities. For years, higher education and VET students who have accessed FEE-HELP or VET student loans to defer their tuition fees have been subjected to a loan fee of 25 per cent or 20 per cent respectively. This is a straight-up student loan tax that is over and above the amount students borrow for their course and applies disproportionately to students for no discernible policy reason. Schedule 4 of this bill, which temporarily removes this FEE-HELP loan fee, is a step towards making higher education more affordable. And, frankly, it’s a step which could have been taken before the pandemic. I also note the similar temporary relief the government will provide to those taking out VET student loans to undertake a diploma or higher qualification with independent RTOs and public TAFE colleges.

Under these measures, prospective VET and VSL students who may be considering commencing or returning to study may in fact be incentivised to study in semester 2 this year. This is good. These types of incentives are needed in rural and regional Australia, even outside of the pandemic. I commend the government for doing this and I encourage them to continue to do this. People living in rural and regional Australia have much lower educational outcomes than our city cousins. We’re less likely to complete year 12, less likely to gain a qualification at certificate IV level or above, and less likely to apply for or accept a university offer. This is not because students from rural and regional Australia are less able; it’s because students from rural and regional Australia face so many more barriers.
The government's own Naphthine review found that high school completion rates are 80 per cent in metropolitan areas and 65 per cent in rural areas. It found that people that grow up in regional Australia are 40 per cent less likely to get at least a certificate IV and 50 per cent less likely than their peers to gain a bachelor degree or above. In my electorate of Indi alone, I know that our rate is half the state average for completing bachelor degrees or higher. Even VET enrolments are increasing faster in metropolitan areas than in regional areas, and it's this lack of training opportunities that is holding us back. The unemployment rate for those with a certificate III or above is 3.9 per cent compared to 7.9 per cent for those without one. And many of our young students are forced to move to metropolitan areas to study and subsequently face higher costs for relocation, but so often lack support to do so. Many students simply never reply because they know their family can't afford to send them.

We have excellent regional universities that, with the right investment and development, could really transform our regions, but they too need support. We also know that there's insufficient career advice guiding students towards courses that could make sense for them. Again, this was shown in the Naphthine review, the government's own review. This affects groups with extra disadvantage especially hard, like low SES students and students with disabilities, and pushes study and skill development opportunities further and further out of their reach.

This government has also fundamentally misunderstood how regional universities structure their operations and finances when compared to metropolitan universities, particularly the Group of Eight. The decision to exclude universities from the JobKeeper package left regional universities like those in my electorate, La Trobe and Charles Sturt, reeling. La Trobe is facing a revenue slump of $400 million to $520 million by the end of 2022. Regional universities and the entire university sector are facing more than 21,000 jobs lost, even under these measures, which is a drop in the ocean of what's actually needed and has always been needed.

I can't emphasise enough the vulnerability of the regional universities in this time of pandemic. One wonders if the government would have been better placed to understand the unique position, needs and ambitions of regional universities and skills development opportunities if it had acted on the recommendations of the Regions at the ready report to build a white paper that includes a clear national regional higher education strategy. Yet, this government has stalled on the release of the expert panel review of that report and its recommendations for well over a year now. We could have been halfway along the course.

It was only last week that I stood in this place and urged the government to support an amendment that would ensure regional Australia was included in its National Skills Commission, based on specific recommendations of the Joyce review. Including regional Australia explicitly in that bill would mean the government would have clear data and analysis on workforce development needs and opportunities in the regions. It's only with that data and the accompanying analysis that it can know exactly how regional universities and vocational education providers operate. It would make sure that future emergency measures, like those contained in this bill, understood regional Australia. But, instead, sadly, the government voted that amendment down.

So, while welcome, the measures in this bill are piecemeal and too little too late. This relief was always needed in rural and regional Australia, not just in the middle of a pandemic. The irony is that this government has been told time and time again what it could be doing for rural and regional Australian education. I really encourage the government to move swiftly on the key recommendations of its own report, the Naphthine review, which are no more urgent than now. That report urged the government to uncap places at regional universities and develop new, innovative VET offerings focussed on practical learning and technical skills. In his second reading speech, the member for Wannon said:

The bill gives effect to the government's commitment to provide certainty to the higher education sector, so the sector can remain agile while meeting the needs of industry and contributing to the economy.

With respect, this measure, which will only last for one semester, does not exactly fortify our universities and provide a reliable level of certainty. Even the Higher Education Relief Package at large, which includes some regulatory relief for education providers, cost reductions, short online courses and a temporary funding guarantee under the Commonwealth Grants Scheme, is not enough. Universities Australia have warned that Australian universities now face a projected revenue decline of between $3 billion and $4.6 billion.

The demand for thriving regional universities has never been greater. The Universities Admissions Centre in New South Wales have stated that 14,669 students have applied to start university in 2021, compared with 7,824 students at this time last year. That's a phenomenal jump of 88 per cent. The Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre and the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre are also reporting rising demand, with some applicants wanting to start their courses as soon as August this year.

I will not stand in the way of this bill, but I want to remind the government that it must do more than suspend a disproportionately applied student tax that has no discernible policy rationale for six months. Reform in this sector should not be about relief; it should be about ambition, transformation, opportunity and optimism. I will continue
to advocate in this place for this kind of future for higher education and for vocational skills and training. I shall do so, always and especially, for rural and regional Australia, and I call on the government to do the same.

(Quorum formed)

Dr ALY (Cowan) (11:52): I rise to speak on the Education Legislation Amendment (2020 Measures No. 1) Bill 2020. But first I want to raise this: I don't believe this bill does much at all in the way of reform, as previous speakers have pointed out. It makes a few technical amendments, and there are a few things such as extending the unique student identifier and some schedules around the repayments of debts, but I echo the sentiments expressed by the member for Sydney. I agree with her that I am completely bewildered that, at a time when the university sector is facing an absolute crisis that could potentially see the closure of Australian universities and a diminishing of Australia's standing as a destination for world-class tertiary higher education—one of our largest exports—this is what the government has come up with, in terms of reform of the university sector. It is absolutely beguiling that this is what the government has put forward.

I also point out the fact that none—not a single one—of the members from the government side has taken the opportunity to stand here today and talk about higher education and universities, despite the fact they have some very, very well-respected people in their caucus—for example, the member for Curtin—who have worked at universities, and despite the fact that many senior Liberal politicians have benefited from the Australian university system and have multiple degrees. I didn't know, for example, that the Treasurer has four university degrees. Collectively, I think they have more degrees than a thermometer—that's a good joke, isn't it? There you go: bang!

Quite seriously, I find it quite extraordinary that nobody from the government side is speaking on this bill, either to defend it or to stand up for universities and the valued place that they have in our country. But, at the same time, I'm not really surprised, because since the election of this government in 2013 universities and university students have been under constant attack with cuts, attempts at fee deregulation, policy chaos and uncertainty.

The 2017 MYEFO decision to cut $2.2 billion from universities and to recap undergraduate places, and their changes to the Higher Education Loan Program were both reckless and unfair. Some 200,000 students will miss out on the opportunity of a university place over the decade because of this government's cuts and capping of places. Not only will this devastate our economy and our society, but I want the House to think for a minute about the missed opportunity here for students who miss out on a place at university. And it's not going to be the students who go to wealthy schools, live in wealthy areas and have wealthy parents that are going to miss out; it's going to be the disadvantaged students—students in rural and regional areas; students who come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds; and women, who, like me, sought to return to work and upgrade their qualifications by going back to university. They're the ones that are going to miss out on places.

This government has buckled down on its contempt, its cuts and its strangulation of universities by failing to extend JobKeeper to universities at this time. I stand here as somebody who comes from the university sector, and it has been devastating for me to see my colleagues at the various universities that I've worked at facing the prospect of losing their jobs and also the closure of university campuses, the cutting back of the course offerings that universities are able to provide to students and the absolute uncertainty and insecurity which university staff face.

What does it mean, that the government has resisted, time and time again, our calls to extend JobKeeper to universities? I want to be very clear here: it's not just the professors and the academics who are going to suffer and lose their jobs. In fact, if you are fortunate enough, like I was, to be a research professor, it's really your own research revenue that guarantees your tenure at a university. However, if you are—like many of my colleagues—employed on a casual basis or on a rolling one-year contract to deliver lectures and tutorials for different units at university, you face unemployment. But it is not just those people. It's the cleaners, it's the admin staff, it's the ground staff and it's the students. Like I said, it's the most disadvantaged students who are going to be cut first because these cuts and the failure of this government to boost and support the university sector through these unprecedented times means that those smaller universities are the ones that are going to go first: the universities that cater to the most disadvantaged domestic students. And I'm not talking here about universities that cater predominantly to international students because they're forced to take on that business model because of progressive cuts by this government. I'm talking about those smaller universities that serve communities and that serve regions. They also serve as a place of belonging for people who come from disadvantaged backgrounds and who, without those universities, would not have had the opportunity to go to university at all.

I stand here as a product of one of those smaller universities. I am a product of Edith Cowan University. And the only reason that I was able to go back to university, to build myself up and make a life for myself and my
children, is because I had the opportunity to get a university degree through Edith Cowan University. I was able to go back as a mature age student, upgrade my qualifications and, then, not stop there but continue to upgrade my qualifications again and again. But I was given that opportunity through one of the smaller universities—the kinds of universities that will suffer exponentially under this government's cuts and their continued unwillingness to support one of the sectors that we should be incredibly proud of, and that we are incredibly proud of. Australia's higher education system is world-class. But that's at risk.

But this coalition's antagonism towards universities and towards research is nothing new. We had the unprecedented intervention by the then Minister for Education in 2018 where he vetoed 11 grants that had been recommended by the Australian Research Council, predominantly for research in arts and the humanities—in history, music and art history. I've been a recipient of three Australian Research Council grants, a Discovery grant and an Early Career Researcher grant, and, just before I was distracted by a parliamentary career, I got another ARC Discovery grant. I know what it takes to get one of those grants, I know what you have to do to get one of those grants. I know how long it takes to write a grant proposal. I know the kind of research backing and publication backing that you need to have in order to be successful in getting one of those grants. And I can tell you, Acting Deputy Speaker Andrews, it is no mean feat. It is quite celebrated at universities when one of their researchers gets an ARC grant, because they are difficult to get. The process, the criteria and the ways in which grant applications are assessed are by a panel of experts. It is a panel of peers who actually understand what the research is about and who know how to assess a grant application. And yet along comes the Minister for Education and, with the sweep of a pen, he vetoes proposals that were deemed to be quality research proposals by a panel of experts in the subject area of the research. Now, if the Minister for Education came to me and said that he was an expert in 19th century Russian literature, and that he had therefore deemed that a particular research proposal should be rejected: fair enough. But I doubt that he's an expert in those areas. This government's contempt for research, their antagonism towards the university sector and their abject failure to support one of Australia's greatest exports in education put at risk our world reputation in this space. In doing that, it risks our engagement with the world.

Education is one of the ways in which we engage with our region and with our world, through partnerships between universities and dual PhDs where a student can start a PhD at one university in, say, Toulouse and then finish it here in Australia. We're not just talking about students from China who come here for a business degree. We're talking about research. We're talking about collaboration. We're talking about soft power. We're talking about Australia's standing in the world and in our region. Education is one of the primary avenues for expanding that engagement and for increasing our soft power.

Parts of this bill refer to 'reform'. I would say there's no reform in this bill. This government likes to talk a lot about reform, but this bill just tinkers around the edges. It's a few technical changes here and there.

Mr Dick interjecting—

Dr ALY: Yes, absolutely, as the member for Oxley says, it is 'window-dressing', much like a lot of the bills that I've stood up to speak about over the past two weeks. Tinkering around the edges, a few minor amendments here and there and—bang!—it's called reform. What kind of sorcery is this? It's not reform. It's not reform at all. If the government were serious about reform, they would devote investment into the university sector. They would talk about investing in our higher education, investing in the future of Australians, investing in the aspirations of young Australians in rural and regional areas—young Australians in areas in Cowan like Wanneroo, which has one of the lowest year 12 finishing rates—and investing in the people of Australia and the future of Australia in our region and in the world by investing in the university sector. This bill just doesn't cut it.

(Quorum formed)

Mr DICK (Oxley) (12:09): I'm delighted to see that there are members of the government wanting to tune in to what I'm going to say about their cuts to TAFEs and universities. I only wish some of them would have the guts to actually stand up and speak on the legislation they have put before the House. But as they slink away, back to their offices, the lazy Liberals will once again not want to defend their appalling record with university funding and higher education allocations and their lack of commitment to vocational education and training.

I take every opportunity in this House to speak about the future of higher education funding, because I know, representing a growth corridor and some of the fastest-growing suburbs in Australia, in the south-west of Brisbane and Ipswich, how vital it is that our national parliament focuses on higher education expenditure. If we are to remain competitive, if we are to remain ahead of the curve when it comes to higher education, then this government needs to start listening to the alarm bells that are being rung across the sector and across the community.
The Education Legislation Amendment (2020 Measures No. 1) Bill 2020 makes provision for fee-paying university students to have a 25 per cent loans fee waiver for six months, obviously due to the COVID crisis. As the shadow minister, the member for Sydney, has indicated, Labor welcomes the small amount of fee relief that the bill provides for that small proportion of full-fee-paying undergraduate students—that six-month waiver of loan fees. So, there's no question that Labor will be supporting this bill. But in the larger scheme of things, this bill makes very minor adjustments to a sector that requires a comprehensive, genuine and enduring reform package.

That's why today I am strongly supporting the second reading amendment, which I would ask all members of the House to consider and to indeed vote for. If those opposite, who claim to support the university sector, really believed the words they uttered they would ensure that due recognition be given to the cutting of billions of dollars from universities, as is indicated in the second reading amendment; the slashing of research funding; and, certainly in examples from my own community, students being locked out of tertiary education. We've clearly seen, due to the cutting of billions from TAFEs and training, a dramatic decline in the number of students undertaking vocational education. And I think the most important part of the second reading amendment is item (3), which is:

failing to develop a long-term policy for the Australian post-secondary education system.

The bill also gives the secretary of the Department of Education, Skills and Employment the power to determine that certain students, due to having more than one Commonwealth higher education support student number, have exceeded the HELP loans limit and to allow these students to repay the resulting excess debt amounts through the taxation system. The bill also extends the Unique Student Identifier regime to all higher education students by requiring students commencing from 1 January 2021 and all students commencing from 1 January 2023 to have a USI in order to be eligible for the Commonwealth assistance. Finally, the bill includes a range of measures that are technical in nature.

But what the bill doesn't do is identify some of the systemic problems that we have identified and that the shadow minister, the member for Sydney, has highlighted today. The coalition government's diminishing of the quality of Australia's world-class higher and vocational education system should be condemned. As I've said, they've cut billions from universities by recapping undergraduate places and have slashed research funding. Since the coalition government came to power some seven years ago they've also cut TAFE and training budgets.

I know that in my home state of Queensland this has had some dire consequences, coupled with the fact that, unfortunately, between the years of 2012 and 2015, in the failed coalition government of the Newman experiment, which was a disaster for vocational education in Queensland, we saw everything from the potential shutting down of campuses to a number of TAFEs across the state being gutted by cuts in funding. But one of the saddest parts of that era, under the conservative government in Queensland, and which we're still rebuilding some five years later, was the frontline workers who were dismissed.

The Newman government came to power promising that no worker's job would be under a cloud or a threat, and yet one of the first actions they undertook was to sack TAFE teachers. I remember a number of local residents in my own community at the time, when I was serving as a Brisbane City councilor, coming to me and saying: 'We cannot believe we've lost our jobs. All we want to do is help—particularly, students from non-English-speaking backgrounds and people from diverse backgrounds—to get into TAFE and secure long-term employment.' Thankfully, a number of those state measures have been reversed, and I pay credit to the Palaszczuk government, and particularly to the Minister for Skills and Training Development, the Hon. Shannon Fentiman. She has made it her mission, as the minister for TAFE, to really inject the lifeblood back into our TAFE sector in Queensland. In my own electorate, just down the road from where I live, we have some fantastic TAFE facilities located in Inala. I've often visited those facilities and have remarked on the level of commitment by the educators there, and also their enthusiasm and energy, that students—many from non-English-speaking backgrounds—are benefiting from in our world-class TAFE system in Queensland.

But it shouldn't just be left to one government to deliver the heavy workload. It should be a national approach from a Commonwealth government which really invests in TAFE and vocational education and training. One of the saddest parts of what I want to put on record today is the number of apprentices in the Oxley electorate, which has collapsed since the government took power. There are 1,707 fewer apprentices in the Oxley electorate now as a result of this government's lack of investment in higher education and vocational education and training. That's a 47 per cent drop—that's a huge drop! As the member for Oxley I should be here celebrating and acknowledging an increase, and I think that any fair-minded person in this chamber would want to see the number of apprentices increasing. Do you know what? I'd just be happy if it stayed the same, if we just kept up with growth. But instead we've seen a fall of 1,707 apprentices.
In my earlier remarks, I said that I represent fast-growing suburbs, and it is fantastic to see infrastructure—led primarily by the state government—out through the Springfield and Springfield Lakes corridor under the leadership of the Springfield City Group, who are doing a fantastic job in providing some of that infrastructure. But they can't do it alone; they have to have a partnership with a Commonwealth government that's really interested in investing in training and infrastructure. I know, from visiting a whole range of businesses in that corridor—everything from manufacturing, food processing and new emerging microbusinesses all throughout the Wacol, Richlands and Carole Park industrial estates—how hard those businesses are working, particularly under difficult circumstances with COVID-19. But when I’ve met with them—and I was delighted to have the shadow minister, the member for Sydney, Tanya Plibersek, accompany me to a local business just before the COVID-19 crisis really kicked in—I’ve heard firsthand about what those businesses need. There's everything, including giving them their infrastructure needs to get their product around the south-east. The one thing that they kept telling us over and over—and continue to keep lobbying me on—is that they need support for trainees and apprentices.

A couple of weeks ago we heard the Prime Minister reveal at his Press Club speech that he had woken from his slumber and realised that we had a skills crisis in this country. You would think that, after seven years, this government would not take it lightly, but there we have it. We heard that this was a priority for the government. I don't know why it took them seven years to work that out.

We on this side of the chamber understand and have always understood that TAFE provides a critical role to the public by providing value through skills, apprenticeships and hard work, particularly through the passionate work of our hardworking TAFE teachers. Unless this government takes this seriously, we could potentially lose a generation of traineeships and employees. So my plea to the government today is this: start taking the sector of vocational education and training more seriously in this country. We know that we are desperate for more apprentices. We know that the businesses—and I speak from a lot of experience of engagement with businesses and the chambers of commerce in my area—are crying out for leadership in this area.

But this bill also, in the second reading amendment, describes the lack of funding for the university sector. I'm really pleased that I have a lot to do with the University of Southern Queensland in the Springfield area, and I pay tribute to the vice-chancellor there, Geraldine Mackenzie, who is an outstanding leader that I know a number of members on both sides of the House respect. She and the university have a vision that that campus, alongside the Ipswich and Toowoomba campuses, will become world leaders. They are doing fantastic work in the area of aerospace and a whole range of telecommunications and communications on that campus, but they are desperate for this government to ensure that more support is given to our university sector. This is even before we get into the issue of support for students who call our country home while they do their studies.

I spoke in the House twice last week about the appalling way the Morrison government has treated foreign students, particularly our international students, that are really struggling under COVID. I've met with church groups—in particular, the Riverlife Baptist Church located at Seventeen Mile Rocks in my electorate—who are filling the gap that the government should be filling. A number of these students who are either studying at university or are doing further education have just been completely cut off. They're unable to leave Australia and return home due to international restrictions or they've yet to complete their studies. They're, of course, unable to have any support through JobKeeper or jobseeker. The industries where they were working part time have collapsed and are not back on their feet, so they've been literally left in limbo. It's not because the government could do something about it; they have chosen, deliberately, not to do something about it. I stand here today to condemn the government for its lack of support for international students at our campuses across the community. It is not good enough. We as a nation have to remember that many are our neighbours that need our friendship and support.

The university sector is struggling thanks to this government who won't allow the universities to access JobKeeper. They are struggling, and we know a lot more has to happen. Today's bill is a very small step, but I'm here to tell the government that I will continue to hold them to account to make sure that our university and higher education system get a fair go under this government.

(Quorum formed.)

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (12:27): Thank you to the government for coming in for my speech—it's very nice of them. I rise to speak on the Education Legislation Amendment (2020 Measures No. 1) Bill 2020. I'll say upfront that Labor will not oppose this bill. This bill amends the Higher Education Support Act, HESA. The funding of higher education in Australia is predominantly provided through that piece of legislation.

The measures this bill implements include measures which give the Secretary of the Department of Education, Skills and Employment the power to determine certain students who have exceeded the HELP loan limit. It will
allow those students to repay the resulting excess debt amounts through the taxation system. The current loan limits for HELP debts are $106,319 for most students and $152,700 for students studying eligible medicine, dentistry, veterinary science and aviation courses. The department has identified 475 students who have exceeded the loan limits. The total of excess debt is $5.9 million. This legislation is necessary so that students are not directly pursued for their debt by education providers outside the current taxation system.

It is only fair that students who have exceeded their student loan limit through an administrative glitch are given an opportunity to repay that debt over time, rather than be pursued for a lump sum that they cannot possibly pay unless they win Gold Lotto. How did the students exceed their loan limits? Students with multiple student identifiers have been able to exceed the loan limits without realising they were racking up enormous debts beyond the limit of the HELP system. To prevent this happening into the future, this bill gives effect to the government's 2019-20 budget measure to extend the Unique Student Identifier regime to all higher education students. All students commencing from 1 January 2021, next year, and all students from 1 January 2023 will have a USI, a Unique Student Identifier, to be eligible for Commonwealth assistance under HESA. Labor has consistently supported the expansion of the USI across higher education. It is time. This should reduce the occurrence of students exceeding their loan limits.

This bill also gives students an exemption from the requirement to pay the 25 per cent loan fee for units of study with census dates from 1 April to 30 September 2020. This will help students finding it tough financially through the COVID-19 pandemic. This will be a welcome relief to students whose income from casual work has all but ceased during the pandemic. The department has advised that up to 50,000 higher education students and 20,000 VSL students might benefit from this measure, so it is not insignificant.

This bill also makes a technical correction to ensure that all students enrolled in aviation courses that enable graduates to obtain commercial flying qualifications, whether through VET or higher education, will be able to access the higher HELP loan limit. And hopefully they are doing that through a reputable organisation, such as those connected with Archerfield Airport in my electorate.

In addition, this bill changes the name of the University of Western Sydney to Western Sydney University, making it consistent with state legislation and the university branding.

As I said previously, Labor supports this bill. But the measures in this bill make only minor adjustments to the sector, a sector that right now actually needs a comprehensive, genuine and enduring reform package and support package. Sadly, the quality of education in Australia has diminished under the Liberal and National parties over the last seven years. What we have seen is billions cut from universities by the re-capping of undergraduate places. We've seen research funding slashed. Funding to TAFE and training has also been cut significantly, some would say to the bone in certain areas but particularly in some rural areas.

We now have a national shortage of tradies, apprentices and trainees. We see a Prime Minister running around looking for tradies to get into shot with to try and counterbalance the argument that flows from the cuts they've put into universities, TAFE and training. So we see, sadly, that the Liberal and Nationals parties do not value education. If they did they would deliver a genuine reform package that overhauls the higher education sector, a package that properly funds both vocational training providers and universities to deliver the education and services that their students need, reflecting what this nation needs.

The 2017 MYEFO decision to cut $2.2 billion from universities re-capped undergraduate places. Because of that MYEFO decision 200,000 students will miss out on the opportunity of a university place, particularly significant for the rural parts of Australia—200,000 students! This will devastate our economy and our society. If the Liberals had their way students would already be paying $100,000 for a university agree. They have forced students to pay off their HELP debts earlier, when they earn as little as $46,000—just $9,000 more than the minimum wage.

Labor understands the importance of higher education and education generally. Labor understands that it is the great transformational policy, that great opportunity in life, for our best and brightest to be of service to this nation. That's why when Labor was in government we uncapped university places. I know that greater participation in higher education not only is good for the student but is good for the Australian economy and good for the nation generally.

Students who were already missing out on university places before this pandemic now have tougher circumstances lined up against them. We see in the aftermath of the pandemic that there is even greater demand for places. This government is doing nothing—nothing—to support these students. They are denying them a place at a university at a time when the unemployment queues are actually getting longer. That's not a turn of phrase. If you walk or drive past the Centrelink offices you will see that.
The re-capping of university places has devastated participation rates in higher education. How is it fair that a student in the North Shore of Sydney is five times more likely to go to university than a student in the Moreton Bay region of Queensland? Perhaps we should blame the federal representatives—but I couldn't possibly comment on that—but obviously something needs to change.

Investing in Australian universities is good for all of us. The minister himself acknowledged that productivity improvements in the sector can increase economic growth by $2.7 billion a year. But the Morrison government doesn't value the university sector and it is deliberately throwing the people who add value to that sector under the bus. This government is sitting by and watching as universities shed jobs, close campuses and cut back on courses and degrees. In fact, this Morrison government has gone out of its way to exclude universities from COVID support. The Morrison government has repeatedly changed its policy to stop university staff accessing wage subsidies and it's putting thousands of jobs at risk.

We've already learnt that hundreds of jobs will go in Geelong and Warrnambool—Deakin University has indicated that 400 jobs will go. In Rockhampton, Central Queensland University has indicated 180 jobs will go and, particularly, I point out that that will involve closing three of their campuses: one on the Sunshine Coast, one at Yeppoon and one at Biloela—areas, which have LNP representatives, that are going to be devastated because they're big parts of those communities. Across Melbourne and Bendigo, La Trobe University has indicated jobs will go as well.

Unfortunately, this is just the beginning of a sector-wide crisis. In my discussions with vice-chancellors we clearly see—and I've done Zoom meetings all around Australia with vice-chancellors—that it is tough now and about to get a hell of a lot tougher, particularly if overseas students are not able to access courses for 2022, and those flow-ons will continue for a very long time.

The impact of these losses on regional communities will be particularly devastating. Universities support 14,000 jobs in rural Australia—and I'm sure the member for Lingiari would agree on how significant Charles Darwin University is in the Northern Territory. They help underpin the local economy in so many of those regional towns. Across the board we're looking at tens of thousands of livelihoods being destroyed. We're talking about academics, tutors, admin staff, library staff, catering staff, ground staff, cleaners, security and all the other jobs associated with universities—all people drawing a wage with families who rely on those wages, with bills to pay, mortgages and so many other commitments to meet.

So, why has the Morrison government gone out of its way to exclude these workers? It's like an anti-intellectual push that befits a Donald Trump or someone like that, a populist, not somebody who actually understands the value of investing in education and the economic benefits that flow from it as a former Treasurer should understand. Why is the Prime Minister so determined to abandon these people connected with the higher education sector and the TAFE and training sector?

At this point, this action seems like a deliberate attack on Australian higher education. This has never been Labor's approach to universities and it never will be. Labor's priority will always be that university education should be accessible to all, making sure that we get our best and brightest in front of the opportunities that come from university. No-one's education should be limited by their background, location or their credit card limit.

Labor boosted investment from $8 billion in 2007 to $14 billion in 2013. We opened up the system, uncapping places giving an additional 190,000 students a spot at university and the life opportunities that flow. This decision was driven by our commitment to improving Australia's productivity—something that has been flatlining for too long—and to breaking down disadvantage and inequality in the system. It succeeded in bringing in new people to university. We saw Indigenous enrolments go up. We saw more Australians with disability entering the system. I point out to the National Party: we saw people from rural and remote areas going to university.

Why is this important? Education helps create jobs that bring higher wages and a better quality of life for all Australians. This should be the guiding principle of Australian education policy rather than short-term budget savings that actually damage what's coming over the horizon. We need a vision of equity and productivity supported by funding and resources. Sadly, this is not a vision shared by this myopic Morrison government, a government that is watching thousands of jobs go, campuses close and is doing nothing to stop it.

The Liberals have neglected the skills and vocational training sector as well. As I mentioned earlier, there's a national shortage of tradies, and it is no wonder. We see that the Liberals have slashed $3 billion from TAFE and training. There are 140,000 fewer apprentices and trainees and there is a shortage of workers in critical services, including things like plumbing, carpentry, hairdressing and motor mechanics. If no action is taken immediately by the Morrison government, another 100,000 apprenticeships and traineeships will be lost by the end of 2020. This is a disgrace, and it's young people who are getting near the end of their schooling who are going to miss out.
The failure of this government has a real effect on people's lives. That is the tragedy of their neglect—their neglect of universities, their neglect of higher education and their neglect of vocational education and training. This government doesn't care enough or have the capacity to do the hard work that needs to be done to build a better post-school education system.

(Quorum formed)

Mr HAYES (Fowler—Chief Opposition Whip) (12:43): I too would like to make a contribution to this debate about something pretty important: education. So I do seek to speak on the Education Legislation Amendment (2020 Measures No. 1) Bill 2020. However, in saying that, I would give way to a single Liberal who wanted to stand up and defend this government's record on higher education. But, alas, as you can see, Mr Deputy Speaker Vasta, not a single Liberal is prepared to come and defend the record of this government on higher education.

In terms of the legislation before us, from the outset I can say that we will be supporting its passage. But that's just the start of the debate, which really does go to this government's record when it comes to higher education. When it comes to the tertiary sector, our universities and our TAFE are the things that are important for the future of our nation. What we have before us is really just fiddling on the edges. This is a tweak being applied by a third-term government that refuses to deliver comprehensive, genuine reform for higher education and for vocational education. It is looking at administrative matters in the main but nothing that goes to genuine reform of this sector.

In essence the bill amends the Higher Education Support Act 2003 and the VET Student Loans Act 2016, and it makes three fundamental changes. Firstly, the bill will give the Secretary of the Department of Education, Skills and Employment the power to determine certain students who, due to having multiple Commonwealth higher education student support numbers, have exceeded the HELP loan limit, and allow these students to repay the resulting excess debt amounts through the taxation system. That is a good thing and it is obviously supported by Labor. This is a favourable measure. It removes the possibility of a situation where the education provider, in fact, has to pay the government and then go about pursuing the debt from the student, which would be inappropriate. It would be problematic in the extreme, because, as I understand it, the amount of the debt recovery could be up to $12,000 per student. So that's a good measure.

Measure No. 2 in the bill extends the Unique Student Identifier regime to all higher education students by requiring students commencing from 1 January 2021 and all students from 1 January 2023 to have a Unique Student Identifier in order to be eligible for Commonwealth assistance under the act. A similar requirement is imposed on all VET student loan recipients who will also be required to have a USI number by 1 January 2021. It is hoped that this measure will prevent instances of multiple student identifiers which would result in HELP debt under the cap.

Thirdly, and importantly, the bill provides undergraduate students seeking FEE-HELP loans with an exemption from the requirement to pay a 25 per cent loan fee for units of study with census dates from 1 April to 30 September. This provision is aimed at reducing the financial burden on students impacted by the current pandemic.

Whilst these are good measures, reasonable, dare I say, and well thought out, the legislation is still tinkering around the edges of higher education. The government simply refuses to deliver genuine reform to overhaul the system of higher education and to provide the funds necessary for both our universities and our vocational education providers to do what they are supposed to be doing—that is, developing our human resources for the future and applying their skills to ensure that we have the skill sets that we need for the future Australian economy. I don't need to remind too many people in this House that it has taken seven long years of this government for us to get to this stage. But don't forget that, during that seven long years, they have neglected higher education. They have taken $2.2 billion of funding out of our universities, effectively re-capping our undergraduate places. That in itself is putting in jeopardy the prospects of some 200,000 students who will probably miss out on a university education because of this government's cuts to Commonwealth funded places.

In electorates like mine and the member for Chifley's in Western Sydney—and no doubt this applies elsewhere—the impact of the coronavirus on our local economies has been pretty devastating. As a region, we've experienced significant unemployment, particularly youth unemployment. We're seeing enormous social and economic disruption. At this point, during this pandemic, the government are denying additional support for our tertiary sector, a sector which has been particularly hard hit, given that some of our universities rely particularly on overseas students and research capability. But for the universities operating in our area, particularly the Western Sydney University, that's not really applicable, but they still are having the funds denied to them.

I'd just like to read what the vice-chancellor of the Western Sydney University, Professor Barney Glover, had to say recently. He was talking about Western Sydney and he said: 'For Western Sydney, the university is part of its very fabric. Alongside one another, the community, business and university have helped transform our region.
This has changed the narrative from one of disadvantage to one of promise. That regional compact is vitally important, but the work is far from finished.’ Here is the head of the university, knowing its place in a wide economic centre such as Western Sydney: education is so vitally important.

Far from being just a major employer—or employers, when you take TAFE into account—our tertiary education sector is integral to the sustainable development of our regions. Institutions such as the Western Sydney University and TAFE colleges out there in the west are critical for developing the pathways of many of our young people to be ready for those jobs of the future. They are pretty significant things. We know that, if the Liberals had their way back in 2013, they would have been introducing at that point $100,000 university degrees. They have already forced students to start paying their HELP debts when they're earning as little as $45,000, which is only around $9,000 more than the minimum wage. My electorate is overrepresented with families from low-socioeconomic backgrounds and, for them, a debt like that becomes pretty significant. As a matter of fact, it becomes a barrier to study. How is that about lifting people out of poverty? How is it that we apply a regime like this which acts, as I say, as a barrier to education, when we know education is a great enabler? We want to see greater participation in higher education, not less. In contrast, this government want to slam the door shut on universities and to more than 200,000 students. This is the track record of a government that love to talk big when it comes to education but in fact do little.

It's the same mob opposite who have diminished TAFE over the whole period of their government since 2013—three terms. They don't recognise that TAFE plays such a fundamental role for our young people and also, in doing so, for the growth of our local economies and, as a matter of fact, our national economy. They have spent seven years cutting the funding to TAFE and training by ripping $3 billion out of the system while underspending on the promises they'd already made to the sector. The Liberals failed to spend $919 million out of their budget on TAFE training over the past five years alone.

I'll just go back to Professor Barney Glover again. He was talking recently about the need to lift the cap on Commonwealth funded places for domestic students. This is where it does become very relevant to what we're talking about now. He went on to say, 'Lifting the cap would allow the university to work hand in hand with our TAFE sector and industry partners to rapidly strengthen the skills within our region to enhance productivity at a time when it needs it most.' I think that's exactly right. This is not just about universities and not just about TAFEs; this is about our higher education sector being able to do what we expect them to do, and that is to deliver the skill sets to our young people that are going to be so vital for our future.

The situation, I think, only gets worse when we look at the impact of the coronavirus on our respective regions. As a result of the government's lack of commitment to vocational education, we have now seen 140,000 fewer apprentices and trainees, which will deliver a shortfall in our skilled workers for the future. We have seen them in our critical trades areas. These are not areas where it's easy to go and manufacture people to just come and take their places. What this mob have done—and they have continually acted this way, ever since the mining boom, when we didn't have that skill set—was run to fill our critical skills shortages by short-term overseas employment visas. Why is it incumbent on a government to do that with our critical trades, whether it be our welders, our diesel mechanics, our carpenters or our plumbers? This is something we have a sovereign interest in. There's no point in those opposite wanting to talk about sovereign interests without addressing the basic issues. It's not all about trade; it's about making sure that we have the capability to be productive and competitive. Therefore, we need that skill base and we need to be able to develop it. We need to be able to develop it through our own universities and our own TAFE colleges.

I tell those opposite: you want genuine reform. But, the thing is, to get that, you need a vision. This mob opposite does not have a vision when it comes to higher education. A government that cuts and diminishes the significant role of universities and vocational education simply has no role in our future. We need a government that is going to look to the future of our young people. As a matter of fact, doing so addresses the future prosperity for our nation. Every dollar you commit to education is an investment in the future of our nation.

I note that Labor is supporting the passage of this bill, but I do call on the government to sit down, do a bit of navel-gazing and look for genuine reform, not just tinkering at the edges and calling that reform to higher education or tertiary education. We want genuine reform of this industry. We want to make sure that we have the young people skilled so they can actually take the jobs of the future. We want this. That would be something our nation can be proud of.

(Quorum formed)

Ms COKER (Corangamite) (13:00): I rise to speak on the Education Legislation Amendment (2020 Measures No. 1) Bill 2020 and to support the amendment moved by the member for Sydney. This bill is primarily to amend the Higher Education Support Act 2003, or HESA, to implement a range of measures across the higher education
sector. A key provision of the bill gives the secretary of the Department of Education, Skills and Employment the power to determine that certain students, due to having more than one Commonwealth higher education student support number, have exceeded the HELP loan limit and to allow these students to repay the resulting excess debt amount through the taxation system. The department became aware of this problem during a data-cleaning process conducted in the second half of 2019. According to the department, HELP loan limits have been exceeded by 475 students, totalling $5.9 million. The average debt above the cap is $12,389; the median is $7,480.

If the provisions in the bill are not enacted, education providers will be required to repay the government, and providers will be free to pursue the debts with students outside of the current taxation system. This could lead to students being pursued for debt recovery of lump sums. The minister responded to a series of questions from the member for Sydney about the impact of the bill on students who may have exceeded the loan cap with dodgy VET FEE-HELP debt. Of the 475 students who have exceeded the loan cap, 128 have some level of VET FEE-HELP debt. Some of them hold those debts with Careers Australia and Phoenix, two of the most notorious VET course rorters. The member for Sydney has been given guarantees by the minister that the department will contact and support these students. This is welcomed.

The bill also gives effect to the government's 2019-20 budget measure to extend the unique student identifier, or USI, regime to all higher education students. Students must have a USI in order to be eligible for Commonwealth assistance. The extension of the USI regime is likely to prevent further instances of multiple student identifiers and any resulting HELP debt above the cap. Also, the bill provides undergraduate students who are seeking FEE-HELP loans with an exemption from the requirement to pay the 25 per cent loan fee for units of study with census dates from 1 April to 30 September 2020. The application of this provision is aimed at reducing the financial burden on students who are impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and it's welcomed by Labor. The department has advised that up to 50,000 higher education students, including full-fee-paying students at public universities, and 20,000 VSL students might benefit. This bill makes several other minor amendments around consistent census dates, definitions of vocational courses and the naming of universities.

Labor supports the bill. It will ease the stress for these students, worried that there might be a knock at the door from a debt collector. It will give some relief for a significant number of students around HELP loan fees in these difficult COVID times. However, this bill highlights yet again how this government serves up minor regulatory housekeeping when major reform is needed. Here we are, providing some minor relief to students, while in the meantime universities are predicted to shed 21,000 jobs by the end of the year. And what real help have our 39 universities had from this government? 'Zero, zip, zilch!' is the answer to that. Worse than that, the government have gone out of their way to change the rules to deny universities access to JobKeeper. Labor continues to call on the government to save university jobs.

You may not believe that education, at $36 billion, is our fourth-biggest export after iron ore, coal and natural gas, and $26 billion of that comes from our university sector. The effect of COVID-19 on university research is predicted to be devastating. On 6 May the Rapid Research Information Forum, chaired by Chief Scientist Alan Finkel, released a paper about the impact of the pandemic on Australia's research workforce and its capacity to support our recovery efforts. It concluded:

- Australia's research workforce will be severely impacted by the pandemic and the effects are likely to be felt for an extended period.

The forum said that, of the 22,000 full-time equivalent job losses, an estimated 7,000 could be research-related academic staff. It also said:

- Income to universities, medical research institutes, publicly funded research agencies, CRCs, and the industrial sector is suffering from the loss of foreign students and a sharp decline in business research spending and philanthropy.
- To try and make ends meet as budgets contract, universities are reducing the number of casual teachers and increasing the teaching loads of permanent staff, further limiting their research capacity.
- These impacts are greater than during the 2008 global financial crisis and are being observed internationally.

... ... ...

Domestic and international post-graduate students comprise 57% of the university R&D workforce.

The forum also estimates that 9,000 international research students will not resume their research in 2020 and said:

- Industry sectors may experience a reduced capacity to innovate given that universities perform approximately 43% of all applied research in Australia.
- A decline in innovation may limit economic growth by slowing the development of new technology, skills, and efficiency gains in service and production processes.
These are the Chief Scientist's words, not mine. This is absolutely devastating as we approach a post-COVID recovery. The Prime Minister can spin like a whirling dervish about building manufacturing capacity and diversifying supply chains, but if our R&D is decimated then we have little prospect of doing either effectively.

And still this government does nothing to help universities. There is no funding rescue package and no access to JobKeeper. But we shouldn't be surprised. There have been recent news articles about how vindictive certain coalition MPs are about universities and about how universities need to be punished for not dancing vigorously enough to the government's tune on foreign interference on campuses or on support for the government at election time. Well, the government is certainly punishing the universities now. Over the last decade, this government has pushed for universities to be more entrepreneurial and to take more and more international students. Those students have been a cash cow. Universities did a brilliant job, to the extent that over $12 billion was taken by universities last year in direct fees compared to $6 billion in 2014-15. But now the bottom has fallen out of the international student market and the government refuses to help, despite universities predicting a loss of up to $4.2 billion this year and a loss of $16 billion by 2023.

International student income has, of course, masked the decline in the Commonwealth's own contribution to universities in general and for research. The impact of the government-imposed freeze on Commonwealth Grant Scheme funding in 2018 and 2019 is obvious. Even by 2018, with the growth in international students, CGS funding accounted for only 21.9 per cent of all university funding, while international student fees accounted for 26.3 per cent. This rapidly growing income from international students has been subsidising domestic teaching and, more alarmingly, the growth in research and training. In real terms, the Commonwealth contribution to universities under the coalition has declined from just under $9.5 billion in 2014-15 to only $9.4 billion this year. This is despite the total number of Australian students studying at universities increasing to over 50,000 in the same period.

What we will probably face with this crisis is a renewed push by universities to deregulate university fees, making degrees even less affordable—a move rejected twice by this parliament in recent years. Labor will continue to oppose $100,000 degrees. We will undoubtedly face increased marketing and poaching campaigns by universities to enrol more domestic students with an adverse impact on regional unis and VET.

