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

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

### SITTING DAYS—2012

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

### RADIO BROADCASTS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Printed by authority of the House of Representatives
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abbott, Hon. Anthony John</td>
<td>Warringah, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adams, Hon. Dick Godfrey Harry</td>
<td>Lyons, TAS</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albanese, Hon. Anthony Norman</td>
<td>Grayndler, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander, John Gilbert</td>
<td>Bennelong, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrews, Hon. Kevin James</td>
<td>Menzies, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrews, Karen Lesley</td>
<td>McPherson, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baldwin, Hon. Robert Charles</td>
<td>Paterson, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bandt, Adam Paul</td>
<td>Melbourne, VIC</td>
<td>AG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billson, Hon. Bruce Fredrick</td>
<td>Dunkley, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bird, Sharon Leah</td>
<td>Cunningham, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishop, Hon. Bronwyn Kathleen</td>
<td>Mackellar, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishop, Hon. Julie Isabel</td>
<td>Curtin, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowen, Hon. Christopher Eyles</td>
<td>McMahon, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bradbury, Hon. David John</td>
<td>Lindsay, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Briggs, Jamie Edward</td>
<td>Mayo, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadbent, Russell Evan</td>
<td>McMillan, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brodtmann, Gai Marie</td>
<td>Canberra, ACT</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buchholz, Scott Andrew</td>
<td>Wright, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burke, Anna Elizabeth</td>
<td>Chisholm, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burke, Hon. Anthony Stephen</td>
<td>Watson, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butler, Hon. Mark Christopher</td>
<td>Port Adelaide, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byrne, Hon. Anthony Michael</td>
<td>Holt, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champion, Nicholas David</td>
<td>Wakefield, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheeseman, Darren Leicester</td>
<td>Corangamite, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chester, Darren</td>
<td>Gippsland, VIC</td>
<td>Nats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christensen, George Robert</td>
<td>Dawson, QLD</td>
<td>Nats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ciobo, Steven Michele</td>
<td>Moncrieff, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clare, Hon. Jason Dean</td>
<td>Blaxland, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cobb, Hon. John Kenneth</td>
<td>Calare, NSW</td>
<td>Nats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collins, Hon. Julie Maree</td>
<td>Franklin, TAS</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combet, Hon. Greg Ivan, AM</td>
<td>Charlton, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coulton, Mark Maclean</td>
<td>Parkes, NSW</td>
<td>Nats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crean, Hon. Simon Findlay</td>
<td>Hotham, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crook, Anthony John</td>
<td>O'Connor, WA</td>
<td>NWA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danby, Michael David</td>
<td>Melbourne Ports, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D'Ath, Yvette Maree</td>
<td>Petrie, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dreyfus, Hon. Mark Alfred, QC</td>
<td>Isaacs, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutton, Hon. Peter Craig</td>
<td>Dickson, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elliott, Hon. Maria Justine</td>
<td>Richmond, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellis, Hon. Katherine Margaret</td>
<td>Adelaide, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerson, Hon. Craig Anthony</td>
<td>Rankin, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entsch, Warren George</td>
<td>Leichhardt, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferguson, Hon. Laurie Donald Thomas</td>
<td>Werriwa, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferguson, Hon. Martin John, AM</td>
<td>Batman, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitzgibbon, Hon. Joel Andrew</td>
<td>Hunter, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fletcher, Paul William</td>
<td>Bradfield, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forrest, John Alexander</td>
<td>Mallee, VIC</td>
<td>Nats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frydenberg, Joshua Anthony</td>
<td>Kooyong, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members</td>
<td>Division</td>
<td>Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambaro, Hon. Teresa</td>
<td>Brisbane, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garrett, Hon. Peter Robert, AM</td>
<td>Kingsford Smith, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gash, Joanna</td>
<td>Gilmore, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georganas, Steve</td>
<td>Hindmarsh, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gibbons, Stephen William</td>
<td>Bendigo, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gillard, Hon. Julia Eileen</td>
<td>Lalor, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gray, Hon. Gary, AO</td>
<td>Brand, WA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grierson, Sharon Joy</td>
<td>Newcastle, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Griffin, Hon. Alan Peter</td>
<td>Bruce, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Griggs, Natasha Louise</td>
<td>Solomon, NT</td>
<td>CLP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haase, Barry Wayne</td>
<td>Durack, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hall, Jill</td>
<td>Shortland, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hartsuyker, Luke</td>
<td>Cowper, NSW</td>
<td>Nats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawke, Alexander George</td>
<td>Mitchell, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hayes, Christopher Patrick</td>
<td>Fowler, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hockey, Hon. Joseph Benedict</td>
<td>North Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunt, Hon. Gregory Andrew</td>
<td>Flinders, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husic, Edham Nurreddin</td>
<td>Chifley, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irons, Stephen James</td>
<td>Swan, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenkins, Harry Alfred</td>
<td>Scullin, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jensen, Dennis Geoffrey</td>
<td>Tangle, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones, Stephen Patrick</td>
<td>Throsby, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones, Ewen Thomas</td>
<td>Herbert, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katter, Hon. Robert Carl</td>
<td>Kennedy, QLD</td>
<td>Ind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keenan, Michael Fayat</td>
<td>Stirling, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly, Hon. Michael Joseph, AM</td>
<td>Eden-Monaro, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly, Craig</td>
<td>Hughes, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King, Hon. Catherine Fiona</td>
<td>Ballarat, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laming, Andrew Charles</td>
<td>Bowman, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leigh, Andrew Keith</td>
<td>Fraser, ACT</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ley, Hon. Susan Peenelope</td>
<td>Farrow, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livermore, Kirsten Fiona</td>
<td>Capricornia, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyons, Geoffrey Raymond</td>
<td>Bass, TAS</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McClelland, Hon. Robert Bruce</td>
<td>Barton, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macfarlane, Hon. Ian Elgin</td>
<td>Groom, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macklin, Hon. Jennifer Louise</td>
<td>Jagajaga, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marino, Nola Bethwyn</td>
<td>Forrest, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markus, Louise Elizabeth</td>
<td>Macquarie, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marles, Hon. Richard Donald</td>
<td>Corio, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matheson, Russell Glenn</td>
<td>Macarthur, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCormack, Michael</td>
<td>Riverina, NSW</td>
<td>Nats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melham, Daryl</td>
<td>Banks, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mirabella, Sophie</td>
<td>Indi, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell, Robert George</td>
<td>McEwen, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morrison, Scott John</td>
<td>Cook, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moylan, Hon. Judith Eleanor</td>
<td>Pearce, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murphy, Hon. John Paul</td>
<td>Reid, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neumann, Shayne Kenneth</td>
<td>Blair, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members</td>
<td>Division</td>
<td>Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neville, Paul Christopher</td>
<td>Hinkler, QLD</td>
<td>Nats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oakeshott, Robert James Murray</td>
<td>Lyne, NSW</td>
<td>Ind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O'Connor, Hon. Brendan Patrick</td>
<td>Gorton, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O'Dowd, Kenneth Desmond</td>
<td>Flynn, QLD</td>
<td>Nats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O'Dwyer, Kelly Megan</td>
<td>Higgins, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O'Neill, Deborah Mary</td>
<td>Robertson, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owens, Julie Ann</td>
<td>Parramatta, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parke, Melissa</td>
<td>Fremantle, WA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perrett, Graham Douglas</td>
<td>Moreton, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plibersek, Hon. Tanya Joan</td>
<td>Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prentice, Jane</td>
<td>Ryan, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pyne, Hon. Christopher Maurice</td>
<td>Sturt, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramsey, Rowan Eric</td>
<td>Grey, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randall, Don James</td>
<td>Canning, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ripoll, Bernard Fernand</td>
<td>Oxley, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rishworth, Amanda Louise</td>
<td>Kingston, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robb, Hon. Andrew John, AO</td>
<td>Goldstein, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert, Stuart Rowland</td>
<td>Fadden, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rowland, Michelle</td>
<td>Greenway, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roxon, Hon. Nicola Louise</td>
<td>Gellibrand, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roy, Wyatt Beau</td>
<td>Longman, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rudd, Hon. Kevin Michael</td>
<td>Griffith, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruddock, Hon. Philip Maxwell</td>
<td>Berowra, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saffin, Janelle Anne</td>
<td>Page, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schultz, Albert John</td>
<td>Hume, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott, Hon. Bruce Craig</td>
<td>Maranoa, QLD</td>
<td>Nats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secker, Patrick Damien</td>
<td>Barker, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shorten, Hon. William Richard</td>
<td>Maribyrnong, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sid-bottom, Peter Sid</td>
<td>Braddon, TAS</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simpkins, Luke Xavier Linton</td>
<td>Cowan, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slipper, Hon. Peter Neil</td>
<td>Fisher, QLD</td>
<td>Ind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith, Hon. Anthony David Hawthorn</td>
<td>Casey, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith, Hon. Stephen Francis</td>
<td>Perth, WA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smyth, Laura Mary</td>
<td>La Trobe, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snowdon, Hon. Warren Edward</td>
<td>Lingiari, NT</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somlyay, Hon. Alexander Michael</td>
<td>Fairfax, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southcott, Andrew John</td>
<td>Boothby, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stone, Hon. Sharman Nancy</td>
<td>Murray, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swan, Hon. Wayne Maxwell</td>
<td>Lilley, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symon, Michael Stuart</td>
<td>Deakin, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tehan, Daniel Thomas</td>
<td>Wannon, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomson, Craig Robert</td>
<td>Dobell, NSW</td>
<td>Ind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomson, Kelvin John</td>
<td>Wills, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truss, Hon. Warren Errol</td>
<td>Wide Bay, QLD</td>
<td>Nats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tudge, Alan Edward</td>
<td>Aston, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnbull, Hon. Malcolm Bligh</td>
<td>Wentworth, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vamvakinou, Maria</td>
<td>Calwell, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Van Manen, Albertus Johannes</td>
<td>Forde, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Members of the House of Representatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vasta, Ross Xavier</td>
<td>Bonner, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washer, Malcolm James</td>
<td>Moore, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilkie, Andrew Damien</td>
<td>Denison, TAS</td>
<td>Ind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windsor, Anthony Harold Curties</td>
<td>New England, NSW</td>
<td>Ind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyatt, Kenneth George</td>
<td>Hasluck, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zappia, Tony</td>
<td>Makin, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Heads of Parliamentary Departments
Clerk of the Senate—R Laing
Clerk of the House of Representatives—B Wright
Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—C Mills
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Minister</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon Julia Gillard MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Social Inclusion</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Digital Productivity</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Mark Butler MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Mental Health Reform</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Mark Butler MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on the Centenary of ANZAC</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Warren Snowdon MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabinet Secretary</td>
<td>The Hon Mark Dreyfus QC MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jan McLucas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer (Deputy Prime Minister)</td>
<td>The Hon Wayne Swan MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Bill Shorten MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon David Bradbury MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon Bernie Ripoll MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Science and Research (Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Chris Evans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Industry and Innovation</td>
<td>The Hon Greg Combet AM MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister Assisting for Industry and Innovation</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Kate Lundy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary for Industry and Innovation</td>
<td>The Hon Mark Dreyfus QC MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary for Higher Education and Skills</td>
<td>The Hon Sharon Bird MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy (Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government</td>
<td>The Hon Simon Crean MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for the Arts</td>
<td>The Hon Simon Crean MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Sport</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Kate Lundy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Defence (Deputy Leader of the House)</td>
<td>The Hon Stephen Smith MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Defence Materiel</td>
<td>The Hon Jason Clare MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Veterans’ Affairs</td>
<td>The Hon Warren Snowdon MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Defence Science and Personnel</td>
<td>The Hon Warren Snowdon MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary for Defence</td>
<td>The Hon Dr Mike Kelly AM MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary for Defence</td>
<td>Senator the Hon David Feeney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Immigration and Citizenship</td>
<td>The Hon Chris Bowen MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Multicultural Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Kate Lundy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Infrastructure and Transport (Leader of the House)</td>
<td>The Hon Anthony Albanese MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Transport</td>
<td>The Hon Catherine King MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attorney-General</td>
<td>The Hon Nicola Roxon MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Emergency Management</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Joe Ludwig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister Assisting on Queensland Floods Recovery</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Nicola Roxon MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Home Affairs</td>
<td>The Hon Jason Clare MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Justice</td>
<td>The Hon Jason Clare MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs</td>
<td>The Hon Jenny Macklin MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Disability Reform</td>
<td>The Hon Jenny Macklin MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Housing</td>
<td>The Hon Brendan O’Connor MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Homelessness</td>
<td>The Hon Brendan O’Connor MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Community Services</td>
<td>The Hon Julie Collins MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for the Status of Women</td>
<td>The Hon Julie Collins MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Carers</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jan McLucas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Bob Carr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Trade and Competitiveness</td>
<td>The Hon Dr Craig Emerson MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary for Trade</td>
<td>The Hon Justine Elliot MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs</td>
<td>The Hon Richard Marles MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>The Hon Richard Marles MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and</td>
<td>The Hon Tony Burke MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities (Vice-President of the Executive Council)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary for Sustainability and Urban Water</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Don Farrell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Finance and Deregulation</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Penny Wong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Minister of State</td>
<td>The Hon Gary Gray AO MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting for Deregulation</td>
<td>The Hon David Bradbury MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth</td>
<td>The Hon Peter Garrett AM MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations</td>
<td>The Hon Bill Shorten MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Early Childhood and Childcare</td>
<td>The Hon Kate Ellis MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Employment Participation</td>
<td>The Hon Kate Ellis MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Indigenous Employment and Economic Development</td>
<td>The Hon Julie Collins MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary for School Education and Workplace Relations</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jacinta Collins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Manager of Government Business in the Senate)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Joe Ludwig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry</td>
<td>The Hon Sid Sidebottom MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Resources and Energy</td>
<td>The Hon Martin Ferguson AM MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Tourism</td>
<td>The Hon Martin Ferguson AM MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency</td>
<td>The Hon Greg Combet AM MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency</td>
<td>The Hon Mark Dreyfus QC MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Health</td>
<td>The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Mental Health and Ageing</td>
<td>The Hon Mark Butler MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Indigenous Health</td>
<td>The Hon Warren Snowdon MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing</td>
<td>The Hon Catherine King MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Human Services</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Kim Carr</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each box represents a portfolio. **Cabinet Ministers are shown in bold type.** As a general rule, there is one department in each portfolio. However, there is a Department of Veterans’ Affairs in the Defence portfolio. The title of a department does not necessarily reflect the title of a minister in all cases.
<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 Tony Abbott MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Leader of the Opposition</td>
<td>Senator Cory Bernardi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Julie Bishop MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Trade (Deputy Leader of the Opposition)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance</td>
<td>The Hon Teresa Gambaro MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Infrastructure and Transport</strong> (Leader of The Nationals)</td>
<td>The Hon Warren Truss MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Roads and Regional Transport</td>
<td>Mr Darren Chester MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations</strong> (Leader of the Opposition in the Senate)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Eric Abetz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Employment Participation</td>
<td>The Hon Sussan Ley MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for the Arts</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon George Brandis SC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Justice, Customs and Border Protection</td>
<td>Mr Michael Keenan MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Shadow Attorney-General</td>
<td>Senator Gary Humphries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Treasurer</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Joe Hockey MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Treasurer and Shadow Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation</td>
<td>Senator Mathias Cormann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Tax Reform (Deputy Chairman, Coalition Policy Development Committee)</td>
<td>The Hon Tony Smith MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Education, Apprenticeships and Training</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Christopher Pyne MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Childcare and Early Childhood Learning</td>
<td>The Hon Sussan Ley MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Universities and Research</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Brett Mason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Youth and Sport (Deputy Manager of Opposition Business in the House)</td>
<td>Mr Luke Hartsuyker MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Education</td>
<td>Senator Fiona Nash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs</strong> (Deputy Leader of the Nationals)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Indigenous Development and Employment</td>
<td>Senator Marise Payne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Water</strong> (Leader of the Nationals in the Senate)</td>
<td>Senator Barnaby Joyce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Regional Development</td>
<td>The Hon Bob Baldwin MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Northern and Remote Australia</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Ian Macdonald</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Shadow Minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Local Government</td>
<td>Mr Don Randall MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Murray-Darling Basin</td>
<td>Senator Simon Birmingham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Finance, Deregulation and Debt Reduction</td>
<td>The Hon Andrew Robb AO MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Chairman, Coalition Policy Development Committee)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Special Minister of State</td>
<td>The Hon Bronwyn Bishop MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for COAG</td>
<td>Senator Marise Payne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Chairman, Scrutiny of Government Waste Committee)</td>
<td>(Mr Jamie Briggs MP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Energy and Resources</td>
<td>The Hon Ian Macfarlane MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Tourism</td>
<td>The Hon Bob Baldwin MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Defence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Defence Science, Technology and Personnel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Shadow Minister Assistant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the Leader of the Opposition on the Centenary of ANZAC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Materiel</td>
<td>Senator Gary Humphries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Defence Force and Defence Support</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Ian Macdonald</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Communications and Broadband</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Regional Communications</td>
<td>The Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Luke Hartsuyker MP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Health and Ageing</td>
<td>The Hon Peter Dutton MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Ageing</td>
<td>Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Mental Health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Primary Healthcare</td>
<td>Dr Andrew Southcott MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Health</td>
<td>Dr Andrew Laming MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services and Indigenous Health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Families, Housing and Human Services</td>
<td>The Hon Kevin Andrews MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Seniors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Disabilities, Carers and the Voluntary Sector</td>
<td>The Hon Bronwyn Bishop MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate)</td>
<td>Senator Mitch Fifield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Housing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Supporting Families</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for the Status of Women</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Climate Action, Environment and Heritage</td>
<td>The Hon Greg Hunt MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Environment</td>
<td>Senator Simon Birmingham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Productivity and Population</td>
<td>Mr Scott Morrison MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Immigration and Citizenship</td>
<td>The Hon Teresa Ganbaro MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Citizenship and Settlement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration</td>
<td>Senator Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Innovation, Industry and Science</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Innovation, Industry, and Science</td>
<td>Mrs Sophie Mirabella MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Chairman, Coalition Policy Development Committee)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Shadow Minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Agriculture and Food Security</strong></td>
<td>The Hon John Cobb MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Fisheries and Forestry</em></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Small Business, Competition Policy and Consumer Affairs</strong></td>
<td>The Hon Bruce Billson MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Fair Competition</em></td>
<td>Senator Scott Ryan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONTENTS

THURSDAY, 13 SEPTEMBER 2012

Chamber
BILLS—
Corporations Legislation Amendment (Financial Reporting Panel) Bill 2012—
Australian Citizenship Amendment (Defence Families) Bill 2012—
Cybercrime Legislation Amendment Bill 2011—
Marine Safety (Domestic Commercial Vessel) National Law Bill 2012—
Marine Safety (Domestic Commercial Vessel) National Law (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2012—
Health Insurance Amendment (Extended Medicare Safety Net) Bill 2012—
Migration (Visa Evidence) Charge Bill 2012—
Migration (Visa Evidence) Charge (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2012—
Assent.................................................................10511

COMMITTEES—
National Broadband Network Committee—
Public Accounts and Audit Committee—
Treaties Committee—
   Membership..................................................................................................................10511

BILLS—
International Fund for Agricultural Development Amendment Bill 2012—
   First Reading................................................................................................................10511
   Second Reading.............................................................................................................10511
Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Declared Fishing Activities) Bill 2012—
   Second Reading...........................................................................................................10514

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS—
National Business Names Registration System.........................................................10576
Centacare......................................................................................................................10577
Southern Districts Rebels............................................................................................10577
Education Funding ......................................................................................................10577
R U OK? Day................................................................................................................10578
Canberra Raiders.........................................................................................................10578
Mannoun, Councillor Ned..............................................................................................10579
Southern Districts Rugby Union Club..........................................................................10579
Millennium Development Goals ................................................................................10579
North Queensland Cowboys.........................................................................................10580
Kingsland, Sir Richard ..................................................................................................10580

STATEMENTS ON INDULGENCE—
London Paralympic Games—
   Reference to Federation Chamber..............................................................................10581

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE—
Gillard Government ......................................................................................................10581
Economy .......................................................................................................................10582
Economy .......................................................................................................................10583
CONTENTS—continued

Schools .................................................................................................................. 10584
Health and Medical Research .............................................................................. 10586
Fisheries ............................................................................................................... 10587
National Disability Insurance Scheme ............................................................... 10588
DISTINGUISHED VISITORS ............................................................................. 10589

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE—
Budget ................................................................................................................. 10590
Suicide ................................................................................................................. 10590
Broadband ............................................................................................................ 10592
Syria ...................................................................................................................... 10592
Budget ................................................................................................................. 10593
Community Services and Family Payments ....................................................... 10594
Carbon Pricing ................................................................................................. 10595
Workplace Stress ............................................................................................... 10597
Carbon Pricing ................................................................................................. 10598
Queensland Government .................................................................................... 10599

PRIVILEGE ............................................................................................................ 10599

QUESTIONS TO THE SPEAKER—
House of Representatives Practice ..................................................................... 10600
Privilege ............................................................................................................... 10600

DOCUMENTS—
Presentation .......................................................................................................... 10601

COMMITTEES—
Selection Committee—
Report ............................................................................................................... 10601

BILLS—
Tax Laws Amendment (Investment Manager Regime) Bill 2012—
Higher Education Support Amendment (Student Contribution Amounts and Other
Measures) Bill 2012—
Navigation Bill 2012—
Navigation (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2012—
Assent ................................................................................................................ 10602

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE—
Budget ................................................................................................................. 10602

BILLS—
Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Declared
Fishing Activities) Bill 2012—
Second Reading.................................................................................................. 10614

ADJOURNMENT .................................................................................................... 10617

BILLS—
Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Declared
Fishing Activities) Bill 2012—
Consideration in Detail ..................................................................................... 10617
Third Reading ..................................................................................................... 10623

BUSINESS—
Leave of Absence .............................................................................................. 10623
CONTENTS—continued

ADJOURNMENT ........................................................................................................ 10623
NOTICES .................................................................................................................. 10623
Federation Chamber
CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS—
Centrelink .................................................................................................................. 10624
Grayndler Electorate: Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Awards ..................................... 10625
Centrelink .................................................................................................................. 10626
Fowler Electorate: Young Adults Disabled Association ........................................... 10627
Longman Electorate: Dragons Abreast Bribie Island ............................................. 10627
Corio Electorate: Reading Recovery .......................................................................... 10628
R U OK? Day ............................................................................................................ 10629
Radioactive Waste .................................................................................................. 10630
Macquarie Electorate: Blue Mountains Cancer Help .............................................. 10631
Conservative Policies .............................................................................................. 10632
CONDOLENCES—
McDonald, Lance Corporal Mervyn John ............................................................... 10633
Galagher, Private Nathanael John Aubrey ............................................................... 10633
ADJOURNMENT—
Rackett, Mr David .................................................................................................... 10638
Housing ..................................................................................................................... 10639
Swan Electorate: National Broadband Network ..................................................... 10640
Bass Electorate: Sporting Achievements ................................................................. 10642
New South Wales Government: School Funding .................................................... 10644
Gippsland Electorate: Gippsland Lakes and Catchments ....................................... 10645
Education Funding .................................................................................................. 10647
Dunkley Electorate: Law Enforcement .................................................................... 10648
Education: Gonski Report ....................................................................................... 10649
Leichhardt Electorate: Dr Edward Koch Foundation ............................................... 10650
Active Travel for Sustainable Cities ....................................................................... 10652
Superannuation Funds ............................................................................................ 10653
Early Childhood Learning ....................................................................................... 10654
Questions In Writing
Post-polio Syndrome Clinics—(Question No. 1133) .............................................. 10656
Thursday, 13 September 2012  

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke) took the chair at 09:00, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

**BILLS**
- Corporations Legislation Amendment (Financial Reporting Panel) Bill 2012
- Australian Citizenship Amendment (Defence Families) Bill 2012
- Cybercrime Legislation Amendment Bill 2011
- Marine Safety (Domestic Commercial Vessel) National Law Bill 2012
- Marine Safety (Domestic Commercial Vessel) National Law (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2012
- Health Insurance Amendment (Extended Medicare Safety Net) Bill 2012
- Migration (Visa Evidence) Charge Bill 2012
- Migration (Visa Evidence) Charge (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2012
- Assent

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

**COMMITTEES**
- National Broadband Network Committee
- Public Accounts and Audit Committee
- Treaties Committee
- Membership

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke) (09:01): I have received messages from the Senate acquainting the House of the appointment of Senators Ruston and Sinodinos as participating members of the Joint Standing Committee on the National Broadband Network; the appointment of Senator Ruston to the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit in place of Senator Kroger, discharged; the appointment of Senator McKenzie to the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties in place of Senator Birmingham, discharged.

**BILLS**
- International Fund for Agricultural Development Amendment Bill 2012
  - First Reading
    - Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Marles.
    - Bill read a first time.
  - Second Reading
    - Mr MARLES (Corio—Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs and Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs) (09:02): I move:
      That this bill be now read a second time.

**Overview**

The United Nations International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) is a specialised multilateral organisation of the United Nations. It is based in Rome and dedicated to eradicating rural poverty in developing countries.

Seventy-five per cent of the world's poorest people—1.4 billion women, children and men—live in rural areas and depend on agriculture and related activities for their livelihoods. IFAD projects help poor rural people improve their food security and nutrition, raise their incomes and increase their access to financial services, markets, technology, land and other natural resources.

Around the world, IFAD is a valued international development partner. It has an
ongoing portfolio valued at US$10.3 billion (inclusive of cofinancing). With the funding replenishments made in 2011, it has a target of lifting 80 million people out of poverty between 2013 and 2015.

IFAD focuses on:

- agricultural production and productivity;
- rural finance;
- support for women and indigenous peoples; and
- building institutions.

Australia was a founding member of IFAD but in 2004 Australia decided to withdraw as a member due to a misalignment with the then government's geographical and sectoral development priorities, as well as internal governance issues. Australia's withdrawal came into effect in 2007.

Since Australia left the fund, IFAD has gone through a major reform, making it a highly regarded development partner by donor countries around the world and by the developing countries in which it works.

It is now timely that Australia renews its membership of IFAD.

Australia's membership of IFAD will:

- complement and strengthen Australia's existing support for food security, rural development and poverty reduction;
- provide for direct engagement with smallholder producers who are disproportionately represented among the poor and vulnerable—consistent with the fundamental purpose of the Australian aid program of helping people overcome poverty;
- address poverty issues in rural areas where IFAD is focused and where Australia has an interest but limited current engagement;
- offer in-depth country and technical knowledge in regions and sectors where Australia wishes to expand but lacks expertise; and
- offer expertise and experience in rural development in fragile and conflict affected areas where Australia has a strategic interest but may not be able to directly engage.

**Reasoning**

**Importance of food security/needs of the poor**

We cannot overestimate the critical importance of food security to every human being—the physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food is surely a fundamental human right.

But tragically, for nearly a billion people in the world, this is not the case.

The United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that nearly one billion people go hungry every day. Two-thirds of these people live in the Asia-Pacific region. They are our neighbours.

In Sub-Saharan Africa almost one in three people suffer from chronic hunger.

Climate change, drought, conflict, and lack of resources and land to grow food all shape this gross inequality.

The impact of these challenges is compounded by the high cost of food, higher even than the 2008 levels when the food crisis was at its peak.

We can attribute the high cost of food largely to the failure of global food production to keep pace with growing demand. Population growth, income growth, changing diets and climatic variability are just some of the critical factors in this trend.

Forecasts by the United Nations and World Bank indicate that this trend of high
food prices is likely to continue for at least the next 10 years.

The magnitude of this challenge cannot be underestimated.

The world is asking why we didn't foresee the current food crises in the Horn of Africa or the Sahel earlier. We did. It isn't a matter of foreseeing; it's a matter of doing something about it.

**Australia's approach to food security**

Australia has long been at the forefront of global efforts to improve food security. We as a nation are very fortunate to enjoy food security ourselves.

At the same time we have had to grapple with issues like climate, water management and natural disasters that plague less food secure nations. And as a wealthy country, we developed world-class research and expertise in these issues. This is something we can share.

Food security is integral to Australia's aid program.

Our approach to food security focuses on:

- increasing funding for rural development;
- pursuing trade policy reforms to open up markets and allow more free and fair access to food.

IFAD's approach to food security marries with our own. As I have said, IFAD is dedicated to enabling poor rural people to improve their access to food and nutrition, increase their incomes and strengthen their resilience.

IFAD also works in regions of importance to Australia, including Asia, the Pacific, Sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa.

Developing countries value IFAD's work.

This was made clear during the most recent replenishment of the fund in 2011—Argentina increased its pledge by 300 per cent, Indonesia by 100 per cent, Brazil by 25 per cent and India by 20 per cent—all during a time of economic hardship.

IFAD has reformed its organisational structure to increase efficiency, align human and financial resources with strategic objectives, and expand its role as a knowledge institution.

For every $1 contributed, IFAD mobilises another $6 for rural development.

**AusAID's 2011 review of IFAD**

In 2011, AusAID conducted a review of IFAD. We found that IFAD had implemented significant reforms and that it was now considered by donors and developing countries to be an increasingly effective, results-focused, value-for-money partner.

The review recognised IFAD's clear mandate to reduce rural poverty and hunger through working with smallholder farmers who are disproportionately represented amongst the poor, vulnerable and food insecure.
IFAD projects currently work with more than 36 million poor men and women, supporting them to become food secure through increasing productivity, access to markets including microfinance, and business development.

Australia's national interest

Renewing our membership of IFAD is clearly in Australia's national interest. It will allow Australia to expand existing support for food security and help the world's most vulnerable to fight hunger.

IFAD's senior management values Australia's unique technical expertise in tropical and dryland farming, fisheries, biosecurity and quarantine. We are considered to have attractive policy and regulatory approaches in these areas.

Membership will also allow Australia to draw on IFAD's considerable experience to strengthen Australia's own approach to food security and rural development in our aid program.

Australia's priorities for engaging with IFAD are:
- improving food security, raising incomes and strengthening resilience of smallholder producers in priority countries for Australia;
- continued commitment to reform to improve governance and management of the organisation, including strengthened focus on results and value for money; and
- ensuring disability inclusiveness and gender equality across all of IFAD's programs.

Investment in IFAD would not detract from existing support for food security programs. Financial contributions to IFAD will be decided through the Australian government's annual budget process. The 2011 review of IFAD conducted in-depth analysis of alternative additional food security funding mechanisms, and found that re-joining IFAD would be the best option for additional Australian support in this sector.

Finally, membership of IFAD would allow Australian firms and individuals to be engaged with or employed on IFAD projects. Only citizens of member states can work on IFAD projects.

With the increasing urgency of our global food security challenges and obligations, this bill to enable Australia to re-join IFAD will have considerable benefit for not only our national interest, but for the billions of people world-wide who remain acutely vulnerable to food shortages, and whose lives would be immeasurably improved if they could achieve the basic human right to food security.

I commend this bill to the House.
Debate adjourned.

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Declared Fishing Activities) Bill 2012

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.
to which the following amendment was moved:
That all 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 calls on the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities to explain:

(1) the reasons for his decision to reverse the policy that he introduced as Fisheries Minister in October 2009 which stated: 'There are considerable economies of scale in the fishery and the most efficient way to fish may include large scale factory freezer vessels';

CHAMBER
(2) why he effectively invited the Margiris into Australia by promoting 'large scale factory freezer vessels'; and

(3) what actions he will take to compensate the 50 Australian workers who are losing their jobs as a consequence of this legislation."

Ms COLLINS (Franklin—Minister for Community Services, Minister for the Status of Women and Minister for Indigenous Employment and Economic Development) (09:12): I am pleased to speak in support of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Declared Fishing Activities) Bill. As many people in this place would know, what has become known as the super-trawler debate has been very big in Tasmania and the changes proposed in the bill are very important to my fellow Tasmanians. I have been contacted by many Tasmanians as part of what has truly become a grassroots campaign. Thousands of petition signers live in my electorate and thousands of people have personally contacted my office—it is a very big issue in my home state of Tasmania.

I want to spend some time talking about what this bill does and about the local Tasmanian campaign. The bill strengthens Australia's fishing industries, both commercial and recreational, by ensuring proposals for large-scale operators are given proper consideration before they get the go-ahead to fish in Australian waters. We as a government are taking a cautious approach. We know that a vessel of this size has not been in Australian waters before. This is the second biggest fishing vessel on the planet, and we do not want to be rushed into any decisions. We want to make sure we know the impacts of it before we give it the green light. We want to make sure we know what will happen. We know the science behind the current quotas is sound, but of course the science has not been done on the long-term effects of a vessel of this size. We certainly know that local community concern has been led, particularly in Tasmania, by the recreational fishers themselves, who are really concerned to make sure we get this right.

This bill is essentially about giving the government time to make sure that we get any decisions that we make on a vessel of this size right, because it is really important. We have said that we are not ruling out a super-trawler in the future, but we want to make sure that any assessment process is done properly.

The Fisheries Management Act has been in place for some time, since 1991, so it is now more than 20 years old, and that is why we have also announced an overhaul of the fisheries policy and legislation. We have said that that will be a root-and-branch review to identify any improvements or changes that need to be made, because we do want to make sure that we have sustainable fisheries going into the future for Australians, including of course Tasmanians. Tasmanians were also very concerned about bycatch and the impacts of the super-trawler on bycatch, so I am glad that Minister Burke has also addressed some of those issues.

I want to take the time to thank the minister for fisheries and the ministry for the environment for their responsiveness over the last few weeks when they have been contacted by me and other Tasmanians—our two senators, Lin Thorp and Carol Brown, and, in particular, Sid Sidebottom, the member for Braddon and the parliamentary secretary for fisheries. The member for Braddon has been on the ground in Tasmania talking to recreational fishers and other people in the community who have concerns about this trawler coming into Australian waters. He has been very busy. He has taken a very considered approach. He obviously has concerns about his local community and
about the broader sustainability of fisheries around Australia. He has been doing a great job on the ground in Tasmania.

We have seen what is a unique grassroots campaign in Tasmania, led by the recreational fishers, as I said before, and I do want to congratulate some local people who have been instrumental in that campaign. Tyson Clements, Martin Haley and Nobby Clark are well known to any representative of Tasmania who has been lobbied on this issue in recent weeks and months. In fact, I think I first met with them around two months ago. They are very passionate individuals and they have been fighting for this not for themselves but because they wanted to make sure Tasmanian fisheries were protected in the long term. They were really concerned about the future of recreational fishing and commercial fishing, and their sustainability. They wanted to ensure that their children and grandchildren had the benefits of the unique lifestyle that Tasmania offers. We know that Tasmanians are particularly passionate about their lifestyle and our environment. They understand that decisions about Australia’s fisheries are based on science and should continue to be, and I certainly agree with that. They are just saying, “How can we know we’ve got it right, when a super trawler of this size has never been in Tasmanian waters before?” I think that is a valid argument and, clearly, the government think that is a valid argument. That is why we are taking our time to look at the issues that have been raised to make sure that we do the work before we allow this vessel to operate. There have been a lot of accusations around the place about knee-jerk reactions, about the government bowing to pressure, but this is not about that. It is not about populism. It is about representing our constituencies, it is about understanding the concerns in the local community and it is about—

Mr Secker: And you ignore the science!

Ms COLLINS: making sure that we get our decision-making right and that the science is right before we go ahead and allow this vessel to fish in our waters.

There were some outbursts from my opponents, the Liberals, over there. There was an editorial in the Tasmanian Examiner yesterday, written by the deputy editor, Barry Prismall, in which he said that the Liberals in Tasmania have been strategically outmanoeuvred by the Labor Party in Tasmania, and:

It is mystifying that the head of the next Liberal half-Senate ticket, Senator Richard Colbeck, is defending the super trawler.

They do not oppose the super-trawler, but the rest of Australia does. It is only the Liberals in Tasmania who do not realise that this is a big issue in Tasmania and in the rest of Australia.

I commend the bill to the House.

Mr RAMSEY (Grey) (09:19): I rise to speak on the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Declared Fishing Activities) Bill 2012. This government could not hold a line between the kitchen sink and the stove. Really, the backflips on policy week after week are becoming so monotonous as to be almost not worth comment. The similarities between this issue and the live cattle export dispute are enormous: within a few days, a government has gone from supporting an industry to suspending the industry.

Last week, with the exception of four or five people, everybody on that side of the chamber supported allowing this vessel to come into Australian waters; this week, they have completely changed their view. What has changed in that time? There has been a public campaign led by GetUp! and the
Greens—around half a million emails. And we saw it happen before in the live cattle dispute. The Left of Australian politics has Labor running scared. This just joins a long line of policy backflips—I will not take you through them, Madam Deputy Speaker, as we often do on this side of the chamber—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): No, you won't, because you'll be relevant to the bill!

Mr RAMSEY: but the most notable, of course, is the carbon tax.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: You'll be relevant to the bill, so you won't, actually, thank you!

Mr RAMSEY: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. The government bill in this case is a knee-jerk reaction and a total overreaction, despite the minister's comments. It proposes that the minister have the power to suspend any fishery for a period of up to two years, and one of the reasons for this, one of the trigger points for this, is that there are 'social concerns'. Social concerns? What the hell are they? What are social concerns? It is ill-defined, and I do not think the minister's office can define it either. It is preposterous. This bill is far too broad, it is ill-defined and it is totally irresponsible. Most importantly, it walks away from all the scientific work and processes that have gone into the approval of fishing licences.

AFMA, the Australian Fisheries Management Authority, are recognised as running the second best managed fishery in the world. We are right up there with the very best. Their work is backed up by the CSIRO and by the South Australian Research and Development Institute, and they all approve of the methodology that has been used. But the government have chosen to throw all of that out and then turn around and say, 'We need more study on this.'

Really what the government are saying to AFMA, to the CSIRO and to SARDI is, 'We don't trust you. You don't know what you're talking about, but the senders of the emails, GetUp! and the Greens, know what they are talking about.' It has really outraged an enormous number of people in the community. These campaigns have many supporters and are very effective. That is why the government have buckled. The problem is, if you have a strong minister, if you have a strong government, they get out and lead the debate with reason. In this particular case, once again they have run for cover. In fact, the bill has been brought in in such a rushed manner that they now seem to be relying on the member for Dobell, who is suspended from the Labor Party, to bring in amendments to try to save their bacon from the wrath of the recreational fishing industry. But they still have not got it right because they have upset the charter industry as well.

There is total confusion.

Already in the industry there is talk of financial tightening, of increasing risk. We have a lot of contacts in the industry. At this stage it is anecdotal, but the talk is that financiers are becoming nervous about backing the fishing industry in Australia. There is good reason for that. The government's grab of marine parks, both Commonwealth and state parks in the case of South Australia, have caused a lot of nervousness. In my own state the abalone industry and the crayfish industry are feeling extremely threatened by the state marine parks. The Commonwealth marine parks off South Australia are not quite so bad but certainly the grab for this enormous slab of the Coral Sea has caused a lot of uncertainty in the industry. This legislation is another grab for power which puts more uncertainty into the fishing industry.

If finance does tighten for the industry then once again we will have a dispute on
our hands similar to the live cattle dispute. If the bankers are saying to these long-term fishing families, 'We're not going to bankroll you for another 12 months, we're not going to allow for the upgrade of your boats', then you will see the knock-on effects. I will come to some of the local effects because the electorate of Grey has a very close association with this matter. At this stage the MV Abel Tasman, formerly the Margiris, is anchored in Port Lincoln. Port Lincoln is the home of the biggest fishing fleet in the southern hemisphere. Understandably, there is a lot of anxiety there about this vessel being in port and what it might be doing when it goes out to sea. Quite rightly, they have raised concerns about the links of super-trawlers to overfishing around the world.

It is worth recounting a little bit of history here. The success of Port Lincoln today is based on modernisation and being able to adapt to the environment and to the economic climate of the time. Port Lincoln became a boom fishing town in the sixties and seventies on the back of the vastly and quickly expanding wild-catch tuna industry. It seemed there was an inexhaustible supply of tuna, but that was not the case—and we know that has happened in many fisheries around the world. Eventually the wild-catch tuna industry virtually collapsed—it was almost wiped out—but the industry was able to revive itself. In fact, fishing stocks are increasing every year at the moment. The recovery is quite remarkable, but it is recovering because of good fishing management through the enforcement of international quotas. There were some difficulties a few years ago with one of the major parties taking beyond-quota fish, but by and large that has been fixed up now. Since that problem has gone away, tuna stocks have been bounding back quite quickly.

The other thing that happened at the same time was the establishment of the tuna farming industry. This has made an enormous difference in Port Lincoln. It required a complete change to technology. It required more powerful boats to drag the tuna back from out in the Great Australian Bight so that it is not damaged as it makes its way through some of the heaviest seas in the world. The tuna is dragged back to Port Lincoln and put into tuna farms, where it can be turned into a high-value product. The industry had to adapt completely, to change its practices and to change its equipment. That is what we are looking at here: an industry trying to adapt to the economic climate and the environmental impact of the times.

I am concerned that this bill is standing in the way of technological adaptation. I was a farmer before I came to this place—I have used this analogy in a few places. What the government is trying to do here is the same as if you were to stop two or three farmers from getting together to get rid of their old header to buy a decent-sized new harvester because they know that they will be able to get their crop-off in a more timely fashion and that it will be in better condition. That is a very important point. I want you to hang on to that, because having the right tools for the job makes an enormous difference to your return. I have sought a lot of advice on this issue because it is so closely linked to my industry.

I know many people in my electorate will not be pleased with what I have to say on this, but I make the point—as I often do—that the way I think democracy should work, and the way it does work, is that we elect people to the parliament to make decisions on our behalf because we trust their reasonable nature. We trust them to get all the facts and to make a reasonable decision. When we leave public life, we do not have
the ability to amass all the facts. So much of what we know is brought to us in little snippets. Unfortunately that is the case for the general public. They elect us because we have the time to get to the bottom of issues. I have sought as much information on this issue as I could possibly find. It is worth getting some of the background on the page.

The *Abel Tasman*, if approved, will be operating on existing quota. It has 18,000 of the 32,000 tonne total allowable catch in the industry. It is true that this quota has recently been expanded. Whether or not that total allowable catch is sustainable is a very good question, but it is not a question for this particular vessel. That is about the overall management of the fishery, which is what we entrust the scientists, who are recognised as some of the best fisheries managers in the world, to do.

At this stage, Australia only produces 25 per cent of its own seafood. Considering the vast amount of ocean space we have, one would think that probably we do not fully understand our stocks. This advance gives us the possibility of understanding more.

We have local owners of the quota. In fact, they have accumulated that quota on the open market, just the same as any other fisherman would accumulate the quota. They are long-term Australian companies and they have effectively leased a ship, just as a ferry operator would do, just as many plant operators do. They go and get the right machine for the job and they bring it in. The target fish in this case are of very low value. They are not of interest to the Australian market, and it is not the kind of fish we eat. At this stage, the fish brought to port are not for human consumption, and that is because the vessels being used at the moment have neither the range nor the capacity to preserve the fish properly once it is brought on board. That means they cannot freeze it. So they are limited to around one week from port. By the time they come back into port—and remember these fish are not gutted, so they do not keep a long time in the chiller—this food is no longer safe for human consumption. So it becomes a lower value product than it would otherwise be. The ability of the ship to range much further than the current vessels means that the load of the 18,000 tonne quota that it would take—half from east of Tasmania and half from west of Tasmania—will be spread over a far greater portion of the ocean. So it is much less likely to have local impact. The boats are currently fishing the same quota. Despite the pictures in the paper of the fishing nets and the comparisons, they actually use the same equipment as the *Abel Tasman* is intending to use. But, of course, they do not have the reach because they do not have the freezer capacity.

I have had, I think, very justifiable concerns raised with me at a local level by the sardine industry in South Australia. The sardine industry was established to provide feed for the tuna industry. They have a quota of 34,000 tonnes. It is a state managed fishery. They are concerned about the possibilities of bycatch on the *Abel Tasman*—and quite rightly; why would you not be concerned? I made some inquiries, and I would like to get this on the record as well. The facts are that the *Abel Tasman* will not have quota for sardine. So if they bring sardine on board they cannot land it. Some might say that they can just chuck it back in a sea but of course if they are catching bycatch, it will be mixed up with the red bait and the other taken fish. So if it is mixed up then their load, their catch, is contaminated and becomes virtually worthless because these are small fish. You cannot afford to sit down and sort them into little heaps and say, 'We have sardines over here and the red bait over there.' So as soon as they start catching

---

**CHAMBER**
sardine—remember there are three observers on this boat and a number of cameras—it is not in their interest to remain there anymore. So I assure the sardine industry back in South Australia that we have looked at this issue, and they should feel comfortable with the outcome. It is a matter of fact that the sardine industry collects a bycatch of red bait. But that is another story.

In balance, the legislation before the House now is a complete overreaction. The outrage against the Abel Tasman and Seafish Tasmania is confected in many cases by people who have a political agenda. The legislation should be rejected. It is not good government.

Dr MIKE KELLY (Eden-Monaro—Parliamentary Secretary for Defence) (09:34): It is breathtaking the way the coalition has addressed this issue. We obviously see the track record that they had prior to the 2010 election—out there mendaciously misleading the entire electorate about the marine bioregional planning process in one of the greatest disinformation campaigns ever seen. In fact, I recall the Leader of the Opposition down in Narooma hanging out a rod, trying to tell people that this was going to be the sort of activity that was going to be affected by the process. He would have had to have been able to cast that rod three nautical miles out to sea to have been anywhere near the region that these marine bioregional planning processes are addressing. So clearly he was out there trying to cause the same sort of hysteria, the same sort of deception and misleading reaction in the community that he has followed as part of his playbook in relation to the carbon tax. How could you take anybody on that side of the House seriously when it comes to dealing with an issue to do with our marine environment? They are out there trying to tell you that this is all about reacting to the Greens, when we know for a fact that what this is about is allaying the concerns that exist amongst our commercial fishers and recreational fishers as well as those who are concerned about the marine environment. If you were honest about that then you would admit it.

Let us remind ourselves technically what this bill does. It enables the minister to prohibit declared fishing activities with an independent expert panel being involved to assess the potential environmental, social or economic impacts of that activity. That would only be activated, of course, where there was a concern and uncertainty about those impacts and about the need for further assessment. As parliamentary secretary for fisheries in the last term, I was very proud to have taken a very keen involvement in refining and improving the regulation of our fishing industry. I was proud to have presented legislation creating comanagement regimes so that our commercial fishers could work more effectively with the regulatory authorities. We have seen some wonderful examples of how that can work; for example, the Spencer Gulf prawn trawlers do a magnificent job of their comanagement relationship with South Australian state authorities. We are now seeing this sort of relationship grow because the fishers in this country do get maligned unfairly by some; they are out there interested in preserving and sustaining their own industry. We do have world's best practice fishing management in this country—that is the truth of the story. With our vessel video monitoring systems and the way we set up the operation of the ships and the tracking of the vessels, it is certainly a commendable operation.

Further than that, we have people interested in the marine environment itself and in recreational fishing. I was very pleased and proud to have regularly conducted roundtable meetings here in
Canberra with all the stakeholders in the recreational fisheries industry. We were able to bring on board all their concerns in the way that we dealt with these issues.

Also, of course, I was able to negotiate and deal with AFMA in finally setting the quotas for our national system of fisheries. There was some concern initially with how those quotas were being determined. In relation to abundant species there were quotas set and, fine, that would not be a problem in the short term; but I wanted to make sure that the quotas we set would give us sustainability in the long term. We certainly saw that. There was flexibility on the part of AFMA and I very much enjoyed working with Michael Egan and with James Findlay from AFMA. There is a high degree of independence in the way those authorities operate.

One of the concerns that has emerged with this issue is the inability of the relevant ministers to take action where something has not quite fit within the regulatory regime. I will come back to the biomarine regional planning process, because this really goes to the credibility of the coalition. I mentioned the misleading conduct and the statements and claims made by the Leader of the Opposition in the 2010 campaign. Of course, I travelled this country far and wide, to the great state of Western Australia, as the member for—

Mr Gray: Brand.

Dr MIKE KELLY: Brand, sitting here today in the House, representing it very well—

Mr Gray: You need to come to the great state more often.

Dr MIKE KELLY: Absolutely. I had the great pleasure of meeting with Recfishwest and the commercial fishing organisations in Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Tasmania—all over this great land. We worked very hard to make sure we got the balance right in the greatest marine conservation effort in the entire world in relation to the sheer scale of the challenge we were dealing with, in addition to making sure that that complemented the sustainability of our fishing industry and took on board their concerns. There was extensive consultation. That is why we are reacting to the current situation with the Abel Tasman: we are concerned to make sure there is even further consultation and scientific analysis. Our track record on this really requires people to accept the merits of our bona fides in this respect.

