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FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—SECOND PERIOD

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

House of Representatives Office holders
Speaker—Hon. Bronwyn Kathleen Bishop MP
Deputy Speaker—Hon. Bruce Craig Scott MP
Second Deputy Speaker—Mr Robert George Mitchell
Members of the Speaker's Panel—Mr Russell Evan Broadbent MP,
Mr Ian Reginald Goodenough MP, Mrs Natasha Louise Griggs MP,
Mr Craig Kelly MP, Hon. Charles Christian Porter MP, Mr Ross Xavier Vasta MP,
Mr Brett David Whiteley MP

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

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Deputy Leader—Hon. Julie Isabel Bishop MP
Chief Government Whip—Hon. Philip Maxwell Ruddock MP
Government Whips—Mr Scott Buchholz MP and Ms Nola Bethwyn Marino MP

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

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

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<td>Robertson, NSW</td>
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<td>Wilkie, Mr Andrew Damien</td>
<td>Denison, TAS</td>
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<td>Williams, Mr Matthew</td>
<td>Hindmarsh, SA</td>
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<td>Wilson, Mr Richard James</td>
<td>O'Connor, WA</td>
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<td>Wood, Mr Jason Peter</td>
<td>La Trobe, VIC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wyatt, Mr Kenneth George AM</td>
<td>Hasluck, WA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zappia, Mr Antonio</td>
<td>Makin, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
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**PARTY ABBREVIATIONS**
ALP—Australian Labor Party; LP—Liberal Party of Australia; NATS—The Nationals; IND—Independent; NATSWA—The Nationals WA; CLP—Country Liberal Party; AUS—Katters Australia Party; AG—Australian Greens; PUP—Palmer United Party

**Heads of Parliamentary Departments**
Clerk of the Senate—R Laing
Clerk of the House of Representatives—D Elder
Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—C Mills
Parliamentary Budget Officer—P Bowen
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon. Josh Frydenberg MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon. Alan Tudge MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Warren Truss MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon. Jamie Briggs MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Attorney-General</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. George Brandis QC</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for the Arts</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. George Brandis QC</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Vice-President of the Executive Council)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Justice</td>
<td>The Hon. Michael Keenan MP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Hon. Joe Hockey MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon. David Johnston</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon. Michael Ronaldson</td>
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<td>The Hon. Stuart Robert MP</td>
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<td>The Hon. Michael McCormack MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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The SPEAKER (Hon. Bronwyn Bishop) took the chair at 09:00, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

BILLS

Land Transport Infrastructure Amendment Bill 2014

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Truss.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (09:01): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.


This government is committed to building the infrastructure of the 21st century—the infrastructure Australia will need to meet the challenges and opportunities ahead.

The government is working with state and territory governments to deliver the nationally significant infrastructure projects to grow Australia's productivity and improve living standards. We also need to work in partnership with the private sector to maximise private capital investment in infrastructure. This collaboration between the Australian government, states and territories and the private sector will enable the successful delivery of the infrastructure Australia expects, industries need and our people deserve.

Through the Infrastructure Investment Program, the government has committed $35.5 billion over six years to road and rail projects, including:

- $6.7 billion to upgrade the Bruce Highway;
- $5.6 billion to finish the duplication of the Pacific Highway;
- $1.5 billion to the WestConnex project in Sydney;
- $1.5 billion for the East-West Link in Melbourne;
- $1 billion to continue the Gateway Motorway North upgrade in Brisbane;
- $700 million for the Toowoomba Second Range Crossing;
- $686 million to finish the Gateway WA Project in Perth;
- $615 million to build the Swan Valley Bypass on the Perth to Darwin Highway;
- $500 million for the upgrade of South Road in Adelaide;
- $405 million for the F3 to M2 Link project in Sydney; and
- $400 million to continue the Midland Highway upgrade in Tasmania.
And of course there will be many more. The government has also committed $300 million to finalise plans, engineering design and environmental assessments for the Melbourne to Brisbane Inland Rail project.

Amendments to the Nation Building Program (National Land Transport) Act 2009 (the act) are necessary to facilitate the government’s ambitious land transport infrastructure agenda.

The bill will rename the act to the National Land Transport Act 2014. The names of some of the parts of the act will also be amended to reflect its change of name. This name change also requires consequential amendments to the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997 and the Telstra Corporation Act 1991.

The bill enables the continuation of the Roads to Recovery Program (the program), which provides vital funding to local governments for the maintenance of the nation’s local road infrastructure beyond 30 June 2014.