The drop in Commonwealth effort is even starker when it comes to research. Since 2008, the universities have almost doubled their contribution to research from $3.6 billion to $6.8 billion. Unfortunately, the Commonwealth total contribution has only increased modestly from $3.4 billion in 2014 to $3.65 billion in 2018. According to Universities Australia, up to $3 billion may now be lost from R&D budgets due to COVID. In a recent opinion piece, UA called on the government to invest more in research, writing:

The first man to set foot on the moon, Neil Armstrong, said: 'Research is creating new knowledge.'

That knowledge is the raw material that makes new ideas, new technologies and entire new industries that will generate economic success and create the new jobs vital to Australia's future national recovery.

Without extra government help, we know for sure that there will be many fewer of these skilled researchers in work in one, two or even three years from now.

UA noted that the recent Deloitte Access Economics paper estimated that for every one dollar invested in research another five dollars is added to GDP. In 2016, almost half of all university R&D funding in higher education was spent in three crucial areas: medicine and health sciences, 28.4 per cent; engineering, 10 per cent; and biological sciences, 9.2 per cent. These are the key areas we will be relying on to help us rebuild our industry, our economy and our society post-COVID. Yet, what is this government doing? Nothing.

Finally, I want to speak about the effect on the regions. In my own region around Geelong, our university is Deakin University. They are a vital player in building our region, collaborating with manufacturing and developing new technologies. They have developed the Institute for Frontier Materials, Carbon Nexus and ManuFutures—amazing incubators for new manufacturers. Deakin have been brilliant for our region, and I love them to bits.

We know that universities are vital to regional Australia. Universities employ tens of thousands of staff. While only 23 per cent of metropolitan university graduates ever work in regional areas, 73 per cent of all graduates from regional universities stay and work locally. I note that young people in regional areas have only half the higher education attainment rate of people in metropolitan areas, so universities are a vital tool in closing the economic and social development gap in regional areas like Corangamite.

During this COVID crisis, Deakin have made over 400 positions redundant, and that is only the beginning. Shamefully, Deakin have deliberately rejected a brave and responsible deal negotiated between Universities Australia and the National Tertiary Education Union to cut wages in return for saving jobs. They are going straight to redundancies. The NTEU should never have been put in that position. There will be a protest by staff
against those job cuts outside Deakin, in Geelong, this Friday. I say to all of those staff and NTEU members that I support you—all power to you!

In quieter times, we might have pondered whether universities have invested the revenue from international students wisely. We might question whether they should've kept some of it for a rainy day, but that misses the point that the coalition has failed to fund universities and research properly. Now is not the time to reflect; now is the time to help. These job losses should never have happened. This vindictive, visionless government should have stepped up to the plate with a rescue package and access to the JobKeeper subsidies for universities. They should be wearing the blame for these job losses at Deakin University, Central Queensland University and many others.

I haven't got time today to speak about the tragedy of the VET sector—the $3 billion in funding taken out of this sector by the coalition over the last seven years, the 140,000 fewer apprenticeships and trainees since the coalition came to office and the severe skills shortages in critical trades. Again, this government has no idea and no plan for the VET sector, just as they have no idea and no plan for universities. It is about time they did.

(Quorum formed)

MS STEGGALL (Warringah) (13:18): The Education Legislation Amendment (2020 Measures No. 1) Bill 2020 will amend the Higher Education Support Act 2003 to implement various schedules across the higher-education sector. Schedule 1 will give effect to the Australian government's measures to require all students commencing studies next year to have a Unique Student Identifier number in order to be eligible for Commonwealth assistance under the act. Schedule 2 will allow the department to resolve debt collection problems arising from an administrative error. This bill will streamline administration in our education system, and I support that. I also support schedule 4 of this bill, which, as a result of COVID-19, provides undergraduate students seeking FEE-HELP with an exemption from the requirement to pay the 25 per cent loan fee for units of study with census dates from 1 April to 30 September 2020, thereby reducing the financial burden on these students during that period. I note that this will assist many local students in Warringah, including those studying at the International College of Management.

But this bill also raises important issues when it comes to education, skills and our economy in the post-COVID-19 world. Prior to COVID-19, I was concerned our economy was losing its competitive edge. GDP and wage growth were slowing. Labour productivity, an essential driver of both, had also stalled. Many people, especially the youth in Warringah, were rightly stressed about their future and finding good employment. COVID-19 has amplified these concerns and put our economy into recession for the first time in 27 years. The young generation of Australians finishing school this year face unprecedented headwinds and uncertainty, including a contracting labour market and high living and education costs, as well as unaffordable housing.

But COVID-19 has also provided opportunities by accelerating trends towards developing new knowledge and skills in areas like digitisation and automation, both high-wage areas. Provided we have the right policy settings in our tertiary education sector, we can harness these shifts and unleash a new wave of economic growth, higher living standards and full employment for our youth.

According to a recent report by Pricewaterhousecoopers, prior to COVID-19, 75 per cent of businesses reported they were concerned about the shortage of digital skills within their industry. This is consistent with my experience. In Warringah last year I talked with several start-up entrepreneurs who were struggling with the lack of skilled employees that they could access. COVID-19 has put further demand on digital skills as many organisations have been forced to shift to remote work and diversify their product and service offerings.

After restrictions set in, businesses quickly needed to upgrade their IT infrastructure and remote-working capability of employees; to shift their product offerings online; and to improve their service delivery. The experience with remote work environments through COVID-19 will likely generate increased demand to deliver an effective, remote experience for employees, which is likely a reality for the foreseeable future.

So we need digitally-savvy employees who can work in a digital space with the skills to collaborate online efficiently and effectively. We need to take advantage of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and machine learning to lead the way in digital business and developing technologies. But machines and technology cannot do everything and, according to the Business Council of Australia, the future of business will also require emotional and social capabilities, or soft skills. Travel restrictions have put a halt on our immigration intake, which has previously supplied high-skilled labour in these areas. Australia should turn and rely on our internally-sourced labour to fill these needs. This means we need an efficient and effective tertiary education system to supply these high-skilled workers.

What are the barriers in relation to tertiary education? The costs are high. Our tertiary education system, prior to COVID-19, faced significant obstacles which have only been compounded. High tertiary education costs
existence. They have now made access to important post-COVID-19 courses prohibitive. A student entering a graduate course in artificial intelligence could be expected to pay up to $90,000 for a course. The government has recognised this and, in the short term, is offering a 25 per cent fee exemption, provided for in schedule 4 of this bill in relation to deferral. The government has also announced discounted six-month online courses in information technology, engineering and mathematics. I suggest that these measures should be extended past the six-month courses and be incorporated over the long term.

The Productivity Commission's 2017 report, *Shifting the dial: 5 year productivity review*, raised concerns about declining admission standards, increasing student attrition rates and declining graduate outcomes in higher education under the demand-driven system. The Productivity Commission also found in a series of surveys that employers were not satisfied with the quality of recent graduates and that university students were not satisfied with the teaching in their courses—many did not even complete their courses. So kids and parents are rightly questioning the value-add of these expensive courses.

The Productivity Commission found that to improve these outcomes the tertiary education sector must improve the relevance of the skills and knowledge that are taught during their degrees and better match students to universities and courses that suit students' long-term interests, thereby reducing wasted education investments. KPMG, in their *Reimagining tertiary education* report, recommended that the government improves information available to support the operation of the tertiary education marketplace and assist students to make good educational choices. To achieve this, consistent with the research of the National Centre for Vocational Education Research, the Mitchell Institute and the Vice-Chancellors of the dual sector universities stated that we need to consider tertiary education holistically, not just universities or vocational education and training independently but as a unified sector, to address issues of relative spaces, funding, policy and regulatory coherence. By improving these measures, this could also lead to lower amounts of HELP debts expected to be repaid by students and to lower dropout rates and switching between courses.

Prior to COVID, our tertiary sector had already been suffering from increased demand for services and decreased government funding, leading to poor outcomes. Government funding of the Australian tertiary education system has received successive reductions in funding through the Commonwealth Grants Scheme and research block subsidies. The Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook in 2017-18 announced that Commonwealth Grants Scheme funding would be frozen for the 2018-19 year—that was a change that did not require legislation—and that increases from 2020 would be contingent on providers meeting performance targets. In August 2018, the parliament passed legislation to reduce the repayment threshold for HELP and introduced a lifetime borrowing limit. And the MYEFO for 2018-19 announced reduced funding growth for research block grants, a key component of university research funding.

There is clearly a difficulty if we are going to equate tertiary education with a business model. As growth in Australian government funding has contracted, overseas student fees have accounted for an increasing proportion of university revenue growth. University finance data from the DET shows that from 2016 to 2017 overseas student fees accounted for 64.2 per cent of total university revenue increases.

The lack of policy coherence between VET and universities is problematic. The Australian Industry Group, citing the Business Council of Australia, stated that preparation for the jobs of the future requires all the education and training sectors to operate as one system, and that this continues to act as a barrier to the creation of the responsive, integrated education and training system required to sustain economic growth in a changing world. The Bradley review highlighted that the efforts to resolve this have had limited success. To resolve this, the first act of the new National Skills Commissioner must be to outline how the government can better coordinate government policy in this area.

We are facing an unprecedented challenge through this crisis. It has exacerbated many of the underlying systemic issues with the economy. Our youth are facing daunting headwinds for their future prosperity and opportunities. And yet the crisis also offers opportunities to accelerate trends towards digitisation and automation. If we reform our tertiary sector to reduce costs for education, to place students more efficiently, to rectify funding disparities and to create a uniform policy framework between VET and the university sector, we can fill skill shortages in the high-growth, high-wage areas that will be the foundation of Australia's future prosperity. So whilst I rise in support of this bill, I call on the government to do much more in this sector.

*Mr HUSIC (Chifley) (13:29):* In the exhaustive time I have to make a contribution—

An honourable member interjecting—

*Mr HUSIC:* Well, then I'm fortunate that I've only got a minute! There are a number of aspects in this Education Legislation Amendment (2020 Measures No. 1) Bill 2020 that I want to comment on, particularly in picking up on some of the elements relating to some of the fee relief that's being provided and particularly as that
relates to technology. I hope that I'll be able to expand upon that in my later contribution, post the matter of public importance.

It is important for us to note that Labor is supporting, the opposition is supporting, the amendment bill but that there are things that do need to be pointed out with respect to the overall investment in tertiary education in this country because there is a concern that the role that tertiary education will play in terms of enriching human capital will be boosted by greater investment, not less, in this area.

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

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Tobacco Plain Packaging

Mr JOSH WILSON (Fremantle) (13:30): We should celebrate the fact that Australia has won the case at the World Trade Organization in relation to our plain-packaging tobacco reforms. Introduced by Julia Gillard in 2012, the reforms have been attacked by big tobacco in the High Court, in an ISDS tribunal and at the WTO. Mercifully on each occasion we have defended those reforms. And it is a mercy because we know from multiple studies that plain packaging has stopped people smoking and encouraged people to quit. That's vital because tobacco remains the leading cause of preventable disease and death in Australia. It costs our health system $7 billion a year, results in 1.7 million hospital admissions and 15,000 deaths.

While the Australian government welcomes the WTO outcome, don't forget that that reform was opposed by many on the other side of the House. The Minister for Trade at the time said he didn't think the reform would make meaningful difference. The Deputy Prime Minister at the time said it was a complete waste of time. How do they reflect on that now?

As we congratulate those who received Queen's birthday honours, it's a funny old world where Nicola Roxon, the first woman to serve as Australia's Attorney-General and the person who delivered this world-leading tobacco control measure, is as yet unrecognised for that great contribution to public health in this country and around the globe. But we acknowledge that achievement and we celebrate the saving of tens of millions of dollars in health resources and, most importantly, the millions of lives that have been improved and saved by this signature Labor reform.

Infrastructure

Telecommunications

Mr HASTIE (Canning) (13:31): I am pleased to report the progress on several local projects within my electorate, funded and backed by the Morrison government. First, we are one step closer to building a new train station in the suburb of Lakelands in north Mandurah. With the Morrison government committing 80 per cent of the funding for the $80 million train station last year, applications have now opened up for designers and builders to construct the Lakeland's train station. I am looking forward to seeing this project completed.

A builder has been selected for the Mandurah train station car park expansion, which has plans to include 600 new parking bays. Importantly, a WA company has been selected for the job. We are driving local projects for the improvement of our community and keeping Australians employed.

Progress has also been made to upgrade the dangerous Thomas Road and Nicholson Road intersection in Oakford. The Morrison government committed $10 million to fix this intersection during the last election. I am pleased to report that construction is expected to start in the first half of 2021, to be completed in early 2022. It is now up to the WA Labor government to get this project finished for the safety of the community.

Lastly, better mobile phone reception is coming to service remote areas in Canning. Three new base stations will be built thanks to the government's Mobile Black Spot Program. These stations will improve connectivity on the Brookton Highway in Lesley east and the Pinjarra-Williams Road in Wuraming. I thank the Morrison government for its investment in Canning.

Dental Health

Dr FREELANDER (Macarthur) (13:33): I rise today as a son of a very good dentist and the brother of a very good dentist to decry the government's lack of a comprehensive and ongoing dental healthcare plan for all Australians. The minister's recent announcement of 12 months of funding for what is manifestly a very small part of dental care is a demonstration of the government's lack of understanding and lack of commitment to dental care.

I know, as a doctor in Australia, that I can look in someone's mouth and know their income. I can look in a child's mouth and know their family's income. I have seen a number of children presenting to our hospitals'
emergency departments in the last few years and also to general practices with severe dental problems, such as severe dental cavities causing pain, dental abscesses and poor oral hygiene requiring emergency treatment because they can't access decent dental care.

We know that poor dental care increases the risk of cardiovascular disease and stroke. Poor dental care leads to workforce difficulties and difficulty even in obtaining employment. Yet this government has no idea and no comprehensive plan. Australians are suffering because of this government's lack of commitment to decent dental care. It is time for urgent action so that all Australians can access dental care.

Davies, Dr Will

Mr FALINSKI (Mackellar) (13:35): Dr Will Davies has published half a score of books and produced over 30 documentaries, most of which concern Australian military history. Will began working with Film Australia in 1972 following study at ANU. He worked overseas briefly with the BBC before establishing Look Film Productions in 1977. During this period he also worked freelance in the emerging Australian film industry, with stints on a number of feature films, including *Phar Lap*, *Monkey Grip* and *Hostage*. In 1983 he produced his first television documentary, and for the next 30 years he produced a broad range of documentaries, corporate films and educational programs, mainly for the likes of the ABC and SBS. In 2010 he closed his Crows Nest production office after 28 years and retired to the northern beaches. His magnum opus, *Somme Mud*, is a bestseller in Australia, the UK and the Netherlands. Will's other books include *The Forgotten* and *The Boy Colonel*; however, Will has an even greater project in the pipeline. In leading tours of the Western Front and Normandy battlefields, Will decided to help the mayor of Pozieres rebuild a small village school. So today let us look to Mr Davies's extraordinary work as an exemplar of keeping our history alive. *(Time expired)*

Sheean, Ordinary Seaman Edward (Teddy)

Mr BRIAN MITCHELL (Lyons) (13:36): Politics and political polling certainly should play no part in awarding of the Victoria Cross, and neither should bureaucracy. The only criteria that should apply are merit, conspicuous gallantry, self-sacrifice and devotion to duty, all in the face of the enemy. This is what the statute requires for consideration for the VC. The independent Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal determined last year that Teddy Sheean's actions in December 1942 passed this test and that he should be awarded the Victoria Cross. But we learned last month that the Prime Minister personally intervened to block the tribunal's recommendation. At first he flat-out rejected it, only to relent in recent weeks because of mounting pressure, and he has now belatedly offered a face-saving review of the independent tribunal's decision. But the review will not consider the merits of Teddy Sheean's actions. Its only job is to see whether a departmental policy has been followed.

A military decoration should never hinge on whether someone has filled out the right paperwork. The integrity of our honours and awards system is not strengthened by holding awards hostage to bureaucracy. The people of my electorate are sending me postcards that call on the Prime Minister to do one thing: uphold the recommendation of the independent tribunal to award Teddy Sheean the Victoria Cross, because merit is the only thing that should matter.

Cooke, Dr David

Mr CONAGHAN (Cowper) (13:37): I rise to congratulate Dr David Cooke of Port Macquarie for being awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for services to both medicine and aviation. Dr Cooke, a GP, practised in a number of rural and regional areas in his career; however, in 1988 he left his long-established home and surgery in Gunnedah and moved to Port Macquarie, where he has practised ever since. Dr Cooke flies his own aircraft to remote areas, including South West Rocks, to provide much-needed general practitioner services and has been an air crew medical examiner for over 50 years.

Some of his achievements include being the co-founder, with his son, and occasional pilot of Avcair aviation services; the former vice-president and member of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association; a doctor with the Royal Flying Doctor Service in New South Wales, Queensland and the Northern Territory; and a member of the advisory board for aviation safety in the late nineties and 2000s. Dr Cooke continues to serve the broader community as a pilot who practices medicine for Port Macquarie and nearby South West Rocks and, after 62 years in aviation and 55 years in medicine, he has no intention of retiring. I would like to say congratulations and thank you to Dr David Cooke.

Queen's Birthday Honours

Dr ALY (Cowan) (13:39): Greenwood resident Michael Romalis was recently awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia as part of the Queen's Birthday Honours List. Mr Romalis is a retired Army colonel and has received recognition for his volunteer services and supporting veterans and their families. He served in the Australian
Army for 38 years in a variety of roles before retiring in 2018. His operational service was mainly in East Timor during the early 2000s, and he now does Public Service work at the RAAF Base Pearce. He served as President of the Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans’ Association in the Tasmanian branch, President of the Naval, Military & Air Force Club of Tasmania and Vice-President of the Greater Hobart RSL. Between 2012 and 2018, Mr Romalis founded and coordinated the Veterans’ & Families Garden Plot in the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens.

Mr Romalis and his wife Galina moved to Perth three years ago to be closer to their grandchildren, who they’re absolutely blessed to have. He continues to be involved with the APPVA as its WA regional coordinator and volunteers with Buddy Up Australia, which started in Perth. He says that Buddy Up differed from other ex-service organisations by giving veterans an avenue to get together for social and community activities. I would like to warmly congratulate Mr Romalis and to thank him for his service to Australia.

**M1 Pacific Motorway**

Mrs WICKS (Robertson) (13:40): The final section in the suite of upgrades designed to deliver safer, better trips on the M1 Pacific Motorway is now complete, with the final stages of the upgrades between Tuggerah and Doyalson now open. It was great to be able to attend the official opening of the 12-kilometre section of the M1 over the weekend with some of my New South Wales state government colleagues—the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, Paul Toole; and state member for Terrigal, Adam Crouch MP. The official opening of this stretch of road marks the completion of the expansion of the motorway from four to six lanes, which greatly reduces congestion and travel time.

The M1 Productivity Package, worth $391.6 million, has been jointly funded by the federal government and the New South Wales state government. It forms part of the federal government's 10-year infrastructure plan, which will be critical in helping our nation recover from the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. This third stage of the M1 project follows vital upgrades to the eight-kilometre stretch of road from Kariong to Somersby in my electorate of Robertson, which opened in March 2020. The M1 upgrades have supported over 2,700 jobs throughout the delivery of the three stages of the project, with 75 per cent of these jobs going to local, Central Coast and Hunter residents, showing just how important infrastructure investment is in regional Australia in creating more jobs.

I'm pleased to advise that this project has been delivered more than six months ahead of schedule, and I thank my local community for their patience over the course of the upgrades. It's a project that will truly benefit more than 70,000— *(Time expired)*

**Pensions and Benefits**

Mr WILKIE (Clark) (13:42): Now that it's confirmed robodebt was illegal, it's time for the government to take responsibility and to immediately repay all robodebts, tax free and in full. It's simply not good enough that uncertainty remains for the many victims of the debacle. For instance, it's still unclear as to whether the government intends to repay those debts that were appealed. Obviously, considering the systemic problems with the appeals process, including how debts were finally calculated, it should repay them.

Moreover, issues have been raised regarding how the repayment of robodebts will impact people's tax returns in previous and future years. Obviously, the government would just be rubbing salt into the wounds if robodebt repayments incurred further debts with the ATO. Tens of thousands of Australians have had their finances and health badly affected by these debts. Some families have even lost loved ones to suicide. It simply defies belief that the government would want this debacle to continue and for victims to further suffer.

I call on the minister to act decisively and to announce full, tax-free repayments of all robodebts, including those that were appealed. Anything else would only prolong the distress caused to so many already. The last thing we want to see is more appeals and legal cases if the government now forces victims to fight for what is rightly theirs.

Kerr, Mr Laurie

Mr GOODENOUGH (Moore) (13:44): It is with great sadness that I inform the House of the passing of Laurie Kerr over the weekend, on Saturday 13 June. Born on 12 May 1958, Laurie was a member of the Kingsley Football Club and a survivor of the Bali bombings of 12 October 2002. Laurie was 44 years old when he travelled to Bali with the Kingsley Football Club as a club official. The club lost seven of its players as a result of the terrorist attack. In the moments after the bombing, despite his injuries, and still inside the Sari Club, Laurie worked to save others who were also fighting for their lives. He was later flown to Royal Perth Hospital for treatment in the burns unit. Laurie suffered burns to 20 per cent of his body. In the years since, Laurie battled...
constant pain from his injuries, undergoing numerous operations. He was diagnosed with regional chronic pain syndrome, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. Sadly, he lost his business and his home.

On behalf of our local community, I pay tribute to Laurie Kerr and extend deepest sympathies to his family. We will always remember the victims who lost their lives in the terrorist attack, and the many survivors who have endured immense suffering in rebuilding their lives. I fully support the efforts by the Bali Peace Park Association to secure government funding to develop a memorial park on the site of the bombing as a place of quiet reflection and contemplation for future generations.

Whitlam Government

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (13:45): I rise to congratulate Professor Jenny Hocking on her four-year campaign to make the 'palace letters' public and to help tell the true story of the 1975 dismissal of the Whitlam government.

The High Court's recent decision confirmed that the National Archives of Australia was wrong to refuse public access to the letters between the then Governor-General, Sir John Kerr, and the Queen. The Australian people have the right to know the full history of the greatest political and constitutional crisis in our nation's history, and for a decade Professor Hocking has fought to see that correspondence. We are thankful that she took her case all the way to the High Court and has finally been vindicated.

The High Court rejected the Commonwealth's claim that the letters did not need to be made available for public access because they were private or personal. These are important historical Australian documents that belong to the Australian public and they tell a great story about our history. It didn't make any sense that these important historical communications were deemed personal communications. Professor Hocking was right when she described the whole situation as a relic of colonialism and a lingering imperial power that comes from an incomplete severance of colonial ties.

Just why did the National Archives, backed by the Morrison government, waste a million dollars of taxpayers' money in fighting the application for access to these documents? Labor strongly supports the right to know, and I congratulate Professor Hocking. I call the National Archives to release the letters— *(Time expired)*

National Bowel Cancer Awareness Day

Ms HAMMOND (Curtin) (13:47): For those people born in 1970 and turning 50 this year, the best, if somewhat unusual, present you will receive is one from the Australian government. And the great news is that you'll receive it every second year until you turn 74! The gift is the bowel cancer home test kit, and I'm speaking about it today because it is National Bowel Cancer Awareness Day.

Bowel cancer is the third-most-common type of newly diagnosed cancer in Australia, and the second deadliest. Over 15,000 Australians are newly diagnosed each year and over 5,000 Australians die each year from bowel cancer. That's about 100 people per week. There is a higher risk for people aged over 50. The good news is that well over 90 per cent of bowel cancer cases can be treated successfully, if found early. That is why regular screening after the age of 50 is vital. It's also important to be aware of the symptoms: blood in bowel movements, unexplained weight loss, persistent change in bowel habits and severe abdominal pain. You also need to know your family medical history; in 30 per cent of all bowel cancer cases there's a family history or hereditary contribution.

Talking about colon cancer can be uncomfortable, but colon cancer is not a comfortable disease. Don't ignore the symptoms; see your doctor if you have any symptoms. And to the approximately 1,800 people turning 50 in Curtin this year: happy birthday, and look out for your special gift!

Environment

Ms THWAITES (Jagajaga) (13:48): I rise to condemn this government's failure to look after our environment. Australia is facing an extinction crisis, which has been compounded by the recent national bushfires. More than one billion animals perished, 12 million hectares of land burned and lives, homes and livelihoods were lost. But the Morrison government has been slow on recovery and has failed to protect our iconic species. And now the Prime Minister is trying to use the cover of the COVID crisis to do away with environmental regulation. But we know it's not regulation that's the problem here; it's the government's public sector job cutting that has meant more than 40 per cent of projects are being decided late, putting both jobs and the environment at risk.

The government isn't even prepared to wait for the result of its own long-overdue review of the EPBC Act. We've been warned by scientists that the EPBC Act fails to take adequate account of the biggest threat we all face—climate change. This means some of our most important and iconic sites and species are at risk—sites like the Great Barrier Reef where climate change is the leading cause of decline.
We know this government has an issue with listening to and comprehending science. It's a flaw they seem to be able to overcome when it came to dealing with the pandemic. They must do the same when it comes to dealing with climate change and the environment. Otherwise they're putting at risk the places we all love. They're putting at risk jobs and they're putting at risk our lives.

Cairns: Captain Cook Statue

Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt) (13:50): I rise this afternoon to condemn the petition circulating in my community calling for the removal of the Captain James Cook statue on Sheridan Street. This is just another example of a noisy few trying to whitewash and rewrite our history with their change-culture mentality. But, unfortunately, they don't represent the views of the vast majority.

Ironically, these noisy few seem to conveniently forget or simply do not know the history of Cook's 1770 scientific voyage and its lasting impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as well as our nation as a whole. In fact it's widely acknowledged that the first recorded active reconciliation took place in Cooktown between the Bama people and Cook's Endeavour crew. Bama man Harold Ludwick explained the significance of this encounter to the National Trust in Queensland. He said:

Cooktown shows a story of [the] humanity of our people, when they met with Captain Cook. They instigated meetings with Captain Cook … and it was that understanding from both cultures that made that ground zero for the birth of Australia.

Cooktown's Bama Aunty Alberta Hornsby added:

We can't change the past, we all have a history. But here in Cooktown we have chosen to show a balance.

I would suggest that there's an opportunity here for those noisy few who are trying to divide us that maybe they should take a leaf out of Aunty Alberta's book.

Australia Post

Mr DICK (Oxley) (13:52): I rise to speak today on yet another industry where the government has completely forgotten essential workers—our trusted and crucial Aussie Post employees. The Morrison government has voted eight times over two days to slash Australia Post deliveries and threaten jobs and wages.

There are fewer services provided by the Commonwealth more familiar and well loved than Australia Post. Many people, including isolated, vulnerable and older residents in Oxley and those living in regional areas, rely on regular postal services to conduct their business and stay in touch with friends and family.

It is shameful that this government is using a pandemic to slash an essential public service. This government is once again cutting services and cutting jobs. It is just not acceptable and certainly not in the climate we are in. People know their posties and they love them. And what this government is planning is restricting deliveries to just two days a week.

Australia Post has community service obligations for a reason: because it is an essential service. An essential service should be provided regularly, and those who provide it should feel safe and secure in their employment. It's a fundamental starting point, for these changes were based on a hoax. How can we trust anything the government says? I know the people of Oxley support our Australia Post services and our posties, and so do I.

China

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson) (13:53): Communist China is waging an economic war against Australia. Attacks on our beef and barley exports and tourism have brought this to light, but the problem is deeper. I have information regarding ASX-listed companies, CuDeco and Flinders Mines, where Chinese institutional shareholders have done over Aussie investors. ASIC and FIRB must investigate this.

Another concern is that there is no way of telling how much of Australian workers' hard-earned retirement funds are actually invested in communist China. We do know that super funds have set up shop there. In 2014, 80 super funds representing $350 billion in retirement savings toured China to scope out potential investments.

AustralianSuper, worth $65 billion, was seeking to invest about 10 per cent of its fund in Asia, including China, by 2016. In 2017, First State Super became the first super fund to secure a licence to trade and invest in China. In June last year, UniSuper, a $70 billion fund, revealed that their exposure to China was worth hundreds of millions via external managers, as well as $200 million through A-shares. Super funds need to stop investing Australian workers' retirement savings in a regime that is waging economic war against this nation. Instead, what they should be doing is investing more at home, particularly in strategic industries, including agriculture and food processing, so that Australians are in control of Australian assets—not China.

Morrison Government

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (13:55): Tackling corruption is not a priority for the Morrison government. In fact, the truth is that fighting against corruption is, at best, a fringe issue.
for the Morrison government. You don't have to take my word for it; just ask the Prime Minister. In November 2018, just after he had stabbed Malcolm Turnbull in the back and become Prime Minister, this is how the current Prime Minister described the establishment of a national anticorruption body: 'a fringe issue'. And that is how he has treated the issue ever since. The ever-growing list of scandals surrounding this government shows why Australia needs a powerful and independent national integrity commission, and why the Prime Minister has no interest in establishing one.

I don't have time to go through all of the scandals surrounding the Morrison government, but it doesn't take any time at all to talk about what the Prime Minister and the Attorney-General have done about those scandals, and that's because they have done nothing. On Monday, we saw the Premier of Victoria and the federal Leader of the Opposition take swift and decisive action after Sunday night's 60 Minutes program. That's what leadership looks like. When it comes to tackling corruption, that's the sort of leadership that is sorely lacking from this Prime Minister and his government. Why is this government so scared of a national integrity commission? What do they have to hide?

Road Safety

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (13:56): On Thursday 28 May, at approximately 4.40 pm, a Nissan Hatchback was travelling southbound on Alford's Point Road between the Alford's Point overpass and the lights at Menai. Following recent major upgrades to the road, from Alford's Point Bridge all the way to Sutherland, the road is divided by either a concrete barrier or wire ropes, except for that one small section where a line on the road divides it. At the same time, a Toyota Hilux was travelling northbound. The Nissan veered just a few metres across the line painted on the road, running head-on into the Hilux. Tragically, a man, 23, of Bangor and a woman, 23, of Yagoona died at the scene. The driver of the ute, a man, 46, was taken to St George Hospital suffering wrist and rib injuries.

This accident and these deaths could have been avoided. Studies have shown that flexible wire ropes and safety barriers can reduce fatalities on our roads by between 75 and 100 per cent. There are many things that governments can spend money on, but we need to give the absolute highest priority to dividing busy roads with concrete barriers and flexible wire safety ropes because, if we do that, we will save lives.

Employment

Ms O'NEIL (Hotham) (13:58): If you live in a place like Eden-Monaro, a fair go has become a pretty scarce commodity. Under this government, underemployment in this part of Australia has soared. Too many people in towns like Queanbeyan, Bega and Cooma are looking for more hours and more shifts at work and are not able to find them. This community is suffering greatly in the first recession that this country has had for over 30 years, but what I want the parliament to understand is that the people in this community were doing it tough before COVID-19 hit, and new data released last week from the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows us why.

That data shows us that, for women in that community who did not study beyond high school, the underemployment rates are around 30 per cent. If we look at men in that community who chose not to study beyond high school, their underemployment rates have doubled under this coalition government. We know the situation is a lot worse today, but the Prime Minister keeps telling us that he wants Australia to snap back to the way things were before. There are a lot of people in that community asking, 'Snap back to what?' It should not be the case that thousands and thousands of people living in this part of the country are not able to put food on the table, pay the bills and support the businesses around their community like they need to. In Kristy McBain we have a person who's been fighting for her community during its darkest days. We want her in this parliament because jobs are her No. 1 priority for this community.

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

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Child Care

Ms WELLS (Lilley) (14:00): My question is to the Prime Minister. On 2 April the Prime Minister said: 'I don't want a parent to have to choose between feeding their kids and having their kids looked after.' But, according to today's West Australian, that is exactly what is happening. Why is the Prime Minister hurting Australian families by snapping back childcare arrangements in the middle of Australia's first recession in three decades?

Mr TEHAN (Wannon—Minister for Education) (14:00): I thank the member for her question. Once again, on behalf of all the House, I thank those early childhood educators who have provided care throughout the pandemic. Ninety-nine per cent of all service providers have remained open during the pandemic, providing care for essential service workers and also for vulnerable children. The system that we put in place when demand was collapsing...
did exactly what it was designed to do, and that was to make sure that care could be provided during the pandemic. Now, as we've seen demand increase—and that demand has increased to 74 per cent—we are going back to the old childcare system that we put in place nearly two years ago. It is just worth noting—and the facts sometimes get in the way when it comes to the other side—that, at the moment, out-of-pocket expenses are 3.2 per cent below where they were nearly two years ago when we introduced our childcare system.

Ms Rishworth interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Kingston.

Mr TEHAN: The member for Kingston can interject, but that is ABS data.

The SPEAKER: I will just say to the minister: the member for Kingston can't interject. That's the point I just made.

Mr TEHAN: Well, that's a blessing, Mr Speaker. Out-of-pocket expenses are 3.2 per cent below where they were when we introduced the childcare reforms nearly two years ago. Everything that we have done in putting our new package in place has been done by consulting with the sector. We said to the sector: 'What is it that you think we need to do, because, as demand is increasing, you're asking us to be able to allow you to meet that demand.' One of the key things was that they said they wanted to see changes to the activity test, and that is exactly what we have done. They also said that they wanted to make sure that they could continue to provide support for the childcare workers in the sector, and that is exactly what we have done through a $708 million transition fund. What we said to the sector was: 'We want an employment guarantee to come with that.' And that is exactly what they've delivered.

So I thank the sector again for the way in which they have provided care throughout the coronavirus pandemic. If you look across the globe, the sector has been an absolute stand-out, and that is why we want to support it as demand increases. (Time expired)

COVID-19: Economy

Mr ZIMMERMANN (North Sydney) (14:03): My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister update the House on the Morrison government’s JobMaker plan to drive our recovery from the coronavirus pandemic? In particular, how will building an outward-looking, open and sovereign trading economy, including negotiating a United Kingdom free trade agreement, create jobs and economic growth?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:04): I thank the member for North Sydney for his question. The government's JobMaker plan is a plan to ensure that we restore and grow jobs in this country to get Australians back into work so they can restore their fortunes and the many things that have been taken from them through this economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic. A key part of that is the principle that Australia will always remain an open trading economy. Australia will not shrink as a result of this crisis. We will grow again and we will look outward for that growth, as well as inward, as we reclaim those jobs that have been taken from Australians.

We will also ensure that we are part of trusted, tested and secure supply chains. Our performance as a government when it comes to trade speaks for itself. Exporters now have access to 1.7 billion extra consumers since we first came to government in 2013, and 70 per cent of our two-way trade is now covered by export agreements, up from by 26 per cent when we were first elected. Some 8,947 more businesses are exporting under the term of this government. Under the previous government's six years in government, the number of businesses actually fell by over 50. Two hundred and fifty thousand extra jobs were created in the traded sector before the COVID crisis hit and 2019 saw a trade surplus of $67.6 billion, and that was after inheriting a trade deficit from those opposite of some $10 billion. Even in the most recent March quarter, 0.5 per cent was added to the quarterly growth because of net exports, ensuring that the outcome in the March quarter saw that we were one of the best-performing developed economies in the world as we go through the COVID crisis.

The IA-CEPA will come into effect on 5 July. I spoke to President Widodo again this week, and we are very much looking forward to that coming into effect in just a few weeks time. The EU free trade agreement has been a topic of regular engagement between me and the trade minister and our counterparts in many European nations, and we have been engaging with those European nations through the course of the COVID crisis. And, today, the UK free trade agreement negotiations formally opened. I look forward to the trade minister advancing that cause in both countries' interests to ensure we can achieve the significant outcomes that we believe will be available. Only one per cent of their beef imports, seven per cent of their wine imports and one per cent of their horticultural and dairy imports come from Australia. The United Kingdom having been part of the EU for so long, there is now a great opportunity for us to re-engage trade with them. (Time expired)
Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (14:07): My question is to the Prime Minister. How many more Australians are unemployed because of the way in which the Prime Minister designed JobKeeper?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:07): JobKeeper is supporting over three million Australians. Over three million—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr Albanese interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Members on my left!

Mr MORRISON: I hear the interjection from the Leader of the Opposition, saying, 'It should be six.'

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Members on both sides! The Prime Minister will resume his seat. I'm not surprised if people mishear given the level of interjections. The Leader of the Opposition on a point of order?

Mr Albanese: There was no mishearing, Mr Speaker. He was the one who said there'd be six million. That was my interjection, and he knows it.

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister has the call.

Mr MORRISON: The Treasury's initial estimate was six million—

Ms Plibersek interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Sydney is warned.

Mr MORRISON: as was explained at the Senate inquiry. But I'm pleased that only three million had to use that program and not six million. Only the Leader of the Opposition seems disappointed that three million Australians weren't in need of the JobKeeper program. Only the Leader of the Opposition seems to take some sort of pleasure in the fact that that estimate of six million Australians needing the JobKeeper program, a demand-driven program, was not necessary. What I can tell the Leader of the Opposition is this: our government is fighting for jobs, and the Labor Party are fighting each other.

Ms Burney interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Barton will cease interjecting. Members on both sides, the level of noise is far too high. You know what follows if it doesn't correct itself.

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson) (14:09): My question is to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development. Will the Deputy Prime Minister inform the House how the Morrison-McCormack government's JobMaker plan is ensuring our trading relationships are supporting regional Australia and how the JobMaker plan is supporting regional Australia in general as part of the recovery from COVID-19?

Mr McCormack (Riverina—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development and Leader of the Nationals) (14:09): This morning the member for Dawson announced a 10-tonne hammer and crane was going to descend upon the Mackay Northern Access Upgrade Project. That's something that's going to have as big an impact as the member for Dawson himself had when he landed ten years ago in this place. He's the voice of the north. He's the voice of the north and he talks about jobs. He talks about investment. He talks about regional development. He talks about trade. He talks about all of the things that are important for the far north. He talks about all of the things that are important for Mackay, for the Dawson electorate. The member for Dawson talked about how this machine will drive 36 piles ranging from 9½ metres to 12½ metres in length and weighing between six and eight tonnes each into the Goosepond Creek.

We are working to maintain supply and boost jobs not only through this project, through the Mackay Northern Access Upgrade, but, indeed, with everything that we do. That is $96.3 million of investment from the federal Liberal-National government. It is going to create more than 150 jobs, and he knows, as we all do, how it's going to improve the logistics, how it's going to improve the freight supply chain in his area. Commuters in Dawson are being supported through the COVID-19 crisis with every measure that we are putting out into the economy to drive jobs, to address the health situation, yes, but also to support our economy. And there's no greater fighter for the economy of Dawson than the member for Dawson himself.

He knows about how our 14 current free trade agreements are playing such a significant role in providing export opportunities for his local area. He understands that. His local area produces sugar cane—it is sugar city Mackay—beef, seafood, fruit and vegetables. The list could go on and on. And through COVID-19, these
producers—the ones in Dawson, the ones in Far North Queensland, the ones right across the nation—are being supported by our $110 million International Freight Assistance Mechanism. Already 1,380 flights under that mechanism have carried more than 25,000 tonnes of Australian produce to international markets, including some great food from the Mackay region. This is but one way we have ensured the supply chain and we have backed our producers, backed those wonderful Far North Queensland producers, those wonderful farmers.

State border closures are costing jobs. I know Mackay's a long way from the border, but it's costing jobs in Mackay. It's costing jobs in Far North Queensland, and certainly we need to make sure that we get those border closures ended so we can get on with producing more jobs and more trade. *(Time expired)*

**COVID-19: Employment**

Dr CHALMERS (Rankin) *(14:12)*: My question is to the Treasurer. According to the Reserve Bank minutes released yesterday, the unemployment rate has been suppressed because an unusually high number of people have drop out of the labour force. With hundreds of thousands of jobs already lost, hundreds of thousands of people having dropped out of the labour force and hundreds of thousands of people in jobs but working zero hours, why won't the Treasurer backtrack on his plan to snap back support for Australian workers in September?

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—Treasurer) *(14:13)*: I thank the member for Rankin for his first question in two weeks. It's a great pleasure! He's been too busy doing interviews for the *Weekend Australian* profile.

Honourable members interjecting—

Dr Chalmers interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Members on both sides! The member for Rankin, the Treasurer has the call.

Mr FRYDENBERG: The member for Rankin can't blame the media for everything. The reality is we've been through a once-in-a-century pandemic which is unfortunately putting people out of work and sending them on to the jobseeker program, and those who have seen reduced hours are going on to the JobKeeper program. What we did see in relation to jobs yesterday was some ABS weekly payroll jobs data which actually said that the number of total payroll jobs had increased by one per cent through May. This is the start of the recovery that we're seeing as the restrictions are eased as a result of our country's success in flattening the curve. It was particularly important to see payroll jobs worked by females increase by 1.4 per cent through May, compared with 0.4 per cent for males.

The member for Rankin refers to the RBA minutes. I also saw the RBA minutes. Those minutes said that the number of jobs had stabilised or increased a little, suggesting that the total decline in hours worked may be less than had previously been feared.

Dr Chalmers interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Rankin!

Mr FRYDENBERG: There's the member for Rankin, always talking about the economy. He is always talking down the economy, in a desperate and delusional bid for relevance. But there it is: in the Reserve Bank minutes that he seeks to quote, they are talking about how the economy is coming back because of the success that we have had as a nation in flattening the curve.

I've said at this dispatch box before, and so has the Prime Minister, that our success on the health front is allowing us now to get the economy back into the recovery phase. If you look at the OECD's recent report, they said that the Australian economy will grow by around four per cent next year and that the contraction this year will be by no means as severe as it is in other countries. So, I say to the member for Rankin—I don't blame the media—understand the fact that we have gone through a once-in-a-century pandemic. I know that he's after one other job, but at least he should try to do his.

**Donations to Political Parties**

Ms STEGGALL (Warringah) *(14:16)*: My question is to the Prime Minister. State governments have led the way with prohibitions on industry donations and anti-corruption watchdogs. In contrast, at the federal level, we still have no national integrity and anti-corruption watchdog and no prohibition on political donations from the property development, mining, tobacco or gambling industries. This is the virus corrupting our democracy. Rather than introducing legislation to bring federal donation laws up to scratch and protect our democracy, your government has introduced legislation to get around stronger state government laws. Why?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) *(14:17)*: I thank the member for her question. I will ask the Attorney whether he wishes to speak to the integrity commission issues that the member has raised. The Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters is a committee that indeed I served on when I first came into this place and that many members have served on. We review the electoral process and the
elections on each occasion they're conducted, and the matters you make mention of are reviewed. I understand that that is still taking place now, from the last election, and I look forward to seeing the committee's report. The Attorney may want to speak to the issues regarding the integrity commission. But I'd be surprised if those opposite in the Labor Party would be asking questions about integrity today.