To highlight that, I will talk about the fishing co-ops on my own coast, in Twofold Bay, Bermagui and just out of the electorate at Ulladulla, all of which I have visited and had extensive dealings with. When a great bloke named Rocky Lagana, who owns the Bermagui Fishermen's Co-operative, was asked about the impact and the marine bioregional planning process, he said: 'Our biggest concern is on the Far South Coast, where a lot of little fishing villages—Bermagui, Ulladulla, Eden—and the community rely on seafood and our commercial fishers to stay financial, and I think the government has brought that on board. We've talked to the government for the last two years about all this and I think they've listened to us. We are quite happy at Bermagui with the outcome that has been achieved. At the co-op at Bermagui we put in a submission from the very early days when it was announced that this was the area that they were looking at to put a marine reserve in and we've had a lot of discussion with the government about where it should go and the effect it will have on small coastal communities.' He went on to say, 'I don't think it's going to have a huge impact on
Bermagui as a community', and he thought it was a good outcome for the Far South Coast.

Our rec fishers have understood that that process also can serve their situation. The rec fishing industry in my region is critically important. One of the biggest activities we have in the region is the Bermagui Blue Water Classic. It is the oldest game fishing club in Australia to conduct that activity. Last year something like 63 vessels were involved in the competition. We also have the Eden game-fishing competition. A lot of tourists come into the region to pursue their recreational activities in this respect. It is those rec fishers and commercial fishers that have been coming to me and my own region concerned about this super-trawler.

The problem we have is that, whereas we have a very good regulatory regime and the quotas that have been set are sustainable in terms of the entire national stock that exists, what we did not have the experience of in the past is a vessel of this scale, of this size, which is capable of storing more than 6,000 tonnes of fish, and the impact that such large-scale fishing would have in one particular location. This is highly relevant to my own region because this vessel would be fishing off our coast in south-east New South Wales. We do not know what the impact would be of such a large take in one particular locality.

There are a couple of very innovative and entrepreneurial fishermen at the Twofold Bay co-op by the names of Gary Warren and Stan Soroka, who have done a fantastic job in recent years of developing a consumer market for these very species, for skipjack, mackerel and red bait. Notwithstanding the fire they had in their processing plan a couple of summers ago, they really persevered with their efforts and have built up a market in this area. What impact would there be from the other species that relate to these species and that would be the target of fishing in terms of the biodiversity and sustainability of the marine environment in that area for our commercial and rec fishers?

I am not saying that it is unsustainable. What we need to know is: what is the real science? What is the conclusive answer to this? How could anybody—any Independent, any coalition member—be against acquiring more scientific knowledge about how this vessel would operate for the long term, for the future? It is the first time we have had a vessel of this type approaching our waters or seeking to fish in our waters. If we can resolve this situation with this vessel then the circumstances in the future will become clearer for any other vessel of its type or nature seeking to operate in our waters.

Obviously, the problem here is that the coalition refuse to take an evidence based approach to any kind of policy. We have seen them reject the Productivity Commission on issues such as the wheat market. We have seen them defy the advice and recommendations of the OECD, the Productivity Commission, Dr Shergold, Ross Garnaut and many authorities in relation to a market based approach to dealing with climate change. We have seen almost half of the members of the coalition defy the evidence of 97 per cent of the world's climate scientists. The coalition seems to have some kind of strange aversion to taking an evidence based approach to policy formulation.

Certainly those opposite do their very best to get out there and to obfuscate and muddy the waters about the science that is out there. Now, we have science—it is true—about the sustainability of the quotas globally that have been set for the nation in relation to this particular species. We can have some confidence about the ongoing sustainability of that species in relation to that quota. But
what we do not know—what we do not have complete understanding or confidence in relation to—is the local impact. What would it do to my south-east coast fisheries to take 6,000 tonnes of red bait and skipjack mackerel from that resource?

I am also concerned about the particular techniques this vessel would use. We know there is a particular bycatch challenge with this. If you have seen the photographs of the massive trawling operation that hangs off the back of this huge factory ship you have to be seriously concerned about that. We need to know what the impact would be. It is okay that the minister had the power to attempt to move the vessel on, where evidence of bycatch was happening, but what about the related species that are not protected under the EPBC and the impact on a local setting in that respect, as well? These are the things we need answers to, and that is what this legislation seeks to do. How could anybody be opposed to seeking those answers?

We have a unique marine environment in our region off south-east New South Wales. It is an area where you have the confluence of major current systems, where it is very important to be able to monitor that to determine the effects of climate change. It is a unique marine environment. That is why the Sapphire Coast Marine Discovery Centre at Eden is doing such a wonderful job, and why we have put funding into it. It is really lifting the veil on some of the things we have not learnt about that unique environment and about the impacts of climate change. So it is very important that we know that a vessel of this kind is not going to come in like a bull in a crockery shop and, even though it is not bottom-trawling—we know the bottom will be secure in the operation of a vessel of this kind—we just do not know the impact that it would have in a region like mine, in particular.

So it is in tune with the very essence of the way this government operates to get out there, to consult, to allow our commercial and recreational fishers and people concerned about the environment to be involved in this process, because we understand these days that to have an effective industry—an industry that will be sustainable—you also have to have the social licence. And the social licence should include not just those concerned about the environmental impacts but those who will have, if you like, the downstream effects in relation to their commercial operations and in relation to the huge tourism and other related industries that are associated with our recreational fishers.

Mr Christensen: You have taken that out of the bill.

Dr Mike Kelly: Why would anybody from that side stand up and oppose that? Why would the member for Dawson or anybody else who has significant recreational fishing or commercial fishing in their electorate seek to oppose those people and those interests in having a say, in being consulted to ensure that their views and their information are included in determinations by the regulatory authorities and by the ministers? What is wrong with that? What we are seeing here today is not an argument based on this legislation or the things that it seeks to fix; what we are seeing today is the ‘Tony Abbott Leader of the Opposition playbook’ being rolled out yet again, ad nauseam—and the public is nauseous in relation to this tactic. The tactic has completely worn off. You are going down the wrong road; give up on this course of action.

What the Australian public wants to see from you is cooperation in the national interest, for once. They are sick and tired of the negativity. They are sick and tired of the
mindless point-scoring, the cheap politics and the mendacious approach to every issue that comes into this place. They are sick of the ‘no, no, no’ approach to dealing with the issues that confront this nation. For once, come on board with something that takes into account the things that make good policy. Vote for this legislation.

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson) (09:49):
Thank you very much. The previous member is probably not aware—he might need to pick up the phone and call the manager of government business—to find that they have given the member for Dobell amendments to move that get rid of the social impact issue that he just spent so much time talking about.

I do not support the supertrawler fishing in Australian waters. I have been on the record as saying that. If you look at the size of the thing and the size of the nets you just get a feeling in your bones that it is not right. And locals in my electorate have also been concerned about it. I refer to Lance Murray from recreational fishing group Sunfish Mackay, who pointed out to me that the superboats strip these migration routes fairly bare and that once the bait and fish stocks are gone they are gone forever. I refer to commercial fishing operator Greg Smith in Bowen, as well, who also has some strong concerns about what it might do to migratory stock.

But the fact is that this Gillard Labor government and its environment minister, when he was fisheries minister, actually invited the supertrawler here. He did so in 2009, when he was minister for fisheries and overseeing the Australian Fisheries Management Authority. In the Small Pelagic Fishery Harvest Strategy in October 2009 they say:

There are considerable economies of scale in the fishery and the most efficient way to fish may include large scale factory freezer vessels.

He was the minister at the time, basically inviting this vessel into Australia. And the government has been defending why it invited them here. The current minister for fisheries, in the other place, as late as Monday this week was raging against the Greens, who were essentially putting forward a proposal similar to that which the government is putting forward now. He said that the Greens motion could harm fisheries across Australian Commonwealth waters. Well, ‘hear, hear,’ to that. He said:

This disallowance motion is a message that the Greens political party do not support sustainable catch limits based on science. It is a message that says the Greens want fisheries managed by politics, not qualified fisheries managers. And it says that the Greens do not support the commercial operators who fish in some of the world’s best managed fisheries.

He went on:
… I have no doubt that the same disregard—by the Greens—
for the science and management of our commercial fisheries will be extended to the legitimate pursuit of recreational fishing.

That was the fisheries minister in the other place on Monday of this week. By Thursday of this week there had been a complete U-turn.

I say to the environment minister and to the fisheries minister: you created this problem. Why did you ask the Margiris to come to Australia to fish in our waters in the first place? Why did you ask a foreign supertrawler to come here when at the same time you were planning a network of marine parks around the country, a network of massive zones where Aussie fishermen, both commercial and recreational, could be locked out forever? Why did you do that? Once again, see how hopeless a government this lot are. They are making it up as they go along. They waited for the supertrawler to get here, to get to the point where the nets
were almost in the water and then they cried 'Foul'! Now an Australian business that has put considerable dollars on the line to get this ship out here is substantially out of pocket, 50 people are out of a job and, what is worse, the taxpayer is probably going to have to cough up for the absolute incompetence of the minister for the environment and the minister for fisheries. You should not have invited them here in the first place.

How do we do deal with this one fishing vessel? A simple way, as I have said, would have been not to have invited it here in the first place. But now that the Greens tail is wagging the Labor dog on this issue, substantially after the fact, how can they deal with it? They could have had a specific bill giving either the environment minister or, probably more appropriately, the fisheries minister the ability to deal exclusively with the Margiris. But, no, they have sought to use an atom bomb to kill an ant. The environment minister has brought before this House legislation that gives him the unfettered power to unilaterally declare unsustainable any fishing activity in Australian waters and to ban it for two years. That cure, my friends, is much worse than the actual disease. That cure in the hands of this environment minister in a dog of a government that is being wagged by its Greens tail could wipe out any form of fishing, anytime, anywhere in Australian waters with the stroke of a pen—or, at least, it would have been any form of fishing. The Recreational Fishing Foundation issued a statement yesterday, in which it said: 'It should not be about stopping mums, dads and kids from going and catching a fish in Australian waters.' It called on the government to amend the legislation immediately, because it had absolutely stuffed it.

The government got the member for Dobell to do its dirty work and fix up this absolute mess of a bill with his amendments. But even with those amendments the bill will still affect any form of commercial fishing—including charter fishing, which actually takes recreational fishermen out into Commonwealth waters. It will still affect those people. It will be one man's decision, because, despite what the legislation says, we know that the fisheries minister is a lame-duck minister and that he will have to bow or curtsey to whatever decision the environment minister makes. We have seen that in this case. Poor old Joe! He was busy defending the supertrawler—

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Mitchell):** Order! The member for Dawson will address members by their proper title—as is in line with what you required yesterday.

**Mr CHRISTENSEN:** Poor old minister. On Monday he was busy in the other place defending the supertrawler on behalf of the government—backing up a decision the environment minister had made when he was fisheries minister to get the supertrawler over here—saying things such as: what the Greens wanted to do was have fisheries managed by politics, not qualified fisheries managers. He was saying that, only to have the rug pulled from under him the very next day, when he stated that he now had a degree of uncertainty about how the vessel was going to operate in these waters. What a shambles. What a lame-duck minister he is. In reality, we will have one minister making these decisions with the stroke of a pen. He will have that power with but one limitation. What is that limitation? It is stated in the original legislation, which says:

(3) The Minister must not make an interim declaration unless the Minister and the Fisheries Minister agree that:
(a) there is uncertainty about the environmental, social or economic impacts of the fishing activity;

That is in the legislation that was originally brought to this place. It mentions social impacts. What exactly is the social impact of fishing? What does social impact actually mean? If we look at the Oxford dictionary, we see that 'social' is relating to society, of course, and 'impact' is a marked effect or influence. So the minister is going to step in and ban any fishing business—commercial or tourist charter fishing—that he deems to have some marked effect or influence on society. That would give me a lot of confidence if I were a lawful Aussie commercial fishing operator who was seeking to expand or to pass the game onto a son or daughter and I knew that the minister could close my paddock down because he thought that my activity had a marked effect or influence on society. No wonder Brian Jeffries, a director of the Commonwealth Fisheries Association, has said that the issue is all about fishing rights. No wonder Dean Logan of the Australian Marine Alliance has said:

If this bill passes it will give the Department of Environment … the authority to stop [bluefin tuna fishing] … all the way down the east coast … in Commonwealth waters.

He went on to say:

Bluefin tuna have been earmarked by environmental NGO's as a target species that they believe to be 'threatened' …

… … …

… sceptics could see this as an insidious ploy to achieve a pre-determined Green outcome with a massive decoy. Regardless of the hypothesis … professional fishermen do not deserve to be punished any more due to Ministerial incompetence.

It is a good point that Mr Logan makes. Does a campaign being run by the Greens against another commercial fishing activity mean that that fishing activity will have a social impact as defined by the original bill? If ragtag leftie groups like GetUp! or Greenpeace target the voters of the member for Melbourne—all those inner-city Melburnians—with massive billboards and Facebook pages and email campaigns to close down bluefin tuna fishing because they do not like it, does that mean bluefin tuna fishing constitutes a social impact as defined by the original bill.

But again it is the member for Dobell to the rescue, with his amazing amendment powers that have no doubt been derived from the office of the Leader of the House. Social impact? Zap, it is gone. Economic impact? Zap, it is gone too. But the environmental factors remain, which means that the minister still has the unfettered power to stop on a whim any lawful commercial fishing activity in this nation if he believes it poses an environmental risk—there need be no science and no consultation entered into.

If the Pew foundation widened its scope and decided to lock up all northern waters to commercial fishermen across the entirety of, say, the Great Barrier Reef catchment area, which is under Commonwealth control, if they bombarded the minister with email after email and they got phony reports funded by the environmental lobby to get a specific outcome, could commercial fishing in North Queensland suddenly be defined as something that has an environmental impact? The answer is, yes, it could, because the bill, even with the proposed amendments, still gives the environment minister unfettered power to put a stop to any commercial fishing anywhere at any time. And it could have stopped recreational fishing too if we had not pointed out the problem with this bill. This is marine parks by stealth that gives the environment minister the right to stop commercial fishing and tourism charter fishing. Why do you need such a nuclear
bomb of a response to squash one trawler unless of course you are gearing up for a scorched earth policy?

Now we hear that there are more amendments on the table perhaps to do with the member for Kennedy, who I know is a supporter of the North Queensland industry and would not be able to bring himself to support the original bill or the bill in its proposed amended form. It shows what a mess of a government this is, making it up as it goes along. The environment minister has proven he does not give a damn about what the Australian commercial fishing industry—or the recreational sector, for that matter—actually thinks. He has proven that through his attitude to them on his marine park fishing lockout proposal. He proved that when announcing the consultation for the proposal, saying, 'It is too late for people to say they want this line shifted or that zone painted a different colour. The question now is very straightforward: do we go ahead with the most comprehensive marine park network in the world or do we not?' That is some consultation—just take it because we are certainly not going to leave it, not with the Greens' tail wagging this dog of a government. That is his approach. So the minister has form in ignoring the fishing community. He has form in upsetting them. It would not be hard to conceive that this environment minister and this dog of a government, being wagged by the Greens tail, could lock up a fishery, that he could ban any commercial fishing anywhere in Commonwealth waters at any time he chooses.

Now there is talk of a root-and-branch review. I saw in the Australian yesterday the head of WA's Austral Fisheries saying that the outcome of this review could be 'Armageddon' for the commercial fishing industry in this nation. He went on to describe the review as something that is 'inspired by politics'. Again, it is not difficult to see where all of this is heading, because already the tail is wagging. Greenpeace's ocean campaigner Nathaniel Pelle has said this week that:

...fisheries management needs to be changed to be based on ecosystem management and the "precautionary principle", where if there is a risk of damage—even if the scientific evidence is uncertain—fishing should not be allowed.

So there we go—there could be the precautionary principle in place with fishing. What is happening? If when you dangle a line over a boat you may catch a fish, well, don't do it. That is ridiculous, but that is the direction we are heading in.

This is why the Australian commercial fishing industry is against this proposal. This is why the recreational fishing sector was against the original bill that was put on the table, and a lot of them are still against it. This is why the Liberal-National coalition is against the bill as it currently is. I call on the government to deal with the actual problem, the problem that they created. Deal with it and deal with it alone and let us keep Australia fishing without this dark shadow of bans hanging over every tinny, longline fisherman, trawler, charter boat and commercial fishing operation in this country. Come and talk to the shadow environment minister. Come and talk to the shadow fisheries minister. Let's put something on the table that deals exclusively with the supertrawler Margiris. Let's not use an atom bomb to kill an ant. Let's not destroy the Australian fishing industry or give the minister the power to destroy it with this bill.

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (10:04): I rise to talk briefly about the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Declared Fishing Activities) Bill 2012 because I have a very keen interest in marine biology. This bill draws a very stark contrast between Labor's view of the
environment and the view of those opposite. I think that is best exemplified by the comments made by the member for Dawson just now. As usual in the comments that we hear from those opposite there has been overblown language like 'Armageddon' and 'atom bombs'. There has been the extreme language typical of those opposite, with no measured or reasoned response. It is always overblown and extreme.

Our oceans and waterways are critical to our survival in so many ways. We are a very dry continent surrounded by vast oceans. It is the role of good government to protect our natural resources and our oceans. It is the role of government to respond when the community expresses concerns about something as significant as this. The Gillard government have shown that we take the environment seriously. Unlike those opposite—and we have just heard from one of them—we believe that human beings influence the environment and that we must therefore take every possible measure to reduce the impact we have on the environment. Overfishing or inadvertently killing marine life is something we must prevent.

I am very supportive of the approach taken by the environment minister to extend his legal powers over the supertrawler FV Abel Tasman. What Minister Burke has done is ensure our precious oceans and fishing waters are properly protected, because if we get this wrong, if the science and advice is not double-checked, the outcomes could be very damaging. My office—and I am sure those of many others here—has been contacted by Canberrans and other Australians concerned about the possibility that this supertrawler could catch marine life like dolphins, seals, seabirds and threatened or protected species.

Anyone who has spent any time swimming in Australia's oceans, particularly in the Great Barrier Reef, begins to appreciate the sensitivity of our marine life and our oceans and to value them. I have been very lucky to have had the experience of spending quite a bit of time swimming and snorkelling up on the Great Barrier Reef. There is a whole new world down there that I have been lucky enough to see and appreciate, and I want to cherish it.

At Christmas time I, like about two-thirds of Canberrans, head to the South Coast. It is sort of Canberra-by-the-sea at Christmas time. I, like everyone else, headed down there for a break and there are a lot of areas that are protected now. The marine life has been protected. There are a lot of zones up and down the South Coast that are now protected. We were down at Guerilla Bay and there is a lovely little inlet there with a cave under the water that you can go snorkelling in. For the first time, I saw a seal at Guerilla Bay. It was just extraordinary, because like everywhere along the South Coast there are Canberrans who have been going there for decades. There was a man on the beach who had been going there since 1961 and he said this was the first time in his life he had seen a seal in Guerilla Bay, which is pretty extraordinary, given the location. I think that highlights what can be achieved when we look after our marine life and protect our marine areas and how they can be replenished and rejuvenated as a result of our taking care of them, taking them seriously and cherishing them.

I understand the concerns about this particular issue. As I said, I have had many, many people from my electorate as well as throughout Australia contact my office, because the stakes here are very high. We are not talking about a simple fishing vessel here; this is about a supertrawler. It is the industrialisation of fishing. If something
goes wrong, if the science is not as originally predicted, then the price we pay will be irreversible.

There are also genuine concerns, despite what the member for Dawson said, from some recreational fishers. They are people like me who have a genuine concern about our marine life and the health of our oceans. There are also concerns that we get this right so that future generations have sustainable fish stocks. I remember my husband telling me about a time he was flying up to China, I think, or somewhere in North Asia. It was at night-time, he was up in the cockpit with the pilot and they were looking down on the waters there. It must have been some bay that he was overlooking. He said that there was a row of lights, of boats in the ocean, almost cheek by jowl. They were lined up right across the ocean, going out to fish in those oceans. Just think about the consequences and what that means, the impact on the marine life when you have those sorts of volumes, not just here in Australia but throughout the region. It is incredibly important that we have sustainable fish stocks in Australia but also throughout the world. That is why I really welcome this decision by Minister Burke.

I also welcome a cautious approach when it comes to the sustainability and future health of our oceans and our marine life. I would have thought that those opposite would share our caution when concerns are raised and join with the government in ensuring critical decisions are made based on the best scientific evidence. It is the right thing to do, to put a pause on fishing activities like this and make the right decision. Like many others, when I first heard about this supertrawler I was concerned. Like many others, I made my concerns known and this is why I am so pleased with the actions taken by the minister to ensure further investigation of the issues and the evidence.

I also welcome the review that the minister has announced into fisheries management. Fishing techniques have changed dramatically over recent decades. We have not had a review of this nature for 20 years. I think the last really serious world-leading fishing management approach was taken by the Hawke government in the early 1990s. So I really welcome the review and this root and branch assessment of how we maintain our fisheries and our world leading status in that area. I commend the government for responding to a matter of great importance to the people of Canberra and to Australians and to the future of our fisheries and our ocean life.

Mr TUDGE (Aston) (10:11): I rise to speak strongly against this bill in front of us. It is not because I am enamoured of the concept of the supertrawler but rather for three fundamental reasons. First, in no good conscience could I support a bill that gives such unfettered power to a minister to close down fisheries on a whim. Second, this bill represents a decision of the minister which is completely at odds with everything he has said and done over the last three years. By making this decision at the last minute, he causes 50 jobs to be lost and creates investor uncertainty for everyone. Finally, the independent expert authorities give us no reason to make such an immediate and hasty decision.

I will move to the first point that I have outlined. This bill is an attempt to address community concerns about the supertrawler, but in writing this bill and putting it through the parliament the minister has gone to an extreme situation. You just have to look at the operative clause of the bill in front of us. The operative clause says that the minister can make a decision to stop any fishing
going on if there is any uncertainty about the environmental, social or economic impacts of the fishing activity. It is an extraordinary clause in this bill. If the minister believes there is any social, economic or environmental uncertainty in relation to the activity in question, the minister can immediately close down that particular activity which he or she may be concerned about. The types of things which the minister may be concerned about can include—and this is also in the bill itself—the method of fishing; the type of vessel used for fishing; a method of processing, carrying or transhipping of fish; or any area of waters or of the seabed.

So, on the basis of the smallest social complaint, the minister is able to make a decision overnight and close down an entire area, close down an entire type of fishing, or close down any type of vessel for any social, economic or environmental complaint.

It is extraordinary. You can imagine the implications, if we pass this bill, as to what GetUp! and the Greens will continue to do. They will start campaigns not just on the supertrawler today; mark my words: tomorrow it will be the next level of boat or it will be the next type of waters which they are concerned about. They will show that one seal has been killed somewhere and demand that the minister close down a certain area of water from further fishing. This puts into jeopardy every single commercial venture and every single social fishing expedition people may enjoy.

It is not just us saying this. The peak fisheries body, the Commonwealth Fisheries Association, which represents the interests of fishers in Commonwealth managed fisheries—a significant part of Australia’s $2.2 billion seafood industry—has this to say about this bill:

Responding to community issues over this single boat by damaging all Australian fishing operations, both commercial and recreational, and creating massive uncertainty for the professional fishing industry in Australia is simply not acceptable in our view.

That is the view from the peak body, the Commonwealth Fisheries Association—that it is simply not acceptable because it creates so much uncertainty, not just for the large trawlers but for commercial and recreational fishers as well. It is fundamentally unacceptable to give the minister so much power in order to make a decision based on a whim.

The second reason that I speak against this bill is that it represents a decision of the minister which is completely at odds with everything that he has said or has agreed to up to this point. It makes a mockery of the entire Australian Fisheries Management Authority process. Let me give you some context in relation to this decision, Mr Deputy Speaker. Here in Australia we have some of the most sustainable fisheries management practices in the world. It is widely acknowledged across the planet that we have some of the most sustainable fisheries management practices in the world. The fisheries are overseen by an independent statutory authority, the Australian Fisheries Management Authority, and it takes advice from scientific experts about the environmental implications, what catches we can take et cetera, to ensure that the fisheries are sustainable. In its own words, it says it takes a conservative approach to the management of our fisheries so that they are sustainable. I should point out that every single one of the commissioners who sit on the Australian Fisheries Management Authority has been appointed by Minister Burke, the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, the key minister here. This
authority sets the total allowable catches and it polices them. That is what it does, and it does an exceptionally good job at it. No-one has ever criticised this authority for not doing its job well. It does an exceptionally good job. If there are any concerns in relation to it, they are properly taken up with the authority.

Three years ago, on the advice of the authority—in fact, under the auspices of the authority—the minister launched the small pelagic fishery harvest strategy. This is a strategy which, based on the science at the time, provides the overarching framework for fishing in the nation. In this document, which was launched in June 2008 but revised in October 2009, Minister Burke in fact invites supertrawlers to come to our fishing locations. It is right here on page 1 of the document. Mr Burke invites large-scale factory freezer vessels to come and fish in our areas because they provide economies of scale. That occurred three years ago.

Over the last three years, AFMA, the Australian Fisheries Management Authority, has been giving the all clear to this supertrawler along the way. As recently as last week, Minister Burke himself announced that, after a 'rigorous assessment' of the environmental impact of the supertrawler soon to commence fishing, he would impose 'tough new environmental conditions' to ensure 'world's best practice' fishing was adopted. He went on to say that this would 'ensure that the environmental impact is no more than if the same quota was being fished by a smaller vessel'. That occurred one week ago.

So three years ago Mr Burke invited the supertrawler to come down to fish. Over the course of the three years, his independent export authority, the commissioners of which are all appointed by him, gave the all clear, encouraged the supertrawler, did all the negotiations and signed off on all the scientific and environmental considerations. One week ago, Minister Burke said that there is no problem here and that there is no difference between one large boat and multiple small boats. Even as recently as Monday, the day before the decision, the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry himself, in the Senate, again gave the all clear to this occurring. He said:

… I will not allow the emotive politics of the Greens political party to run fisheries management policy in this country. We will ensure that the Australian Fisheries Management Authority is independent, that it makes independent decisions based on the science through its expert commissioners and on the facts that are presented to them.

That was on Monday. On Tuesday, we had the minister make the decision, because of the campaign of GetUp! and because Kevin Rudd was going to support Melissa Parke's bill, and 50 jobs were gone overnight.

This is no way to run our fisheries. It makes a mockery of the entire process. Even overnight, the Dutch Deputy Prime Minister—and bear in mind that the Dutch are some of our key allies—has called the fisheries minister to express his concern over what has occurred here, and he has made this public. Rarely does it occur that a head of state, a deputy head of state or a head of government makes public their concern about the governance of another country, particularly when they are from a country which is such a strong ally of ours. But this is on the front page of the Australian today. The Deputy Prime Minister of the Netherlands is expressing his concern, and he is doing so because it has been a seven-year process and yet, overnight, with no warning, the decision has been made to simply halt this action.

The question was asked, and I know our shadow ministers have asked Minister
Burke: did you seek advice on this decision? Did you speak to any experts, any scientists? Did you go and speak to the Australian Fisheries Management Authority before you made this decision? Apparently the answer was no. He did not need to speak to anyone. He spoke to his department, apparently, but did not speak to any experts before making this decision. I just find this absolutely extraordinary. It is no way to run a country to make such decisions like that.

My third reason for strongly opposing this bill is that the independent authorities, the expert scientists that the other side of the parliament constantly say that we should be relying upon, give us no reason to make such an immediate, hasty decision. In fact, the advice coming from the Australian Fisheries Management Authority is quite clear. They say that no more than seven per cent of the fish stock may be taken from any fishery, and they say that there is no evidence that larger boats pose a higher risk to the fish stock or to the marine ecosystem than smaller boats. That is the advice from the government's appointed commissioners in charge of managing our fishing authority.

If we are concerned about the impact on the environment from new developments in fishing technology, we must go through a proper process of reviewing the overall system. If you are concerned about our quotas, then go through a proper process where you consult with the industry and consult with other stakeholders about your concern about the quotas being taken, but do not just make a decision on the run, like this government did on Tuesday, out of the blue, and create so much uncertainty for the entire fishing industry in doing so.

This is not the first time that the government has made such decisions, because we know it did exactly the same thing in relation to live animal exports. On that occasion, it was a television program which caused it to make a decision on the spot which shut down an entire industry, put hundreds of people out of work and put into jeopardy the food security of one of our near neighbours, Indonesia. This government has form in this type of decision making, but this is not the way to run the country. If this government is serious about managing our fisheries then it should listen to what the Australian Fisheries Management Authority has said. It should conduct its processes rigorously and systematically over time, listening to the stakeholders and doing proper consultation, rather than having this knee-jerk reaction, making decisions on the run because of a GetUp! and green campaign.

Mr Stephen Jones (Throsby) (10:26): I welcome the opportunity to contribute to a debate which enables us to shine a spotlight on fishing and the way we sustainably manage a precious resource in this island nation, a debate which enables us to talk about the ecology, ensuring that we get the right balance between the ecological management of the fishing stock, the commercial interests and the recreational interests in fishing in this country. Of course, Deputy Speaker, you would know very well that any time a government, local, state or federal, seeks to regulate in the area of fishing or the use of our oceans it excites the passions of this nation. That is so because Australians love the water and they love their fishing. It was so when the government moved, quite properly, to establish marine parks in this country. At that stage we saw many people entering the debate in defence of recreational fishers, raising, in our view, unfounded concerns about the impact that those marine parks would have on the enjoyment of recreational fishing. It is disappointing that some of those speakers
have not come to this debate with the same passion.

I would like to say a few things about the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Declared Fishing Activities) Bill 2012. The bill will provide for the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, jointly with the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, to declare a fishing activity where there is some uncertainty about the environmental, social or economic impacts of that fishing activity. Once the ministers jointly declare an activity, that activity may be prohibited for a period of up to 24 months. During that period the bill provides for the establishment of an expert panel and for consultation to occur regarding the economic, social or environmental concerns that led to the declaration of that activity. In short, it enables a process for further scientific, economic or social impact studies to be done on the specific activity which has excited the declaration and the concern of the minister and the community.

It is a good process. It has come about because we have discovered, through the recent events surrounding the Margiris, now the Abel Tasman, that there are gaps in the laws, gaps that do not empower the Commonwealth government to appropriately respond to community concern around the ecological impacts of large-scale factory ships such as the Margiris.

It is worth saying a little bit about the Margiris, because it is obvious that the appearance of this ship on our horizon is what has led to this debate before the parliament. It is unprecedented. There is no doubt that we have factory ships, or large-scale trawlers, operating in Australian waters at the moment. That is absolutely true. But there is nothing on the scale of the Margiris—the Abel Tasman—operating in Australian waters. It is a 140-metre long ship. As some recreational fishermen in my electorate have said to me, it is about 100 times the size of the trawlers we see in Wollongong Harbour and Port Kembla Harbour, trawlers which operate along the coast. So it is a giant. It has nets in excess of 600 metres. Just to put that in some perspective, a net that size would be big enough to more than surround the Sydney Cricket Ground. These are enormous enterprises. Its freezers have a holding capacity of over 6,000 tonnes. That is more than four times the holding capacity of any ship which currently operates in Australian waters.

Mr Schultz: Your minister approved it.

Mr STEPHEN JONES: I have significant concerns about the operation of these factory ships, these super-trawlers, not only in Australian waters but anywhere else. The sophistication of these operations really does take the chance out of the fishing exercise. They simply do not miss. The fact that the Margiris has freezers on board which, as I have said, hold up to 6,000 tonnes of fish at any one point in time enables it to concentrate its fishing activities in one particular area—effectively depleting the stock in that area. We are talking about a fishing or trawling capacity which has never before existed in this country's waters.

It is not just about the quotas. It has been argued that it should not make any difference whether the Margiris is a big ship or a small ship, that it is the quota—the Margiris's quota is 10 per cent of the total catch—we should focus on. There may be some merit to that argument, but I would make this point: when you have an operation as massive as the size of this ship permits, the bycatch is a major concern. Whilst the owners of the Margiris may have a licence which only
permits them to take about 18,000 tonnes of mackerel and red bait, they have to throw a hell of a lot of other fish away in the process of obtaining that 18,000 tonnes. It is has been suggested to me that the bycatch can often exceed the amount the trawler extracts legally in filling its quota. It is not the same as when you or I go fishing. When we pull in a fish which is undersized, oversized or not what we are after—not edible—you can just throw it back and it swims off, maybe with a bit of a sore mouth or a scar. Once fish are caught up in the massive super-trawler nets, they are either drowned or crushed by the exercise. You can be throwing away as many dead fish as you are bringing in and sticking in your freezer. So there is a lot of legitimate scientific concern about the impact of a ship this size operating in our waters.

I have heard a number of objections and interjections during the course of this debate, most recently from my friend the member for Hume, who is in the chamber at the moment. I also heard the contributions of the member for Dawson and the member for Aston. I will go directly to some of the concerns they raised. I never thought I would agree with the member for Dawson on a major issue, but we heard him say that he actually opposes these super-trawlers, these factory ships. But he also opposes this bill. The reason he is going to oppose the bill is that he did not like the process by which the bill came before the House. That is the essence of his argument. He says he hates the fact that we are going to have a factory ship operating in our waters. And I believe him on this—he has form. I have heard him speak quite passionately on many occasions in defence of recreational fishing and small-scale commercial fishing. So I believe he is genuine when he stands in this place and raises concerns about the impact of a large ship like this on commercial and recreational fishing, particularly in relation to his electorate.

But, if he is right and there was some problem with the process by which the bill came before the House, doesn't opposing it just compound the problem? If he says, 'In spite of my objections, I am going to vote down this bill because I did not like the process by which it came before the House', doesn't that just compound the problem? This is a perfect example of how the opposition operate—they will put politics before principle every time. We heard it from the member for Dawson just now. We heard him stand up and say, 'I want to see this factory ship banned from our waters', but in the next breath we heard him say, 'I am going to vote against the only show in town which gives us an opportunity to do that.' We have seen no better example of how those opposite put politics before principle every time.

The reason for opposing this legislation given by the member for Aston, whose contribution was immediately before mine, was that he is a champion of the science. It is very refreshing, I have to say, to see members of the Liberal and National parties championing science. They do not have a lot of form in that regard. You will never see them championing the science when it comes to climate change and you will never see them championing the science when it comes to a whole heap of other environmental activities. But on this one they have stuck their hands up to champion the science. If that is their real objection, they should support this bill, because this bill provides for an expert scientific panel to be brought together to investigate and make recommendations about the specific activity which is the subject of the declaration.

So, if their objection truly is to making regulations or government decisions that are
not based on science, they should support this bill, because that is exactly what the bill is designed to do—it is designed to empower the minister for the environment and the minister for fisheries to put in train a process which enables us to marshal the most up-to-date and most specific scientific evidence available to see whether the existence of a factory ship such as the *Abel Tasman* will have the ecological impact that many of us in the community fear it will. If their objection is that we should not be making regulation or decisions that are not based on science—it is a novel objection from those opposite—then that is a reason they should support this bill.

Another issue that has been raised by members of the Liberal and the Nationals, sometimes in debate and sometimes outside the chamber, is that the owners of the *Abel Tasman* have invested in the ship and suspending their operations, however justified that suspension might be, is unfair. I have some sympathy for that argument, but I have done some research into it as well. I have learned that this ship does not operate exclusively in Australian waters. It operates here for a relatively short period, and it operates in many other countries as well. I note in passing that we are not the only country to have contemplated banning the ship from operating in coastal waters. Other countries have banned the operation of this and other ships from their coastal waters because of the fear, or the proof, of the devastating impact it can have on marine life in coastal waters. We are not the first country to contemplate this and I daresay we will not be the last, given the increasing awareness that countries around the world have about the impact of overfishing and intensive fishing practices on our marine resources.

I support the bill and welcome the fact that we have been able to have this debate. If we want to continue to enjoy our fishing industry, our wonderful marine ecology and our recreational fishing, we need to ensure that we are responsibly managing our coastal resources. This bill puts in place additional powers for the ministers to do that, and to do it in a way that is based on science, on economics and on an apprehension of the social impacts of these more intensive, large-scale fishing practices. For these reasons the bill should enjoy the support of all members of the House.

Mr TEHAN (Wannon) (10:41): What an absolute mess! I never thought we would be back here so soon trying to clean up another absolute debacle, but we are. We are once again here debating legislation as a result of this government following GetUp!, deciding it will make policy on the run as a result of what GetUp! has had to say. The best way to describe the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Declared Fishing Activities) Bill* is GetUp! governing. It is a complete mess; it is a complete overreaction to a problem. It reminds me of what we saw with the Indonesian live cattle debacle. If proper processes had been followed from the very start, this bill would not be here today.

Let me step back and look at the roles each of the relevant ministers have played in the bill being debated today. There is the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, who has failed to do his job of standing up for AFMA and standing up for the science-driven processes that drive AFMA. He has been asleep at the wheel once again, like he was with the live cattle debacle. He has not put the science out there, he has not defended the science, and where questions have been asked about the science—relevant and pertinent questions, particularly when it comes to the impact on local fish stocks—he has not said anything. As proof of that, on behalf of the recreational fishermen in my electorate I wrote to the minister on 9 August asking him about the
concerns they had raised about the impact on local fish stocks. I have not even had the courtesy of a reply yet. In the paper today we now see evidence that issues were raised about this as early as June, and yet there is silence from the minister.

What about the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, who is responsible for the great drafting of this legislation? Based on this piece of legislation the minister for the environment could not draft a grade 2 essay. It had been in the parliament for less than 12 hours, and we already had the member for Dobell and others already proposing amendments to him and telling him he had completely messed this up. And he has messed it up. Instead of boasting about what happened to the Greens in the council elections in New South Wales, maybe he should say their performance was because he is now so caught by environmental groups that he is the reason the Greens are declining—because they are all looking to him and saying, 'Minister for the environment, you are greener than green'. That is the problem.

The minister for the environment should also look at the way he goes about things. Instead of his 'I, I, I', he should be thinking, 'I am part of a process. I should listen to what the minister for fisheries and the minister for trade have to say. I should listen to the party room, to the collective voices.' Rather just going out and saying, 'I am wonderful, I am this, I am that, I did this', he should just let go of the ego a little bit and get back to governing properly and with due process. We have that great example of him heading off to Victoria on a big media junket to try and highlight the impact of the trial the Baillieu government were going to do, putting cattle back into national forests. Now, there are some serious issues there, but what did the minister for the environment do? He got in his four-wheel-drive, with a great media pack behind him, tried to drive up into the Alps and got bogged. And that was the news story: he got bogged and then had to go back—all because it was a complete media stunt to get attention for himself rather than deal with the issues as he should have been doing.

Then there is the minister for trade. Where has he been? We know he was mute when the decision on the live cattle trade with Indonesia was made in the cabinet room. Now we find out that the Dutch government are watching this issue unfold and saying, 'What the hell is going on in Australia?' Our good reputation is now being trashed. The sovereign risk for Dutch companies is now being trashed. And where is the minister for trade—I mean the minister for the Whyalla wipe-out? Where is he? He is again mute on an issue which fundamentally goes to how we are seen internationally, particularly how our trade performance is seen internationally, and about how overseas companies can invest in this country without sovereign risk.

Apologies to Lewis Carroll, but I think he is going to have to rewrite Alice in Wonderland, because we have the minister for fisheries, Tweedledum, and the minister for the environment, Tweedledee; but now there is this new character, the minister for trade, Tweedledo-nothing—Tweedledum, Tweedledee and Tweedledo-nothing. That is what this government are like. The process around this is a sham. It would be laughable if it were not such a serious matter, because look at the powers the bill gives to Tweedledum and Tweedledee. The bill gives the minister the power to, with a stroke of a pen, prohibit fishing via an interim declaration, stating:

When making an interim declaration, the Minister may identify a fishing activity by reference to all or any of the following:
(a) a method of fishing;
(b) a type of vessel used for fishing;
(c) a method of processing, carrying or transhipping of fish that have been taken;
(d) an area of waters or of seabed.

So these minister's powers, which are not based on good process, not based on the science, can have an impact depending on the type of fishing, whether recreational or commercial; and the size of the boat, big or small; and so on. The only thing that is not mentioned in the bill, that they have not tried to cover, is the old fishing rod. It surprises me that they have not put that in there as well. I am surprised that they do not also want control of the fishing rod or, by extension, the handline. But they have not gone quite that far.

Under the bill, the government can prohibit a fishing activity if there is 'uncertainty about the environmental, social or economic impacts of the fishing activity'. They are saying: 'Forget about a science based approach, forget about driving industry certainty based on the science; we're going to take into account the social or economic impacts.' In particular, the 'social' aspect of this should be of great concern to everyone, because, as I said at the start, what we are seeing here is GetUp! governing. We are not seeing due process. We are not seeing the government listening to the scientific community or thinking about the various issues at stake and saying, 'Okay, if there are questions about certain parts of the science, let's have them investigated and looked at properly.' What we have here means that, if there is a campaign by people who are opposed to fishing full stop, their considerations can be taken into account and lead to the prohibition of certain types of fishing. For instance, if a popular fishing competition had been occurring for a number of years but, all of a sudden, there was a social media campaign against it, the bill gives the minister the power to stop the competition. It is not based on asking whether the catch from the tournament has any impact on fish stocks. Basically, the minister would have the power, based on a few emails and a few tweets, to stop such an activity.

The reason this is so alarming is that, when it comes to Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, there are people whose intentions might be fine but who do not know or understand the science and the practices behind what occurs in these important areas of our economy. Because of that, through misinformation and misperception, they can be misled. What we do not want to see is a government that will flip-flop, overreact or have a knee-jerk reaction to these types of issues, because it puts investment in those important areas at risk.

At the moment, with this bill before the parliament, who would invest in commercial fishing, knowing that, due to a social media campaign, the licence for that commercial fishing could be just pulled away? We will freeze investment in commercial fishing and Australian commercial fishing is the most sustainable in the world. AFMA has the best reputation of any fisheries management authority in the world, yet through this whole debacle we see all that trashed by these processes and trashed in an absolutely appalling way.

I cannot, in good conscience, support the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Declared Fishing Activities) Bill 2012 because it puts in jeopardy our way of life in Australia and I do not want that to occur. I do not want to allow fishing to be held to ransom by social media and I do not want governing to be held to ransom by social media.
We need to step back, to go back to proper process. We have to make sure that we govern this country with certainty, to ensure that people are encouraged to invest. Let us get on the record once again that the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, through his policies, encouraged this vessel to come here. We need to remind everyone that there are considerable economies of scale in the fishery and the most efficient way to fish may include large-scale factory freezer vessels. That is what the minister for the environment put in a publication in 2009. He tried to walk away from it yesterday, but he should be responsible enough to say, 'Yes, I did put that publication out.' So we encourage them to come in, and then what happens? There is a campaign against it. Does the minister say, 'Let's review the science again. Some issues have been raised with us, especially to do with local fish stocks. Should we look at the science around those areas and make a considered opinion? No, we won't, we will have a knee-jerk reaction. We will say to the people we encourage to come to Australia, "Sorry, sovereign risk, so you are basically parked for two years while we try to deal with the mess we have created."' At the same time, the government do not defend the science which has ensured that our fisheries management is regarded as absolutely world-class.

In my time in this parliament I have now seen two debacles. How this government handled live cattle export to Indonesia was a disgrace and the impacts are still being found. If this bill passes, it will be a similar debacle because the powers it will give to Tweedledeum and Tweedledee are beyond the pale.

Mr SCHULTZ (Hume) (10:56): I compliment the member for Wannon on his contribution today. While he put a little bit of humour into the debate, he raised very serious matters associated with the fishing industry in this country. At the outset, can I make the point that the coalition supports sustainable fisheries management and practices. I also put on the record that it was Minister Burke who created this issue by inviting these types of vessels to Australia as part of his 2009 Small Pelagic Fishery Harvest Strategy. Page 2 of the Australian Fisheries Management Authority strategy states:

… there are considerable economies of scale in the fishery and the most efficient way to fish may include large scale factory freezer vessels.

That should have sent a very compelling message to the fishing industry that the minister was already focused on what he was going to do in terms of bringing large fish-harvesting vessels into our waters. Let us talk about the unlimited power on the basis of social uncertainty, which the minister has talked about. The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Declared Fishing Activities) Bill 2012 gives the minister extraordinary and unfettered powers and threatens every Australian family fishing operation. The bill states at 390SD(2):

When making an interim declaration, the Minister may identify a fishing activity by reference to all or any of the following:
(a) a method of fishing—
(b) a type of vessel used for fishing—

I have a vessel which I use for recreational fishing. I do not get to use it much but I have it down on the coast at Bermagui. I noticed with interest the member for Eden-Monaro voicing for the first time some concern about the fishing industry at Bermagui, which has a
considerable number of commercial vessels. The bill continues:

(c) a method of processing, carrying or transhipping of fish that have been taken;
(d) an area of waters or of seabed.

I want to talk about sustainable fisheries and the way in which the fishing industry and the recreational fishermen in this country have looked after them. A few years back, we had a very serious problem in relation to the way kingfish were being trapped in our waters, on what it was doing to their numbers. The problem was rectified not through pressure from the environmental groups that drive this country but from pressure by the recreational fishing groups who are concerned about what this was doing to the species. I remind the community that it has not just been kingfish; it has been ongoing in the protection of our crustaceans, shellfish and the many other species around our coastline.

I have concerns about, and did have concerns about, what this minister was promoting in terms of this huge gigantic trawler. Why did I have concerns? Because his language when he was talking about it was the same language as the language he used when he was talking about shutting up our national parks in Victoria. I had a few words to say to the minister about that particular issue because shutting up the national parks to cattle grazing has been proven in the past to be a catastrophic exercise on behalf of the flora and fauna within those national parks. I do not want to see that happening with our fish stocks. In closing off on that particular comment, in 1992 I warned another environment minister about the repercussions of that particular move, and in 2003 we saw what locking up a national park can do not only to our native flora and fauna but what it can do to people's lives. I was proven to be correct on that.

The minister has gone to the extreme by giving himself unlimited powers which will impact on every family fishing boat around the country. The minister must not make an interim declaration unless the minister and the fisheries minister agree that there is uncertainty about the environmental, social or economic impacts of the fishing activity. Once more, the government is making policy on the run, and in the process is giving the minister unlimited powers that go way beyond addressing the current issue and the current concerns. The minister, under this act, will be able to overturn any fishing activity on the basis of even the slightest social complaint. And, importantly, any fishing activity can be overturned without the need for evidence. Uncertainty can be created by a complaint from a political source. The same absolute powers apply to economic or environmental complaints. In a new addition to the EPBC Act, the criteria now includes social impacts. It appears that the act is no longer about the environment.

What about sovereign risk, which has been raised here today by a number of people? This decision creates sovereign risk issues for existing fishers who hold licences to fish in Australian waters. Australia's commercial fishing industry will not have the confidence to continue to invest if any quota and/or licence can be overturned at the whim of the government. This decision makes a mockery of the whole Australian Fisheries Management Authority process, which the government relies on for its scientific advice and, which, once again, the member for Wannon referred to.

The precedent of ignoring your own independent management processes and world's best science quite frankly terrifies me in relation to my own concerns about the state of the industry. It is obviously a knee-jerk populist decision with ramifications that are endless in their connotations.
decision this week follows on from the disastrous chaos created by the government with the ban on live exports which resulted in an industry brought to its knees.

And what about the harvest strategies? Australia's fisheries are independently benchmarked. The management strategies are developed based on science and extensive consultation with a broad range of stakeholders, which of course includes the people within the industry itself—that is, the people in the commercial fishing business and the people in the recreational fishing business, which creates a very solid economic base for many of the rural and coastal towns in this great country of ours.

The small pelagic fishery harvest strategy was released in June 2008 and revised in October 2009 with Minister Burke as the fisheries minister. Specifically, that particular strategy states the following:

... small pelagic species are caught in high volumes and have low unit value. Additionally, there are high capital costs associated with the large scale catching units and specific processing infrastructure required. As a result, fishing operators need to have heightened efficiency—wait for it—and there are considerable economies of scale in the fishery and the most efficient way to fish may include large scale factory freezer vessels.

Three years ago this current minister made that statement.

Let us now look at that other minister, that very competent, in some people's eyes, agriculture minister who sits in that other place, Minister Ludwig. In August he said in response to a Greens' motion—and you have to really listen to this because it indicates the hypocrisy and the double standards of this government:

This disallowance motion is a message that the Greens political party do not support sustainable catch limits based on science.

I agree with that.