This change is necessary as the act currently specifies the Roads to Recovery funding period as ending on 30 June 2014. The bill removes the specification of the funding period from the act and places it in the Roads to Recovery List. This removes the need to amend the act every time the Roads to Recovery funding period changes, and ensures that this very important program will continue.

The bill also inserts a power for the minister to determine a Roads to Recovery List, which is essential for the program to be able to function. The Roads to Recovery List will be exempt from disallowance under the Legislative Instruments Act 2003, which will provide certainty for the local government funding recipients of the program.

The bill also streamlines and enhances the operation of the act by combining part 3, National Projects, and part 6, Off-Network Projects, into one part for Investment Projects. Parts 3 and 6 contain a significant number of identical provisions. By combining the two parts into one this will remove unnecessary duplication of provisions.

The new part 3 for Investment Projects also includes a new requirement that states and territories notify the minister as soon as possible after the sale or disposal of land that was acquired using Australian government funding. This will ensure a timely response to land sales or disposals from both the states and territories and the Australian government. The proceeds of the sale or disposal can then be allocated to new infrastructure projects.

The bill also slightly alters one of the reasons for granting states and territories an exemption from the public tender requirements in part 3. Work that costs less than an amount prescribed by regulations can currently be exempted and this is being altered so that the amount is determined instead by legislative instrument. This alteration will reduce regulatory delays.

The bill introduces a new type of project that can receive funding under part 4 of the act—transport development and innovation projects. Projects that involve research, investigations, studies or analysis of investment or Black Spot projects, previously funded off-network projects, and works funded under the Roads to Recovery Program, will be eligible for part 4 funding. This amendment will enhance the management of projects and the Infrastructure Investment Program. Part 4 funding will also be able to be used for analysis of projects submitted for consideration for funding as investment or Black Spot projects, to help inform advice to government.
The bill also adds two new types of eligible funding recipient into the act. Partnerships have been added as an eligible funding recipient for parts 4 and 5 of the act. This change will simplify funding arrangements for firms without a body corporate structure. Non-corporate Commonwealth entities whose functions include research related to land transport research operations will now be able to receive funding under part 5—funding for land transport research entities.

The government has committed to the continuation of the Black Spot program, which provides funding to address road sites that are high-risk areas for serious crashes. Black Spot projects are administered under part 7 of the act and the bill makes a few changes to that part as a result of the act's name change.

The bill makes no amendments to the National Land Transport Network, a vital component of the Infrastructure Investment Program. This network contains the key road and rail links connecting Australia.

The bill also repeals three spent land transport infrastructure acts. The Australian Land Transport Development Act 1988 was superseded by the then AusLink (National Land Transport) Act 2005, now the Nation Building Program (National Land Transport) Act 2009. There are no outstanding claims under the Australian Land Transport Development Act and consequently it should be repealed.

The bill also repeals the Roads to Recovery Act 2000. The Roads to Recovery Program commenced under this Act and in 2005. The program was moved into the then AusLink (National Land Transport) Act 2005, now the Nation Building Program (National Land Transport) Act 2009. There are no outstanding claims under the Roads to Recovery Act and consequently it should be repealed.

The bill further repeals the Railway Standardisation (New South Wales and Victoria) Agreement Act 1958. This act incorporates an agreement between the Australian government, New South Wales and Victoria to implement gauge standardisation, with the Australian government loaning funding to New South Wales and Victoria for that purpose. These works were completed in 1962 and the last loan repayments were received in June 2013. As the loan has been repaid the Railway Standardisation New South Wales and Victoria Act can now be repealed.

The amendments to the Nation Building Program Act, and the repeal of the three spent acts, do not have any regulatory or financial impacts on businesses and the not-for-profit sector.

Australia's future growth will be significantly influenced by our capacity to deliver more appropriate, efficient and effective infrastructure. The amendments in this bill will help to better deliver the infrastructure Australia critically needs.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

**Governor-General Amendment (Salary) Bill 2014**

**First Reading**

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Pyne.

Bill read a first time.
Second Reading

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (09:12): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill will set the salary of the next Governor-General.

The Governor-General is appointed by Her Majesty the Queen on the advice and recommendation of the Prime Minister and under the provisions of the letters patent relating to the office. On 28 January 2014, the Prime Minister announced that the Queen had approved his recommendation to appoint General Peter Cosgrove AC, MC as our next Governor-General following the retirement of Her Excellency the Honourable Quentin Bryce AC, CVO.