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Leader of the House) (14:18): I thank the member for her question. I might just quickly touch on the electoral issues as well. The government has instituted a number of reforms in recent years with respect to donations, many of them relating to foreign donations, and I'm very happy to provide a summary of those to the member individually. Of course, giving the analogy of the state prohibitions that have existed in some states with respect particularly to property developers, there are issues at a federal level with those types of laws which go back to a range of decisions of the High Court on constitutional matters, going back to the ACTV decision and the implied freedom of political communications. So those comparisons, if I might say so respectfully, aren't perfect comparisons.

With respect to the integrity commission, as the member is aware—and we've discussed the model that the government has for an integrity commission, and I know that the member prefers some features of some other models to those that the government is proposing—there's been serious design attention to that integrity commission body. We have allocated $106.7 million of new money to the integrity commission over the forward estimates. That excludes the $40.7 million of existing funding for ACLEI. By comparison, members opposite promised $58.7 million. So, the commitment we've given to that integrity commission is almost $89 million greater. Obviously there have been other priorities for the government whilst, as the opposition have noted, hundreds of thousands of Australians have, very sadly, lost jobs or are in zero hours now because of the COVID pandemic. But we are now revisiting the issue of the integrity commission, and our legislation, and no doubt you and I will have further conversations on that.

Trade

Mr HASTIE (Canning) (14:19): My question is to the Treasurer: Will the Treasurer inform the House how Australia's record run of trade surpluses is helping to hasten our recovery by expanding new markets and opportunities, and is the Treasurer aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—Treasurer) (14:19): I thank the member for Canning for his question and acknowledge his chairmanship of the intelligence committee. He, unlike other members of that committee, has informed me that he doesn't have any secret hidden cameras in his office. But he, like members on this side of the House, are very proud of the fact that under the coalition we have increased the percentage of free trade agreements covering two-way trade from 26 per cent to 70 per cent, and the ambition is to get to 90 per cent by 2022. We have entered into free trade agreements with China, with Japan, with Korea, with Indonesia, with Peru, with Hong Kong, and there's the Trans-Pacific Partnership. This has helped create the first current account surpluses in more than 40 years. In the March quarter, the current account surplus was $8.4 billion, a record amount, and as a percentage of GDP it was the highest since June 1973.

Trade and free trade create jobs. One in five Australian jobs are related to trade. In the last five years, more than 240,000 trade related jobs have been created. Our businesses who are exporting are likely to employ 23 per cent more people and to be 13 per cent more productive and to have wages that are 11 per cent higher. And this has created jobs right across the country in businesses in every electorate of this country—like in Canning, where they have three out of the nation's six alumina refineries, in Boddington, in Wagerup and in Pinjarra. Australia is the world's largest alumina exporter, and it's those refineries that help to create $10 billion of export revenue each year.

I was asked about any alternative approaches. We know when the Labor Party were in government, when it came to trade, their position was characterised by indecision and inaction. We didn't see movement on the free trade agreement with China. We didn't see it with Japan. We didn't see it with Korea. What was their strategy when it came to trade? Well, they went to the Labor handbook and opened up chapter 1. What was it? Higher taxes—a carbon tax and a mining tax. When it came to the mining tax, what did the member for Rankin say? He said, 'The fruits of which are yet to be understood'. That's in his book. Only the coalition can be trusted to create more jobs. (Time expired)

Hospitals

Ms PAYNE (Canberra) (14:23): My question is to the Prime Minister. Women from Yass Valley are currently forced to travel an hour to Canberra or Goulburn to give birth. As a result, a number of women have been forced to give birth on the side of the Barton Highway. Does the Prime Minister agree that that is unacceptable?
Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:23): Well, I'm pleased to let the member know that's why we've committed $150 million to upgrade the Barton Highway, which includes the duplication of the highway from the ACT border towards Murrumbateman—

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The members on my left! The Prime Minister will pause for a second. The Prime Minister has the call.

Mr Conroy interjecting—

Mr Clare interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Shortland is warned. The member for Blaxland will cease interjecting.

Dr Chalmers interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Rankin is now warned for incessant interjecting. The Prime Minister has the call.

Mr MORRISON: I was asked about the Barton Highway. I was also asked about health, and I'll come to both matters. The commitment will improve safety and reduce travel times for all motorists on that busy stretch from Yass to Canberra.

When it comes to issues regarding hospitals, under the new hospitals agreement we have signed with the New South Wales government, there'll be some $40 billion provided over the next five years, delivering an additional $9.3 billion for funding in that hospital sector. Now, specifically, I also note that the Southern NSW Local Health District received $107.8 million in community activity-based funding for public hospital services in 2018-19. And that is an increase of 64.5 million—or 149 per cent—on what we inherited back in 2012-13. So this government has increased funding for hospital services in that area, and in New South Wales, and across the country, to ensure that we can provide the support, whether it is for maternity services or other important hospital services all around the country. We're fighting for the funding to ensure that it can continue to be provided, whether it's in Eden-Monaro or anywhere else; the Labor Party, as I said before, are only fighting each other.

Trade with the United Kingdom

Ms HAMMOND (Curtin) (14:25): My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment. Would the minister please update the House on how the Morrison government is progressing its jobs and economic growth agenda by pursuing a United Kingdom free trade agreement?

Mr TEHAN (Wannon—Minister for Education) (14:26): Can I thank the member for her question and acknowledge her passion, in particular when it comes to international higher education and the contribution that it makes in creating 250,000 jobs in this nation. Today we've received some wonderful news. We are going to formally launch a free trade agreement with the United Kingdom, our seventh-largest trading partner. The great news about this is that—for those who can remember dating back to 1973, and, I must confess, I was a young boy growing up on a family farm—when the UK entered the European Economic Community, it had a devastating impact on our farming community. What we saw were lower quotas and higher tariffs when it came to beef, when it came to dairy, when it came to lamb and when it came to wool. And it meant, for our farmers, some very difficult times. What they learnt was that they had to diversify, and they have diversified and diversified successfully. But what this gives us is the opportunity to right that wrong. Many of them felt harmed by what the United Kingdom did in those times. And we can now fix this, because now consumers in the UK, rather than having to look at a French chop—and they're good!—will now be able to look again at an Australian chop. They won't have the choice of a Belgian steak; they'll also have a choice of a good Australian Hereford or Angus steak. And this is what we're going to be able to achieve through this FTA.

We're going to be able to do other things as well. We're going to be able to build on our services exports, and we've already got a very strong services export relationship with the United Kingdom, but that will continue to grow and it will continue to provide jobs for our local communities. And one such example of that which we've already seen is British based AstraZeneca's $200 million investment to expand manufacturing in Sydney, creating 250 jobs, resulting in a total export value of $4.4 billion over the next five years. This government wants to create an open trading environment globally, because we know that we have the competitive advantage through our economy to be able to capitalise on that and to be able to create jobs. And this free trade agreement with the United Kingdom, coupled with our endeavours to have a free trade agreement with the European Union, will once again diversify our export markets. They'll reach over 70 per cent if we can successfully land these FTAs and create more jobs in the Australian community.
Eden-Monaro Electorate: Health

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (14:29): My question is to the minister for regional health: According to the most recent public data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, one in eight people in the Eden-Monaro area skip Medicare services because they can't afford them. Can the minister provide the House with any more recent data? And won't cutting bulk-billing incentives in Queanbeyan make the situation even worse?

Mr COULTON (Parkes—Minister for Regional Health, Regional Communications and Local Government) (14:29): I thank the shadow minister for his question. There's been no cut to bulk-billing services in Queanbeyan. I get frustrated that the member opposite wants to come in here and scare the people of Eden-Monaro. I had a bit of a look at the Riverside Medical Centre this afternoon. If the minister wanted to see a doctor in Queanbeyan, he might get the 2.40, the 2.50, the 3.20 or the 3.40. The people of Queanbeyan get the bulk-billing incentive like everyone else in Australia does. He might be interested to know that in other parts of Eden-Monaro they actually get the rural bulk billing.

There's a scare campaign coming up. I can tell you that there have been some changes to the geographic eligibility for the Modified Monash Model. The Labor Party was so incensed about these changes in October last year that they supported them. The changes didn't get rushed through in the middle of the night. These changes to the rural bulk-billing eligibility program were laid on the table for 15 days. This side of the House has a rural program worth $550 million, and the Labor Party was so incensed when it was introduced in May 2018 that the then shadow minister, the member for Ballarat, said:

... there are many measures in the Budget that Labor has welcomed. These include:

• a new Rural Health Strategy

That was on 15 May 2018.

This side of the House is not indulging in scare campaigns. We have a program in place to train doctors to have a broader range of skills—that is, GPs with obstetrics skills, GPs with emergency training and GPs with psychological training for places like Yass. In Yass, I might add, the Labor government in New South Wales removed maternity services in 2004. The program is to have staff training junior doctors to have a broader range of skills so they are suitable to go and work in regional areas.

We are trying to change the dynamic and the message so that rural Australia is a place to go and have a meaningful career in medicine. Those opposite continue to scare people right across Australia. They were doing it here about a month ago, talking about cuts to bulk-billing that did not happen. As a matter of fact, during COVID-19 we doubled the bulk-billing incentive rate. We introduced telehealth in a very short time so that people in regional Australia could be in touch with their doctors. On this side of the House, we support—(Time expired)

Agriculture Industry

Mr CONAGHAN (Cowper) (14:32): My question is to the Minister for Agriculture, Drought, and Emergency Management. Will the minister update the House on what action the Morrison-McCormack government is taking to expand trade opportunities for our agriculture sector?

Mr LITTLEPROUD (Maranoa—Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management and Deputy Leader of the National Party) (14:33): I thank the member for Cowper for his question and acknowledge the rich history the Cowper electorate has in the agriculture sector in production and export. The farmers of Cowper understand better than anyone the importance of trade. They understand that we're a nation of 25 million people and we produce enough food for 75 million people. We need to engage with the world. We need to trade with the world. The farmers appreciate and acknowledge the work that this government has done over many years in securing free trade agreements with China, Japan, Korea, Peru, Hong Kong and Indonesia—that little $13.2 trillion marketplace that those opposite said was too hard to crack, the TPP-11. Indonesia comes in on 5 July, and tonight we start our negotiations with the UK.

This morning I was fortunate enough to catch up with the high commissioner. We talked about not only the traditional opportunities in agriculture but also the new opportunities in trade and agriculture—that is, the research and development of technology, allowing the UK to invest in the best agricultural minds of the world right here in Australia to help both production systems and to enrich the production systems at an agriculture product level and at a human capital level. That's why we continue to make sure that we've been giving our producers the opportunity to spread their risk. We've done that in other markets by investing in 21 agriculture counsellors who work in embassies and high commissions around the world. They work at a government-to-government level, trying to reduce technical barriers and get more market access. These can sometimes be the real barriers for our producers to access markets and have a more streamlined export system. We will continue to look at streamlining
The federal government is committing $850 million in biosecurity measures. Today, I was proud to introduce a bill that strengthens the message to those international visitors who we welcome and to Australian citizens who travel around the world and come back that we are looking to increase the penalties regarding passenger declaration cards from $420 to $2,520, in today's value, to make sure we continue to send that strong message around biosecurity. This complements the measure that we put in place before the election, where, for the most serious biosecurity breaches, we gave our biosecurity officers the opportunity to cancel the visas on the spot—to send them home and not allow them to reapply for a visa for up to three years. This shows the importance of trade to the agricultural sector and to regional Australia. We're not just protecting but we're also enhancing agricultural trade and regional Australia.

Rural and Regional Health Services

Mr Bowen (McMahon) (14:36): My question is to the Minister for Regional Health, Regional Communications and Local Government. The Queanbeyan GP Super Clinic has had to increase fees, due, in part, 'to the removal of Queanbeyan from the rural and regional classification for bulk-billing incentives by the Commonwealth government'. Does the minister accept this cut is hurting Queanbeyan?

Mr Coulton (Parkes—Minister for Regional Health, Regional Communications and Local Government) (14:36): I thank the shadow minister. I can say that in the last round of changes to the Modified Monash Model Queanbeyan was MM 1. It is still MM 1. There have been no changes to Queanbeyan, and I dispute the quote the member has got. I point to the Riverside Medical Centre in Queanbeyan, where this afternoon there is an appointment every 10 minutes—in a super clinic that does receive the bulk-billing incentive. There have been no changes to the MM model in Queanbeyan, and it would be better if the shadow minister stopped trying to scare the people of Queanbeyan.

The SPEAKER: The member for McMahon, seeking to table a document?

Mr Bowen: I am, Mr Speaker. I seek leave to table the statement by the Queanbeyan GP Superclinic announcing a fee increase due 'to the removal of Queanbeyan from the rural and regional classification for bulk-billing incentives by the Commonwealth government'.

Leave not granted.

National Security

Ms Bell (Moncrieff) (14:37): My question is to the Attorney-General. Will the Attorney inform the House what Commonwealth laws exist in relation to surveillance devices? Are there any recent events that raise questions about these laws in relation to members of parliament? Is the Attorney aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr Porter (Pearce—Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Leader of the House) (14:38): I thank the member for her question, and it is a very good question. At a federal level, there are very strict rules about the use and authorised use of surveillance devices which, essentially, restrict that use to law enforcement agencies. As the member is aware, recently we also passed very important laws to counter the influence of or interference with members of parliament. Frankly, I think that everyone in this parliament would agree that the idea that a 'non-law-enforcement device', if you like, appeared to have been installed in the office of any member of this parliament is a serious concern. I think it's a matter also of some obviousness that the level of concern we might have, and whether that matter might require further inquiry, would turn very substantially on whether the member in question had themselves authorised or otherwise had knowledge of the installation of that device. That seems to be a very obvious and first question.

In fact, so obvious is that question that that obvious proposition was put to the opposition leader this morning by Neil Mitchell who said: 'He's a member of your backbench. He's right in the middle of this, and you haven't even spoken to him!' The answer was, 'Well, I haven't, because it's very clear that I wasn't aware of the member's office's involvement until much later on.'

The SPEAKER: The Attorney-General will resume his seat. The member for Sydney has already been warned. The Manager of Opposition Business.

Mr Burke: On a point of order, I didn't rise to object to the question because the question was framed in the general. The Attorney-General now is going to specific matters that are under investigation. And, of all the portfolios in this House—

Honourable members interjecting—
The SPEAKER: The member for Fisher is warned. Manager of Opposition Business, could you just go back a sentence because I didn't hear that, with the interjections from my right.

Mr Burke: Now that the Attorney-General has gone to the specific, he's referring to a situation which is under investigation by authorities. And, of all the portfolios, the Attorney-General is the one that ought not be doing that. There are serious rules and references in Practice to us avoiding reference where it could affect an investigation.

Mr Porter interjecting—

Mr Burke: He is objecting. I know that there's a broad principle in favour of debate occurring, but the argument that the Attorney-General is going to is to actually argue that members should be interfering and taking a role with respect to the investigation.

The SPEAKER: I'm listening very carefully to the Attorney. The Manager of Opposition Business makes a reasonable point, which is why I'm listening very carefully. The Practice makes clear that debate shouldn't be curtailed, and there are a number of principles where that arises. When it comes to sub judice, there really is a staged approach, and I've been through this a number of times. Essentially, matters become serious if charges are laid or a jury has been appointed, and the Practice makes that very clear. So, whilst I'm listening very carefully to the Attorney-General, I think, for me to pull him up on what he said, would set new precedent or to try and pull him up because of what he might say would set new precedent, so I'm just going to allow him to continue.

Mr PORTER: Thank you, Mr Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition didn't ask the obvious question because he didn't understand until much later on after—

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the House will resume his seat. The Leader of the Opposition on a point of order.

Mr Albanese: It is further to the point of order of the Manager of Opposition Business, and it goes to the comments of the Attorney-General including the correct quote from me. The question that I was asked this morning went to whether I had made inquiries. The comment that he used indicated that—and if he looks further at the transcript he will see that I made the point—on Sunday night before the Premier of Victoria had initiated the police and IBAC inquiry, I was not aware that it was a member of parliament's office. I had no idea where that office was—

The SPEAKER: I will ask the Leader of the Opposition to wind up his—

Mr Albanese: Once IBAC—

The SPEAKER: I'm giving the Leader of the Opposition a lot of latitude, but this is really an indulgence rather than a point of order. What I really need to do is hear from the Attorney-General and, if members feel they've been misrepresented, there's an opportunity for them to deal with that at the end. I've given latitude, given the nature of the question and the answer, but I really do need to hear from the Attorney.

Mr PORTER: That's precisely the point, because the Leader of the Opposition said, 'I didn't recognise the office.' So the Leader of the Opposition must be the only keen political observer in Australia who missed both the map of the federal division of Holt and missed the back of the election poster with the member's name on it in the relevant footage. And everyone in his office must have missed those. That does sound quite remarkable, don't you think, members?

The next question was asked of the opposition leader was: if he hadn't satisfied himself that the recording was authorised or otherwise known to the member, given the member's very sensitive position on the intelligence committee and given that he had had his office bugged, would the opposition leader call in the Federal Police? And the opposition leader said, 'Well, they make their own decisions.' That has always been the government's view, but that is a remarkable turnaround in policy of the members opposite, because, of course, the Leader of the Opposition had at his disposal the greatest serial referrer to the AFP of these types of matters in the history of modern politics, the shadow Attorney-General, the member for Isaacs. This is the only one he doesn't seem to want to refer, which is quite strange. As to the prolific nature of his referring, the journalist Annika Smethurst, no less, wrote in her book:

… despite screaming for leniency when my house was raided. Shadow Attorney General Mark Dreyfus wrote to then-Prime Minister Malcom Turnbull encouraging him to call in the police.

A simple question and answer, as a leader of your party, with your backbencher could clear this up. *(Time expired)*


**Donations to Political Parties**

Mr BUTLER (Hindmarsh—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (14:45): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to evidence to the Independent Commission Against Corruption that the Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction was involved in laundering illegal donations through the Liberal Party front organisation known as the Free Enterprise Foundation. What action has the Prime Minister taken to investigate the minister's conduct?

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the House.

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Leader of the House) (14:45): A very big turnaround from their views previously! But this clearly is a matter outside the ministerial responsibilities of the Prime Minister. It requires knowledge of donations, which is not inside the Prime Minister's responsibilities.

The SPEAKER: I just say to the Leader of the House: there is a way that question could have been framed that would have made it closer to, if not in, order. But I think that, as it's—

Mr Burke interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Alright then. That'll be quicker. Let's go to the member for Bass.

**Child Abuse**

Mrs ARCHER (Bass) (14:46): My question is to the Minister for Home Affairs. Will the minister update the House on recent steps the Morrison government has taken in the fight to protect Australian children from exploitation and abuse? How will this support the efforts of law enforcement authorities? Is the minister aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr DUTTON (Dickson—Minister for Home Affairs) (14:46): I thank the honourable member for her question and, in doing so, I acknowledge that she is a survivor of child sexual abuse and an advocate on behalf of other people, other adults who faced this terrible injustice as a child. She's an incredibly brave woman, and I pay tribute to Bridget.

On behalf of all victims of child abuse and, in fact, all those investigators who do that very difficult job of working in this area of police investigation, the government has, for the last three years, fought to get legislation through the Senate to make sure that we could have meaningful jail terms for people who had committed these heinous crimes against children. We have fought tooth and nail against the Labor Party and the Greens, but eventually we have got this legislation in place, which will make a big difference to the victims and to the police investigators. It will give more meaning to the efforts and the sacrifice that those police investigators make. The work that they do with families and survivors is quite remarkable and is a great tribute to their professionalism.

We recognise that the numbers are quite significant—unbelievably significant—and that this is a very difficult topic to talk about as a country, but, as I've said to the House before, it's a topic that we must discuss. We can't allow it not to be aired in this parliament or in lounge rooms across the country, because parents need to speak to their children. We need to have a greater awareness and children need to have a greater ability to speak up to their parents or to a person of responsibility in their community.

I want to give you one example. In 2012, the Crown had a case against an individual named Van Der Zyden. This offender sexually abused three young boys aged between 11 and 13. He was convicted of eight counts of sexual conduct involving a child under 16 and seven counts of sexual intercourse with a child under 16. He was sentenced to three years and six months imprisonment, with a nonparole period, unbelievably, of just 21 months. The Attorney-General and I, along with the Prime Minister and others, have been absolutely determined to introduce this law, and I thank all of my colleagues for their support, because, in this case, it would have meant that the offender would have been subject to a mandatory minimum penalty of six years imprisonment and up to a maximum of 25 years for each incident of sexual intercourse with a child outside Australia.

We know that many of these children don't recover—that the mental health issues continue throughout their life. That is why we do need to put in place a deterrent. It's why the government was absolutely determined to act on behalf of these children and also the investigators. I commend the Prime Minister and everybody involved in our leadership team for making sure that this became a reality.

**Aged Care**

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (14:50): My question is to the Prime Minister. In December 2017 there were more than 100,000 older Australians waiting for the home-care package for which they had been approved. Two years later, more than 100,000 older Australians were still waiting. Why?
Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:50): In both my time as Treasurer and my time as Prime Minister, on every single occasion we have increased the funding available for in-home aged-care places. We have put a priority on that in budget after budget, putting important resources into it as a matter of priority. One of my first acts as Prime Minister was to initiate the royal commission into aged care to address these very issues.

We will continue to put more funding into aged care and in particular into in-home aged-care places at every opportunity we have, which has been my practice and will continue to be my practice. Earlier this week I spoke to the CEDA forum and I talked about our commitment to guarantee the essential services Australians rely on. That related not just to the record funding agreements we have put in place with the states and territories on hospitals and on schools; I went further to specifically say that we would be continuing to address the challenges in the areas of aged care, in-home aged care and disability care.

And the only way you can provide support for those essential services is if you properly manage the economy. That's how you fund these services. You do not fund them through higher taxes; you fund them by ensuring that Australia re-emerges from the COVID-19 crisis with a stronger economy that gets people back into work. That's how you lift the revenues and, for those older Australians who are looking to have those in-home aged-care places, that's how you can pay for them.

Those opposite do not have a plan for how they would grow the economy. They don't have one. That's why they cannot look Australians in the eye, whether in Queanbeyan or anywhere else, and tell them that they can fund services, because they do not have a plan as to how they can grow the economy through this crisis and on the other side to ensure that our revenues can be restored and that we can commit to these services.

Mr Albanese interjecting—

Mr MORRISON: The Leader of the Opposition interjects and talks about how the economy has shrunk. He must be the only person in this place who is unaware that we've gone into recession as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. The Leader of the Opposition is, I would hope, the only one in this place who would seek to use the COVID-19 crisis to make a cheap political point in this place. He must be the only one.

But we will be able to commit the funding that is needed in disability care, in aged care, in in-home care, in hospitals and in education services, because our government has been able to guarantee these essential services because of our ability to manage budgets and our ability to ensure that we have a plan—the JobMaker plan—to get Australians back into work and to get the economy back on the right track, so we can commit to those important services. (Time expired)

JobMaker

Mrs McINTOSH (Lindsay) (14:53): My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business. Will the minister please update the House on how the Morrison government's JobMaker plan is backing Australian small businesses to access export markets and grow their businesses to create jobs and help drive the post-coronavirus economic recovery?

Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson—Minister for Industry, Science and Technology) (14:54): I thank the member for her question, and I thank her for the work she has been doing in Western Sydney supporting many businesses, especially advanced manufacturing businesses, in her electorate in Lindsay. I'm sure everyone in this House would agree that Australia has a very well-earned reputation for high-quality products that are very highly valued both here and around the world. Many, many of our businesses are among the most productive and innovative in the world.

Our small and medium businesses benefit from the fact that we are a very strong and a very proud trading nation and that we have had a very healthy balance of trade, even over the last few very critical months. That's why a critical part of our JobMaker plan is backing our export businesses so that they can take advantage of our free trade agreements. During the COVID-19 pandemic, I have been so thrilled by the level of support that has been given to Australian businesses and to Australian Made, but it is clear that, as a small nation with a population of about 25 million people, the export markets are very important to us. If we want our small businesses to grow, if we want our medium enterprises to grow, it's very important that we continue to trade and that we continue to support those businesses to develop the export markets that they need.

So we have delivered on our promise to boost funding to further promote the Australian Made logo in overseas markets and to back our Aussie exports. It's very clear that the coalition understand the value of promoting Australian businesses, including through the very successful Export Market Development Grants scheme. We've restored the funding that was taken out of that program. We increased it with an extra $60 million in last year's budget and, importantly, we have increased it further again by $49.8 million as part of our response to COVID-19.
Wednesday, 17 June 2020

Our support to small and medium businesses, including our JobKeeper payment, has kept many businesses afloat during this pandemic, but it is very important that we do more than keep our businesses afloat. We need our businesses to do more than stay afloat; we need them to keep swimming and we need them to get started to make sure that we are getting all of the benefits that we can into our economy so that we can grow jobs and grow our economy. Being a trading nation, we are very well placed now to support our businesses as they come through the COVID pandemic.

Pensions and Benefits

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong) (14:57): My question is to the Prime Minister. Given that many debts to the Commonwealth accrue interest, will his government apply the same principle and refund victims of the Prime Minister's illegal robodebt scheme in full, including interest?

Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme and Minister for Government Services ) (14:57): What I find ironic is that, in the last question about the rorts and corruption in Victoria, those opposite were claiming, 'It's before the courts; we can't possibly speak about it.' We know this is before the courts, but they have the hypocrisy to step up about it. This is extraordinary. Those opposite don't want to talk about what's been happening in Victoria over the last week, hiding behind sub judice, yet they come forward knowing full well this is before the courts, with hearings—

Ms Burney interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The minister will resume his seat. The member for Barton will cease interjecting. The member for Maribyrnong on a point of order?

Mr Shorten: It's a point of order on relevance, Mr Speaker. It's a very straightforward question: when Australians owe the Commonwealth money, they can be charged interest; when the Commonwealth owes hundreds of thousands of robodebt victims money, will they pay interest?

The SPEAKER: I'll just say in ruling on that point of order—and I've made this point before—the minister is entitled to a preamble, as robust as that was. He's a much shorter way into the answer than yesterday. He's not even 30 seconds in. He knows it was a very specific question and he's had his preamble.

Mr ROBERT: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I've got a point of order on hypocrisy and those opposite are covered in it!

COVID-19: Trade

Mr DRUM (Nicholls—Chief Nationals Whip) (14:59): My question is to the Minister assisting the Minister for Trade and Investment. Will the minister update the House on how the Morrison-McCormack government has acted to ensure Australian export opportunities are maintained through the coronavirus pandemic so that businesses can keep selling their products as well as keeping Australians in jobs?

Mr GEE (Calare—Minister Assisting the Minister for Trade and Investment and Minister for Decentralisation and Regional Education) (15:00): On this side of the House we know that trade is absolutely critical to the prosperity of Australia and country communities around our nation. And I thank the member for Nicholls for his question, because he knows only too well the importance of growing export opportunities for his local farmers and local producers, particularly in the Goulburn Valley through iconic local firms such as SPC Ardmona. We on this side of the House know that international trade generates no less than one in five jobs in Australia and that over the last five years alone there have been over 240,000 trade-related jobs created in this country. And so we know and we are acutely aware of the importance of foreign markets for our primary producers and our local businesses because, by value—and here are some stats for you, Member for Nicholls—we are the world's largest exporter of wool, the second-largest exporter of beef, and the fourth-largest exporter of sugar, wine and cotton.

Mr Christensen interjecting—

Mr GEE: And the member for Dawson loves the sugar references. International trade supports commodity prices—so, during this devastating drought when farmers have had to sell their stock, they haven't had to sell it for a song. Our network of free trade agreements is absolutely crucial to our national success, and we've already delivered in spades through FTAs with key partners such as Japan, Hong Kong, South Korea and China, and also with partners such as Vietnam and Canada through the Trans-Pacific Partnership. I'm delighted that a host of agricultural producers will reap the benefits of the Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, which will enter into force on 5 July. Yes, under that agreement, 99 per cent of Australian goods will enter Indonesia tariff-free or under very preferential agreements. And our agricultural producers are some of the biggest winners, so, for example, in my electorate of Calare, the cherry producers Bernard and Fiona Hall will be able to start selling their cherries into Indonesia tariff-free from day one of that agreement being implemented. And our beef exporters will enjoy enhanced access to the Indonesian market. So, for example, in the member for
Nicholls's electorate, Ralphs Meats will be able to sell their high-quality beef from the Goulburn Valley right into Indonesia. So it's a big win for country Australia, but the coalition won't be resting on our laurels. We're moving on free-trade negotiations with the United Kingdom and we are backing our free trade agreements, backing our farmers, backing our businesses and backing our country communities to enjoy jobs, opportunities and prosperity.

(Time expired)

Sheean, Ordinary Seaman Edward (Teddy)

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (15:03): My question is addressed to the Prime Minister, and I ask: does the Prime Minister agree that it is entirely inappropriate for polling to be done in Tasmania on whether Teddy Sheean should receive a Victoria Cross?

The SPEAKER: Just before I call the Prime Minister—yes, I think that question is just in order. The Prime Minister has the call.

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (15:03): I'm unaware of what the Leader of the Opposition is referring to. So this is not something that I have any knowledge of. I'll tell you who I'll be listening to, Mr Speaker, on this on this matter, and this matter alone, and that is the expert panel that I have appointed to address the very specific issue regarding the matter of the VC for Teddy Sheean, a very brave Australian. But there are other voices that have spoken on this matter. Les Carlyon has said:

If Australia were to grant VCs as the result of a government acting on recommendations to this inquiry, we would have introduced a two-tiered system. … In other words there would be a VC and a VC with an asterisk …

John Howard has said that to order honours for past deeds is an 'inherently hazardous exercise'. Retired Brigadier Chris Roberts, a respected military historian, has said retrospective awards would have 'the potential to cheapen the VC' and would 'have the potential to bring a degree of ridicule on retrospective awards'. The secretary of the Victoria Cross and George Cross Association in London said 'to make an award of the Victoria Cross of Australia to someone who performed an action which was not recognised by the award of the Victoria Cross at the time' was 'risking lowering the status of the VC for Australia below that of the Victoria Cross.' What all that means is that, if you're going to make a decision on these matters, you take it very seriously and you consider it all very seriously, and that is exactly what I've done. The panel approach that I've put in place has been done after I have consulted with the Chief of the Defence Force, who was very supportive of the panel approach put in. I also consulted the Governor-General, informing these views.

I want to ensure that any recommendation I might make to Her Majesty would be done on a very considered basis. I am open-minded as to the views of the panel that would be put to the government to make a further consideration. I have no interest in this matter becoming a matter of political debate for partisan purposes. I understand the popularity of this point which the Leader of the Opposition has sought to engage in. I will not engage in such crass popularity when it comes to the integrity of the VC. I know my responsibilities on this matter and I will exercise them very carefully.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition on a point of order?

Mr Albanese: The question was very specific. It just invited the Prime Minister to oppose polling, to oppose populism, on this. That was the point of the question. If he can't do that, he should sit down.

The SPEAKER: No, I just say to the Leader of the Opposition that, at the very beginning of the Prime Minister's answer, he addressed that issue. He answered the question. The Prime Minister has concluded his answer.

JobMaker

Mr THOMPSON (Herbert) (15:06): My question is to the Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction. Will the minister please outline to the House how the Morrison government's trade and energy strategy under the JobMaker plan is supporting jobs by creating new markets for Australian energy exports?

Mr TAYLOR (Hume—Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction) (15:07): I thank the member for Herbert for his question. He knows that we're focused on opportunities for exporters who can create jobs and drive investment as we come out of COVID-19, including in places like Townsville in his electorate. He also knows that central to this is the need for affordable, reliable energy using a balance of different fuel sources—old technologies and new technologies—to provide that affordable, reliable energy.

I had the chance not so long ago to spend time with the workers on the shop floor of the Glencore refinery in his electorate. They know how important exports are, the role they play in our economy and the economy up around Townsville and how important affordable, reliable energy is for them. The good news for those workers and for workers right across Australia is that we have now seen 10 consecutive months of wholesale price reductions, starting even before COVID-19 hit. Indeed, in February this year, before COVID-19 struck, we'd seen
wholese electricity prices across the National Electricity Market down to close to half of where they were just a year before. This means manufacturers, farmers and other users of energy are in a much stronger position to build their export businesses. Along with that, it's no surprise that Australia is now the biggest LNG exporter in the world. What an extraordinary achievement. The people of Queensland and other states, such as Western Australia, who are playing a role in that know how important those jobs and those industries are to them.

But on top of that mixing of the old with the new we see enormous opportunities in new technologies in fuel sources like hydrogen. As the Chief Scientist has told us, hydrogen offers us the opportunity to create an industry with 8,000 jobs and about $11 billion worth of revenues. We've already invested $500 million into our National Hydrogen Strategy, including $300 million into the new Advancing Hydrogen Fund. It's crucial that as part of that we form partnerships, as we are doing, with our customer countries like Japan and South Korea, who see enormous potential in working with Australia not just by buying our current exports like coal and gas but by buying new exports like hydrogen and adjacent exports like ammonia. Not just Asian but also European countries are interested in this. Only today we've seen Germany signalling their interest in importing hydrogen, announcing 2 billion euros to develop international partnerships. We will certainly be talking to them about that. We're focused on affordable, reliable energy to drive exports and jobs as we come out of COVID-19.

Aged Care

Ms COLLINS (Franklin) (15:10): My question is to the Minister for Health. Can the minister confirm that as at 31 December 2019 more than 1,130 older Australians were waiting for the approved home-care package in the region that covers Eden-Monaro?

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Cabinet) (15:10): I'll obviously check the record on the specific area in question. I can confirm that across Australia since 2012 until now we have seen an increase from 60,000 to a projected 158,000 home-care packages. That is a more than doubling, from 60,000 to 158,000.

In the last year, what we have seen is an increase of almost 40,000 packages. This has all occurred at a time where we've had over $2 billion of additional funding on the watch of the Prime Minister and the Treasurer go into home-care packages. So, just to repeat, we have gone from 60,000 to a projected 158,000 over the course of the current forward estimates. But there is a very interesting point here in making this comparison. Whilst we on this side have contributed over $2 billion for additional home-care packages, there was an opportunity for the alternative government to set out how much they would put in at the last budget and, despite over $380 billion of taxes, they had zero in their budget for home-care packages. So as an exemplar of crocodile tears this is hard to beat. We put in over $2 billion. They claim there's an issue and they put in nothing.

JobMaker

Mr RAMSEY (Grey—Government Whip) (15:12): My question is to the Minister for Resources, Water and Northern Australia. Will the minister please outline to the House how the Morrison government's JobMaker plan is supporting our resource export markets and how this approach is working to secure new jobs? Importantly, is the minister aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr PITT (Hinkler—Minister for Resources, Water and Northern Australia) (15:12): I thank the honourable member. As we all know, the honourable member is very public in his support of the resources sector. The government is committed to the sector. We are committed to the resources sector because the sector continues to deliver for Australia tonne after tonne, job after job. The resources sector is helping us through this very difficult period. They are on track to deliver almost $300 billion worth of GDP to the Australian economy—$300 billion!

The industry in this period, in the first three months of this year, created over 3,000 new jobs. That is a fantastic effort. The copper and gold sector continues to grow. Places like OZ Minerals at Carrapateena in the member's electorate produced its first copper concentrate in December of 2019. We remain committed to the resources sector, to the projects that it brings, to the jobs that it brings, because it's a jobs pipeline, a jobs pipeline of projects for Australia. Places like BHP's Olympic Dam will continue to provide jobs into the future. We're driving development through critical minerals in the Critical Minerals Facilitation Office. We continue to work with our major trading partners: India, South Korea, Japan, the US, China. All of these trading arrangements are good for this nation. They are good for jobs and good for the economy.

But I'm asked about alternatives. I speak very often with the member for Hunter, my shadow counterpart, as you'd expect. He's always been very supportive in private, I have to say, of the resources sector. Imagine my surprise when on the weekend I read in The Sauce, which is very informative, by Annika Smethurst, that there's a group of pro-coal Labor MPs—they call themselves the Otis group—and they have defied the opposition leader, Anthony Albanese, holding a secret meeting in Canberra. It's a secret faction. Shadow ministers: there are some
who support the coal sector publicly, but it's not those opposite. They've had to take it underground. I just find this incredible. Where is the public support for what is one of the greatest sectors in this country?

We will continue to support the resources sector, because on this side we understand what it takes to deliver jobs for this country and for continued growth. We will continue to grow it, to mine it and to make it. We will continue to provide opportunities, because on this side we are the job makers. Those opposite are job takers! They want to take away from the resources sector the opportunity for Australia's youth to have more jobs, more opportunities and more apprenticeships.

I'll say to those opposite again: be public in your support of the resources sector. It is critical to the Australian economy and long may it be so!

**Mr Morrison:** On that important note, Mr Speaker, I ask that further questions be placed on the Notice Paper.

**DOCUMENTS**

**Presentation**

**Mr PORTER** (Pearce—Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Leader of the House) (15:15): A document is 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.

**QUESTIONS TO THE SPEAKER**

**Parliament**

**Mr BOWEN** (McMahon) (15:16): Mr Speaker, my question to you refers to the resolution of the House adopted on 27 August, 1997, relating to the right of persons who have been referred to in the House, where that person has had their reputation adversely impacted. As you are aware, Mr Speaker, that resolution allows for those persons who have been attacked in parliament to have their right of reply recorded in the parliamentary record, in certain circumstances.

By way of context, earlier today the Minister of Health, using parliamentary privilege and speaking on the Therapeutic Goods Amendment (2020 Measures No. 1) Bill 2020, launched an attack on the campaign to have the migraine drug Emgality listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, and accused that campaign of being an 'astroturf' campaign—his words. 'Astroturfing' refers to the practice of vested interests funding and organising community campaigns through front groups. It's a very serious allegation to make, both against the pharmaceutical company involved, Eli Lilly, and against the campaign being run by Migraine Australia. Mr Speaker, I refer you to the public statement made by Migraine Australia in response to the minister's attack, which reads in part that Migraine Australia categorically rejects:

… any assertion that we are a front for Eli Lilly, or any of the other companies that make medications for migraine. … This company has never taken money from anyone.

My question to you, Mr Speaker, is that given the resolution refers to 'persons' being able to write to you to seek a right of reply, whether you would accept a submission as Speaker from Migraine Australia or Eli Lilly, both of whom are legal persons but not individuals, or any one of the 400,000 Australians who suffer from chronic migraine, many of whom have participated in the community campaign to have Emgality listed on the PBS?

**The SPEAKER** (15:17): Obviously, as the shadow minister for health and member for McMahon has pointed out, the resolution does refer to persons, and I am in the hands of the resolution of the House. But what I'll do, obviously, is not detain the House now. I'll study the resolution carefully and I'll report back to the House. It won't be today.

**Mr HUNT** (Flinders—Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Cabinet) (15:18): Mr Speaker, I'd like to make a statement on indulgence. I can add—

**The SPEAKER:** No, it's not an indulgence. You can seek to make a personal explanation if you think you've been misrepresented.

**Mr HUNT:** Mr Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation.

**The SPEAKER:** Do you claim to have been misrepresented?

**Mr HUNT:** I do, indeed.

**The SPEAKER:** You may proceed.

**Mr HUNT:** That's given that I made no reference to any group or any individual.

*An honourable member interjecting*—
Mr HUNT: Eli Lilly, absolutely! And I do believe that the company has not behaved ethically—that the company, which is a $137 billion company, is seeking to avoid and overturn the decisions of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee.

But in relation to the group which was mentioned: there has been no reference to any group or to any individual. And, for clarity, let me make this clear: there is no reference, there has been no reference and nor do I believe that that group has done anything wrong. There you go.

AUDITOR-GENERAL’S REPORTS
Report No. 41 of 2019-20


Document made a parliamentary paper in accordance with the resolution agreed to on 28 March 2018.

BUSINESS
Rearrangement

Mr BANDT (Melbourne—Leader of the Australian Greens) (15:19): I seek leave to move the following motion:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Member for Melbourne from moving the following motion—That the House:

(1) notes that:
   (a) on 24 April 2020, the Treasurer said the principle behind JobKeeper is ‘One in, all in’ and ‘The employer cannot select which eligible employees will participate in the scheme’;
   (b) despite the Treasure's statement, the decision about employees' inclusion in the JobKeeper scheme remains entirely at the discretion of employers; and
   (c) there is currently no avenue for employees to dispute decisions made by their employer to include some but not all employees in the scheme, and many employees are not getting payments they are entitled to; and

(2) agrees that private Members' business order of the day No. 29, Fair Work Amendment (One in, All in) Bill 2020 be called on immediately and passage of the bill through all stages be given priority over all other business during periods of government business until its completion.

Leave not granted.

Mr BANDT: I move:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Member for Melbourne from moving the following motion—That the House:

(1) notes that:
   (a) on 24 April 2020, the Treasurer said the principle behind JobKeeper is ‘One in, all in’ and ‘The employer cannot select which eligible employees will participate in the scheme’;
   (b) despite the Treasure's statement, the decision about employees' inclusion in the JobKeeper scheme remains entirely at the discretion of employers; and
   (c) there is currently no avenue for employees to dispute decisions made by their employer to include some but not all employees in the scheme, and many employees are not getting payments they are entitled to; and

(2) agrees that private Members' business order of the day No. 29, Fair Work Amendment (One in, All in) Bill 2020 be called on immediately and passage of the bill through all stages be given priority over all other business during periods of government business until its completion.

People aren't getting what they're entitled to, and the government is turning a blind eye. People are missing out—

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Greens will resume his seat. The Leader of the House.

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Leader of the House) (15:21): I move:

That the Member be no longer heard.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the Leader of the Greens be no further heard.