It is a message that says the Greens want fisheries managed by politics, not qualified fisheries managers. And it says that the Greens do not support the commercial operators who fish in some of the world's best managed fisheries.

That message should be well understood, because I have no doubt that the same disregard for the science and management of our commercial fisheries will be extended to the legitimate pursuit of recreational fishing. As Minister for Fisheries—this is the now agriculture minister—I will not allow the emotive politics of the Greens political party to run fisheries management policy in this country.

Yes, good on him!

We will ensure that the Australian Fisheries Management Authority is independent, that it makes independent decisions based on the science through its expert commissioners and on the facts that are presented to them. They will continue to make decisions based on sound judgment to ensure that fisheries are sustainable and meet all the ecological requirements—and, moreover, predicated on the precautionary principle so often espoused by the Greens.

Mr Tehan: He said that?

Mr SCHULTZ: It gets better:

Why? Because AFMA will continue to apply sound policy to ensure that we will have sustainable fisheries now and into the future. For those reasons, the government opposes this motion.

That is what Joe Ludwig said in the Senate on 23 August 2012, when speaking on the motion to disallow the Small Pelagic Fishery Total Allowable Catch (Quota Species) Determination 2012.

Let us now talk about the science in relation to the other genius minister from this government. AFMA reaffirmed the science regarding the operations of the company on Monday. Minister Burke reaffirmed the science last week. Minister Ludwig
reaffirmed the quota on 23 August and Labor voted on it on Monday, 10 September. The quota is not reduced. Burke called for 'large factory freezer vessels' in October 2009 when he was fisheries minister.

In general, I make this point: this legislation is just another tool for the Greens and environmental groups to campaign against our fishing industry. Minister Burke's concerns are based on the capacity of the vessel to fish in one place for a considerable time. The solution to that problem of course could have been to amend the Fisheries Act to allow move-on provisions or spatial management that would prevent localised impacts. The coalition would have supported those moves. Minister Burke is saying, 'If you don't know everything, do nothing.' Minister Burke is not trying to find a way to make it work. He has been desperately looking for some way to lock up more water.

Minister Burke has trashed the reputation of the AFMA commission, and he appointed every member of that commission. Minister Burke has also trashed the reputations of our world-leading scientific community and institutions who had done the science. This government have demonstrated once again that, if you do everything asked of you and then some extra, it is not enough: they will shaft you, they will shaft your business and they will shaft your employees. How can any business operate in an environment such as this? This government now operate on the basis that if a minister is uncertain then nothing should happen. Worse still, this minister did not take steps to find the answer to the things he was uncertain about. He just shut the business down. What message does this give to our researchers and innovators? 'Don't explore your science' means nothing. I think I have said enough on this.

In closing I will quote from a media release by the Australian Marine Alliance: In summary, skeptics could see this as an insidious ploy to achieve a pre-determined Green outcome with a massive decoy. Regardless of the hypothesis recreational and professional fishermen do not deserve to be punished any more due to Ministerial incompetence. I think that says it all.

Mr MORRISON (Cook) (11:10): I rise to speak on the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Declared Fishing Activities) Bill 2012. Frankly, I am not shocked that we find ourselves in the situation where we have, on yet another issue, a government making it up as they go along. It makes me wonder: what is the use-by date on government policy these days? You would have to classify the product of government policy these days as clearly perishable, because it really does not last very long at all before coming into this place. All it requires is some tweets or an ABC Four Corners program or something of that nature and this government will put themselves into all sorts of convulsions. As my colleague the member for Wannon said, it is government by GetUp!—and that is what we are seeing here.

What is required in these situations is a sober reflection on the serious issues that are at stake here, not the sorts of knee-jerk convulsions that I thought were limited only to the Minister for Trade and Competitiveness when holding press conferences, jigging himself about in public display. But I suppose what we are seeing in policy terms here is pretty much the same as what we saw from the minister for trade on that occasion. We have a government here that is once again, while claiming to be immutable on these sorts of topics, performing a backflip in the space of hours in response to a few tweets and demonstrating that they just do not believe in anything. It is not hard to change your mind as constantly as this government does from
one day to the next when you do not believe in anything in the first place. I think this is a matter of significant concern to the Australian people. This is not just a moving feast; this is a moving farce. We are constantly faced with these issues from this government on a regular basis. This matter involves very serious issues that affect not only the sustainability of our environment and our fisheries but affect the thousands and thousands of people who depend on the fisheries industry for their livelihoods.

The complete U-turn on the supertrawler Margiris is just another example of the Labor government making up policy on the run, oblivious to or regardless of the sovereign risk they have created for this nation. At the heart of it, that is why the coalition are so concerned about the way this matter has been brought into this place and it is one of the critical reasons we are not signing up to what the government have sought to impose on this parliament today. There was the live cattle fiasco, there was the East Timor farce, there was the Malaysian people-swap—and it goes on and on and on.

As the government keep making it up as it goes along, it seems to be governing as if there were no yesterday. So, whatever you said and whatever you did yesterday does not matter, and there is no tomorrow. There are no consequences that one has to be accountable for tomorrow; the government lives in the moment. This government constantly lives in the moment. It lives within the space of 130 characters on Twitter rather than actually looking at the broader perspective and at what is necessary to deal with these very sensitive matters before the parliament.

I said the other day that the government had finally stopped a boat and that on this occasion they had stopped a legal one, and it is one they had actually invited in. This is at the heart of the confusion and the uncertainty that the government I think create for themselves, not just on this decision. What confidence can any commercial operator, any investor, have when the government are so clearly and plainly willing to turn policy on its head after working for years and years with a company, indicating all along that there would not be a problem?

It reminds me of that bloke who used to be on the *Vicar of Dibley*. He used to sit on the parish council, and his contribution to a meeting, when he was asked a question about something, was, 'Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes—no!' 'No', at the end of the day, was ultimately his answer, but you were always led to believe that he was going to take a different view. And that is what it is like with this government: yes, yes, yes, yes—no; yes, yes, yes, yes—no. What confidence can people have when this government makes policy decisions the perishability of which is so plainly on display in what we have seen here today? It was the minister for fisheries, now minister for environment, who invited large-scale factory freezer vessels to Australia when he said, in relation to the 2009 Small Pelagic Fishery Harvest Strategy:

> … there are considerable economies of scale in the fishery and the most efficient way to fish may include large scale factory freezer vessels.

You would think, if you were someone who was interested in bringing such a vessel to Australia that that was a pretty good indication that the government was actually on board with this decision. But in 2008 Minister Burke, as fisheries minister said:

- small pelagic species are caught in high volumes and have low unit value. Additionally, there are high capital costs associated with the large scale catching units and specific processing infrastructure required. As a result, fishing operators need to have heightened efficiency; and
there are considerable economies of scale in the fishery and the most efficient way to fish may include large scale factory freezer vessels. I lament the fact that companies seeking to operate and employ Australians, as this one has done, cannot rely on the stated positions of this government in making decisions about their future and about the future of their operations so that they can make commitments to people in terms of putting employment in place and going about their business.

If the government wants to know what is crashing business confidence in this country they need to look in the mirror, because it is this flip-flop attitude which does not give business any confidence. Of course there are massive problems of increased regulation under this government, which is having a massive impact on productivity and innovation, but when you overlay that with the uncertainty which comes with the way decisions are made in this country you only get yourself into a more serious situation.

I note that even the member for New England this morning, when he was commenting on the ABC, highlighted this issue of sovereign risk, in his understanding and in working through these issues today. I think he was making some very good points. I hope he follows through later today, when this bill is finally considered, having reflected on the very important points that he has raised about the way in which this matter has been handled. As he said this morning, it is not just this issue that is at stake. If this bill is passed today, and this parliament supports the flip-flop attitude of this government, then it is sending a message, as is the government, that investors can have no confidence in the decisions of this government, and business will make investment and employment decisions on the basis of that. How that can be in the national interest is completely beyond me.

The government has been saying how devastated the Greens were after the New South Wales local government elections. They have been trumpeting up their position. I am not quite sure that they have actually reflected on the primary vote results for the Labor Party in those local government elections, but they were at much pains to go out there and trumpet the fact that they had put the Greens in their place, and that the Greens were no longer the tail that was wagging this dog of a government. But it is true that the Greens are the tail that is wagging this dog of the government on a daily basis. Even the minister for fisheries has said, as the member for Hume just reminded the House: … I will not allow the emotive politics of the Greens political party to run fisheries management policy in this country.

That is tough stuff. He said: We will ensure that the Australian Fisheries Management Authority is independent, that it makes independent decisions based on the science through its expert commissioners and on the facts that are presented to them.

It would have been great if the companies involved here could have relied on that statement, because he was really putting it out there. He continued: They will continue to make decisions based on sound judgement— at least someone was!— to ensure that fisheries are sustainable and meet all the ecological requirements …

Now there have been a couple of tweets and this minister has turned into a twit in terms of how he has responded to these issues. But he has form, as we know, in relation to the live cattle trade. He absolutely has form when it comes to these issues: talking tough and rolling over. I see it in my portfolio on an almost daily basis. The government seeks to talk tough on these issues but does not
have the substance to back up the claims when it really counts.

It is what you do that counts. People make judgements about your performance—on what you do—and what they see happening as a result. And what they are seeing happening in this parliament today is a government that simply cannot make up its mind. It is being blown to and fro by the huffs and puffs of the Greens and GetUp!. That is what is running the policy of this government. That is what is driving them. That is what has become the artificial soul of this government, because this government does not have a soul. It does not believe in anything. It is simply made up of those who will do whatever deal they think will keep their Prime Minister in power and keep themselves in power, and they are trying to manage an unravelling farce which is very plain to the Australian people.

I have concerns, as do my colleagues, about the extensive nature of the powers that are placed in this bill. The overreaction to the issues that are being raised here are similar to the responses we have seen from the government on other occasions.

There have been offerings from the member for Dobell, on which the government is relying, to try to tidy up their first attempt in this. It is not the first time the government has relied on the member for Dobell. The government relies on the member for Dobell every single day for their legitimacy as a government. And it is for them to explain that to the Australian people. It is surprising that they are now relying on the member for Dobell to try to clean up this latest knee-jerk mess that has been brought into this parliament.

The amendments of the member for Dobell, which insert the word 'commercial', do not deal with the problem of charter boat operators, which are—guess what?—commercial. As a result, the protections offered here, at the last minute, do not afford the protections that we believe are necessary to ensure that we are in a position to protect the very important matters that are at stake in this debate.

There are some important facts. The vessel is targeting small pelagic fish. Pelagic fish live near the surface in the water column, not on the bottom of the ocean. They swim continuously in open water and they tend to be nomadic. The Small Pelagic Fishery is managed by AFMA under a statutory management plan. Fish are caught under a quota system. No boat size limits apply in this fishery or in any fishery managed solely by the Commonwealth. The total allowable catch for each species in each zone of a fishery is set annually by AFMA, which the minister who is now the minister for environment endorsed. There are seven such allowable catch limits for the Small Pelagic Fishery. They are set by the AFMA commission, which considers advice from the Small Pelagic Fishery Resource Assessment Group, the South-East Management Advisory Committee and AFMA management and considers other information. The members of this group have expertise in commercial and recreational fishing, conservation matters, fisheries management and fisheries science. It does not include Twitter. I suppose the government has chosen not to listen to the commission because of its inexperience with Twitter, which is where the government gets its advice from. It includes representatives from AFMA, resource assessment groups, states, industry bodies, scientists and economists. It also has representatives from the environment and recreational sectors. AFMA must be informed of all catch landed and it must verify this information. The harvest strategy is more precautionary than the Marine Stewardship Council's global best
practice. The harvest strategy is based on sound science, recognises the ecological importance of the species and is precautionary. The strategy has three tiers, which allows for higher potential catches where there is a higher level of information known about the stock. The harvest strategy restricts the total catch for each species to a maximum of 20 per cent of the estimated stock biomass. It limits the catch in a way that ensures fishing does not cause the stock to decline to unsustainable levels. Total allowable catches for small pelagic fisheries are small. They are set at 10 per cent of stock for the redbait east fishery. For all other small pelagic fisheries the Margiris will be harvesting, the current allowable catch is 7.5 per cent of the estimated stock biomass.

The advice was clear. This government always says it likes to take advice. The science supports the position the government took previously, but it is in conflict with the urgings of what has become the soul of this government: GetUp! and the Greens. As a result, we are seeing a backflip which we can add to the many other backflips we see daily from this government. I call on the parliament not to allow this farce to pass the parliament; it must restore some sense to this debate.

Mr ROBERT (Fadden) (11:25): I rise to speak on the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Declared Fishing Activities) Bill 2012. This is a complete and utter joke. I have been trying to keep track of the amendments being rushed in—three lots in three days, with another series of amendments only one hour ago—as this government responds to an online campaign., as it reacts with a knee-jerk and moves away from policy settings because of Twitter, Facebook and emails. This is no longer a debate about sustainable fisheries management, quota management and how commercial fishing operates. This is now a debate about Labor and what it believes.

All was apparently going well until the member for Fremantle decided to introduce a private member's bill. Then Kevin turned up. The dear old member for Griffith decided to support the member for Fremantle, and now we have a farce of the highest order. We now have the live-cattle-trade disaster operating on the water.

Be in no doubt that the coalition supports sustainable fisheries management and sustainable fisheries practices. We stand for sustainability, but it seems like we are the only party that actually has a view on a disciplined approach to the sustainable management of our fish stocks. It seems like we are the only party that stands up for recreational fishers. The government is in a mess on this—a mess that is entirely of its own making. It is a mess that involves leadership of foreign countries as they seek to understand the level of sovereign risk this government has again put into our economy. This is policy on the run. This government is making it up as it goes along. There have been three sets of amendments to legislation that was formed on the back of a Twitter campaign, after years and years of negotiation. If that is not making it up as it goes along, give me another definition. They have spent years formulating a policy position that they have junked, and then they add amendment after amendment on top of that junked position. If that is not making it up as it goes along, can someone please tell me what is? I do not believe the Labor government knows what it wants to achieve.

It certainly wants to achieve the stopping of the rise of 'St Kevin'. It certainly wants to achieve the appeasement of a narrow-interest set of Greens, whose vote is now collapsing across the country but whose vote is crucial to keeping this government in power. This debate and this farcical series of multiple
amendments is not about sustainable fisheries, it is about the government sustaining itself. It is policy on the run.

History is always instructive. It gives us a lesson on where we have come. History in this case frowns deeply upon this government that is making it up as it goes along. Tony Burke, as the minister for fisheries, created this issue, he was the inception of this issue, because he invited this larger type of vessel as part of his 2009 Small Pelagic Fishery Harvest Strategy. It was his strategy. It was his invitation. I will quote what he said on the matter, because it is instructive:

- there are considerable economies of scale in the fishery and the most efficient way to fish may include large scale factory freezer vessels.

That is what he said—it may include large-scale factory freezer vessels, vessels such as the *Abel Tasman*, which this government is now going into hyperdrive and overdrive to try to stop.

But, then again, Peter Garrett, the member for Kingsford Smith, had it right in 2007 when he famously said, 'Once we get in we'll just change it all.' I do not think even he envisaged the degree of change this hapless and hopeless government would be inflicting on a daily basis and—looking at the series of amendments coming through—on an hourly basis.

On 23 August we had Senator Ludwig, the current minister for fisheries, criticising the Greens for wanting fisheries managed by politics. Minister Ludwig—that famous minister responsible for taking food away from the Indonesians by banning live cattle export, destroying an industry and displacing thousands of workers, including 600 Aboriginal workers on northern stations—promised that emotive politics would not run fisheries management policy. If years of work followed by a Twitter campaign and now rushed bills, three sets of amendments, proposed private members' bills and a government in chaos is not emotive policy, can someone please tell me what is?

The current minister promised no emotive policies. What is more, he supported the ability of the Australian Fisheries Management Authority to make independent decisions based on science to ensure the sustainability of Australia's fisheries. Yet here we are debating a Labor bill slapped together on the back of a beer coaster—probably the same beer coaster this hapless minister wrote on to put together the cancelling of the live export trade to take food away from our most important neighbour, Indonesia—a bill that has now had three lots of amendments, some of them rushed in by none other than the member for Dobell, Craig Thomson. There have been multiple amendments.

The minister said 21 days ago that he supported the ability of the authority to make independent decisions based on science to ensure sustainability. Can the government really look the nation in the eye and say the debacle we are debating today of a rushed bill with rushed amendments really lines up with the government's rhetoric of 21 days ago that they would make independent decisions based on science to ensure sustainability? No wonder people are confused. No wonder people are astonished at what this government is doing. No wonder there is enormous uncertainty in the industry. No wonder we are talking, once again, about sovereign risk.

Labor's policy on the run has again created enormous uncertainty in the industry, enormous uncertainty for those who hold licences to fish in Australian waters and enormous uncertainty for those who lease vessels and seek to bring in vessels or seek to partner with Australian industry. Is it not
enough, I ask the government, that you have destroyed the live export of cattle? Do you wish to destroy commercial fishing in the same way? Is that your intended aim? Australia’s commercial fishing industry cannot now have the confidence to continue to invest in any quota and/or licence because this bill and its farcical amendments will allow anything to be overturned at the whim of the government.

The Dutch Deputy Prime Minister, Maxime Verhagen, even telephoned the hapless Joe Ludwig on Tuesday to ask why Labor wanted to ban the Abel Tasman, a ship brought to Australia through a private joint venture after seven years of negotiations. After seven years of negotiations, three years of ministerial strategic discussions and one or two days of nonsense from the Labor government here we are.

We oppose the legislation, suffice it to say. It gives unlimited power to the minister on the basis of social uncertainties. One of their three amendments actually knocked out the word 'social' and replaced it with 'commercial'. Frankly, who would know with the number of amendments running through on this hapless bill? It presents enormous risk. There is no indication as to what the term 'uncertainty' means and it provides scope for the minister to stop any fishing activity without any substantive case. The minister could simply wake up in the morning and decide he does not feel good about catching small, defenceless fish and that he is going to refer, on a whim, all commercial fishing ventures to get greater scientific input, which will take two years.

I saw students from a school before—Trinity Lutheran College. It is a great school in my electorate. As I was walking back from the area past Queens Terrace Cafe I walked past the Magna Carta signed at Runnymede in 1215. We have one of only a few copies. I read through the opening paragraphs about the rights under law. Next to the Magna Carta is the fifth amendment to the constitution of the United States—the first 10 comprise their bill of rights. The fifth amendment talks about how, before freedom is taken from you, you have the right to appeal to a court of law. The fact is this bill takes freedom away from commercial fishers. They have in good faith invested in equipment and quotas and done all that society has asked of them, and this government can come in on a whim to take it away. I wonder if we were standing in the House of Representatives in the United States of America whether this bill would survive the fifth amendment of the US constitution.

I am not a lawyer. I am a former Army officer and businessman. I live in the real, practical world where this is nonsense. If you tried this on in a business setting, any business relationship would be quickly axed and your services quickly terminated. If I were to take this to the local pub and ask, 'What you think, team? Does this survive the pub test? For the average Australian, the average reasonable man, is it reasonable that a minister could be able to cancel your livelihood on a whim with no appeal because of a social or other commercial issue? Is that reasonable?'

I think the average man or woman would say no. They would question the implied freedom within that and they would say this is big government going completely and utterly absurd.

Our side of politics does not believe in big government. We believe in individual freedom. We believe you should be free to pursue life, liberty and loves. If any of those are taken away then you have the right to the courts. This bill says you have no such right. It gives unlimited power to the minister on
the basis of uncertainty. All fishers will be concerned—no question about it—that these powers can be used against them. This is a cloud over the entire fishing industry.

The issue is no longer about this trawler, and frankly it is only large because of the fact that it has factory freezing and processing on board. This is about how we do business in Australia. This issue is about how a government governs, whether it takes a long-term, unemotive, scientific and disciplined approach. The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Hon. Joe Ludwig, just 21 days ago criticised the Greens. He said the relevant authority would make independent decisions. He said they would be based on science. He said it would be about ensuring sustainability. He said that 21 days ago. Does the man have such a short memory that he cannot remember what he said about providing certainty to an industry?

Every resource based industry should be concerned with this decision. And for what? The concerns held about one vessel fishing in one place to catch a quota of fish. The quota of fish will be caught anyway. This is not about reducing the amount of fish caught; it will be caught. People who hold the quota to catch the fish simply got together to hire a larger vessel to be more productive. The government speaks about a productivity agenda. Here you have it in real life. People holding quotas to catch fish have got together to be more productive and this government, in an act of simply changing its mind after a Twitter campaign, says: 'No, you can't be more productive. You must go back to catching your individual quotas.' The same number of fish will be caught, except this boat, all the science tells us, will have lower bycatch because of a whole range of inspectors, technologies and cameras on board.

The solution could have been to amend the fisheries act to allow for move-on provisions or spatial management that would prevent localised impacts. We would have supported these moves, but no. The minister is saying he cannot do anything. The minister is saying that productivity is off the table. The minister is saying in response to a Twitter campaign, 'No more.' What is next? What is the next Twitter campaign? What is the next harebrained scheme to come along and lead this government to make it up as it goes along? The nation can only wonder.

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (11:40): I rise to speak on the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Declared Fishing Activities) Bill 2012. Like the rest of the coalition, I oppose this bill because it is a bad bill and it has been poorly thought through. Not only that, we have seen chaos and confusion reigning over this bill. As I understand it, less than 24 hours after its introduction and a little over an hour ago the government foreshadowed several amendments to its own bill. But this bill has nothing to do with protecting Australia's fish stocks. It has nothing to do with large trawlers. It is simply about increasing the arbitrary powers of government.

This bill is simply policy on the run. It is a knee-jerk reaction to a social media campaign that does not deal with the issues. It is all about appeasing a scare campaign from the Greens, who we know are completely anti-fishing and would happily see the entire Australian fisheries industry shut down. When you look through the detail of this bill, it should terrify every small family fishing operation in our nation. Now, at the stroke of the minister's pen, they can be driven out of business and lose everything. They would have no right of appeal, no court that they could turn to.
When we see such knee-jerk reactions and such backflipping legislation as this introduced into the House, is it any wonder that only last week we saw that Australia has slipped down the global rankings in the recently released World Economic Forum's *Global competitiveness report*? Under this Labor government, in just about every single measure, including our international rankings for reliability and wastefulness of government spending, we are slipping down the ladder. We are going backwards as a nation.

This legislation is bad for many reasons. It is bad because of its ill-defined terms. This legislation provides:

(3) The Minister must not make an interim declaration unless the Minister and the Fisheries Minister agree that:

(a) there is uncertainty about the environmental, social or economic impacts of the fishing activity …

Can anyone on the other side start to give us a definition of what is meant by social uncertainty? Can just one member give us a small explanation of what social uncertainty means? Unlikely. The legislation also provides:

(2) When making an interim declaration, the Minister may identify a fishing activity by reference to all or any of the following:

(a) a method of fishing;
(b) a type of vessel used for fishing;
(c) a method of processing, carrying or transhipping of fish that have been taken;
(d) an area of waters or of seabed.

These are very broad-ranging powers. Typically, this government has not thought through any of the unintended consequences. Let us just for a minute look at some of the unintended consequences of this poorly thought through legislation and this government's making policy on the run. This legislation gives the minister unlimited powers which go way beyond addressing the current issues and concerns. Every family fishing operator around our nation will be impacted by this. It is simply a Trojan Horse. It has put a cloud over our entire fishing industry. If this legislation passes, the minister can, at the stroke of a pen—without consultation, without warning, simply because he wakes up one morning and considers there is social uncertainty—close down any fishing business in the nation.

In fact, it is this legislation that creates massive economic uncertainty for every small, medium and large fishing business and their employees. They are now faced with great uncertainty, with no right of appeal and no court that they can go to. This legislation itself creates massive social uncertainty for every small, medium and large fishing business and their employees. If this legislation is passed, what happens next time when these small businesses in the fishing industry sit down with their bank for a review? The bank will see that the risk and uncertainty for those businesses has increased simply because of this government's legislation. The business risk has increased, so what will the banks do? Will they ask the small businesses for extra security? What if the businesses do not have the extra security to put in? Will the banks withdraw their facility because of the increased risk created by this government? This is something the government simply has not thought through.

But it is not only businesses currently operating in the fishing sector that are exposed to this ill-thought-out legislation. This legislation sends a message to every potential investor in Australia, in every sector: 'Be afraid, be very afraid, of this Labor government.' This legislation sends out the message: 'If you have met all the rules, requirements and requests of government, if you have worked for years
and spent millions of dollars to set up a business here, under this Labor government there is a sovereign risk, for without warning and without consultation, at the last minute, after having done everything that has been asked of you, after having complied with every regulation, this government, on nothing less than a social media campaign, can shut you down and change the rules, after the money has been committed.'

Sadly, this is not a one-off. This Labor government already has form on spooking investors by abrupt decisions and reversals on mining taxes, the carbon tax and live cattle exports. No-one will ever know what investment dollars have been scared off from our country. No-one will ever know what jobs have failed to be created because of the risks that this government has created. Talking of jobs, this legislation is going to kill off jobs directly. This legislation means that 50 Australians, including 45 people engaged in work in Devonport, will lose their jobs. The minister should today, after parliament finishes, jump on a plane, fly down to Devonport, look these people in the eye and apologise to them for costing them their jobs. What other jobs are these people going to find when we close industries down like this? We can only finance Public Service jobs from Commonwealth revenue. Next year could we give these 50 people alternative jobs in the Public Service? It would be great if we could. But next year we need to find, from government revenue, $7 billion to pay interest on the debt that this government has created with its reckless spending. That $7 billion, which we will spend from government revenue to pay off the debt, could have employed 100,000 public servants at $70,000 each. But we cannot do that, because that money instead will go to pay the interest on the debt created by the government's reckless spending.

What is also very concerning about this legislation is how it has been brought about by a misinformation campaign by the Greens. When I first read about this and looked at the papers, the story that came across in the media was that this giant foreign supertrawler was going to come to Australia and vacuum out our entire fish stocks. But the truth could not be further from that misinformation campaign. Simply, there is a strict quota that this trawler will be allowed to take. That quota is the same, whether it is taken by one, two, three, four or more boats. That quota is just 10 per cent of those fish stocks.

It is worthwhile looking at just how well managed our fish stocks are and just how little Australia takes as a nation. We have one of the largest coastlines in the world, yet in Australia we import 70 per cent of the seafood we eat. Only 30 per cent of the seafood we consume here comes from Australian waters. The rest comes from overseas. If you look at marine catches from around the world, you see how little we take and how well protected Australia's fish stocks are. It is quite amazing. China, with a coastline smaller than Australia's, takes over 11 million tons of marine catch every year. Our northern neighbour Indonesia takes close to 3½ million tons of marine catch every year. Thailand takes close to 2½ million tons of marine catch every year. Australia takes less than 200,000 tons. We take less than one-tenth the sea catch that Thailand does. This is how well our fish stocks are protected. This bill has absolutely nothing to do with those fish stocks.

I will conclude with a comment that shows how bad this legislation is. Around the world, people need protein. There are many ways that we can get protein. Our fish stocks are the most efficient way, especially in measurements of greenhouse gas emissions. Our seafood is our most
sustainable, best, ecologically proven way of providing that protein. For example, the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide emitted per ton of live weight of poultry meat versus wild-harvest fisheries is worth noting. For beef operations, it is 11.3 to 18.3 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions per live tonne of meat, yet for herring and sardine fisheries—what we are talking about here—it is 0.07 to 0.36 tonnes. Our fisheries are one of the most sustainable industries that we have. This is simply bad legislation. It should be opposed. It should cause great concern to every business and every Australian out there. I cannot support this legislation.

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (11:53): What do we know? We know that our oceans have never been subject to anything like the Margiris, now called the Abel Tasman. This massive 9½-thousand-tonne, 142-metre trawler is twice the size of the largest trawler to have ever fished in Australian waters and can catch more than 90,000 tonnes of fish every year. We also know that supertrawlers have developed reputations all around the world for devastating local marine environments, vacuuming tonnes of fish out of the food chain and killing dolphins, seals and turtles. We also know specifically with regard to the area around Tasmania where it was proposed the Margiris would operate that there is a very real, appreciable risk of localised depletion. The way that this supertrawler would have operated, because it would have caught large numbers of small species close to the surface, would have only enhanced those risks.

We know that these risks are real. Large surface schools of jack mackerel were once common off Tasmania until they were targeted by trawlers more than 20 years ago. These surface schools have since disappeared and have not been seen since. The Margiris supertrawler would have been able to come in and continue vacuuming fish from closer to the surface in particular localised areas, in the context where there is currently no federal government strategy to deal with the problem of localised depletions. There is no federal industry strategy to deal with the problem of localised depletions.

We also know that supertrawlers threaten not only the fish but also other marine life such as dolphins, seals and seabirds, which they are not targeting, simply because they have such huge nets and that is the way that they operate. This has been the experience around the world. And there was never going to be 100 per cent observer coverage of what the Margiris would have done.

We also know that, as far as stock management and those broader fisheries management issues are concerned, we do not have timely and accurate estimates of the fish numbers or how those fish numbers change over time. Blue mackerel were last surveyed in 2004; red bait in 2005 and 2006; and the data for jack mackerel comes from 2003.

As far as this particular supertrawler is concerned, as recently as March this year this trawler was fishing near West Africa off Mauritania and Morocco, where most of the targeted fish stocks are considered fully exploited or overexploited, and local fishermen reported it increasingly hard to find fish and having to go further for longer to get their catch. In December last year, 2011, the Margiris, along with other EU trawlers, was ordered out of occupied Western Sahara waters after the fishing agreement they were fishing under was voted down by the European Parliament following advice that they were breaching international law.

We in the Greens have known these things for some time, but so have the local communities in Tasmania and so have the
recreational and professional fishers in Tasmania. They knew that this supertrawler would have threatened their livelihood. They knew that the quota had been doubled previously, precisely to allow this supertrawler in. The recreational and professional fishers, concerned about their livelihoods, wanting to make sure that they could take their kids and their grandkids fishing, came to us in the Greens because neither the Liberal Party nor the Labor Party would listen.

The Greens worked with them and with a range of environmental groups to organise public meetings to try to get their concerns addressed. We did not get satisfactory responses from SeaFish, from AFMA or from the fisheries minister. So, in the Tasmanian parliament, the Greens moved a motion opposing the operation of the Margiris in those waters, and others eventually came on board and supported that. Senator for Tasmania Peter Whish-Wilson asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry more than 30 questions on notice about this and was fobbed off every time. He was told that the science was all solid and there was no need to inquire further.

Federally, the Greens were the voice of the majority in this debate, when neither of the other parties were willing to listen or wanted to know.

Almost a month ago, back on 15 August, the Leader of the Australian Greens, Senator Christine Milne, wrote to the Prime Minister and said:

The Greens do not believe this supertrawler should be permitted to operate in Australian waters as the evidence indicates it’s a subsidised vessel and there are real issues with quotas being exceeded, death of bycatch species, localised depletion and impact on other fisheries.

We urged the Commonwealth to put in place management plans to prevent localised depletion of stock and we proposed that not only should the government refuse to permit the trawler to operate in Australian waters: … but that regional development funds be made available to support the construction of a Tasmanian-made purpose-built vessel to monitor and research existing fisheries and for scientific research including marine protected areas.

Central to the Greens is the interconnection between these environmental concerns and the social and economic questions affecting communities in Tasmania. The people who came to us were not only concerned about their own livelihoods but they understood that we needed sustainable fisheries to operate in Tasmania for the sake of the Tasmanian economy, for the sake of Tasmanian society and for the sake of the environment. We are pleased the government has responded.

There has been much talk of this response being somehow unjustified because people's voices were heard through campaigns on social media. What this shows is that sometimes the community can win against big business. Especially when the Greens are in parliament and acting as the voice of the community, the community’s need to preserve recreational fishing, professional fishing and the environment can win out against big business.

We are pleased the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Declared Fishing Activities) Bill 2012 has been introduced and we will support it. It is disappointing that all it does is stall the arrival of supertrawlers for, potentially, a year past the next federal election. Given what we know and given what uncertainties there are about the effect these supertrawlers will have on the environment, on society and on the economy, they should not just be stalled; they should be banned. When we reach consideration in detail, I will move an amendment to that effect.
We support the legislation and we especially support its emphasis on the social and economic uncertainty that a supertrawler would have created. Above all, the Greens care about the environment and people. This is an instance where doing the right thing by local communities and doing the right thing by the environment work together hand in glove. We are pleased that finally, after months and months of campaigning, we are now seeing action. It would not have happened without the Greens.

Mr McCormack (Riverina) (12:03): If ever there were a speech to challenge Labor to put the Greens last on their how-to-vote cards, that was it. If ever there were proof that this is government by social media, the supertrawler debate is it. This is true Labor, a party far removed from Ben Chifley's idealistic light on the hill. Now it is nothing more than a blight on the hill.

Banning the *Abel Tasman* is not about science. It will subject taxpayers to compensation claims. It will cost Australians jobs. This is more of what we saw last year with the live cattle fiasco. This is policy on the run and legislation by overreaction. It is a knee-jerk reaction to a campaign on Facebook and Twitter orchestrated by the Green lobby—by leftie lobbyists, including Greenpeace and GetUp!

Banning live cattle to Indonesia, one of our largest trading partners, followed the broadcasting of an ABC Television *Four Corners* program. Without so much as a thought about how her swift response would affect regional Australia, the Prime Minister stepped in and banned the export of live cattle to all Indonesian abattoirs, even the ones using Australian standard stunning killing. Just like that, she stopped it forthwith—no correspondence entered into.

The ramifications of that decision made in blind haste are still being felt today. Aboriginal stockmen are still out of work. The cattle industry has not fully recovered. The shutdown cost business in the Riverina dearly. Family owned and operated Byrne Trailers in Wagga Wagga manufactures specialised livestock transport equipment. When the cattle being shipped to Indonesia stopped, so too did the orders for trailers. It cost Byrne Trailers tens of thousands of dollars. Similarly, the supertrawler stand-off between the Dutch and Australia will also cost someone, if not everyone involved, a lot of money. But what does Labor care? Precious little, obviously.

The Netherlands has insisted the Gillard government explain its decision to bow to a pressure group campaign and, effectively, ban the vessel from fishing in our waters for two years. They now know how Indonesia felt last year. Dutch Deputy Prime Minister Maxime Verhagen telephoned the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Senator Joe Ludwig, on Tuesday, inquiring why Labor wanted to ban the boat. It seems the only boats Labor are able to stop are boats in Senator Ludwig's portfolio area—boats with our cattle on them or boats people want to use for fishing. This is in complete contrast to the people smuggler boats, which have brought 10,000 illegal immigrants to our northern shores already this year.

Labor's move to bully the Dutch smacks of rank hypocrisy. The Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, in his previous role as fisheries minister, actually invited the Margiris, now the *Abel Tasman*, into Australia when he called in October 2009 for large-scale factory fishing vessels to come to Australia. A paper was signed by the minister encouraging large-scale factory fishing vessels to come to this country to fish in our waters. How can he then stand in this place and call for the complete opposite?
But it goes further than that. The wording of the bill and the amendments by the supposed Independent, the member for Dobell—no doubt cobbled together in the office of the Leader of the House to save some face for Labor—go much further than stopping the *Abel Tasman*. They strike at the very heart of fishing generally.

The Australian Marine Alliance accused Labor of hastily drafting a bill which would give the minister for the environment and his department almost unfettered authority over all forms of fishing. This bill has nothing to do with the *Abel Tasman*, about which people have genuine concerns. Mind you, the take by that particular vessel will not be any greater than would otherwise have occurred. Not one fish more will be taken from the sea. I understand the concerns of those about what supertrawlers could do to fish stocks. The week before last I was at a place called Bay Bulls in Newfoundland, Canada, once wholly reliant on cod. On 2 July 1992, commercial cod fishing was banned and 19,000 people lost their jobs in the area. Of course we do not want our oceans depleted such that fish are pushed beyond the brink. On the other hand, we cannot allow the government to continue its war against fishing, to continue its war against cattle, to continue its war against agriculture.

The *Abel Tasman* was brought to Australia in a private joint venture after seven long years of negotiations—seven years of discussions, of investment, of planning, of organising staff. And for what? To be told 'Go away—while you were once invited, now the Labor government does not want you.' There is a better way. This bill needs to be opposed. The minister needs to explain why he has reversed the policy he introduced as fisheries minister nearly three years ago, which stated 'There are considerable economies of scale in the fishery and the most efficient way to fish may include large-scale factor freezer vessels,' and why he effectively invited the *Abel Tasman* into Australia by promoting large-scale factory freezer vessels, and what actions he will take to compensate the 50 Australian workers who will lose their jobs as a result of this legislation.

Mr Mitchell: What about the thousands you lot are sacking in WA?

Mr McCormack: Don't you start, member for McEwen. Your government has overseen the greatest debt and deficit this country has ever seen, and you sit there smugly saying we are costing jobs. Don't you start.

Mr Mitchell: So you are not costing jobs?

Mr McCormack: You can have your turn in a minute.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Leigh): Order! The member for McEwen will cease interjecting and the member for Riverina will direct his comments through the chair.

Mr McCormack: This bill gives the minister unfettered and extraordinary powers and threatens every Australian family fishing operation. In an attempt to supposedly address community concerns about the *Abel Tasman*, the minister has gone to the extreme—the green extreme, as per usual—by giving himself unlimited powers which will impact upon every family fishing boat around the nation. My electorate of Riverina is landlocked, but this is of great concern to me and to those people who enjoy fishing and who do not want to see Labor continue to be led by the nose by the green lobby. Not content with putting up barriers to fishing, under the guise of national marine parks, the minister will stop our people from fishing but he will not prevent illegal fishing boats from taking whatever they like as long as
they go undetected. Given this government's record on border protection, that could amount to a lot of fish.

Once more the government is making policy on the fly—it is policy on the run—and in the process it is giving the minister unlimited powers on the basis of social uncertainty, whatever that means. That goes way beyond addressing the current issue and concerns. The minister will be able to overturn any fishing activity on the basis of even the slightest social complaint—supposedly social uncertainty.

There is a message there: get a greenie, leftie idea, turn it into a social media campaign and watch this government jump. Watch it twist. Watch it turn. There does not have to be any evidence, and uncertainty can be created by a complaint from a political source. The same absolute powers apply to economic or environmental complaints. Don't we know how this government twists and turns when they are subjected to environmental lobbying! The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act will no longer be about the environment. There is no indication of what the term 'uncertainty' means, and the bill provides scope for the minister to stop any fishing activity without any substantive case.

This is a threat to the entire fishing industry. One problem should not create a greater problem for an entire fishing community. The decision clearly creates sovereign risk issues for existing fishers who hold licences. Australia's commercial fishing industry will not have the confidence to continue to invest if any quota and/or licence can be overturned at the whim of the government. Businesses and private individuals are worried about the power of mob rule and that, essentially, is what happened with the live cattle farce. We heard the member for Melbourne talking about how the Greens were there to stop the business—he said they could stop big business in its tracks. He is so right, because this Labor government is beholden to the Greens, is beholden to Senator Christine Milne and the rest of her coterie.

Seafish director Gerry Geen said on Tuesday the decision would cost 50 Australians, including the 45 engaged in Devonport, Tasmania, their jobs. The report of his fears is worth repeating as a message of dire warning:

'It is going to be hard to have to tell those employees, some of them who were long-term unemployed, that we no longer have a job for them,' he said.

'It seems that after we have met every rule, regulation and request made of us; after years of working with the relevant authorities, that in the end the government reacted to the size of the Abel Tasman and not the size of the quota and the science that supports it,' Mr Geen said.

This decision sends an awful message to all potential investors into Australia to be very, very afraid. It shows that this government can and will change the rules after you have committed to a venture, putting at risk the investment, the jobs and all the hard work of many people over many years. And then, when you have met all the new rules and all the requests, they can still just shut you down. Haven't we heard that from many, many people. We have heard it in the cattle industry, we have heard it in the irrigation industry and now we are hearing it in the fishing industry.

Mr Mitchell: What about teachers and firefighters?

Mr McCormack: Don't start talking about teachers—your government, with the Gonski report—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Riverina will direct his comments
through the chair and the member for McEwen will cease interjecting.

Mr McCORMACK: They talk about bringing in a national curriculum and forward funding, but it is not going to happen until at least 2025 under that mob.

We heard the member for Hughes talk about the fact that 70 per cent of the fish that we eat comes from overseas. He also told us that China fish 11 million tonnes of marine catch every year from international waters; Indonesia, nearly 3½ million tonnes; and Thailand, close to 2½ million tonnes. How much does Australia fish? It is less than 200,000 tonnes. That is a telling statistic.

The Australian Fisheries Management Authority manages fisheries in real time and has the powers to take immediate action if and when required. Commercial fishers know how seriously AFMA takes its responsibilities in all fisheries. The Greens do not support sustainable catch limits based on science. We know that. Everyone knows that. The message is that the Greens want fisheries managed by politicians, not by qualified fishery managers. The Greens do not support the commercial operators who fish in some of the world's best-managed fisheries, nor do Labor. It is Labor, it is the Greens; it is their way. They do not support the science, they do not support commercial fishers, they do not support the fishing industry and they certainly do not support farmers—and we see that in every way and in every one of their policies.

This bill does not merit supporting, and it will not be supported. This bill is about appeasing the green lobby. If this goes through, you have to wonder which agricultural industry will next be in the Greens' and Labor's crosshairs. Thank you.

Ms BIRD (Cunningham—Parliamentary Secretary for Higher Education and Skills) (12:16): I rise to support the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Declared Fishing Activities) Bill 2012. There has been much conversation and debate about how we got to this point and a lot of casting of aspersions on motives. I think, at the end of the day, good policy requires us to address the content of the legislation. Rather than question why we are here and whose motives contributed what to that process, it is a matter of what legislation is before the parliament, what the intent of the legislation is, whether it will be achieved and whether it is something that as a nation we seek to support. On those bases—not on the basis of all the spurious mud-slinging we have heard from the other side—I support the bill before the House.

As a local member I have had representations from people in my area about their concerns. So I am pleased to support the bill today, and I wanted to recognise the significant number of representations that have been made to me and to local people who have expressed their views to me on the matter. I want to acknowledge the important work of our ministers in finding an appropriate way to deal with what is an important issue. The minister for the environment said on 11 September, only this week:

If we get this wrong, there are risks to the environment, to commercial operators and to everyone who loves fishing and they are risks I am not prepared to take.

Hear, hear, I say.

As the minister has outlined, it is important that this parliament provides the government with legislation that enables the minister to give proper consideration to proposals about new fishing technologies and techniques. It recognises that the Commonwealth Fisheries Management Act began operating in 1991—that is, over 20 years ago. Often, when we debate things like the National Broadband Network in this
place, I point out to people that 20 years ago, when I was a young mum—my boys were just born—the technology that faced us at the time was profoundly different from what we face today. At that point in time, we had one house address and one fixed phone line. It was very easy to fill out a business card because there was not much to put on it. It is very, very different today.

The area of this legislation is no different. Technology over 20 years has significantly changed. In 1991, supertrawlers such as the one now named *Abel Tasman* were not envisaged. As Cunningham is a coastal area in the Illawarra, we well understand the critical importance of our marine and fisheries management, the sustainability of the industry and the need to stay ahead of technological developments in the interests of the various groups who rely on our marine environment. The *Abel Tasman* is the second biggest fishing vessel on the planet. It is indeed a 'super' trawler. It has a storage capacity around four times that of other factory fishing operations in Australia—vessels that have a storage capacity of around 1,500 tonnes.

In following the media conversation on this matter, I came across an article that was written by a former member of this place, one Wilson Tuckey. He is not someone I regularly found myself in agreement with, but he did make some very interesting points in this article that was published on 27 August this year in the *Australian Financial Review*. He said:

Put simply, the world has got too smart at catching fish.

Further on, he says:

To put it in the words of a long-term fisher: when he started out the boats were small and slow, which restricted fishing days according to weather conditions and the distance a vessel could travel. And locating fishing spots and relocating pots required dead-reckoning navigation and good luck, thus giving the lobster an even chance.

He was talking about lobster fishing in his own region. He goes on:

All this changed with the advent of larger and faster vessels, GPS navigation linked to autopilots and seabed radar in its various forms.

Human innovation in the fishing industry has reduced the capacity of fish to maintain a breeding stock sufficient for a harvestable food chain for the fish and we humans.

So Wilson Tuckey is concerned by what he is seeing develop across some of the marine industries in the area that he previously represented. He has expressed his concerns about what impact certain technologies have had on the sustainability of this industry. Now, I do not pretend to totally agree with all his answers and responses to those developments. But I do think that the bill before us is a reasonable and measured response to some of those challenges, particularly those presented by this supertrawler.

The science behind quotas is sound, but we need to consider the science around the extended long-term capacity of a ship such as this one. In this legislation, we are adding the means by which it can be assessed prior to operating, to be sure that we are not putting our marine environment at risk. It is made clear that the bill does not impact on the ability of quota holders to fish in Commonwealth marine areas using fishing methods and vessels that have employed in the past.

These actions by the government will only serve to strengthen the Australian fishing industries, both commercial and recreational, by ensuring proposals for large-scale operators are given proper consideration before they are given the green light.

The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment
(Declared Fishing Activities) Bill 2012 establishes a two-stage declaration process involving both an interim declaration and a final declaration. That works in this way. The interim declaration process facilitates the prohibition of a declared fishing activity, while consultation with affected operators occurs over a period of up to two months. The final declaration process, the second part of the two-stage process, imposes a longer term ban for a maximum of two years while an expert assessment can be done undertaken regarding the potential impacts of the fishing activity. Both declarations require the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities and the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry to agree that there is uncertainty about the environmental, social or economic impacts of the fishing activity.

Further, the environment minister must, in making a final declaration, take into account the comments provided by affected fishing concession holders and can only make a final declaration in relation to the same activity that was the subject of the interim declaration. This ensures there is procedural fairness in the two-stage process of consideration. If the assessment identifies that the activity will or may have a significant impact on a matter of national environmental significance, the relevant provisions of the EPBC Act would apply. For example, the person undertaking the activities would be required to refer the activities to the minister under section 68 of the EPBC Act, or the minister may call in the matter under section 70.

If the assessment report indicates there are no significant impacts for the fishing operation, then they fishing activity may proceed, subject of course to regulation under the fishing management arrangements in place for the fishery and for the operator. There must be investigation of matters presented by such a super trawler: questions such as the impact of its capacity to stay on a single school of fish and to take many hundreds or indeed thousands of tonnes of an individual species, the potential for bycatch of protected species over an extended period of fishing a single school and the uncertain impacts of a target species catch of that magnitude on dependent prey species. Again, these were some of the issues that Mr Tuckey went to in this article. He was specifically referring to an issue which had happened in the northern hemisphere, which the previous speaker, the member for Riverina, referred, talking about destroying cod fish breeding stocks and the collapse of the North Sea cod fishery as a result of practices, which had been in place there for centuries, being progressively replaced by vessels and technologies along the lines of supertrawlers. He makes the point that for many years the cod wars in Iceland created a real battle over the sustainability of the fish stocks and their traditional fishing methods. He makes some very interesting points in the article and I would encourage some of his former colleagues to perhaps to have a look at it.

He does, I would suspect, commended us to go back to a simpler but unsustainable response to those sorts of challenges. The point he makes about the speed with which technology can move and its adaption in all sorts of aspects of our life, including in an industry like the fishing industry, are significant. We have a responsibility, not only to those who are currently involved in the fishing industry as commercial operators or indeed as recreational users of our marine environment but also to future generations who, one would hope, would still be able to participate in the fishing industry in the future, to take these challenges seriously.

The minister outlined that he had had a look at and sought advice on what actions
and powers he may have to look at these matters under the existing act. He was of the view, when the advice came back to him, that it was insufficient to enable him to respond in a meaningful way to the challenges the super trawler presented. So the bill before us puts in place the powers to enable a measured, sensible assessment of the technology and its impacts. It does not prohibit the technology in the longer term but it does seek to get some expert views and up-to-date science on the issue it confronts us with.

In amending the act, the bill provides for the minister to establish an independent expert panel and for them to conduct an assessment into the potential environmental, social and economic impacts of a declared fishing activity and to prohibit the declared fishing activity while the assessment is undertaken. The minister will have the flexibility obviously under the act to establish the panel, to appoint panel members having regard to the expertise required for each particular assessment, which would obviously vary depending on the nature of the particular fishing activity and its potential impacts. It may also comprise a variety of people with environmental and economic expertise, including scientists and economists.