General Cosgrove will be sworn in as Governor-General on 28 March 2014. Section 3 of the Constitution prevents the Governor-General's salary from being altered during his term of office. As such, the salary must be set prior to the appointment of General Cosgrove as Governor-General on 28 March.

Although the Governor-General serves at the Queen's pleasure, it is usual to serve for approximately five years. As such, it is necessary to set the next Governor-General's salary at a level appropriate for the duration of this term.

It has been longstanding practice to set the Governor-General's salary with reference to that of the Chief Justice of the High Court. The proposed salary is based on a forecast of the Chief Justice's salary over the next five years using wages growth projections. I note that the Chief Justice's salary is determined annually by the Remuneration Tribunal, a body that is independent of government.

In setting an appropriate salary, the Governor-General designate requested that regard be given to the Commonwealth-funded military pension he will be entitled to receive during his term in office. This is consistent with precedent established by Sir William Deane in 1995 and continued most recently for Her Excellency Ms Bryce in 2008.

The proposed salary of $425,000 per annum therefore takes account of General Cosgrove's military pension.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Amendment Bill 2014

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Pyne.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (09:14): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Reducing red tape and enhancing quality in higher education are key priorities for the government. The government has committed to deliberate action to remove red tape and is determined to implement an appropriate deregulatory agenda to ensure that higher education institutions have more time and resources to devote to doing what they do best—that is, delivering the highest quality teaching, learning and research.
To support higher education institutions to focus their energies and resources on their core business, the government committed to implementing the recommendations from the independent *Review of higher education regulation* (the review). The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Amendment Bill 2014 (the bill) will give effect to key recommendations contained in the review.

The bill will deliver measures to improve the efficiency of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) and reduce the regulatory burden on higher education institutions. The measures will enable TEQSA to focus on its core functions of provider registration and course accreditation, and the development of more efficient processes around these functions.

To support TEQSA's focus on its core functions, the bill will remove TEQSA's quality assessment function, which allowed the agency to conduct sector-wide, thematic reviews of institutions or courses of study. Such reviews are time and resource-intensive of TEQSA itself but also of the higher education institutions, which are asked to provide input to the reviews. They do not relate directly to TEQSA's core responsibilities to register providers and accredit courses. Broader issues around quality in higher education and risks to quality are better supported through the constructive engagement with and initiatives of institutions themselves.

The bill will enhance TEQSA's capacity to delegate its functions and powers to appropriate level staff within the organisation. This will support swifter decision making and faster turnaround of provider applications. This amendment will also assist to ensure that applicants seeking to appeal a TEQSA decision can access TEQSA's internal review mechanisms rather than, as a first step, having to seek review through the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

The bill will enable TEQSA to extend the period of registration and accreditation in particular cases on its own initiative, thus improving TEQSA's ability to take a more flexible approach to managing the registration and accreditation processes. For example, in cases where institutions have multiple course accreditations with different end dates or which do not align with the period of registration, or where they are registered under both the TEQSA Act and the Education Services for Overseas Students Act, TEQSA would be able to adjust the period of accreditation or registration to achieve better alignment. This will make the processes much more efficient for higher education institutions.

In line with TEQSA's refined functions, the amendments will provide the minister with the flexibility to appoint fewer commissioners, remove the requirement to appoint full-time and part-time commissioners, and separate the roles and responsibilities of the chief commissioner and the chief executive officer. To enable effect to be given to these amendments, the bill will curtail the terms of the incumbent commissioners, allowing the minister the flexibility to better determine the number of commissioners required to support TEQSA's renewed focus on its core activities.

The bill enhances the minister's ability to give a general direction to TEQSA in relation to the performance of its functions and the exercise of its powers, and a specific direction in regard to the fees that TEQSA charges for its services.

Finally, the bill provides for a number of technical amendments suggested by TEQSA to improve the efficiency of the notification requirements. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.
Fair Work Amendment Bill 2014

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Pyne.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (09:19): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Only a common-sense and practical approach to workplace relations can protect people's jobs and income, and encourage an environment for productive and innovative business. That is the approach this government promised in our Policy to Improve the Fair Work Laws, released in May last year. Our policy will help make Australian workplaces even better, by improving the Fair Work laws to provide a stable, fair and prosperous future for all. The coalition's workplace relations reforms will restore the balance back to the sensible centre. This has already begun through the introduction of the Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Amendment Bill 2013 and the Building and Construction Industry (Improving Productivity) Bill 2013.