The House divided. [15:26]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ......................56
Noes ......................51
Majority .................5
AYES

Alexander, JG  
Andrews, KJ  
Archer, BK  
Chester, D  
Conaghan, PJ  
Coulton, M  
Dutton, PC  
Falinski, JG  
Frydenberg, JA  
Gillespie, DA  
Hastie, AW  
Hunt, GA  
Kelly, C  
Ley, SP  
Martin, FB  
McIntosh, MI  
Morrison, SJ  
O’Dowd, KD  
Pearce, GB  
Porter, CC  
Ramsey, RE (teller)  
Simmonds, J  
Sukkar, MS  
Tehan, DT  
Tudge, AE  
Vasta, RX  
Wilson, RJ  
Young, T

NOES

Albanese, AN  
Bandt, AP  
Burke, AS  
Burns, J  
Chalmers, JE  
Coker, EA  
Conroy, PM  
Dreyfus, MA  
Freelander, MR  
Gorman, P  
Haines, H  
Hill, JC  
Jones, SP  
Leigh, AK  
McBride, EM  
Mulino, D  
O’Connor, BPJ  
Payne, AE  
Pibbersek, TJ  
Ryan, JC (teller)  
Shorten, WR  
Stanley, AM (teller)  
Swanson, MJ  
Thwaites, KL  
Wilkie, AD  
Zappia, A

PAIRS

Broadbent, RE  
Buchholz, S  
Coleman, DB  
Evans, TM  
Flint, NJ  
Goodenough, IR  
Hogan, KJ  
Howarth, LR  

CHAMBER
Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER (15:30): Is the motion seconded?

Mr WILKIE (Clark) (15:30): I second the motion by the member for Melbourne and would add it's undeniable that some employers are—

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Leader of the House) (15:30): I move:

That the Member be no longer heard.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the member for Clark be no further heard.

The House divided. [15:32]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ...................... 56
Noes ...................... 51
Majority ............... 5

AYES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Archer, BK
Chester, D
Conaghan, PJ
Coulton, M
Dutton, PC
Faliniski, JG
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hastie, AW
Hunt, GA
Kelly, C
Ley, SP
Martin, FB
McIntosh, MI
Morrison, SJ
O’Dowd, KD
Pearce, GB
Porter, CC
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Simmonds, J
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Tudge, AE
Vasta, RX
Wilson, RJ
Young, T

NOES

Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP
Burke, AS
Burns, J

CHAMBER
Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER (15:34): The question now is that the motion moved by the Leader of the Greens be disagreed to.

The House divided. [15:34]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes .................. 56
Noes ................... 51
Majority ............... 5

AYES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Archer, BK
Chester, D
Conaghan, PJ
Coulton, M
Dutton, PC
Falinski, JG
Frydenberg, JA

Clare, JD
Collins, JM
Dick, MD
Fitzgibbon, JA
Giles, AJ
Gosling, LJ
Hayes, CP
Husic, EN
Khalil, P
Marles, RD
Mitchell, BK
Murphy, PJ
O’Neill, CE
Phillips, FE
Rishworth, AL
Sharkie, RCC
Steggall, Z
Templeman, SR
Wells, AS
Wilson, JH

PAIRS

Broadbent, RE
Buchholz, S
Coleman, DB
Evans, TM
Flint, NJ
Goodenough, IR
Hogan, KJ
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Laming, A
Landry, ML
Liu, G
Marino, NB
Morton, B
O’Brien, LS
Sharma, DN
Webster, AE
Wicks, LE
Wilson, TR
Wood, JP

Bird, SL
Butler, TM
Byrne, AM
Champion, ND
Chesters, LM
Claydon, SC
Elliot, MJ
Georganas, S
Kearney, G
Keogh, MJ
King, MMH
Mitchell, RG
Neumann, SK
Owens, JA
Perrett, GD
Rowland, MA
Vanvakinou, M
Smith, DPB
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Watts, TG

CHAMBER
AYES

Gillespie, DA
Hastie, AW
Hunt, GA
Kelly, C
Ley, SP
Martin, FR
McIntosh, MI
Morrison, SJ
ODowd, KD
Pearce, GB
Porter, CC
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Simmonds, J
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Tudge, AE
Vasta, RX
Wilson, RJ
Young, T

Hammond, CM
Hawke, AG
Joyce, BT
Leeser, J
Littleproud, D
McCormack, MF
McVeigh, JJ
O’Brien, T
Pasin, A
Pitt, KJ
Price, ML
Robert, SR
Stevens, J
Taylor, AJ
Thompson, P
van Manen, AJ
Wyatt, KG
Zimmerman, T

NOES

Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP
Burke, AS
Burns, J
Chalmers, JE
Coker, EA
Conroy, PM
Dreyfus, MA
Freelander, MR
Gorman, P
Haines, H
Hill, JC
Jones, SP
Leigh, AK
McBride, EM
Mulino, D
O’Connor, BPJ
Payne, AE
Plibersek, TJ
Ryan, JC (teller)
Shorten, WR
Stanley, AM (teller)
Swanson, MJ
Thwaites, KL
Wilkie, AD
Zappia, A

Aly, A
Bowen, CE
Burney, LJ
Butler, MC
Clare, JD
Collins, JM
Dick, MD
Fitzgibbon, JA
Giles, AJ
Gosling, LJ
Hayes, CP
Husic, EN
Khalil, P
Marles, RD
Mitchell, BK
Murphy, PJ
O’Neil, CE
Phillips, FE
Rishworth, AL
Sharkie, RCC
Snowdon, WE
Steggall, Z
Templeman, SR
Wells, AS
Wilson, JH

PAIRS

Broadbent, RE
Buchholz, S
Coleman, DB
Evans, TM
Flint, NJ
Goodenough, IR
Hogan, KJ
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Laming, A
Landry, ML
Liu, G
Marino, NB
Morton, B
O’Brien, LS
Sharma, DN
Webster, AE

Bird, SL
Butler, TM
Byrne, AM
Champion, ND
Chesters, LM
Claydon, SC
Elliot, MJ
Georganas, S
Kearney, G
Keogh, MJ
King, MMH
Mitchell, RG
Neumann, SK
Owens, IA
Perrett, GD
Rowland, MA
Vanvakinou, M
Question agreed to.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

COVID-19: Women

The SPEAKER (15:36): I have received a letter from the honourable member for Franklin proposing that a definite matter of public importance be submitted to the House for discussion, namely:

The Government's mismanagement of the COVID-19 recovery and its lack of a plan to address the disproportional impact of this crisis on women.

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

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

Ms COLLINS (Franklin) (15:36): If ever we needed another example of how the government is not listening to women when it comes to cuts in a post-COVID recovery, we got it today. When the Prime Minister was responding to a question about women giving birth on the side of a highway and said, 'Don't worry; we'll spend more on the road,' I think he missed the entire point. Unfortunately when this government are actually responding to the post-COVID recovery and the economic crisis that we have today, they keep missing the point. They missed the point when it came to the frontline workers who have been leading us through this crisis. They missed the point when it came to responding to the aged-care workers, the childcare workers, the retail workers and the nurses, who are all on the front line.

When it came to things like JobKeeper for the childcare sector, the government said that they're going to snap back, cut JobKeeper and pull the rug out from under all the early childhood educators. Ninety-seven per cent of that industry are female workers. What don't they get about that? What don't they understand about child care, the fact that families need it to be able to go back to work and the fact that people will no longer be able to afford some of the highest childcare fees in the world?

The government said that they were going to recognise the contribution of the aged-care workers during COVID-19—great idea; we supported it. But, of course, yet again, they implemented it badly. And what have we seen? Almost 40 per cent—125,000 aged-care workers—missing out on their retention bonus. Again, this is another industry dominated by women; 87 per cent of them happen to be women. You can see a bit of a pattern forming here when it comes to the government's response.

Then we see one of the centrepieces of the government's response—the early drawdown of super. What do we know about women and superannuation? We know that women already retire with half the superannuation balances of men, and we know that women, as part of some of the figures, have a lower withdrawal rate than men in terms of the amount. Why do you think that might be? I suspect it's because women are completely draining their superannuation balances. The other thing we know is that they told us Treasury did no modelling on the impact based on gender prior to this decision that this would be part of the recovery. They didn't want to know the impact on women in Australia when it came to retirement incomes. What we know is that this is not going to improve the retirement incomes of women in Australia.

And of course JobKeeper—who was JobKeeper supposed to support? It was supposed to support workers, and what have we seen from the government's own figures? The number of people who've lost their jobs in Australia has been disproportionately women. Indeed, the minister at the table gave us the number yesterday: 325,000 women have lost their jobs during this COVID economic crisis that has been caused by the government's decisions.

The thing about this, of course, is that the government could have made a choice to include more people in JobKeeper originally because most of the people who are missing out are of course women. Modelling estimates 200,000 of those 325,000 women who have lost their jobs could have been employed on JobKeeper, if it had included casuals. What a good idea that would have been! But instead, according to the payroll data yesterday, 9.5 per cent of women have lost their jobs, and women of course are losing more hours than men.

We've heard about a lot of people who are getting fewer, and indeed zero, hours when it comes to employment in Australia today, and of course we know they are women. Studies and the data have told us that women are doing more of the child care at home. Women were doing more of the homeschooling when schools weren't in session. Women are doing more housework during COVID.
And we see the government's response: HomeBuilder—again, a good idea. Let's invest in some infrastructure but, instead of spending it on social housing to help women fleeing family violence with their children, we see it's being spent on people's home renovations. Seriously, you have to have $150,000 to be able to get 25 grand to renovate your house. In my home state of Tasmania, I doubt we'll see even a couple of hundred of those, but we could have seen, proportionately, $13 million go into social housing in Tasmania. That would've made a difference to an enormous number of women and children fleeing family violence in Tasmania.

We have from this government a whole series of deliberate decisions that they have made that disproportionately impact on women as they prepare this country, as they make decisions, for how we're going to come out of this recession—the recession that the government admits that we are in because of the decisions that were made during COVID-19. The government can and should do better when it comes to responding.

Today we had a good announcement from the minister—$1.8 million for some scholarships to help some women. That's a good start, but where is the plan? Where is the actual holistic plan for responding to the disproportionate impact that women have felt during this recovery? There isn't one. You can get nearly $800 million for thousands of workers in a male-dominated industry, which is a good idea, as I said, but they could have spent it better. They could have done a better job with it and a better job with JobKeeper. They could've done a better job with their childcare package. They could've, and they should've, done a better job on all of it, and then the women of Australia wouldn't be in the position they're in today.

What we need from this government is for them to actually listen to the women of Australia. The gender pay gap has been around 15 per cent for more than two decades. But, of course, we had the Treasurer come in here just a few months ago and tell us prior to COVID that there was nothing to see here: the gender pay gap has closed in Australia. Well, it hasn't. I doubt after this it'll be the same as it was prior to, given the government's deliberate decisions that will probably expand the gender pay gap.

The gender pay gap has only closed marginally in Australia very briefly due to legislation that this side of the House implemented when we were in government and of course the mining boom. They are the only two things that have impacted the gender pay gap for the last two decades. If this government was serious after seven years, they might have done something about it. If we want true equality in this country, if we want women to be equally represented in the workplace and in other spheres around Australia, the government needs to listen to what women are saying to them today. Quite frankly, when we got the Prime Minister's response to a very legitimate question about women giving birth on the side of the road to get an answer about more road funding, it seriously shows what a joke and a farce the government is when it comes to listening to women.

There are a lot of great women over on that side of the House but, please, the government needs to listen to what they are hearing and what they are saying when it comes to responding to this economic crisis. We cannot continue to have language like 'snapback'. I don't think the women of Australia want to snap back to a 14 per cent pay gap. I don't think the women of Australia want to snap back to the highest childcare fees in the world, almost. I don't think women want to snap back to some of the decisions that this government has been making around people like aged-care workers. That is not the answer. The government needs to come up with a comprehensive plan for addressing the disproportionate impact that this economic crisis has had on women, and it needs to do it quickly. It needs to listen and do it quickly.

Those on the other side of the House come in here talking about how they want gender equality. We had Dorothy Dixers to the minister yesterday talking about the 325,000 women who have lost their jobs, but where is their plan to fix it? How many jobs does JobMaker provide for women of Australia? I'd really like an answer to that. I want to know: how many jobs for women will JobMaker actually create? That's what we want to know. That's what the women of Australia want to know. The government should be able to do the work and have the plan so they can actually answer that question, because we all know that they have no answer to it today. They should have an answer, they could have an answer, but they don't. They need to. They need to be able to say to the women of Australia, and their families: 'We understand the situation. We understand women have been disproportionately impacted, and we are going to come up with a comprehensive plan to address it. We are not simply going to snap back to the inequality that we had beforehand.' We are not going to be able to snap back and create thousands of jobs for women who have lost them, because the government have bungled the implementation of the recovery plan and they need to fix it. They need to do the work very, very quickly, because Australian women will not put up with this government continuing to make decisions that disproportionately impact on them.

**Ms LEY** (Farrer—Minister for the Environment) (15:46): I thank the member for Franklin for allowing me to explain further to the House and the parliament this government's very strong record when it comes to women's policy, whether it be women's economic security, women's safety, the gender pay gap, which was 17.4 per cent when Labor was last in government and is 13.9 per cent today and going down—that's roughly $1,100 a year that...
women are better off as a result—or access to superannuation. But, most importantly, the No. 1 thing that a government must do during a global pandemic—and the responsibility we have for women is the responsibility we have for every Australian—is keep people safe, build a hospital and healthcare system that looks after them and their loved ones, contribute to international research for a vaccine and a cure, make sure, as the health minister has done, that we have sufficient ventilators in place for the worst possible scenario and fund states and territories to do what they need do in response. This is not solely a women's issue; it is an issue for every Australian. I am certainly not going to underplay the challenges that this pandemic has delivered for so many people, whether they be women in their own particular circumstances or whether they be the elderly, the lonely or the people who have been impacted in ways that will only come to light later on when we consider the mental health implications. But what I want to say very, very strongly to the member for Franklin and members opposite is that we as Liberal and National parties have been here before as a government in delivering for Australian women and we will do this again. We have always led the way.

Central to our response is our $1,500 per fortnight wage subsidy, JobKeeper. I have countless examples coming to me from my rural and regional electorate about how this wage subsidy is supporting women, whether they be in the workforce or in small business, and keeping them connected to their employers, allowing them to contribute and being there for the great ideas and the great contributions that they will be ready to give on the other side. But the health of our economy is vital when it comes to the opportunities and the choices for women. The member ridiculed part of the announcement today. It's just come through, and I see that women in local government are delighted that they will share government funding to support women's economic security in the local government workforce. That came through just before question time. That is part of our response. But, more importantly, the women's economic security statement that this government delivered in 2018, that is still there and that will get a refresh, as the Prime Minister announced recently, is backing up so much of what is important. This is a $158.3 million initiative, and it has some key areas that matter to women—boosting their skills and employability, encouraging their return to work and helping them establish their own business.

Scholarships for women in business and finance were mentioned almost as though they were a nothing thing by the member for Franklin, which is crazy, because re-education and retraining is vital during this pandemic, improving the economic recovery following critical life events, such as family and domestic violence and separation. That is a women's economic security statement that responds to the needs of women. It's not just about the economy. I mean, it never is just about the economy, but it's vital for women in particular and it targets their needs. It is $158 million and it is underway. It was launched by this government in 2018.

It's important during these challenging times to face the issue of women's safety, and I want to do that with strong statements about the security that we have improved for women in their homes, particularly during this global pandemic. Now, we know that home has been a pleasant place for some people, but it's been pretty awful for others, and so we've announced and allocated $150 million for a COVID-19 domestic and family violence support package. We announced that on 29 March. One hundred and thirty million dollars will be provided to state and territory governments to invest in their specialist frontline services. Although she didn't directly mention it, I know, because I read the words of her MPI, the member for Franklin alluded to that. She certainly alluded to it in a press release issued earlier today, so I want to respond to that and reject, completely, that this government is not responding to women's safety, because we are. There's $150 million during the pandemic. I have a note from the New South Wales government that states:

Domestic violence victim-survivors will have more vital help available during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the NSW and Federal Governments today investing more than $21 million to boost frontline services and other supports.

We send this money to those frontline services through the states. We don't have the funding contracts directly, so, to get it out the door and get it delivered, we've given that money to the states. That's $150 million just because we recognised the issues during the pandemic.

That figure is in addition to the $340 million the Commonwealth has already invested in initiatives under the Fourth action plan of the national plan to reduce violence against women and their children 2010-2022. I hope people are getting the continuity here: by having a strong, determined women's policy that is resourced to a higher level than I've certainly ever seen from a Labor government, going into the pandemic, adding the supports we need to women's safety and women's economic security and JobKeeper to keep women connected to the workplaces, as we come out the other side—and we're not there yet—we know that we will be in the best possible place to support the women of Australia.

I'm constantly surprised at the tone that the opposition has. It tends to reinforce gender stereotypes, no more so than in the area of child care.

Ms Rishworth interjecting—
Ms LEY: The member for Kingston is chiming in, and so I would expect her to do, but what has really been missed by the opposition in the childcare debate is that our rescue package funded childcare centres at 50 per cent of their revenue regardless of how many children attended the service, and it worked. Ninety-nine per cent of childcare providers are still operating. The message we had before we injected that funding was, 'My goodness, these centres are going to close!' Well, 99 per cent are still operating. How successful is that? Childcare attendance has lifted to around 74 per cent, and we've added $780 million in transition payments, frozen fees and guaranteed employment levels, because it is also about the early childcare educators. We built the childcare system for families and for children—

Ms Rishworth interjecting—

Ms LEY: And, yes, we support our educators for the early learning that they deliver. Yes, of course we do, and we want to. The most important thing we can do is keep the centres open. By keeping the centres open we have families looking for child care for workforce participation. This is in addition to the $2 billion in the childcare subsidy that will once again go to eligible families from July. The system we've designed is all about increasing choice and enabling women to make different choices when it comes to their participation in the workforce. We know that for families—women and men; childcare is an issue for women and men—the hours of work and the flexibility around that that is being delivered through the latest childcare package is absolutely enabling more parents to go back to work in the way they want to go back to work. And families on JobSeeker will be eligible for a subsidy of 95 per cent of the fees, so we are making sure that, as we reopen our childcare centres, those on the lowest incomes get the best access and have the lowest fees. And that's exactly as it should be. But that's not what you hear from the opposition, because what you hear from the opposition is this long, ongoing, bleak, dreary narrative about entrenched disadvantage. And, you know, it's just so last century. I see the opportunities for women in the modern world, and coming out of this pandemic, as giving families and communities something that adds to their choices.

We've always seen women at the front line of modernising the workplace—flexible work practices, working from home. We know that, on the other side of this pandemic, they will be there with good ideas, with good initiatives, stepping up as leaders and stepping up for the leadership roles that we often see in our communities. And we wish women would step up for more of them, because they often don't know how strong they are in the work they do and in their advocacy—for example, in rural and regional Australia, their incredible cohesiveness in bringing their communities together. But I think there must be a change of heart from the Labor Party when it comes to this subject and a recognition that there are—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member's time has expired. I call the member for Kingston.

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (15:56): From what I heard from the last speaker, women have never been better off than under a Liberal government, and, I have to say, there might be a few on that side who are saying it, but it's not what Australian women right around this country are saying. In fact, we heard the minister just talk about how affordable childcare is in this country. Well, it's not just the Labor party saying that's not true; it's actually organisations and families right across the country.

That gives me the opportunity to talk about a report released today by The Front Project. This has made very, very clear the struggle that families will be under if this government does what it intends to do and 'snaps back' to its high-cost childcare system. Ninety-seven per cent of all families surveyed said that early learning and care was important in their family. A quarter of families are concerned about future employment and nearly 10 per cent are looking for new jobs. So what we've got here is families who are concerned about the cost of child care. Fifty-seven per cent of families said that fees impact on their social spending, 55 per cent said that fees impact on their grocery budgets and 35 per cent said that fees impact on where they choose to live. So when this government says that there has never been a more affordable childcare system it is just plain wrong.

And, in the middle of a recession, when families are relying on mortgage and rent moratoriums, and JobKeeper and job seeker to get by, the government says: 'We've got a plan for Australian women: we're going to bring back childcare fees. That's what's going to fix the economy!' Of course, childcare providers C&K are so worried that they've said the cost of child care is starting to influence the way people live their lives and the sort of nutrition families are able to put on the table for their children. That's the impact this is having.

The Prime Minister pretends it concerns him. In April, when he announced his so-called 'free' child care for essential workers policy, he said:

I don't want a parent to have to choose between feeding their kids and having their kids looked after.

Well, that's exactly what's going to happen when we revert—snap back—to the Liberals' failed plan of high childcare fees.
Of course, the government is pretty tone deaf to what families and women need, and the shadow minister for women highlighted that. But you don't need to listen to us to realise how out of touch the government is. You just need to turn to the Senate. Let's hear it from Senator Rennick in the other place last week. He said that children should be at home with their parents and that parents should be home and not participating; that is their rightful place. That's the attitude this government has. Senator Rennick belled the cat when it came to their plans for Australian women: stay at home, look after your kids, be seen and not heard. That is this government's plan for Australian women.

Dr Martin (Reid) (16:01): The Morrison government has shown clear and decisive leadership in guiding our nation through this twin crisis created by coronavirus. We acted early in declaring COVID-19 a pandemic to give our health system the best chance to prepare for an outbreak. And we put in place social-distancing restrictions to protect all Australians, but especially our most vulnerable. As a nation we've done a great job of flattening the curve, which has seen Australia become a world leader in fighting the coronavirus. National cabinet, led by our Prime Minister, has developed a clear plan to remove the restrictions which were necessary to suppress the virus in our community. We're focusing on reopening the economy, and we're focusing on creating jobs. We want jobs across all industries.

The Prime Minister has acknowledged that the health and economic impacts of coronavirus are affecting women more than men, with 55 per cent of jobs lost being held by women. It is a fact that women hold less-secure employment, such as part-time or casual employment, and make up the greater proportion of workers in industries which have been hit hard as a result of the pandemic, such as hospitality and retail. Prior to coronavirus, there were more women in work than ever before and the gender pay gap had closed to its lowest level on record at 13.9 per cent, well below the 17.4 per cent that was the gap when Labor were last in office.

This is why supporting employment and supporting businesses as they reopen is central to providing financial security for women. Business supports, such as the JobKeeper wage subsidy, have kept employment opportunities open for women, and I can quote Belinda Merlino, who is the owner of Concord's The Skin Clinic in my electorate of Reid. She said, 'The government has done an amazing job for us in helping us all during this time.' On Tuesday, it was encouraging to see that the ABS payroll data showed that the number of females in jobs increased by 1.4 per cent through May, compared with 0.4 for males. While we undoubtedly have more work to do, this is an encouraging start.

I have spoken in this place before about the need to support more flexible working arrangements and childcare provisions to encourage more women to return to the workforce. Recent challenges posed by the need for children to stay at home and to be schooled at home has brought this issue into focus. Social distancing and restrictions in public spaces have led to an increase in unpaid care work—not only care for children but also care for older family members who have been asked to isolate in their homes.

Many parents from my electorate, often mothers, have been in contact with me over the past few months to share their own experiences of the unique impact the coronavirus pandemic has had on their working life and family structure. It was this valuable feedback that directly influenced the Morrison government's decision to supply a childcare relief package for families at this critical time when parents have been working from home. While free child care allowed parents to continue to work at the height of restrictions, we are now once again adjusting the support to this critical industry based on feedback from providers as demand for care increases.

We must keep providers viable at this critical time. There is more work to be done to support working women, but the key to this is ensuring that childcare centres remain open. As businesses ease back into more regular operations it is imperative that childcare facilities are able to offer parents the ability to increase the number of days they can access. That is why we have made adjustments to the activity test and introduced a $708 million transition payment to keep the childcare sector viable for consumers and for providers.

Tough times don't excuse abusive behaviour at home, and even in a crisis there's no place for abuse or domestic violence. It's devastating that this pandemic has led to an increase in domestic violence reports and that 1800RESPECT has seen an increase in the number of calls for assistance. The government is proud to have had the largest-ever Commonwealth investment, of $340 million, for prevention and frontline services to support the Fourth Action Plan, including $82.2 million to improve and build on frontline services. (Time expired)

Ms Thwaites (Jagajaga) (16:06): It is so important that we debate this topic today, because this government has ignored the women of Australia, with the result that we are now experiencing a 'she-cession'. Women have lost their jobs because they work in the industries that have been hardest hit by the shutdown. They've had to give up paid work because they're the ones who took on the job of managing schooling from home and caring for their children. Too many of them have been at increased risk of family violence while at home. And
what support do they get from this government? They get a snapback to unaffordable childcare fees and a home builder package aimed squarely at an industry that is overwhelmingly dominated by men.

Women deserve better than this. They are tired, they are fed up and they deserve a government that understands their lives, not one that makes it harder. We know that during this crisis service industries, such as hospitality and retail, were hit hardest. And guess what? Those are the industries that employ the most women. ABS data shows that women not only were more likely to have lost their job after COVID-19 compared with men but also lost more wages than men. Almost 200,000 Australian women missed out on JobKeeper because of the design flaws from this government. And now the Morrison government has made specific choices about how they believe the economy should ‘snap back’—and those choices are not focused on women. We have the JobMaker scheme, targeted at boosting the construction industry. Well, guess what? At least 82 per cent of construction workers are men. The construction industry did not have a closedown forced upon them during the pandemic. Yet that's the industry the government has targeted with its stimulus package. At the same time, early childhood workers have had their supports taken away from them.

I just feel as though the members in this chamber today have not understood or recognised that. From the other side we've heard from the Minister for the Environment, who seemed to suggest that child care actually isn't an issue that affects women but just an issue that affects people in general. Well, what nonsense. We all know that women take up the majority of childcaring duties. Women are the ones who have to decide whether they can afford to go back to work. In this country, too often they cannot afford to go back to work. I've been part of those conversations in the playground, and I'm sure many people in this chamber have as well, where you sit next to a woman and she says, 'The second one's eight months old now, but we've had the conversation at the kitchen table and I decided it just wasn't worth me going back to work.' That is the reality of child care in this country. That is the system this government wants us to snap back to. It's a disgrace.

We also heard from the Minister for the Environment that she wished women would just step up—'Step up. It's your fault you're not getting ahead. It's not the unaffordable child care. It's not that you can't find a place. It's not that JobKeeper got taken away from you. It's your fault. Step up.' The member for Reid said that women should look to increase their childcare days. And it is really important—women should be able to increase their days. But, again, there was no mention of the affordability issue that is keeping so many women from being able to do this.

While women have been waiting to find out what comes next from this government, I've heard from women in my electorate who work in the travel industry. They're currently not making any money. In fact, they've told me that at the moment they're essentially working to pay back money. Are they going to be next? They need JobKeeper. They told me the only way they can continue to employ—again, this is a largely female dominated industry—was through JobKeeper. If that's taken away, even in September, before we have international travel, these women are likely to suffer further job losses.

So women in Australia are right to be worried. We've heard already today from the Prime Minister about how he sees women's lives. Apparently, if you're due to give birth and there's no local hospital, what's really going to help you is an upgrade to the highway. Now, look, I've given birth. It was a pretty tough experience, and I don't think speeding down the highway would have made it feel any better. So I say to the Prime Minister: it is time for you to take a good hard look at what your government is doing to the women of Australia. You clearly are not in touch. You're not addressing the issues that they are concerned about. We need affordable child care. We need women workers supported. We need an economy that works for women in this country.

Ms BELL (Moncrieff) (16:11): I'd like to say to all Australians and perhaps remind those opposite that COVID-19 definitely does not discriminate. I refute the claims from those opposite, and the member for Franklin, that this government intentionally discriminates against women. The suggestion is appalling. It's distasteful and untrue. Can I also remind those opposite to read the PM's response beyond his first sentence where he went on to talk about record investment in hospitals and health.

We're also asked about our government's plan. Can I outline JobKeeper, jobseeker, JobMaker. Those opposite, as we heard, are job takers. Their record on the economy is appalling. It's terrible. They wanted to increase taxes by $387 billion. What sort of state would Australia be in now if that had occurred? So I'd just like to remind those opposite of our plan.

I've spoken in this chamber before about the profound impact that COVID-19 has had in my electorate of Moncrieff on the Gold Coast. As in the rest of Australia, the blow to Gold Coast jobs has been devastating, as tourism, education, events and hospitality are all key employers in our city. It is called JobKeeper for a reason. The government has taken decisive action to address the economic consequences of the coronavirus pandemic. The Morrison government has provided a historic wage subsidy of $1,500 per fortnight before tax. This has been a
Estella Rodighiero from Regional Development Australia Gold Coast released a survey this week that showed 92 per cent of the businesses surveyed on the Gold Coast have been affected by COVID-19. With 32,111 small businesses in Moncrieff at the last census, that number is potentially very high. Treasury data has revealed that suburbs in my electorate are some of the hardest hit in Queensland, with around 12,000 businesses applying for JobKeeper. Surfers Paradise with 2,949, Southport with 2,439, Nerang and the hinterland with 2,420, Ashmore, Arundel and Molandinar with 2,166 and Broadbeach with 2,114 were all in the top 10 suburbs of businesses who have applied for JobKeeper. As COVID-19 is controlled, the government is focusing on reopening and rebuilding. We need to get businesses back open, enable Australians to go back to work and ensure that consumers and businesses have the confidence to return to normal activities. Our focus remains on jobs, jobs and more jobs. I've established the City Heart Taskforce in Moncrieff to engage with key industry sectors to build city-wide strategies as we foster the economic road to recovery. This is all about community leaders of peak bodies working together to revive our city heart and create job opportunities as we foster our road to recovery.

On domestic violence, the government's first priority is to keep all Australians safe. Combating violence against women and children is, of course, central to that goal. While we're asking Australians to stay at home to control the spread of COVID-19, we also recognise that, for many women and children, home is not a safe place to be. The Morrison government has just last week committed $245,000 to the Gold Coast domestic violence unit in Southport. The unit is a critical frontline service that is essential for those Gold Coasters who are impacted by domestic violence. Additionally, the Morrison government's $150 million domestic violence support package was designed to keep women and children safe during these challenging times. This will continue to help break down barriers to women's economic security, including $18 million in grants to boost entrepreneurship opportunities for women. I would like to highlight that, prior to COVID-19, there were many more women in work than ever before. The gender pay gap had closed to its lowest level on record, at 13.9 per cent, well below the 17.4 per cent gap when Labor, those opposite, were last in office.

I will finish by adding that, here on the Gold Coast, we're still looking forward to the day when the Queensland Premier confirms the 10 July opening date. This closure is hindering the Gold Coast's COVID-19 recovery. As we've heard multiple times from the Prime Minister, the Treasurer, the Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment and as I have said multiple times, reopening the interstate border is the first step—(Time expired)

Ms PAYNE (Canberra) (16:16): If there was any doubt that this government is out of touch with the needs and the lives of Australian women, the Prime Minister's answer today to my question about whether it was acceptable for women from the Yass Valley to give birth by the side of a road says it all. His response was, 'That's why we're upgrading the road.' I think that really says it all. It's a really important issue for our region that women in the Yass Valley have to travel for over an hour to give birth in either Canberra or Goulburn. We've been calling for that area to have a maternity hospital. In fact, Labor has this week committed to putting $4.75 million towards building a maternity hospital at Yass.

When I asked the Prime Minister, 'Is it acceptable to you that numerous women have given birth beside the road in traumatic circumstances?', his answer was, 'That's why we're upgrading the Barton Highway.' It's kind of funny, but it's also not funny at all because this is a serious health risk to mothers and their babies. Having given birth previously—and I'm going to be doing it again sometime soon—I can tell you that I don't want to be doing it beside a highway with no help. Pregnant women really need to know that they're going to have the help and support they need at that time. They are worried about their babies' health and their own health through that process. Hearing this complete lack of understanding of that from the Prime Minister says everything. It really is a huge worry. It's not just the fact that the birth can take a disastrous turn for women and their babies in that sort of circumstance; it's also the trauma that many women will experience as a result of that throughout their lives. That is something that many women from the Yass Valley have talked about, and it has been covered widely in the media. It is something that this government should be aware of.

I move on now to other areas where the government is out of touch with Australian women, particularly in their response to this pandemic. Many female dominated industries have been the absolute heroes of this pandemic. I refer to cleaners, nurses, aged-care workers, early childhood educators and teachers. These are the people who have kept us healthy, kept us alive, kept us safe and kept our economy going as this pandemic has pushed us into recession for the first time in almost 30 years.

Women have also borne the brunt of the economic downturn—55 per cent of Australians who have lost their jobs are women, even though the workforce participation rate for women is almost 10 per cent lower than for men. That's 325,000 women who will have to live with the lifelong consequences of unemployment. We know these consequences are worse for women.
Even before the pandemic, we knew that our economy was not working for Australian women. It's not set up for women to succeed, with women holding only a quarter of board positions in this country. It's not set up to treat women fairly, with women still earning 14 per cent less than men for the same work in this country—and in the private sector that is even higher. When women have children, more than 50 per cent of them don't get any maternity leave from their employer. Even fewer employees provide secondary carers leave. The number of secondary carers—it's mainly fathers who take it up—is low. Just 15 per cent of Australian fathers take more than four weeks when their baby is born. This is a huge cause of the ongoing gender disparity in our workforce. Only when it becomes normal for both mum and dad to take time out of the workforce to care for children will we have any chance of equality. The government has a huge role in that, in the types of programs that they provide and the law around what's provided by employers.

Even just in this sitting period, where we've moved some changes to paid parental leave to allow it to be more flexible, this government refused to ensure that women affected by coronavirus will be exempt from the work test and be able to access paid parental leave. Again, for families expecting a new baby, it's a huge worry that they'll lose, potentially, up to $15,000 as a result of that failure to step up and protect those women. It's not going to cost the government anything extra. These are people who would have been receiving it anyway but have lost their jobs due to a global pandemic.

This government really needs to stand up for Australian women. They obviously don't understand the pressures, the economy. The childcare situation is another example of where a female-dominated industry is going to be kicked off JobKeeper well before any other industry. Why is that? (Time expired)

Mrs McIntosh (Lindsay) (16:22): I want to read a note from a female small business owner in my electorate of Lindsay, who says, 'I'm thankful for all that has been put in place during the coronavirus pandemic. We have so much faith in the way that this country is being led that we just purchased a new vehicle because of the $150,000 asset write-off. Due to having three apprentices, we benefitted from the apprentice rebate.'

I'm not here to say how wonderful and great things are for women—I don't think there's a person on this earth who has been having a great time of it over the last few months. We've had the health impacts of coronavirus. We've had the economic impacts of coronavirus. As families, we've been impacted, ensuring that our children are still getting that great Australian education at home. But the Morrison government has been very focused on the health impacts, the economic impacts and our Australian families. From an economic perspective, I have over 15,000 small and medium-sized businesses in Lindsay. We were certainly a coronavirus hotspot at times, which put extra pressure on our community, and we've had over 4,500 organisations access JobKeeper. So we have very much been focused on the economic and health impacts. As you know, I have Newmarch House in my community.

Lindsay is a community that comes together and has a wonderful community spirit. I've got a female network within the Lindsay electorate of small business owners, and we have very much stayed in touch and talked about the road to recovery post-coronavirus. Part of that road to recovery is the large infrastructure investment that the Morrison government is putting into Western Sydney to create more jobs. When I've gone out and visited the infrastructure projects, it's been really fantastic and pleasing to see the number of women who are taking up jobs in construction and non-traditional female roles.

Encouraging female workforce participation is really important to me. It's something I did when I led W21, the 21st century global women's initiative at the United States Studies Centre, which looked at how growing women's economic participation would contribute to global economic growth and, certainly, economic growth in our country. So creating jobs for women is something I'm very passionate about. I want to ensure that in Western Sydney those jobs will be in industries that will feature with the development of the airport, and in manufacturing, agriculture and technology. This means that I have a strong focus on educating our young girls in science, technology, engineering and maths. This is a focus of our government, and the industry minister talks about this a lot. She has come out to Lindsay where we've worked with some amazing young girls in their development of their interest in science and maths and where that might take them in the future.

We need to be ensuring that we're reaching our full workforce potential. I am focused locally—and I know the Prime Minister is too—on ensuring that, as we emerge from coronavirus, women are still getting all the opportunities they can. That's why the recent numbers have been pleasing, with ABS payroll data showing that the number of women in jobs increased by 1.4 per cent in May, compared with 0.4 per cent for men. But we do have a lot of work to do. It is an encouraging start and I am completely focused, from a local perspective.

I know that getting a job helps many women. I've worked with women in social housing to get them to financial and housing independence. So, from all ends of the spectrum, I think supporting women and encouraging
increased female participation in the workforce is something that we're all going to be focused on and, certainly, something I'll be focused on in my electorate of Lindsay.

Ms TEMPLEMAN (Macquarie) (16:26): I anticipated that there would be certain things that both sides of the House agreed on during this MPI. That's partly because only yesterday the minister addressed the issue of how women have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19. She said:

Women have been the hardest hit though COVID-19. Our participation figures show that 325,000 women have lost their jobs and the women's workforce participation rate has fallen 0.9 percentage points to 58.4 percentage points, and this is partly due to the fact, of course, that women are heavily represented in sectors with sharp decreases in paid work: hospitality, tourism and retail.

So I thought: 'Okay, there's a certain amount of stuff here that we're on the same page with for a change. They actually accept the facts.' But, rather than acceptance that there's gender inequality in the way coronavirus has played out through our economy and through our social structures, what we've had is total denial that that could even be the case. We had a minister telling us that women have never had it so good. We've also heard in the chamber today the Prime Minister, when asked about the serious issue of women with no access to maternity services finding themselves giving birth on the side of a road, respond: 'Ha! We've got an answer for that. We're going to upgrade that road.' This is just a classic example of how out of date the other side is. I thought they had learned through this crisis that you have to look at the evidence and you have to listen to the experts. Clearly, they have learnt nothing.

There's one other thing they clearly haven't done and that is read their own agency's report. The Workplace Gender Equality Agency only last month—so they've actually had a little bit of time to read it—put together a fabulous document exploring the ways in which women have been disproportionately impacted by coronavirus. If they won't take the advice of their own agencies, we don't have much hope. There is no doubt that, as ACTU leader, Sally McManus, said this week, there is a pink recession happening, and it's being acknowledged in the government's own documents. Women, of course, were the warriors in the home during this pandemic. They were maintaining work, if they still had a job, they were supervising learning at home and they were worrying about their older relatives and their neighbours. I saw women doing incredibly thing.

The Mountain of Joy group in Kurrajong Heights fed people every night, and no doubt are still feeding people who are concerned about spending too much time outside their homes because of their age or their vulnerability. Women did amazing things. Women were the warriors in the workplace. Eighty-seven per cent of registered nurses and midwives are women. Eighty-seven per cent of aged-care workers are women. Ninety-six per cent of early childhood educators are women. A percentage of cleaners are women. A high percentage of teachers who are now back in the classroom are women. They're back in the classroom literally with kids who are not able to enforce social distancing in the same way that we have privilege of being able to do here.

Women were the warriors and that's why they need extra support to get back up into the place that they deserve, whether it's pay equality or equality around who has jobs. Unfortunately, at the moment we've got a government who thinks that it's fine just to do jobs for the boys. That's what we've had. That's not because women can't do these jobs; it's because the government has singled out sectors and given them support—not the arts sector where there are lots of women, not universities where there are lots of women, but construction where the facts show us that there are more men than women choosing to work in that sector. That's the inequality.

I thought it was very interesting to hear Associate Professor Alysia Blackham, from The University of Melbourne, who researches workplace discrimination and inequality, describe the pandemic as magnifying the already existing inequalities in the labour market. She said:

Women were already overrepresented in insecure work and are more likely to be on casual contracts with no paid leave entitlements, so there is no obligation to employ them on an ongoing basis …

That's why women are disproportionately affected and that's why we need a plan. And that's not even touching on the issue of women and superannuation. (Time expired)

Mrs ARCHER (Bass) (16:32): I think it's fair to say that no government would want to be in the position that we found ourselves in just a few months ago, having to prioritise the health of all Australians while also giving regard to the economy. The strong, decisive actions of our government have led the way in countries across the world. We have seen success on the health front. There is no doubt that, by putting in place those appropriate measures, we have slowed the spread of the coronavirus. We are certainly all aware that the economic impacts of COVID-19 have been severe. Businesses and households are facing increased uncertainty. We all witnessed the lines outside of Centrelink as job losses came swiftly. It was very painful to witness. This government rightly took swift action to address the devastating consequences of the pandemic, including with the in introduction of JobKeeper.
In my community alone 2,800 businesses have been processed to receive JobKeeper so far. Our community is innovative, entrepreneurial and has a significant number of small businesses both owned by and employing women. In a region that has a significantly high number employed in the private sector, JobKeeper has proved absolutely necessary. The package kept a large number of northern Tasmanians in work and our businesses in business.

Just last week I held a tele town hall with Tasmanian Premier Peter Gutwein where we engaged with thousands in our northern Tasmanian community to discuss the health and economic response to COVID-19. It was certainly made clear that JobKeeper had had a positive impact at a very difficult time. This payment has been used to keep businesses afloat during this time across a range of sectors, including the female dominated hospitality industry.

Restaurant owner Karen Burbury owns and runs successful restaurants in Bass—Cataract on Paterson and Rupert and Hound—employing over 100 people, many of them women. She says: 'JobKeeper has granted us the confidence to plan for the future success of our restaurants. The payment has given us the opportunity to retain our employees, as our teams are the backbone of our businesses' foundation. The payment has been very valuable for the wellbeing and mental health of all our employees and it has offered them the reassurance that their position is secure when the restrictions are lifted. As a business owner, it has given me the security to engage with our employees and renewed hope that our local economy will come back.'

As we now look to the next phase of our economic recovery, much is being done by our government to ensure that our economy can begin to recover. As the Prime Minister pointed out earlier this week, almost 30 months of job growth was lost overnight when COVID-19 took hold a few months ago. Undoubtedly, the impact has been devastating, but it could have been far, far worse without the right economic strategy in place. And, as we look to the recovery phase, it is important that women's roles in the workforce are taken into account.