The amendments enable the minister to specify the manner in which the expert panel is to carry out an assessment. This provides, again, the minister with the flexibility to determine the manner in which the assessment is conducted, having regard to the nature of the fishing activity and its proposed impacts. For example, in some cases a desktop review of the available scientific literature may be all that is required. By comparison, in other cases it may be desirable for the public to have an extensive input into the assessment process. So the expert panel, its methods and make up in this particular amendment bill, are designed to ensure that people with real and meaningful expertise can be pulled together to deal with the particular aspects of the new technological change we are confronting in assessing whether or not such activity should be allowed to proceed.

It is important to recognise that having done all that, if at the end of that process it is quite clear that the issues of concern have been allayed, then the activity can proceed. So it is not a blanket ban. It is not saying that technological improvements and changes are in and of themselves a bad thing and should be prohibited. It is simply saying that in this age where technological advances have moved beyond a limited range of industries and into a much broader range—in this case, the fishing industry—we need to be able to respond to the challenge we are confronted with in terms of providing sustainability into the future. What the ministers have put together in this proposed amendment bill is well targeted at achieving that. Regardless of the carry-on from the other side about what might motivate such an outcome, I would have thought that the priority for them at the end of the day would be to actually see good legislation in this place that has positive outcomes for our nation. I would argue that that is exactly what this does. There is no surprise that they are fear-mongering again, and I think it is a disappointing contribution to the debate that they are doing so.

**Mr MITCHELL (McEwen) (12:31):** I rise today having listened to many hours of debate over the supertrawler. I am absolutely appalled by the arguments being put forward by the opposition. They have no facts, no evidence; they just bring in their little key-lines book and every single speech you hear is exactly the same rhetoric. Obviously no-one over there has any clue about fisheries management. They have not talked about science. They have not talked about
evidence. They have not talked about the commercial industry. It is all this fear and smear that they go on with every single day. Because we have had a debate on such a narrow topic we have had the same lines from speaker after speaker from the opposition.

What this is about is protecting our fish stocks, protecting the environment, protecting the industry and protecting the opportunity for recreational fishers—that is, mums and dads—to go out fishing and catch fish. We know it is a great pastime, we know it is a great family thing to do, to catch yourself a feed and come home and have some healthy food. But those opposite claim that this is an attack on recreational fishers. We are not talking about recreational fishers. I do not know many recreational fishers in their 15-foot De Havillands who would be able to pull in a 600-metre-wide net of fish.

The opposition tries to confuse this with all their rhetoric about how bad this is. Senator Barney Joyce called this a sovereign risk. Anyone who has had to listen to Senator Joyce would know that, with him, every single thing is a sovereign risk. If he runs out of milk in his office it is a sovereign risk. He fails to understand the fishing industry at all. This is about protecting those in the industry—the commercial fishers who work with what we call a total allowable catch. We get the science that is available and we look at it and we find out what fish species and numbers are around. We then set a quota for each boat so that they can have a share of that quota dished out between them and continue to fish and keep themselves profitable. The scale on which we do that involves small boats around a lot of areas. So we do not have a sudden all-out impact in one spot. And that is what this is about. We have got new technology for which the science has never been tested before.

Twenty years ago when the science was done, these trawlers were just not thought of, they just were not around, they were not the sort of thing that people fished with. But now that we have them we need to make sure when we are allocating our fish stocks and quotas that we have the best available science to say yes, this is what we need to do. I think about the industry and the people involved in it. I know there are many hardworking people out there in the commercial fishing industry who do not want to see a boat of this size come through and take huge amounts of fish from the areas that they may fish in their small vessels. That is why it is important that we have a look at that.

But it is also important to the recreational fishers. In Victoria we went through some very serious changes. First, the Kennett government closed the commercial scallop fishery. That was a decision that even I applauded then—and it is not very often that I supported anything Premier Kennett did. But I supported that because in a small bay area like Port Phillip Bay—and it is relatively small compared to our oceans—there was a huge impact from the commercial industry. Over time, that got better with the banning of scallop fishing—to the point where the Victorian Labor government was considering bringing back a small-scale handpicking operation for scallops in Port Phillip Bay.

We have also seen in Victoria the closure of Westernport Bay to commercial fishers because of the impact it was having on the fish stocks, on the quality of the water and on the undersea life there. So there are times you have got to have a look at that. That was
happening because the size and scale of operators was getting bigger, they were getting more knowledgeable and they were targeting a lot better. So we have to go through these processes and look at them and see what the best way forward is. That is why we have got to have this two-year ban put in place to do the science and get the evidence so that we know whether it is good or not.

The member for Riverina, in his hysterical little rhetoric over there—as well as page six of the talking documents of those opposite—talks about the tail wagging the dog. It is quite interesting that none of them, to this day, will own up and say that they were the ones who preferred the Greens, which got them in here and gave them that position. I am not backing the position of the member for Melbourne and the Greens at all, because if they had their way there would be no commercial fishing, and I do not support that in any way, shape or form. Their partners, PETA, call fish 'sea kittens'—that is how they want us to think of them—which is absolutely silly. But that is where their mindset is. That is why we should not be supporting them, saying, 'We've got to ban this', because they will not ban it on evidence; they will ban it on emotion. That is not the right way, it is not the proper way, it is not the intelligent way that a government should deal with its science and its evidence. That is why this government is saying that we are going to put a moratorium on it. We are going to stop, we are going to have a look, we are going to see what the impacts are, and we are going to go with the science and then make the correct decision—a decision that will actually help fisheries and help our ocean and environment.

I was interested to hear those opposite say that there are 50 jobs at stake here. I have read a media report of that, but I have not seen anything definite on it. They complain about 50 jobs and the pain that causes—and no-one likes to see people lose jobs, which is why this government has been investing to create the 800,000 jobs—but it comes in the same week that their counterparts in state governments have slashed thousands upon thousands upon thousands of jobs right across the east coast. And it comes in the same week that they are cutting resources to CFAs and rural fire services, to the point that the Baillieu Liberal government is now saying to those who want to volunteer in the fire service: 'Yes, you can, but you can only have second-hand clothes. We'll give them a quick dry-clean, and away you go.' You could be out fighting fires for 18 hours a day, but they are taking the ration packs away. They do not want the fire men and women who are out there fighting fires, protecting private assets and government assets, to have access to fruit bars, water or biscuits. And here is another one that absolutely amazes me: you could be out there for 18 hours, but they are going to cut back on the toilet paper the CFA volunteers get.

If you want to talk about petty, stupid, unintelligent decisions that Liberal governments make, look at the state governments on the eastern seaboard and it will give you a window into what will happen if they get in federally. It is an absolute disgrace that people who claim to represent country areas, like the so-called National Party, are out there supporting the cutting of services to CFAs and other services in rural and regional areas, such as TAFEs. It is absolutely appalling.

I actually spoke to a few recreational fishers the other day about their thoughts on the supertrawler. I was very interested to read that VRFish, the peak body for recreational fishers in Victoria, actually said that they were considering the supertrawler's potentially devastating impact on a crucial component of the Australian fisheries
environment. The VRFish chair said, ‘Our members are telling us they strongly object to the supertrawler’ because ‘we don't think enough is known about the state of the SPF—the Small Pelagic Fishery—to enable the Commonwealth government to make a call on this fishery based on the currently available scientific evidence’.

I think that is very important—that the chair of VRFish, the peak body for recreational fishing, has said that we have to look at the available evidence and that there is not enough information there. He also said:

Victorian fishers have real concerns about the potential impact a super trawler could have on the marine ecosystems.

As is noted, this is a water column trawler; it is not a bottom trawler. The movement of fish species through water columns is very hard to detect. So you get the available science, you have a look at the areas you monitor, and that is where you come up with these sorts of things. You have a look and say, ‘This is the number of fish we believe are in that area, and this is what we are going to do.

I also notice that the peak body representing recreacting fishing sector—the Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation—says:

The federal Government has made the right decision by listening to Australia's 5 million anglers over the super trawler issue.

It should be made clear to every recreational fisher that it is the Liberal and National parties who will not support them, will not stand up for them and will not represent them. They sit there and say, ‘Let it happen, and see what happens in the end.’

We already know that other countries have banned supertrawlers because of the damage they do to the environment. The Senegal government withdrew the licences of 29 foreign trawlers in May following 'growing resentment at overfishing'. In other countries around the world, they are saying that these boats are too big, they take too much in one hit and they cause concerns. We are saying that this is the first time we have had them here, so we want to look at the evidence, get the science and make the decision that is best for our fisheries. The Liberals and Nationals are saying, 'Don't worry about it; she'll be right.' They would just let them fish, and when there is no fish, then bad luck for Australia; if we want to eat fish we will just have to import more and more. At the same time, the members of the National Party are out there saying that we import too much fish and we have to catch more local fish. Well, you cannot have it both ways. You cannot increase the take of stock from a small single area and cause a depletion of stock—which will happen in a very short period of time—but then say that we have to keep producing more fish to eat. There will not be any fish to eat, and then you have to import more. But with the National Party, as one former member, Mr Black, said, there are 'four fingers and two grandparents between the lot of them'. I think that explains a lot about the way they are thinking.

We need to do what we need to do with the science, get the evidence, stand up and make sure that our world-class fisheries—and they are world-class fisheries—are managed exceptionally well and that we have the evidence, including science based evidence, to back that up, to make sure that when a decision is made it is not made on emotion or on personal beliefs that fishing should not be allowed full stop, but is an evidence based decision that you can stand there and defend.

That is what we are doing and it is what the Howard government did, but it is not what the Leader of the Opposition, Tony Abbott,
and the rest of the crew in the coalition want to do. They just want to let things run and see what happens and then hope for the best.

This government should not and will not allow that to happen. We want to make sure that when we make these decisions they are based on the best science available relative to what is happening in the fishery and relative to the size of the vessels included in the fishery. So I think it is important that we take stock and support this bill, because the bill has been brought in to make sure that we can get the best evidence and the best science available for making this decision so that you and I can go fishing, and I am sure there are plenty of kids in the gallery who also would like to go fishing. We need to do that not just for today but for 10, 20 and 30 years down the track.

This government is making decisions not just for the now but also for the future. It is important that we support this and also that we support the science and the evidence to manage our fisheries and ensure they are sustainable into the future.

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter—Chief Government Whip) (12:46): There is nothing more inevitable than change. Change is with us all the time; it always has been and always will be. First there were stone tools and then the invention of the wheel. Later we had weaving machines and the Industrial Revolution more generally. There was the steam engine, which caused enormous change in the economy, in society and in the way governments dealt with the regulation of the economy. Later we had fixed-line phones, which are now almost extinct, because another technology, the mobile phone, came along and effectively took its place. Also, there has been a lot of conversation today about Twitter and other social media and such technologies. All of them have brought great change. Going back to the steam engine and railways, the monopolies involved caused the US to put in place anti-trust laws, which are among the more well-known laws that exist to this day in the United States.

So, change is with us all the time and societies and governments have to adapt to that change. This bill is very much about change. What is driving the government's policy—

Mrs Bronwyn Bishop: Mr Deputy Speaker, a point of order on relevance. I am grateful for the interesting dissertation on the history of change in the world, and I know that the Chief Government Whip has been called in at the last minute, but do you think, Mr Deputy Speaker, he could actually get to the bill.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. DGH Adams): Order! I ask the honourable Chief Government Whip to speak to the bill.

Mr FITZGIBBON: Well, some things do not change, and that is the member for Mackellar's constant frivolous points of order in this parliament. They may be very amusing for many in the House, including those who sit on the other side. But I was being very relevant, because this bill deals with change, it deals with technological change. This is the government's response to a technological change that not too many people anticipated. It certainly was not part of the Australian conversation only a couple of months ago. I am referring to the arrival of the supertrawler. As I understand it, the Abel Tasman is the second biggest in the world. That is not a subtle change in the way our commercial fishers do their fishing.

I was interested to hear the member for Cunningham earlier today quoting none other than someone who used to sit on the other side, Wilson Tuckey, whom I actually have enormous regard for. He is quite knowledgeable in this area. He made the
No, that is not their modus operandi. Their modus operandi is just to say no and, in doing so, hope to score a political goal or two—very disappointing.

Then there are the Greens. As I understand it, the Greens have a slightly different view than the government: they don't just want to pause and look at the science; they just want to oppose it. They just want to say to the company involved: 'No, you're not going to be able to use this technology, regardless of what the science says.' Why do they say that? Are they seriously arguing that the science is wrong? Or that it should not be reviewed? What are they saying? Why are they arguing that this technology should never be put to use? I suppose the answer is: form. This is the modus operandi of the Greens: oppose everything—forget about economic opportunity, forget about jobs, forget about the other benefits that flow to the community; just say no. Theirs is a zero tolerance approach: if in doubt at all, just don't do it.

This is why, for example, the Greens want to close down the coal mining industry in the Hunter Valley. This is a ridiculous proposition. Coal mining has lived in harmony with agriculture and viticulture in the Hunter Valley for years. There have been pressures and strains—and, again, government needs to be constantly adjusting its regulatory platforms to reflect technological change in the coal mining industry, which is allowing us to mine much more coal much more quickly than we ever could before. That requires a government response. And government is constantly responding to those changes in mining by adjusting its policy setting. There is no better example of that than the EPBC itself, which not that long ago did not exist but, even in its early days, probably did not have an application to mining. So, technology
changes and government policy needs to change as a response; and no-one should be surprised by that.

Coal-seam methane is another issue for people like me, representing the community in the Hunter Valley. The government has really taken the same approach: there is concern about the science, there is still some doubt about the impact on water tables et cetera, so we have established an expert scientific committee to ensure that those questions are properly tested. So this idea from the Greens that we should just approach every policy issue, every challenge in the community, by beginning with a big ‘no’ is just wrong. People have to earn an income to put food on the table, raise their kids, pay school fees et cetera. Imagine the Hunter Valley's economy if we decided to shut down coal mining. The proposition that this should be ruled out forever and a day is almost as ridiculous.

Let us not pretend that these are easy issues; they are not. If you listened to those sitting on the other side, you would think they were. I heard the member for Fadden speak with some passion. He was talking about applying what he called 'the pub test'. He put the proposition that if he took this piece of legislation being proposed by the government into his local pub people would see it for what it is and they would reject it immediately. I find that pretty interesting because, increasingly in my electorate—working class people who toil in the mines, in a manufacturing industry or elsewhere throughout the week—look forward to their weekends, and they say to me, 'You know what my real concern is? I just want to go to work, put food on the table for my family and send the kids to have a good education; and then on the weekend I just want to hunt or fish'—some say 'hunt', some say 'fish', some say both.

There is this growing concern, if not just a perception, in some of my communities, that governments are stopping them from doing these things—stopping them from hunting, stopping them from fishing. I understand some of those sentiments, quite frankly. Today, as we debate this bill, a lot of those people will be out there asking themselves the question, having seen some of the photographs, illustrations and indeed cartoons in the newspapers, whether they are going to continue to have something to fish for if these supertrawlers come into existence in Australian waters. That is the pub test, as far as I am concerned. I have no doubt that, when I go back to my electorate tomorrow, that is what people will be saying to me. They will be saying, 'Gee, we've seen that new fishing vessel. It's huge! No wonder people are concerned. And I think the government were absolutely right to pull it up, to take a pause and to have another look at the science to make sure it's right; because, if it's not right, that's going to have enormous ramifications for those of us who enjoy a bit of recreational fishing.'

Mr Deputy Speaker Adams, I have some sympathy for people like you, who represent people in Tasmania—people like the member for Braddon and others. This must be a very difficult issue down there because this new vessel carries with it some employment opportunities. I want to pay tribute to people like you, the member for Braddon and others, who have led the debate within the party room in this building to ensure that this government gets this balance right. The government could have done three things: it could have just closed its eyes and let it rip, let the vessel do its thing; it could have said, 'No, it's not worth the risk; we don't understand this technology so we're going to legislate to stop this from happening'; or it could have taken the middle ground, as it has done, and said, 'We're not
certain about this; there's a lot of community concern out there and it makes sense to take a pause, to get an expert panel in, to ensure we understand the science—not just the immediate impact in terms of the science but the long-term impacts.' And that is what you and your colleagues have been doing inside the building, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am not sure that the outcome today is exactly what you were looking for. I will allow you to express that to your constituents. But I would have thought that this will be seen in Tasmania as the sensible thing to do to ensure that we get it right.

Interestingly and coincidentally, Mr Deputy Speaker, I have a couple of mates holidaying in Tasmania at the moment—one a coal miner, by coincidence, because I have just been talking about coal mining. I exchanged a text message with one of them today on another matter. So I took the opportunity to say, 'Mate, what are they saying down there in Tasmania about the big trawler?' He said, 'People down here think that the government is doing the right thing.' My friend Mark is having a bit of a holiday down there. He is a good talker—I will not mention his last name without his authorisation—he loves to go into a pub, a service station or news agency and have a yarn. He is a pretty good barometer. If Mark has put the test in Tasmania and got that sort of feedback, then I reckon the government is probably on the right track and I am very confident that that is the case.

So I say to the crossbenchers, who I know are also finding this a difficult issue: come with the government; it makes sense to come with the government. We are not taking either of the two extremes—that is, to say no or yes without qualification—we are taking a pause to make sure that we get this right. On all of these issues I appeal to members to reject the Greens’ approach to these things. When we have economic interests sometimes competing with environmental interests, we need to get the balance right and take the sensible approach.

As I said, we have had a range of industries in the Hunter Valley—coalmining, aluminium smelting and power generation—coexisting with agriculture, viticulture and the like. There is no reason we cannot do that in the future if we continue to adjust the regulatory regime to suit changing climate conditions and changing technology, which is exactly what we are trying to do here today in terms of commercial fishing.

Ms O'NEILL (Robertson) (13:01): I too rise to speak on the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Declared Fishing Activities) Bill 2012. I would like to commence by making a couple of observations about the nature of the debate this morning, particularly regarding the contributions from those opposite. Here we have a situation that involves fishing and a fishing industry that is vital to Australia’s biodiversity. We have, watching from the sidelines, five million recreational fishers, who understand very clearly that a vessel of this size is untested in our waters. Yet, despite that uncertainty, the widespread concern in the community and a lack of good evidence, those opposite stand up and say, with their arrogance, that we should push on regardless. This seems to be a bit of a problem for the Liberal Party and those opposite. Just this week we have seen the same sort of arrogance where the Premier of Queensland, Campbell Newman, attempted to lecture the mining industry, by saying that they needed to change their workplace practices. Even Clive Palmer bit back at that one.

Mrs Bronwyn Bishop: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I know the Labor Party is trying to filibuster—
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. DGH Adams): What is your point of order?

Mrs BRONWYN BISHOP: Mr Deputy Speaker, my point of order is that this is not an industrial relations bill; it is about fisheries—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Robertson will speak to the matter before the House.

Ms O'NEILL: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I was discussing the arrogance of those opposite and of the Liberal Party generally in terms of responding to the facts. We get this constant litany—and it was embedded in each of the contributions of those opposite this morning—that they know better. They always assert that they know better than anybody else. They were wrong on 1 July and they are wrong on this matter.

In place of relentless negativity and with an absence of fact, I think it is pretty important that we get some facts on the record. People in the community who are listening to this debate, people who are interested in fishing, people who care about this matter—there are five million out there—might be interested in getting some facts about the size of this boat.

In fact, the former Margiris, now named fishing vessel Abel Tasman, is the second-largest fishing vessel on the planet. We are not talking here about some small thing that is going ahead into our wonderful marine environment; we are talking about the second-largest vessel on the planet. This is not a situation where we as the government should be rushed into making decisions about how that vessel should operate in these waters. Of course, we should always be guided by science and good evidence, and the science behind the current quotas is certainly sound. But the problem we currently face with the fishing vessel Abel Tasman is that the science about the long-term effects of a vessel of this size is simply not known to us. The science has not developed to a point where we can in a safe, judicious, informed and careful way determine whether this is a good thing for our local environment. We should be taking this cautious approach to ensure that our fisheries, managers and environmental assessors, who are otherwise doing a wonderful job, have the opportunity to take this matter on board and give it proper consideration.

This legislation does not forever rule out a supertrawler. But we are adding to the means by which it can be assessed, prior to it operating, to ensure that we do not put our marine environment at risk. The Australian people broadly and generally would think that is a very good thing. In contrast, those opposite, with that supreme arrogance that I spoke of earlier, think they know better and they want to press on regardless—regardless of the immediate impacts, regardless of the impacts in a year's time, two years time or 20 years time and regardless of the interests of five million fishers around this country.

We know that this fishing vessel does not actually fit with the rules that we currently have. We know that AFMA are a world leader in the management of our fisheries and we know that they take confident and decisive action when they need to.

But right now it is very clear that they need time to give consideration to the precious natural resources that we have in our fishing stocks. It is incumbent upon this parliament to provide the type of legislation that will enable us as a nation to stay out in front and give proper consideration to all the proposals that involve new technologies and techniques. In 1991, some new, important legislation, the Commonwealth Fisheries Management Act, came into force. Things have changed since 1991. I recall significant...
change in my life in that period, and certainly technology has overtaken us at an amazing rate. It is important that technology serves the purposes of the community and that we are not rushed ahead of our own interests and what our environment can actually sustain.

In terms of the five million recreational fishers around Australia, I would like to put on the record how critical fisheries have been to the Central Coast. We still have a small but active fishing fleet. On Sunday morning, when I went for a walk around the rock platform at Pearl Beach, in one of the most beautiful parts of my seat, down on the Bouddi Peninsula, I saw active local fishermen checking their lobster pots. We saw a successful catch of six lobsters in one pot. Four went back and two were retained. Our fishermen rely on a healthy, sustained environment for their livelihood. But the people who fish for enjoyment, for sport and recreation, also have quite a prominent presence on the Central Coast, and there are a number of significant local businesses who deal in recreational fishing.

I would like to give a particular plug to the Central Coast Gamefishing Club, based right in the heart of the Central Coast. It started out as many fishing clubs around the country have—with just a couple of mates who had had a single-minded love of the sport for many years. They established a club, and they now have 230 members. They have tournaments and competitions and they really want to make it family friendly. The threat to their recreation is something that should not be taken lightly. The threat to their recreation by the second largest fishing vessel in the world is something this government is taking seriously, and, if amendments to legislation are required to enable a judicious response, that is exactly what we will do.

Unlike those opposite, with their relentlessly carping, negative version of reality, this government is about building Australia, building our capacity and ensuring a balanced response to the challenges that presents. We are a responsible government. Because of that, this legislation seeks not just to ban the boat—which is certainly what we heard the member for Melbourne speak about—but to, in a very judicious way, delay the action of that boat by two years to allow proper scientific, evidence based consideration to be undertaken.

There are a number of amendments before the parliament. They are designed to enable our fisheries managers and environmental assessors the tools that they need to give the proper scrutiny to proposals that we could only characterise as being unprecedented. We know that natural justice and procedural fairness are absolute cornerstones of democracy, and we need to make sure that our fishing concession holders, including people who do have the opportunity to access new technologies and techniques, have access to those, even if it is controversial. What we cannot do is proceed at pace without access to the critical advice that should inform judicious decision making. That is why this government is taking a balanced approach.

If this legislation passes through the House today, delaying a possible entry into our fishing area for two years, we would be able to gather in that period sufficient evidence to reveal whether or not what the fishing vessel *Abel Tasman* is proposing to do would have a significant impact. If that becomes evident in the collection of evidence, obviously it would need to go to further environmental assessment processes under the EPBC Act, and that is appropriate.

What does this legislation do? There are two stages in the declaration process under
this bill, involving both an interim declaration and a final declaration. The first part, the interim declaration, makes it possible to have a prohibition of a declared fishing activity while consultation which affects the operators occurs over a period of up to two months. The final declaration, which is the second declaration process under the bill, imposes a longer term ban, with a maximum of two years, to enable an expert assessment to be undertaken of the potential impacts of the fishing activity. Importantly, they are two different instruments, but both require the environment minister and the fisheries minister to agree on whether there is uncertainty about the environmental, social and economic impacts of fishing activity. What this legislation will require of the environment minister is that, in making their final decision, they take into account the comments provided by the affected fishing concession holders, and they cannot make a final declaration in relation to the same activity that was subject to the interim declaration. This is structured in such a way as to ensure procedural fairness. The obvious objective of that prohibition is to prevent the declared fishing activity from occurring. We need this assessment to be undertaken. As I said before, if the assessment identifies that there is harm then there will be further action.

One of the terms that has been bandied about in this debate is 'bycatch'. I have to confess that I am not a very successful fisherwoman in my own right; however, I do fondly recall many great fishing adventures with my father. Gladly, I had a little more success when he was with us. I remember catching wonderful bream on holidays up at Iluka. People like me, who enjoy fishing from a boat close to the shore or fishing from the seashore, do not have a working knowledge of all the language that is being bandied about in this debate. This term 'bycatch' is very important in the debate. What does it mean? Commonwealth Policy on Fisheries Bycatch 2000 was endorsed by Minister Truss and Minister Hill at the time, and that policy makes it very clear at a broad level that the definition of fisheries bycatch includes lots of things: all material, living and nonliving, which is caught while fishing, except for the target species. The reality is that—I know it might surprise you, Mr Deputy Speaker, and anybody who is listening—there can be a little gap between what the policy and legislation might have as its intent and what is actually practised in the field. Very significantly in terms of this word 'bycatch', the term is used differently by different parts of the industry and stakeholders. We need to protect seals, dolphins and seabirds. We need to act with caution and I recommend the passage of this bill to the House.

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (13:16): I too rise to support the Environmental Protection and Diversity Conservation Amendment (Declared Fishing Activities) Bill 2012. For the benefit of those listening, I point out that this debate is basically about the supertrawler but obviously the legislation before the House is this bill, a piece of legislation that is about preserving species forever, for the future. For the young children up in the gallery listening, we are talking about making sure that all of the species that are in Australia at the moment are around when your grandchildren are around. That is what the legislation in used for. It is a bipartisan piece of legislation mostly; both sides of the House support it.

The member for Flinders, the shadow spokesman on the environment, would agree that this is important legislation, although I think yesterday the House was presented with a letter that he wrote asking for the preservation of the Tasmanian tiger. I think
the horse might have bolted on that one. When we write letters, the devil is in the
detail—I assume he meant Tasmanian devils. Nevertheless, the legislation that we are
talking about is all about preserving species, and this declared fisheries activity bill is
about making sure that all the bycatch, as referred to by the member for Robertson, is
not going to be impacted on. How so? By having significantly large trawlers such as
the current one that is in the media.

Environmental protection is something that is important to me, and obviously the
people in Moreton, the electorate that I represent. Even though it is an inner-city
electorate a long way from most of the fishing parts of Australia, a long way from
the Coral Sea, nevertheless a lot of people in my community have spoken about the
marine parks, particularly in the northern part of my electorate up near the Brisbane
River. Numerous individual and community groups have come to me urging me to support the
Coral Sea. They have also written in about the supertrawler legislation. The people of
Moreton realise that all our precious oceans need to be protected. Australia is quite
unique in that we control and look after, basically for the rest of humanity, 11 per cent
of the earth's surface. We are a small country but we are responsible for a big chunk of
territory, obviously most of it marine. This is an important issue in Queensland and it is
certainly a topic we have been hearing some contradictory views on from those opposite. I
will particularly focus on the Queensland representatives that have spoken.

It started for me back in the 2010 election campaign when Senator Boswell from
Queensland put out some quite misleading information about fishing and what the
Labor Party was going to do for fishing. He put fear into every tinnie owner in
Queensland by suggesting that Labor was going to stop people from fishing. We go
back to the facts—there is not going to be an impact on 96 per cent of the Australian
coastline, wherever you walk down to the water. You can still throw the line into 96
per cent of Australia's water. And in some of

Dr Leigh: There is something fishy about these stories.

Mr PERRETT: Something fishy entirely about these stories. I follow a couple of the
LNP members on Twitter, the member for Wright and the member for Dawson.
Immediately they started trotting out the same party lines. The member for Fraser is a
bit of an expert on Twitter; I think there is a rule of thumb that the more there is one
voice putting out a proposition, the less thought has been given to the proposition by
the person putting out the idea. That applies to both sides of the chamber, I would
suggest.
The member for Dawson and the member for Wright were immediately putting out these lines about the supertrawler. When you listened to the speeches of the member for Herbert and the member for Leichhardt, you could hear that they were floundering when it came to the logic of what they were actually doing. They were in deep water; they were lost. The day before, the member for Dawson had said, 'We must stop this supertrawler.' He backflipped straightaway and said, 'Oh, no, the party lines are that I must say this.' I know that is tough for a backbencher, when you are being asked by the people in headquarters to parrot—or parrotfish—some lines. Nevertheless, that is what he did.

I am not sure what we pay the clerks of the House, but it is not enough when they have to hear 30 people give the same speech—the same speech that none of them particularly believe. Those are tough yards. They should have some sort of danger money built into such speeches.

Mr Billson: Mr Deputy Speaker, on a point of order, the content relevant to the bill has been filleted out of this contribution. Perhaps you might make sure, even as a matter of bycatch, there is some relevance to the member's contribution.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. DGH Adams): I ask the member to pick up the wave of the bill.

Mr Perrett: I thought he was going to accuse me of 'jumping the shark' with my lines there, Mr Deputy Speaker. Obviously, this is all about the supertrawler, but I just wanted to give a bit of context. That is why I am proud to be on this side of the House: we are committed to protecting our ocean environments through the world's largest network of marine reserves and also by having legislation to respond to this supertrawler. That is a lesson in the history of the fishing industry as well. These reserves, which seem to be largely opposed by the LNP members of Queensland, will protect some of Australia's most precious ocean ecosystems—for the last time in the history of humanity that we can do this. We have done so on land. Admittedly there have been some retrograde steps, particularly in Queensland, as now we have shooting and fishing and motorbikes and all sorts of things going back into national parks. How that can be preserving things for the future, I have no idea. It is back to the old Joh Bjelke-Petersen days—the attitude to sandmining on Fraser Island and the like. How Premier Newman, whose father fought to protect Fraser Island, can oversee a government that steps in and wrecks some of our national parks is beyond me.

I am particularly passionate about the Coral Sea. It is globally recognised as an extremely important marine region, both because of its biodiversity and because of its World War II history. I was up in the Solomon Islands recently. I was able to go to some of the battle sites, to Alligator Creek, which is famous, especially if you have seen the HBO series *The Pacific*. Minister Clare wrote an article about Milne Bay and some of the battles there. This is a unique part of the world that we should be preserving. International studies have highlighted how the Coral Sea is one of the last remaining areas of the world's oceans where large-scale and biologically rich ecosystems remain relatively intact. Its reef systems support tropical ecosystems rich in hard and soft corals, sponges, algae, fish communities—such as clownfish, like Nemo, if you have seen the movie—and other sea creatures. Many globally threatened corals and other marine animals are known to live there. Many species are known to occur only there—nowhere else in the world. That is why it is so important that we should be
grasping this opportunity for our generation and this parliament. Instead, we have the politics.

As stated earlier, I think the opposition's position is a little bit flaky. One day they want to stop the trawlers but they are simultaneously opposed to protecting the Coral Sea and other marine reserve areas. I note, being married to a North Queenslander, that the Coral Sea is a critical habitat for black marlin, which is important for tourism, because they undergo seasonal movements through the Queensland plateau area. It also has important nesting and foraging sites for a wide range of seabirds. The new marine reserves take the overall size of the Commonwealth marine reserves network to 3.1 million square kilometres, which would be the largest represented network of marine protected areas in the world. Those in the 43rd Parliament could sit back on our rocking chairs in the future and say, 'We did that.' I am hopeful that everyone in this chamber would want to be on the right side of this opportunity in history.

Together the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and the Coral Sea, which abut each other, will become the largest adjoining marine protected area in the world, covering 1.3 million square kilometres. Unfortunately, the day after the Newman government was elected, almost the first thing that Deputy Premier Seeney—good old National Party roots—said was that he wanted to decrease the size of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. Unbelievable! He was particularly focused on the Gladstone Harbour area. I looked for the member for Flynn's speech to see if he stood up and said, 'We actually think pretty highly of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.' It is pretty iconic. Most people in the world have heard of the Great Barrier Reef at some stage or have seen it in movies and the like. The member for Flynn, on this topic, was totally silent.

Obviously, whenever we are going to make decisions about fishing there will be some impact on local jobs and perhaps on some of the people who love to fish. As I said, the marine parks are 400 kilometres offshore, but it will have some impact. For those fishermen—just like the Howard government—the Gillard Labor government will be delivering an adjustment package. We have already had a commitment of $100 million, which will be worked through on a case-by-case basis to help the fishers who need it. So, for those people who read those fantasy emails put out by Dean Logan—they are almost like a fantasy novel—what he is suggesting to people is a total red herring. Too often, responsible, sensible people have swallowed this line. The Cairns Regional Council responded to his suggestions and said, 'This is going to have a great impact on the Cairns economy.' The reality is that Cairns is doing it a bit tough at the moment. Between the high dollar, the GFC, tourism and a few other things, Cairns is doing it tough. The report the Cairns council relied on was riddled with errors and inaccurate assertions. ABARES, which has empirical data, found that commercial fishing makes up only two per cent of the Cairns economy and the city will be able to adjust. In fact, there will be opportunities to benefit if we have some Coral Sea protections. Cairns could become a centre for managing the marine reserves. The $50 million national management budget will flow through the Cairns economy over the next few years and there will be some great opportunities.

I would suggest that people like those in the Cairns Regional Council should read the article by Tim Winton. I think it is available if you google it. Tim Winton is the famous Australian author of Cloudstreet, Breath and other books that often deal with the Western Australian marine environment. He wrote a wonderful article dealing with this. It is
basically a transcript of the speech he gave here at Parliament House a few weeks back.

The bill currently before the House will go one step further to protect our marine life. To borrow a phrase from my learned colleague the member for Fremantle, who called this supertrawler the 'Godzilla of the sea', this will be a great outcome. It is incumbent on this parliament to provide legislation that enables us as a nation to stay out in front and give proper consideration to proposals about new technologies and techniques.

At the time the Commonwealth Fisheries Management Act came into force in 1991, supertrawlers the size of the Abel Tasman were not on the horizon. As the second-largest trawler in the world it has a storage capacity around four times that of other fishing operations in Australia, and there is a large amount of uncertainty as to what the size and capacity difference means in terms of impacts on the environment. As Minister Burke pointed out, the big difference is that it can stay out at sea because it chills the catch. That is not something that we had considered previously.

Our fisheries and marine management is world class. People from around the globe look to us for the lessons we have learnt. Nevertheless, we must ensure that we are not asking our fisheries managers or environmental assessors to enforce out-of-date legislation that is not keeping up with significant changes in fishing practices or environmental conditions and vessels such as the Abel Tasman. This bill will keep fisheries management mechanisms at pace with the changing industry. The effect of a rushed decision now may have unacceptable and unintended consequences for threatened or endangered species for which we are accountable to future generations.

If I wanted to talk about protecting our environment I could talk about the cuts that Campbell Newman has made to the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and the 220 jobs cut from the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection, which will have a significant impact, but I do not have time. (Time expired)

**Dr LEIGH** (Fraser) (13:32): Balancing the economics of fishing is no easy task. Quentin Grafton, one of Australia's leading economists of fisheries, has argued that the massive expansion in fishing over the past 50 years has brought the industry to what seems like a paradox, where an immediate reduction in worldwide catch would actually increase future profits of the industry—he estimates it may be by as much as $50 billion a year. There has been overfishing throughout the world and that has led to stock declines so severe that about 15 per cent of all exploited capture fisheries have collapsed or are at less than 10 per cent of their unexploited levels.

Quentin Grafton argues that world capture fisheries reached a plateau in the early 1990s and that aquaculture must be the future of fisheries. It is a classic collective action problem: because the fish in the sea are not owned by anyone there is an incentive for every individual fisher to overfish. Good fisheries management recognises this. It recognises that if each individual fisher—each fisherman and fisherwoman—is able to go out and take as much as they want then there will not be enough there for the future. We need to make sure that we have a set of policies that recognise not only individual species but also the ecosystem in which they operate.

In that context, the Abel Tasman poses a substantial challenge. This is a supertrawler that has a storage capacity of 6,000 tonnes.
The weight of fish that this supertrawler can take is equivalent to 6,000 small cars. That makes it the second largest supertrawler in the world—the largest ever to have fished our waters.

We know a lot about the science of fishing in Australia. We have dedicated teams of researchers looking at the science and the economics of fishing. And I have great respect for those scientists. But when we are dealing with an entirely new way of exploiting fish stocks we need to be very careful. And we need to be careful particularly in the global context, where we know that, as a species, we have overfished and we need to cut back.

The challenge that the Abel Tasman poses to fisheries management is its ability to stay in a single place and to take huge amounts of fish from a single part of the ocean. The impact that that has on a species is complicated. If species move around a great deal then the impact on biodiversity of focused fishing in a single part of the ocean may not be so large. If species are restricted to certain parts of the ocean then it could have substantial impacts on fish stocks. We need to be careful in moving towards this.

When the Commonwealth Fisheries Management Act came into force in 1991 there was not a prospect of supertrawlers the size of the Abel Tasman. They were as distant then as the aviation of today was to the Constitution founders of 1901. They just were not contemplated. So we need to make sure that legislation keeps up with technological developments.

If you listened to the other side you would think that this was an assault on the very foundation of society itself. I was struck by the speech of the member for Fadden, who quoted the Magna Carta—surely a sign that we are about to move into crazy email land—and then talked about how this legislation was impinging on life, love and liberty. I thought he was actually going to talk about same-sex marriage at that point, because that seems the logical place to go with those words, but, no, he was talking about legislation that would allow the minister to restrict the activities of a supertrawler in Australia's waters.

We, of course, have a framework that regulates fishers already. We impinge on the liberties of the fishing community in order to make sure that their industry is stable. Member for Fadden, that happens already. But here I am struck by the way those on the other side are standing up for big fishing operations just as they stand up for big miners and big polluters.

The old argument of the left was: they stand for capital and we stand for labour. I always thought it was a bit more complicated than that, but sometimes that is the way it feels. There is no more capital-intensive fishing operation in existence than these supertrawlers. The ratio of what they spend on machinery to what they spend on people is higher than for any other form of fishing. Let us not have lines about the impact on employment—capital-intensive fishing, such as a supertrawler, employs fewer people than labour-intensive fishing. As we have seen those opposite stand for the big miners and big polluters, they are now standing for the big fishers. We need to be cautious. As the minister has pointed out:

If we get this wrong there are risks to the environment, to commercial operators and to everyone who loves fishing and they are risks I am not prepared to take.

The minister has pointed out that he has been lobbied by a number of Labor MPs. This is an issue that concerns me, but I cannot claim to have had the passion on this issue that the member for Fremantle has had. I pay tribute to her and to her hard work and devotion to this issue.
This bill will not impinge on recreational fishers. The minister has bent over backwards to put in place amendments that make sure that if you are going out in your tinnie to pick up a couple of fish for dinner this bill is not going to impinge on you. This is a supertrawler bill. Make no mistake: if those opposite vote against it, they are saying that they are happy for the supertrawler to come into Australian waters regardless of the uncertainty that we have over what it will do to long-term fish stocks. That is not a pro-fishing position; that is an antifishing position. That is saying: 'We're not going to go and find out any more. We're not going to get any more research to find out how this impacts on the sustainability of an industry we love. No, just let it rip! Let the most capital-intensive form of fishing come into our waters and take what it needs.'

I have no problem with the fish from the Abel Tasman being exported. Australia has a proud export industry. I think it is a terrific thing that we produce many agricultural services and manufacturing goods that are used by the rest of the world—that is not an issue. I am an open markets guy; I am entirely relaxed about the export capacity. What I am concerned about is the sustainability of our fishing stocks and making sure that we have all the science we need to make those decisions. The minister is making sure, through an expert panel, that we explore the impact of the FV Abel Tasman before it is given approval to fish in Commonwealth waters. Using an expert panel will make sure that we make the right decision, that we undertake an open and transparent assessment process and that we have public confidence on this issue. I have been contacted by a number of my constituents who have raised concerns about the supertrawler.

I think they raise perfectly reasonable questions that suggest that we need to make sure that the decisions are based on sound science. The current regime is based on 1,500-tonne storage capacity vessels. We need to make sure that that is updated for 6,000-tonne storage capacity vessels and we need to recognise that there is always uncertainty in the science. We do not dispute the AFMA science on catch limits and the effect of localised depletion on target stocks, but the Abel Tasman's capacity to stay on top of a single school of fish, to take hundreds or thousands of tonnes of an individual species, means that it is uncertain what impact the Abel Tasman may have on individual species.

The Commonwealth policy on fishing bycatch, endorsed by then ministers Truss and Hill, makes clear at a broad level that the definition of fisheries bycatch includes all material, living or nonliving, that is caught while fishing, except for the target species. But in practice that term is used differently by different parts of the industry and by stakeholders. What we are concerned about, for the purposes of the EPBC Act, is bycatch of protected species. We are concerned about the impact of the Abel Tasman on seals, dolphins and seabirds. We need to make sure that the impact on those species is no larger than it needs to be.

In doing so, we need to make sure that we do not adversely affect recreational fishers. I have been contacted by recreational fishers who say that they support this bill. Why wouldn't they? They are not the ones going out with a supertrawler. They are the ones who want to make sure that Australia's fish stocks can be managed not just for our generation but for future generations. We are here not just for ourselves but for the generations to come. The work we do in parliament recognises that policy has continuity. We want to leave the country and the oceans better than we found them, not worse than we found them. We do not do a
service to future generations if we allow a supertrawler to take fish species in a way that does irreparable damage to the oceans.

As previous speakers have noted, this bill, the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Declared Fishing Activities) Bill 2012, fits in with a Labor tradition of standing up for our oceans. The marine parks that have been announced form a historic network. They fit in with a Labor tradition of looking after the environment. It is a Labor tradition that saw the creation of Australian national parks in the 1940s and 1950s, saw us sign the Kyoto Protocol and saw us move to put a price on carbon pollution, because if you do not put a price on carbon pollution you do not save the Barrier Reef. We need to leave a legacy in the oceans for our children. The previous speaker, the member for Moreton, noted that, in a splendid speech in Parliament House, the great Australian author Tim Winton highlighted what a legacy moment that is.

Sitting alongside the network of marine parks that we have established is good fisheries management. It is making sure that we do not do harm to the oceans that cannot be undone afterwards. That fits in with a Labor legacy of listening to the scientists and the economists and thinking for the future. Too often I worry that those opposite are here just for the here and now, for what can be grabbed—that they are the supertrawlers of the policy world: they grab what they can and get out. That is not the Labor view.

**STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

**National Business Names Registration System**

Mr BILLSON (Dunkley) (13:45): Sadly, it is my melancholy duty to advise the chamber and small businesses in Australia that yet another Labor broken promise is being inflicted on the engine room of the Australian economy. In this parliament, the coalition worked very collaboratively and quite cooperatively with the government to put in place the Australian National Business Names Registration System. It was, in fact, an initiative instigated during the Howard government years—something that, to the government's credit, they did pick up.

What we tried to do, after saving the government from itself where consequential provisions were actually going to be introduced before the main bill itself had taken effect, was work through a number of concerns that have been raised with us. Those concerns were very legitimate and reflected the small business community's experience with the state based registers. Some of the concerns arose out of the transition to a single national registration scheme.

We were particularly assured for home based businesses that their privacy would be protected—that there would be measures put in place to make sure that their place of work, which was also their private home, would not be disclosed to the full world. We have now found that that assurance has not been met. I met yesterday with ASIC to work through a number of issues. This was one of them, and there were also issues in relation to the transfer of businesses and concerns about like names and the use of locator descriptors. There is much work to be done there, but it is sad that the small business community could not count on the government's word. We will try to work
effectively to deal with the concerns—(Time expired)

Centacare

Mr LYONS (Bass) (13:46): I rise in the House today to commend the excellent work that Centacare is doing in George Town in my electorate. Centacare Tasmania Family Services have been active in the state since 1960. They provide a variety of counselling and support services, including on families and relationships, settlement services, sexual health, parenting and supported housing.

I recently had the pleasure of attending the launch of the Challenging Abusive Behaviour program at Centacare in George Town. This is another extremely worthwhile program that aims to educate men about respectful relationships, leading to a better way of life and a more fulfilling lifestyle. The facilitator of the CAB program is Peter Ross. He made the point that domestic violence or abuse in any form is never acceptable. He has seen firsthand the difference the program can make to individuals and the benefits it has for families and the wider community.

For the past 15 years, Centacare has provided the CAB program throughout Tasmania—always unfunded until now. I would like to sincerely thank the Tasmanian Community Fund for providing funding to Centacare to allow them to run the Challenging Abusive Behaviour program for the next three years in George Town. I congratulate Centacare for the ongoing support and services they provide to the Tasmanian community and wish them the very best with this latest program.

Southern Districts Rebels

Mr MORRISON (Cook) (13:48): I am sure the member for Hughes and the member for Barton will join me in congratulating the Southern Districts Rebels, who will take part in their first grand final appearance in the Sydney rugby union premiership—on Saturday, this weekend—since the club was formed in 1989. It was only five years ago that their opponents on Saturday, Sydney University, sought to have the Rebels ejected from the Sydney rugby competition. So we will have the opportunity to settle that score this weekend.

I congratulate Cameron Blades, the coach, and all of his coaching staff and the captain, John Ulugia, and all of his players. I wish them the very best for this Saturday's contest. Congratulations also go to club president Neville Shooter and his deputy, Steve Brittons, ably supported by general manager Craig Hawkings. I also want to particularly thank the club's sponsors: the National Institute of Training, Sylvania BMW, Ocean Monarch, the Tulla Group and McLeish Estate. They have been loyal and fantastic supporters of this club as it has rebuilt over the last five years to realise this great objective and achievement of being in the grand final on Saturday.

I seek leave to table an agreement between the member for North Sydney, the member for Hughes and me, which says that this time next week the loser of this contest on Saturday, with the member for North Sydney representing the Sydney University club, will come into this place and give a 90-second statement congratulating the winner. We are looking for that opportunity next week, and I hope the member for North Sydney will be given the call when Sydney University go down.

Leave granted.

Education Funding

Mr MURPHY (Reid) (13:49): The O'Farrell government will cut funding for non-government schools in New South Wales by $66.7 million, or eight per cent of the 2012 total. The cut to the state's Catholic system will be $24.5 million. I report to the
House that this decision is causing great unrest, dissatisfaction and action across all non-government schools in my electorate of Reid.

For the first time ever, all Catholic schools in New South Wales face a radical and immediate cut to their state recurrent grants. This unprecedented cut in state aid breaks the long-established trust of parents in continued government support for Catholic schools and comes without prior consultation or reasonable notice. It will require Catholic schools to systemically increase fees by about $100 per student and independent Catholic schools to increase fees by between $58 and $496 per student. That comes after most Catholic schools have finalised their staffing and budget decisions for 2013.

I have also been forwarded a message from Newington College, a Uniting Church non-selective school that is attended by many pupils in my electorate. The headmaster's message also points out: the lack of notice and consultation; the size of the cuts and their effects; the timing, when most schools have already committed to next year's staffing and budgets; and the contradiction to the Gonski report, which mandates increased funding for all schools. This is a massive betrayal of parents and children by the New South Wales Liberals, and Mr O'Farrell should be flogged.

R U OK? Day

Ms O'DWYER (Higgins) (13:51): Mental health care is an issue that affects everybody, stretching across generations and across socioeconomic groups. In my electorate-wide survey, mental health care consistently ranks as one of the top-priority issues. It inspired me to host a Higgins community meeting on mental health both to share information from our expert panel and to receive feedback about how policy in this area should be shaped. More than 200 people turned up and it was standing room only, with people sharing their stories and hearing from expert panellists Jeff Kennett AC from beyondblue, Professor Kulkarni from the Monash Alfred Psychiatry Research Centre and Quinn Pawson from the Prahran Mission. I mention this because often one of the greatest challenges to people receiving the help and care they need is no-one knowing there is a problem.

Today is R U OK? Day, a day where we remind people that they should regularly stop to ask those close to them—family, friends and work colleagues—whether they are okay. Simply lending your ears and listening to others, giving support or helping them find the right support, can sometimes be the difference between life and death. The first R U OK? Day was launched in 2009 and was formed in the memory of Barry Larkin, who took his own life in 1995. Gavin, his son, was the driving force behind the initiative.

Members on both sides of this chamber joined together this morning for a morning tea to mark this day and to raise awareness that we need to care for those around us each and every day. Organisations like beyondblue and Lifeline offer fantastic services to those in need, and their work cannot be commended highly enough. If you are unsure of where to go, speak to your local GP— (Time expired)

Canberra Raiders

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (13:53): A few months ago the mighty green machine, otherwise known as the Canberra Raiders, was written off by armchair critics and some sporting commentators. Yet this Saturday night the Canberra Raiders will play the South Sydney Rabbitohs in the NRL elimination semifinal in Sydney. The Raiders are just two wins away from a fairytale grand final spot. This is a remarkable achievement for a remarkable team.
The Canberra Raiders have risen from near the bottom of the table halfway through the season to win five tough games in a row and end the regular NRL season in sixth place. This incredible winning streak is reward for the great organisation of the Raiders team and a tribute to coaching staff, led by David Furner. David Furner was under plenty of pressure this year when he made some tough decisions and some unpopular ones. But I see a good sign in seeing a leader under pressure, criticised in the media because he made the tough calls, the hard decisions, and seeing how that pays off, with unbelievable success!

One Sydney league expert wrote this about the Raiders:
… they are irresistible, a real delight to watch. They add something to the finals series, and more power to them for doing that.

The Canberra Raiders are setting this year’s NRL final series alight and I wish them the very best in the match against Souths. Go Raiders! Go green machine! I want to acknowledge the incredible work of the Raiders coaching and admin staff and all the players in the squad. Go Raiders!

Mannoun, Councillor Ned
Southern Districts Rugby Union Club

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (13:54): I rise to congratulate my good friend Ned Mannoun, who less than three hours ago was officially declared the new Mayor of Liverpool. Liverpool is our fourth oldest settlement after Sydney, Parramatta and Hobart, and Liverpool used to be Labor central. It was previously the home to both Gough Whitlam and Mark Latham, but no longer. Now Ned becomes the first ever Liberal elected mayor, with a 23 per cent swing. Tonight the blue Liberal flag flies proudly over the city of Liverpool.

I look forward to working closely with Ned. We have a lot of work to do to revitalise Liverpool after decades of neglect by Labor. Ned will also be joined on the council by a strong team including re-elected councillors Tony Hadchiti and Maz Hadid, with new faces Peter Ristevski and Gus Balloot, while our fingers remain crossed for Sabrina Mamone and George Germanos.

I would also like to congratulate my old rugby team, Southern Districts, who after their 41-22 victory over Manly last weekend will for the first time in the club’s 23-year history play in a first grade rugby grand final when they take on Sydney University at Concord Oval. Although ex-Sydney University players, including the members for Warringah and North Sydney, will be cheering on University, the member for Cook and I will be in the grandstands supporting the Dists. Go the Dists!

Millennium Development Goals

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Throsby) (13:56): I met recently with Jenny Dundas, a local constituent of mine, and her colleagues from the Baptist World Aid program, Catalyst. Catalyst is a program that empowers small community groups to speak up on behalf of the poor, the oppressed and the marginalised and enact real change on global issues. That was exactly why Jenny came to meet with me earlier this year. She is particularly concerned about the number of people in the world living without access to safe drinking water and adequate levels of sanitation. She is not alone in her concern.

The United Nations have attempted to halve the proportion of people who live without safe drinking water and basic sanitation in their seventh millennium development goal of ensuring environmental sustainability by 2015.

However, of all the goals, this target is the one most off track. There are things we can do as a nation and as a parliament. We can make a timetabled commitment to lift our
international aid budget to 0.7 per cent of GNI by 2020. We can increase our aid allocation to water, sanitation and hygiene to $50 million annually by 2015, and we can join the international Sanitation and Water for All partnership.

These are small actions that have the real potential to provide an additional 8.8 million people with access to safe drinking water and sanitation and save the lives of more than two million children by drastically minimising the global incidence of diarrhoea and water and hygiene related malnutrition.

(Time expired)

North Queensland Cowboys

Mr EWEN JONES (Herbert) (13:57): Before the Canberra Raiders take on Souths, the mighty Cowboys will carry the weight of the nation as they go in against bloody Manly Warringah. It will be the mighty North Queensland Cowboys. We already have a Cowboys flag flying out the front of the member for Brisbane's office, and on Monday morning I expect to see a flag flying out the front of the office of the Leader of the Opposition, as the mighty Cowboys go marching forward.

Matthew Bowen will continue to play on after next year—a true North Queenslander. Although Jonathan Thurston is from Brisbane originally, he is now a true North Queenslander. All those guys, even the guys from Gerringong, are true North Queenslanders now. The mighty Cowboys will go forward. They will beat Manly this weekend and if they do meet Canberra next weekend you can only kiss it goodbye, guys, because from the gulf down to Rocky the eyes are in the west. It is an unforgiving country. It brings out the best. That is where the Cowboys come from. That is what we stand for. Go the blue and the gold! That is what we are here for. And go Teachers West tomorrow as they beat the fish brothers in the Townsville rugby union grand final as well. Go Teachers!

Kingsland, Sir Richard

Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (13:58): Sir Richard Kingsland passed away at Calvary John James Hospital after a short illness on Monday, the 27th. Like many of my constituents, his was a life of public service. His wartime service was marked by the bravery and ingenuity he displayed in the 1940 retrieval of Field Marshal Viscount Gort VC from a Moroccan hotel. It is a tale of derring-do that befits 007, perhaps with a hint of the Pink Panther.

Having received orders to extract Gort from the hotel in Rabat, he first seized a police boat, commandeered a car, then shot his way into the hotel. Then, because the French failed to take away his revolver, he shot off the lock, managed to free them both from the room in which they were held captive and made a dawn escape by flying out of Morocco under a guard of pro-Nazi police.

He later served with distinction in the Royal Australian Air Force, was Secretary of the Department of Veterans' Affairs and was awarded the Commander of the Order of the British Empire, receiving his knighthood in 1978. He was an extraordinary Australian.
there this morning to welcome the team. It was a great honour. It was great to see so many of their family and friends there and to see how excited they were, because the success of the Paralympians in these games was truly spectacular—85 medals in the games, fifth overall in the medal tally, and, of course, we beat the USA when it came to gold medals. This team was particularly excited. The swimming team in particular did very well. There were some absolutely remarkable individual achievements. They wowed the crowds in London, but here the ratings were the highest the Paralympic Games have ever had in domestic Australian television. So this was one of the best teams ever. There were a record number of countries taking part in the games, and for us to come fifth in the medal count means that these Paralympians are well and truly Australia's golden team. They left these shores a few weeks ago with high hopes. They did not just realise those hopes; they exceeded them by far. They blew them right out of the water. It was just so pleasing to see all of the Paralympians there today, the years of hard work and discipline and dedication paying off for so many of those athletes this morning. On behalf of everyone in this House, I think, I can truly say we are proud of each and every one of them.

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:02): It is dreams that inspire people to reach for the skies, dreams of representing our country at sport and dreams of being acknowledged as among the best athletes in the world. Many of us have such dreams as young children, but very few of us reach such lofty heights of achievement. Those that do represent our country are an inspiration to the entire nation, as we marvel at the spirit that drives our athletes to greater heights, faster times and longer throws.

The Paralympic Games are among the most inspiring sporting events in the world. Our Paralympians are outstanding athletes who have overcome additional challenges to those that confront all elite athletes. Many of us spent hours watching our Paralympians compete against the best in the world. We cheered, whether they won gold and set world records or not. We are all equally proud of all our athletes, as we know they have given their all. Australians watching the games were taken on the same roller-coaster ride of emotions that we saw so clearly on the faces of our Paralympians. We shared their hopes and expectations, their triumphs and disappointments, but most of all we were overjoyed at their efforts. This is a triumph of the human spirit. Australians are united in our pride at the efforts of our wonderful athletes. We welcome them home.

Reference to Federation Chamber

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (14:03): by leave—I move:

That further statements on indulgence in relation to the London Paralympic Games be permitted in the Federation Chamber.

Question agreed to.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Gillard Government

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:04): My question is to the Acting Prime Minister. I remind the Acting Prime Minister that there have been seven changes to the carbon tax it was promised would never be introduced, five versions of the mining tax, live cattle exports that have been allowed and then banned and then allowed again, and, in the last 24 hours, three versions of the legislation banning fishing. How can Australian businesses plan for the future when this government flips and flops, chops and...
changes and just makes it up as it goes along?

Mr SWAN (Lilley—Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer) (14:04): I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for that question, because it is not a bad attempt to deflect attention away from the savage cuts that are being made to health and education right across Queensland, the absolutely savage cuts—14,000 public sector workers getting the axe in Queensland.

Mr Pyne: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. If the relevance rule is to mean anything at all, the Treasurer must be brought back to the actual question he was asked and not this extraordinary attempt to avoid his own incompetence.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): When questions are asked with so much detail, applying a direct relevance rule becomes quite difficult. I will ask the Acting Prime Minister to return to the question before the chair.

Mr SWAN: Certainly. First of all, I was asked about the carbon price. The government has put in place a carbon price to make sure we reduce carbon pollution and to drive investment in renewable energy. Nothing could be more important to the prosperity of an economy in the 21st century than being driven by renewable energy and making your economy more energy efficient.

We have devoted a lot of time to that over the past 12 to 18 months, and we have been opposed, tooth and nail, every day of the week, by those opposite. But we have got that done, and that will be good for our economy in the long term. It will be good for prosperity in this country and it will increase the investment in renewable energy. So everyone on this side of the House is proud of that achievement.

But of course what those opposite have done there, once again, is to be entirely negative, to oppose everything, because they would rather see our economy fail than see this country succeed, and that is the approach that they take on every issue.

Now let us go to the issue of the supertrawler. What the government wants to see is a sustainable fishing industry in this country. The supertrawler poses new challenges to our current regulatory framework, so the government is coming to the table in good faith, understanding the concern of all Australians about the activity of the supertrawler. As someone who grew up on the Queensland coast, I have spent a lot of time in the water and I have spent a lot of time out there fishing along the Queensland coast. What I want to see for my children and what I want to see for my grandchildren is the capacity to throw a line in and catch a fish. That is what we want to see, and anyone who wants their children and grandchildren to see that will be for sustainable practices in fisheries.

But, as is the case with the carbon price, what we have on the other side of the House is a mob of environmental vandals who do not understand the importance of sustainability—sustainability when it comes to the need to invest in renewable energy, sustainability when it comes to the need to make sure we have adequate stocks— (Time expired)

Economy

Mr HAYES (Fowler) (14:08): My question is to the Deputy Prime Minister. Will the Deputy Prime Minister outline why it is important to invest in reforms to keep our economy strong?

Mr SWAN (Lilley—Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer) (14:08): I thank the
member for Fowler for that question, because the Australian economy walks tall in the world. Our economy is now 11 per cent higher than when we came to office, and of course we have done that during a period when many other developed economies have gone backwards. One of the reasons that we are in this strong position is that during the global financial crisis and the global recession we put in place a range of policies to support employment and to support small business. We did this in the face of the worst global downturn in 80 years. That meant that we avoided the skill destruction and we avoided the capital destruction of small businesses that we see right around the world, which are holding all of those developed economies back.

But, most importantly, why did we do that? We did it to protect communities. We did it to protect families. We did it to protect small businesses. We did it because we understand that we live in a community; we do not just live in a corporation, and we bring those values towards our decision-making processes. We want to protect the very social fabric of our communities. Of course, to do that, you also have to invest in the future, and that means investment in education in particular: in schools, in vocational training and in universities. That is why we have found savings in our budget over the past five years to make room for those priorities. We have put in place a responsible fiscal policy. It is all about making sure that Australians have jobs and about getting a fair go, not just everything going to the fortunate few.

We on this side of the House will always stand up for working Australians. We will not have any part of tearing them down, which is why what we are seeing in Queensland and New South Wales at the moment is so regrettable. The big axe is being taken to health and education, having dramatic impacts on the lives and lifestyles of tens of thousands of Australian families right around the country, and there is the big attack on education spending in New South Wales as well—indiscriminately wielding the axe, cutting the basic services that go to the very basic fabric of our society.

We know that this is just a warm-up act for Tony Abbott and Joe Hockey, because they have a $70 billion budget crater.

Ms Julie Bishop: Madam Deputy Speaker, I raise a point of order. The Deputy Prime Minister ought to know by now that you address members by their seat, not by their name, and I find it offensive that he continually flouts the standing orders, not just in this instance but quite often.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): The Deputy Prime Minister will refer to people by their titles—

Mr Randall interjecting—

Mr SWAN: Certainly.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: and the member for Canning is warned!

Mr SWAN: I do understand why they are so sensitive, because they are going to take the axe to basic services, and they want to keep their agenda hidden just like Campbell Newman kept it hidden in Queensland. That is their objective: to have a commission of audit to hide the truth, not to tell the truth.

We on this side of the House understand that you have to build up the nation. You have to support your workforce. You do not do it by tearing working people down.

Economy

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney) (14:12): My question is to the Acting Prime Minister. What is the current level of Commonwealth government debt, today, in dollar terms?

Mr SWAN (Lilley—Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer) (14:12): Net debt
2011-12, $142.5 billion; 2012-13, $143.5 billion.

Mr Hockey: Gross debt!

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): The member for North Sydney has asked his question.

Mr SWAN: Gross debt 2011-12, 265.8; 2012-13, 274.2.

Honourable members interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr SWAN: I also wanted to make some—

Ms Julie Bishop: Madam Deputy Speaker, on a point of order: I could not hear when the Deputy Prime Minister said '265'. I could not hear him.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Deputy Prime Minister has just demonstrated amply for me why everybody in this chamber should pick up the standing orders and read 65(b). The Deputy Prime Minister has the call and will be heard in silence.

Mr SWAN: Thank you, Deputy Speaker, because I am only too happy to talk about debt. I am very happy to talk about it. Net debt in Australia as a percentage of GDP was 9.6 per cent in 2011-12. That is around one-tenth of the level of other major developed economies.

Why is that important? It goes back to the core of the disagreement in this chamber between the government and the opposition. We do have some net debt in this country now. We have it because the government took the responsible position of supporting jobs and small business during the global financial crisis and the global recession. The consequences of that action are the strong economic fundamentals we have and, most particularly, the gold plated AAA credit rating we have from the three major global rating agencies.

I make that point because here we have yet another scare campaign from those opposite. They are seeking to exaggerate our levels of debt and seeking to talk down our economy as they have day after day for the last few years—but all the time having the shame of having opposed what we did to make our economy strong, to support jobs and to protect the fabric of our community. That shows the clear contrast between the values those on that side of the House have and the values we on this side of the House have. We will always support working Australians and small businesses, but those opposite will always take the axe to them.

Mr Hockey: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker: before I ask my supplementary question, I ask the Treasurer to table the document he was reading from.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Was the Deputy Prime Minister reading from a document?

Mr Swan: No.

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney) (14:16): Madam Deputy Speaker, I ask a supplementary question. Does the Treasurer stand by the commitment he made on 21 May that government debt will be 'within the $250 billion cap'? If so, is he ruling out borrowing more to fund the government's $120 billion black hole?

Mr SWAN (Lilley—Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer) (14:16): Here we go—putting forward the shonky figure which appeared on the front page of the Financial Review. It is simply untrue. I stand by all the commitments we have given.

Schools

Ms Saffin (Page) (14:16): My question is to the Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth. Will the minister please outline the importance of
government making the right choices to support school students and their families?

Mr GARRETT (Kingsford Smith—Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth) (14:17): This Labor government has a proud history of investment in schools. But what we build up, the Liberal Party is intent on tearing down. We are seeing the biggest cuts to education in New South Wales in decades—the biggest cuts since the Liberals were last in power. These cuts will impact on families, on teachers and on disadvantaged students.

I have noticed all kinds of excuses from the New South Wales government. The Premier said yesterday that money does not matter in schools. That is wrong. Targeted investments make a difference in schools. But do not take it from me—I had an opportunity to read one of the submissions to the Gonski panel on school funding. That submission said, 'Australia must increase school funding at least to the OECD average.' It went on to say, 'The Gillard government's National Partnership investment should be maintained. Many advances will be lost if the extra funding ceases.' Who said that? It was Barry O'Farrell's New South Wales government submission to the Gonski review. He agrees that we need to invest more—and why? Because it is working. Then he turns around and delivers the biggest cuts to education in New South Wales in decades.

The second excuse made by the New South Wales government was that they had to cut schools funding because GST revenue is down. That is also completely wrong. The New South Wales minister yesterday issued a press release saying he had to cut schools funding because of a huge drop in GST revenue and he asked me to speak to the Treasurer about it. I did speak to the Treasurer—and guess what? New South Wales revenues are rising. Over the next four years, New South Wales GST revenue is projected to rise by 18 per cent. GST revenues in New South Wales are going up while Barry O'Farrell and the Liberal Party cut education funding.

The truth is, whatever the excuses of the New South Wales government, this is all about choices. We on this side of the House, as a Labor government, choose to support investment in education because we know that good jobs in the future are absolutely reliant on a good education—a good education, a good job. If you choose to cut funding to school education, that is a choice that you, as a government, will be judged by. In New South Wales, all we are seeing from the Liberals is cut, cut, cut.

Ms SAFFIN (Page) (14:20): Madam Deputy Speaker, I ask a supplementary question. Minister, how is the government supporting schools in my electorate of Page and what would be the impact of cutting school funding?

Mr GARRETT (Kingsford Smith—Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth) (14:20): I thank the member for Page for her question. The Gillard government's investments have seen 29 libraries, 19 multipurpose halls, 42 classrooms, six trades training centres and 9,000 computers delivered to the schools in her electorate. The Gonski review found that our system is falling behind and that additional targeted investment is needed to
make sure every student can do their best. This government is prepared to act on those findings, but regrettably New South Wales is going in the opposite direction.

The effect of that is likely to be felt right across the state. The director of the Association of Independent Schools in New South Wales has stated that the cuts will mean that front-line teaching jobs will be axed or that there will be significant fee increases. The director of Catholic schools in Lismore has said that up to 25 teaching positions could be lost. The *Northern Star* had what I thought was the most damning assessment of all. A mother with children in local Catholic schools said: ‘I didn’t sleep last night because I know Catholic schools do not make a profit, so their fees would have to rise to reflect that cut.’ I understand why that woman is so worried. She is trying to do the best she can for her children. It is for that same reason that I, as minister, and this Labor government are intent on pursuing a national plan for school improvement. We believe in investing and we believe in building up our schools, but all we see from the Liberals is an intention to cut them down. (Time expired)

Health and Medical Research

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): The member for Dickson has the call and should not tempt fate with his prop.

Mr DUTTON (Dickson) (14:22): My question is to the Treasurer.

Government members: Oh!

Mr DUTTON: Don't be so disappointed in him; he will give it a go. I refer to Labor’s claim that it will bring the budget back to surplus this financial year despite collecting less revenue than forecast. Will the government rule out cuts to health and medical research grants in order to fund its $120 billion black hole?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Dickson was warned about props. I give the same warning to everybody.

Mr SWAN (Lilley—Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer) (14:23): I thank the member for Dickson for his question about the Australian economy and about his allegations of a black hole. The only black hole around is the $70 billion crater in the Liberal Party's bottom line that the shadow Treasurer announced on breakfast television when he was sitting next to the environment minister. I would like to talk more generally about the state of our economy and relate that to revenues. There have been a number of statements in recent times about the strength of the Australian economy, and one in particular stands out. It goes like this:

There is no doubt the Australian economy is doing better than most—our unemployment is remarkably low, our debt-to-GDP compares very favourably on all measurements, our inflation is low.

Mr Dutton: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order on relevance. The Treasurer was asked to rule out cuts to health and medical research. He refuses to do that. He tried to cut it last year, and with his $120 billion debt—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Dickson will resume his seat.

Mr Dutton interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Dickson is warned! Abuse of points of order will not be tolerated. Introduction of argument into questions or points of order will also not be tolerated.

Mr SWAN: The shadow minister has the hide of a rhino. He comes in here and wants a guarantee from me that there will not be cuts in certain areas when he has said nothing about the savage cuts in Queensland to health and education by the Newman
government—absolutely nothing. He has been completely mute. The reason every single one of those over there have been mute about the cuts in New South Wales and in Queensland is that they have the stamp of approval of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr SWAN: Certainly. I was also asked about the economy.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr SWAN: I am sorry—if you cannot understand a question from the member for Dickson, you are not going too well. I was asked about an alleged hole in the budget and I am responding to that by talking about the strength of our economy and our economic fundamentals and about the commentary that our unemployment is remarkably low, our debt-to-GDP compares very favourably on all measurements and our inflation is low. So who do you reckon might have said that? Which leading Liberal? Which living Liberal leader might have said that? It was John Howard who said that. So when they come in here to run their scare campaign about our budget, they cannot climb over that assessment of the Australian economy. Nor can they climb over the assessments by the IMF, the OECD and most other reputable bodies.

The fact is that we have put in place a responsible fiscal policy in this country and we have done that over five years. We stimulated our economy to support jobs, now we are coming back to surplus and our economy is growing. What we are doing is paying down debt. That is precisely what a responsible government does in these circumstances, and it is precisely what those opposite cannot do because they have a $70 billion hole in their budget bottom line and the fact is they have got an agenda to slash in health and education just like New South Wales and Queensland.

Mr Dutton: Madam Deputy Speaker, I seek leave to table this article showing Labor's $120 billion blowout. I am sorry he refuses to rule out cuts to health and medical research.

Mr Albanese: No, leave is not granted. I table the media release entitled 'NSW bishops: unprecedented threat to Catholic schools', from the Catholic Education Commission.

Fisheries

Mr OAKESHOTT (Lyne) (14:27): My question is to the Minister representing the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. Minister, with the fisheries hat on, do you acknowledge the precautionary principle is already written into the Fisheries Management Act 1991 and, if so, in the light of decisions taken this week can you confirm whether you do or do not have confidence in the Australian Fisheries Management Authority?

Mr BURKE (Watson—Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities) (14:27): Whether it be because of AFMA's legislation or because of their own actions, I do not believe they have been precautionary enough.

Opposition members interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): The member for Cook is warned!

Mr BURKE: Those opposite ask why we are forming this view of AFMA. AFMA themselves in the last 24 hours have reported to the government legal advice that they have been implementing some aspects of the act incorrectly. Members have heard me talk repeatedly about whether or not quota has yet been assigned to the vessel. AFMA at their meeting yesterday received new legal
advice that a practice they had been following since the previous government was in office, and it continued under our government, was not actually consistent with the act. There are some serious questions, and I am pleased that the fisheries minister has called for a root-and-branch review. We need to make sure not only that a precautionary principle exists in writing but also that it is being implemented and implemented appropriately.

There are some areas, for example with respect to target species, where I have no reason to doubt that the science is done thoroughly. But, in terms of bycatch issues, I am not relaxed about a situation where you always wait for the damage to occur before you decide that there should be tougher rules. Certainly, in terms of questions which I sought an answer to, to work out whether part 10 of the environment legislation would be activated—

Mr Hunt: That's not what you told Q&A a week and a half ago!

Mr BURKE: Correct. A week and a half ago I had not received the information that came in the last 24 hours. But, if we want to talk about events 80 years ago, you are the one who thinks Tasmanian tigers are still around! So don't you be talking about recent discoveries. We have an answer to the question—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am sure the minister does not think I have mentioned the Tasmanian tiger!

Mr BURKE: No, no—there would only be one member of this House that could possibly apply to, Deputy Speaker Burke, and I withdraw any reference to you in that respect.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you!

Mr BURKE: The question asked by the member for Lyne goes to that final question to which I sought an answer when I was working out whether part 10 of my legislation would be activated. It was a question of what the impact on species that rely on the target species would be. The answer was that we do not have that scientific information, and that that was giving a green light to the vessel. I do not believe that is a sufficiently precautionary principle. That is the principle currently being applied by AFMA. When the law falls short, I believe we need to change the law.

National Disability Insurance Scheme

Ms LIVERMORE (Capricornia) (14:30):
My question is to the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, and Minister for Disability Reform. How will a National Disability Insurance Scheme support people with a disability, their families and carers?

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga—Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister for Disability Reform) (14:31):
I thank the member for Capricornia very much for her question. I was very pleased to be in Sydney this morning with the Acting Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and others to welcome home from London our Paralympic team. They were incredibly pleased to be home and, of course, very, very proud of their achievements. I know you are not supposed to have favourites, Deputy Speaker Burke, but my favourites really were the wheelchair basketballers, both the men and the women, who were fantastic competitors—incredibly tough. Congratulations to them and all of the other athletes, who showed that the Paralympics are all about hard work and dedication to your sport, demonstrating to not only the Australian people but also the world what
extraordinary talent we have in this country. We are proud of our Paralympians because they also demonstrate what people with a disability can do, even when faced with sometimes very serious disabilities.

This government is determined to do what we can for all people with disabilities, their families and their carers by building a National Disability Insurance Scheme. In building that National Disability Insurance Scheme, we want to make sure that we do everything we can to support people with disabilities so that they can meet their aspirations, find what it is that they can do, rather than have the system focus on what they cannot do. We believe that Australia needs a disability insurance system and, at long last in this country, we will have one. We are determined to deliver it to end what so many people have called 'the cruel lottery'—the cruel lottery that at the moment says that you get a certain level of care and support depending on where you live, depending on the type of disability you have or depending on how you got your disability, not depending on what your needs are. We want to turn that around and make sure that the National Disability Insurance Scheme we have in this country will determine what people get on the basis of need.

We have already agreed that the scheme will start in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania and here in the Australian Capital Territory. So we will be starting from the middle of next year. Twenty thousand people with disabilities will benefit, and so will their carers and families.

Ms LIVERMORE (Capricornia) (14:34): Madam Deputy Speaker, I ask a supplementary question. Can the minister update the House on how the government is working with state governments to deliver the National Disability Insurance Scheme; and what are the challenges in this, particularly in my home state of Queensland?

Ms MACKLIN (Jagajaga—Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Minister for Disability Reform) (14:34): Once again, I thank the member for Capricornia for her question and for her advocacy on behalf of people with disabilities in her electorate in central Queensland—

Mr Fletcher: Wind back the charisma and give us the facts!

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): The member for Bradfield might be winding something back very soon—his presence in the chamber!

Ms MACKLIN: As I outlined in my earlier remarks, we are starting the National Disability Insurance Scheme in many parts of Australia. Unfortunately, that certainly will not be happening any time soon in Queensland because of the absolutely devastating attitude of the Premier of Queensland towards people with disabilities and their families and carers. Just this week, we have seen the Premier of Queensland slash and burn services in the community sector, slashing more than 300 jobs in a department that is delivering to vulnerable people, including people with disabilities, and slashing $360 million from community organisations delivering to vulnerable Queenslanders. That is exactly what the member for Capricornia and our other Queensland colleagues are so concerned about. The Acting Prime Minister and I met with people in Brisbane on Sunday and heard firsthand how terrified people in Queensland are about the Premier's cuts.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke) (14:35): I am reliably informed that we have representatives from the South-East
Queensland Council of Mayors in the gallery today. I welcome them to the House. I am not sure what you call a collective of mayors—dangerous or persuasive? But we welcome you to the chamber today.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Budget

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney) (14:36): My question is to the Treasurer. If the Treasurer disagrees with the $120 billion figure for his black hole, does he also disagree with the Director of Budget Policy and Forecasting at Macroeconomics, Stephen Anthony, a former senior figure in the Treasury and the department of finance who says, regarding your $120 billion black hole: There is a hole—fill it—and by the way, stop raising spending promises you cannot keep.

Mr SWAN (Lilley—Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer) (14:36): I thank the shadow Treasurer for that question. I would like to go back to basics here because I think it is very important. We have put in place a responsible fiscal policy. We have set ourselves the objective to come back to surplus in 2012-13 and we are committed to doing that because our economy is growing around trend. That is precisely what we ought to do, given the strength and fundamentals of our economy, and that is what we have been working on for a number of years since the global financial crisis when we took the essential steps to support our economy, to support our communities, to keep people in work and to keep the doors of small business open.

Of course, we have always been able to find room for our Labor priorities. In some of the most dreadful conditions in 80 years we found room to put in place the most significant increase in the pension and we are very proud of that. We have tripled the tax-free threshold, a fundamental reform, which really delivers to many people on low and fixed incomes. We have done all those things because we have found responsible savings. It has been hard. We have worked very much in the budget to find those savings—$33 billion in our last budget, $100 billion before that. That has been the methodical, careful approach of the government, which stands in stark contrast to the approach of those opposite who simply want to slash and burn.

Their agenda is to slash and burn, like they are slashing and burning in Queensland and in New South Wales. We hear this afternoon that the Liberals in South Australia also have a new plan which is that, if elected to government, they will cut the public sector by—

Mr Hockey: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Labor just lost its AAA rating in South Australia, mate! So you should be pretty thankful.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): The member for North Sydney will raise the point of order.

Mr Hockey: Madam Deputy Speaker, my point of order goes to relevance. I would hope the Treasurer would be relevant to the question.

Mr SWAN: The shadow Treasurer has confirmed yet again that he has given a big tick to all of the cuts in Queensland and New South Wales and, if they are to come, in South Australia, because that is the federal Liberal agenda. What we have here is the Liberal 'Horror show'. It is produced by Barry O'Farrell and Campbell Newman and it is authorised by Tony Abbott, Leader of the Opposition.

Suicide

Mr MURPHY (Reid) (14:39): My question is to the Minister for Mental Health and Ageing, Minister for Social Inclusion
and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Mental Health Reform. Minister, as you know, Monday was World Suicide Prevention Day and today is R U OK? Day, both of which focus on raising awareness of suicide. Minister, will you inform the House what the government is doing to address suicide in Australia?

Mr BUTLER (Port Adelaide—Minister for Social Inclusion, Minister for Mental Health and Ageing and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Mental Health Reform) (14:39): I thank the member for Reid for his question about a topic which I know occupies the minds of everyone in this chamber. Every day, on average six or seven Australians die by suicide and many dozens more make an attempt. Suicide is the biggest killer of men under 45 and of women under 35. One in four deaths of very young men is through suicide and, shockingly, two or three high schools every week are rocked by suicide. Certain groups in the community are at higher risk than others to suicide—Indigenous Australians, the LGTBI community, construction workers, families themselves bereaved through suicide, to name just a few, which is why over recent weeks and months I have announced millions of dollars in funding targeted at each of those groups. In spite of increased investment in the last term of the Howard government and in our first term in this area, the death toll through suicide has not shown significant improvement in more than a decade.

That is why, in the lead-up to the last election, the Prime Minister announced that in a second term of her government we would redouble our efforts in this area, in addition to tackling broader mental health reform. That policy has led to funding flowing, for example, to Lifeline to increase their call capacity from about 400,000 calls per year to 700,000, and to take off the charges for mobile calls to that critically important service; to emergency face-to-face counselling services for Australians across the country where they are identified by GPs or emergency departments as a suicide risk; to infrastructure projects at notorious suicide hotspots which, for obvious reasons, we do not discuss in precise detail; and to a crisis outreach service run by headspace for schools that are impacted by suicide and more. We know that government investment in these programs alone is not going to protect families and communities from this ongoing tragedy. We need more open discussion in this nation, more open discussion as a community about mental health, about the impacts of bullying and about suicide.

As the member for Reid reminded us, Monday was World Suicide Prevention Day and today is R U OK? Day. These are important community initiatives, led from the community and supported across politics, which promote more open discussion. Today reminds us all that looking out for each other and taking a short period of time to have a quiet discussion with someone we know who does not seem quite okay can have an enormous impact and can save a life.

Mr Dutton: Madam Deputy Speaker, on indulgence, I want to join with the minister and offer the coalition's full support to the government's efforts in this regard. I praise the government for the investment they have made and also thank the minister for acknowledging the investment the coalition made when we were in government. The charge of all of us in this place is to make sure we lift the stigma from mental health. People who suffer from a mental health condition are no different from people who suffer from asthma or from any other disease and it is for all of us as a nation to make sure that we continue to put additional efforts into this area, in particular in relation to
Indigenous communities. I look forward to working with the government in this space in the period ahead.

Broadband

Mr Turnbull (Wentworth) (14:43): My question is to the Treasurer. I reminded him that in January 2011 the NBN Co. took over responsibility for broadband in new housing estates. Will he confirm that by June 2012, 18 months later, fewer than 1,000 homes in new estates have an active service from the NBN? Can he also confirm that the NBN's rollout is so slow that up to 74,000 such new homes are currently without any fixed line telecommunications at all?

Mr Swan (Lilley—Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer) (14:44): I thank the member for Wentworth for that very rare question. He deserves congratulations. It is obviously because the deputy leader is at the table that he has actually asked a question.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr Swan: You do not believe in the NBN!

Mr Pyne: People haven't got telephone lines and you're making a joke about it!

The Deputy Speaker (Ms AE Burke): The Manager of Opposition Business is warned!

Mr Swan: On this side of the House we do have a commitment to nation building. We have a commitment to the NBN because we understand the importance of super-fast broadband to the modern economy. We understand that we need to have the latest technology so we can deliver super-fast broadband and not have to maintain the horse-and-buggy system that we have got now. I think everybody understands there is a basic difference of opinion between this side of the House and that side of the House. They want to stay with the horse-and-buggy system. We want to invest in the latest technology to make sure that we are not only connected across our country but we are effectively connected to the rest of the world. Wherever I go in this country, but particularly in regional areas, the NBN is well understood. Even if they are not on our side of politics they give it very strong support.

What I would say in regard to the specifics of the question from the member is that I am advised that, in terms of our corporate plan, our rollout is rolling out consistent with the time frame and numbers that we have published, and it will continue to be rolled out.

Mr Turnbull (Wentworth) (14:45): Madam Deputy Speaker, I ask a supplementary question. I refer the Acting Prime Minister to the Villa World housing estate at Mango Hill in Petrie, whose residents have been without any fixed line telecoms for over eight months as they wait for the NBN to arrive. Can the Acting Prime Minister guarantee the NBN Co. will connect them before the year is out?

Mr Swan (Lilley—Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer) (14:46): I am happy to have a look at it.

Honourable members interjecting—

The Deputy Speaker: I am well aware the member for Calwell is on her feet. I am waiting for some silence and civility in the chamber.

Syria

Ms Vamvakinou (Calwell) (14:46): My question is to the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship. Will the minister update the House on the number of refugees fleeing escalating violence in Syria? Minister, what is the Australian government doing to contribute to government efforts to help these refugees as well as those...
neighbouring countries that are dealing with the flow of people?

Mr BOWEN (McMahon—Minister for Immigration and Citizenship) (14:47): I thank the honourable member for her question and recognise her very strong advocacy for the cause of refugees in the Middle East. We have all watched the humanitarian crisis in Syria in horror—250,000 people have fled Syria for Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan and Iraq. The humanitarian situation in Damascus has deteriorated rapidly. Over 100,000 people have fled Syria in the last month alone and thousands more are fleeing Syria every day. High Commissioner Guterres expects that a further 650,000 people will leave Syria in coming months, bringing the total to almost one million people. One of the most disturbing facts about this crisis is that many of the people who have been forced to leave themselves sought refuge in Syria. Over the past 10 years many people have fled Iraq and taken refuge in Syria, and now they are again being forced to leave and seek refuge in another country.

Of course, Australia is helping. We have committed $20 million in food assistance and medical assistance, making us the fourth largest bilateral donor in the world. Today I have announced another significant contribution. As part of the government's decision to increase the humanitarian intake to 20,000 people, I can announce today that we will resettle an extra 1,000 people from Syria. These UNHCR mandated refugees will be resettled over coming months. This will include both Syrian nationals and members of the Iraqi community who have previously been forced to leave Iraq and take refuge in Syria. This includes Assyrians, Chaldeans, Syriacs and Mandaeans. Many of these refugees we resettle will already have significant family links to Australia.

This government is committed to ensuring that those in urgent need of resettlement get the chance of a better life in Australia. Many of those who have fled Syria will want to return when it is safe to do so, but many others simply will not be able to do so. Proximity cannot be the determinant of our obligation to help people in desperate circumstances.

Today's announcement is only possible because of our decision to increase the humanitarian intake to 20,000 people. Our humanitarian program can never take all or even most of the people in need in Syria or anywhere else, but we can do our part. The announcement today says to people in desperate circumstances in Syria that those for whom the Arab Spring has turned to winter have a friend and a supporter in Australia.

Budget

Mr BRIGGS (Mayo) (14:49): My question is to the Acting Prime Minister. I refer the Treasurer to the Prime Minister's statement in response to caller Wazza on Darwin radio in June that he could save on power costs by switching off his beer fridge. Why is the government ignoring the Prime Minister's own advice by buying a climate controlled wine and champagne fridge for the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency? How will the government find $120 billion for its budget black hole when its spending is so wasteful?

Mr SWAN (Lilley—Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer) (14:50): I was just trying to figure out which Wazza it was. We have a couple. I thank the member for his question. There has been some publicity about these matters in the press, and it is the case that the department has been out seeking quotes for whitegoods, kitchenettes, meeting rooms and so on. I just want to go through what the department is doing,
because this is a very energy-efficient building.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr SWAN: I really do understand that those opposite do not understand the concept of energy efficiency. I think everybody in the House actually gets that, and they have proved it yet again. The fact is that this new building which is being constructed and which the department is moving into is expected to cut their emissions in half, and it is going to save something like $70,000 a year from power generated by solar panels that are on the roof. The department expects to make $19.1 million in savings from 2011-12 to 2015-16 from the construction of this energy-efficient building. As I have been saying through the discussion today, the government does have a focus on finding efficiencies in savings. Efficiencies in savings have been found substantially within the department and that will continue to be the case.

Mr Chester: What time's happy hour?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): The member for Gippsland may be celebrating his birthday today, but he is not going to continue to do it in the chamber. He will leave under 94(a).

The member for Gippsland then left the chamber—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Mayo is seeking to table a document?

Mr Briggs: Indeed, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am seeking to table the tender document in relation to the provision of whitegoods and associated services for the Nishi building, which includes the champagne and beer fridge.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Mayo will resume his seat. Is leave granted?

Mr Albanese: No, and to benefit the member for Mayo from South Australia, I table ABC news report, 'SA Liberals keen to slash public sector'.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Mayo.

Mr Briggs: With the same leave, can the minister also table the same report which talks about losing the AAA—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Mayo will also leave the chamber under 94(a) for continual abuse of points of order. The member for Mayo should have learnt his lesson at the beginning of the week.

The member for Mayo then left the chamber—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business.

Mr Pyne: Madam Deputy Speaker, on your ejection of the member for Mayo, can I just ask how it is in order, if a member asks to table a document, for a minister to table an entirely extraneous matter—he could table the telephone book or the electoral roll, and that makes a mockery of question time.

Mr McCormack interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Riverina might not be able to table anything for much longer if he continues like that. The member for Moreton has the call.

Community Services and Family Payments

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (14:53): My question is to the Minister for Community Services, Minister for Indigenous Employment and Economic Development, and Minister for the Status of Women. How is the government supporting disadvantaged families, victims of domestic violence and children at risk of abuse and neglect? Why is it important for all levels of government to support these services and what would be the impact of funding cuts to them?
Ms COLLINS (Franklin—Minister for Community Services, Minister for the Status of Women and Minister for Indigenous Employment and Economic Development) (14:54): I want to thank the member for Moreton, because I know that the member for Moreton, like many other members in this place, understands the vital role that community organisations and all levels of governments play in supporting some of the most vulnerable in our community.

Of course, the government is very proud of our record when it comes to supporting families: our Schoolkids Bonus, our increased family payments. We are also doing a lot of work when it comes to vulnerable families, with our $1 billion Family Support Program, $86 million in our National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children and, recently, $400 million in the second three-year action plan on the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children. The government will continue to invest to support our fellow Australians in need. It is really important, because many of these programs require not just one level of government alone acting. We all need to work together—all levels of government and the community sector—on these very important policies.

That is why the cuts in the Newman state budget this week are so alarming. I just want to run through a few. We have cuts to mental health programs, cuts to support for victims of domestic violence, cuts to family planning, cuts to rent support, cuts to women's health services, cuts to Indigenous employment and cuts to the commission for children. We know that the Leader of the Opposition and the Liberals have endorsed this plan and these cuts to vulnerable families in Queensland. Why is that? We know it is because, if they ever get back into government, they would do the same. They would cut services to community organisations, they would sack workers and of course they would do all this to fill their $70 billion black hole. The shadow Treasurer says natural attrition, of course, would take care of their proposed public sector cuts. But we now know in Queensland that natural attrition means sacking 14,000 workers—shame! Can you believe that in community services alone, as the minister for families said, there are $360 million in cuts? Of this, can you believe that $9.6 million is cut from the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian? This is when the Queensland government have just endorsed their second three-year action plan on the National Framework for the Protecting Australia's Children and they are in the middle of a child protection review.

Of course, Campbell's cuts go further: $260 million in what the Newman government is calling lower priority projects and efficiency improvements. Where is the efficiency in cutting domestic violence services? Domestic violence currently costs the Australian economy $13 billion a year, and Queensland's share of that would be $2.5 billion on a per capita basis. This is just ridiculous. We know that Liberal governments right across the country are cutting money away from vulnerable people in our community and of course this government is getting on with the job of supporting them. (Time expired)

Carbon Pricing

Mr JOHN COBB (Calare) (14:57): My question is to the Acting Prime Minister. I refer the Acting Prime Minister to this newsletter from Lithgow Workers Club, which states: 'The bill for the month of July reflected an increase of $4,863 simply because of the carbon tax. We have been advised that many of our suppliers' costs will be increasing because the carbon tax will
present additional costs with regard to transport and coolrooms and the like.’ Why should the working families of Lithgow pay for your broken promise not to introduce a carbon tax?

Mr SWAN (Lilley—Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer) (14:58): We have seen these allegations day after day after day, and most of them are incorrect. But I do say to the member that they should refer these matters to the ACCC, because if somebody out there in the supply chain is not doing the right thing then there is a means to deal with that. So they should go straight to the ACCC if the member is actually serious in the question that he has just asked. Has he referred these matters to the ACCC? Has he referred what the suppliers are doing to the ACCC?

We have heard day after day members on the other side come in here and give us some facts about the impact on electricity bills, and generally they have been found to be wrong. The fact is that what we have seen here is a continuation of the scare campaign, which they are pretty embarrassed about now. The opposition leader went to Tasmania three or four weeks ago and admitted that the sky was not going to fall in, that things might not happen quite the way that he said they would—Whyalla would be wiped off the map, Gladstone would be wiped off the map, the whole of the Central Queensland coal industry would be gone. We can see that that has not happened, so they are continuing to try to do this in a different way.

The fact is that this mob opposite have simply run out of steam when it comes to this scare campaign. It is leaving them exposed as not having a policy agenda for the future. All they have got is a $70 billion budget crater. That is what they have got. The shadow Treasurer announced that on breakfast television, sitting there beside the minister for the environment.

Then he goes on TV and says that it never happened. It did not happen! He was not there! The invisible man!

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

Mr SWAN: Why we are getting this sort of campaign from those opposite is that they are seeking to camouflage the fact that at the core of their whole policy agenda they have very harsh cuts planned for health and education—harsh cuts, just like we have seen in Queensland and just like we have seen in New South Wales and what would be seen if the Liberals were in power in South Australia.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Mackellar has her new House of Representatives Practice.

Mrs Bronwyn Bishop: I rise on a point of order. Madam Deputy Speaker Burke, I do refer to the new House of Representatives Practice at page 568, which points out that, with regard to the insertion of 'directly relevant', you have far more power to make the minister be relevant, and that on frequent occasions you ask them to come to the question or sit them down. I note that you have already asked the minister to return to the question, which he refuses to do. I ask you to go to the next step and ask him to sit down.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am sure the Clerk is very happy that someone is reading his new House of Representatives Practice. The Deputy Prime Minister has the call and will refer to the question before the chair.

Mr SWAN: Certainly. I was referring to the fear campaign that has been waged by those opposite on carbon pricing, which has been found to be baseless. Frequently, when
matters are raised in this House and we go away and investigate them we find out that they are wrong. But the member who asked me this question does not even believe in the science of climate change. This is what he has had to say:

So we are not talking about proven science we are talking about a climate change theory.

So what we have is a clear and stark contrast—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Deputy Prime Minister will refer to the question before the chair.

Mr SWAN: What I would say is that he should say to everyone in Lithgow that he does not believe in the science of climate change and that is why he is involved in the fear campaign as he is.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Calare is seeking to table a very large document.

Mr John Cobb: I would like permission to table both the newsletter and the electricity bill from the Lithgow Workers Club.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is leave granted?

Mr SWAN: No. I table the Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia media release 'New South Wales Government fails students at independent schools'.

Workplace Stress

Mr MITCHELL (McEwen) (15:02): My question is to the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations and Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation. Will the minister update the House on the latest research about the causes of workplace stress? Are there examples that support this research, and how is the government responding to this issue, particularly in the public sector?

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation and Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations) (15:03): I thank the member for McEwen for his question. There has been a concerning report released today that finds that a significant and rising problem for working Australians is job related stress. This can cause long-term damage to health. Nothing is more expensive than sending a good worker into stress, triggered by what happens in the workplace. This can take a heavy toll on staff, on families and on the performance of organisations. That is why, where there is stress caused in workplaces by uncaring and deliberate decisions of bad bosses, this needs to be tackled. Labor does not believe it is right and fitting for employers to cause stress for teachers, members of the Rural Fire Service, teachers aides, firefighters, police, ambulance officers, nurses, cleaners, orderlies.

On this side of the House we appreciate what 1.8 million public sector workers do for Australia. We understand that our public servants at local, state and national level deliver services, deliver care, deliver trenchant analysis and deliver emotional commitment and that they work very hard. If it were not for our 1.8 million public sector workers, Australia would not be as modern; Australia would not be as fair. It would not be as flexible, it would not be as safe and it certainly would not be as compassionate. That is why public sector workers do not require the stress of 15,000 job losses in New South Wales. Public sector workers do not require the stress of 20,000 job losses in Queensland and 10,000 in Victoria. And—adding to the arms race—the South Australian Liberals have said, in the last half hour, that they want to get rid of 25,000 public servants.
Indeed, if those numbers do not appal those opposite, let me quote, from the Courier Mail and the Brisbane Times today, the voices of the real people affected by these terrible changes and stress. Lisa Rake, a Queensland public servant, received a yellow envelope yesterday saying that she was excess to requirements. She is quoted as saying:

Newman has stolen my future, that's what he has done.

Bernard White is a 56-year-old nurse at the tuberculosis centre at the Princess Alexandra Hospital in Brisbane. He said:

I can't give up because the amount of money that they are offering isn't enough for me to retire.

Felicity Davis is a nurse at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital. She said:

Everybody's really unhappy and everyone in our department definitely feels the same way. It's not right.

Members of the House, one thing is very clear about workplace stress: bad bosses cause stress and fear; Liberal governments cause stress and fear; Liberal governments make bad bosses—or, to put it another way, if we want to do something about workplace stress in Australia, the three biggest causes are Campbell Newman, Ted Baillieu and Barry O'Farrell.

Carbon Pricing

Mr ROBERT (Fadden) (15:06): My question is to the Acting Prime Minister. Acting Prime Minister, I refer you to this letter and power bill from Ernest and Marjorie Clark in my electorate, which shows that their off-peak power has gone up by a whopping 25.5 per cent since the introduction of the carbon tax. They write, 'As pensioners we find it hard to cover costs for everyday living let alone to be hit with increases in power costs above the 10 per cent promised by the Prime Minister.' Why did the government mislead Ernest and Marjorie by promising, before the last election, that it would not introduce a carbon tax? (Time expired)

Mr SWAN (Lilley—Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer) (15:07): It may have something to do with the $400 per household that is paid by them to meet Campbell Newman's taxation of the power system. It may have a lot to do with that. We have had a lot of discussion about the impact of a carbon price on electricity. The government has outlined the impact time and time again. Those are the figures that have been published. Any claims over and above those are simply part of a scare campaign. I reckon people in Queensland have got a lot to fear from Campbell Newman when it comes to electricity, given how much he is ripping off, putting into his budget and then transferring on to households like the ones in the member's electorate. Do you want to know something? They are pretty cranky about it.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): The member for Fadden is seeking to table some documents.

Mr Robert: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I seek leave to table Ernest and Marjorie's bill. By the way, Campbell Newman throws the electricity tariff into—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leave is not granted. The member for Fadden is warned.

Mr Robert interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Fadden will leave the chamber under standing order 94(a).

The member for Fadden then left the chamber.

Mr Albanese: No, and I table a media release from Liljana Mularczyk JP, the Principal of Merrylands High School, entitled 'A dark day for public education in New South Wales'.

CHAMBER
Queensland Government

Mrs D’ATH (Petrie) (15:08): My question is to the Minister for Trade and Competitiveness. Will the minister inform the House of the impacts of the Queensland government's budget on the competitiveness of Queensland businesses?