A study earlier this year showed that women dominated employment growth in this country for both full- and part-time work and that prior to COVID-19 there were more women in work than ever before. As we've heard, the gender pay gap has reduced to its lowest level on record at 13.9 per cent, which is well below the 17.4 per cent gap when those opposite were last in office. Of course, not for one second am I saying that equity and equality for women in the workforce has magically been fixed or that there aren't unique challenges facing women across my community and the country as we look to our economic recovery. Without a doubt, we know that this pandemic has had an impact on women and we need to focus on that as we prepare and plan our way out. This is partly due to the fact that women are heavily represented, as we've heard, in sectors with sharp decreases in paid work, such as the hospitality, tourism and retail sectors. We know that increasing women's participation in paid employment will assist in accelerating Australia's overall recovery. Our investment in essential services throughout the COVID-19 pandemic ensures that women are well positioned to play a full and equal role in every aspect of Australia's response and recovery.

As the economy, particularly in those industries which employ large numbers of women, such as retail and hospitality, starts to revive again, we would hope to see at least an additional improvement in that situation. Just this week, we saw some welcome news on Tuesday, with ABS payroll data showing the number of females in jobs increasing by 1.4 per cent through May, compared with 0.4 per cent for males. While we undoubtedly have more work to do, this is an encouraging start. The government are continuing our focus on women with our $158.3 million women's economic security plan, which we were the first to introduce.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The time for this debate has expired.

BILLs

Treasury Laws Amendment (2019 Measures No. 3) Bill 2019

Returned from Senate

Message received from the Senate returning the bill and acquainting the House that the Senate does not again insist on its amendments disagreed to by the House of Representatives.

Export Control Legislation Amendment (Certification of Narcotic Exports) Bill 2020

Returned from Senate

Message received from the Senate returning the bill without amendment.

Treasury Laws Amendment (2020 Measures No. 2) Bill 2020

Consideration of Senate Message

Bill returned from the Senate with amendments.

Ordered that the requested amendments be considered immediately.
Senate’s amendments—
(1) Clause 2, page 2 (at the end of the table), add:

6. Schedule 7—The day after this Act receives the Royal Assent.

(2) Page 29 (after line 10), at the end of the bill, add:

Schedule 7—Financial reporting obligations for large proprietary companies

Part 1—Repeal of instrument
ASIC Corporations (Exempt Proprietary Companies) Instrument 2015/840

1 The whole of the instrument
Repeal the instrument.

Part 2—Grandfathered exemption
Corporations Act 2001

2 Subsection 1408(6) (table item 7)
Repeal the table item.

Part 3—Application

3 Application

(1) This item applies to a company if, immediately before the commencement of this item, the company was exempted from complying with subsection 319(1) of the Corporations Act 2001 by the ASIC Corporations (Exempt Proprietary Companies) Instrument 2015/840.

(2) Despite the amendments made by Parts 1 and 2, that exemption continues to apply to the company in relation to the 2019-20 financial year.

4 Instruments that provide relief from requirements of Corporations Act—Lodgment of annual reports by large proprietary companies

(1) Despite anything contained in the Corporations Act 2001, ASIC may not make a legislative instrument, however described, if that legislative instrument would have the effect of relieving the class of companies referred to in subitem (2) of the requirement to comply with subsection 319(1) of the Act for a financial year.

(2) The class of companies is the class of large proprietary companies that was relieved from the requirement to comply with subsection 319(1) of the Corporations Act 2001 due to the operation of the ASIC Corporations (Exempt Proprietary Companies) Instrument 2015/840 as in force immediately before the commencement of this Schedule.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Andrews): I understand that it is the wish of the House to consider the amendments together. I call the minister.

Mrs MARINO (Forrest—Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Territories) (16:38): I move:
That the amendments be disagreed to.

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Whitlam) (16:38): Something extraordinary has happened this week. For the third time in three days, an identical proposition has travelled from the Senate to this House and sought our agreement. That proposition is that we remove a discrimination which currently exists within our corporate law, which enables some of Australia's largest companies to avoid the sorts of scrutiny and transparency that apply to every other like company in the country. It's not right, it's not fair and it's not in the public interest, and this House should agree with the amendments that have been moved and agreed to in the Senate to the Treasury Laws Amendment (2020 Measures No. 2) Bill 2020.

It is worth noting that we have now approached the 25th year of the existence of a measure which was supposed to be both temporary and transitional—the 25th year. And as the member for Fenner said in his contribution yesterday, a measure that was once supposed to be a grandfathering provision is now a great-great-great grandfathering provision!

It is about time that this government and this House agree to a proposition which was recommended to the government five years ago to be incorporated into our law. When it made that recommendation, the Australian Securities and Investments Commission said this: The lack of availability of public financial reports reduces transparency about possible indicators of tax avoidance or tax minimisation. There can be no clearer example of clear advice to government and the inability or the unwillingness of government to accede to that advice.

If the majority of members of this place were to be coupled with the majority of members of the other place, I have no doubt that this proposition would be moved into law. If you are going to adopt a proposition which, on its face, is completely opposite to the public interest and if you are going to adopt a proposition which is completely
opposite to that which has been recommended to you by the corporate regulator and if you are going to refuse to accept the recommendation from a Senate committee that has spent several years investigating the matter, the very least you could do would be to come into this place and explain why.

Yesterday, we gave the assistant minister at the table the opportunity to explain why his government was refusing to accept this proposition. The day before, we gave the assistant minister the opportunity to come here and explain why they refused to accept this proposition. On the first time it appeared before this House, the assistant minister refused to speak but tabled a document. The document had this to say:

The House will not pre-empt the Government's response to this recommendation as part of its response to the Senate Economics Committee's corporate tax avoidance reports.

That report is five years old. We've had three elections, three Treasurers and three Prime Ministers since that report was given to the government. We are still waiting. Glaciers move faster than this government on adopting a report from that Senate committee—a report which adopts the recommendation of the Australian Securities and Investments Commission.

Many members opposite may not be aware of what they're going to be coming into this chamber to vote on. They are about to refuse a proposition that says that we should not have laws which discriminate against one group of companies and another group of companies dependent on the date they are incorporated. They are going to vote to maintain a proposition to level the playing field between one group of companies and another group of companies. And you may ask: why does this matter? Transparency always matters in corporate affairs. It matters to creditors, it matters to investors and it should matter to the members of the company, but it also matters to taxpayers. At a time when this government has managed to move more than double the debt that they have inherited—debt this week clicked over at $673 billion—it's incumbent upon them to ensure that every corporate pays every cent of tax that they are required to pay.

Dr LEIGH (Fenner) (16:43): In The Mikado, the Lord High Executioner sings, 'I've got a little list,' and the coalition have a little list as well. Their little list is of their mates that they would like to avoid public scrutiny. That's what they're doing with this vote that we are about to have in this place. Yet again, for the third time in as many days, they are going to come into this place and defend the indefensible. Why do I say it's indefensible? It's because none of them are standing up to defend it. None of them are saying 'boo' as to why they are taking this extraordinary action. They're too ashamed. As the member for Whitlam says, they are hanging their heads, hoping the issue will go away.

The fact is that the issue will not go away. This provision was grandfathered in 1995 and had been intended to be in place for a year or two. The Howard government made it permanent and the mob on the other side want to maintain it. They have no rational reason for arguing in favour of it. In 2015, ASIC said very clearly that such a list 'reduces transparency about possible indicators of tax avoidance or tax minimisation'. The firms on this list are not tiddlywink firms. They include Baiada, Tangaratta, 7-Eleven, Linfox and Suttons Investments. They include firms, as Tom McIlroy from The Australian Financial Review has said:

… linked to billionaire rich listers Anthony Pratt, Kerry Stokes and Bruce Gordon, along with firms controlled by the Myer family, transport magnate Lindsay Fox, and private hospital giant Ramsay Health Care.

They include entities linked to Transfield, Tobin Brothers, Bob Jane, Jones Lang LaSalle, Sealey, Inghams and Dymocks. It includes billionaire investor Alex Waislitz’s Thorney Opportunities Ltd and leading hedge fund Portland House Group among others.

In listing these firms, I'm not casting aspersions on them, because they couldn't get off the list even if they wanted to. Former Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull tried in 2018 and was unable to do so. So the fact is that this list only exists for one purpose—to prevent the proper public scrutiny of private firms. We're not asking much in asking the government to remove this exemption. We are saying that these firms, which are old firms—because, by definition, you had to exist in 1995 to be on the list—should be on the same level playing field as other private firms in Australia. We're asking for a level playing field, which is, of course, a Labor value but once upon a time was a coalition value too. But the coalition won't defend it and can't defend it. The once-great party of Menzies has become the party of 'the dog ate my homework', the party unable to come in here and back up with words what it is about to do with its vote.

Labor has been utterly consistent on this issue. In 2015, we voted for Ricky Muir's measure to get rid of the grandfathered list. The Greens voted with the Liberals at the time, but a few years later the Greens had a change of heart and put up an amendment and we voted with them at the time. We, again, believe that these 1,500 firms should be treated like every other private firm in Australia. Again, today, we are consistent with the position we have held since 2015, voting to say: 'Enough's enough. Let's get rid of the grandfathered position. Let's put these 1,500 firms on the same footing as all other firms in Australia.' In so doing, we are ensuring that integrity is
returned to our tax system. It is only fair that these firms be treated as other firms are treated. It’s what ASIC has called for.

The government have no rational reason for their position. They tabled a desultory note in which they said their reason for not responding was that there was a Senate report that they hadn’t yet responded to. When was that Senate report handed down? 2015. Their only reason is: ‘We are voting against it because a 2015 report recommended it and we haven't got around to responding to that report.’ The party of Menzies has become the party of 'the dog ate my homework'. They have no reason for voting the way they did. They ought to be hanging their heads in shame for this secrecy provision which protects some of the richest firms in Australia.

The **SPEAKER**: The question is that the amendments be disagreed with.

The House divided. [16:53]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes .................55
Noes ..................52
Majority ..............3

**AYES**

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Archer, BK
Chester, D
Conaghan, PJ
Coulton, M
Dutton, PC
Falkins, JG
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hastie, AW
Hunt, GA
Kelly, C
Ley, SP
Martin, FB
McIntosh, MI
Morrison, SJ
O'Dowd, KD
Pearce, GB
Porter, CC
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Simmonds, J
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Tudge, AE
Vasta, RX
Wilson, RJ
Young, T

**NOES**

Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP
Burke, AS
Burns, J
Chalmers, JE
Coker, EA
Conroy, PM
Dreyfus, MA
Giles, AJ
Gosling, LJ
Hayes, CP
Husic, EN
Katter, RC
King, CF
Marles, RD
Mitchell, BK
Murphy, PJ
O'Neil, CE
Phillips, FE

Aly, A
Bowen, CE
Burney, LJ
Butler, MC
Clare, JD
Collins, JM
Dick, MD
Fitzgibbon, JA
Gorman, P
Haines, H
Hill, JC
Jones, SP
Khalil, P
Leigh, AK
McBride, EM
Mulino, D
O'Connor, BPJ
Payne, AE
Plibersek, TJ
NOES
Rishworth, AL
Sharkie, RCC
Snowdon, WE
Steggall, Z
Templeman, SR
Wells, AS
Wilson, JH
Ryan, JC (teller)
Shorten, WR
Stanley, AM (teller)
Swanson, MJ
Thwaites, KL
Wilkie, AD
Zappia, A

PAIRS
Broadbent, RE
Buchholz, S
Coleman, DB
Evans, TM
Flint, NJ
Goodenough, IR
Hogan, KJ
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Laming, A
Landry, ML
Liu, G
Marino, NB
Morton, B
O’Brien, LS
Sharma, DN
Webster, AE
Wicks, LE
Wilson, TR
Wood, JP
Zimmerman, T
Bird, SL
Butler, TM
Byrne, AM
Champion, ND
Chesters, LM
Claydon, SC
Elliot, MJ
Freelander, MR
Georganas, S
Kearney, G
Keogh, MJ
King, MMH
Mitchell, RG
Neumann, SK
Owens, JA
Perrett, GD
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Rowland, MA
Smith, DPB
Vamvakrounou, M
Watts, TG

Question agreed to.

Mrs MARINO (Forrest—Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Territories) (16:57): I present the reasons for the House disagreeing to the Senate amendments and I move:

That the reasons be adopted.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the motion moved by the minister be agreed to.

The House divided. [16:58]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ...................... 55
Noes ...................... 52
Majority ................. 3

AYES
Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Archer, BK
Chester, D
Conaghan, PJ
Coulton, M
Dutton, PC
Falinski, JG
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hastie, AW
Hunt, GA
Kelly, C
Ley, SP
Martin, FB
 McIntosh, MI
Morrison, SJ
O’Dowd, KD
Pearce, GB
Porter, CC
Ramsey, KE (teller)
Allen, K
Andrews, KL
Bell, AM
Christensen, GR
Connelly, V
Drum, DK (teller)
Entsch, WG
Fletcher, PW
Gee, AR
Hammond, CM
Hawke, AG
Joyce, BT
Leeser, J
Littleproud, D
McCormack, MF
McVeigh, JJ
O’Brien, T
Pasin, A
Pitt, KJ
Price, ML
Robert, SR
### AYES

- Simmonds, J
- Sukkar, MS
- Tehan, DT
- Tudge, AE
- Vasta, RX
- Wilson, RJ
- Young, T
- Stevens, J
- Taylor, AJ
- Thompson, P
- van Manen, AJ
- Wallace, AB
- Wyatt, KG

### NOES

- Albanese, AN
- Bandt, AP
- Burke, AS
- Burns, J
- Chalmers, JE
- Coker, EA
- Conroy, PM
- Dreyfus, MA
- Giles, AJ
- Gosling, LJ
- Hayes, CP
- Husic, EN
- Katter, RC
- King, CF
- Marles, RD
- Mitchell, BK
- Murphy, PJ
- O’Neil, CE
- Phillips, FE
- Rishworth, AL
- Sharkie, RCC
- Snowdon, WE
- Steggall, Z
- Templeman, SR
- Wells, AS
- Wilson, JH
- Aly, A
- Bowen, CE
- Burney, LJ
- Butler, MC
- Clare, JD
- Collins, JM
- Dick, MD
- Fitzgibbon, JA
- Gorman, P
- Haines, H
- Hill, JC
- Jones, SP
- Khalil, P
- Leigh, AK
- McBride, EM
- Mulino, D
- O’Connor, BPJ
- Payne, AE
- Plibersek, TJ
- Ryan, JC (teller)
- Shorten, WR
- Stanley, AM (teller)
- Swanson, MJ
- Thwaites, KL
- Wilkie, AD
- Zappia, A

### PAIRS

- Broadbent, RE
- Buchholz, S
- Coleman, DB
- Evans, TM
- Flint, NJ
- Goodenough, IR
- Hogan, KJ
- Howarth, LR
- Irons, SJ
- Laming, A
- Landry, ML
- Liu, G
- Marino, NB
- Morton, B
- O’Brien, LS
- Sharma, DN
- Webster, AE
- Wicks, LE
- Wilson, TR
- Wood, JP
- Zimmerman, T
- Bird, SL
- Butler, TM
- Byrne, AM
- Champion, ND
- Chester, LM
- Clayton, SC
- Elliot, MJ
- Freelander, MR
- Georganas, S
- Kearney, G
- Keogh, MJ
- King, MMH
- Mitchell, RG
- Neumann, SK
- Owens, JA
- Perrett, GD
- Thistlethwaite, MJ
- Rowland, MA
- Smith, DPB
- Vanvakinou, M
- Watts, TG

Question agreed to.

**Education Legislation Amendment (2020 Measures No. 1) Bill 2020**

**Second Reading**

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.
to which the following amendment was moved:

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

"whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading, the House notes that the Government has damaged the quality of Australia's world-class post-secondary education system by:

(1) cutting billions from universities, slashing research funding and locking students out of tertiary education;
(2) cutting billions from TAFEs and training, presiding over a dramatic decline in students undertaking vocational education; and
(3) failing to develop a long-term policy for the Australian post-secondary education system".

Mr HUSIC (Chifley) (17:01): As I indicated earlier this afternoon with respect to this bill, the Education Legislation Amendment (2020 Measures No. 1) Bill 2020, Labor has indicated that it won't oppose the bill. There are a lot of straightforward measures contained within it, particularly around full-fee-paying university students having a 25 per cent loans fee waived for six months due to coronavirus. The bill also includes a range of other provisions that are largely technical in nature, extending the unique student identifier regime to all higher education students by requiring students commencing from 1 January 2021—and all students from 1 January 2023—to have a USI in order to be eligible for Commonwealth assistance under the HESA scheme, and all VET student loan recipients from 1 January 2021. We've also welcomed the fee relief that the bill provides for—such as it is—for that small proportion of full-fee paying undergraduate students that a six-month waiver in loan fees will provide. There are a number of different things in this bill that we've been quite happy with.

But, as I said in the contribution that I made earlier, we are concerned that, at a time where we need to be building up the range of skills of Australian students, both younger and older, we need to see more of an investment in those skills—be it through the tertiary pathway or through the VET vocational pathway. This is particularly true—and a number of contributors from this side of the House have focused on this—of the major skill shortages that exist within the tech sector, where we do not have enough skills and where we import a lot of skill simply because there aren't Australians with the skill set that is required by the tech sector in this country. While it's noted that we don't have enough people going through the tertiary sector to gain those skills in areas of high demand, particularly right now in the artificial intelligence area, we should be looking at what other countries are doing—for example, in the UK, where they are quite open about funding more PhDs in the artificial intelligence arena to ensure that they've got the skills to compete in that space. I notice that Professor Toby Walsh of UNSW has been saying publicly that we should be doing that. It's something that I've argued in recent weeks that we should be doing. We're losing a lot of talent to either China or the US because people feel that they don't have any options here—that their skills aren't being valued and aren't being put to use, in an area where we need to do that. We do need to see more of that happen. I absolutely agree that we should be funding more there, not just in the tertiary arena but in VET, where we should be encouraging more skills development in the information, communications and technology arenas, and we're simply not doing that. It is stunning to me that, at a time when businesses are crying out for skills, they can't get them. We're not investing enough here and, with the borders being shut, we've got a lot of firms that are unable to access talent that can come in from overseas now as well. It's a big issue.

I also notice that in this bill there is provision for some consequential or some straightforward procedural changes to allow for the University of Western Sydney to rename itself Western Sydney University. I am the first graduate of what is now Western Sydney University who has been able to serve in the House of Reps. I'm very proud of my old university. I'm proud of the fact that the Hawke reforms of the late eighties allowed for the emergence of the then University of Western Sydney. The then minister, John Dawkins, pioneered and argued for a lot of the colleges of advanced education to be converted into universities so that we would have an increase in school retention rates. That is something that people on this side of the House are very proud of. Bob Hawke championed those retention rates going up so that, instead of three out of 10 kids, we would have seven out of 10 finishing year 12. If you have that lift in retention rates you will hopefully see that extend into tertiary education, and you need to have the institutions of learning in those areas where you see greater growth, so the Hawke government championed that occurring in my part of the world. We saw retention rates increase, and then we saw more kids going on to university. The old Nepean College of Advanced Education was converted in part into the University of Western Sydney. I first attended the Kingswood campus, and then they opened Werrington and brought in Hawkesbury. These were important moves. We saw a big investment in tertiary education in my part of Western Sydney, which was fantastic.

The University of Western Sydney, now Western Sydney University, has grown, but I have to say that I am concerned that it is not growing in accordance with the growth that we've seen in our part of the world. It is a matter of deep concern to me that Western Sydney University did not take up the opportunity to set up a stronger presence within the local government area of Blacktown, which is one of the biggest LGAs in the country. More
students leave this local government area to go to campuses outside of the Blacktown area. Western Sydney University has spectacularly failed to provide a campus in our area. I note the presence of the member for Berowra because of his connection to the university I'm about to mention. I have to say that it was quite stunning, though welcome, that the Australian Catholic University, to its great credit, has agreed to open a campus in Blacktown. I am impressed by that. Given that the member for Berowra has an association with that university, I speak very highly of ACU for their commitment to making an investment in the future of the young people of Blacktown and to doing that. But, to their great credit, they're not just limiting themselves to the central business district of Blacktown. They are, for example, committed to doing outreach in parts of the Chifley electorate such as Mount Druitt to ensure that kids in Mount Druitt are encouraged to take on tertiary education. ACU is making the commitment to do that in our part of Western Sydney, and it is simply staggering to me that Western Sydney University does not do that and did not have that faith.

I am genuinely concerned that what has happened is that Western Sydney University has focused principally on Parramatta, which is now at the edge of where the bulk of growth is happening in Western Sydney. They've had some focus in south-west Sydney, but other universities are now coming in and recognising the potential of the region and are investing in it. I have to question why the leadership of Western Sydney University is letting the grass grow under its feet in such spectacular fashion.

We have 200,000 people that are moving into north-west Sydney. While the Hawkesbury campus, which is largely focused, importantly, on agriculture, is doing tremendously and has had a legacy and proud tradition of a lot of work in this area, I don't think Western Sydney University has flagged any intent to expand or provide an additional campus in the north-west growth sector where 200,000 people, as I said before, are moving in. I don't think there's any real plan—and I'm happy to be corrected if I'm wrong—to expand vocational education within that part of Western Sydney. Specifically, I'm talking about Marsden Park through to Schofields and Riverstone. I actually think this is the Bermuda Triangle of Sydney development. You've got 200,000 people moving into that part of Western Sydney, and yet there's very little focus on providing the supporting infrastructure or services in that area.

I note the presence of the shadow infrastructure minister, who I've spoken with about improving infrastructure in that part of Western Sydney, but we also need to see hospitals built. The New South Wales government has said that it'll build a hospital in north-west Sydney around Rouse Hill. We'll be interested to see when that actually occurs. We need to see additional services—for example, the building of further schools so that we have educational support for those 200,000 people that are moving into north-west Sydney so that their kids can go on to secondary schools that also need to be built. We need to have TAFEs or vocational education providers, plus a university campus in that part of north-western Sydney to make sure that we've got education and training happening right there on the ground. I'm genuinely concerned Western Sydney uni will be absent from all that. They will just focus on Parramatta and south-west Sydney, and they'll completely neglect north-west Sydney.

We can have some consequential amendments, as are delivered in this bill, sure, and we can facilitate the name change getting recognised, terrific. But Western Sydney University has to be more than a name. It cannot just say it's Western Sydney in name and not fulfil the ambition that drove its creation in the first place, which is to ensure that young people in our part of the world can defy the low expectations that are set because there's this belief that the socioeconomics won't justify the investment. That is just patent garbage. There are a lot of young people in our part of the world that have a lot of talent and need to have that talent twinned with a serious investment by governments at federal and state level—and, in particular, institutions like Western Sydney University—to make that a reality. And I would call on Barney Glover, who heads up Western Sydney University, to demonstrate his commitment to growth in our part of Western Sydney and to show us what his plans are.

Western Sydney does have a presence at the oldirimba site, but it's largely administrative. Again, if that has changed and I haven't kept track of it, I'm more than happy to be corrected. I'm happy to be wrong but, if I'm right and it's not there, that has to be fixed. Certainly, Western Sydney uni can do that and should do that. Because at the moment, all I see is a lot of focus on Parramatta, a lot of focus, potentially, on Bankstown and a lot of focus on south-west Sydney. But, again, this whole group of people, this huge residential growth in north-west Sydney, is being neglected.

It's not good enough, and I'm absolutely committed to standing up for people within the Chifley electorate but also in the surrounding areas, joining up with people, to make sure that young people's ambitions are not neglected and that we do make the proper investment in their future and in our area to ensure that we've got the talent there. It needs to be backed up by economic opportunity, if we get the infrastructure right, and the bringing of businesses into that part of the world so that we have local jobs for local people and the local jobs are actually filled with people who've been trained up either through TAFEs or universities in that part of the world. There is absolutely no excuse for that not to happen now. I would rather us make the investment at this point in time instead of
playing catch-up down the track. The test is whether or not Western Sydney will continue to have other universities—like the Australian Catholic University, like the University of Wollongong, which is nipping at their heels, or the University of New South Wales or the University of Sydney—coming into Western Sydney to do the job that Western Sydney University won't do. It's an absolute tragedy that that's occurring, but that's competition, and if it spurs Western Sydney to do better, than I'm all for it.

Mr SNOWDON (Lingiari) (17:15): Can I acknowledge the contribution of the member for Chifley, who's nicked off.

Honourable members interjecting—

Mr SNOWDON: Oh, he is here! I do want to acknowledge the member for Chifley. I should say that the vice-chancellor you referred to, Barney Glover, was with CDU in the Northern Territory prior to going to you, and it is CDU that I want to talk about very shortly.

As others from our side have mentioned in this debate, including the shadow minister, we support this legislation and can see some merit in many of the proposals within it. However, I do draw your attention to the amendment which was put by the shadow minister. It gives us the opportunity to talk about the billions cut from universities, the slashing of research funding, the locking of students out of tertiary education, the cutting of billions from TAFE and training, the presiding over a dramatic decline in students undertaking vocational education, and the failure to develop a long-term policy for the Australian post-secondary education system.

It's not my intention to speak at any length, but I do want to, particularly, talk about the impact of the cuts that have been made by this government—the billions of dollars of cuts to universities—through the re-capping of undergraduate places and the slashing of research funding. I say that as someone who lives in the Northern Territory, where we have one university, the Charles Darwin University. We have the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, which is an organisation dedicated to opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia and, most particularly, in the Northern Territory. What we know is that since the election of this government in 2013 students in universities have been under constant attack with cuts, attempts at fee regulation, policy chaos and uncertainty: 200,000 students will miss out on the opportunity of a university place over this decade because of the government's cuts and capping of places. This will have a devastating impact on our economy.

As we know, regional universities are really important in a number of ways for local communities—most importantly for the local economy, but also in providing educational options and opportunities and research opportunities for people who live in those regions. If you think about the north of Australia, you isolate James Cook University in the east and you look at what's happening in the west. There's not much happening north of Geraldton, I have to say, in terms of the provision of tertiary education. We've got Charles Darwin University operating out of Darwin and operating a campus in Alice Springs. It's very important for the people who live in those communities to be able to have access to tertiary education and to TAFE—the provision of services out of Charles Darwin also includes TAFE services.

Historically, when young people from regional communities, isolated farming communities and pastoral properties were aspirants for higher education, they had to leave town, leave their communities and leave the Northern Territory to get access to that higher education. That's still the case for many. When we talk about the impact of government expenditure cuts, it makes it really difficult for universities like Charles Darwin to provide the range of courses that they should be able to provide for the student population they seek to attract. As the Vice-Chancellor of Charles Darwin University, Professor Maddocks, said:

At the end of 2017 the Australian Federal Government, the Minister for Education, capped all funding for Australian universities for domestic undergraduate places. That means, ultimately, that fewer students can be enrolled year-on-year, and that's the current environment we've faced.

We know that the CDU has a growing net deficit. In 2018, it was $21 million; it's higher now. But we know that the funding cap on the Commonwealth grants scheme, which froze university funding at 2017 levels from 2018 to 2020, has been crippling for the university. There's no need for this. If the government had its eye on the ball and was concerned, as it says it is, for opportunities for all Australians, particularly those who live in regional communities across this country, the very last thing it would do is inhibit opportunities for people to attend university by cutting university places. Yet, sadly, that is what it's done. As Professor Maddocks has said in the past, 'When you constrain our income, the costs of delivering education and training continue to rise.' We know that, when your budget is constrained and costs are increasing, the relative impact on your educational outcomes has got to be heavy. That's what has happened in this instance.

What we need to impress upon this government is that the best way to improve the life opportunities for young Australians is to make sure that they've got access to a high-standard university opportunity, whether they live in
Western Sydney, in Darwin in the member for Solomon's electorate, across the Northern Territory or, indeed, across northern Australia. We can only do this by making sure the funding is properly put in place. We know that Charles Darwin say they've lost over $30 million in federal money over the four years that I referred to earlier. That's an eight per cent decline in their funding. We do have to change the way in which we deal with these universities, but we've got to make sure that we're doing it for the purposes of improving the opportunities for young people, particularly, to attend universities and get the qualifications they require to be able to get a decent job. That's what this is about.

When we're looking at places like the north of this country not only are university places and university courses extremely important but TAFE is also. What we've seen this government do is emasculate skills training across this country by attacking apprenticeships. We've now got 140,000 fewer apprenticeships and trainees and a shortage of workers in critical services, including plumbing, carpentry, hairdressing and motor mechanics. In communities like mine, these basic skills are really very important. If you're a young person who is living outside of Darwin, in particular—but not only Darwin—you've got no other opportunity but to travel somewhere else to get your training. What we've got to do is make sure that the TAFE services are available and accessible for all Australians, and they should not be burdened with the costs that have been applied as a result of the decisions made by this government. The Liberals have cut $3 billion from TAFE and training. The government clearly don't care enough. But I say to you: if you want to improve the opportunities for Aboriginal people living in remote parts of this country, particularly in Lingiari, then what you will do is make sure they've got decent access to TAFE-type services. Currently, they do not. And you'd make sure that the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education was properly funded so we could provide a better range of courses and a fuller range of services.

These are decisions that this government could make today, and I ask it most sincerely to do so. And we're not only talking about opportunities in traditional areas of education. In the health space, for example, we're talking about providing opportunities and access to training for Aboriginal health practitioners, who are vital in delivering primary health care across the north of Australia, particularly in my own electorate of Lingiari and in the minister's own electorate. I know Durack reasonably well, having travelled around it quite a few times. But you would appreciate the importance of making sure that, for people who don't have access to higher education or TAFE-type services, their life opportunities are severely limited. We've got to make sure that that doesn't happen, and we've got to make sure that this government sees what its responsibility truly is and to remedy the cuts they've made by ensuring that we get a number of opportunities available in the TAFE sector for apprentices and in higher education to the level they need to be at in order to meet the demands of the community.

Ms PRICE (Durack—Minister for Defence Industry) (17:25): I'd like to thank those members who have spoken on the Education Legislation Amendment (2020 Measures No. 1) Bill 2020. The bill implements part of the higher education relief package, the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. For a period of six months, from 1 April to 30 September, the loan fee that applies to undergraduate students accessing a FEE-HELP loan for their studies will be removed. Undergraduate full-fee-paying students who may have been affected by the COVID-19 crisis will be given an incentive to either begin or continue to study in semester 2 of 2020, therefore supporting higher education providers to continue to support student enrolment. Through this measure, the government demonstrates its commitment to ensuring that Australians are able to upskill and retrain, even during these difficult times.

The bill also enables the implementation of the government's decision to extend the unique student identifier, the USI, to all higher education students. By replacing existing student identifiers with the USI, students and providers will have access to a single identification system. To support a single identification across the tertiary education system, the bill will require students who are accessing Commonwealth assistance to have a USI. With almost all students who are in tertiary education using the USI, we will be able to monitor and collect unprecedented data to better inform education programs and policies. In addition, through the USI, students will be able to move between VET and higher education more easily, encouraging ongoing engagement in education and lifelong learning, personal development and career aspiration.

The bill also introduces measures to validate loans for students who have been assigned multiple Commonwealth higher education student support numbers to prevent unfavourable financial outcomes for providers and students. Following the passage of the legislation, the Department of Education, Skills and Employment will make best efforts to contact the affected students as soon as is practicable. The correspondence will contain information on their situation and the effect of the legislation and will also include information on how to challenge debts that may be inappropriate or incorrectly allocated. Additional information on managing financial hardship and the income-contingent nature of the HELP scheme will be provided to ensure that students
are aware of their obligations and any course for redress or relief where required. The Minister for Education has written to the opposition to confirm this. I thank the opposition for their constructive engagement on this bill.

The bill also clarifies the point in time that a student's HELP balance is taken to be reduced to ensure consistency across the HELP and VET student loan programs and makes minor amendments that streamline and improve the operation of the Higher Education Support Act. Once again, I thank all the members, in particular on behalf of the Minister for Education, for their contributions with respect to debating these measures and supporting the government's continued commitment to the higher education sector and its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. I commend the bill to the House.

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

The House divided. [17:34]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes .................60
Noes ..................47
Majority .............13

AYES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Archer, BK
Chester, D
Conaghan, PJ
Coulton, M
Dutton, PC
Fallinski, JG
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hammond, CM
Hawke, AG
Joyce, BT
Kelly, C
Ley, SP
Martin, FB
McIntosh, MI
Morrison, SJ
O'Dowd, KD
Pearce, GB
Porter, CC
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Sharkie, RCC
Steggall, Z
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Tudge, AE
Vasta, RX
Wilson, RJ
Young, T

NOES

Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP
Burke, AS
Burns, J
Chalmers, JE
Coker, EA
Conroy, PM
Dreyfus, MA
Giles, AJ
Gosling, LJ
Hill, JC
Jones, SP
King, CF
Marles, RD

Aly, A
Bowen, CE
Burney, LJ
Butler, MC
Clare, JD
Collins, JM
Dick, MD
Fitzgibbon, JA
Gorman, P
Hayes, CP
Husic, EN
Khalil, P
Leigh, AK
McBride, EM
NOES

Mitchell, BK
Murphy, PJ
O'Neil, CE
Phillips, FE
Rishworth, AL
Shorten, WR
Swanson, MJ (teller)
Thwaites, KL
Wilkie, AD
Zappia, A

Mulino, D
O'Connor, BPJ
Payne, AE
Pibersek, TJ
Ryan, JC (teller)
Snowdon, WE
Templeman, SR
Wells, AS
Wilson, JH

PAIRS

Broadbent, RE
Buchholz, S
Coleman, DB
Evans, TM
Flint, NJ
Goodenough, IR
Hogan, KJ
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Laming, A
Landry, ML
Liu, G
Marino, NB
Morton, B
O'Brien, LS
Sharma, DN
Webster, AE
Wicks, LE
Wilson, TR
Wood, JP

Bird, SL
Butler, TM
Byrne, AM
Champion, ND
Chesters, LM
Claydon, SC
Elliott, MJ
Georganas, S
Kearney, G
Keogh, MJ
King, MMH
Mitchell, RG
Neumann, SK
Owens, JA
Perrett, GD
Rowland, MA
Vamvakinou, M
Smith, DPB
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Watts, TG

Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER (17:38): The question now is that this bill be read a second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Message from the Governor-General recommending appropriation announced.

Third Reading

Ms PRICE (Durack—Minister for Defence Industry) (17:39): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Health Insurance Amendment (Continuing the Office of the National Rural Health Commissioner) Bill 2020

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (17:39): The Labor Party will be supporting this bill, the Health Insurance Amendment (Continuing the Office of the National Rural Health Commissioner) Bill 2020. We will support it because it implements Labor policy. This bill amends the Health Insurance Act 1973 to continue the Office of National Rural Health Commissioner and expand its functions—in fact, this bill makes the office permanent. Under the existing legislation, the office will expire at the end of this month. As the House will recall, the Labor Party has long suggested that the role should be made permanent. The honourable member for Ballarat is in the chamber, and she made that view clear when she was Labor's health spokesperson. It has been our consistent position. In the debate on the bill which established this commission, through our spokesperson the member for Makin, Labor argued strongly that the many challenges in rural, regional and remote health could not be addressed in just three years, and that the commissioner's role should be a permanent one. The government has
consistently rejected that argument, although we have moved amendments at various points to implement it. We are very glad that the government now shares our view.

In addition to continuing the office, the current bill expands the commissioner's functions. Until now, the commissioner has been focused on the establishment of the National Rural Generalist Pathway, a very important new program to train GPs and one that has our support. But the commissioner's role should really be more expansive than that. I particularly welcome the fact that the commissioner will now consider the entire health workforce, including, very importantly, allied healthcare professions like nursing. Allied healthcare professionals across the board will now be within the remit of the commissioner. I also very much welcome the fact that non-statutory deputy commissioners will be appointed to ensure a focus on nursing, allied health and, most importantly, Indigenous health. These are all welcome developments, so we will be supporting the bill. We note that this has come very late. The government has left it to the last minute to continue the role of the commissioner—it expires in just a fortnight. But I'm sure the Labor Party will be constructive in facilitating the passage of the bill through both houses of parliament to ensure that the role can continue as it should.

This also gives us the opportunity to focus on rural health in more general terms. While I am sure every honourable member would like to see health outcomes improve in rural and regional Australia, the Labor Party do have very real concerns about the way the government is going about this. This was a matter of some interest in question time today, when again the minister for regional health denied that there had been any bulk-billing cuts. He said there are changes to the maps—yes, but some areas have been taken out of the rural bulk-billing incentive scheme, and that is, for them, a cut. On Monday, I visited Queanbeyan with Labor's particularly outstanding candidate for Eden-Monaro, Kristy McBain. People in Eden-Monaro face the same challenges accessing health care as other people in rural Australia. They travel too far, they wait too long and they pay too much for health care. Queanbeyan is not a hamlet, it's not a small village, but nor is it a big metropolis; it's not Mosman, it's not St Kilda—it's not inner-city. It has real regional challenges.

The government's own figures show that people in Eden-Monaro paid an average out-of-pocket cost of $39 to see a general practitioner—that's up 30 per cent under this government. To see a specialist the average out-of-pocket cost is $96—up a staggering 50 per cent under this government. So one in eight people in the Eden-Monaro area are forced to skip Medicare services because they can't afford them. I asked the minister about this today, and he said there are no cuts. You'd think the government would actually want to make the position better, but they're making it worse.

The 2018 budget announced a number of changes and, again, everybody, I think, would have the intent of improving access to medical services in rural and regional Australia. It's a very important priority for me; I've made it a priority in my time in the portfolio. I've spent a lot of time going to rural and regional areas. That's one of the reasons why I'm so concerned about some of the government's impacts: because I've seen the impacts firsthand.

My last interstate trip before the restrictions came into place was to Maryborough in Queensland, where I visited a doctor's surgery impacted by the ROMPs changes of the government—the abolition of ROMPs. I asked at that doctor's surgery in Maryborough: how long would it take to see a doctor if I rang today for an appointment? If I was feeling unwell and I needed to see a GP, when could I see a GP? The answer was two weeks—two weeks before the people of Maryborough could see a GP. Some people will get better in those two weeks. Some will get a lot sicker in those two weeks. A lot of people will experience a lot of pain and discomfort in those two weeks. It's really not good enough, and yet the ROMPs changes have impacted on Maryborough and up and down regional Queensland and regional Australia.

On the bulk-billing incentives, which have impacted on Queanbeyan, the government initially claimed that just 14 areas were affected, but at Senate estimates we found out that there are actually 433 areas that have seen cuts. These areas have seen a 34 per cent reduction in incentive payments, down from $9.65 to $6.40—these are the cuts that the minister tries to gloss over in the parliament that are recurring.

In places like Queanbeyan, GPs have built their practices and their business models around these incentives. They've been told that they were there, and now they've been taken away. Many GPs say that this threatens their ability to bulk-bill and some say it threatens their viability altogether. Again, although it's a slightly different program, I have seen GPs' clinics closed in Maryborough. I went to one with a sign on the door—shut, closed down, gone due to changes in government policy. These things have real impacts on both availability and costs.

Kristy McBain and I visited the Queanbeyan GP Super Clinic on Monday. It opened in 2012, following a $5 million grant by the then Labor government—it's a very good clinic; I was very impressed with the set-up. But earlier this year the clinic announced it would have to increase its fees. It said there were two main factors: the government's long-running Medicare rebate freeze; and 'the removal of Queanbeyan from the rural and regional
classification for bulk-billing incentives by the Commonwealth government’—their words, not mine. These are
doctors with no political axe to grind—I've no idea how they vote; don't care. They're just calling it as they see it,
and they see the impact of government policy. This is an area where already one in eight people skip Medicare
services like GP visits due to cost, and the government is making it more expensive. Kristy McBain's called on the
government to reconsider these changes, and I'd agree with her: the minister should be doing that.

The second change is the longstanding district of workforce shortage—it's a different program but very
relevant. Doctors who trained overseas are in a bonded position in Australia and can only claim Medicare benefits
in defined rural areas. The government's changed the system for defining those areas, and there can be a case for
changing these things from time to time. I don't argue in this House that the DWS system was perfect. The intent
of the new system indeed is one I agree with. I welcome the fact that the new system takes into account
socioeconomic circumstances. That's sensible; that's compelling. But, again, they're having huge impacts and in
many instances I can only assume that the impacts are unintended.

The areas that were district of workforce shortage are no longer in many instances the new distribution priority
areas, and that's having an impact. For example, Yass—we heard a bit about Yass in the parliament today, Mr
Deputy Speaker, you will recall, on a different matter—has struggled to attract and retain doctors even when it
was a district of workforce shortage. That'll be tougher now that it's no longer a DPA. So the government is really
letting down the people of Yass, and they're particularly letting down the mothers of Yass.

We asked the Prime Minister today whether it's acceptable for women to be giving birth on the side of the road
on the way to Goulburn and/or Canberra hospitals, their nearest birthing hospitals, which is happening. The Prime
Minister's answer was, 'That's why we're upgrading the Barton Highway.' I almost fell off my chair, I've got to
say! I think honourable members on both sides probably did. I've been here 16 years. I've heard some weird stuff.
That's right up there. That's right up there in the weird stuff I've heard from the mouth of a Prime Minister—to say
that's the reason they're improving the Barton Highway. The member for Ballarat will point out that, actually, our
policy is better for the Barton Highway than theirs. But, even giving them some credit for doing something on the
Barton Highway, to suggest that that will help the women who are giving birth on the side of the road is weird.
Are there going to be birthing lanes? Are there going to be little signs? What's the upgrade which is so relevant to
giving birth on the way to Canberra and Goulburn hospitals?

The government should fund a new maternity ward at Yass hospital. I suggest that would be a better policy
solution than upgrading the Barton Highway, which should be done but for different reasons. Two hundred
mothers a year from the Yass Valley are currently forced to travel to Canberra or Goulburn to give birth. Too
many of them don't make it in time and give birth on the side of the road.

In conclusion, again, I understand the intent of the government's rural health strategy. The intent is one that I
am very focused on, and it will be a very strong element of Labor's policy at the next election. But we will hold
the government to account for the impact of their changes on regional Australia, wherever they be. Up and down
the coast, in different areas, they're having a negative impact. They need to be accountable for that, and we will
hold them to account. That's why I move:

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

"whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading, the House:

(1) expresses its concern at the Government's cuts and changes to regional health; and

(2) calls on the Government to reconsider those measures".