Dr EMERSON (Rankin—Minister for Trade and Competitiveness) (15:09): I thank the member for Petrie for her question. As a Queenslander she is experiencing through her constituency the devastation of the cuts that are being inflicted upon Queensland by the Newman government. We know that skills are absolutely essential to Australia's future competitiveness, yet incredibly the Newman government has completely axed the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program at a cost of almost $300 million. A recent evaluation of this program by Deloitte said:

It has directly led to the employment of an additional 8,500 people who would not otherwise have gained employment … the increased earnings generated by this employment ultimately contribute an additional $6.5 billion to Queensland GSP to 2020.

That was a great program that was axed by the LNP government in Queensland.

What is the federal coalition's view of these sorts of cuts? The Queensland Premier, Campbell Newman, said of the Leader of the Opposition: 'I've taken him through it. And he's very understanding ...' He said the Leader of the Opposition has been 'incredibly supportive' of these cuts. The shadow Treasurer said of Campbell Newman: 'All strength to his right arm.' The shadow Treasurer said also that he was absolutely committed to these cuts, that they are fantastic and that there should be more of it. What do we have in common here? We have in common a Leader of the Opposition who is committed to an audit commission, exactly as Campbell Newman was committed to an audit commission. They have both done that because there is a $70 billion black hole. The shadow Treasurer said, 'I never mentioned $70 billion; I wasn't there; it wasn't me.' He said, 'Therefore, finding $50 billion, $60 billion or $70 billion is about identifying waste in areas where you do not need to proceed with programs like the skilling Queenslanders program.' The Leader of the Opposition then said, 'Well, this $70 billion is a fanciful figure; it's plucked from the air by government ministers, and I'm surprised you're retelling it to me.' Then on cue the shadow finance minister said, 'Oh, it's not a furphy. We came out with that figure, right?' That is the $70 billion black hole that they have to fill. We have the same shadow finance minister saying, 'I've got on my desk 49 policy documents with covers, narrative, a list of policies and the costings.'

The truth is that they want to conceal the costings. They will not go to the Parliamentary Budget Office. I will tell them what they can do. They can go down to Aussies, get a cream bun, get a cup of coffee and get the costings done, all for $10. They will not go anywhere reputable to get those costings, because they know that they will set up an audit commission and inflict on Australia the savage cuts that Campbell Newman, Ted Baillieu, Barry O'Farrell and all of their Liberal cronies have inflicted on this country.

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

PRIVILEGE

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney) (15:12): Madam Deputy Speaker, during the course of question time we witnessed the Acting Prime Minister read from a document. We asked expressly for the document to be tabled. You asked the Acting Prime Minister
whether he was reading from a document. He said he was not. Here is a photo of him actually reading from the document. It is a serious issue when the Acting Prime Minister stands up and denies a fact at his own hand. I would ask that the matter be considered by you, that you look at the tapes—

Honourable members interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): Order! This is a serious matter.

Mr HOCKEY: Madam Deputy Speaker, I ask that you consider the matter, that you look at the tapes to consider whether the Acting Prime Minister was reading from a document and report back to the House. If it is the case that the Acting Prime Minister was reading from a document and subsequently denied it, I ask that the matter be referred to the Standing Committee of Privileges and Members’ Interests immediately.

Mr Matheson interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (15:13): I thank the member for North Sydney. I will refer the matter to the Speaker for his consideration. For the record for the House, the Deputy Prime Minister is no longer acting, as the Prime Minister is back in his position. That is why I have been referring to him by his title of Deputy Prime Minister.

The member for Hughes made an interjection during that time and I will ask him to withdraw. Sorry, I have done you a massive disservice—I am looking at the wrong person. The member for Macarthur will withdraw. He made a very loud reference that is unparliamentary. He will withdraw. My humble apologies to the member for Hughes.

Mr Matheson: I withdraw.

QUESTIONS TO THE SPEAKER

House of Representatives Practice

Mr ANDREWS (Menzies) (15:14): Madam Deputy Speaker, can I also ask you to refer to the Speaker the practice of the Leader of the House when an opposition member seeks leave to table a document relevant to the question and is denied such leave he then proceeds—and has done continuously for the last few days—to then table a document which is unrelated to any current question or business before the House? In my recollection, this is a novel practice and I would ask you to refer the question to the Speaker and get his advice as to whether or not this actually constitutes an abuse of the proceedings.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke) (15:56): I will refer the issue to the Speaker.

Privilege

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter—Chief Government Whip) (15:15): Madam Deputy Speaker, with respect to the matter raised by the member for North Sydney, I would ask you whether you would consider asking him to authenticate the photograph and to provide the source of the photograph so we can all be assured there has not been a breach of the standing orders.

Mr Hockey: I seek leave to table the photograph.

Mr Albanese: If he knew the standing orders, he would know that it has already been tabled. To help the member for North Sydney, as a matter of privilege the incorporation of documents is automatic and it has been. Check with the clerks or read the standing orders just once.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke) (15:56): The photo has been tabled and will be dealt with by the Speaker.
Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter—Chief Government Whip) (15:56): With respect, Madam Deputy Speaker, the tabling or the incorporation of the photograph does not provide us with the source of the photograph and therefore does not give us the assurance we are seeking.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke) (15:56): The issue of the photograph will form part of the matter of privilege.

**DOCUMENTS**

**Presentation**

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (15:17): Documents are presented as listed in the schedule circulated to honourable members. Details of the documents will be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings.

Debate adjourned.

**COMMITTEES**

**Selection Committee**

**Report**

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke) (15:17): I present report No. 65 of the Selection Committee relating to the consideration of bills. The report will be printed in today’s Hansard and the items accorded priority for debate will be published in the Notice Paper for the next sitting. Copies of the report have been placed on the table.

The report read as follows—

**Report relating to the consideration of bills introduced 10 to 13 September 2012**

1. The committee met in private session on 12 and 13 September 2012.
2. The committee determined that the following referrals of bills to committees be made—

- Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services:
- Corporations Legislation Amendment (Derivative Transactions) Bill 2012.

**REASONS FOR REFERRAL/PRINCIPAL ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION:**

Massive unintended impact on the electricity generation sector and significant concerns raised by a number of stakeholders.

- Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade:
  - International Fund for Agricultural Development Amendment Bill 2012.

**REASONS FOR REFERRAL/PRINCIPAL ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION:**

Determine whether the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has fully addressed the concerns that were raised by the former Howard Government, and which prompted Australia to withdraw from the organisation in 2004.

- Consideration of the additional financial and human resources required by AusAID to support Australia’s engagement with IFAD.
- Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs:
  - Social Security and Other Legislation Amendment (Further 2012 Budget and Other Measures) Bill 2012.

**REASONS FOR REFERRAL/PRINCIPAL ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION:**

Examination of drafting changes regarding schoolkids bonus, child support legislation and the Social Security Appeals Tribunal.
BILLS
Tax Laws Amendment (Investment Manager Regime) Bill 2012
Higher Education Support Amendment (Student Contribution Amounts and Other Measures) Bill 2012
Navigation Bill 2012
Navigation (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2012
Assent
Messages from the Governor-General reported informing the House of assent to the bills.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Budget
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke) (15:18): I have received a letter from the honourable member for North Sydney proposing that a definite matter of public importance be submitted to the House for discussion, namely:

The urgent need for the Government to address its worsening debt position.
I call upon those members who approve of the proposed discussion to rise in their places.

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney) (15:18): Whilst the member for Hunter is in the House, I will note that the photograph was published on the web on Fairfax’s site. That was the source of the photo.

The parlous state of the government’s budget is obviously back in the headlines—and so it should be. We all know the story—the four biggest budget deficits in modern Australian history, totalling $174 billion; a massive blow-out in spending, with the government this year spending $100 billion more than the last year of the coalition government; a massive increase in debt, with the $70 billion the coalition left in net assets being turned into a projected $145 billion of net debt; and an interest bill on gross debt of $12 billion a year.

Madam Deputy Speaker, if the member for Lyne and the minister want to negotiate, they are perfectly entitled to do so outside this place.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I would ask the minister to stop his negotiations in the corridor—and everybody else, now that I have set the precedent, better take note when they do it the next time too.

Mr HOCKEY: The next parliament the ministers will negotiate, I am sure.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for North Sydney better not to tempt fate if he wants to get through his MPI.

Mr HOCKEY: This government has left us with an interest bill of $12 billion a year. This would be enough to fully fund the Gonski education reforms, to fund the National Disability Insurance Scheme and to build 12 new teaching hospitals.

The government has staked its economic credentials on delivering an underlying budget surplus, but already there are private sector bodies such as Access Economics raising doubts about whether a surplus can actually be achieved this year. We will wait and see if it is achieved. The government has shuffled the money around. They have shuffled expenditure from one year to the next. They have shuffled revenue from one year to the next. They have engaged in accounting tricks. The numbers will be heavily massaged. But whether they get there or not, what matters is the sustainability of the budget and whether budget borrowings will continue to climb. The whole idea
behind a desire to have a surplus is to reduce
the burden of debt. The Treasurer knows
this. On the day after this year's budget he
claimed the reason to achieve a surplus was
to pay down debt. He said, 'It is very modest.
That is why you come back down to surplus.
That is why you pay down your debt.'

Yet the budget papers show that the Labor
Party will continue to increase borrowings
until 2015. This year alone the Labor
government will be borrowing $24 million a
day to fund just its off-budget initiatives.
Next year they will be borrowing $19 million a
day. So every day this government has
been in power debt has been increasing.
Nothing changes.

Labor has now sought to increase the limit
on the government's debt ceiling on four
separate occasions, to increase the credit card
limit. It was originally $75 billion. Then it
went to $200 billion, and then $250 billion.
This year the government said, 'Don't worry—we're paying down the debt. But,
just in case, we want to go to $300 billion.'
Just in case!

Total government debt on issue is
currently $240 billion, but with all the
spending for an uncosted National
Broadband Network and a $10 billion Clean
Energy Finance Corporation, who knows
where we will be in three years time. Most
concerning of all, it does not include all the
announcements this government has made
over the last few weeks—all targeted, dare I
say, not at the electorate but at Kevin Rudd.
The government has announced $120 billion
of new spending initiatives to put off the
leadership challenge of the member for
Griffith. That is what it is about. If anyone
thinks it is seriously about people with
disabilities, then why isn't the government
allocating serious money to it? If it is
seriously about submarines, then why isn't
the government allocating the money to it? If
the government is really serious about dental
health care, where is it going to find this
money?

Of course, there are also the Gonski
reforms. Remember it was the member for
Griffith—whose predecessor had 'noodle
tag—who said he would deliver the
education revolution. That is why this Prime
Minister is determined to have a Gonski plan
with no money. But still, they have given the
commitment. This is about building
monuments to Julia, as everyone in the
Labor Party seems to be doing, to fend off
Kevin. The bottom line is—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member
for North Sydney will refer
to members by
their appropriate titles.

Mr HOCKEY: Yes, I understand. Sorry.
The Prime Minister is building monuments
to herself to fend off the member for Griffith.

Dr Leigh: Point of order, Madam Deputy
Speaker: the member for North Sydney
wrote the MPI but seems unable to retain
relevance even to the MPI he wrote himself.
I ask you to ask him to remain relevant to the
MPI he wrote.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member
for Fraser will resume his seat. The member
for North Sydney has the call.

Mr HOCKEY: Let's go through them.
There is the National Disability Insurance
Scheme, which will cost $10½ billion a year
when it is operational. There is an extra $3.7
billion for aged care and an extra $1 billion
which the government says is going to $3
billion for low-paid workers. There is
offshore processing. Gee, that's gone well!
So far there is $2.1 billion for reopening
Nauru and Manus Island. There is an
increase in the refugee intake to 20,000. That
is going to cost an extra $1.4 billion. For
Defence there is $36 billion for submarines
and $16 billion for joint strike fighters. The
Greens dental care program, which the
government has taken credit for, is $4 billion. Then, of course, there is Gonski, at least $6½ billion a year. Where is this money coming from? These are huge announcements. Where is it coming from?

Mr Champion: A growing economy.

Mr HOCKEY: Listen, old sunshine: it is not your money; it is the taxpayers' money. It is the taxpayers' money out there, not yours. That is the problem with Labor. They think it is their money, but it is the taxpayers' money—the same poor old taxpayers who have to pay for the $900 cheques that go to dead people, for the pink batts that go into people's roofs and burn down people's houses, for the massive overspend on school halls. That is the same Labor Party and you know it is the same taxpayers who have to pay those horrific bills.

We know that it can only come from one of two sources. It can come from increased taxes, and Lord knows the Labor Party is pretty good at that. There have been 26 new or increased taxes since the Labor Party was elected, some of them real crackers, like the carbon tax and the mining tax. The carbon tax has had six different versions and is over $8 billion a year. Gee, that's gone well for you guys! That is terrific. That has done great things to the Australian economy. Then there is the mining tax, which now raises less than one per cent of Commonwealth government revenue. The Labor Party has been so diligent in its application to delivering a simple mining tax that there are mining companies spending up to $1½ million a year on accountants, complying with the mining tax, and they have no liability to pay it. They have no liability to pay the tax, but the paperwork of the tax is costing $1½ million a year for some mining companies, half a million dollars for most of the others.

I would say to you that the coalition is absolutely determined to get rid of the carbon tax. We are absolutely determined to get rid of the mining tax. We are absolutely determined to have smaller government than Labor. We are absolutely determined to empower taxpayers to have more control over their own hard-earned money. That is what we do. But it is in the DNA of the Labor Party to have increased spending and increased taxation. That is what the Labor Party does.

I always love referring to Doug Cameron. We love Doug Cameron. Dougie, with the Scottish accent over in the Senate, is a truth teller for the Labor Party. He said, 'We need Kevin Rudd to campaign for us at the next election.' Damn right they need Kevin Rudd to campaign for them at the next election. It would be a welcome change from Kevin Rudd campaigning against the Labor Party at election. So yes, they do need Kevin. But Doug Cameron said about the $120 billion of new commitments that it was:

… inconceivable that this amount of government expenditure on building a good society could be funded from existing revenue.

That makes everyone a little bit nervous. What tax is next?

The Labor Party is refusing to release the costings undertaken by the Treasury on the Greens policies. Let's just get this right. The Greens, who are the coalition partners of the Labor Party, went to the Commonwealth Treasury and said, 'Can you cost our policies?' Then the Labor Party gives us a lecture and says, 'You should do that and then everyone can see what the numbers are.'

But the thing is: the government are refusing to release the Treasury costings of Greens policies. They are claiming they are cabinet-in-confidence. I been around this place a while, Madam Deputy Speaker Burke, as have you—not nearly as long as me, but you
are showing your age very well!—and I have never seen a Green in the cabinet. I do not think they are there. So how is their deliberation actually in confidence to cabinet? They do not sit in the room. So we will be looking at the information office's deliberations on this very carefully.

What we do know is that the Greens want to see company taxes increased to 33 per cent. We know the Greens want to reintroduce death duties to Australia—and the Labor Party struggles to answer the questions. The Greens want to increase taxes on superannuation. You might say, 'That's the Greens.' Well, the last time the Greens had a policy costed by the Treasury, it was changes to FBT on company cars. The Greens came out and said, 'This is our policy,' and then the government announced it. I thought at the time, 'Gee; I've heard that before.' What other policies do the Greens have? The Greens went to the last election promising a $23-a-tonne carbon tax. Wow! What does this government do? 'We're going to have a $23 a tonne carbon tax.' So now we know.

The Labor Party have a $120 billion black hole, in an attempt to make the Prime Minister more popular with the Australian people. They have had a huge raft of announcements over the last few weeks, and now they will not tell the Australian people where the money is coming from. It is a magic pudding. But you know what? At the end of the day, there is only one taxpayer, the poor soul. Labor are hoping that everything is going to be okay, that the economy is just going to choof on. They are ignoring what is happening in Europe. They are ignoring the challenges in the United States. They are ignoring that China is coming off what seems to be quite a peak. They are ignoring that, in the last national accounts, the government sector contributed 0.5 per cent to the 0.6 per cent growth. They are ignoring that, in the June quarter results, without their cash handouts household disposable income would have been in trouble, because the economy is not performing as well as was expected. They are ignoring that company profits are coming down, according to the national accounts. They are ignoring that investment in dwellings continues to slump. They are ignoring that the terms of trade continue to decline. They are ignoring that the June quarter accounts predate the introduction of the carbon and mining taxes. They are ignoring that retail sales fell by nearly one per cent in July. They are ignoring that ANZ job advertisements declined by nearly one per cent in July and two per cent in August. They are ignoring that the Sensis Business Index showed that confidence of small and medium businesses declined in the September quarter, and consumer confidence remained pessimistic for the seventh consecutive month. These are the stats.

What does the Labor Party do? In response to the general malaise across the Australian community, the Labor Party says: 'Don't worry. We're going on a big-spending, big-taxing binge.' You know what? The Labor Party are hypocrites for this. They criticise for Campbell Newman for job cuts. They are cutting 3,000 jobs this year out of the Public Service in Canberra, and they are trying to give us a sanctimonious lecture about who cares about jobs. Typical Labor—all hypocrisy.

Mr BRENDAN O'CONNOR (Gorton—Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness and Minister for Small Business) (15:33): I am not sure what planet the member for North Sydney has been living on or what country he thinks he was referring to, but he is certainly not representing the state of our economy, including our debt, in any accurate way. What we just heard from the member for
North Sydney was a delusional attempt to suggest that our economy is in some way weak when compared with other advanced economies. The facts are that all economic indicators say otherwise.

I would like to say this on behalf of the government. The government is not interested in taking lectures from an opposition so lacking in fiscal rectitude that they came to the last election without satisfying their own Charter of Budget Honesty. As we all know now, when they eventually provided those details, after the election, after there was proper scrutiny of the details of those costings, they were found to have a very significant black hole. So we do not really need any lessons from those on the other side in relation to the economy and the way in which we should handle the global financial crisis.

We all remember that, when this government made a decision to stimulate the economy, to replace the contraction of private capital, to ensure that small businesses and workers across the country kept their jobs, those opposite voted against those initiatives. Indeed, the Leader of the Opposition slept, both metaphorically and literally, through the legislation that was passed in this place to provide support to our economy. As a result of those initiatives, in partnership with businesses and with workers across this country, we came through the global financial crisis as well as any other country in the world.

In relation to debt, there is no doubt that the member for North Sydney is delusional. Let me just turn to his references about tax. He says that this is a high-taxing government. Let me just be very clear and ensure that we place on the record in this place in this debate which government was the biggest taxing in the history of Australia. It was not the Whitlam government. It was not the Fraser government. It was not the Hawke government or the Keating government. It is not this government. It was the Howard government that was the highest-taxing government, when tax was compared to our gross domestic product as a ratio. It does not matter what the member for North Sydney says—he can bluster all he likes; he can distract us with all sorts of other references—but the fact is, when you look at the most important indicator to illustrate the extent to which a government taxes its people, the Howard government is left exposed as the highest-taxing government in this nation's history.

This debt delusion of the member for North Sydney is all just a further example of the alarmist, scaremongering nonsense that we have been hearing from the Leader of the Opposition, the shadow Treasurer and other members on the other side in relation to our economy—an attempt to scare people into believing that our economy is in some way in bad shape, an attempt to talk down our economy, which adversely affects businesses in this country. It is a shameful act that, for their own self-interest, they choose to misrepresent the facts and create a problem with consumer and business confidence. It is a shameful and irresponsible act.

Just have a think about what we would expect to find in the Australian economy if there were any merit to the arguments of the member for North Sydney. If it were true that the government was flooding the place with government debt, what would you expect the consequences to be? The answer is quite straightforward. Either the price of government bonds would be collapsing because of all the bonds being issued, or the interest rates in the economy would have to go up to influence people to hold extra debt. Are either of these scenarios true? They are not true. The reality is in fact the opposite.
Just in relation to debt—and the Acting Prime Minister referred to this, of course, when asked in question time today—that net debt peaks as a percentage of GDP at 9.6 per cent in 2011-12. That is on average one-tenth of the level of the major advanced economies in the world—one-tenth—so by any measure the debt in this country is very, very low. As a result of that, and for other reasons, the rating agencies have given our economy a very big tick indeed. For the very first time, all three major rating agencies have given our economy a triple-A rating. Fitch referred to our economy thus:

Australia's low general government debt-to-GDP ratio ... is already a standout ratings strength, having given it a demonstrable capacity to absorb fiscal and economic shocks.

As a result, Fitch upgraded Australia to AAA from AA+ in November last year.

Moody's, on 8 May this year, said:

... by demonstrating continued commitment to fiscal discipline, the Australian budget presented on May 8 is consistent with the government's Aaa rating.

And of course we maintained that triple-A rating.

S&P on the same day, in relation to the budget, said:

Restoring the government's strong fiscal settings through a forecast return to surpluses over the cycle and maintaining low debt will provide flexibility to respond to large economic and financial shocks, and is consistent with maintaining the 'AAA' rating on Australia.

For the very first time in our history, this government has received a triple-A rating from all three rating agencies when they are comparing us with other economies. We could not have a better evaluation from independent bodies than that.

But we do have more. We have more people commending our efforts. Very recently, the former Prime Minister, in a moment of candour—a rare moment of candour, perhaps, when it comes to praising this government—said:

When the Prime Minister and the Treasurer say that the Australian economy is doing better than most, they're right. I agree with them. There's no doubt that the Australian economy is doing better than most.

Our unemployment is remarkably low; our debt-to-GDP is converged very favourably; and by all the measurements, our inflation is low. I won't bore you with the statistics; you've heard them all before.

Well, we were not bored by that, because the former Prime Minister is right in saying that we have very low debt, very low inflation, very low unemployment and, as a result, a very strong economy—which of course makes this MPI quite absurd. The proposition upon which this whole debate is based is that somehow we have a debt problem, but we do not have a debt problem.

I will tell you what we do have. We have an economy that is 11 per cent larger since Labor came to office, despite going through the worst global economic conditions since the Great Depression. We have growth running at 3.7 per cent up to this year. We have low unemployment of 5.1 per cent, less than half the rate seen in Europe and significantly below that of other advanced economies. We have an exceptional job creation record of 800,000 jobs that we have created since we came to office, despite our watching 27 million jobs disappear globally in that same time. We have had inflation at 13-year lows, with underlying inflation at the bottom end of the RBA's target band. We have a low official cash rate at 3.5 per cent—350 basis points. We have seen a reduction of 125 basis points in that official cash rate since November last year and, indeed, an official cash rate lower than was the case at any time under the Howard government. And of course we have hundreds of billions of
dollars in a huge investment pipeline. We have healthy consumption of four per cent through the year. We have very low debt, as I have said before. We are of course returning the budget to surplus. These are the facts—

Mr Truss interjecting—

Mr BRENDAN O'CONNOR: if the opposition want to listen to them. These are the facts confirmed by rating agencies and confirmed by the former Prime Minister of this country, John Howard, in a recent discussion that he had.

That being so, you wonder: why is it that the member for North Sydney chose to suggest that we have a debt problem? Why would he posit a view that we somehow have a debt problem in this country? There must be some rationale. The only conclusion I can draw from the opposition and the Liberal shadow Treasurer suggesting that we have a debt problem is that he needs to have a bogus rationale to cut services. He needs to advance the argument that we have a major debt problem to justify the cuts to essential services across this country if the opposition were ever to be elected to government. That is the basis upon which this whole argument that we somehow have a debt problem is being run. Nobody else believes it other than the Liberal Party. They say we have a debt problem, and as a result they want to find a case, find an argument, find the rationale, to cut jobs—front-line job services and essential services—in the same way that the Premier of Queensland, the Premier of New South Wales and indeed even the Premier of Victoria have been doing in recent times.

You might wonder: 'Is it fair to say that? Would it be true to say that the federal Liberal opposition are supportive of the approaches taken by the Queensland, New South Wales and Victorian governments?' I think it is fair to say that they are indeed supportive. Premier Newman himself has said that the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Treasurer are supportive. He said:

I talk regularly to Mr Abbott … He is very understanding, he and people like Joe Hockey have been incredibly supportive.

Of course they have been incredibly supportive!

Just last Friday, the shadow Treasurer praised Queensland Premier Campbell Newman as he cut 2,745 health jobs—with more to come. The shadow Treasurer said:

Campbell Newman, all strength to his right arm, is showing incredible courage …

That is the view of the member for North Sydney on the cuts in Queensland. It is also the view of the Leader of the Opposition, who is supporting the cuts being made by Liberal governments in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and other parts of this country.

What does all that mean? It means it has been a very bad week for Queenslanders—reckless cuts to front-line services which will impact on patient care; cuts to breast-screening services; cuts to nurses in Townsville, the Darling Downs, Charters Towers and West Moreton; cuts to the flu vaccine for health workers; and cuts to counsellors who help grieving relatives at the morgue. The Queensland Tuberculosis Control Centre is being closed and 12 full-time jobs are going from Donate Life, effectively shutting down this organ donation agency.

This is what the Liberals do. This is in their DNA. They do this as a matter of reflex. But they know they must dress it up—they have to be able to pretend there is a need to do it. That is why we have this MPI—they want to pretend we have a debt problem so that in future, if they are ever elected, they can justify announcing cuts.
Just recently we have seen the South Australian Leader of the Opposition announce a keenness to slash the public sector. She is keen to swing the axe on the public sector just as her colleagues in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland have done. That is what you get from Liberal governments. They do not say anything before the election, but once they are in they are after you. They have been cutting services throughout regional Queensland—Townsville, Mackay, Cairns, Rockhampton. These places are being decimated by a rampant government with a callous disregard for people who need education and health services.

We do not need any lecturing from those opposite. We do not need any pretence that there is a debt problem in this country. We know that is their way of giving themselves a pretext for announcing cuts in essential services—education, health and other areas which ordinary Australians rely upon for a good quality of life.

What we do need before the next election—and we need it soon—is a direct explanation to the Australian people from the Leader of the Opposition of what he is looking to do. We know he supports Campbell Newman's approach, we know he supports Premier Barry O'Farrell's approach, we know he supports the cuts in Victoria and I am sure he will support the Leader of the Opposition in South Australia, but we need to know—and the people of Australia deserve to know—what Tony Abbott is going to do in relation to cutting essential services if he gets elected. He needs to tell people the truth. In the last week he has said nothing. He owes the Australian people an explanation. He needs to tell them the truth.

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Leader of The Nationals) (15:48): The MPI before parliament today is one of very great importance—our worsening debt position and rising government debt. If anyone needed any further convincing that they should despair of this Labor government, they would have had their views totally reinforced by the response we have just heard from the minister. This is a matter of public importance about Australia's worsening debt position. In spite of a $145 billion black hole, in spite of $174 billion worth of deficit racked up by this government, in spite of repeated demands for increases in their credit card borrowing limit, this government says we do not have a debt problem. Their attitude is: 'This is nothing to worry about. It is only $145 billion black hole. It is only $174 billion worth of deficits. We do not have a problem.'

The minister just said that it is only a pretend debt. You go and tell your bank manager that your house mortgage is only a pretend debt—you don't have to pay it back; it doesn't matter. This is the irresponsible approach this government are taking towards debt. Their response to being racked with debt is to spend, spend, spend. Their attitude is: 'Spend your way out of debt. Spend your way out of the country's troubles. The credit limit doesn't matter—raise it again. Keep on spending.'

Labor have no appreciation of the crisis. They are leaving this country with a level of debt which just grows and grows. They have learned no lessons from the Hawke-Keating government, which left behind $96 billion worth of debt, debt which took a decade to repay. This government is already way beyond that—$145 billion worth of debt—and they have no plan to repay it. The minister's attitude is: 'It does not matter; it is only pretend. Who cares about the debt? Just keep on spending.'

Today and on previous days Labor have criticised the Queensland government, the
New South Wales government and the Victorian government for having to cut expenditure. This is a further reflection of the way Labor believe debt should be dealt with. The Queensland LNP government does not want to cut expenditure. They would like to keep going on spending—as all of us would like to keep on spending. They are not doing this because they want to do it; they are doing it because they have to do it.

Labor has spent the state into a $70 billion debt, rising much higher as time goes by. The state has lost its credit rating under Labor.

Queenslanders are paying hundreds of millions of dollars more than they should because of the higher interest rates caused by Labor spending irresponsibly—and, again, it had no plan to ever pay that money back. Now the South Australian Labor government has had its credit rating downgraded. What is Labor's response? Keep on spending—spend your way out of debt. This is the kind of illogical economic policy that has given that state so much trouble over the years.

Every Labor government leaves behind a legacy of debt. It is quite clear from the minister's recent comment that they do not care. The mantra of the government has been heroic announcements. They revel in rhetoric and big-vision type announcements full of carefully crafted speeches, but with no plan ever to pay for them. They are big on overcooked promises but they are hopeless on delivery. The cost blow-outs, along with commodity prices in freefall, mean that any hope Labor ever had of achieving its $1.5 billion surplus is long gone. The budget was never honest. There was never any likelihood that it would return to surplus. The Gillard and Rudd governments have never delivered a budget surplus. This is not the first time they have promised one—they promised it in their very first budget. After Kevin Rudd had promised the Australian people that he was a fiscal conservative, Labor delivered their first budget, promising a $22 billion surplus. We all know that that turned into a $27 billion debt. The $70 billion that was in the bank and that they inherited has now gone and they are way into the red. Our national debt is at a record—a staggering $145 billion.

But they have not stopped the promises. They are still out there with these big announcements that are simply not funded. That is what has delivered a $120 billion black hole, on top of the existing debt that Australians are going to have to fund. There is a whole array of announcements. There is to be $10 billion a year for the National Disability Insurance Scheme—a project that everyone would like to see put in place, but Labor have not provided the money. They have even boasted that they have delivered the National Disability Insurance Scheme, but it is unfunded. There is $4 billion for a new dental health package. They are not telling the Australian people, who are despairingly starting to wake up to this, that as of last week they have actually cancelled the previous government's billion-dollar dental scheme.

There is $6.5 billion a year on the Gonski education program not funded. There is $3.7 billion for aged care, but there has been no new money for a long time and even when the program is fully implemented most of it
will come from older Australians themselves—it is not a government program. There will be $2.2 billion for mental health, but they are actually cutting expenditure for mental health this year.

They are up to their old tricks. We have seen these grand plan announcements before—big promises but they are not delivered on. There was GroceryWatch; Fuelwatch—it did not even get off the ground; cash for clunkers, abolished before it started; the green loans scheme, which has left so many people out of pocket; $2.4 billion for the pink batts that went up in smoke, with 250,000 botched installations and a thousand electrified roofs; and then there was the Building the Education Revolution, which delivered overpriced school halls, and the computers that were supposed to go to every child between years nine and 12, costing $900 million. It cost $2.3 billion and ran years late. Labor is out there just cynically trying to buy votes. They are talking up the rhetoric, but everyone needs to remember that the money is not there to pay for any of these programs.

Labor's $120 billion black hole is not just on paper—it has a direct effect on families. It is not pretend money, as the minister suggested. There will be an ongoing cost for Australian households and Australian businesses. As a result of this great black hole, as a result of this debt, there will be less money to be spent on health, education, roads, defence and all the important things that governments must do, because money will first have to be paid as interest to the bankers. They are the people who are going to demand interest on this debt, the people who will decide even the federal government can maintain its credit rating if it keeps on spending, spending, spending with no plan whatsoever to pay the debt back. Is it any wonder that countries around the world are observing Australia and wondering whether this is a place they should invest in—we have a government that cannot be trusted, that does not understand economics, that does not care about debt.

The Treasurer has been asked over recent days about what he proposes to do about this debt and what new taxes are going to be introduced. There are 26 new ones already and another 20 at least are being talked about, including the horrors of death duties, which the Treasurer was not willing to rule out yesterday. The reality is that Labor continues to deliver record deficits, record expenditure and record incompetence. Australians are paying for this at the rate of $20 million a day in interest and they will keep paying for it for generations. (Time expired)

Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (15:59): If you want to know what the member for North Sydney thinks about debt, don't listen to what he says in this House. You know what those opposite say in this House is not to be taken as gospel truth. Listen to what he said on 17 April, when he travelled to London to give a speech and talked about the debt that Hong Kong held. He said that the debt that Hong Kong held was 'moderate'. How much debt does Hong Kong hold? It holds debt that is 34 per cent of GDP in gross terms. That is about twice Australia's gross debt, which will peak at 18 per cent. So the only reasonable way the member for North Sydney could characterise Australia's debt would be 'low'. Australia's net debt will peak at 9.6 per cent. So, if you want to find what those opposite really think about the economy, look at what they say when they go to London. When the member for North Sydney went to London, he noted that Hong Kong's debt was moderate; therefore, ours would be low. When the Leader of the Opposition went to London last year, he said:
... Australia has serious bragging rights ... Compared to most developed countries, our economic circumstances are enviable.

The opposition get the economic truth-telling gold when they go to London! The trouble is that, when they get back to Australia, they do not make the medal ranks because they cannot be honest with the Australian people and tell them that Australia's debt levels are around a 10th of those of the major economies. Nine point six per cent of GDP is like someone earning $100,000 a year owing a modest $9,600.

If you want to know what those opposite really think of debt, again, don't listen to what they say in this place; listen to what they tell the Register of Members' Interests. If they really believed what they said, that debt is a bad idea, then you would not expect to find that any of them personally held debt, would you? You would think that, if debt is bad for the country, then it must be bad for them. You would think, for instance, that the member for Aston would not have a mortgage. You would think you would not see a mortgage for the member for Forde, the member for Mitchell, the member for Boothby and the member for Casey. The member for Paterson and the member for Mackellar also hold mortgages, as do the member for Dunkley, the member for Sturt, the member for Wannon, the member for Herbert, the member for Flinders and the members for Groom, Mayo, Ryan and Gilmore.

I note in passing that the member for North Sydney himself has a mortgage. He thinks it is worth taking on some debt for his own future, but he thinks it is a bad idea to save the jobs of some poor people. The member for Bennelong, the member for Kooyong, the member for Pearce, the member for Curtin, the member for Higgins, the member for Hasluck and the members for Macquarie, Cowan, Stirling, Dickson, Berowra, Bonner, McMillan, Wright, Cook, Indi, Swan, Moncrieff and Leichhardt all hold mortgages, as does the member for Warringah. His mortgage was a little late in coming on to the Register of Members' Interests, but it did get on there eventually, with a story in June 2010 over his failure to declare a $710,000 mortgage. 'What's that as a share of income?' I hear you ask. 'If he's worried about this country's debt levels being 9.6 per cent of GDP, I bet he's got a small mortgage.' Well, no; in fact, his mortgage was then about 300 per cent of his annual income. There is nothing wrong with that. It is perfectly fine for the Leader of the Opposition to take out a mortgage because he thinks that is a good way of securing his future. I would just like to see him have the same commitment to securing the future of low-income Australians, because they are the ones that get wiped out in recessions.

Let's be very clear about what the opposition's anti-debt strategy means. When the global financial crisis hit, the revenue write-downs were two-thirds of the total debt we took on. So, if you take the view that we should not have taken on debt, what you are saying is, 'Bring on the firings; if only the government had cut back at the same rate as the private sector when the global downturn hit, everything would have been all right.' But we have a historical example of just that: Herbert Hoover, in the teeth of the Great Depression, as the member for Wakefield was reminding me earlier, cut back on government spending as the Great Depression hit. But the impact of doing that here would have been brutal to young Australians and low-skilled Australians, who are the first to be hit when a downturn strikes.

So, really, those opposite are just playing politics with debt. They do not really believe it. They carry debt themselves; they take out mortgages. But they come in here and rail
against Australia's debt. If you take them to London, they might tell you the truth; but bring them in here and they will angrily rail against debt. I am reminded of one of the most awful Lenin quotes:

It would not matter a jot if three-quarters of the human race were destroyed; the important thing is that the remaining quarter should be Communist.

Those opposite seem to be taking a leaf out of Lenin's book. They would rather see the Australian economy suffer than see Labor succeed. That is the Leader of the Opposition's modus operandi. As David Marr's Quarterly Essay reminded us:

There was always the Santamaria way: when you haven't got the numbers, be vicious. It's called minority politics. Abbott would come to play them superbly, having learnt in the Democratic Club how small constituencies can cause big trouble.

Mr Marr talks about how the Leader of the Opposition pursued that strategy, first through 'don't know, vote no' in the referendum on the republic, and then in minority parliament. As the then tyro journalist writing for the Bulletin, now the member for Wentworth, wrote of the Leader of the Opposition—this is well before either of them entered politics, but you can imagine some of it is still there today—

**Mr Tudge:** Mr Deputy Speaker Murphy, I rise on a point of order on relevance. This MPI is in relation to debt, and the member should be relevant to the MPI.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Murphy):** The member for Aston will resume his seat.

**Dr LEIGH:** Malcolm Turnbull wrote:

The leading light of the right wingers in New South Wales is twenty-year-old Tony Abbott. He has written a number of articles on AUS in the Australian and his press coverage has accordingly given him a stature his rather boisterous and immature rhetoric doesn’t really deserve.

**Mr Tony Smith:** Mr Deputy Speaker Murphy, on a point of order—and I follow on from the member for Aston's—

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** What is the point of order, Member for Casey?

**Mr Tony Smith:** The point of order is that what the member is saying should bear some relationship to the topic of this MPI, which is debt—

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The member for Casey will resume his seat. He knows that an MPI debate is a wide-ranging debate and there is a lot of licence given to what is contributed in this chamber.

**Dr LEIGH:** The destructive politics on debt are characteristic of the way in which this opposition does business. In a piece entitled 'Small target, big letdown' Peter Hartcher, writing in the Sydney Morning Herald, talked about the opposition's strategy as being in the vein of Achilles: they rage against everything in front of them. My friend Macgregor Duncan has noted, similarly, that the opposition seem to be behaving like an Achilles rather than like a Hector. The opposition are out there to attack, to criticise to condemn. They are not there to build and to create. I will end there.

**Mr ALBANESE** (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (16:07): I move:

That government business be brought on.

The House divided. [16:11]

(The Deputy Speaker—Ms AE Burke)

Ayes .....................69
Noes .....................67
Majority...............2

AYES

Albanese, AN
Bandt, SL
Bowen, CE
Brodmann, G
Butler, AM
Champion, ND

Adams, DGH
Bandt, AP
Bowen, CE
Brodmann, G
Butler, MC
Champion, ND
AYES

Clare, JD
Crean, SF
D'Ath, YM
Elliot, MJ
Emerson, CA
Garrett, PR
Gibbons, SW
Grierson, SJ
Hall, JG (teller)
Husic, EN (teller)
Jones, SP
Kelly, MJ
Leigh, AK
Lyons, GR
Marles, RD
Melham, D
Murphy, JP
Oakeshott, RJM
O'Neill, DM
Parke, M
Pibbersek, TJ
Rishworth, AL
Roxon, NL
Shorten, WR
Smyth, L
Swan, WM
Thomson, CR
Vamvakinou, M
Zappia, A

NOES

Collins, JM
Danby, M
Dreyfus, MA
Ellis, KM
Fitzgibbon, JA
Georganas, S
Gray, G
Griffin, AP
Hayes, CP
Jenkins, HA
Katter, RC
King, CF
Livernore, KF
Macklin, JL
McClelland, RB
Mitchell, RG
Neumann, SK
O'Connor, BPJ
Owens, J
Perrett, GD
Ripoll, BF
Rowland, MA
Saffin, JA
Sidebottom, PS
Snowdon, WE
Symon, MS
Thomson, KJ
Wilkie, AD

O'Dwyer, KM
Pyne, CM
Randall, DJ
Roy, WB
Schultz, AJ
Secker, PD (teller)
Smith, ADH
Southcott, AJ
Tehan, DT
Tudge, AE
Van Manen, AJ
Wyatt, KG

Prentice, J
Ramsey, RE
Robert, SR
Ruddock, PM
Scott, BC
Simpkins, LXL
Somlyay, AM
Stone, SN
Truss, WE
Turnbull, MB
Vasta, RX
Windsor, AHC

PAIRS

Combet, GI
Ferguson, LDT
Ferguson, MJ
Gillard, JE
Rudd, KM
Smith, SF
Robb, AJ
Haase, BW
Billson, BF
Abbott, AJ
Mirabella, S
Coulton, M

Question agreed to.

BILLS

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Declared Fishing Activities) Bill 2012

Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

to which the following amendment was moved:

That all 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 calls on the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities to explain:

(1) the reasons for his decision to reverse the policy that he introduced as Fisheries Minister in October 2009 which stated: 'There are considerable economies of scale in the fishery..."
and the most efficient way to fish may include large scale factory freezer vessels;

(2) why he effectively invited the Margiris into Australia by promoting 'large scale factory freezer vessels'; and

(3) what actions he will take to compensate the 50 Australian workers who are losing their jobs as a consequence of this legislation."

Mr BURKE (Watson—Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities) (16:20): I want to thank all members who have contributed to the debate. During the debate, a number of issues have been raised by the opposition and the crossbench. During that time the government has circulated amendments which I believe address each and every one of these issues.

Ultimately we will not be in a situation where we are voting on a bill that simply affects the large changes in fisheries activity which are currently being contemplated. No-one in the next vote can hide behind a recreational fishing argument. No-one in the next vote can hide behind this bill having any impact on social or economic considerations. No-one in the next vote can hide behind this being somehow something that would affect current fishing businesses' fishing activity.

The bill that is before us has had the astonishing aspect in the debate of people being outraged about a marine park that is 400 kilometres away but not caring about the depletion of fish stocks 5½ kilometres offshore. In this vote, the government will remain true to its commitment on our oceans—whether it be protecting the Great Barrier Reef, protecting the oceans or making sure that we have an appropriate precautionary principle that applies to fisheries.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): The immediate question is that the amendment moved by the member for Flinders be agreed to.

The House divided. [16:26]

(The Deputy Speaker—Ms AE Burke)

Ayes .....................66
Noes .....................70
Majority ..............4

AYES
Alexander, JG
Andrews, KL
Andrews, KL
Baldwin, RC
Bishop, BK
Bishop, JI
Briggs, JE
Broadbent, RE
Buchholz, S
Chester, D
Christensen, GR
Ciobo, SM
Cobb, JK
Crook, AJ
Dutton, PC
Entsch, WG
Fletcher, PW
Forrest, JA
Frydenberg, JA
Gambbaro, T
Gash, J
Griggs, NL
Hartsuyker, L
Hawke, AG
Hockey, JB
Hunt, GA
Irons, SJ
Jensen, DG
Jones, ET
Keenan, M
Kelly, C
Laming, A
Ley, SP
Macfarlane, JE
Marino, NB
Markus, LE
Matheson, RG
McCormack, MF
Morrison, SJ
Moylan, JE
Neville, PC (teller)
O'Dowd, KD
O'Dwyer, KM
O'Sullivan, KM
Pyne, CM
Prentice, J
Randall, DJ
Ramsey, RE
Roy, WB
Robert, SR
Schultz, AJ
Ruddock, PM
Secker, PD (teller)
Scott, BC
Smith, ADH
Simkins, LXL
Southcott, AJ
Somlyay, AM
Teahan, DT
Stone, SN
Tudge, AE
Truss, WE
Van Manen, AJ
Turnbull, MB
Washer, MJ
Vasta, RX
Wyatt, KG

NOES
Adams, DGH
Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP
Bird, SL
Bowen, CE
Bradbury, DJ
Brodtmann, G
Burke, AS
Butler, MC
Byrne, AM
Champion, ND
Cheeseman, DL
Clare, JD
Collins, JM
Crean, SF
Danby, M
Question negatived.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): The question now is that this bill be read a second time.

The House divided. [16:31]

(The Deputy Speaker—Ms AE Burke)

Ayes......................69
Noes......................67
Majority..............2
NOES

Kelly, C
Ley, SP
Marino, NB
Matheson, RG
Morrison, SJ
Neville, PC (teller)
O’Dwyer, KM
Pyne, CM
Randall, DJ
Roy, WB
Schultz, AJ
Secker, PD (teller)
Smith, ADH
Southcott, AJ
Tehan, DT
Tudge, AE
Van Manen, AJ
Washer, MJ
Wyatt, KG

Laming, A
Macfarlane, IE
Markus, LE
McCormack, MF
Moylan, JE
O’Dowd, KD
Prentice, J
Ramsey, RE
Robert, SR
Ruddock, PM
Scott, BC
Simpkins, LXL
Somlyay, AM
Stone, SN
Truss, WE
Vasta, RX
Windsor, AHC

PAIRS

Combet, GI
Ferguson, LDT
Ferguson, MJ
Gillard, JE
Rudd, KM
Smith, SF

Robb, AJ
Haase, BW
Billson, BF
Abbott, AJ
Mirabella, S
Coulton, M

Question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.

ADJOURNMENT

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke) (16:32): Order! It being 4.30pm I propose the question:
That the House do now adjourn.

Mr Albanese: Madam Deputy Speaker, I require that the question be put immediately.
Question negatived.

BILLS

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Declared Fishing Activities) Bill 2012

Consideration in Detail

Bill—by leave—taken as a whole.

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (16:36): by leave—I move amendments (1) and (2) as circulated in my name together:
(1) Schedule 1, item 1, page 3 (line 7), before Chapter 5B insert:

Chapter 5AA—Oversize Fishing Vessels
Part 15AA—Oversize Fishing Vessels
Division 1 Prohibition

390SAA Civil penalty—fishing activity using an oversize fishing vessel

A person must not engage in fishing activity using an oversize fishing vessel in a Commonwealth marine area.

Civil penalty:
(a) for an individual—5,000 penalty units;
(b) for a body corporate—50,000 penalty units.

Note: If a body corporate is found to have contravened this section, an executive officer of the body may be found to have contravened section 494.

390SAB Offence—fishing activity using an oversize fishing vessel

(1) A person commits an offence if:
(a) the person takes an action; and
(b) the action is taken in a Commonwealth marine area; and
(c) the action is a fishing activity using an oversize fishing vessel.

Penalty: Imprisonment for 7 years or 420 penalty units, or both.

Note 1: If a body corporate is found to have committed an offence against this section, an executive officer of the body may be found to have committed an offence against section 495.
Note 2: Subsection 4B(3) of the Crimes Act 1914 lets a court fine a body corporate up to 5 times the maximum amount the court could fine a person under this subsection.

(2) Strict liability applies to paragraph (1)(b).

Note: For strict liability, see section 6.1 of the Criminal Code.

390SAC What is a fishing activity using an oversize fishing vessel?

(1) A fishing activity using an oversize fishing vessel is a fishing activity using a vessel capable of processing and storing more than 2,000 tonnes of biomass.

(2) A fishing activity means an activity that constitutes fishing.

(2) Schedule 1, item 11, page 11 (line 8) before item 11 insert:

10A Section 528

Insert:

Fishing activity using an oversize fishing vessel has the meaning given by subsection 390SAC(1).

I spoke to the rationale for these amendments during the substantive debate so I will keep my remarks short.

If there is a reason for banning this supertrawler, as has now been accepted there is, there is a reason for banning supertrawlers permanently. That is especially so if, as appears to be the case, as a result of further amendments this bill is going to be weakened even further. There is a very strong argument for preventing a situation where we have one supertrawler coming in in a short period of time and then another one after that and then another one after that. We do not want to be coming back here having these kinds of debates every time one of these industrial sized fishing vessels comes in, so the simplest solution is to accept these amendments and ban supertrawlers altogether.

Mr OAKESHOTT (Lyne) (16:37): I know there may be several amendments and one statement. All week I have been raising a very simple point: we either believe the science and the processes by which that advice makes its way to government or we do not. All week it has seemed that the response from government was that there was no problem with the processes, the science and the Australian Fisheries Management Authority—that is, until question time today. For me the response from the minister that there were some problems with the processes was significant. The second thing that I report to the House is that today, finally, we have got the terms of reference for a root and branch inquiry into the Fisheries Management Act. In progressing this issue through the House this week three things have occurred. First, we now have in question the issue of quota management and sustainable fisheries. I accept the advice from the government that there are doubts about how quotas are formed and how the science is formed.

Secondly, there will be a short time line for a review of the Fisheries Management Act. That will have a status that it should have had already. The ministers have been saying that the Fisheries Management Act does not deliver, that they are getting poor advice and that the science is not allowing them to do their job. I accept now that the Fisheries Management Act will be gone through root and branch, that this inquiry will matter and will have a short time frame and that we can expect a new fisheries management act, preferably this year.

The third part is that the powers that have been given to the minister today will not last. The legislation will include a sunset clause when it is passed today. I have had great concerns about the unintended consequences there would have been, with two ministers having full discretion over social, economic and environmental concerns at the end of the process. We either beef up the process and
make it matter and give the minister for fisheries those powers or we do not. I am pleased that we are now going to tidy up the science and make it and the process matter so that in the future we do have happen weeks like the one we have had this week.

Mr BURKE (Watson—Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities) (16:40): The government has brought forward the bill because we believe there are gaps in the science. We regard this particular amendment—

Mr Briggs interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): The member for Mayo is not in his chair. He should learn from his earlier act.

Mr BURKE: We regard these particular amendments as abandoning a science based process and we will not be supporting them.

Mr HUNT (Flinders) (16:41): The government is opposing an amendment against big boats. These guys have no idea what they are doing. It is complete chaos. They have had three positions in three days. We will certainly not be supporting these amendments.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that the member for Melbourne's amendments be agreed to.

A division having been called and the bells having been rung—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: As there are fewer than five members on the side for the ayes, I declare the question resolved in the negative in accordance with standing order 127. The names of those members who are in the minority will be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings.

Question negatived, Mr Bandt and Mr Wilkie voting aye.

Mr BURKE (Watson—Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities) (16:46): by leave—I present a supplementary explanatory memorandum to the bill and move government amendments (1) and (2) of sheet BW261 and amendment (1) of sheet BW265 together:

(1) Schedule 1, item 1, page 5 (lines 1 and 2), omit ", social or economic".

(2) Schedule 1, item 1, page 7 (line 2), omit ", social or economic".

(1) Schedule 1, item 1, page 9 (after line 27), at the end of Part 15B, add:

Division 4—Sunsetting of this Part

390SM Sunsetting of this Part

New declarations under this part may not be made 12 months after the day the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Declared Commercial Fishing Activities) Act 2012 commences.

Of the two amendments in front of us, one relates to an outcome which was sought by the opposition during debate, which was that 'social' and 'economic' be removed and that we simply deal with environmental considerations only. Since the Water Act I have constantly been asked: why can't social and economic always be included when environmental is? We thought the opposition would like it; they did not. We are taking it out. The second amendment, referred to by the member for Lyne, is that new declarations under the amendment we are dealing with today will not occur after 12 months time. By that time the root-and-branch review of the fisheries management processes should be in place, but we will have this legislation to be able to fill that gap in the interim.

Mr HUNT (Flinders) (16:48): Yesterday the minister introduced a new power based on social uncertainty. Today the minister takes away the power based on social uncertainty. This is a government that was born of uncertainty.
Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (16:48): I will just address briefly this question of social and economic considerations. It was very important that this found its way into the bill in the first place. It is a core argument which has been made by the people who have concerns about this supertrawler—and rightly so. The environment is not separate from people. The EPBC Act contains a general requirement for the minister to consider social and economic impacts when making decisions. The social and economic considerations in relation to environmental decisions are not just legitimate but essential. For example, in approvals of coal seam gas wells the impact on local communities as well as the environment are legitimately taken into account. In fact, if the minister did have the power and did more often take into account social impact we would see a lot less disruption of the environment.

But essentially this first amendment shows that those who support it do not have the same level of concern about the impact of the supertrawler on local fishing communities, the viability of the local fishing industry or the jobs impact. Fishing is an important industry for many small communities. For some communities, it is a major source of employment. The impact of the supertrawler could potentially devastate a small local economy. Ministers should be required to take into account the potential social and economic impact their decisions could have.

Fishing Party attacks on the Greens at the last election, which came thick and fast, now have a great degree of irony because here it is the Greens who are the only party standing up for recreational fishing by opposing these amendments. The effect of these will be to open the door to the supertrawler in two years time, and what we share with recreational fishers is an understanding of the environment, of the need to maintain fish stocks and of the damage massive commercial fishing operations can do not just in relation to the amount of fish that they take but to the ocean. Massive commercial fishing operations like the supertrawler catch much, much more than the fish that they intend to take for consumption. They also catch other fish of interest to recreational fishers. This activity disturbs the ocean’s ecosystems to the detriment of all who enjoy the ocean.

So the social and economic interests should be taken into account. They were the basis of the concern about the supertrawler and the reason this bill was being introduced. It is hypocritical to now remove them from that very legislation.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): The question is that the amendments be agreed to.

A division having been called and the bells having been rung—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: As there are fewer than five members on the side for the noes, I declare the question resolved in the affirmative in accordance with standing order 127. The names of those members who are in the minority will be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings.

Question agreed to, Mr Bandt and Mr Wilkie voting no.

Mr BURKE (Watson—Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities) (16:56): by leave—I move government amendment (1) on sheet BW262 and amendments (1) to (41) on sheet BW264 together:

(1) Schedule 1, item 1, page 4 (before line 29), before subsection 390SD(3), insert:

(2A) When making an interim declaration, the Minister may only specify a commercial fishing activity that had not been engaged in before 11 September 2012 in a Commonwealth marine area.
(1) Clause 1, page 1 (line 7), after "Declared", insert "Commercial".
(2) Schedule 1, heading, page 3 (line 1), after "Declared", insert "commercial".
(3) Schedule 1, item 1, page 3 (line 7), before "fishing activities", insert "commercial".
(4) Schedule 1, item 1, page 3 (line 8), before "fishing activities", insert "commercial".
(5) Schedule 1, item 1, page 3 (line 10), before "fishing activities", insert "commercial".
(6) Schedule 1, item 1, page 3 (line 11), after "declared", insert "commercial".
(7) Schedule 1, item 1, page 3 (line 19), before "fishing activities", insert "commercial".
(8) Schedule 1, item 1, page 3 (line 23), after "declared", insert "commercial".
(9) Schedule 1, item 1, page 4 (line 3), before "fishing activity", insert "commercial".
(10) Schedule 1, item 1, page 4 (line 4), before "fishing activity", insert "commercial".
(11) Schedule 1, item 1, page 4 (line 5), before "fishing activity", insert "commercial".
(12) Schedule 1, item 1, page 4 (line 6), omit "declared fishing activity is a fishing activity", substitute "declared commercial fishing activity is a commercial fishing activity".
(13) Schedule 1, item 1, page 4 (after line 9), after subclause 390SC(1), insert:

A commercial fishing activity is a fishing activity that is engaged in for a commercial purpose, and, to avoid doubt, does not include an activity that constitutes recreational fishing (within the meaning of subsection 212(2)).

Note: Under subsection 212(2), recreational fishing includes fishing from a charter boat and fishing in a fishing competition.

(14) Schedule 1, item 1, page 4 (line 15), before "fishing activity", insert "commercial".
(15) Schedule 1, item 1, page 4 (line 16), before "fishing activity", insert "commercial".
(16) Schedule 1, item 1, page 4 (line 21), before "fishing activity", insert "commercial".

(17) Schedule 1, item 1, page 5 (line 2), before "fishing activity", insert "commercial".
(18) Schedule 1, item 1, page 5 (line 3), before "fishing activity", insert "commercial".
(19) Schedule 1, item 1, page 5 (line 6), before "fishing activity", insert "commercial".
(20) Schedule 1, item 1, page 5 (line 23), before "fishing activity", insert "commercial".
(21) Schedule 1, item 1, page 5 (line 24), before "fishing activity", insert "commercial".
(22) Schedule 1, item 1, page 5 (lines 30 and 31), before "fishing activity", insert "commercial".
(23) Schedule 1, item 1, page 6 (line 3), before "fishing activity", insert "commercial".
(24) Schedule 1, item 1, page 6 (line 9), before "fishing activity", insert "commercial".
(25) Schedule 1, item 1, page 6 (line 17), before "fishing activity", insert "commercial".
(26) Schedule 1, item 1, page 6 (line 18), before "fishing activity", insert "commercial".
(27) Schedule 1, item 1, page 6 (line 23), omit "the fishing activity", substitute "the commercial fishing activity".
(28) Schedule 1, item 1, page 6 (line 23), omit "a fishing activity", substitute "a commercial fishing activity".
(29) Schedule 1, item 1, page 6 (line 27), before "fishing activity", insert "commercial".
(30) Schedule 1, item 1, page 7 (line 3), before "fishing activity", insert "commercial".
(31) Schedule 1, item 1, page 7 (line 7), before "fishing activity", insert "commercial".
(32) Schedule 1, item 1, page 7 (line 9), before "fishing activity", insert "commercial".
(33) Schedule 1, item 1, page 8 (lines 4 and 5), before "fishing activity", insert "commercial".
(34) Schedule 1, item 1, page 8 (line 8), before "fishing activity", insert "commercial".
(35) Schedule 1, item 1, page 8 (line 9), before "fishing activity", insert "commercial".
(36) Schedule 1, item 1, page 8 (line 12), before "fishing activity", insert "commercial".
(37) Schedule 1, item 1, page 8 (line 15), before "fishing activity", insert "commercial".
10622 

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES 
Thursday, 13 September 2012

(38) Schedule 1, item 2, page 10 (line 2), before "fishing activity", insert "commercial".

(39) Schedule 1, item 3, page 10 (lines 7 and 8), before "fishing activity", insert "commercial".

(40) Schedule 1, page 10 (after line 8), after item 3, insert:

3A Section 528

Insert:

commercial fishing activity has the meaning given by subsection 390SC(1A).

(41) Schedule 1, item 5, page 10 (line 15), before "fishing activity", insert "commercial".

As I referred to in my closing remarks in the second reading debate, these are the amendments that guarantee that all existing commercial fishing activity which had been engaged in before 11 September, when this bill was introduced, remains not subject to interim declarations, and that recreational fishing, whether it be purely recreational or whether it be charter recreational activity, is clearly not part of the bill before the House.

Mr HUNT (Flinders) (16:57): Despite these overdue amendments, this bill is still fatally flawed for the very simple reason that any small family fishing operation can still be terminated by arbitrary powers if it begins after 11 September. So any small family fishing operation is still subject to arbitrary closure. This has been chaos from start to finish and the minister should hand in his notice.

Question agreed to.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms AE Burke): The question now is that this bill, as amended, be agreed to.

The House divided. [16:59]

(The Deputy Speaker—Ms AE Burke)

Ayes..........................62
Noes.........................60
Majority....................2

AYES

Adams, DGH 
Albanese, AN

NOES

Alexander, JG 
Baldwin, RC 
Bishop, JI 
Broadbent, RE 
Christensen, GR 
Cobb, JK 
Entsch, WG 
Forrest, JA 
Gambaro, T 
Giggs, NL 
Hawke, AG 
Hunt, GA 
Jensen, DG 
Kelly, C 
Ley, SP 
Markus, LE 
McCormack, MF 
Moylan, JE 
O'Dowd, KD 
Prentice, J 

Bird, SL 
Bradbury, DJ 
Byrne, AM 
Cheeseman, DL 
Collins, JM 
D'Ath, YM 
Elliot, MJ 
Emerson, CA 
Garrett, PR 
Gray, G 
Griffin, AP 
Hayes, CP 
Jenkins, HA 
Katter, RC 
Leigh, AK 
Lyons, GR 
Marles, RD 
Melham, D 
Murphy, JP 
Oakeshott, RJM 
Owens, J 
Perrett, GD 
Ripoll, BF 
Saffin, JA 
Snowdon, WE 
Thomson, CR 
Vamvakinou, M 
Zappia, A

Andrews, KL 
Bishop, BK 
Briggs, JE 
Chester, D 
Ciobo, SM 
Crok, AJ 
Fletcher, PW 
Frydenberg, JA 
Gash, J 
Hartseyker, L 
Hockey, JB 
Irons, SJ 
Keenan, M 
Laming, A 
Marino, NB 
Matheson, RG 
Morrison, SJ 
Neville, PC (teller) 
O’Dwyer, KM 
Pyne, CM
Thursday, 13 September 2012  HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  10623

NOES
Ramsey, RE  Ruddall, DJ
Roy, WB  Ruddock, PM
Schultz, AJ  Scott, BC
Secker, PD (teller)  Simpkins, LXL
Smith, ADH  Somlyay, AM
Southcott, AJ  Stone, SN
Truss, WE  Tudge, AE
Turnbull, MB  Van Manen, AJ
Vasta, RX  Washer, MJ
Windsor, AHC  Wyatt, KG

PAIRS
Combet, GI  Robb, AJ
Crean, SF  Buchholz, S
Ferguson, LDT  Haase, BW
Ferguson, MJ  Billson, BF
Georganas, S  Tehan, DT
Gillard, JE  Abbott, AJ
King, CF  Dutton, PC
O’Connor, BPJ  Macfarlane, IE
Rishworth, AL  Robert, SR
Roxon, NL  Jones, ET
Rudd, KM  Mirabella, S
Smith, SF  Coulton, M
Swan, WM  Andrews, KJ

Question agreed to.
Bill, as amended, agreed to.

Third Reading
Mr BURKE  (Watson—Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities) (17:09): by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

BUSINESS

Leave of Absence
Mr FITZGIBBON  (Hunter—Chief Government Whip) (17:09): I move:
That leave of absence for the remainder of the current period of sittings be given to Mr L. D. T. Ferguson on the ground of parliamentary business overseas.
Question agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT
Mr ALBANESE  (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (17:10): I move:
That the House do now adjourn.

House adjourned at 17:10

NOTICES

The following notices were given:

Mr Georganas to move:
That this House:
(1) congratulates the 2012 Australian Paralympic Team for its success at the London Paralympics;
(2) recognises the:
(a) achievements of the 161 Australian athletes who competed in the games, including their efforts in winning 32 gold medals, 23 silver medals and 30 bronze medals; and
(b) success of the Paralympic movement over six decades in fostering a unique spirit of competition and friendship among people with disability; and
(3) commends our Paralympians for being fantastic ambassadors for Australia, and for inspiring another generation of Australians with disability to reach their full potential.

Mr Katter to present a bill for an act to require fair indexation of military pensions, and for related purposes.
CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Centrelink

Mr RANDALL (Canning) (09:30): I rise to raise the issue of excessive waiting times in my constituents' experience when attempting to phone Centrelink. The issue affects a huge proportion of my electorate, particularly elderly residents receiving the age pension, who often utilise Centrelink's phone services. Customers receiving Centrelink payments such as the age pension and disability support pension are frequently required to contact Centrelink to report changes to their income or to inform them of overseas travel.

Reporting this information is a legislative requirement for payment receipts; otherwise, their payments will be cancelled. However, my office has been inundated with constituents informing me that they have not been able to get through to Centrelink on the phone and reporting being kept on hold from anywhere between 30 minutes and up to four hours. In desperation, these people often contact my office in the hope that I may be able to pass on their message to Centrelink.

Mrs Dale Ward, a pensioner from Armadale, first contacted me late last year reporting her difficulties getting through to Centrelink and sought assistance in trying to contact them before she left on a holiday. She has since reported the same problems a number of times throughout this year. Mr Peter Pavlinovich and Mr Joseph Sutherland are in the same boat.

Most of my constituents who are trying to contact Centrelink are relying on these payments as their main source of income. In many cases, these people are elderly and vulnerable and are frightened of the ramifications of not reporting to Centrelink. They are simply trying to do the right thing and feel that they are being treated as second-class citizens. One local resident told me that, although he is retired, he has better things to do than spend the whole day on the phone.

In the light of the vast number of complaints that I have received, on 1 June 2012 I wrote to Senator the Hon. Kim Carr, the Minister for Human Services, in order to raise this issue, and I received a response—which I have here—on 28 August 2012. This was a poor response which was a standard in every sense of the word and even managed to repeat paragraphs. Furthermore, the minister fails to effectively acknowledge the problem and simply offers other alternatives to getting in touch with Centrelink. Whilst I have informed my constituents of the online services, the option of visiting an office or mailing Centrelink, these are not suitable alternatives for most people.

Many people that receive the pension or other payments are elderly or disadvantaged and do not have the ability to access online services. A large majority are also unable to drive and cannot get to a Centrelink office to report their information. In addition, most that are able to get in to an office are also met with huge queues and significant delays.

I do not seek to criticise the excellent work of Centrelink staff, and I can confirm that staff in the Centrelink offices in my electorate are extremely helpful. However, they are significantly understaffed and underresourced and simply cannot deal with the huge increase in demand for their services. My constituents are trying to assist Centrelink by reporting their
incomes or overseas travel but are continually being punished and are at risk of having their payments cancelled unless this issue is addressed urgently. I seek leave to table the minister's letter to me.

Leave granted.

**Grayndler Electorate: Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Awards**

**Mr ALBANESE** (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (09:33): Just over a week ago, I had the honour of meeting Justin Kwon, a year 5 student at St Vincents Primary School in Ashfield. Justin's passion for prose saw him take out a top spot in the Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Awards, a nationwide competition that attracted over 10,000 entries this year. What was extra special about Justin's award was that it was in the learning assistance and special education category. Justin's passion for poetry began when he heard Dorothea Mackellar's legendary poem *My Country*. It is fitting that this budding poet has won an award named after his idol.

While I happily presented Justin with a book pack and a cheque for his prize, he gave me a much greater gift: a book that he made himself with poems he had written since he was seven years old and illustrations for each poem.

It is obvious that poetry is an important part of the way that Justin expresses himself. I was honoured to receive such a wonderful present. He is a credit to his parents, Oh Soo and Marissa; his teacher Robin Catchpole; and his school, St Vincent's at Ashfield. I would like to share with the House some of his poem which won the prize:

I wish I had wheels, wings and marvellous things!
I wish I had wheels,
So I can be as fast as a car,
I can go near and I can go far.
I wish I had wheels, wings and marvellous things!
I wish I had wings
so I can fly:
I can take a trip to the blue sky!
I wish I had wheels, wings and marvellous things!
I wish I had a shell,
So I can hide,
when I am scared…
or when I’m sleepy inside…
I wish I had wheels, wings and marvellous things!
I wish I had gills
to breathe in the sea,
to conquer my swimming,
to be a different me.
I wish I had wheels, wings and marvellous things!
I wish I had springs,
so I can jump high
to feel the clouds
and the beautiful sky
I wish I had wheels, wings and marvellous things!
I wish I had muscles so I can be strong:
I can carry people all day long
I wish I had a tail, fins, a magic ring
and all sorts of marvellous things!
I wish I had wheels, wings and marvellous things,
wheels, wings and marvellous things!

This is a wonderful young man. He is in year 5 at St Vincent's at Ashfield.

Mr ALBANESE: I note the statements from across the chamber, including from the member for Hinkler, acknowledging what a marvellous young man this is. He suffers. He is on the autism spectrum. He expresses himself in such a magnificent way through this book of poetry. I assure other honourable members that this book that I will cherish as a prized possession, as a member of parliament, is full not just of wonderful poems but of wonderful illustrations of those poems. He is a wonderful boy and he is a great credit to his school, to his family and to the local community.

Mr Neville interjecting—

Mr ALBANESE: I note the statements from across the chamber, including from the member for Hinkler, acknowledging what a marvellous young man this is. He suffers. He is on the autism spectrum. He expresses himself in such a magnificent way through this book of poetry. I assure other honourable members that this book that I will cherish as a prized possession, as a member of parliament, is full not just of wonderful poems but of wonderful illustrations of those poems. He is a wonderful boy and he is a great credit to his school, to his family and to the local community.

Centrelink

Mr NEVILLE (Hinkler—The Nationals Deputy Whip) (09:37): Very inspiring, the last presentation. But today I want to raise an important issue relating to injury compensation payments and subsequent Centrelink payments. My Hinkler electorate office has received numerous questions and representations on this issue. What appears to be the crux of the issue is the lack of financial advice given to claimants by insurance companies relating to the period of time compensation funds must support the recipient and the fact that most people are unable to receive Centrelink assistance once they have received a payout.

Let me explain. When a person receives a compensation payment for whatever reason, they are made aware that they will have to cover their legal fees from the proceeds of the payment. That is fair enough. However, what they are not being told is that, once they receive the compensation payment, they will not be able to receive Centrelink payments for a certain period of time, which is known as the preclusion period. Any Centrelink payments which are being received or have been received during the preclusion period must be repaid. This is what I see in my office frequently. It is very important for all recipients of compensation settlements to understand that the money they received is to support them for the duration of the preclusion period and to cover all of their costs. It has come to my attention that many people are not made aware of the necessity to repay Centrelink or of the preclusion period until they receive a letter from Centrelink after the settlement date. Depending on the amount of the settlement, some people have been placed in a situation where they have to pay back several thousand dollars to Centrelink and wait for many months or even years before they are again eligible for benefits. From my experience, the shock of being made aware of this information can be quite a blow to people, who in many cases are recovering from physical and emotional situations.
I do believe that in some cases the criteria for repayments could be reassessed. For example, those who become permanently incapacitated are not excluded from these criteria. If those who are unable to ever work again after suffering serious injury use the compensation to pay out a housing loan or convert a home to suit their needs then I believe some sort of exemption should be made available to them, as opposed to those who have become rehabilitated and then can rejoin the workforce. This is a very important matter and I hope the government will take note of it.

**Fowler Electorate: Young Adults Disabled Association**

**Mr HAYES** (Fowler) (09:40): I rise this morning to talk about the wonderful work of the Young Adults Disabled Association, better known as YADA. YADA is a charitable organisation that provides a range of recreational and social support services for people living with disabilities in my local community. Their work is of vital importance, given the fact that my electorate is, unfortunately, overrepresented with families and people who live with disabilities. YADA was started 25 years ago by Jennifer McAlees, John Eastwood and a number of local residents who teamed up to enhance the quality of life for young people with disabilities in a social and friendly environment. Jennifer, who has hydrocephalus and Dandy-Walker syndrome, has taken herself and others living with disabilities on a journey to enhance the quality of their lives, living without isolation. John was a community transport driver at the time and he made it his mission in life to transport members to and from YADA social support activities.

This small group, with humble beginnings, has now grown into a large, extended family type organisation. YADA is now a registered charity and driven by the generosity of its many volunteers, who have worked tirelessly to support and assist the disabled in our community. YADA runs a day centre group two days a week for the local community at the local community hall, where people can come to participate in the various activities, including arts, crafts, singing and dancing. It enhances their confidence, living skills and social interaction. It also alleviates and provides some respite to carers of people with disabilities and their families. YADA also provides assistance to many newly arrived migrants in my area. This is very fortunate considering the fact that more than 55 per cent of my electorate was born overseas.

Remarkably, the charity is one of the most self-sufficient. Its operational costs are met by offsetting a comprehensive re-use and recycling program. Second-hand goods ranging from clothes and toys to scrap metal and soft drink bottles are carefully sorted, deconstructed and sold at a reasonable price on the second-hand goods market. Although YADA has received federal funding through the New South Wales Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care in the past, it largely stands on its own two feet. As someone who has long held passionate views about disabilities, I feel very fortunate that, as an organisation, YADA is based in Liverpool and Fairfield local government areas. On behalf of the community, I would like to take the opportunity to thank Jennifer and John for the initiation of this wonderful organisation. *(Time expired)*

**Longman Electorate: Dragons Abreast Bribie Island**

**WYATT ROY** (Longman) (09:43): I rise today to share information about the great work of one of the local community groups in my electorate. Dragons Abreast Bribie Island is a group of ladies who regularly get together to paddle up the Pumicestone Passage. But these
ladies are not just sports enthusiasts; there is a very important purpose behind this simple activity. Dragons Abreast Bribie Island is a support group, both in the emotional and physical sense, to ladies in my local community who are recovering from breast cancer. Together the ladies paddle canoes, and the physical act of paddling specifically helps with muscle regeneration. But, more than that, the relationships that the ladies develop help them with the difficult transition from treatment to recovery and beyond.

A few weeks ago I braved an early morning to meet with the ladies of Dragons Abreast Bribie Island for the regular paddle up the Pumicestone Passage. I have done a lot of kayaking up the passage—I grew up kayaking up the passage—but canoeing with the Ladies of Dragons Abreast Bribie Island is something else altogether. The camaraderie and support between the ladies that I witnessed are quite incredible. It is not difficult to see how important these times are for these special ladies.

Dragons Abreast Bribie Island was founded four years ago and has already come a long way. The idea itself came from a lady by the name of Dawn Worley, who, after herself experiencing breast cancer and seeing firsthand the challenges associated with recovery, saw the need to provide a support group for others in a similar position.

Dawn recognised that individuals recovering from breast cancer need some help for both the body and for the soul, which is exactly what she saw that Dragons Abreast would provide. Dawn worked tirelessly to raise the funds so that Dragons Abreast could purchase the boats that they now use. Without Dawn's hard work, the generous contribution of donors in my local community and the commitment of other ladies who were determined to see this project come to fruition, this great local initiative would not have been possible.

While it is difficult to quantify how much Dragons Abreast Bribie Island means to the local ladies, it is clear from the smiles and from the laughter that I witnessed out on the passage on that cold morning that Dragons Abreast is a very vital part of recovery for many women who have had breast cancer. To all of the ladies who regularly dedicate their time to being a mentor to the other ladies, thank you. Thank you for making our community a richer place. I look forward to getting back out on the passage—on the beautiful Pumicestone Passage—again with these inspirational ladies to offer my support to the incredible work that they do. Thank you, ladies.

**Corio Electorate: Reading Recovery**

Mr MARLES (Corio—Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs and Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs) (09:45): As a parent who knows the utter joy of hearing one's child read their first tentative words from the page of a book, I also very much understand the importance of catching early those children who take a bit longer to get the hang of reading. That is why the Reading Recovery program has been such a success in so many of our primary schools in Victoria. It gives grade one children who need extra help with reading highly skilled one-on-one tuition for up to 16 weeks. Because it is so intensive, it helps these children catch up to their classmates before their reading difficulties erode their confidence in other areas of their schoolwork.

But in my electorate and those electorates that make young people the Barwon south-west region, the reading recovery program is under threat. Funding cuts by the Baillieu Liberal government meant the Barwon south-west region is being forced to consider scrapping its
reading recovery tutor. This will impact nearly 80 primary schools across the region. Without a tutor working with reading recovery teachers in each school, there will be no training for new reading recovery teachers. Without a tutor, and with reading recovery teachers in each school, the intensive skills set required among the current batch of teachers will not be maintained. Over time there will be fewer qualified to teach reading recovery, and schools will be in the unenviable position of competing with each other for a dwindling pool of teachers. It will be a slow, but inevitable erosion of a highly effective program. There will be a real risk that reading recovery will be no more.

I know from talking to teachers and principals in my electorate how much the program is valued. Currently, nearly three quarters of the schools in the Barwon south-west region use the reading recovery program. It boasts a success rate of around 80 per cent. A lot of students starting grade 1 are struggling readers, but finishing the year as confident readers. Without the program, there will be many students in the future not getting the help they need. Many students are being let down by Victorian Liberal government.

Since coming to office, the Baillieu government has cut a swath through the school support programs. The school start bonus, the student support officers, education maintenance allowance, the Victorian Schools Plan and VCAL, are all programs that have been cut back or scrapped altogether. That is not to mention the devastating cutbacks to the TAFE sector, which has been experienced by the Gordon in Geelong.

To add reading recovery to this list in this, the National Year of Reading, is indeed alarming. In recent days, we have seen how Liberal governments are taking the axe to education services in New South Wales and Queensland. It is a frightening glimpse into what we would face under an Abbot-led federal government.

**R U OK? Day**

Mr **WYATT** (Hasluck) (09:48): Today is R U OK? Day. I want to encourage all parliamentarians to speak up and ask the important questions. Often we do not stop to think of the people around us and check that they are actually okay. I urge everyone to visit www.ruok.com and find out ways to join the movement by hosting events in the workplace, home or classroom, by spreading the message on social media or sharing your story.

The R U OK? Day website states that connection, and open and honest conversations, are good for our wellbeing, whether or not we are struggling with a problem. It helps us to feel valued and supported by the people around us. There is also an emerging body of research which links supportive social relationships and a sense of social connection with protective factors in suicide prevention.

I completely agree with this. In Hasluck, we have a large fly-in fly-out population. This has a major impact on the mental health needs of those who travel to mines and on the families left at home. I had one lady visit me in the office with an issue. After she discussed the issue, all it took for me to help was to ask, ‘Are you okay?’ We were then able to have a discussion around the issue she was facing at home and how she was feeling.

Tips on the R U OK? Day website include: just ask the question, listen without judgment, encourage action and then follow up with the person. Suicide is a major killer of men in Australia and people can make a difference by asking this simple question. Men are not often
that great at talking about their feelings, but sometimes we just need that small intervention to make a huge difference. Lifeline can be contacted on 131114 and the Suicide Call Back Service on 1300659467 for immediate help. There is no shame in saying, 'I'm not okay,' and we urgently need to breakdown the stigma surrounding mental health and suicide.

Last Friday, I was fortunate enough to listen to former ABC commentator Glenn Mitchell share his journey with depression and mental health issues. Glenn's story is an inspirational one and embodies the spirit of R U OK? Day. If his wife, Karen, had not persisted and asked the question, Glenn's life would have been very different today. Everyone came away from the event quite affected and inspired to make a difference in our own communities. I want to congratulate and thank co-founders Janina Nearn and the late Gavin Larkin OAM for commencing this initiative, and Janina for the hard work that she is doing as the CEO.

All Australians should get on board with R U OK? Day, and I urge all parliamentarians to support this life-changing initiative. I think that sometimes in this parliament of ours there are members who experience incredible challenges, as well as staff, and sometimes it would not hurt for us to take the time out to ask a colleague if they are okay, regardless of which political side they are on or which spectrum they are involved with. I think it is important that as human beings we take the time out to care for each other, to listen and to be receptive.

Radioactive Waste

Mr BRADBURY (Lindsay—Assistant Treasurer and Minister Assisting for Deregulation) (09:53): I rise to express my outrage at the very poor treatment that the residents of Western Sydney are receiving from the New South Wales Liberals. We have seen in the last couple of days these devastating cuts to education: $1.7 billion worth of cuts. We all know that this will have a very big impact, especially in places like Western Sydney. The point and the issue I want to discuss today is the breach of promise—the broken promise—by the O'Farrell government, the New South Wales Liberals, and their decision to send radioactive waste to Kemps Creek in Western Sydney. This is waste that comes from the site of a former uranium smelter in Hunters Hill on Sydney's North Shore. To ship it out and to dump it in Western Sydney, in my community, is an outrage. People are angry and they have every reason to be angry.

They are especially angry because Mr O'Farrell gave clear commitments before the election that he would not be sending this waste out to Western Sydney. In fact, I have a letter here dated 25 October 2010, where he referred to the waste and the plan to move the waste out to Kemps Creek as 'utterly unacceptable and dangerous'. He said, 'I think the idea of reclassifying the waste so that it could be accepted at Kemps Creek is appalling.' Now, he is in office and that is exactly what he intends to do. Before the election, what did he have to say? He said that it was a threat to people's safety. That is what he said on Channel Nine News on 17 October 2010. On the same day, on the ABC News, he said, 'It needs to be put in an appropriate facility.'

To rub people's noses in it, the state Liberal member for Mulgoa, who up until Saturday also happened to be a councillor on the Penrith City Council, got up in the council after having run a campaign against this before the state election, where she said such things as: The people of Western Sydney are not the dumping ground for Sydney, especially this radioactive waste. It is unsafe waste material and should not be dumped in our community.
She got up at a recent council meeting and defended this plan to send it out west. What did she say? She told the people of Western Sydney that the amount of radioactivity in this waste was the same level of radioactivity as you would experience in eating a banana. The member for Mulgoa has gone bananas, but people in our community are rightly livid about this. A recent report issued by Mr O'Farrell’s own experts say that this waste, if dumped in Kemps Creek, will need to be monitored for up to 300 years. That does not sound very safe to me. It is being moved because there were cancer clusters that emerged in the area where it currently rests. If it is not unsafe, why do they want to move it? I have established a petition at www.nodumping.org, and I would like to table it. (Time expired)

Mr BRADBURY: I seek leave to table the document.

Leave granted.

Macquarie Electorate: Blue Mountains Cancer Help

Mrs MARKUS (Macquarie) (09:55): I rise today to speak about a fantastic not-for-profit organisation in my electorate. Blue Mountains Cancer Help is an organisation that is dedicated to supporting people diagnosed with cancer in the local community. Since 2005 more than 400 people from areas as far as Blacktown to Katoomba have received support from Blue Mountains Cancer Help. In the last 12 months alone, this not-for-profit organisation has provided 2,387 subsidised therapies including massage, lymphoedema, oncology massage, acupuncture and reflexology as well as support groups and counselling for clients and their families and carers. These therapies promote relaxation during a very challenging and often life-changing experience. All therapies are subsidised by Blue Mountains Cancer Help and if necessary can be carried out in the client’s home.

Blue Mountains Cancer Help goes above and beyond to support their clients and the local community. They have implemented a buddy system to support the primary carer or family member and also assist with the transportation costs, which can be considerable when regularly travelling throughout the Blue Mountains. What makes this organisation so unique is the way that they engage with their clients and the local community. In their own words, they ‘provide a sense of purpose, friendship and support’ to clients and their families.

Community engagement has extended beyond just providing therapies and support. Blue Mountains Cancer Help have opened up op shops in the Blue Mountains townships of Blaxland and Katoomba. These shops provide a regular source of income, as well as a source of fundraising events and donations. There are two particular fundraising events that I would like to draw attention to, as I think they are amazing and truly demonstrate just how unique this organisation is.

In May this year I attended the 2012 Blue Mountains Cancer Help Arty Bra Auction. The works of art bras are indeed something to behold. This auction raised more than $10,000 in much-needed funds. The solid chocolate corset was auctioned off for close to $3,000. One of the volunteers I met with at the event, Lynne, told me about the next fundraising endeavour: she would be undertaking the Camino walk across Europe. I am delighted to tell you that Lynne commenced the almost 800 kilometre walk just last week and is keeping a highly entertaining blog on the Blue Mountains Cancer Help website to keep us up to date. I would like to read from her blog:
Let's run with those bulls in Pamplona. After a long hot walk we arrived in Pamplona and for the first time we saw people. Pamplona was abuzz with the festival and paella. I cannot believe they run those bulls through the streets here; it is absolute madness.

If you would like to make a donation to support Lynne or Blue Mountains Cancer Help, you can do so by attending one of their op shops or going to their website. (Time expired)

Conservative Policies

Mr DANBY (Melbourne Ports) (09:58): Euripides said: 'Those whom the gods wish to destroy they first make mad.' Surveying the conservative movement in Australia these last weeks, one recognises the truth of that ancient wisdom. The astonished, angry face of Mr Jac Nasser on TV last night at the decision of the Queensland Premier to impose a mining tax that will be larger than the federal government's in its effect especially on the coking coal industry, and the almost comic performance of the Liberal Party's major fundraiser, Mr Palmer, on Lateline last night, all come to the serious point of what is happening in Queensland. Closing breast cancer screening and closing a TB clinic at Brisbane Hospital—do you imagine that, across, Australia people are not concerned that this is the kind of Australia that a conservative government would stand for?

In New South Wales, Mr O'Farrell's cuts to education include cuts to Catholic and independent schools—$66 million a year from their recurrent funding. These are schools that have teachers and programs already in place for next year and the cuts were done without consultation. The Catholic bishops, I believe, got two days notice.

Schools will have to close. No wonder the New South Wales Liberal caucus is in revolt.

Moving to what one might call the intellectual front, if one looks at the Australian Spectator, the palaeoconservative flagship, one sees that it more and more resembles the world view of the isolationist Pat Buchanan. The Australian Spectator has not only sectarian attacks on other conservatives such as Gerard Henderson in its current edition but it has the idea that there should be an investigation into war crimes of the Iraq War. I would remind all of the people who support the Australian Spectator that Mr John Howard, a former conservative Prime Minister of Australia, would be subject to such an investigation by the very people being advocated by the Australian Spectator.

Finally, on my friends at the Institute of Public Affairs: I cannot imagine the great Liberal conservatives, fundraisers such as Charles Goode and Hugh Morgan, support the free-market fanatics of the IPA who appeared before the inquiry of the Joint Standing Committee on Intelligence and Security, denigrating the security services, denigrating what they call the national security state, saying it was unnecessary for the security services to intercept telephones and ensure that terrorist events do not happen in Australia. Look at the events in Melbourne this morning.

My only conclusion is that their hubris, as we know, leads to nemesis. I think the conservatives across Australia are counting on a victory at the federal election. They have already put it in the bag and they are behaving in the most outrageous fashion by making some truly extreme statements and acting in a way that shows what they really believe.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): In accordance with standing order 193, the time for members' constituency statements has concluded.
CONDOLENCES

McDonald, Lance Corporal Mervyn John
Galagher, Private Nathanael John Aubrey

Debate resumed on the motion:

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

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (10:01): 29 August 2012 was a dark day for our whole nation. The loss of one soldier is always one too many. On Monday we remembered the loss of three Australian soldiers who were murdered by a member of the Afghan military and now we also mourn the loss of two Special Operation Task Group members who were killed when their helicopter crashed in Afghanistan. Not since the battle of Nui Le in Vietnam on 21 September 1971 has Australia lost five men in a 24-hour period.

Australian Special Forces soldiers Lance Corporal Mervyn McDonald and Private Nathanael Galagher, from 2nd Commando Regiment, were killed when an ISAF helicopter crashed in Helmand province. The Australian Special Forces and their partnered Afghan National Security Force unit were participating in a targeted mission at the time of the incident.

Thirty-year-old Lance Corporal McDonald was on his sixth tour of Afghanistan. Lance Corporal McDonald was quick-witted and brought a positive energy to both his unit comrades and all those who served with him.

A dedicated and enthusiastic professional soldier, he was always willing to come forward with ideas and solutions. He was a highly professional soldier, but his quiet nature and humility meant he always deflected credit back onto fellow members of his company.

I wish to express my sincere condolences to his fiancee Rachael; his mother Myrna and stepfather Bernie; and brothers Percy, Roger and Gary.

I am told that his 23-year-old colleague Private Galagher idolised Lance Corporal McDonald. Private Galagher always put 110 per cent into everything he did. He had a 'can-do' attitude, always wanting to get the job done and taking everything in his stride. He was an enthusiastic, young soldier who was very well respected by his mates in the regiment.

I wish to express my sincere condolences to his partner Jessie; parents Wayne and Sally; and sister Elenor.

During the parliamentary recess I spent 10 days in Afghanistan with our troops and during this time I met with members of the 2nd Commando Regiment. They were frank and open about their mission, about the challenge it presented and indeed the pressure of achieving their objectives before Australia is scheduled to leave Afghanistan.

We have lost two very special soldiers—two men trained to an exceptionally high level, both physically and mentally; two quick-thinking and innovative men who could keep a cool head in difficult and complex situations all over the world. Their commitment to their chosen career as soldiers and to our mission in Afghanistan was unswerving, as was their loyalty to their mates and their love for their own families and their Army family. On behalf of the Ryan
Mr McCormack (Riverina) (10:05): A sombre ceremony is being held today at Pilliga, a village a long way from anywhere in the north-west plains of New South Wales. You get a sense of the isolation—some would say desolation—of this community by the fact that the 1981 award-winning regional history about the area, a work by Eric Rolls, was entitled A Million Wild Acres. Although far away, Pilliga is very much at the heart of the nation at the moment, as the people of this tiny speck on the map farewell one of their favourite sons. Private Nathanael John Aubrey Galagher called Pilliga home. He was just 23 years of age when he was killed during operations in Afghanistan. Also killed in the same helicopter crash was Lance Corporal Mervyn John McDonald, 30, from Carnarvon in Western Australia.

We have now lost 38 gallant soldiers in Afghanistan—a terrible loss of young life, but by no means a waste. They have helped to secure a better future for a troubled country, a nation which, by and large, seeks the same ideals of peace that we hold so dear and which we almost take for granted here in Australia. They helped drive the Taliban into hiding, if not total submission. The price of peace is a heavy one. It is measured in the blood of brave soldier from far-flung places—freedom fighters sent to do a job in the deadliest of situations. Private Galagher and Lance Corporal McDonald exemplified all that is good and great about the Anzac spirit.

Nate Galagher's partner, Jessie Feeney, is expecting a son—a boy who will grow up without the benefit of having his father around, but who will understand the wonderful man his dad was. That is Jessie's pledge. As she said, 'There is no trait of Nate's that I wouldn't want his son to inherit.' Nate idolised Lance Corporal McDonald, who was also killed alongside him on that fateful 30 August flight. Jessie recounted:

Merv was generous with his experience and shared it with the other boys in the team, especially Nate. I last saw Nate at the airport when he departed Australia in July. As they were about to walk off to the gate together, Merv turned to me and said, 'Don't worry Jess, I'll bring him home.' While it's under the most tragic of circumstances, Merv is honouring his promise.

Nathanael is also survived by his parents, Wayne and Sally, and sister, Elanor. Born in Wee Waa, Private Galagher joined the Army in 2007, was posted to the 2nd Commando Regiment in November 2011 and was on his second tour to Afghanistan. The Australian Defence Force said:

He had a 'can-do' attitude, always wanting to get the job done and taking everything in his stride.

Lance Corporal McDonald is survived by his fiancee, Rachael Sprigg-McKinnie, his mother, Myrna, stepfather, Bernie, and brothers, Percy, Roger and Gary. He enlisted in 1999 and at the time of his death was on his sixth tour of duty to Afghanistan. The ADF paid tribute to Lance Corporal McDonald's quick wit and positive energy. According to the ADF:

A dedicated and enthusiastic professional soldier, he was always willing to come forward with ideas and solutions. He was a highly professional soldier, but his quiet nature and humility meant he always deflected credit back on to fellow members of his Company.

Highly decorated during his career Lance Corporal McDonald was, according to his fiancee:

… the warmest guy you'd ever meet. You could see it in his eyes, they had a special sparkle. He was a real Aussie bloke with a passion for his country, especially its natural splendour.
Nate and Merv were real Aussie blokes, but they were much more as well. They were courageous in the midst of an enemy sometimes impossible to see. They were inseparable mates then, now and forever. They were Anzacs. They were heroes. They may be gone but they will not be forgotten. Let us mourn them today and remember their selfless bravery, their supreme sacrifice, as long as the last post is played each Anzac Day. Their grieving families will remember their love each and every day. May they rest in peace. Lest we forget.

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (10:09): Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the most thoughtful and touching contributions by those who have spoken before me on both sides of this House. We are in this chamber today to pay our respects to Lance Corporal Mervyn McDonald and Private Nathaniel Galagher and to offer our condolences to their colleagues in the 2nd Commando Regiment and their respective families and friends.

The motto of the 2nd Commando Regiment is foras admonitio, or without warning, and the brave soldiers of the regiment live and serve by this motto. Australian commandos are respected around the world for their skill, professionalism, dedication, discipline and strong determination. The 2nd Commando Regiment has been awarded the unit citation for gallantry and the meritorious unit citation for their role in Afghanistan. It is in this noble and brave vein that these two young Australians served.

Lance Corporal McDonald was an experienced soldier and on his sixth deployment to Afghanistan, while having completed four deployments in East Timor between 2001 and 2007. He was generous with his experience and someone that his younger colleagues looked up to. Among them was Private Galagher. Private Gallagher was a young soldier who gained entry into the elite commando unit within four years of joining the Army. He has been described as someone with a 'can-do' attitude who always put 110 per cent into everything he did, and there is no doubt that this is why he was so well thought of by his colleagues.

The loss of any soldier serving overseas is a tragedy and one felt right across our community, and it is heightened when they are our much respected neighbours stationed at Holsworthy. Today, I am particularly struck by the stories of these two young men, and I have a deep sympathy for their families and their partners. These brave young men have made the ultimate sacrifice: giving their lives in defence of the principles in which they believed—the principles of freedom, democracy and mateship. These men, like all those who join our defence forces, did so out of a love for their country, a love for freedom and a love for the Australian way of life. Both these men travelled to the other side of the world to defend those who could not defend themselves, to give hope to a population that, for so long, has had none. These men are true heroes and will be remembered forever for their sacrifice and their service.

Given some recent comments in the media, it is worth recounting the absolute evil that our troops are fighting against in Afghanistan and the evil for which Lance Corporal Mervin McDonald and Private Nathaniel Galagher gave their lives fighting against: the evil of the Taliban. This is a group so evil that it commits systematic massacres against its own civilians. This is a group so evil that it has denied UN food supplies to tens of thousands of starving civilians, with the UN confirming that the Taliban had starved civilians for their own military agenda and were using humanitarian assistance as a weapon of war. This is a group so evil that it conducts a scorched earth policy, burning vast areas of fertile land and destroying tens...
of thousands of family homes. This is a group so evil that a report by the Physicians for Human Rights said:

To PHR's knowledge, no other regime in the world has methodically and violently forced half of its population into virtual house arrest, prohibiting them on pain of physical punishment …

This is a group so evil that it has issued edicts forbidding women the most basic human right of being educated, forcing girls to leave schools and colleges. Again, I quote the same report by the Physicians for Human Rights. It said:

The extent to which the Taliban regime has violated the human rights of Afghan women is unparalleled in recent history.

It is difficult to find another government or would-be government in the world that has deliberately created such poverty by arbitrarily depriving half the population under its control of jobs, schooling, mobility and health care. Such restrictions are literally life threatening to women and to their children.

This is a group so evil that it has planted improvised explosive devices in girls' schools. This is a group that dynamited the famous sixth century archaeological masterpieces of Buddha statues at Bamiyan. This is a group so evil that it outlawed sports, denying children the right and the joy of kicking a ball, and turned sports stadiums into public execution grounds, shooting people, hanging them from goalposts and chopping off their limbs. This is a group so evil that it seeks to deny people the joys of music and, only recently, took knives and beheaded 17 people for simply playing music at a party.

We should never forget the words of Edmund Burke, who once famously said, 'The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.' Lance Corporal Mervyn McDonald and Private Nathanael Galagher were good men. They were prepared to stand up and to fight evil to ensure that it will not triumph. Australia, and the world, is a better place for their sacrifice and their service, and their efforts should never be forgotten. Lest we forget.

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (10:16): It is with great sadness that I rise today to support the condolence motion to honour Lance Corporal Mervyn John McDonald and Private Nathanael John Aubrey Galagher. Lance Corporal McDonald and Private Galagher were both members of the Special Operations Task Group in Afghanistan. Tragically they both lost their lives when their helicopter crashed on 30 August 2012. This has been a very tough time for the family and friends of Lance Corporal McDonald and Private Galagher and their mates still serving in Afghanistan. However, I would like them to know that our thoughts and prayers are with them.

Lance Corporal McDonald was on his sixth tour to Afghanistan. He served in Operation Slipper in Afghanistan, as well as Operation Astute in Timor-Leste and Operation Citadel in East Timor. By all accounts Lance Corporal McDonald was noted for his quick wit and positive energy. He has been described as a dedicated, wholehearted and highly professional soldier and a credit to his company. The moving words of Lance Corporal McDonald's fiancee, Rachael Sprigg-McKinnie, paint a picture of a loving family man with an infectious personality who was passionate about the Army and serving his country. Rachael's touching tribute to her fiance brings to the fore the tragic loss of this young soldier.

I also want to offer my condolences to the family and friends of 23-year-old Private Galagher, who was serving on his second tour to Afghanistan. Private Galagher, known as
Nate to his family and mates, was deployed as part of the operation. I have spoken before about meeting soldiers of the calibre of Lance Corporal McDonald and Private Galagher when I travelled to Afghanistan. In my short time in Tarin Kot, Kandahar and Kabul, I saw firsthand the determination and focus of the Australian troops and the passion that they have in their mission to eliminate terrorism from the region and create a peaceful and safe country for the people of Afghanistan. I also got to see the loyalty and the camaraderie of these soldiers, and I can only imagine what they are feeling and what they are experiencing at the moment at the loss of two of their own, because they are a very tight-knit and loyal group, and they are very close. It is like a brotherhood.

They operate in an environment that is unimaginable to most people. Our troops face unique hardships and risks. They share the satisfaction of serving in an operation that is designed to bring freedom from oppression, and they share the loss of their fellow soldiers very deeply. In my visit I met with those soldiers and commandos and got a sense of the conditions and challenges they endure, because the environment in Afghanistan is difficult and it is difficult to describe. When I was there I was told of life in winter, when the temperature can drop to minus 20, and of life in the summer months, when the temperature can rise to 50 degrees. Within a year the people of Afghanistan experience freezing conditions and boiling hot and dusty days that test the most highly trained and experienced soldiers.

So I have tremendous admiration for the people of Afghanistan, who endure these extreme conditions while under the constant threat of war and terrorism, and I hold in great admiration our service men and women who are there to help the Afghani people as they work towards building their own resilience and stability. Our service men and women are there to assist the people in Afghanistan. They want and need our help, and there are overwhelming sacrifices being made on all sides.

What impressed me about the soldiers there was the incredible dignity and respect that they have. Of course, the soldiers being Australian, I also saw a lot of humour and larrikinism, which is very much a trait of Australian soldiers. I have previously described our service men and women in Afghanistan and those serving in other operations as being like a brotherhood, as I mentioned before. As in a brotherhood, if one of their brothers dies or is injured then they are commemorated, often with bracelets bearing their names. There are many ways we can honour and pay tribute to our soldiers. While I did not know these soldiers personally, I can understand the incredible loss their mates are experiencing.