I commend this second reading amendment, and the bill, to the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Claydon): Is the amendment seconded?

Mr Snowdon: Yes.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Lingiari. The original question was that this bill be now
read a second time. To this, the honourable member for McMahon has moved as an amendment that all words
after that be 'That' be omitted with a view to substituting other words. If it suits the House, I will state the question
in the form that the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the question.

Mr SNOWDON (Lingiari) (17:52): I want to thank the government for allowing me to speak now, because
I'm supposed to be at the Privileges Committee—not as a subject! So I give my apologies. I won't be long. It gives
me great pleasure to support this legislation, the Health Insurance Amendment (Continuing the Office of the
National Rural Health Commissioner) Bill 2020. As the shadow minister pointed out, we're pleased to do so
de spite the fact that it's a belated arrival at this point by the government. I think that the position of this Rural
Health Commissioner is extremely important and note the changes that have been made in the context of the
functions of the commissioner under this legislation.

CHAMBER
It's worth actually reflecting upon them. I won't go through all of them, but some are as follows: to provide advice to the rural health minister; to develop, align and implement Commonwealth strategies—as you'd expect; to develop and promote innovative and integrated approaches to the delivery of health services; to identify opportunities to strengthen and align health workforce training; to strengthen and promote regionally based, patient-centred approaches to the delivery of health services to those areas that take into account the needs of communities, families and individuals in those areas; to undertake research and collect, analyse, interpret and share information about a process for improving the quality and sustainability of access to health services; and to consult with the following persons and groups: health professionals, state and territory government bodies, industry, non-profit and other community groups and other health stakeholders.

I want to make some observations about that because, in the context of my own electorate, and given my own knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal health and the role of Aboriginal community based health organisations in the delivery of primary healthcare services across this country, most particularly to regional and remote communities, it is important that we see the priority that should be given to ensuring that the consultation, which is referred to here, includes working with Aboriginal community controlled health organisations and their communities. I say that for a range of reasons, the most important being that they're the fundamental drivers of change in the delivery of primary health care in the bush. In my own communities, we're talking not about one or two health services; we're talking about a range of health services that work across the Northern Territory.

I was actually driven to write a few of these organisations down today just to check how many of them there are, but it is quite a large number if you include Nganampa Health Council, which is the community based health organisation that works in the APY Lands of South Australia, and if you then go to the primary healthcare delivery organisations in the Northern Territory working not only in Alice Springs but also in Darwin, Katherine and Tennant Creek. There are organisations such as Danila Dilba in Darwin, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress in Alice Springs, Anyinginyi Health Aboriginal Corporation in Tennant Creek and Wurli Wurlinjang in Katherine. There are organisations such as Miwatj Health, which provides primary healthcare services to all the major communities of large areas of north-east Arnhem Land. Then, if you look at the work that is being done by other health services, there is Ampilatwatja Health Service, the Utopia health service, the Pintupi Homelands Health Service, Katherine West Health Board and Sunrise Health Service, and the list goes on.

If you had any understanding of these organisations, what you would note about them is that they are fundamental to changing lives and to making sure that the life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are a lot better than they have been. But it requires dedicated purpose. It requires ensuring that investments are being made in rural and remote health. In the context of this legislation, it requires looking at the role of the Rural Health Commissioner to reinforce the value of the role and make sure the commissioner has the resources that are required.

I say that in the context of the COVID pandemic and the issues that have confronted people right across this country. And I point out that, given the role of these Aboriginal health services, working in conjunction with the public health officials of the Northern Territory government, and the work of the Northern Territory government's own health clinics in remote parts of this country and the work that is being done in a policy sense by closing the Northern Territory borders and working with the federal government, using the Biosecurity Act to prevent travel into remote communities, it has been 72 days since there has been a COVID case in the Northern Territory and 28 days since the last patient recovered in the Northern Territory. That's phenomenal when you think about the potential impact of this virus on remote communities. The member for Durack would understand what I'm talking about. I know, Madam Deputy Speaker Claydon, you'd be fully aware of what I'm talking about. Given the poverty that strikes at the heart of many of these communities—the overcrowding in housing et cetera—it was anticipated that there would be, and there was contingency planning done around, a very, very dramatic impact of this virus on the bush. In fact, in the Northern Territory, I'm not sure that we've had any case of an Aboriginal person getting COVID.

I know of the enormous amount of work that is being done by the health services—not only the Northern Territory government's own health services but also, most importantly, the Aboriginal primary healthcare providers, the ACCCHOs—to ensure that there are proper pandemic plans for every community. I've seen some of these pandemic plans, and they involve the communities integrally. When we look at those, and we know how much we rely upon these Aboriginal community controlled organisations and indeed public health generally in the bush, we are taken to the question of ensuring we've got the health workforce able to deliver the services.

One of the issues that has bedevilled remote communities in rural health in this country for many years has been the capacity to attract and retain public health professionals. I want to point out that the dedication and longevity of the Aboriginal community controlled health organisations and some of the public health offices in the Northern Territory that I am aware of have been really important in achieving the outcomes across the public
health domain. But when we acknowledge the importance of the work which is being done in the COVID space, we’ve got to appreciate that this is effectively a partnership between the Commonwealth government, in this case, and the Aboriginal community controlled health organisations to achieve this outcome, and it’s to their great credit.

The work which is being done by the Northern Territory government—by the Chief Minister, Michael Gunner, in his leadership and by the minister, Natasha Fyles, and her public health officials—with the NT Commissioner of Police in getting these plans put in place and protecting the Northern Territory community is monumental. To think that we haven't had a case in 72 days is monumental and really important. I understand there are people in this place who are bemoaning the fact that the Northern Territory government still has its borders closed. I can tell you that it’s very strongly supported by a large section of the Northern Territory population. They can see the merit in ensuring there are not a lot of people coming into the Territory, and it's one of the reasons that we’ve been so successful. Of course that will change, I'm anticipating, over the next month or so. But lessons have been learned here.

We need to be understanding that, even though we haven't had a case in 72 days, there is contingency planning in the case that there may be an outbreak in the future. It's important, again, to understand that the people who have ventilated the views about this and developed the contingency planning are those very same organisations in partnership with the Northern Territory government public health officials, and this contingency planning is really important.

I’ve been regularly briefed by Northern Territory government officials, Aboriginal health services and public health around what's been happening. It's taken them quite a while, but it's very clear that they've developed very comprehensive contingency planning for the possible sad eventuality—and we hope it will never happen—of an outbreak of cases in one or two Aboriginal communities or a number of Aboriginal communities and how they might deal with that. Their response relies upon, as I say again, the professionalism and the expertise of the public health officers who have done all this work. We need to say thank you to them for continuing that work.

I'd say that the health commissioner, as he goes about his work over the next little while, appreciates and understands that we can learn a great deal from what's happened and what's worked. But his role, as I see it, is in part to advise the government of the need to make sure that we have a comprehensive plan for rural and regional health—something we don't yet have. But, if we did have such a plan, and if we were developing such a plan, it would need to understand, comprehend and accommodate the issues around Aboriginal primary health care and the Aboriginal community controlled health service organisations, who provide, in my view, the best examples of comprehensive primary health care in the country. We need to make sure they have the resources they require to be able to undertake their work effectively. So I say to the government: 'Here's an opportunity for you. You've done the right thing about this health commissioner. What we want you to do now is sit down with the health commissioner and with the community generally—the health professionals, the doctors, the nurses, the Aboriginal health workers and the allied health professionals across the country, all of whom are in great demand in the bush—and work with them and the community to develop a comprehensive rural and regional healthcare plan.' Of course, that should also include the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

It's been a privilege to be able to speak in this debate and, more importantly, to be able to highlight the importance of the Aboriginal health services. Most importantly, we need to understand the priority we should be giving to making sure we've got appropriately skilled and appropriately trained health officials in the bush, whether they're doctors, nurses, allied health professionals or, most particularly, Aboriginal primary healthcare workers, including Aboriginal health practitioners, who are fundamental to the operation of the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation. And we need to reinforce the value of training people in the bush. I know it's something which has had the attention of this place in the past, but, if we can make sure that we train people in the bush, I can guarantee you we'll get more people who are trained as professionals staying in the bush. I want to commend the work that's being done in that space at Alice Springs Hospital, for example, and at Charles Darwin University, in training medical practitioners.

It's been a privilege to offer a contribution here, and I apologise again to my colleague the member for Mallee for jumping in her place.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Claydon): I thank the member for Lingiari for his contribution and give the call to the very patient member for Mallee.

Dr WEBSTER (Mallee) (18:05): Thank you. I rise today to support the Health Insurance Amendment (Continuing the Office of the National Rural Health Commissioner) Bill 2020, which amends the Health Insurance Act 1973 to continue the Office of the National Rural Health Commissioner. I want to commend the
hard work of the minister for regional health, Mark Coulton; and the Minister for Health, Greg Hunt, for this great outcome.

Health care impacts every person, regardless of where they live; however, we know that Australians living in the regions have less access to quality health care. In short, there is a lack of equity in healthcare provision. Valuable regional healthcare reform must address the unique problems and challenges that arise in these settings.

My electorate of Mallee is home to over 150,000 people and covers an area just shy of 82,000 square kilometres. The size of the electorate represents 36 per cent of Victoria, making it the largest in the state. Despite its size, population and economic significance to the state and nation, the Mallee is plagued by issues related to the provision of health services. Issues like those faced in Mallee are becoming exceedingly common across regional and rural Australia.

There is a significant maldistribution of health professionals between metropolitan and regional areas, especially with regard to general practitioners. The GP-to-population ratio in the Mallee is appallingly low compared to cities. The doctor-to-patient ratio in Melbourne is one GP to approximately 900 people, compared to the Mildura region where that ratio is one doctor to 3,700 people. In the Swan Hill region, it is over 6,200 people per doctor. In the Horsham region, it is over 3,400 people per doctor. This disparity highlights the inequity between regional and metropolitan areas and represents the significant workforce shortages plaguing the Mallee. Workforce shortages are exacerbated by an ageing cohort of GPs, of which one is my husband, and the difficulties in attracting new GPs to regional areas.

An honourable member interjecting—

Dr WEBSTER: Absolutely. We have reached a crisis point. In September 2019, I convened a health forum with senior representatives of a number of local health organisations from across the Mallee. It came as no surprise that the most immediate concern from all involved was the lack of workforce. That is why it's so important to me that we implement the changes and the strategies to address the inequity that exists in the healthcare system. It's simply not okay that a person's location determines their access to health services and therefore their quality of life. But at the moment it does. That is why I am pleased to see the continuation of the Office of the National Rural Health Commissioner that will support the government to address the challenges of regional healthcare delivery.

Since its establishment in 2017, the office has delivered valuable outcomes for regional and remote Australia. The office brokered the landmark Collingrove Agreement to develop a framework for the rural general subspecialty and delivered advice to the government leading to the $62.2 million investment in the National Rural Generalist Pathway. The office has since progressed the pathway by working with GP colleges to apply for subspecialty recognition for rural generalism within the field of general practice. More recently, the office has been investigating options to improve access to allied health professionals in rural communities and has worked closely with local doctors and health professionals in communities to prepare and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly through the rollout of the GP led respiratory clinics.

The rapid establishment of these respiratory clinics has been welcomed in Mallee, with three clinics opening: in Mildura, Horsham and Swan Hill. In Mildura, a clinic led by Sunraysia Community Health Services was the first in Victoria to be funded as part of the government's plan to establish 100 respiratory clinics across Australia. By taking pressure off the hospital and local GPs, this clinic has delivered enormous benefits to the community. In just over one month, the clinic triaged 528 telephone consultations which led to 345 GP appointments and 326 tests for coronavirus.

Lister House Medical Clinic in Horsham was chosen to operate the respiratory clinic due to its exceptional standing in the community. Lister House has been operating in Horsham since 1946 and is one of the original GP Super Clinics in Victoria. Its status as the biggest clinic in the Wimmera-Grampians area positioned it to be the best candidate to operate a respiratory clinic next door to its current building. Swan Hill District Health Service is operating the Swan Hill clinic, and I was pleased to meet with the CEO, Peter Abraham, and visit the clinic recently. It has been widely welcomed in the community.

The requirement for social distancing has created many challenges for accessing healthcare services, and the government responded with a significant shift to telehealth. I also acknowledge that GPs in Mallee have applauded the $669 million expansion of Medicare-subsidised health services. What needs to be understood is that a 10-year reform of telehealth occurred in 10 days. From March to May, over 11 million telehealth services were delivered by 70,000 providers to almost six million patients. By significantly reducing the level of physical interaction between patients and health practitioners, we have been able to slow the spread of the virus to our most valuable frontline workers and to vulnerable members in our communities.
With the surge in telehealth, we have seen a proportionate reduction in transport costs, accommodation costs and time out of work and away from family. Sentiment among family members is absolutely positive. It is also vital that telehealth subsidies remain in place after COVID-19. Telehealth has the potential to transform regional healthcare delivery, to be part of the answer, and I am working to keep it a national priority going forward.

The new, and now permanent, Office of the National Rural Health Commissioner will take a broader perspective on rural health reform, with deputy commissioners enabling the office to have expertise across a range of vital rural health disciplines, such as nursing, allied health and Indigenous health. The office will support the government's work to deliver major reforms, including providing a rural focus for primary healthcare reform, the National Medical Workforce Strategy and considering the review of the Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training Program. The office will also continue to play a key role to progress the National Rural Generalist Pathway.

Continuing the Office of the National Rural Health Commissioner demonstrates the government's dedication to supporting better outcomes for healthcare service delivery in rural Victoria. The government needs to work on getting the settings right so it can address the maldistribution of our nation's healthcare workforce. A number of government initiatives are delivering positive results, and this work needs to be continued and expanded. Take, for example, the Workforce Incentive Program, which provides targeted financial incentives to encourage medical practitioners to deliver eligible primary care services to rural and remote Australia. In Mallee, we are fortunate to have many overseas trained doctors filling positions. I am pleased that the Visas for GPs Program commenced in March last year. The program directs overseas trained doctors to areas in need of primary health services—in particular, rural and remote communities. Under this program, the percentage of overseas trained doctors directed to fill primary healthcare positions in rural, regional and remote communities has increased from 35 per cent in 2018-19 to 52 per cent as of 30 April 2020.

The Murray-Darling Medical Schools Network evolved from the hard work of the National Party and was announced in the 2018 budget. It aims to provide end-to-end training for rural students in rural locations across New South Wales and Victoria. The Murray-Darling Medical Schools Network is one part of the $95 million investment set up to work towards the train in the regions, stay in the regions program. The guiding logic behind this program is train local, stay local. We know that people from a regional city or town who can learn in a regional place have the best possible chance of graduating and staying in the regions to work. The network consists of university campuses in Wagga, Dubbo, Orange, Bendigo, Shepparton and Mildura.

I know that La Trobe University is doing fantastic work with their rural medical pathway program in partnership with the University of Melbourne. This is the first course to commence as part of the Murray-Darling Medical Schools Network. Under this course, 15 students from regional and rural areas will begin their studies at either La Trobe's Bendigo or Albury-Wodonga campuses and undertake a three-year Bachelor of Biomedical Science before going on to study a four-year Doctor of Medicine at the University of Melbourne's Shepparton campus. There are seven Mallee students undertaking this program in 2020. They are: Alfred, Isabella, Abdo, Abigail, Kunind, Maddie and Oscar. These bright young students already understand the unique challenges of healthcare delivery in regional Australia. Many of them have firsthand experience. It's clear that these students are passionate about making a difference to regional and remote communities.

Alfred, who was born in India, says he wants to travel Australia, working in remote communities and ultimately return to his hometown in Mildura to work locally. Kunind, from Mildura, wants to pursue a career in craniofacial surgery and hopes to bring this area of medicine to areas in rural Victoria. I wish him all success, as it will mean patients won't have to travel to a major city to receive treatment or wait for a specialist to visit. Maddie, from Milawa, wants to address doctor shortages by working with close-knit communities in rural and remote Australia. She ultimately aims to become a rural generalist or to work with the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

Abdo aspires to becoming a general practitioner to give back to his local community of Mildura by addressing the chronic doctor shortage in the area. Abdo is committed and passionate about addressing the inaccessibility of the doctors in Mildura. Oscar is from Cohuna and he wants to develop a dependable reputation and close sense of connectedness to a small rural community. He also wants to be a rural generalist and become experienced in as many specialisations as possible in an attempt to increase the breadth and efficiency of medical care delivered in regional areas.

I truly believe in the efficacy of local, regional training as a solution to the workforce challenges we face. My husband completed his internship and registrar year at the Mildura Base Hospital in the late 1970s. The hospital was a thriving teaching hospital at that time. It took just two years to complete and gave us, as a young couple, the opportunity to experience a regional town and become connected to a wonderful community. And here we are, 43 years later, having raised our family, who have remained local and are now raising their families in Mallee.
I also know that Monash University has developed a postgraduate course under the Murray-Darling Medical Schools Network. Starting in 2021, 30 students will begin the rural end-to-end program studying at Monash in Churchill. Students will then complete clinical training in rural and regional hospitals and community based practices, including Mildura. I look forward to welcoming these future students to the region. It is wonderful to know that La Trobe University, Melbourne University and Monash University students from Mallee are taking up these opportunities and I wish each one of them the very best in their career aspirations. I hope they’re the first of many to achieve success through regional training programs.

These are the types of programs that will deliver real differences to the provision of healthcare services in regional areas like Mallee. I welcome the continuation of the Office of the National Rural Health Commissioner and will continue to address the shortcomings in regional and rural health care.

Dr ALLEN (Higgins) (18:19): I commend the Health Insurance Amendment (Continuing the Office of the National Rural Health Commissioner) Bill 2020, which is to ensure the Office of the National Rural Health Commissioner continues beyond 1 July 2020.

I come from a long line of doctors. My father, Dr Bill Stevens, was the first specialist in Albury many years ago now, in the 1960s. As a child, I grew up with my father being the only specialist for a very large region of the north-east of Victoria. Dad was the adult physician. He was the paediatrician. He was the endocrinologist. He was the gastroenterologist. He was the cardiovascular expert. In fact, he manned the intensive and coronary care unit on his own without any resident staff.

You can probably imagine that, as a child growing up, we were told to answer the phone very formally, because we never knew when it was going to be an emergency or someone inquiring for Dad's services. We said: '212894 Dr Stevens' residence. Can I help you?' That was the typical line that we were taught to answer the phone, because dad was constantly being called out to heart attacks or to strokes or to someone on their deathbed and dying. It was a very informative part of my life: to deal with a community that was having to cope with having one specialist for a very large population.

I’ve grown up to be a doctor and, in fact, my daughter is also a medical student. And I have a lot of doctors in my family. They’re scattered all over in Victoria, including my brother-in-law, Dr Simon Horne, in Point Lonsdale and my sister in law, Dr Rosamund Stobie, in Castlemaine. And I have dear friends who are still in the north-east, including Dr Rebecca McGowan, the sister of Cathy McGowan, the former member for Indi. They constantly tell me updates on how the rural health workforce is dealing with the massive changes that are occurring in the healthcare sector and that affect the regional, rural and remote communities here in Australia.

I would like to say that I’m proud the Morrison government has a longstanding commitment to rural and regional health, and there is always more we can do. This bill builds on that commitment, and it’s in an area that I’m extremely passionate about. To be a local doctor in a rural or regional area is a great privilege, serving that community. The GPs in these areas have to deal with so many different diseases. They have to be able to cover them in a very generalist way. Most importantly, going forward, it’s important that we understand the difference in health outcomes that occur in rural and remote areas, compared to their metropolitan cousins. On average, Australians living in rural and remote areas have shorter lives. They have higher levels of disease and injury, compared with their metropolitan counterparts. In 2015, the life expectancy for both males and females decreased as remoteness increased. In 2017, potentially preventable hospitalisation rates in very remote areas were 2½ times higher than major cities. Challenge in accessing health care or health professionals is regarded as one of the key factors behind health inequalities. As a metropolitan based physician, this was something that I saw.

I dealt with patients in the field of paediatric gastroenterology and allergy. I was very delighted when we were able to start using telemedicine, because that enabled patients to more easily access review appointments without having to travel for many hours across the state of Victoria to come to see a specialists at The Royal Children's Hospital. Families would have to take a day off work—usually two days off work—to travel from different parts of Victoria, or to fly down if they had to come down from Mildura. Not only was that a costly exercise but also a big time constraint and time impost on that family. Telemedicine has been a great boon to rural and regional medicine. The Morrison government is very proud to support telemedicine. In fact, it was the strengths in telemedicine that enabled the Morrison government's swift response to the COVID pandemic, which we are currently in the midst of.

We saw very early in the COVID pandemic a requirement to ensure that our healthcare professionals were protected and that patients who needed to see a healthcare professional were protected from coronavirus. The ability to access telemedicine—not just in rural, regional and remote areas but also in metropolitan areas—has been one of the great transformative aspects of our healthcare system in response to the COVID pandemic. So, in all this darkness there is some light, and telemedicine and telehealth are among those aspects. The Minister for
Health, Greg Hunt, should be congratulated for his swiftness in activating telemedicine MBS rebate items and activating those sorts of services across Australia. Not only did it protect our healthcare professionals and enable our patients to remain safe from COVID but it also protected our PPE, or personal protective equipment, stockpiled in a time when we were having some difficulties with our supply chain, early in the COVID crisis, when the world was seeking every mask and every gown around the world.

So, the government has done a lot for rural and remote care. There is a lot more to do, but we are committed to rural and regional health, and this bill is speaking to that very point. We've increased funding every year and will continue to deliver funding to regional hospitals. The Morrison government has launched the $1.3 billion Community Health and Hospitals Program. This has seen $63.4 million for regional radiation oncology centres for cancer treatments. My own uncle—‘Lazy Harry’, as he's known; he's a country singer who lives in Beechworth, Mark Stevens—was lucky enough to be able to access regional health care for bowel cancer, which he's recently suffered from.

Also, there's a very big intent to make sure that clinical trials are undertaken regionally so that patients in regional areas can access the best and newest novel treatments. In the past, a lot of regional patients have missed out because they haven't been able to travel to the city for the cutting-edge trials that are available to metropolitan based patients. So, it's wonderful that $100 million is invested in regional clinical trials. This is a very welcome development. The Morrison government has also established the Murray-Darling Medical Schools Network as part of a $550 million rural workforce strategy. This will deliver 3,000 additional specialist GPs for rural Australia, over 3,000 additional nurses in rural general practice and hundreds of additional allied health professionals in rural Australia over 10 years.

There have been a number of recent reforms that are very important, which I'd like to make note of today. One of those includes, in January 2020, the rollout of the workforce incentive program Doctor Stream. This has provided targeted financial incentives to encourage medical practitioners to deliver eligible primary care services to rural and remote Australia. These doctors really are quite highly specialised in their ability to do more than just general practice; they are also able to deliver some of the specialty care that they need to do. So, an incentive program is so important, because we know that many doctors travel to metropolitan areas to get their university training and don't return to their home town, and I'm an example of that.

Furthermore, from 1 January 2020 the geographic eligibility for rural bulk-billing incentives was aligned to the Modified Monash Model 2019, or MMM, which ensures that the higher incentives are correctly targeted to practitioners who are working in regional, remote and rural areas rather than in metropolitan areas or larger towns. This is a better targeting of that supplement to ensure that the incentives are correctly aligned with those who are truly distant from where they can access metropolitan services. And, as I mentioned before, we have also rapidly expanded telehealth services, which has improved continuity of care and advice during this difficult time.

The proposed legislation will ensure that rural communities and rural health workers continue to have an independent advocate. This legislation will transform the Office of the National Rural Health Commissioner from being a temporary one to becoming a permanent feature of our approach to rural health reform. I'd like to congratulate the Minister for Health, Greg Hunt, and the minister for rural health, Mark Coulton, for this extremely important initiative to make this into a more permanent office rather than a temporary one. The office will be ongoing in function, and a review of the office's effectiveness and achievements will occur after five years of operation.

It is important to constantly review and assess what we do so that we can continue to tailor and target the effects of what we are committing to. Future commissioners will be appointed on a two-year tenure with options to extend for a second tenure. The office will also take a broader focus, with the National Rural Health Commissioner supported by an expanded office. This will include deputy commissioners, and these deputy commissioners will provide specific advice on vital rural health disciplines, such as nursing, allied health and of course Indigenous health. This approach will ensure the office is well placed to provide advice on an integrated multidisciplinary model of care.

One aspect of regional health that we do hear about from our general practitioners and allied health workers is that working in a team is something that they do miss out on when they're not in large metropolitan centres. Ensuring we have a networked, multidisciplinary and integrated approach to health care in regional areas is not only important for the patients themselves; it's important for the specialist GPs and allied health workers who are working in this environment. It does already occur to a large degree, but we need to do better in this area to ensure, for instance, that a patient who is undergoing palliative care in a regional or remote town has an integrated approach, supported by a GP, a psychologist, a nurse and allied health workers who are helping solve problems together so that the patient can get the best support and advice.
The commissioner position has been a wonderful initiative and is being made into a more permanent position. The inaugural commissioner was Professor Paul Worley. The National Rural Health Commissioner was established on 1 July 2017 and has been at the centre of our response with regard to rural and regional health. Professor Worley has worked tirelessly to consult with and advocate for the rural health sector, and he's brokered the Collingrove agreement, which defines rural generalist practice. His final report will soon be submitted with regard to medical and allied health services.

The office has also provided advice leading to a $62 million investment in the National Rural Generalist Pathway and prepared draft advice on rural allied health reform, including a published literature review. It's very important to look at the role of nurses, speech therapists, occupational therapists, psychologists and the like in care in a generalist setting in these rural areas because often there are not enough healthcare providers and so we need to diversify the advice provided.

During the COVID pandemic, as we've just heard from the member for Mallee, the commissioner worked closely to develop and establish GP-led respiratory clinics, which is important not just for rural and remote areas but particularly for Indigenous communities. I have recently been on the national health and research coronavirus rapid response advisory committee, and a lot of work has been done in protecting our Indigenous communities during the COVID pandemic, including ensuring that they have been quarantined but also that they're getting enough testing to control and contain any possible outbreaks in Indigenous communities.

Most importantly, the office has worked with communities and professionals to help meet the unique needs of rural and remote patients. You really need to have a rural and remote lens to be able to solve the problems, not to have a centralised model where metropolitan services are being provided in an outreach way. It's more important that we have commissioners who actually know what they are talking about from the perspective of the locals.

An initial focus will be to assist with the government's rural response to COVID-19 and its understanding of any longer term impacts of COVID-19 from the drought and bushfires that have occurred in the last few months. Rural and regional Australia has suffered in the last year. It isn't just COVID-19; it's been off the back of the droughts and bushfires. The office will otherwise continue to build on the body of work already delivered while focusing on practical outcomes, including through supporting government delivery of key reforms and programs.

The office will have the capacity, importantly, to conduct an evidence based research approach into issues in rural health. Importantly, it will also focus on the chronic workforce shortages. We all know that we need to ensure that younger doctors train in rural and remote areas because, firstly, they get the opportunity to experience the diversity of work opportunities they have and, secondly, they're also more likely to establish roots, enjoy living in a rural and regional town and develop relationships. There are opportunities for their partners to develop working opportunities. There is a lot more work that can be done, and we do know many universities are starting to provide these sorts of programs—such as the bonded programs at Monash University—to ensure that students can actually get a foothold in a community environment and potentially stay there for the long term.

Promoting rural and regional health is fundamental to helping regional Australia to be a better place to work, live and raise a family. I'd like to commend to the House the Office of the National Rural Health Commissioner and its vital role in achieving parity in health outcomes between rural and regional patients and their metropolitan counterparts.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Vasta): The question is that the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the question. I call the honourable member for Gilmore.

Mrs PHILLIPS (Gilmore) (18:35): I am always pleased to talk about rural and regional health so I am happy to rise tonight to support this bill, the Health Insurance Amendment (Continuing the Office of the National Rural Health Commissioner) Bill 2020. Health is very important to country communities like mine. Our health system can't be a cut-and-paste of those in the city. We can't use a cookie-cutter approach and think everything will be fine. Country areas need to have country-specific health policy, rural-specific health policy. That's why I support this bill today—because it is recognition by the government that a rural health commissioner is necessary into the future and that more changes are needed to improve rural and regional health. When the Office of the National Rural Health Commissioner was first established in 2017, Labor raised concerns about the fact that the office would cease in June 2020. It took a while—three years, in fact—but the government have now decided that we were right, and I am glad they did. One thing I notice about the government is that they fight and fight Labor, and then they realise that we were right and they do what we suggested. It's lovely, but I simply wish they would get there a little quicker, because, while they dither, people in country areas suffer. That is the reality.

Take the new Eurobodalla regional hospital, for example. This is another one where I hope to one day be able to say that the government realised we were right, but it sure is taking a while. I have been standing with the community in their calls for a new Eurobodalla hospital for years. The current Moruya and Batemans Bay
hospitals are only level 2 facilities. They are small regional hospitals. This means that two-thirds of local patients are forced to travel outside of the area to get the treatment they need—to Canberra, Shoalhaven or Sydney. This means time away from families and friends, those essential support services. It means more expense and more stress when needing to seek vital medical assistance. In an area with a growing retirement-age population, we need to make sure that our hospitals have services up to the necessary standards to meet the needs of local people.

My electorate of Gilmore on the New South Wales South Coast has one of the highest numbers of aged pensioners in Australia so, naturally, good-quality hospital systems are crucial. Late last year, when the New South Wales Labor leader and I met with local residents in Tuross Head at a kitchen table discussion, they said the poor hospital services were turning older people away. They can stay for a time, but not as they get older. It is too risky. Those residents could see how absolutely vital this new hospital is. I thank them all for their contributions.

The New South Wales and federal governments have been dragging their heels on this critical infrastructure for years. It was only last week that the New South Wales government even confirmed that the new hospital would be in Moruya—very welcome news, absolutely, but we have waited a long time for it. At the same time, the New South Wales government has also committed an additional $50 million, which is excellent. I welcome any additional funding towards the new Eurobodalla hospital. I have been calling on the Morrison government to do the same.

But it isn't enough to just replace what we have. We need to make sure that there is real improvement for local people and local health workers. We need to ensure the hospital is a level 4 facility. This is critical. We need to ensure there is an acute mental health inpatient facility included. We need those assurances from the government urgently. I have long been calling for the New South Wales and federal governments to include funding for mental health inpatient beds as part of this new hospital, and I want to see the government take this issue seriously. This hospital has taken too long to get off the ground. The community, rightly, wants to make sure that we have a facility that is fit for purpose and will provide the ongoing health support we will need into the future. As Dr Michael Holland has said:

The Eurobodalla Health Services Clinical Services Plan was submitted to NSW Health in July, 2019. Improvement of services needs to be provided immediately within the existing infrastructure as requested by the Petition to the NSW Legislative Assembly and as recommended by the NSW Health Agency for Clinical Innovation.

He went on:

The commencement of work on the single new Eurobodalla hospital needs to occur as soon as possible.

The community on the far South Coast deserves no less. Dr Holland has campaigned tirelessly, along with a number of people in the community, for improved health services in the Eurobodalla. I thank him for his ongoing dedication to this. We are still waiting for the clinical services plan, the next important step. I look forward to seeing those details.

It isn't just Eurobodalla hospital that is in desperate need of additional investment by this government, the Shoalhaven Hospital redevelopment has also been promised for too long without enough action to get it off the ground. It is yet another example of coalition governments at the state and federal levels dragging their heels on rural and regional health. Shoalhaven Hospital is a major regional hospital. In March this year it was revealed that 43.1 per cent of people wait longer at Shoalhaven Hospital's emergency department than the state benchmark, ranking it seventh out of the list of longest emergency wait times in New South Wales. That is absolutely outrageous and not good enough. We know that complete bed block and code blacks is a huge stress when people's lives are at one of the toughest times of the year—incomprehensible. At the time, I called on the Morrison government to intervene and provide funding to keep the unit open. The Morrison government has continually said it is committed to providing the best mental health care and support for all Australians. But all they did was divert responsibility for this closure to the New South Wales government. They abandoned our community. Sadly, that is the government's record on rural and regional health.

The hospital's lack of acute mental health beds is exacerbating this problem. Mental health beds are hugely important in taking pressure off emergency departments. They mean that people suffering from acute mental health episodes can get the appropriate treatment they need when they need. But, in another show of rural and regional health being put last, the subacute mental health unit at the hospital was closed for three weeks during the bushfires over Christmas. This is cost saving with people's lives at one of the toughest times of the year—impossible. At the time, I called on the Morrison government to intervene and provide funding to keep the unit open. The Morrison government has continually said it is committed to providing the best mental health care and support for all Australians. But all they did was divert responsibility for this closure to the New South Wales government. They abandoned our community. Sadly, that is the government's record on rural and regional health.

We need to make sure that all our regional hospitals have adequate services. For some time the community in the Milton and Ulladulla area have been campaigning for a CT scanner at the hospital. According to an article in the Milton Ulladulla Times, local paramedics have said they have become a taxi service taking people to Nowra to access the scanner there. Why do the people of Ulladulla have to settle for fewer services, more travel, more stress
and difficulty? We deserve better than this. The government's changes to rural health policies are hurting our communities.

In 2018 the government announced a number of health workforce changes under a so-called Stronger Rural Health Strategy. The strategy sounds great, improving access to health services in the bush, but the reality is different. The strategy changed the rural classifications for restricted doctors, that is doctors who trained overseas or in a bonded position in Australia. These doctors can only claim Medicare benefits in defined rural areas. In 2018 the government changed this from the longstanding district of workforce shortage to a new distribution priority area system.

I want to use the example of the Shoalhaven Family Medical Centres to show the negative impacts these changes have had on practices on the New South Wales South Coast. The Shoalhaven Family Medical Centres run general practices in Vincentia, Worrigee, Basin View and Culburra Beach. I have had the pleasure of meeting with the practice owners Dr Hao Pham and Mrs Annette Pham on number of occasions now. Under the old system Shoalhaven Family Medical Centres were provided with replacement provision exemptions under section 19AB of the Health Insurance Act 1973. This meant that when an overseas trained doctor left the practice, they were able to replace them with another overseas trained doctor. Dr Pham and Mrs Pham advised me that at the time the changes were introduced the practice was in the process of recruiting two new doctors under these provisions.

In a letter I received from the minister after the changes came into effect on 1 July 2019, the minister advised that the Department of Health would still consider applications from practices in a 'workforce shortage area' that began before the changes came into place. It is certainly the Shoalhaven Family Medical Centres' view that they should meet this requirement. However, the two doctors had been denied Medicare provider numbers because the practices are not located in a 'distribution priority area'. The practice has sought reviews of this decision by the minister. However, I am yet to receive a response from the minister on this issue. As Mrs Pham said, the department continues to cite complex legislation which changed without their knowledge and has left them worse off than they were before. We need to be encouraging doctors into country areas. We need to be making it easier for practices to recruit and keep doctors in our community. Mrs Pham has said, 'It is just too hard to try and wade through this,' and she has given up.

The government's changes and cuts to rural and regional health are hurting our providers and, by extension, hurting our communities. In January, official data confirmed that out-of-pocket costs for people in my electorate to see a doctor had increased by 34 per cent. Local people are now paying $8.27 more per visit than they were under Labor. Why are people in rural and regional areas having to pay more to see the doctor? This government has been waging a war against Medicare for years. Health costs have never been higher than under the Morrison government, and it is rural and regional Australia that is suffering.

I have spoken on a number of occasions in this place about the Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre. This centre is based in Nowra, but it has been providing mental health outreach services to the Ulladulla region thanks to funding from the federal government. But this funding is due to cease in 13 days. The centre has been trying to obtain a further commitment of $70,000 from the government so that they can continue this outreach. As most people would know by now, the Ulladulla region was severely impacted by the recent bushfires. We know that this has had a huge impact on the mental health of local people. Throw COVID-19 on top of that, and it is not difficult to see that we need to be increasing mental health support in these areas. But the government has been reluctant to provide this funding—as I said, a total of $70,000.

I wrote to the minister in February this year on behalf of the centre. In March, the centre was told to try the Primary Health Network. The Primary Health Network had been given funding for additional mental health services in bushfire impacted areas, and maybe the centre could benefit from that. Fantastic news, we thought. But this contract had already been awarded. So, back to the minister I went, again, asking him to ensure we don't lose this vital mental health service in the Ulladulla region. I'm really pleased that the Shoalhaven's Women's Health Centre has received some additional funding from the federal government. However, the money is for financial counselling services. It's very welcome indeed, and hard-fought, but the money cannot be used for mental health services, so the Ulladulla outreach services remain severely at risk. So, again, I ask the minister to provide the Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre with the $70,000 they need to keep this vital local service going. Time is ticking. There are 13 days to go. It isn't much, but it makes a huge difference to local organisations and the people they serve.

We need to make sure that rural and regional areas receive targeted and appropriate services for their needs. We can't use a cookie-cutter approach. What works in the city doesn't necessarily work in the country. What works in one regional area doesn't necessarily work in another. The fact of the matter is that many of the government's changes have been hurting rural and regional areas like ours on the New South Wales South Coast. Not enough focus and attention has been paid by the federal government to improving our local hospitals.
We simply aren't doing enough to recruit and keep doctors in rural and regional areas, and healthcare costs continue to rise. The government need to take urgent action on this. They need to address it now. So I support this bill today, and I hope to see more changes by the government that will improve outcomes for people in rural and regional areas. I commend the bill to the House.

Dr HAINES (Indi) (18:50): I'm delighted to support the Health Insurance Amendment (Continuing the Office of the National Rural Health Commissioner) Bill 2020. As a former rural health professional and a former rural health researcher, speaking about rural health is right up my alley. I'm really pleased to do so. But, more than that, this piece of legislation heralds a really good day for rural health. Both the Minister for Regional Health, Regional Communications and Local Government and I live have worked almost all our lives in rural and regional Australia. I know that he'll agree with me when I say it's an incredible place to live. It's filled with opportunities, but they're not always fulfilled.

We both share a passion for vibrant and healthy rural communities but, as members of these communities, we know this doesn't happen by accident. Rural communities rely on good-quality health services that last the distance. Crucial to rural and regional development is having strong, vibrant, high-quality rural and regional health facilities. That's how we attract people to rural and regional Australia—by guaranteeing that we have those services. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic that we've been experiencing this year, we have seen the strength of rural communities and the strength of our rural and regional health practitioners as they've risen to the challenge, often in very, very challenging circumstances. I have seen them across my electorate. I have seen them do what rural health people do, and that is often make do with less than optimum facilities. So I take my hat off to them. I thank them. I know they're working tonight in difficult circumstances in order to make sure that they are ready for whatever happens.

Last year, the minister visited Beechworth, in my electorate, to meet with four of our vital but very small rural health services: Beechworth Health Service, Alpine Health, Tallangatta Health Service and Corryong Health. It was clear from our discussion that the minister understood the issues that were facing these small health services and came from a place of experience. I would say that that's not always common in this House.

This bill consolidates the place of a dedicated advocate for rural health within government decision-making and policymaking. It builds on the reforms led by the outgoing commissioner, Professor Paul Worley, and recognises that the job is not yet done. It is far from done. I want to recognise Professor Worley for the reforms that he's been undertaking—in particular, the rural generalist training program. I would also like to point to the recent GP respiratory clinics. I recently attended one in Wodonga, and I was really pleased to see the work that they're undertaking there, particularly in the area of paediatric respiratory health.

Health care is a lifelong passion for me. It's both personal and professional. As a midwife, I've delivered many hundreds of babies, many of whom are now of voting age—and I think a few of them might have even voted for me! That's a heck of a way to get a vote, I've got to say—it's a long wait! Some of them have gone on to have children of their own. My own daughter is a junior doctor and she undertook her training as a medical student in the rural medical program. I worked for many years with an extraordinary obstetrician, Dr Leo Fogarty. For every baby I delivered, I think he probably delivered 20 or 30 more. I've worked extensively with another exceptional rural doctor, Dr Ian Wilson, an emergency department physician and excellent educator of rural medical students.

As a former rural health researcher and director of the Rural Health Academic Network with the University of Melbourne, I oversaw and led research into various aspects of rural health. That's the thing about rural health: it is so diverse and the amount of skill that people have to have crosses so many disciplines. Our research program included telehealth assistance for stroke and cardiovascular disease. We undertook research into palliative care, diabetes and a multitude of other chronic diseases. We did exceptionally large amounts of work in men's health, included telehealth assistance for stroke and...
midwives, and we need more culturally appropriate training into our medical schools, allied health and nursing
courses.

We know that it's the social determinants of health that have the biggest impact on why health outcomes in
rural and regional Australia are poorer than those in metropolitan areas. We know that we are without good
regional infrastructure. We have fewer bicycle paths and we are more reliant on cars. We don't have footpaths that
are good for walking and we have conditions that create chronic disease—conditions that mean more rural
Australians smoke, more of them are overweight and more of them do less physical activity and have higher than
optimal alcohol consumption and blood pressure than in the cities. It's little wonder when you see that some towns
are just so poorly equipped for people to exercise in. Indeed, food security in some rural and regional towns—in
the very remote areas—is extremely poor. So it's not that rural and regional Australians are any worse at looking
after their health from a deliberate choice, it's the circumstances in which they find themselves. That's why it's so
important that we invest in rural and regional infrastructure if we want to improve rural health.

The link between poor health outcomes and the lack of access to health services is well known. Often we have
to travel considerable distances just to see a doctor for a basic consultation, or wait weeks to see a specialist. Of
course, one of the silver linings of the COVID-19 pandemic has been the freeing up, the unlocking, of telehealth.
Those of us who have worked in the area for decades have been crying out for this, so I am really pleased that this
is now a permanent fixture.

Unfortunately, rural health has been viewed as the fringe of an overarching system that is set up for
metropolitan Australia. It's really a metrocentric healthcare system. What we know, as I've heard other speakers
say today, is that metropolitan systems of care simply cannot be translated directly into regional Australia. That's
why a commissioner for rural health is so important.