Lance Corporal McDonald and Private Galagher were bravely serving their country with distinction and honour. The tributes we have heard today are a recognition on behalf of the parliament that we honour their commitment to our Defence Force and the operations they engage in. I extend my sincere sympathies to the family of Lance Corporal McDonald—his fiancee, Rachael; his mother, Myrna, and stepfather Bernie; and his brothers, Percy, Roger and Gary—and to the family of Private Galagher—his partner, Jessie; his parents, Wayne and Sally; and his sister, Elanor. Lest we forget.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr HUSIC (Chifley—Government Whip) (10:21): I move:

That the Federation Chamber do now adjourn.
Rackett, Mr David

Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (10:22): I note before my remarks that I am following the condolence motion for Lance Corporal Mervyn John McDonald and Private Nathanael John Aubrey Galagher. I would like to identify with the remarks made in that condolence motion.

It's all about looking after your mates. Some are not travelling so well, so we're there for each other. The main thing is they are not alone.

These are Dave Rackett's words. Dave is a constituent and a friend and has been awarded the Meritorious Service Medal by the RSL. When Dave Rackett returned from World War II, his father encouraged him to continue his service to others by joining the Returned and Services League. Sixty years later, he has now been awarded another service medal that he will wear with pride. Dave Rackett was presented with the Meritorious Service Medal at the RSL's annual state conference on Wednesday, 4 July. The Meritorious Service Medal is an honour over and above life membership. It is awarded to those already holding life membership who have had 30 years continuous membership and who have given 25 years outstanding service.

When Mr Dave Rackett moved to Warragul from Darwin more than 30 years ago, one of his first priorities was to be active in the Warragul RSL branch. Many in the community would know Mr Rackett for his commitment to RSL appeals. He is regularly seen in the lead-up to Anzac Day and Remembrance Day selling badges and poppies. For Mr Rackett, it is all part of the ongoing service he committed to as a 20-year-old in World War II.

Mr Rackett served with the Royal Australian Air Force in the south-west Pacific between 1944 and 1946. When he returned home at just 22 years of age, his father immediately took him to the local RSL. His father was also a returned serviceman. Dave says in his own words: I thought, what is all this about. But my father (a returned serviceman from both World War I and World War II) told me it was a way to continue my service to others.

In the early days, following the war, Mr Rackett joined other returned servicemen to visit veterans in hospitals and institutions. He said there were many sad cases, many men who had returned from battle still shellshocked and struggling to get back to life. 'Little has changed', says Dave. He becomes emotional now, speaking of other young men he has come into contact with as a welfare officer—a 22-year-old, just like he was, who recently returned from Afghanistan. 'It is tough', he says, shedding a tear, 'It never gets any easier and the wars keep going. It will never end; mankind can be so bitter to others.'

Dave Rackett has held many positions within the RSL. For 16 years he has been secretary of the Warragul Branch and is also a past treasurer. But it is service he is happy to continue. There is a lovely photo in the local paper of Dave holding his framed certificate, and up on the honour board behind him, in the corner of the photo, is Dave Rackett's name in the secretary's position. I think that is a lovely catch in the photo—it was great that the local paper's photographer got that. Dave says:

We have a dedicated team of hospital visitors to people at home who can't get out. That is the beauty of having a local RSL. It has been a rewarding part of my life. It's a real privilege to go into people's homes, talk to them and see what we can do to make their lives easier. But if it wasn't for the support of the community through Anzac and poppy appeals, we wouldn't have the money to do that.

Mr Rackett said he had never provided his service to RSL to be recognised. But he admits, 'when recognition does come along, it is very sweet'.

FEDERATION CHAMBER
Dave is a special personality, and I want to pay tribute—from Maranoa to McMillan, which is from the bottom to the top, there are people like Dave Rackett serving our returned services community. I want to praise every one of them today for the work they do on behalf of our returned servicemen. Here's to you, Dave Rackett, and congratulations on a well-deserved citation.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

Housing

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (10:27): The issues of housing availability, affordability and access present critical challenges in Australia, and these are issues on which I have spoken a number of times, particularly with respect to tackling homelessness. In the last 12 months I have been pleased to take part in aged care policy consultations in my electorate with my community, and this has reinforced for me the pressing need to ensure that we create appropriate housing for older Australians and for Australians living with disability. These of course are overlapping categories, because as we age we inevitably become less able in a number of ways.

The government's Living Longer, Living Better policy springs from the recognition that Australians are living longer and that the preference of most people is to live active, vibrant lives in their own homes for as long as possible. This government recognises that enabling that to be the case in future will require policy and service reform in a number of areas. One of them is certainly housing. In the last week of August I had the opportunity to attend, with the federal Minister for Housing, Brendan O'Connor, the opening of a new development in my electorate at Cockburn Central. The Living Space development is a five-building, 130-apartment complex built under the Gillard government's social housing initiative at a cost of $39.35 million. The apartments in this development will deliver a range of affordable housing options, including social housing, affordable rental properties and privately owned homes for low- to moderate-income earners, some of which can be purchased through WA government assisted shared equity programs.

It is a credit to the development proponent, the builder and the city of Cockburn that the Living Space project does a lot more than simply create much-needed diverse and affordable housing. The development has a six-star or higher energy rating across all its units, greatly reducing the energy demands of this housing complex and also the cost to the residents. The complex has been designed with accessibility in mind and has special features that provide improved access for those with restricted mobility as well as being easily adaptable for universal access in future. What's more, the Living Space development is a short distance to the Cockburn central train station, the new Cockburn GP superclinic and the Gateway shopping centre, and it is 15 minutes by train from the Perth CBD. It therefore represents the kind of transport-oriented development we need to see a lot more of if our cities are to operate on a more sustainable basis. This development forms only one part of the $101 million that the Labor government has invested in the Fremantle electorate to help build around 320 new homes and to repair and maintain a further 1,580 existing homes.

It was late last year that the first major project of this kind in my electorate reached completion, namely the $22.8 million Fort Knox Match development within the heritage warehouse precinct in the heart of Fremantle. That project delivered 58 one-bedroom units, 12 of which are class C adaptable, which means they are easily modified for tenants with a
disability. They make up half of the 24 units, which will be available as social housing for the region's most vulnerable people including older Australians and people with a disability.

I am proud to be part of a Labor government that has made significant strides in addressing housing affordability and in reducing homelessness in this country. This Labor government has invested a record $20 billion in programs targeted at addressing these issues since coming to office—programs like the National Rental Affordability Scheme, which, through partnership with states and territories, has delivered an increase in the supply of new affordable rental dwellings across Australia. Under the scheme, approved properties are rented out to eligible low-to-moderate income tenants at 20 per cent or more below the market rate. In Western Australia alone the scheme is expected to deliver an additional 5,000 affordable rental homes.

The creation of adequate, affordable, accessible, sustainable and well located housing is an absolutely critical challenge in Australia and it is one that must be guided by government at the local, state and federal level. There are special imperatives and constraints that apply when it comes to providing social housing, universally accessible housing and transport oriented development. These imperatives will cause the underprovision of such housing if its provision is left to the market.

On either edge of my electorate, east and west, in the City of Cockburn and in the City of Fremantle, both the Living Space and the Match developments have demonstrated how carefully targeted government investment can create much needed housing that would never be provided by the market left to its own devices. Both these projects are transport oriented developments, both these projects involve high-quality energy efficiency and environmental design, both these projects create social and affordable housing and housing that caters for older Australians and Australians with a disability. To me they represent not only brilliant new housing but brilliant examples of the way forward when it comes to Australia's future housing needs.

Swan Electorate: National Broadband Network

Mr IRONS (Swan) (10:31): Last week the member for Wentworth and I went on a broadband policy tour of my electorate of Swan to meet residents and businesses. We felt a bit like David Attenborough looking for a wild creature out in the wild west of Western Australia that we know is very scarce. It is that scarce, we could not find the NBN nor could we find the fibre in my electorate. If you look at the website—

Mr Lyons interjecting—

Mr IRONS: I hear the member for Bass. I know he is lucky enough to have found the NBN in regions of Tasmania. We did not find the NBN but we did find many constituents disillusioned by the broken Labor broadband promises in my electorate from the last election and positively enthused and receptive to Malcolm Turnbull, the member for Wentworth, and the coalition's policy of rapid rollout of fibre-to-the-node NBN that would be delivered faster and to areas that need it most first.

I am sure there are many members in this place that remember the great fanfare of the Labor broadband promises made before the last election. In my electorate of Swan, particularly, the Labor candidate trumpeted the fact that we were going to have the commencement of broadband in the second quarter of 2011. There has been no
commencement as yet. There are plenty of signs on the website saying it has been commenced but it has not commenced. They were out there saying to everyone in Victoria Park, ‘We want your vote. We are going to give you broadband in the second quarter of 2011.’ It just did not happen. That promise was broken well over 12 months ago. Today not one piece of fibre has been laid in Victoria Park. The residents of the trial site are becoming increasingly frustrated about the lack of delivery from this government and from the NBN.

*Government members interjecting—*

**Mr IRONS:** It is great to hear the members interjecting because they have got a lot to hang their hats on about all the performances of all the schemes they have implemented since they were elected in 2007. Let us remind them about pink batts, schools, BER and all those sorts of things. We have seen the inability of the government to deliver simple schemes over the last four years—

*Government members interjecting—*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I am having trouble hearing the member for Swan.

**Mr IRONS:** and they are clearly struggling with the NBN. There have already been massive delays, missed deadlines and broken promises. The losers are the people of my electorate of Swan as well as the people of Australia, who are still waiting for the first house to receive better broadband services.

The question has to be asked: if they still have not managed to connect a small trial site in a small part of one of 30 suburbs in my electorate, what hope is there for the broadband black spots in Swan, out in Cloverdale and in Kewdale which have not yet been shortlisted for connection? I know a constituent in Cloverdale who has been told he simply cannot connect to broadband as he is in a black spot. The City of Belmont put in a submission for broadband to the NBN that was rated highly by the office of the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy before the last election, but it was not selected and to this day it has not been shortlisted. The black spots in Swan also have not been addressed.

The residents and businesses enjoyed meeting the member for Wentworth and were very receptive to the coalition's FTTN policy, given the delays and broken promises that this government has presided over. I commend the member for Wentworth for work he has done in developing a policy that will be rolled out faster and, importantly, will first meet the needs of the areas that need it most. The coalition is in favour of comprehensive high-speed broadband that can be delivered to all Australians, and that is the policy the member for Wentworth has produced. Certainly the residents and businesses we visited in the 6VIC-01 trial site are fast coming to the conclusion that the only way to get change and action is to change the government.

I understand it is the government's intention to shortlist another area of Victoria Park next week. My suggestion to the government is to stop the spin and start delivering. There have been so many announcements of new areas, yet still no fibre has been laid for the first area announced in 2010. Stop the spin and start delivering—that is all the residents want, what they expected and what they were promised, but it is not happening. In Bentley the frustration was summarised in an email I received on Tuesday from one of the businesses in my electorate frustrated at the inability to connect to ADSL or to supposed broadband:
It is quite obvious that there is built up and widespread frustration in the community about the lack of average broadband services.

... ... ...

The other unbelievable fact, and this is a great opportunity for someone in Parliament to bring it to the Governments attention, that a prime industrial area in the heart of an Australian capital city does NOT have access to proper broadband and, in some cases, has to send its employees off site to access suitable services!

So, Bill, I have mentioned that for you, and the residents of Victoria Park wait for the broadband to arrive. *(Time expired)*

**Bass Electorate: Sporting Achievements**

**Mr LYONS** (Bass) (10:37): I rise in the chamber to recognise and congratulate two outstanding athletes in my electorate of Bass: one who is a world champion and one who will be a world champion. These individuals have both reached the pinnacle of their chosen sport. Launceston-born boxer Daniel Geale's victory on Saturday, 1 September in Germany was an historic one. In defeating WBA middleweight titleholder Felix Sturm, Daniel has become the first Australian boxer in history to hold two globally recognised major titles in the same division. The WBA middleweight title adds to the IBF middleweight title which Daniel currently holds. He won the IBF title last year in Germany against another German, Sebastian Sylvester. It is believed that Daniel is the first boxer to twice take titles from German boxers on their home soil.

This latest achievement adds to an already impressive career for Daniel which includes a Commonwealth Games gold medal, being a former holder of the IBO middleweight title and an impressive 28-to-one professional record. An unassuming, humble man outside the ring, Daniel is a credit to himself and the upbringing he received from his family in Tasmania. We are all very proud of his achievements and in the way he handles himself. Congratulations to Daniel on his well-deserved, historic achievements. You are a great role model not only for upcoming boxers but for athletes generally.

The second person I congratulate is Rebecca Quail on her induction into the legend status at the Invermay Bowls & Community Club. I was privileged to be present for Rebecca's induction. Rebecca began her bowling career in 1998 aged 10 years. She is now in her 14th season, having won numerous awards in those 14 years. I would be here a long time if I wanted to list Rebecca's achievements so I will just mention a few. In 2005 she made her debut for Tasmania in the seniors, becoming the inaugural Tasmanian women's Bowler of the Year. It was about this time that Sophie Fletcher, Margaret Pearce and Molly Howell took her under their wings and began mentoring Rebecca. Rebecca went on to create ladies bowls history in 2005 when she became the first female lawn bowler to be granted a scholarship with the Tasmanian Institute of Sport. Rebecca is the Australian Champion of Champions singles titleholder.

Continuing with her impressive form, in 2011, Rebecca became the first Tasmanian women's bowler to ever attain national No. 1 ranking. She then travelled to South Africa for a test series. This was a test to see if Rebecca had what it takes to compete on the international level. Rebecca was also on the Australian team for the Asia-Pacific Championships. The team went on to be undefeated at the competition and won the gold medal. This event is a very
Thursday, 13 September 2012  HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  10643

high-ranking event, the third highest event on the bowls calendar, only behind the Commonwealth Games and the World Championships.

Rebecca's impressive form has continued and in April this year she was selected to travel to Adelaide for the Six Nations International. Again, Australia took away the gold medal. As you can see, Rebecca has an extremely impressive record and is truly deserving of this fantastic and prestigious accolade. What makes it even more impressive is that she is the first female legend for the club. Rebecca has acknowledged her coach, Mr George Atkins, for his contribution to her success. Congratulations to both Daniel and Rebecca. They are both from Launceston, are both humble and outstanding champions, and I wish them all the best for their continued success in their sporting endeavours.

Mr BRUCE SCOTT (Maranoa—Second Deputy Speaker) (10:41): There has been a debate about foreign investment in this country recently which has got political, and I think many misleading statements about foreign investment have been made. I just want to outline our oldest agricultural company's history in this country. Would you believe that the land that they managed is still done so by them today? The oldest agricultural company in Australia is the Australian Agricultural Company Ltd, AAC. It was established in 1824 and it is the oldest continuously operating company.

It has had many different owners over time and the original company had to raise capital in England, which they did. They had to raise one million pounds in order to be granted one million acres in Australia. The member for Hunter, who has walked in, will be interested that that original grant of land had to be out of the settled areas of the colony. It was, in fact, from Newcastle to Gloucester. That was the original AAC—Australian Agricultural Company—land. The land that was granted was for the production and cultivation of agricultural products, obviously, mainly wool.

Interestingly, there were 30 members of the House of Commons who were initial investors and who contributed capital to raise that one million pounds. Included in that list of shareholders at the time was the great reformer, William Wilberforce—and we all know the wonderful work he did in the House of Commons for many years to bring about an end to the slave trade, which ended emancipation. He was a great hero for all of us and, I think, should be an inspiration for many of us in this place.

The Australian Agricultural Company, since that date, that settlement and that grant of land, and once the bill went through the House of Commons and received royal assent from the King, have been producing agricultural products and for some time had a coal mining operation. They have also been producing food in Australia. In fact, in my own electorate they operate an irrigation and cotton farm near St George, just below Surat. They have a very well established feedlot in the Darling Downs, near Dalby. They hold some 600,000 head of cattle on their books through 19 cattle stations and two feedlots, and they hold today more than 7.2 million hectares of land across Queensland and the Northern Territory, which is equal to about 1.1 per cent of the landmass of Australia.

This land was originally wholly owned by foreign investment that started the Australian Agricultural Company in 1824. The Bank of New South Wales, which is now Westpac, claimed to be the oldest company established; it was established in 1823. But AAC is the oldest continuous company and the very oldest agricultural, food producing, company in Australia. It is a proud history, and it underpins and puts to rest this notion that foreign
investment could be bad for the agricultural sector in Australia because they will own this land, they will lock it up, they will not produce food or, if they do produce agricultural products, they will take them offshore and value-add offshore.

This is one of the best examples that I can give this parliament, that I accept that foreign investment is important for agricultural development in Australia. It will be needed long into the future. The current proposal for the purchase of Cubbie Station and the group of properties that they hold—not just the one at Dirranbandi but also the anchorage property at St George—is a good one. The proponents certainly do not own it at this stage; they have got to work through the process of the guidelines which have been given to them.

But what I say to the Treasurer is this: he should not in future release a statement on a Friday afternoon, that he knows would create a political situation, approving the sale of Cubbie Station under certain terms and conditions, and then hope it will go away. He should be more open about it. He needs to make sure that in the future, while ever he is Treasurer, that it is not done on a Friday afternoon when the media shut down. It should be open and be more transparent. He should ensure that when he releases a statement about why such a foreign investment is in the national interest, whether it is to do with agriculture, mining operations or housing in urban Australia, he does not do it on a Friday afternoon.

New South Wales Government: School Funding

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter—Chief Government Whip) (10:46): This morning I am teaming up with the member for Shortland to express on behalf of the Hunter community collective concerns about the impact of the decision by Barry O'Farrell, Premier of New South Wales, to cut $1.7 billion out of school funding. I know our sentiments will be supported by both the member for Newcastle and the member for Charlton. I challenge, in a bipartisan way, the member for Paterson to come into the House today and also support us and to express concern about the impact of these cuts on Hunter communities generally. We really should pause for a moment and ask ourselves: why do we all need to be in here supporting our schools? Surely, we all support better schools for our children? We should not need to be in here having this debate. But, yet again, this week the Premier of New South Wales announced he would be cutting $1.7 billion from local schools—public, independent and Catholic.

This measure will of course affect every school and every student. You do not get better education outcomes by spending less money, although I saw the Premier trying to suggest that was the case in the newspapers this morning. It will mean fewer teachers, fewer textbooks, fewer support staff and fewer computers for our local schools. It will also mean bigger class sizes for our young children. These cuts affect not only schools but, very importantly, our TAFE colleges. It is just so important, particularly in electorates such as mine, which, in the middle of a mining boom, are facing very, very significant skills shortages. We should be investing more in skills, as is the Gillard government, not cutting back our investments in skills training. It will mean that training staff, an apprentice or a trainee will become more expensive or, even worse, that the training they receive will be delivered at a lower standard. That is not good for the broader Hunter community.

It will mean cuts to funding for schools in my electorate such as Maitland Public School, St Patrick's Primary School in Cessnock, Merriwa Central School and a school, which I noted this morning was in the parliament, St Paul's of Rutherford. I understand that it will also mean
cuts to the Catholic Schools Office, which was planning for a new school in the Maitland area. I understand and I say this advisedly, because I have not yet spoken to the schools office but I will, that they may now be putting that program on hold. We are already seeing the impact of Barry O’Farrell’s cuts. My electorate cannot afford these cuts. It is a disastrous decision to slash $1.7 billion from our schools and our TAFE colleges. It is not about making savings; it is about making choices. Barry O’Farrell has chosen to put school and TAFE students last. That is the bottom line in this debate. We know that these state cuts to schools are just a curtain raiser for what Tony Abbott has in store for the broader Australian community. We can read directly into this and what the election of a Liberal-National Party government at the national level will mean for education standards in this country.

Whenever a Liberal premier picks up the axe, schools are the first to face the chop—this I just do not understand—and Tony Abbott undoubtedly will do the same thing. We know he wants to sack one in seven teachers; we know he wants to cut trades training centres. Every child in every local school will feel the pain of the Liberal and National parties’ savage budget cuts.

Mr Chester: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member should refer to the Leader of the Opposition by his correct title.

Mr FITZGIBBON: I accept that point of order. The Liberals’ and Nationals’ cuts mean almost 1,800 jobs slashed in New South Wales and are gouging workers and students with an almost 10 per cent increase in TAFE fees and a whopping $1.7 billion in funding cuts. As I said, they are freezing funding to Catholic and independent schools in New South Wales. This again is a glimpse—a very important glimpse—of what it will mean to have the Libs and the Nats running our education system at the federal level.

Mr Husic interjecting—

Mr FITZGIBBON: I thank the member for Chifley for his interjection, because I can see now that the Libs and Nats are trying to blame one another.

I have been roaming schools throughout my electorate in the past months doing Building the Education Revolution openings, and everywhere I find great, dedicated teachers trying to do great things for our local schoolkids. We should be supporting them collectively, not making their work even harder than it is.

Gippsland Electorate: Gippsland Lakes and Catchments

Mr CHESTER (Gippsland) (10:51): I appreciate the opportunity to update the House this morning on activities within my electorate to protect and enhance the environment of the Gippsland Lakes. I have spoken several times about the importance of the Gippsland Lakes and its catchment areas in terms of the environmental, social, cultural and economic life of my region. I deliberately mention the word ‘cultural’ because there is a long Indigenous heritage associated with the Gippsland Lakes. They are very productive, with an abundance of bird, animal and fish life which supported Indigenous communities for thousands of years. The European heritage has continued in that vein, so we have very strong cultural links to the lake and river systems.

However, I do remain critical of the federal government's attitude to the Gippsland Lakes. I am disappointed that these Ramsar listed wetlands do not receive the level of recognition they deserve by the current government. There is no ongoing funding for practical environmental works and no commitment to working in partnership with the state government, which is
leading the way through the formation of the $10 million Gippsland Lakes Environmental Fund. For the benefit of the House, I want to provide a bit of background on that fund. It came about during the 2010 state election campaign, when I strongly supported the Nationals candidate, Tim Bull. As a fourth-generation East Gippslander with a family history steeped in the marine industry, Tim is as passionate about the Gippsland Lakes as I am. Together, we developed a policy to secure a state government funding commitment and it has led to the development of the environmental fund under the stewardship of the Gippsland Lakes Ministerial Advisory Committee.

Recently I attended the launch of the committee, where its first eight projects were outlined. The projects include: $30,000 to evaluate the economic and community impact of the algal bloom; funding of $160,000 to support a range of care groups to enhance the biodiversity of the Gippsland Lakes; $137,000 for nutrient reduction in the upper Gippsland Lakes catchment; $120,000 for Latrobe Estuary and wetlands restoration; $150,000 for the meander restoration of the lower Latrobe River; $80,000 for engaging the Gippsland Lakes community; $44,000 for landholders' fencing and revegetating; and $126,000 for monitoring the environmental health of the Gippsland Lakes.

That is a great start and I commend the committee on its work under the leadership of its chair, Dr Peter Veenker, and for the way it has undertaken its task. An outstanding committee of people has been assembled. They are passionate about the lakes and have direct local experience in diverse industries such as tourism, fishing, local government and some of the key state government agencies. I look forward to working very closely with this committee in the years ahead and doing everything in my power to help it secure federal funding to leverage off the substantial state government commitment that has been made. We all know it makes sense to combine our resources wherever possible to have all levels of government working closely with groups like Landcare and the Friends of the Gippsland Lakes to achieve practical environmental outcomes to safeguard this magnificent lake and river system for the enjoyment of future generations.

As a local member of parliament, I am very keen to build ownership of the lakes within the community and to give local residents a chance to help protect the system. That is why I organised a community action day in 2010 and that is why I am planning another event, on 25 November this year. It is a chance for everyone who loves the magnificent Gippsland Lakes and cares about the future of the system and its rivers to join in and help make a difference. There is, unfortunately, a lot of rubbish which has been blown up by the wind or washed off streets or dropped from boats and collected by tides on the foreshore around the lake system. We will be targeting a few of the highly visited locations around the lakes—towns like Lakes Entrance, Paynesville, Metung, Raymond Island and Eagle Point—and we will be hoping to do a clean-up along the banks of the Mitchell and Tambo rivers.

As much as most locals and visitors care about the environment and do the right thing when they visit our waterways, there are some people who show a complete disregard for the environment. I have been appalled, quite frankly, by some of the rubbish that has been left behind by a small minority of recreational anglers who lack the intelligence to understand that damaging the environment will actually damage the resource that they have come to enjoy. I know we should not have to clean up after them, but these are irresponsible people and it is a fact of life that there is a mess left behind and it leaves a very poor impression when we are
trying to attract visitors to our region and to showcase the beautiful environment of our rivers and lakes system.

The community action day on 25 November this year will be a chance for everyone to show their support for the lakes. I will be inviting local people to nominate their own clean-up sites in the weeks leading up to the day, and those sites will be targeted by the volunteers that we assemble on the day. We will be encouraging people to register for the clean-up and we will be allocating some areas for them to work on. Hopefully, at the end of it all, we will have done a good job in cleaning up some of these high profile locations and we will also have a bit of fun at the end of it with a community barbeque. It should be an enjoyable day as well as a very productive day.

The community action day will be an opportunity for people who love the lakes to help improve the environment through direct action. I am looking forward to working with my community in the weeks ahead to make sure it is a great success.

**Education Funding**

Ms HALL (Shortland—Government Whip) (10:56): I rise to join with my colleague the member for Hunter in expressing disgust at the New South Wales government's decision to withdraw funding for education in New South Wales. I also call on the member for Paterson to join us in our campaign to see that the New South Wales government reverses its decision and actually provides resources for education in New South Wales.

The focus of the federal government, since being elected in 2007, has been on making education a priority, as Labor recognises that education is imperative and it is so important that all children can obtain a quality education. We have made an absolute commitment to making our great schools even better. The Prime Minister and the education minister commissioned the Gonski review and have committed to implementing the Gonski reforms. We are planning to build on the reforms and investments that we have made in schools with our national plan for schools. Better schools will give our children the best start in life, and that is why we want to put more teachers into the classroom, give principals more say in the way their schools are run, get better results for education and improve the information that parents get. It is all about education and making sure that we position our students so that they can enjoy a good quality of life. Education is the key to success.

This is very different from the approach that the New South Wales government has adopted, and I am extremely disappointed. I hope that the state members in my area will speak out against the $1.7 billion that the Barry O'Farrell Liberal government is slashing from education. New South Wales government cuts to schools will put thousands of students at risk. This comes just after the government has confirmed its commitment to the national school plan.

On the ground, this has a devastating impact. It is going to mean a cut of $116 million to TAFE and 1,800 jobs will be slashed. This will also lead to an increase in TAFE fees. TAFE fees will increase by 9.5 per cent and overall there will be a three per cent cut in education funding. This is a four-year funding freeze to all government and non-government schools. It is not going to impact on one sector over the other.
I first learned of these changes when the director of schools from the Catholic Schools Office on the Central Coast contacted me and said that the New South Wales government was about to announce a cut of $24.5 million to Catholic schools. What that will mean in that diocese is 20 teachers will lose their jobs, there will be approximately 10 per cent in government cuts and it will lead to a steep rise in fees and the withdrawal of advertising and funding. It will also lead to planning for a Catholic high school on the Central Coast being put on hold, and it is very much needed in the northern part of the Ryan electorate.

It is a heavy blow. It was unexpected. I have been told by people involved in Catholic education that the four-year freeze will mean they will be struggling to keep pace with increased costs, but they are going to try not to pass it on to the families. There will be cutbacks in services and planning and, as I just mentioned, the Lake Munmorah High School. It will lead to a lack of support for teachers. One of the most important issues is that this will lead to students with special needs not getting the services they need.

These are heartless cuts and they cannot be allowed to continue. It is imperative that the New South Wales government reverse its decision and recognise the fact that education is imperative for every student. Education is our future and the New South Wales government needs to know— (Time expired)

Dunkley Electorate: Law Enforcement

Mr BILLSON (Dunkley) (11:01): I rise to talk about something that has been a key issue for me in representing the Dunkley community for well over a decade and a half—that is, the issue of local community safety. We have been able, under the Howard government, to make many good gains in this area, including the deployment of a CCTV system in Mornington, which is something I was very pleased to partner with the local Mornington police crew in implementing many years ago. This then prompted Frankston City Council to see the value of this technology and embark on its own deployment strategy. I was very pleased that the Howard government and even this government, from funds recovered from the proceeds of crime, have been able to assist.

We need to keep that work going. It is a very important tool to support the work of the local police. It is able to capture evidence that can be pursued and used for prosecution even if police are not right there on the spot at the time of an incident. It also adds to the sense and perception of community safety and it is a very wise investment in the Dunkley community.

I also acknowledge the excellent work of my state parliamentary colleagues Neale Burgess, Geoff Shaw, Donna Bauer and David Morris who, through their advocacy, have seen a significant increase in not only the number of police officers in our reason but also the protective services crew that is now at Frankston Railway Station and set to be deployed more widely to those state coalition MPs in our region. I tip my hat to them; it is an excellent outcome they have achieved, and we have more officers on the way to the Dunkley community.

Recently, at neighbourhood visits in Langwarrin and also at the recent Langwarrin community safety meeting, where I was represented by one of my staff members, some of the themes that we have been working on for some time continue to be uppermost in people's minds. Graffiti continues to be a misspent and misapplied use of creative talents, primarily
amongst young people, that causes a great deal of concern as people see their neighbourhoods diminished by anything that is not nailed down—actually, most things that are nailed down tend to be a target, but at least some of the moving pieces and assets in the area have not been hit.

Frankston City, to its credit, has a very proactive approach to tackling graffiti. There are contractors engaged by the council, a five-day limit on any graffiti that arises, and if there is offensive graffiti they seek a two-day turnaround time as the maximum period within which they seek to remove that graffiti. Residents are encouraged to call 000 if they say any kind of unlawful or antisocial behaviour—something the police keep reminding me of is the need to feed episodes of concern into the police database and their own management systems so that their patrols and the deployment of their officers can reflect what is going on in the community. My message to those in the Langwarrin community is that if you are seeing things that are criminal or antisocial, such as graffiti or vandalism or those kinds of things, please call 000, because that then registers that activity in the police's planning system and can influence where officers are deployed.

We still have work to do. The CCTV technology supported by mobile cameras are good devices. Some of the battery life concerns have been overcome and these movement activated devices can be very helpful in law enforcement. For many years I have been working in partnership with Sharron Coburn and others at the local police station trying to establish a Neighbourhood Watch group in Langwarrin. There is lots of interest in it, but, when push comes to shove, we are not always able to get the committed volunteers that are necessary to be at the heart of an initiative like that. It is something I am still very keen on being involved with and it is something that the police are very supportive of, but we need the residents to see that this is of benefit to them, particularly in local community awareness about behaviours and information that can be fed into police planning. It has a very important role in addition to things like Adopt a Park, which is one of the other measures that we are contemplating.

We have work still to do in this area. I know Frankston City. I have been working closely with Steve Dickson, the manager at Frankston City Council, for many years. He shares with me his plans of how we would like the network of CCTV technology rolled out. We have some previous commitments up in Seaford that I am revisiting to see whether that is still a relevant response. Mornington is going very well and there are other areas in the Dunkley community where this smart use of technology can support the excellent and dedicated work of our local police force, which has been very welcome bolstered by the effective advocacy of local state members of parliament. It is a communitywide effort and I will continue to make my contribution as best as I am able.

**Education: Gonski Report**

**Mr CHEESEMAN (Corangamite) (11:06):** It was with a great deal of pleasure that last Friday, 7 September, I was invited to Oberon High School in the Belmont suburb in my electorate to meet with the principal, Timothy McMahon, AEU representative Leanne Salisbury, and teaching and support staff. We came together to have morning tea and to recognise the government's response to the Gonski review. I was very pleased that the teachers at that school passed a motion applauding the federal government and urging the Victorian government to also commit to increasing funding for public schools.
Our local schools need a number of things to enable them to operate at peak performance. We need to see student centred teaching; we need principals to have the resources to enable them to be flexible; we need access to modern facilities and technologies in schools to enable them to be innovative in the way they go about teaching; and, to be perfectly frank, they need the financial support to enable them to succeed. The level of funding available to schools certainly makes a dramatic difference to the opportunities that those students have. In order to best educate local students, teachers need support and ongoing training, and they need to be able to learn how to use new technologies and new methods in the classroom.

The Gonski review was the first real funding review that this country has undertaken since the Whitlam years. The Gonski review found that, in order for schools to excel, they need to have adequate funding to back up new programs targeted at their schools. The review suggested a new funding model whereby each school would have access to a base amount of funding per student and schools with particular needs would be supported with additional funding, particularly in recognition of students who have a disability or students who come from a low socio-economic background or perhaps students who come from homes where English is their second language. In total, the federal government has identified that governments collectively will need to put in an additional $6.5 billion to fully fund the new system.

The new national plan for schools will deliver a brand-new funding mechanism for local schools from 2014. The plan will include new ways of funding every school to guarantee all of our schools get access to the money required to enable them to do a better job in the classroom. Additional funding will be available to drive up standards by providing teachers with the necessary time and opportunity to access additional skills to ensure that they are best placed to do their jobs. Under the local reforms local principals and school communities will have a greater say on issues such as hiring staff and controlling their local budgets.

The debate around additional funding for local schools has only just begun. We will need to work in partnership with the states and territories to deliver this additional money, and we will need to work in partnership with Catholic and independent schools to ensure that they have at their disposal the resources to teach those communities. I take this opportunity to thank teachers at Oberon Secondary College and I look forward to continuing to work with them so that we have a fantastic education system. (Time expired)

Leichhardt Electorate: Dr Edward Koch Foundation

Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt—Chief Opposition Whip) (11:11): I rise in this Suicide Prevention Week to highlight the work of a very worthwhile organisation in Cairns, the Dr Edward Koch Foundation. Since 1996 this non-profit organisation has been involved in many public health activities in Far North Queensland, but a focus I have been particularly supportive of is its role in suicide prevention. In Far North Queensland, since 2007, 40 people on average have taken their own life each year. Anecdotally, I understand this is higher than other regions with a similar population. I have closely followed two particularly sad cases that have occurred in recent times in Cairns. The first case was that of 20-year-old Shelby Fullalove, who committed suicide in February just three weeks after being discharged from the Cairns Base Hospital's mental health ward. On 9 March local teenager Declan Crouch disappeared after school. After an extensive and very public three-month search the 13-year-old's body was found near his Machans Beach home.
From these tragic cases lessons must be learnt, and this is where the Dr Edward Koch Foundation, and in particular its CEO Dulcie Bird, has risen to the challenge. For some years, the foundation has presented its Life workshops throughout Far North Queensland giving people a set of basic skills to help them realise when someone is at risk of suicide and to know how to respond, along with information on referral services. After Cyclone Yasi, the workshop was held with a post-disaster wellbeing focus, addressing ongoing mental health needs.

Dulcie Bird has told me the more she travels around doing this work the more she sees a pressing need for basic suicide awareness and prevention education in our schools. Speaking to parents of teenagers who have taken their own life and often to the victims’ friends, they told her they were not aware of how serious the situation was or what they could have done to help. Sometimes a person who suicides has posted comments on Facebook or may have experienced cyberbullying. The foundation is now developing a version of its Life Workshop for teenagers. Complementing these activities, the foundation runs a free bereavement support service. In June the Dr Edward Koch Foundation hosted its second national Suicide and Self-harm Prevention Conference. I am very proud to have participated in both of those conferences, and they were an outstanding success. The foundation has also set up the Declan Crouch Fund. All money raised will go towards suicide prevention in Far North Queensland.

No doubt, 40 deaths a year is 40 too many. Unfortunately it is very difficult to ensure accurate statistics from these cases due to the underreporting of suicide. In researching this speech, I found that figures are often unconfirmed for up to two years while coroners reports are in progress. Suicides are usually expressed as the number of individual cases rather than broken down into rates per region, ethnicity, gender or age, making it difficult to identify areas where suicide prevention activity should be focused. Lastly, the media guidelines mean that suicide—if covered at all—is often reported as non-suspicious death. This contributes to the issue not being openly discussed. In this regard, I commend the Cairns Post for its extensive coverage of the deaths of both Shelby Fullalove and Declan Crouch, which has certainly helped to raise the awareness of this dreadful epidemic in our community. The really incredible and sad thing is that the foundation does not receive any ongoing Commonwealth funding for its activities but relies on occasional one-off grants, corporate sponsorships, donations and fundraising to raise money to try and continue to provide these services.

For an organisation that is recognised around this country—and around the world—as a leader in suicide prevention, they are struggling to continue to offer their desperately needed services. I certainly call on the government to recognise the foundation’s value and to provide an appropriate level of funding. In closing, I would like to refer to Dr Edward Koch himself, who, in 1880, stood alone in recognising the link between mosquitoes and malaria. Dr Koch was tireless in his efforts to have the local swampland cleared and drained. He was often seen doing the rounds of work gangs, appealing to them to wear long sleeves to avoid being bitten. The same level of perseverance and determination is required in the field of suicide prevention. It is the most worthwhile of causes and I again commend the work of the Dr Edward Koch Foundation.

Thursday, 13 September 2012
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEDERATION CHAMBER
Active Travel for Sustainable Cities

Mr RIPOLL (Oxley—Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer) (11:16): I put on the record my thanks to all the participants last night of the Active Travel for Sustainable Cities parliamentary dinner. I particularly want to say thank you to the Cycling Promotion Fund—Peter Bourke, who is their general manager, and also Stephen Hodge, who is a key player in that organisation in and around Canberra. I also want to make special mention of and thank David Epstein, who is the Vice-President of Corporate and Regulatory Affairs for Optus; Neil Trembath, who is the Chief People and Sustainability Officer for Ausenco; and Atsuhide Seguchi from Sekesui House, who, among many others—including many colleagues in this place—were at the dinner to hear about a very interesting, but a really topical debate around what more we can do in active transport.

I think we are all familiar in this place about governments at all levels—local, state and federal—playing a role in active transport, in transport policy and development. There is also a significant role to be played by the corporate sector, and that was the theme last night. It was about talking to two fantastic large companies in Australia with global footprints about what they do in these particular areas. I want to briefly go through their stories.

Ausenco is a large company that has somewhere in the order of 3,500 staff. Through some good work they did in wanting to look after their staff they realised that there was actually an economic as well as a social impact that they could have by re-doing some of their policy, particularly in terms of active transport. They decided to invest in their offices around the world, not just in Australia, and build facilities to help people commute to work—mostly by bike but some might also walk to work, run to work, or find other methods to get to work. They also built a gym, change and shower facilities, and looked at how they could better connect people with their organisation and be more a part of their community. You might think it is just a feel good thing that a large organisation like Ausenco might do, but in fact there was an enormous cost saving. Their annual staff turnover went from 10 per cent down to less than five per cent, which had an enormous cost saving base for them. It also meant that people were more productive, there was more encouragement for recommendations to work at the company, and they found that from two years ago when they first started the program and were 10 per cent short on staff, 250 people were not earning a single dollar for that company. They have managed to turn that around. As well as doing something for the broader environment and a broader social good, they also did something really great for their shareholders. They did it through some really simple things: providing shower facilities, encouraging their employees to be active, to be healthier and to do a whole range of things. They did it all without any assistance from any government, which is really commendable.

Optus is a well-known telecommunications company, located in Macquarie Park, with 6,500 workers. They have a campus. They had to think about how to get people to and from their site. It is so big, particularly when they have a limit of just 2,000 car-parking spaces, so they embarked on a similar journey, asking: 'How do we encourage active transport? How do we get people to look after themselves and their health and get to work in a better condition?' They found that there was an enormous economic upturn through what that provided for the organisation. They worked with the local council in the area to provide cycling paths, to build infrastructure and to look at ways that they could contribute to the local community, by going down this path. Again, this was all done without any specific government incentive.
It is really great to see that the corporate world can lead in these areas and does not always require government funding. But the fact is that our tax system is currently skewed towards incentivising people to drive—to commute by using a vehicle—and I certainly believe, as many do, that we need to look at a broader way that active transport can be incentivised as well. These days we know a few more facts and details around evidence based research indicating how good this can be, not just for an organisation or for a country but for individual people. We know that inactivity, for example, is the leading cause of chronic disease right alongside smoking and is recognised as the major cause of disease in OECD countries. There is plenty of evidence in the area of health that points in that direction. But also, if you look at the congestion in cities, productivity and lifestyle, there are so many departmental and portfolio areas that active transport impact on that there is a more global view and a more global approach to the good that can be done. The simplest way, of course, is just to be a bit more conscious personally about being active. Find a better way to get yourself to work on a daily basis. We have great corporate leaders and great government that can do it. (Time expired)

Superannuation Funds

Mr FLETCHER (Bradfield) (11:21): I have spoken before in this place about the role of the union movement in the governance of superannuation funds, as a consequence of the so-called 'equal representation model' introduced by the Hawke-Keating government, under which the boards of industry superannuation funds have a certain number of people appointed by unions. That is also the case in respect of public sector funds, such as, for example, the Energy Industries Superannuation Scheme and Local Government Super in New South Wales.

These arrangements are very extensive. I recently looked at the arrangements across 64 public sector and industry funds, with a total of more than $300 billion under management. On my calculations there are more than 150 directors appointed by the unions, and there are a significant number of funds where the unions appoint at least half of the directors. It is also interesting to look at the number of unions that appoint the directors of multiple funds. The CFMEU appoints directors to the Auscoal Superannuation Fund, to Equipsuper and to First Super. The AWU appoints directors to AUST(Q), the Allied Unions Superannuation Trust of Queensland, to the AustSafe Superannuation Fund, to Club Super in Queensland, to Health Super Fund and to Local Super. The Australian Services Union appoints directors to CareSuper, to Equipsuper, to the Health Employees Superannuation Trust Australia—that is, HESTA—to legalsuper and to Vision Super, as well as to SunsUPER Superannuation Fund and the WA Local Government Superannuation Plan.

In other words, the arrangements which were introduced by the Hawke-Keating government have led to the union movement having very extensive influence and control over the conduct of the superannuation sector. This is so, even though the percentage of employees across the workforce who are members of unions is now as low as 18 per cent, and in the private sector it is materially lower than that, around 12 per cent, I believe. When you do a basic calculation, if you assume an average fee per director of around $40,000, which is a reasonable number when you look at those funds which do disclose directors remuneration, you are getting the best part of $10 million a year going to directors who are union officials,
in some cases to be kept by those directors personally and in other cases to be paid into the unions' coffers.

There are a number of reasons to be very concerned about these arrangements. The first is that many of these officials are in a position where they face a conflict between their role as industrial advocates and their role as custodians of the retirement savings of the members of the fund.

I have previously cited in speeches in this place and elsewhere TWUSUPER, which has some $2.6 billion under management, was very aggressive in its criticism of actions taken by Qantas management last year—actions which Qantas management said were necessary to improve the financial performance of the company. Members of that fund might reasonably ask how directors think about equity investments in Australian companies in the transport sector.

I have also previously spoken about the Australian Workers Union and its involvement in effectively scuttling the proposed merger between Vision Super and Equipsuper in Victoria. There is a very long tale of small funds, which is another consequence, because the arrangements we have today effectively reflect the architecture of the union movement. It suits particular union officials to have an affiliated fund. This presumably explains why, for example, we have on the one hand the Australian Meat Industry Superannuation Trust and on the other hand the Meat Industry Employees' Superannuation Fund. We have the Health Industry Plan with net assets of some $612 million, which is different to HESTER. We have what I previously mentioned Aust(Q), the Allied Union Superannuation Trust, with net assets of only $193 million—in other words, a long tale of small funds. You also have the Transport Industry Superannuation Fund with net assets of $84 million and that is different to TWUSUPER. So we have a set of arrangements where there are multiple small funds. A real question arises as to whether the architecture of the arrangement of the funds suit the interests of union officials and the interests of members of the funds come a distant second. There are other issues about the basis on which transactions occur between funds and organisations where there are directors on both the selling organisation of the fund, and I will be pleased to speak about those on another occasion.

Early Childhood Learning

Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (11:26): As a parent of two young boys, I am a high user of early childhood centres. I remember with great fondness taking my then one-year-old to day care on the back of a bike. These days I tend to drop them off by car, but it is always a pleasure to go there and to see their great enthusiasm at arriving at the Acton Early Childhood Centre. It is a place where they not only have friends but also are learning. One of the great changes over the last couple of decades has been the broad recognition that early childhood is not babysitting; it is education. And high-quality childhood education is fundamental to the future of those individual children and collectively to the productivity and the social wellbeing of our society. I pay tribute to the hard working staff at the Acton Early Childhood Centre.

The fact is that Labor has put record investment into early childhood. We are investing $22 billion dollars over the next four years—more than triple that of the former Liberal-National government. We have raised the childcare rebate to from 30 per cent to 50 per cent of parents' out-of-pocket costs and increased the cap from $4,354 per child per year under the coalition to $7½ thousand now. Despite this, the United Voice Big Steps campaign has pointed out, there
are challenges with the low wages currently paid to workers in the early childhood sector. The Big Steps campaign estimates that 180 educators leave the sector every week due to low wages and conditions.

I have been grateful for the passionate advocacy from United Voice workers Yvette Berry, Rebecca Garden and Verity Mays as well as centre directors, Catherine Konkoly and Timothy Toogood among them, who came to see me to speak about the importance of raising wages and qualifications. The two big challenges for the government in the early childhood space are to improve affordability and access as well as increase quality. The number of Australian children in childcare last financial year reached 1.3 million, an increase of 20 per cent over five years.

As I have noted, the government has increased the share of the out-of-pocket costs borne by the federal taxpayer, but at the same time it is vital that we improve the wages and conditions in the sector. The Big Steps campaign calls on the federal government to improve funding for the early childhood sector so that the turnover decreases and we are able to ensure that the sector continues to attract and retain the very best educators. In a recent survey I did of childcare issues in my electorate of Fraser, I asked parents how happy they were with their child's care. Forty per cent said they were very happy and another 39 per cent said they were happy. Only 10 per cent were rather unhappy or very unhappy. There is a great big tick across the Fraser electorate for the great work being done by early childcare educators. I also asked parents how they received the childcare rebate and discovered that 11 per cent received it annually and 35 per cent received it quarterly. That means that only around half of all parents are receiving the childcare rebate in the two new ways that federal Labor has enabled them to receive it—paid either fortnightly or directly to the centre, perhaps the most convenient way of receiving the childcare rebate.

Even more concerning are figures from Kate Ellis, the Minister for Early Childhood and Child Care, that 100,000 families across Australia and 1,400 families in the ACT are eligible for the childcare rebate but are not receiving it. I encourage all families to check whether they are eligible for the support and to consider whether they are receiving the childcare rebate in the way that most meets their needs. I also asked parents whether, if they used formal care, they would be willing to pay higher fees in order to increase the salaries of staff and reduce staff turnover. The question was evenly split: 55 per cent in favour, 45 per cent against. The work of early childhood educators is vital to Australia's future and I commend them for it. (Time expired)

Question agreed to.

Federation Chamber adjourned at 11:32
QUESTIONs IN WRITING

Post-polio Syndrome Clinics
(Question No. 1133)

Mr Oakeshott asked the Minister for Health, in writing, on 14 August 2012:
How is the Government responding to calls for post-polio syndrome clinics to be established within the Australian health network?

Ms Plibersek: The answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
I note the Discussion paper on the late effects of polio/post-polio syndrome prepared by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health and Ageing, and its recommendations. I would like to acknowledge the work of the Committee in highlighting this important health issue.
Recommendation 3 of the paper calls on Medicare Locals to engage with Polio Australia and other stakeholders to help raise awareness of the late effects of polio / post-polio syndrome.
Medicare Locals are a nation-wide network of 61 primary health care organisations, and operate as health system planners at the regional level. They have primary responsibility for identifying the health care needs of their local populations, based on a comprehensive needs assessment process involving public and stakeholder consultation, and coordinating activities to address identified service gaps. Medicare Locals are also responsible for ensuring that primary health care works for the whole of the local community, including through addressing the needs of people affected by the late effects of polio/ post-polio syndrome.
Community members, including post-polio syndrome patients, their families and their carers, are encouraged to engage with their Medicare Local to ensure that their specific health care needs can be better understood, and appropriately addressed, by the Medicare Local.
The Medicare Local network is well placed to support clinicians, service providers and peak bodies in improving patient care. An example of how this can be achieved is through Medicare Locals supporting local primary health care providers to participate in continuing professional development activities.
The Government urges peak stakeholder groups such as Polio Australia to engage with the Australian Medicare Local Alliance (AML Alliance), as the national body for Medicare Locals, to jointly consider options for how the Medicare Local network can help to address the impacts of the late effects of polio / post-polio syndrome, in collaboration with local primary health care service providers and practitioners.