I think it's really important to talk about—and the AMA only recently gave statistics about this—the healthcare
deficit in spending. We can't get away from this. There is a healthcare spending deficit of $2.1 billion in rural and
regional health. It's a chronic underspend of Medicare, PBS and publicly provided allied health services. I can't
emphasise enough the impact on access to allied health services, and that's why I'm very pleased that there are
going to be co-commissioners looking at this.

There is still so much to do in rural health. It's common sense to extend the office beyond 30 June and to
establish the office as an ongoing entity. We still experience perennial issues of health workforce shortages and
have a higher disease burden, as I just said, with the health consequences that arise from those. That's not to
mention the health consequences that have arisen from the fires. The data is coming out now; there is very, very
robust evidence emerging about the impact on people who live in rural and regional Australia of the 'black
summer' bushfires and smoke inhalation—and of course on people who live in the cities too. That summer
exposed the brittle systems in telecommunications, welfare and health that are the reality of service delivery in the
country.

It's a comfort to me, it truly is, to know that the National Rural Health Commissioner is here to stay, and I'm
confident that this commissioner will examine the multiple social and environmental impacts of health. I'm
confident that they will. The functions of the office have been expanded to include the appointment of deputy
commissioners, and this will support the commissioner and provide expertise across health disciplines, including
Indigenous health, nursing and allied health. This is excellent news. Health care is a team sport. Interdisciplinary
care is the gold standard. We need to achieve greater enrolment of rural students into allied health professions. We
need greater access to allied health positions in our universities, and just this week in the House I asked a question
directly to the Minister for Education about this. We need to free up places.

Deputy health officers have immeasurably enhanced and enriched our national health response. One example
that comes to mind is Professor Paul Kelly, the deputy chief medical officer. He visited me in Wodonga earlier
this year, in the midst of our terrible bushfires. He came with me and Minister Hunt to Corryong and saw firsthand
what was going on up there. He visited the very tiny Corryong Health, which was evacuated during the bushfires.
Another recent appointment is that of eminent psychiatrist Dr Ruth Vine as the deputy chief medical officer for
mental health, and I really commend that appointment, too. If there's one area of health care that we are so far
behind in it's mental health.

When the Office of the National Rural Health Commissioner was first established the former member for Indi,
Cathy McGowan, advanced an amendment to ensure that the commissioner consulted with communities in
regional, rural and remote areas, including consumer support and advocacy groups. I'm pleased to see that this bill
goes into detail about who the commissioner consults with and lists health professionals, state and territory
government bodies and industry, non-profit and other community groups and stakeholders. On a commonsense
reading, this bill includes the groups identified by the former member for Indi, and I hope this commitment to broad-based consultation is echoed not just in legislation but in reality.

Importantly, building on the success of the office since 2017, the office is now legislatively mandated to undertake research and to collect, analyse, interpret and share information about approaches to improving the quality of and sustainability and access to health services. This strong research capacity is absolutely essential to providing comprehensive insight. Rural health research has historically been underfunded. In a study from 2018 by a good friend of mine, Professor Lesley Barclay, it was reported that, between 2000 and 2014, of the 16,651 projects funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council, just 185 focused on rural health research. That's just one per cent of NHMRC funding at that time.

I'm glad to see that the office's responsibilities will translate into practical activities, such as working with communities that are experiencing workforce shortages to co-design primary care models that respond to the community's circumstances. Again, from my own experience as a rural health researcher embedded in a regional health service, along with my colleagues Kaye Ervin, Anna Moran and Carol Reid, I have seen firsthand how important it was to connect a university to a clinician, by the bedside, so that we could assist them in undertaking key research and translating that research into practice. To get traction with health services research at the bedside is extremely difficult. Again, I would say to the government, in terms of research funding, that health services research is not very glamorous, but it's crucial to rural health.

The commissioner is scheduled to present the final report into improvement of access, quality and distribution of allied health services in regional, rural and remote Australia to the minister later this month. I am really looking forward to reading that, because, as I said earlier, allied health professionals play a major role in the prevention and treatment of so many chronic diseases. The commissioner himself notes in his interim report:

Allied health services underpin the health and wellbeing of our nation. They are the quiet achievers of our health, disability, education, aged-care, and social service sectors. Without them, our schools, workplaces, homes and aged-care facilities all struggle to realise their potential, communities suffer and economic development stalls.

The interim report identified four strategic themes for reform. One is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners and culturally safe and responsive services, and I can't emphasise enough how important that is.

Finally, I'd like to speak on the university model of university departments of rural health. I particularly mention today the Going Rural Health initiative, which has worked tirelessly to undertake allied health training across the regions, particularly in my region of Indi, where almost 2,000 nursing and allied health students have been placed across the region, and I particularly mention the leader of that program, Keryn Bolte. I would also like to particularly mention Dr Seb Kirby, who is an outstanding graduate of the University Department of Rural Health medical program in Wangaratta. He has continued to practise as a junior doctor and is contributing on the ground in a way that we want to see in rural health across the nation.

Dr Gillespie (Lyne) (19:05): I support the Health Insurance Amendment (Continuing the Office of the National Rural Health Commissioner) Bill 2020 that we are debating tonight, which provides for continuing the Office of the National Rural Health Commissioner. I'd like to personally commend and congratulate Emeritus Professor Paul Worley, who is about to complete his term. His was the inaugural appointment, and I was very pleased to make that appointment when I was the Assistant Minister for Rural Health. I'm pleased to see that the Office of the National Rural Health Commissioner is being continued and will become a permanent fixture, rather than being temporary. It will continue for another five years before it's reviewed again. I'd like to congratulate Minister Greg Hunt and the Minister for Regional Health, Regional Communications and Local Government, the member for Parkes, on the decision to continue this wonderful initiative.

I would also like to congratulate Professor Worley on his achievements in getting the two general practice specialist colleges to agree, in the Collingrove Agreement, on the national framework for developing a national rural generalist pathway, which is no mean feat. I'm pleased to say that over $62 million has been appropriated to deliver that. He's also worked with the two colleges to get a pathway for subspecialty recognition for rural generalist practitioners. He's also advised on rural allied health reform and helped the set-up of GP-led respiratory clinics during the COVID crisis, and he's been instrumental in implementing the $550 million Stronger Rural Health Strategy. The Workforce Incentive Program has been reformed during Professor Worley's time into support for Doctor Stream and for medical practices themselves.

A lot has been said about rural bulk-billing. The rural bulk-billing incentive program is continued, but they have focused it by aligning it with areas that are rural, because there were some areas which were actually metropolitan centres which, by a freak of old classification systems, were still getting a rural bulk-billing incentive that is meant for rural, regional and remote Australia.
I'm really pleased that, at the last election, we as a coalition government made other announcements to strengthen rural health. One of the big issues facing rural Australia is the disproportionate shortage of professionals, and it's no more acute than in the health field with medical specialists and specialist rural generalist GPs, and that's what Professor Worley and the Office of the National Rural Health Commissioner have been particularly focused on. I'm pleased to say there is a growing realisation of how valuable a highly trained rural generalist practitioner can be. One of the markers of good health outcomes is timely access to medical care. That is so important. So we are really committed to getting improved access for the people of rural Australia. They have more diabetes, more heart disease and more cancer, and they get worse outcomes. We can fix it, but it takes a long time.

I'd like to run through the focus on rural health reform and the incentives. In my area of Lyne, we successfully argued for and got a commitment to a Headspace centre in the town of Taree. We have got an MRI license to re-expand Manning Base Hospital, and we've got a commitment to rolling out radiotherapy in the Taree-Manning region. These are no small achievements. Over the last 10 or 15 years, a lot of the services at the Manning Base Hospital have wound back, but we're in the middle of wounding them back up again. The Manning Base Hospital look about after 90,000 people, and it's important they get the support that we from the federal government can give them. The state government is committed to the already-announced expansion of that facility, and I'm really pleased to be supporting the state member in getting a hospital for Forster-Tuncurry as well.

There are many other rural incentives that we have put out to increase rural workforce retention, and I'll just elucidate some of them. It's not just about doctors in rural health; we need more pharmacists in rural health. We've just concluded a very successful seventh Community Pharmacy Agreement. Because the rural and remote pharmacists do so much more, that is a really sensible outcome, and I know a lot of my pharmacy colleagues are really pleased with the outcome.

I might mention that I actually don't just talk about it, like many of the people who've spoken tonight; I actually practised medicine for 33 years, and 22 years of that was in a regional town called Port Macquarie. When I went there, there were five medical specialists, but there are probably now almost 20. There's been an expansion of surgeons, anaesthetists—all sorts of subspecialties. And one of the biggest drivers has been the rural clinical school of the University of New South Wales at Port Macquarie Base Hospital.

One of the big initiatives driving workforce development not just for medical specialists but for GPs and rural generalists is the expanded Murray-Darling Medical Schools Network. Around the country, 12 centres in these rural clinical schools and schools of rural health are being expanded so that they have end-to-end med school teaching. That's also part of the Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training Program, where we expanded the amount of training for physiotherapists, occupational therapists and all the multidisciplinary care that you need for proper healthcare delivery.

We've developed the regional training hubs to grow that secondary degree training program. What most people don't realise is you have to do several degrees. The first one is awarded by a university and the next one by a college, and with the second medical degree you get your vocational training and recognition and your specialty status as a specialist GP, a rural generalist, a surgeon or a psychiatrist. That is going ahead full steam, with many regional training hubs now in existence.

We've got the junior doctor training initiative, allowing young doctors to work in general practice so that they get exposed to general practice before they get buried into a hospital pathway. We've also supported an increase in the Specialist Training Program, which co-funds the employment of trainee specialist registrars, and we've weighted that towards regional areas. If you get a registrar in a regional area when they're settling down and doing their second, college, degree, that's the time when they're starting families and getting their networks. It's probably one of the best initiatives that we've got.

I'm really pleased to see also that the More Doctors for Rural Australia Program is delivering dividends already. We have 291 participants. I'm really pleased the office of the Rural Health Commissioner is going to get deputy rural health commissioners to focus on allied health, nursing and Indigenous health. We also expanded funding to the Royal Flying Doctor Service. They not only fly people around but actually deliver clinics as well. We funded a project which is dear to my heart and that is the Heart of Australia bus in rural and remote Queensland. So there are many things that we have done, but I'm really pleased that the Minister for Health and the minister for rural health have supported making this office permanent. I wholeheartedly support this bill in the House.

Ms McBRIDE (Dobell) (19:14): I rise to speak on the Health Insurance Amendment (Continuing the Office of the National Rural Health Commissioner) Bill and support the amendment moved by the member for McMahon.
Labor supports this bill which amends the Health Insurance Act 1973 to continue the Office of the National Rural Health Commissioner and expands its function.

During debate when the legislation and the office were first established in 2017, Labor were quite concerned that it was due to cease by June this year. The government now shares this concern, and this is why we're debating the bill before us, which extends the office indefinitely and expands its power. Until now, the commissioner has been focused on the establishment of the National Rural Generalist Pathway, which the previous speaker has spoken about, an advanced training program for GPs.

The bill expands the commissioner's remit, including providing advice to the rural health minister about matters relating to health in rural, regional and remote areas; undertaking specified projects about matters; and inquiring into and reporting on specified aspects of those matters. As part of the broader remit the office will now consider the entire health workforce. As a pharmacist and allied health worker myself, this is something that I think is really critical—including nursing, allied health and other health workers.

I want to focus a little on the divide between health and wellbeing that people experience between those living in major cities and those living in the bush. In its 2019 report on rural and regional health, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare found that on average Australians living in rural and remote areas have shorter lives, higher levels of disease and injury, and poorer access to and use of health services compared with people living in metropolitan areas. The report found that people in remote areas were more likely to report barriers to accessing GPs and specialists than people in big cities. Life expectancy for both men and women decreases as remoteness increases. This is a really stark divide between Australians living in major cities and Australians living elsewhere. And, given the very real disparities in morbidity and mortality between the city and the bush, I welcome the continuation of the office and expansion of its role.

One thing that I want to focus on was, although we strongly support the intent of the strategy, which was to improve access to health services in the bush, that some of these measures as they've been rolled out in recent months have had some unintended consequences. It's become clear that the government's changes are hurting regional and outer metropolitan areas. The first change is to Medicare bulk-billing incentives. GPs are paid additional incentives when they bulk-bill children and concession card holders. The incentives are higher in rural areas than cities to encourage GPs to practise in the bush. But, under the government's changes to classifications of rural areas, many regions have lost access to the higher rural incentives and been dropped to the lower metro rates.

The government initially claimed just 14 areas were affected, but it was revealed at Senate estimates that 433 areas have seen cuts. GPs in these areas have seen about a 34 per cent reduction in their incentive payments. GPs have built their practices and business models around these incentives, and now they've been stripped away. Many GPs say this threatens bulk-billing and some say it threatens the viability of their practices altogether.

The second change is the longstanding district of workforce shortage system. Doctors trained overseas or in bonded positions in Australia—and I've worked with many of them—can only claim Medicare benefits for a time in defined rural areas. The government has changed the system from the previous DWS to the distribution priority area. The DWS wasn't perfect, and while we welcome a change that takes into account socioeconomic considerations, it appears the DPA model is also flawed. The change is having unintended consequences in areas that were classified DWS but are now not distribution priority areas.

The third change is the abolition of the Rural Other Medical Practitioners Program. Under the former program, GPs were paid a higher rebate if they practised in rural and regional areas. The government's stated intent was to improve the quality of rural and regional GPs and has abolished this program. At the same time, this has removed the incentive for GPs to practise in this area. In some regional towns, the abolition of ROMPs has forced the closure of the towns' few remaining general practices and, along with other changes, has made it harder for surviving practices to recruit and retain doctors.

While Labor support the intent of the government's rural health strategy, we were alarmed by continuing acute health worker shortages experienced in rural and remote Australia. But any efforts to boost rural health shouldn't come at the expense of regional areas that are also struggling to attract and retain doctors, nurses and allied health workers, and that's what these changes have done.

I'd like to turn now to the critical issue of mental health in rural and remote Australia. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Lifeline reported that more than 40 per cent of online crisis chat contacts were from rural and remote locations. Beyond Blue says:

Remoteness is a major risk factor contributing to suicide and the likelihood that someone will die by suicide appears to increase the further away they live from a city.

They went on to say:
people in outer regional, remote or very remote areas of Australia face more barriers to accessing healthcare than people living in major cities, making it harder … to maintain good mental health.

The COVID-19 pandemic is having a particular impact on young people's mental health and wellbeing. New data from ReachOut, which was released this May, showed a 50 per cent spike in the number of young people seeking help from their digital youth mental health service compared with the same time last year. According to ReachOut, from 16 March to 17 May this year their online information and support for isolation and loneliness was accessed more than 17,000 times. That's one young person every five minutes accessing ReachOut. Yet this bill fails to mention mental health. This appears to be an oversight when rural, regional and remote communities face the challenges of access to services and distance. Without a coordinated effort, rural, regional and remote communities will continue to struggle to receive the mental health services that they need when they need them.

The National Rural Health Commissioner released its interim report to the Minister for Regional Health, Regional Communications and Local Government in March 2020. The report observed the workforce challenges of allied health services. It said:

The undersupply and maldistribution of the allied health workforce has a significant negative impact on the accessibility of allied health services for rural Australians and the severity of impact increases with remoteness.

The report went on to say:

… there is strong unmet need for more allied health services in rural and remote Australia.

And:

Policies need to accommodate growth of rural public, not for profit and private service capacity.

The National Rural Health Commissioner will release its final report later this month, and I urge the minister and the government to adopt any recommendations calling for improved access to allied health services.

As a pharmacist who started out my pharmacy career in 1997 in Forbes, I believe appointing a deputy commissioner to focus on allied health is a big step forward. Allied health professionals include pharmacists, social workers, OTs, physiotherapists, dietitians and psychologists who serve our rural communities as best they can, often across vast distances. Allied health professionals provide care in settings from outpatient clinics to in-home to hospital and are often the first point of contact with the healthcare system for somebody living in remote Australia and sometimes the only point of contact with the healthcare system for that person. However, I urge the government to also consider a deputy commissioner with responsibility for professionals involved in mental health care. The stated No. 1 social priority of this government is suicide prevention towards zero. Having worked in adult acute mental health inpatient units in a regional centre at Wyong Hospital in my electorate for almost a decade, I urge the government to see this as crucial and something that the government must consider.

Experience tells you that mental health in rural, regional and remote communities deserves priority, focus and an urgent funding boost. Too many people in these communities don't have access to services that people in big cities just take for granted, often leading to tragic consequences. This is even more important as we face the long and bumpy road to recovery from the economic impacts of COVID-19.

The minister would be aware of the link between unemployment and financial distress and mental health crises. It's well established. As Suicide Prevention Australia highlighted in its report released this March, an unemployed person is nine times more likely to take their life than someone who is working. The Productivity Commission report estimated the cost of mental ill health to the Australian economy to be between $43 billion and $51 billion each year, and that was before COVID. Mental health professionals and services in the bush need to be given priority and focus, and there's an opportunity to do that. The National Rural Health Alliance, made up of 44 organisations, said in its response to the draft PC report:

… it is preferable to have a focus on wellbeing—wellness not illness—and this approach needs to be implemented as part of a holistic approach to mental health wellbeing …

The service providers that make up the NRHA understand best practice for mental health in their communities and they should be heard, Minister. I urge the government to clarify what role the commissioner and the deputy commissioners will have concerning mental health. This is a chance here to be able to give mental health the priority, focus and resources that it needs. I urge you to consider this, Minister.

Mr COULTON (Parkes—Minister for Regional Health, Regional Communications and Local Government) (19:25): It is indeed a pleasure for me to making these summing-up remarks. With regard to comments from the member for Dobell, I appreciate her interest in mental health. I was speaking to the Mental Health Commissioner yesterday. I'm sure that as the role of the rural commissioner becomes known some of your fears will be allayed, because the points you make are genuine and real. Thank you.
I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all the members on both sides of the House for their contributions. It's nice to know that, although at times we have different points of view, when good policy and a program that's actually doing what it's designed to do come through, we have that support.

Continuing the office of the Rural Health Commissioner is a very important part of tackling the challenges around rural health. I know we are very short of time, but in the minute I've got left I would like to thank Emeritus Professor Paul Worley for his outstanding commitment and the body of work that he's done in that role as the first National Rural Health Commissioner. The work that he has done around the generalist pathway and the body of work that he's done on allied health in regional Australia is a valuable resource. Certainly we'll be looking at that.

On behalf of the government, I'd like to thank the many rural health stakeholders and organisations around the nation who have welcomed our decision to continue the office of the Rural Health Commissioner. We are looking forward to working closely with the commissioner and the rural health stakeholders and organisations over coming years to achieve our shared aim of delivering a quality standard of health care for our regional, rural and remote communities, and I commend the bill to the House.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Vasta): The original question was that this bill be now read a second time. To this, the honourable member for McMahon has moved as an amendment that the words after 'That' be omitted with a view to substituting other words. The immediate question now is that the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the question.

Question agreed to.

Original question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Message from the Governor-General recommending appropriation announced.

Third Reading

Mr COULTON (Parkes—Minister for Regional Health, Regional Communications and Local Government) (19:28): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

ADJOURNMENT

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Vasta) (19:29): I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

Employment

Ms WELLS (Lilley) (19:29): ABS data shows that young people have experienced the highest job losses, both before and since the GFC. That really shouldn't come as a surprise, because roughly two in five people in their early 20s and almost one in five people in their late 20s and early 30s are casually employed. On the principle of last in, first out and who is the easiest and cheapest to fire, it makes sense that young casuals generally get hit the hardest in any economic downturn. We've seen this with COVID-19, where young people employed as casuals in the hospitality, retail, arts and recreation industries have had their hours slashed or their jobs cut altogether. While some people are lucky enough to have JobKeeper to rely on for the next few months, more than a quarter of young people are excluded from it altogether because of the eligibility rules around casuals. A large number of these casual workers are also uni students accruing tens of thousands of dollars worth of debt, not knowing whether their study will actually lead to a job in the end.

I recently spoke with Shirley, who's a visual arts student at the ACU Banyo campus. She expressed to me her growing doubt about choosing to study in a field that she loves, not knowing whether that industry would even be viable when COVID-19 is over. The same concern is likely to be shared by our journalism students, who are entering a field where ABC funding is being slashed, jobs are being cut and, increasingly, regional media are being shut down altogether. In every field where jobs are cut, nabbing a spot becomes increasingly difficult, and many are left with no job and a huge pile of debt. To weather the economic storm, we've seen 450,000 people under the age of 30 access their superannuation. This fact, combined with huge HECS debts and the lower rate of home ownership amongst younger households, which is driven by economic and institutional influences, will have serious consequences down the track when the young people of today eventually look to retire in the future. Many of them will not have the benefit of an investment or a superannuation nest egg or a house that they own outright.

So I am standing here today to amplify the voices of our young people—our older generation of tomorrow. We can't walk people to a cliff without a parachute and just leave them to see if they fall or fly. They deserve better
than an economy that consigns them to a lifetime of low wages, job insecurity and unaffordable housing. If young people have to bear the brunt of the COVID-19 economic recovery, it is not going to affect them just during the immediate recovery period; it is going to affect them well into the future. All levels and sides of government need to come together to work out who is falling through the gaps and where support is needed and to create practical and meaningful forward plans.

The best way to improve the outlook for young Australians is to get back to high rates of job creation as quickly as possible. We have lots of young families moving to the Sandgate-Brighton area, and they need hospitals, schools, infrastructure and services so that they can live out their dreams. We could be investing in Northside infrastructure projects, such as upgrading Gympie Road or building more social housing, to create local jobs. These projects could have a minimum number of apprentices to make sure that our young tradies are getting a fair start. We could be incentivising young people who have become unemployed because of COVID-19 to use their time to upskill with short-term TAFE courses, especially in IT and innovation. We could be investing in a local government program that specifically employs long-term unemployed young people to maintain our fantastic parks, bushland and waterways. There are more particular measures we could consider to support small businesses being run by young people, such as increasing the small brewers rebate so that local breweries such as Aether brewing in Northgate can afford to hire more workers.

We also have to invest more into employment service providers to help people who are low-skilled and experiencing long-term unemployment get back on their feet. Earlier this year I spoke to Bonnie from Aspley, who expressed her frustration about being pushed around between providers with no actual help to show for it. To help young people in the media, we could allocate federal funding to the Walkley Foundation, for example, to establish a grants program for local and regional media outlets so that community and local papers, such as the Northside Chronicle and the Bayside Star in our Northside community, could continue to tell local stories and give opportunities to young graduate journalists who need somewhere to start.

These are just a few ideas, but I am ready and willing to work with the federal government to create local jobs to kickstart the Lilley economy and secure a stronger, fairer future for young people on Brisbane's Northside who are currently not getting their fair share and cannot see hope from this Morrison government.

### Australian Made Campaign

Mr PASIN (Barker) (19:34): I'm speaking tonight in support of the Australian Made Campaign. I'm here to encourage all Australians to join the Aussie Made Club. In recent weeks, my office—like those of others, I'm sure—has been inundated with enquiries about how constituents can support Australian domestic manufacturing. It might be one of the silver linings of this dark COVID cloud. The solution is simple. The most powerful industry builder is consumer spending. Whether it's at the checkout or at the click of a button, our decisions on how we spend can either build up a local business or destroy an industry. There's no shortage of innovation and drive to expand Australian made production, but private industry is at the behest of its consumers. That's why initiatives such as the Aussie Made Club are having such great success. Currently, the website is attracting 250,000 visitors a month. The 'Australian Made' logo rightly elicits a sense of pride for Australians and is globally recognised as an assurance of quality. The Morrison government recently committed $5 million to expand the reach of the 'Australian Made' logo so manufacturers can take on new markets around the world.

Another initiative the Morrison government has actioned in recent weeks is the HomeBuilder program. That program will help support 140,000 tradesmen directly and another one million indirectly in the residential construction sector. That's great news for the timber industry in the electorate of Barker. The Australian Forest Products Association forecasts that, but for our scheme, sawn timber demand could have dropped by as much as 50 per cent by the end of the year, putting as many as 45,000 jobs in the softwood timber supply chain at risk. This package will help prevent that devastating impact on timber communities and help the whole supply chain weather the storm. And, as I said, it's great news for the timber workers of Barker.

In 2018, our government introduced country-of-origin labelling to increase the transparency of imported products. One statistic that shocked me when I heard evidence when I was on the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Water Resources, which recommended the current country-of-labelling regime, was the fact that imported pork made up 75 per cent of processed pork consumed in this country. In my electorate, Barossa Fine Foods is but one example of local suppliers who source their meats locally and are supporting primary producers. Big River Pork finds its home in my electorate as well. It's one of our nation's largest pork-processing facilities. Apart from its award-winning wineries, the Barossa Valley is also home to producers of high-quality products such as Barossa Valley Cheese Company, who source their dairy products locally and provide economic benefit to the community. The electorate of Barker boasts more Australians employed in the food-processing sector than any other division in this place. Whether it's food, fibre or wine, Barker's producers and processors are leading the charge.
What we need is for Australian consumers to lean in, look for that 'Australian Made' logo, make sure the bar chart is full and do the right thing by your fellow Australians. Supporting Australian Made is a patriotic duty. Food processors in my electorate such as Thomas Foods, Big River Pork—there are any number I could mention—are doing the right thing. On wine, we have the high-value, low-volume offerings of the Barossa and the Coonawarra, but we also have the bulk offerings of the warm inland regions like the Riverland.

I've spoken a bit about food and wine and I've touched on wood fibre, but let me talk about another fibre. MiniJumbuk is a local company in Naracoorte which operates in the wool industry. Partnering with Australian retailers, it is turning domestically produced wool into high-quality bedding and other goods. But this company doesn't just do that. As part of its mantra, MiniJumbuk recently released 1,000 bedding sheets, with $50 per set donated to BlazeAid. It is just another way this company is giving back to Australians. So, if you're looking for bedding, think of MiniJumbuk.

Whether it's HomeBuilder, MiniJumbuk, the wineries in Barker or food producers more generally, think Australian Made, look to the bar graph, make sure it's full and deliver for your fellow Australians.

**Cybersecurity**

Mr WATTS (Gellibrand) (19:39): It was 1989 and the world was experiencing the emergence of HIV/AIDS. Exploiting this moment an unstable biologist unleashed the world's first ransomware attack, which is malware that holds IT systems hostage by encrypting files until a ransom is paid. Dr Joseph Popp was ambitious. He sent 20,000 infected floppy disks to medical researchers all over the world, ostensibly containing medical discoveries around the syndrome. Instead, the disks contained a virus that, ultimately, seized their victim's computer and presented a digital ransom note demanding the victim send money to an address in Panama. So, strangely enough, ransomware originated amidst another pandemic but it wasn't used much in the decades since. As recently as 2016 it was considered relatively exotic but, in recent years, fuelled by the rise of cryptocurrencies like bitcoin, it's become an industry driven by well-resourced crime gangs who can scan the world for targets.

In the current COVID-19 pandemic we've seen a tidal wave of phishing lures with COVID themes used to deliver these ransomware pay loans. Last year almost 1,000 US government agencies, education and healthcare providers were attacked by ransomware at an economic cost of billions of dollars. As a result of those attacks, 911 dispatch services stalled, medical records were inaccessible and surgeries were delayed. Schools closed, local governments couldn't provide basic services and police couldn't perform background checks. In other words, ransomware endangered essential services, just as it did in 2017 when a Wannacry virus corrupted Britain's National Health Service. And it's happening here. Late last year a regional health system in Victoria was affected. In January, Melbourne-based logistics company Toll Group was crippled by ransomware. After a second attack on Toll Group last month, the supply of influenza vaccines was disrupted. Steel manufacturer BlueScope has been similarly hit. And last week it was the beverages company Lion.

While the US has so far attracted the highest percentage of attacks, ransomware is an international industry. But Australia isn't heeding the warning. I asked the Parliamentary Library to compare the number of documents submitted to both the Australian Securities Exchange and the US Securities and Exchange Commission that contained the term 'ransomware' in the calendar year 2019. The result: of the 108,334 documents submitted to the ASX, just 24 contained a reference to ransomware, that's 0.2 per cent. Of the 113,937 documents filed with the SEC, 1,139 contained the term, which is only 0.99 per cent but still magnitudes greater than in Australia. These documents included annual reports, including assessments of the risks facing companies, yet ransomware doesn't seem to be appearing to be on the radar of Australian companies. It's only a matter of time before we see the kinds of groups hit in the US being targeted here, and the unprepared are in for a rude shock.

While organisations must assume primary responsibility for their cybersecurity, government plays a role here too. Individuals have primary responsibility for their personal health, but governments undertake preventative health programs because it understands that chronic disease has costs for the whole community. We need a similar public health mindset for cybersecurity, one that engages at-risk groups and lifts the baseline of cyber-resilience. In the broader context of a potential cyberwar, the Defence department—in a mobilisation review recently disclosed under FOI—accepted that improving our country's cyber-resilience should be a whole-of-nation endeavour, because many of the targets will be civilian businesses or individuals. Contingency planning cannot just occur inside Defence or government silos. We've got a long way to go to realise this and ransomware is far from the only cyber threat. Yet, in the face of these evolving threats, Australian cybersecurity policy lacks political leadership. There's no longer a dedicated role for cybersecurity in the executive, which means there's a diffusion of responsibility for cybersecurity throughout multiple departments.

When something is everyone's responsibility, it tends to become nobody's responsibility. With this government you can't find a fixed point of accountability. Trying to pin them down on this is like wrestling with a column of
smoke. But, despite all of this, the Morrison government's new four-year Cyber Security Strategy is now two months overdue. Despite growing threats, home affairs minister Peter Dutton has left cybersecurity at the bottom of his in-tray. It's been 10 months since the Morrison government began consultations on the new Cyber Security Strategy. Given how quickly things change in cybersecurity, a virtual millennia in hacker years has passed without action. Labor hopes that the new cybersecurity strategy is released very soon, and we hope that it shows the substance and imagination that our national cyber-resilience deserves. Unlike the previous plan, it should include measurable benchmarks and it needs to include a minister with accountability for delivering on change through this policy. We should have learned a few lessons in crisis preparedness now, but on cybersecurity the government remains detached, ignorant or indifferent. We can't afford to respond to a crisis only after it's happened.

**Queensland: Coal Industry**

**Mr O’DOWD** (Flynn—Deputy Nationals Whip) (19:44): I rise today to talk about my concerns for the coal industry in Queensland. Coal is one of the most valuable exports that we have, and it keeps our prices on the domestic scene as low as possible—or it would if it weren't for the gouging of the Queensland government when it comes to electricity prices. As we approach the Queensland state election in October—and let us not forget the last federal election, where Labor demonised coal to a great extent, particularly in Flynn and in my neighbouring electorates of Capricorn and Dawson—I am concerned that, if the Labor Party win the state election and they win the next federal election, we will have no coal industry at all.

It is very contradictory, seeing as these companies pull a lot of money in royalties, payroll tax, GST and workers’ comp—and, of course, they pay big wages to thousands of workers in my area. The Queensland government continue to operate in the red, but they don't seem to realise they'd be much further in the red if it weren't for the coal industry. The Queensland government don't seem to mind seeing small businesses go to the wall while they look to the south-east corner—that's where their votes are. Central Queensland has some of the largest coal deposits in the world. The Galilee, Bowen and Surat basins employ thousands of workers from Queensland and elsewhere in Australia. We do have some fly-in, fly-outs. The coal industry looks after small business too, indirectly. Small business runs alongside the big business in the coal mines of Emerald, Biloela, Blackwater, Moranbah and those towns that rely heavily on the coal industry, whether it be motels, hotels, coffee shops or the like. But here we are, we've got all these natural resources at our fingertips and yet we pay the fourth-dearest electricity prices in the world. This is just terrible.

Turning to manufacturing, if we're going to entice manufacturing back to Australia, we need to get our electricity prices down. Manufacturing in Australia has slipped to about five per cent of GDP. We rate about 179th in the world for manufacturing. This is terrible—when you compare us with Singapore, Israel and Germany, we're not even in the race. If we're going to get back in the race on manufacturing, we've got to have cheaper electricity. There are eight coal-fired power stations in Queensland. One is privately owned by Rio Tinto and NRG, an American company. The rest are owned by the state government. These power stations include Callide B and the Gladstone Power Station—the Gladstone Power Station is the biggest in Queensland—which need upgrading and maintenance. It is up to the state government to do the maintenance in Callide B. I know they have recently spent some money, but they still want to close that site by 2028, and that's the life of the Gladstone Power Station too. So, if we're going to replace those two power stations, what are we going to replace them with? That is the question. I know the Labor government are looking at 50 per cent renewable energy. How are they going to supply the other 50 per cent? I don't think 50 per cent renewable energy is achievable. It certainly won't achieve base-load power. But how are they going to replace those power stations if they close? They won't close down under our government, but if Labor do get in, in state and federal, we're in trouble. They'll want to come up with a plan there.

But it's not only the mines. It's the freight. It's the railway workers. At the Port of Gladstone, which is now one of the biggest ports in Australia, even through the pandemic the tonnage to overseas customers still kept on going, and we've had record tonnages through Gladstone throughout the last three months. That's how important it is to our industry and to our economy.

**Child Care**

**Mr JOSH WILSON** (Fremantle) (19:49): There are three things we know about accessible and affordable high-quality early childhood education: it's essential for giving children the best and fairest start in life and for putting them on the path to lifelong learning; it's essential for supporting the fullest economic participation of women; and, because of the first two things, it's one of the most important ways we can improve both quality and productivity in Australia.
The significance of all three imperatives has been sharpened by the global health pandemic, which has knocked around families, disrupted kids' education and shown how poorly prepared our economy was for dealing with such shocks. Through this pandemic we've seen more clearly than ever that early childhood educators are essential workers. I want to thank them for their contribution to this crisis and I want them to know that they're valued. We know that they should be better supported. On that basis, it's hard to understand why the government has decided to withdraw support, including JobKeeper, from childcare services next month. We already know that JobKeeper is a short and patchy blanket, with millions left missing out. And now that blanket is being whipped away from a sector that is key to our recovery and key to our long-term future.

In my electorate of Fremantle, there are 75 childcare facilities that provide early education to nearly 6,000 families and 7½ thousand children. Many of these families are dealing with the acute economic impacts of the coronavirus, and those impacts have been hardest on low-income families and hardest on women. A survey of more than 1,000 parents conducted by The Front Project, and reported in *The West Australian* by Lanai Scarr and Bethany Hiatt, has found that for 35 per cent the cost and availability of child care has affected where they choose to live and that for 55 per cent the cost of childcare fees affects their weekly grocery budget. That rises to 64 per cent for low-income families. Back in April, the Prime Minister said:

I don't want a parent to have to choose between feeding their kids and having their kids looked after, or having their education being provided.

This survey indicates that two-thirds of low-income families are facing some kind of conflict in choosing between childcare fees and their weekly groceries.

Since March, the impacts on childcare operators have been devastating in some cases. There are centres that have closed, and many providers, particularly those in the family day care space have suffered substantial losses. As that unfolded it has meant that essential workers—nurses and teachers—were forced to choose between working and finding someone to care for their kids.

If I could choose one example of how early childhood care and education is a life changer I'd pick the Young Parent Centre at Port School in Hamilton Hill. Port is an independent school with a focus on supporting and educating kids who are vulnerable and at risk. Some years ago, the school leadership embarked on the innovation of creating the Young Parent Centre on site, which enabled young mums—mums who are teenagers—to finish their high school education or to undertake a VET course, with their babies or toddlers cared for close at hand. It's really not hard to understand what a massive difference that makes. For those mums and their kids, it's quite literally the difference between a future in the short term with or without education. And that education is being provided at the same time for both the young women and their children. You would think that this kind of service is exactly what every relevant part of our system should be straining to enable and should be falling over itself to support. And yet that hasn't been the case, and Port's Young Parent Centre is one of many centres that have not received proper support through this crisis. That can't be how our system operates; we have to do better.

It's a matter of huge concern that Australia ranks 49th in the World Economic Forum's gender participation opportunity index for 2020, which measures female workforce participation remuneration and so on. While women make up more than 68 per cent of all part-time employees, they still earn on average 39 per cent less than men for doing equivalent work. Until we address these imbalances and disparities, Australia will not achieve its potential and will not be the best form of the fair and egalitarian nation that is at the core of our national character and ethos.

Other countries do things differently and they get much better outcomes. The Educare model in Sweden is one example, and I'm aware that the effective abolition of childcare fees in Germany has delivered positive results in those three areas I mentioned at the start—better education, better and fairer participation of women in the workforce and a corresponding impact on productivity and broader social and economic wellbeing. Why wouldn't we want that for our country? Why aren't we taking a sensible approach to reforming early childhood education in Australia instead of pulling the rug out from under a sector, a workforce and an educational service that is so vital to Australian families?

**Fairfax Electorate**

**Mr TED O'BRIEN** *(Fairfax) (19:54):* When I was elected to this parliament in 2016, I made a pledge that I would be the Sunshine Coast's man in Canberra, and not Canberra's man on the Sunshine Coast, as an expression of my dedication and my desire to serve. As part of that pledge, each financial year I complete an annual report as a way of being accountable to the people who put me here. I look forward to publishing that annual report in a few weeks time, but I thought I would take this opportunity to at least provide a verbal snapshot of what this financial year has been about, particularly for the people of Fairfax.
I will say at the outset that I've never been as proud to represent my community as I have been this financial year, and that is because of how the community has responded to the coronavirus. One of our leading demographers, Bernard Salt, refers to the Sunshine Coast as being the most entrepreneurial region in the country, which speaks to something in our cultural DNA as a region. And it also makes sense when you think of one of our leading sociologists, Hugh Mackay, who talks about particular areas of the Sunshine Coast having the highest degree of social capital compared with other places right across the country. I think it's those informal bonds between people and that real sense of community that has shone through, particularly in recent months, as we have all supported each other as a global pandemic hit our shores. Of course, the Grattan Institute's analysis suggests that the Sunshine Coast has been hit harder with job losses than any other region in Queensland. Indeed, if you look at the federal government's JobKeeper program, the Sunshine Coast is one of the largest recipients. So our community has done it tough.

It does make sense, when I look at some of the statistics of what my electorate office has done in this financial year, that we have sought to assist so many people. My office and I have made over 5½ thousand outbound phone calls, focusing on that demographic which we think would be most impacted by COVID-19. We sent over 15½ thousand direct letters to residents over the age of 70. We responded to thousands of phone calls and emails from people in distress. We published weekly COVID e-newsletters for residents and weekly COVID business sector updates for chambers and local businesses. We distributed 2,000 face masks from my electorate office, delivered five online business forums about COVID-19 in the course of the last few months, and spoke regularly to the community via radio, newspaper and television advertisements and, of course, via social media. Only recently did I release the most comprehensive and most recent COVID-19 business survey for the region. This was, of course, in addition to the $260 billion that the federal government committed, and I'm very grateful to the business owners in the seat of Fairfax who shared with me some of their insights and, indeed, some of their problems. Through the listening ear of the Prime Minister and Treasurer, I was delighted to see the final package of JobKeeper reflect some of those areas of input.

But, of course, it wasn't just about COVID. The Sunshine Coast continues to receive more federal government funding than it ever has in its history: $3.2 billion for Bruce Highway upgrades; $390 million for the North Coast rail line; and $181 million for the upgrade of the Sunshine Coast Airport by way of concessional loan. This month alone, June, has seen the $301 million works at Maroochydore Road begin and the launch of the Sunshine Coast International Airport runway. We continue to work, and I look forward to working hard during the next financial year.

House adjourned at 20:00

NOTICES

Mr Sukkar to move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the Public Works Committee Act 1969, it is expedient to carry out the following proposed work which was referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works and on which the committee has duly reported to Parliament: Land 121 Stage 5B Facilities Project.

Mr Sukkar to move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the Public Works Committee Act 1969, it is expedient to carry out the following proposed work which was referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works and on which the committee has duly reported to Parliament: Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority—National Education Centre, Reef HQ.

Mr Sukkar to move:

That, in accordance with the provisions of the Public Works Committee Act 1969, it is expedient to carry out the following proposed work which was referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works and on which the committee has duly reported to Parliament: Armoured Fighting Vehicles Facilities Program—Stage 1.
CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Calwell Electorate: The Arts

Ms VAMVAKINOU (Calwell) (10:22): Artists have always had to fight to be recognised and funded, and this is especially so during times of economic downturn. Artists were seen as No. 1 in the top-five non-essential jobs in a recent newspaper poll conducted by The Sunday Times in the UK. Arts is seen by many as a luxury item, something when times are good and resources are plentiful. However, the arts and, more broadly, culture are intrinsic to what it means to be human. They are a part of our identity, our expression of who we are as individuals, as communities and as a nation.

Last week I took part in an online discussion with hundreds of visual artists through the NAVA, the National Association for the Visual Arts. They wanted advice on how to lobby for their causes. I encouraged them to insist on proper recognition and support for the fundamental work that artists do in building empowering communities.

The swallowing up of the arts within the recently created super Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications is highly regrettable. I wonder how the arts are going to get the recognition they need when they have to jostle for attention within this monolith of a department. In my view, instead of further diminishing the profile of arts policy, we need to be broadening our horizons and establishing a separate department of arts and culture. At this critical time, our cultural maturity should be at the forefront of our public policy. The pandemic has forced us, like all other nations, to consider our national identity and our place in the world. The growing demands to confront racism and inequality are matters that go to the heart of culture. Arts and cultural policy are crucial to genuine reconciliation, to multiculturalism, to human rights and to a truly inclusive society.

The arts live and breathe creativity everywhere in our nation and across our communities, and, in my own electorate, the Mesopotamia Visual Arts Society is made up of artists whose have migrated from Iraq and promotes art as a humanitarian message. For migrant communities, struggling with a new cultural environment and language they may not be fluent in, artistic expression is the lifeline of communication and connection.

The Indigenous Education Centre Kangan TAFE teaches Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students about the importance of maintaining the tradition of storytelling and identity through the visual arts, and the Craigieburn Art Group brings together a diverse range of local artists from different cultural backgrounds to exhibit together, to enjoy each other's friendship and encourage local school children in pursuing their creativity.

The City of Hume runs three magnificent local galleries, which provide quality exhibition spaces and host workshops for community members. Many artists share their experiences of local life, migration and settlement in a way that is often more powerful and direct than any other means of building community connection. This is why arts and culture are so important to the health and wellbeing of our nation, and why they should always be a priority for governments at all levels. (Time expired)

Grey Electorate: Regional Airports Program

Mr RAMSEY (Grey—Government Whip) (10:25): I'm very pleased to discuss the fact that the Grey electorate received seven separate grants under the recent Regional Airports Program. Two of them, Orroroo and Quorn, are for fencing and lighting. The fencing is to keep vermin off the strips. Down at Jamestown, we have an installation going in for the waterbombers, and at Cowell and Minlaton there'll be substantial upgrades with the sealing of their strips. These are hundreds-of-thousands-of-dollars jobs, so they're gratefully received in the community there. The Copper Coast, which is Kadina, there's over $100,000 for the resealing of the taxiways and approaches. Probably in Whyalla is where we've got the most important grant of all, almost $2½ million to assist the Whyalla council in the redevelopment of the airport there.

Whyalla has been an airport that I've had some concerns about ever since we first announced that we were going to bring in regional airport security scanning. It was highlighted that it was the worst affected airport in Australia, and it's been quite a while making sure that the government is standing behind this council, this airport and this community to make sure that we've got a good package. Firstly, we managed to secure $850,000, like all the other airports installing the scanners, for the equipment and then a million dollars for alterations within the terminal. Then, just recently, we announced that we would actually fund the ongoing operating costs of the scanners, which I always thought was possibly the most important thing of all to do. We're not dead sure how we're doing that yet. We've got through the first 12 months, but we're organising the mechanisms that will allow

FEDERATION CHAMBER
for that. And now we've come on board and supplied almost $2\frac{1}{2}$ million to assist the council in the major redevelopment. In this particular case, the money's going to the main runway extensions, new taxiway aprons and separate areas to facilitate GA traffic, the Royal Flying Doctor Service and of course the daily passenger services. So, all in all, it will be a mighty upgrade for the Whyalla Airport.

Regional aviation, like all aviation in Australia, is struggling at the moment, and the government has had substantial packages there, assisting where we can to keep these companies in business and operating. We need them now very soon to, as we've said, snap back and increase flight frequency. I was very, very pleased to hear that Qantas is increasing their frequency. It was only announced last week, I think. So, those things are coming together. Give us six or eight months and we'll have a brand new airport for it all to happen in.

COVID-19: International Travel

Ms STEGGALL (Warringah) (10:28): There's no denying that the government's swift and decisive action in closing our international border is one of the key reasons the COVID-19 health crisis was not more severe. I take this opportunity to thank the hundreds of staff of the Department of Home Affairs who have been processing inquiries and requests for exemptions from the travel bans, both in and out of the country.

Whilst I appreciate that departmental staff are doing their best to apply the current regulations, I am concerned that these restrictions are now disproportionate, resulting in curtailing civil liberties. So I call on the government to introduce more flexibility and compassion to enable consideration of particular requests and circumstances. I understand the importance of border control during this global pandemic, but people's lives and freedoms are being adversely impacted.

I have specific examples: Australian citizens needing to travel overseas for compelling reasons, or long-term visa holders stranded aboard unable to return to their homes in Australia, and overseas citizens needing to enter Australia on compassionate grounds. Here are some examples. Donna Burton is an Australian citizen seeking to travel to the UK in July for the wedding of her only daughter. Her first application has been rejected and she's awaiting her second. Gonzalo and Luillya are visa holders who have lived in Australia for seven years. They have full-time employment here and were in the process of applying for permanent residency. They visited their family in Colombia at the beginning of the year and are now stuck there. They want to come home. Then there's the heartbreaking situation of the family of Debra Hale. Debra passed away suddenly on 16 May, leaving behind two sons who have no other family here in Australia. Debra's sister, Lesley Hawes, and her parents are British citizens and they were denied permission to enter Australia to attend the funeral and assist the young men in dealing with the logistics of their mother's death. Debra's former husband, Derek, has also been denied permission. He's written to me to say he managed to watch Debra's funeral through a livestream facility. He said, 'To be honest, watching my two children bury their mother without any support or comfort from other family members was one of the most harrowing things I've ever had the misfortune to witness.'

So, clearly, a more compassionate and consistent approach is required. If exemptions are made for an entire NRL team and their support staff to enter Australia, then surely we can look at allowing grieving family members to come or long-term visa holders who have made their lives here. In some cases, children are separated from parents, or husbands and wives are separated for an indefinite amount of time. These are real lives being impacted and we can and should do better. I call for some flexibility and amendments to the regulations.

Ryan Electorate: Men's Sheds

Mr SIMMONDS (Ryan) (10:31): I rise in the chamber today to talk about a number of organisations in the electorate of Ryan who are doing great things to support the mental health of men in the electorate, and that is our local Men's Sheds. They've done a tremendous job during COVID to adapt and make sure they are continuing to keep in touch with their members. Unfortunately, they haven't been able to meet together or they have been meeting together recently in limited numbers, but they have been making sure that they reach out to all their members and check in on them via Zoom meetings. I have had the privilege of participating in a number of them. There are over a thousand Men's Sheds across Australia now and there are a number in my electorate of Ryan. They are fast-becoming the pre-eminent organisation in terms of supporting men and men's mental health. The Men's Shed is a particularly powerful tool in bringing gentlemen together to talk about issues that they otherwise wouldn't, with men who are in a similar situation. The operation of the Men's Shed, the way they undertake different activities, is what is particularly appealing about this model. I had the great privilege of being involved in putting together the Indooroopilly Men's Shed. There is a wide variety of activities, including metalwork and woodwork, which you would expect, but there are also reading clubs, IT clubs and bike-riding groups which allow a diverse range of men from across the electorate to get together, talk about important issues and work on their mental health and mateship.
The Morrison government provides a significant amount of funding to support Men's Sheds across Australia. We provide funding of over a million dollars a year to the National Shed Development Program, which supports local Men's Sheds. The Indooroopilly Men's Shed in the electorate of Ryan recently got a grant for $1,310 to purchase a new welder to help them with their work, which was fantastic. They use the tools to repair and manufacture things that they then donate to schools, hospitals, welfare and disadvantaged groups, so they are out there supporting their community as well. I would like to pay tribute to the Men's Sheds in the Ryan electorate, at Kenmore, Indooroopilly, Moggill, Bellbowrie, Ashgrove, The Gap and Ferny Grove. I congratulate and thank all the men working in those Men's Sheds for the way that they've kept in touch with each other during COVID. It was only last night that the chamber voted through a bill to make it easier for Men's Sheds to achieve tax deductibility status so that they can take donations and further their work in the local community. I'm very pleased and proud to support the Men's Sheds in my local community of Ryan, just as the Morrison government is proud to support Men's Sheds right across Australia.

**Jagajaga Electorate: Queen's Birthday Honours**

Ms THWAITES (Jagajaga) (10:34): On behalf of the Jagajaga community, I congratulate all our Queen's Birthday Honours recipients. My good friend David McKenzie has received his OAM for a lifetime of service to community health, and local and federal government. Everyone who knows Dave will tell you that this award is long overdue. He's dedicated his every waking moment to improving the lives of people and advancing equality, social justice and policy reform. David's contribution to his community is quite outstanding. He began his career as a teacher and entered local politics as a councillor at the Shire of Diamond Valley. In 1972, he was elected to the House of Representatives as the member for Diamond Valley in the Whitlam government. In 1973, he introduced the Medical Practice Clarification Bill, which, if passed, would have legalised abortion in the Australian Capital Territory. The bill was defeated after a conscience vote, but it was an important step for further debate and reform that ultimately saw the decriminalisation of abortion. David recently retired as a director at Banyule Community Health in my electorate after 29 years, for which he received a lifetime achievement award. He was also a former board member of Family Planning Victoria and chair of the Diamond Valley Community Health Centre. David is still strongly connected to his local community. He is still actively involved in supporting our community. He's someone whose advice and wisdom I trust. Congratulations, Dave.

Congratulations to our other Jagajaga awardees: the late Mrs Glenys Kendall for significant service to lacrosse through administrative roles and as a player; Mr Noel Griffith for service to music in the community; Professor Graham McDowell for service to the dairy industry and to education; and Mr Michael Smith for service to journalism and to the public relations sector. And there are our PSM recipients: Ms Christina Asquini for outstanding public service to innovative policy design and service delivery in Victoria; and Mr Dallas John Reilly for outstanding public service to policy and program delivery in support of community safety in Victoria. We're proud to have you in our community.

Today, I'd also like to congratulate all the local recipients of this year's Volunteer Grants program. Jagajaga is stronger because of their work. I send a shout-out to the volunteers at Footscape, Diamond Valley Greek Senior Citizens, the Greensborough Historical Society, Hayden's Helping Hands, the Heidelberg United Football Club, the Ivanhoe Bowls Club, the Ivanhoe Cricket Club, the Nillumbik Historical Society, the Olymic Village Exodus Community, the Plenty Cricket Club, the Rosanna Tennis Club, the Rotary Club of Diamond Creek, Sustainable Macleod, Wahroonga preschool, the Waterdale Theatre, the Watsonia Warriors Junior Basketball Club, and all of our local Scouts groups who were also successful in receiving these grants. Our volunteers make our communities a stronger place. They do work that is often unpaid and unseen but vital. So much work is happening and I thank them all for their contributions.

**Canning Electorate: JobKeeper Payment**

Mr HASTIE (Canning) (10:37): I rise to update this House on the success of the JobKeeper program in my electorate. New data from Treasury estimates that 3,300 businesses in Canning are benefitting from the program. I have spoken to a number of business owners who signed up to the program during the pandemic, and they've told me that JobKeeper has allowed them to retain their staff and keep their doors open. For instance, Adam Lewis, the owner of Bridgestone Select Tyre & Auto in Mandurah had one of his toughest months in April. His workers had to drop to a four-day work week to prevent staff lay-offs. Once the business became eligible, Adam signed up to JobKeeper. He told me the program has given him security and assurance that he would be able to pay his workers at a time when business was at an all-time low. Now, Adam says, he is busier than ever. He's hired another staff member to work the front desk because of the increase in business, and may even have to look for another employee for the workshop.
Edward Janiec is the owner of Murphy's Irish Pub in Mandurah, which won the Irish International Hospitality Award last year. When COVID-19 hit, Edward could only retain 16 core members of his staff of 50. When JobKeeper was introduced, he was able to keep those 16 staff members employed part-time for nine weeks over the course of the pandemic. Because pubs were closed under COVID-19 restrictions, Edward used his staff to do some renovating and other projects in the pub. Employees who used to work as chefs and managers enjoyed repainting, sanding back and restoring old furniture, and general maintenance to improve the presentation in readiness for reopening. In renovating and improving the pub, Edward told me he spent $25,000 at local hardware stores and services. Edward was able to open his pub last week as restrictions eased in WA, and is doing two sittings of 100 at both lunch and dinner. Even with 400 patrons a day, he has to turn away customers and has employed another eight casuals due to the workload. He's looking forward to restrictions being lifted and returning to full capacity.

Nourishing the Soul Cafe in Dudley Park thought they would have to let their staff go when restrictions were placed on dining in. When the owner, Paige, found out the business was eligible she signed up to the JobKeeper program. She was able to keep most of her staff on and keep the cafe open, offering takeaway meals and coffees to keep her business running.

There's no doubt that many businesses are still doing it tough. I encourage everyone to support their local economy where they can, and I thank the Morrison government for supporting business owners and their staff in my electorate throughout the pandemic.

**Australia Post**

**Australian Bushfires**

Ms TEMPLEMAN (Macquarie) (10:40): What a disgrace we saw in parliament last night and today, when the government refused to allow debate on the changes to Australia Post that will see letter services slashed to maybe twice a week and posties' jobs gone. The member for Chifley was allowed to say 15 words, which is six words less than the length of that sentence. Those opposite are too scared to have issues that affect people in a day-to-day way debated in this place. What we've largely been able to rely on in outer-Sydney areas like mine is that the letter to your accountant or the legal documents, the important work-related things that from time to time have to be posted, would get there usually by the next day. For goodness sake; Centrelink still posts letters to people with two-week deadlines on them. This move will hurt people and will add to the cost of small business, who rely on that universal service—such a fundamental thing, especially for areas where the NBN isn't rolled out, mobile is non-existent and ADSL can disappear. The lack of regular service will mean that people have to look at much more expensive options. At a time when we're looking to create jobs, surely a boom in parcel services should be leading to more jobs, not fewer posties.

We know on the ground what the economic impact of the summer bushfire crisis was in my electorate of Macquarie. Blue Mountains City Council found the bushfires decreased gross regional product for the region by an estimated $283 million, and that as many as 2,586 jobs were lost. Figures from the National Bushfire Recovery Agency show overall an estimated $65.4 million in damage was done to the Blue Mountains economy. The same estimates state the bushfire damage to the Hawkesbury economy was around $33 million. So the numbers show a massive impact, but what's not so clear is how the recovery for those areas is progressing.

Yesterday, the government claimed the data was transparent; yet the figures are as clear as mud. New information provided from a Senate question on notice has shown that, as at 20 May, of the 107 Blue Mountains properties registered for debris clean-up, just 41 had been cleared. That's just 38 per cent of properties cleared, nearly six months after the fires. And in the Hawkesbury, 86 properties were registered to be cleared and only 41 were completed. When you look at the breakdown for loans granted, on the recovery agency's website there's no data available—nothing; not for concessional loans, not for primary producer grants, and not for small business grants.

Bushfire victims feel they are being left behind by the Morrison government. And with the next fire season just three months away, it needs to be really transparent what progress there is for people to have any confidence that this government will keep its promise to do whatever it takes to help bushfire communities recover from those devastating fires.

**Sturt Electorate: Creative Industries**

Mr STEVENS (Sturt) (10:43): I'd like to take the opportunity to talk about the creative industries, and particularly the screen sector, television and film. This is relevant as a constituency statement because, indeed, I'm very proud to have the South Australian Film Corporation located in my electorate of Sturt, in Glenside, which is one of the premiere sound stage pieces of infrastructure, frankly, in the Southern Hemisphere. Recently, very proudly, to use an industry term, we 'wrapped' a film, *Mortal Kombat*, which is really exciting. It is the most
significant, highest-budget production ever undertaken in South Australia, which I see as, in many ways, being just the beginning for us. One of the things that we have seen in this sector because of the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is that the initial response from the industry across the world has been to put on hold a whole lot of productions and content creation across film, television and streaming services. But, of course, those businesses, paradoxically, of course, have never had more demand, given the restrictions that have been put in place on society. So they're very excited and ambitious to get back up and produce content to satisfy this enormous demand.

Of course they're considering where in the world are the places that are safe for them to make their future investments into production. I think it's quite self-evident that a country like Australia is clearly going to be a higher preference into the future because of the way in which we've managed this pandemic. I see in my home state of South Australia, and of course having the film corporation in my electorate of Sturt, that we are only going to have an increase in interest from significant overseas production companies to undertake these sorts of projects in Australia and South Australia.

The Commonwealth has a very effective scheme for location attraction. Frankly, the screen sector is a lot like the car industry: everywhere in the world there are taxpayer subsidies. You have to have taxpayer funds backing these productions for your location to be competitive. That is the case with Commonwealth policy in this area. I'm very proud to be part of a government that sees the value in this industry and is investing it. We want to see that happening well into the future. I'm also very lucky to have local post-production companies in my electorate, like KOJO in Kent Town, who are working on amazing Hollywood films. It's so easy these days to collaborate across the planet. A company in my electorate of Sturt can be involved in a production out of Hollywood, and that's certainly happening with companies like KOJO and Rising Sun and Technicolor. So I congratulate the sector but also reinforce what great excitement there is for the future and the opportunities that will come post this pandemic in Australia.

**HomeBuilder**

Mr HILL (Bruce) (10:46): I want to make some remarks, indeed condemn, the government's absolute joke of a housing package: its $688 million renovation scheme. It's the kind of housing package you want when you don't actually want a housing package, isn't it? During the GFC—'we're told by the government that that was a much littler crisis and this is a much worse crisis—the then Labor government invested $6.6 billion into social and public housing across the nation. It is an enduring asset. They're still there. In contrast, this tiny little package, the Prime Minister's teeny, tiny, little package, will not create enough jobs. It's not going to create enough houses. The housing industry is a sector that we actually have very good data on. You can look at the building approvals. They're the canary in the coalmine showing what's going to happen. Are the contracts in place after the building approvals? No, they're not. You can see that this sector is going off a cliff. Pre-COVID, there were going to be 160,000 houses built per year. That is going to drop to 100,000 now. So 60,000 fewer houses are going to be built because of the COVID crisis. What's the government's response? A tiny little package that will build only 10,000 more houses. The government has no answer. What about the 50,000 houses which are not going to be built now? What are the tradies going to do? What are the builders and building companies going to do then?

Size does matter in a housing package; but it's not just size. This whole scheme is flawed. The design of the scheme is flawed. It is a random private enrichment scheme. It's only going to benefit people who have more than $150,000 to spend on a home renovation, who earn less than $125,000 a year and who are ready to go now. It's completely random. It is not actually stimulating more jobs. That's the joke of it. It's window dressing, because you want to say you've got a housing package. The economic analysis says it's not generating more jobs. You know it's a joke. You now see on the home renovation shows and the online sites advice on how to get better bathroom fittings with your renovation. You hear the builders say, 'I'm going to raise my quote now and give you better fittings so you can qualify for the grant.' It is a joke.

Instead of this joke of a scheme to randomly enrich a few people with new TV rooms, you should be building social and public housing, an enduring asset for the taxpayer that would have some lasting public benefit. You could get the renovations done and you could build the new houses. Every state and territory government has the permits in the bottom drawer. They've got the projects drawn up. The money is there. There are 150,000 people in this country desperately waiting on the public housing waiting lists. You could do something about that. But, no, this government does not like the word 'public'. You'll help private units and not public units. You'll help private vocational education but not public TAFE. You'll privatise the public service and you won't help public housing.

**Bowel Cancer**

Dr ALLEN (Higgins) (10:49): I stand to support and raise awareness for Bowel Cancer Awareness Month. More importantly, today is Red Apple Day. This is about raising awareness about bowel cancer. We know that so
many people are frightened to take the test, so for people over the age of 50 the federal government provides a free test every two years to keep people safe. That's because we know that people feel icky about doing the test for bowel cancer. Bowel cancer is one of the deadliest cancers in Australia, unfortunately. It can affect every age, although people over the age of 50 are more likely to be affected. So people who have changes in their bowel habit or bleeding should go and see their doctor to get a test, because it's so important and it can save lives. Every year 15,000 Australians develop bowel cancer, and unfortunately 5,000 of those will die. But if you get the cancer diagnosed early you're more likely to survive. This week alone, Bowel Cancer Awareness Week, unfortunately 300 people will be diagnosed with bowel cancer.

There are many different personal stories to bowel cancer. I have met so many people whose relatives, their mother, father, daughter, sister, their brother or son, have died from bowel cancer. It affects so many thousands of Australians each year. In my office alone I have a staff member, Donna, who has become a bowel cancer ambassador. She is a busy professional mother with children. She developed symptoms. She started bleeding and didn't do anything about it. It took her a number of months to get organised enough, not because she's not someone who cares about her health, but she was caring for children, she had a job, and she just didn't get around to it. Luckily, she is one of those very fortunate people who got diagnosed with bowel cancer that could be treated. Luckily that's 90 per cent of people with bowel cancer. She had extensive treatment and surgery, including radiotherapy. She says herself that if she had been diagnosed earlier she wouldn't have had to have such extensive surgery. That's the thing she would like to raise awareness about. She was able to get treatment and she's now cured. So it's a great good news story, but she would like to raise awareness, because just by getting the home test kit that is sent out every year to millions of Australians, we help to save lives. I would encourage people to acknowledge that Red Apple Day is a day to look after your health—to make sure that you eat well, that you exercise well, keep your alcohol intake down, try not to smoke or give up smoking—because cancer is a dreadful disease and it affects so many people around the world. Cancer killed my mother prematurely. It's a dreadful disease and we really want to make sure that people stay safe, fit and healthy.

**Refugees**

Ms KEARNEY (Cooper) (10:52): This week is Refugee Week. Australia has welcomed over 900,000 refugees since 1947, and we should continue to welcome and provide safe haven to people who have escaped persecution and unimaginable tragedy. But since the Liberal government was elected seven years ago, we've seen a policy of indefinite detention and serious ill treatment of refugees and asylum seekers. In my first speech in the House, I said:

I doubt we can afford the ongoing cost to our national psyche of subjecting men, women, and children to years of punitive indefinite detention.

Since then, we saw this House and the Labor Party and crossbenchers work very hard to get medevac laws legislated, only to have them dashed from under us by this government. In my electorate of Cooper, refugees who were brought here lawfully for urgent medical treatment, which many of them still have not yet received, are detained Mantra hotel. Soe cannot consume solid foods and have stomach infections because of parlous decline of their teeth over the last seven years. Throughout the COVID crisis, little effort has been made to ensure they do not contract the virus—

_A division having been called in the House of Representatives—_

**Sitting suspended from 10:54 to 11:05**

Ms KEARNEY: I have met with the men in the Mantra. I have seen firsthand the damage we are doing. I am able to communicate with them via their phones, giving them what little hope I can, but even that might be made impossible if this government gets their way. I have written to the minister and have made every effort possible to free them from that place where they have now been locked up for over seven months. Many were on Manus or Nauru for seven years before that. We know refugees and asylum seekers who are detained are sick because of their indefinite detention, not knowing when the nightmare will end. They have committed no crime. It is not illegal to ask for asylum. Unsurprisingly, their physical and mental health continue to deteriorate, exacerbated by being locked on one floor of the hotel, with virtually no access to fresh air and outdoor areas. Recently, one of the men attempted suicide.

The government have the power to release the men, where appropriate, into community detention. There are people in the community who are willing to help these men if they are, indeed, released. They have the power to make sure they have access to medical treatment, and there are many people in the community who are willing to provide medical treatment. Most importantly, they have the power to resettle these men in safe, permanent homes.
I call on the government to act justly and with humanity. Do all three of these things. These men are at breaking point. I doubt they can take much more.

Belmonte, Mr Jason

Mr GEE (Calare—Minister Assisting the Minister for Trade and Investment and Minister for Decentralisation and Regional Education) (11:07): I’ve spoken to the House before about some of the high achievers who can be found in my electorate of Calare. Today I'd like to recognise one of Orange city's sporting icons, tenpin bowler Jason Belmonte. Jason, known as 'Belmo' to his friends and family back home, is a terrific bloke who, some might say, was destined for bowling greatness. In 1983 Jason's parents, Aldo and Marisa, opened the first family owned and operated tenpin bowling centre in Orange, New South Wales. From 18 months old, Jason was whipping balls down the bowling lanes, and at age four he won his first tournament. From there the trophies just kept getting bigger.

Fast forward to today, and Jason is one of the best tenpin bowlers that Australia and the world have ever seen. He has shattered numerous records, with a total of 24 Professional Bowlers Association victories, including 13 major championships and 11 further titles. He is one of two bowlers in PBA history to have won the 'super slam'—all five major titles. Jason joined the PBA millionaires club in a record-breaking 131 tournaments, and the achievements just keep rolling in. With stellar performances in 2019, Jason capped off the decade with a fifth PBA Player of the Year award.

Jason has made famous his trademark two-handed, footy-pass style bowling technique, fondly referred to as 'the bowl' by his family. Jason recalls picking up a bowling ball as a young kid and going to bowl one-handed, only to realise he was too little to use the traditional style, so he used two hands and has done so ever since. His unorthodox delivery has received universal admiration, with thousands of kids and adults embracing the style today.

While Jason's career often means he's on the road, his thoughts are never far from his country home town. Following the recent bushfires which ravaged much of regional Australia, including central-western New South Wales, Jason announced that he will donate to Red Cross Australia $50 for every strike he throws in televised matches in 2020 and $100 for strikes in championship matches. As he said, 'So many people and animals have been affected by this disaster and they need all the help they can get!'

On behalf of the House, I would like to congratulate Jason on his wonderful contribution to the sport of tenpin bowling and on showing the world what country Australia can achieve. I would also like to congratulate Jason's parents on their wonderful contribution to the economic and sporting life of Orange and extend my congratulations and commendations to Jason's wife, Kimberly. They are a family with young children, and it's not easy being a professional sportsperson on the road on an overseas tour. To Jason and the Belmonte family: this House salutes you.

Renewable Energy

Child Care

Mr KHALIL (Wills) (11:10): Over the last few weeks I have sought and received over 150 submissions from my constituents in Wills on the government's newly released 'Technology investment roadmap discussion paper'. All of these submissions will go towards a joint submission from Wills, a community submission, calling on the government to commit to an ambitious emissions reduction target and actual strong investment in cheap, clean renewable energy for Australia's energy future. The government's paper outlines what the Wills community already know—that renewable energy is the cheapest and cleanest form of energy for Australia. We also know that, when it comes to accepting the reality of climate change, facts matter little to this government.

I want to read to you some of the thoughts that we received, and I think you'll hear a common message, Mr Deputy Speaker:

We need to get to net zero emissions as soon as possible, and Australia is well placed to lead the world in this. But the first step is to commit to that target.

Another submission said:

After yet another federal report on climate change, the evidence is clear renewable energy is critical in our fight against climate change. The community is frustrated with denial and no action. It is time to protect our future and that of generations to come.

A final example:

Read the room, Liberal government. Make a national commitment to climate change action—enough of this ambulance at the bottom of the cliff tactic.
My constituents have also contacted me expressing their concern about the government's announcement that they are 'snapping back' to their old childcare system, which means families will be back paying some of the highest childcare fees in the world. You know, Mr Deputy Speaker, that Australian families were already struggling with childcare fees pre-pandemic. Now that we're in a recession, a lot of those families are doing it tough, with parents unemployed, underemployed, or on JobKeeper or jobseeker payments. These fees will put child care out of reach for many.

The subsidy wasn't perfect in the first place. The shortfalls of the government's relief packages have meant that many childcare centres have fallen through the cracks, including centres run by charities or local government. I've been hearing from many providers, educators and parents in my electorate, and I know the extreme stress they're experiencing from the impact of COVID-19. A lot of centres in my electorate have struggled to remain viable with only 50 per cent of their previous revenue. I've made representations on behalf of many of these centres, including Hartnett House in Brunswick and other childcare centres that have fallen through the cracks.

The truth is that the free child care promise made by Scott Morrison, the Prime Minister, and this government has been a disaster for many early learning services. The promise of free child care for all Australian workers during this crisis basically has been a failure in funding and proper delivery. The government has failed childcare centres and it has failed families.

Bradfield Electorate: Queen's Birthday Honours

Mr FLETCHER (Bradfield—Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts) (11:13): I'm very pleased to rise to acknowledge the distinguished list of my constituents in Bradfield who were honoured in this year's Queen's Birthday Honours list. I'm struck by the diversity of the contributions they have made to our nation and to their community. Let me start with Dr Catherine Foley OAM, PSM, honoured for her distinguished service to research science, the advancement of women in physics, and to professional scientific organisations. I should also note that Cathy Foley has made me welcome on a number of occasions to the CSIRO's impressive facility in West Lindfield, where her passion, knowledge and leadership have been extensively demonstrated. She really is, I think, a very impressive role model for, in particular, young women interested in a career in science.

Can I acknowledge the Hon. Justice Derek Price AO, who received this award for his distinguished service to the law, and to the judiciary, in New South Wales, and through contributions to professional legal organisations. Also recognised were: Mrs Julie Fitzgerald AM, for her significant service to netball as a coach and as a mentor of sportswomen; Dr Jill Gordon AM, honoured for her significant service to psychological medicine and to professional medical bodies; Mr Peter Lancken AM, for his significant service to business, equipment hire and rental industry, and to the community; Mr Ian Langford-Brown AM, for his significant service to youth, through Scouts, and to the community of the North Shore. As a Scout's parent, I've had the opportunity to see for myself what a wonderful contribution to the community and to the development of young people the Scouting movement makes.

I acknowledge Ms Ming Long AM, awarded for her significant service to the financial and real estate sectors, and to diversity and inclusion. I'm particularly pleased to mention Mr Ken Broadhead OAM, RFD for his service to the community. Ken has given me great support and assistance; he's served on a number of community committees that I have established. He's one of those people who you will see in one capacity or another at any community event you go to. I acknowledge Dr Emily Matters OAM, awarded for her service to education and professional associations; Dr Jenetta Russell OAM, for her service to the community and to business—and, again, I've enjoyed getting to know Jenetta well. And, finally, in the military division: Commander Richard Brickacek CSC, DSM, RAN for his outstanding achievement as commanding officer of HMAS Gascoyne. I congratulate all of these distinguished and appropriately recognised constituents of mine in Bradfield.

Democracy

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (11:16): I'm reminded this week of the importance of defending our fragile democracy in light of what has been going on in Victoria. Democracy is important at all levels, especially in our political organisations. We have seen how easily that can be eroded this week by those who seek just one element of democracy—power—over all else.

I know that in Moreton democracy is alive and well in my Labor Party branches—branches like Annerley, Coopers Plains Acacia Ridge, Robertson Macgregor, Runcorn Kuraby, Salisbury, Stratton, Sunnybank Central, Yeronga and Walter Taylor. These branches are filled with motivated and politically minded locals who meet regularly to discuss how to make our society better, fairer and wealthier. These grassroots political organisations are a living and breathing tribute to democracy at work. It is the sum of all parts that creates this success, but a good leader is an essential element, so I particularly acknowledge the local branch presidents and secretaries. They do their best to make sure that democracy is strong.
Of course, it is not just political organisations that make a healthy democracy. All constituents, whether they are aligned to a political organisation or not, should have their voices heard by their parliamentary representatives. Locals in Moreton know that they always can reach my ear. I listen to their issues and make sure their concerns are known here in the corridors of Canberra. That is how a representative democracy works, but we always need checks and balances. In Queensland we have the Crime and Corruption Commission; in Victoria they have the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission; in New South Wales they have ICAC, the Independent Commission Against Corruption. But there is no federal equivalent.

It's 2½ years since the Morrison government claimed to have started work on its own weak, ineffective and opaque Commonwealth integrity commission. The Attorney-General promised the government's draft legislation would be ready by the end of 2019, yet here we are, halfway through 2020, still waiting. If we truly value our democracy, we need a Commonwealth integrity commission that is powerful, transparent and independent.

It should be no surprise that the Attorney-General is no fan of a transparent process to protect democracy. There is currently a trial being conducted here in Canberra in secret. Yes, I said here in Canberra. In Australia. In what we celebrate as a liberal democratic country. The trial is being held in secret at the behest of the Attorney-General, using his national security powers. The trial is the prosecution of lawyer Bernard Collaery for revealing national secrets, specifically that Australia bugged East Timor's government buildings in 2004 to gain advantage during crucial oil and gas negotiations. It is troubling to me that the trial is being held in secret, and it is troubling to me that the Attorney-General is pursuing Bernard Collaery at all.

A liberal democracy requires all four principles to function: legitimacy, justice, freedom and power. We should be ever vigilant to protect our fragile democracy, and that duty is incumbent on all of us to make sure that everyone is accountable.

**Atkins, Mr Darrin**

Bruce, Chief Inspector Nicole, APM

Mr HOGAN (Page—Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister) (11:19): I would like to recognise retained firefighter Darrin Atkins. 'Acko', as he is known, is celebrating 32 years of service at Woolgoolga Fire Station 507. He started on 15 June 1988, and has been serving full time since then. He served as deputy captain for over 10 years. He is still a committed first responder, driving fire trucks and protecting our community. Darrin's wife, Lisa, is very proud of him, as is his son, Brock. Their daughter, Bree, sadly died in a car accident 10 years ago. Darrin, as a first responder, was on the way to the accident, but was turned back. Her passing was obviously a devastating loss for the family, as it was for the whole community. His colleagues say Darrin is not only a firefighter, he is also a mentor and a mate to all who serve alongside him. Congratulations, Darrin. I want to thank you for your continued service to our community over many decades.

I would like to recognise Chief Inspector Nicole Bruce, who was named on this year's Queen’s Birthday Honours List. Nicole received the Australian Police Medal for her distinguished service in the police force. Nicole is a highly respected officer within the Richmond police district, and was the first woman to reach the rank of inspector in the northern region. She commenced her career as a probationary constable when she was 19, before moving to general duties at the Botany police station. Nicole then transferred to the Bathurst joint investigation response team in 2002. A year later, she transferred to the Orange Police Station and was promoted to the rank of sergeant. In November 2008, my region got lucky because Inspector Bruce was promoted to the rank of inspector and transferred to the Richmond Local Area Command as a duty officer. She is currently the police district inspector in the Nimbin sector of the Richmond police district. Nicole has distinguished herself in frontline policing, child protection investigation, and LGBTIQ liaison and command roles. This has enabled the New South Wales Police Force to achieve significant outcomes. Nicole is also passionate about mentoring junior staff, peers and senior members of the organisation. Congratulations, Nicole, and thank you for your service to our community.

**COVID-19: Private Health Insurance**

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (11:22): Private health insurance premiums are up 30 per cent under the Liberal-National government, and, with record out-of-pocket costs, when care is needed hospital cover is at its lowest level since 2007. Private health has played an important role in the response to COVID-19, and that should be acknowledged. Private hospitals have been a very important element, and I thank them for it. But Australians have every right to question whether there is more that should be done to get value for money out of private health insurance. Of course, during this pandemic, elective surgery ceased for a period. It has started to return. Around a quarter of elective surgeries will be able to resume from late April. There will be a plan to gradually resume all activity, but this will take some time. Also, very understandably, many Australians have ceased going to allied
health care professionals while the pandemic is on, so Australians have had less value out of their private health insurance during this pandemic.

Again, I recognise that private health insurers have delayed their three per cent premium increase this year by six months. I want to make it very clear: I do not think that that increase should be automatic. I think private health insurers need to justify to the minister, in light of the changes during the pandemic, why that increase should be continued and applied at all. I think Australians need to know that they're getting value for money out of private health insurance.

There has been some work done by the Australia Institute, for example, which shows billions of dollars' worth of savings to private health insurers. I'm not saying that that's how it will pan out, given the pandemic has perhaps moved through more quickly than had previously been estimated, but it is undoubtedly the case that premiums have continued to be paid and payouts have been less. Some private health insurers have indicated they'll be given back to their members in some form. I welcome that. But we need to see the meat. We need to see how this is going to happen. We need to see the details, and part of the conversation, as I said before, should be whether the three per cent increase should apply at all.

In due course, we are going to get statistics from the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority which will indicate the full degree of savings to the private health insurers, but we know that this government has fiddled with private health insurance. The minister promised a second wave. Well that's one second wave we do want to see—a second wave of reform. That's one second wave we do want to see, and we haven't seen it. The minister hasn't delivered further private health insurance reforms.

Many Australians are doing it tough. Some Australians have had to cancel their private health insurance. Others have kept it in difficult circumstances, but they do not need to be hit with a three per cent increase unless it is fully justified. I'm making very clear the view of the alternative government: that should not be automatic. It should be justified in light of the changes over recent months.

**Children's Tumour Foundation**

Dr Martin (Reid) (11:25): The Children's Tumour Foundation, located in Five Dock, is a true success story for our electorate of Reid. It is an organisation that does incredible work for children living with neurofibromatosis, a genetic disorder that causes tumours to form on nerve tissue. The organisation first began in 2010 and has grown from a volunteer based support service into the only national charity in Australia for those impacted by neurofibromatosis. It empowers those living with the disorder with knowledge and support, and invests in promising research and more effective treatments that provide hope for a cure. The hardworking volunteers of the Children's Tumour Foundation received $4,960 through the Morrison government's volunteer grants for an IT equipment upgrade. When we support volunteers we support the work they do to help those who are most vulnerable in our community. I'm also pleased that their support staff have benefited from the JobKeeper program so that, even during the challenges of the coronavirus crisis, staff could continue to provide vital support to the neurofibromatosis community.

The organisation is working very closely with Monash University on a TiNT treatment trial. I'm very pleased that the Morrison government recently contributed $760,000 through the Medical Research Future Fund for this clinical trial. This will be the first ever neurofibromatosis clinical trial partially funded by the Australian government. This clinical trial offers real hope for children who live with neurofibromatosis, which affects one in every 2,500 Australians. The trial will run alongside other trials into childhood brain cancer, which are also receiving funding from the Morrison government.

Ruth Lindsay of the Children's Tumour Foundation told me that the neurofibromatosis community is so excited by the news that they have been shouting it from the rooftops over there in Five Dock. Well, it only seemed fitting that I should share this news here in parliament too. I congratulate the staff and volunteers of the Children's Tumour Foundation for the work that they do with children who suffer from neurofibromatosis, and I look forward to seeing the positive outcomes of the TiNT treatment trial in the future.

**Werriwa Electorate: COVID-19**

Ms Stanley (Werriwa—Opposition Whip) (11:28): Right now, governments of all levels need to support local communities, especially small and family-owned businesses, to keep the Australian economy moving. They are the lifeblood of our economy, employing over 44 per cent of the total workforce and accounting for 35 per cent of Australia's GDP. This is a time to ensure the security and the livelihoods of the families, communities and workers that rely on them. These businesses and communities have taken COVID-19 measures seriously, and, as a result, Australia is in a far better place compared to many countries around the world. It's only reasonable, then, to expect the government and bureaucracies to work closely with them. Unfortunately, this is not the case for some of the residents and businesses in Werriwa. Last year, the New South Wales Liberal government announced plans
to extend bus lanes on Hoxton Park Road, which goes past their businesses. The proposed changes meant that it would be extremely difficult and cumbersome for anyone trying to access the Hoxton Park shops by car. I know these business owners well, and, when I talked to them about the changes, they were understandably upset and concerned for their futures. The New South Wales government undertook a consultation process, or so it seemed. Businesses made submissions and told the government exactly how the left-in-left-out design of the new roadway would seriously impact them and make it difficult for the local community. In fact, as outlined in those submissions, proposed plans could reduce traffic by 50 per cent. The result would be a catastrophe for their businesses. In a recent report released by the government the government has ignored their submissions and will now push ahead with these plans that could ultimately ruin these businesses.

There's really no point in conducting a consultation process if the very people the project will affect are ignored. Already suffering from the impacts of COVID-19 and the fact that they had to close, these plans will further impact the centre and their future. We should be supporting local businesses, not hurting those who have been serving our community for many years. Consultation should be just that: it should engage, listen and produce with the people that it affects the most. I am really horrified that the New South Wales Liberal government seems to want to push ahead with these road changes which may ultimately destroy large numbers of small business.

The government has passed over crucial infrastructure in the electorate of Werriwa. We need a lift at Macquarie Fields, we need the car park at Edmondson Park, and we need a rapid bus corridor to Western Sydney Airport. I call on the New South Wales government to support our local businesses, come out and talk to our community owners, and rethink the plans for Hoxton Park Road.

**Petition: Health Care**

Mr ALEXANDER (Bennelong) (11:31): I rise to table a petition on behalf of the Lung Foundation.

*The petition read as follows—*

Additional funding for specialist lung cancer nurses.

Recognising that the Federal Government funds 98 specialist breast, and 62 prostate cancer nurses, and NO lung cancer nurses, this petition signed by lung cancer patients, nurses, doctors, specialists and other concerned citizens, draws to the attention of the House the disparity in treatment faced by Australians suffering from lung cancer. Lung cancer is Australia's biggest cancer killer and it affects Australians from all walks of life; you do not need to have a history of smoking or vaping to be diagnosed. The stigma associated with lung cancer is a stumbling block to treatment and support. As result, there are NO federally funded specialist lung cancer nurses to help Australians diagnosed with lung cancer in the fight for their life. Specialist lung cancer nurses, like breast cancer and prostate cancer nurses, would navigate critical gaps in the treatment pathway with a lung cancer patient by ensuring: timely patient access to treatment - by helping patients through avoidable and unavoidable health system delays; increased receipt of anti-cancer therapy - principally through holistic assessment practice; decreased inadvertent and avoidable hospital admissions – through timely accessibility via phone or in-person support and guidance; and increased health related quality of life in the post-treatment to end of life phase.

We therefore ask the House to fund a minimum of 15 national specialist lung (health) cancer nurses in the 2020/21 Federal Budget.

From 4225 citizens (EN1306)

Petition received.

Along with my friend and colleague the member for Adelaide I'm honoured to be co-chair of the Parliamentary Friends of Lung Health. This group raises awareness of lung conditions, particularly lung cancer. It's strange that lung cancer could possibly need an awareness campaign. Everyone knows someone who has had lung cancer, and we know that it's the largest cancer killer in Australia.

Unfortunately, too many of us assume that it is a lifestyle cancer. We assume that to avoid lung cancer we just have to stop smoking. There is an element of fatalism to it too: smokers know the risks in smoking and still continue to smoke; so why help them? This fatalism has led to unequal funding and support from government and society. More than 12,500 Australian men and women will be diagnosed with lung cancer this year. Their family and friends hope for the best-practice clinical care from a specialist lung cancer nurse, and therefore better survival and quality of life. But there are only 12 specialist lung cancer nurses in Australia. It is impossible for 12 nurses to take care of 12,500 Australians.

It is no less shocking that only 15 per cent of Australian men and women diagnosed with lung cancer will survive more than five years after diagnosis. And the tragic truth is that lung cancer isn't a lifestyle illness. You don't have to be a smoker to get it. People get lung cancer because they've got lungs, just as people with prostate or breast cancer because they have prostates and breasts. Those other cancers don't have stigmas and get funding; so why doesn't lung cancer?
The Parliamentary Friends of Lung Cancer support investment in specialist cancer nurses, such as prostate and breast cancer nurses, because providing specialist care is proven to increase timely access to treatment and cancer therapy, decrease advertent and avoidable hospitalisation, and increase health-related quality of life in the post-treatment phase. By funding more nurses, we can get people back to health, back to their families and back at work. Investment in keeping people alive saves money as well lives.

This petition calls on the government and the Minister for Health to make provision in the federal budget for 15 lung cancer nurses over five years. It's a small ask, $3 million per year, in the context of a $1 billion budget, but it will make a difference for thousands of Australians facing down the biggest cancer killer—lung cancer.

**Federation Chamber adjourned at 11:34**