This bill will deliver on key aspects of our election policy and does not go any further. Indeed, on union workplace access, individual flexibility arrangements and the removal of the ability to strike first and talk later, we are delivering on specific policy commitments made by the Labor Party prior to the 2007 election but which Labor deliberately broke.

Through our Fair Work Amendment Bill 2014, we are giving effect to a number of commitments in our policy and further restoring balance to the system. We will do this by:

- improving the process for the negotiation of greenfields agreements, to ensure that unions can no longer frustrate bargaining for these agreements through unsustainable claims and delays, which can threaten investment and delay the commencement of major new projects that are crucial to our prosperity;
- restoring union workplace access rules reflecting those in place prior to Labor's unbalanced amendments and dealing with excessive right-of-entry visits by union officials;
- improving workplace productivity and flexibility by enhancing the scope for employees to make individual flexibility arrangements that meet their genuine needs, as determined by those employees;
- closing the 'strike first, talk later' loophole in the good faith bargaining rules, which Labor refused to address; and
- maintaining the value of unclaimed wages recovered for workers by the Commonwealth.

This bill also enacts a number of recommendations from the Fair Work Review Panel in its 2012 report commissioned by the now Leader of the Opposition, the member for Maribyrnong.

Union workplace access

The Fair Work Amendment Bill will address the current imbalance in union workplace access rules. Our changes will fairly and sensibly balance the right of employees to be
represented in the workplace if they wish to be, with the right of employers to go about their business without unnecessary disruption.

The government sees right of entry as a specific statutory privilege to which conditions ought to apply. Regrettably, some union bosses do not.

In 2007, the Labor Party promised on multiple occasions that there would be no changes to the union right-of-entry laws. In a press conference on 28 August 2007, then deputy opposition leader Julia Gillard said:

We will make sure that current right of entry provisions stay. We understand that entering on the premises of an employer needs to happen in an orderly way. We will keep the right of entry provisions.

These promises were not kept and unions were given much easier access to workplaces under the Fair Work Act provisions which were exploited.

This has meant that many businesses face excessive workplace visits from unions even when their employees are not union members and have not asked for the union's presence. The problem has been exacerbated in some workplaces by unions competing to represent employees at the workplace.

The problem was highlighted by the former government's Fair Work Review Panel, which noted that the Pluto LNG Project received over 200 right-of-entry visits in only three months. BHP Billiton's Worsley Alumina plant faced 676 right of entry visits in a single year. Our changes will reduce the capacity for unions to deliberately harass and disrupt businesses in this way.

A recent case featuring CFMEU National President Joe McDonald has underlined the urgent need for these reforms. In the most recent case, where Mr McDonald and the CFMEU were fined $193,600, he ignored the request of an industrial relations consultant to leave a site owned by Citic Pacific's Sino Iron Ore in Western Australia. When asked by the consultant to leave the site because he didn't have a right-of-entry permit, Mr McDonald replied:

I haven't had one for seven years, and that hasn't f**king stopped me.

Mr McDonald's attitude reflects the regrettable dark underbelly of the union movement that should have no place in modern and fair workplaces.

To be clear, these amendments will enact Labor's publicly stated promise prior to the 2007 election—a promise that was not honoured. Given that the Labor Party in opposition, with the strong support of the union movement, supported this 2007 policy platform we expect that these amendments will not be contentious. Most union officials will find these changes are not impacting their sensible approach to their right-of-entry activities.

**Right of entry—eligibility**

Currently, right of entry for discussion purposes can occur when the relevant union is entitled to represent the industrial interests of the employees at the workplace. This means unions can enter and hold discussions even if they have no actual members at that workplace and no-one has sought their presence.

The bill will amend the provisions so that the ability for unions to enter a workplace is either tied to a union's recognised representative role at the workplace, or employees at the workplace have requested the union's presence. A union will only be entitled to enter a workplace for discussion purposes if:
1. they are covered by an enterprise agreement, or
2. they have been invited by a member or employee they are entitled to represent.

If the employee who would like the union to come to their workplace wishes to remain anonymous, a union will be able to apply to the Fair Work Commission for an 'invitation certificate'. The Fair Work Commission must issue a certificate if it is satisfied that a worker who performs work on the premises and whom the union is entitled to represent has invited the union to the workplace to hold discussions. The certificate will not identify the employee who has made the request. This will restore the balance in the right-of-entry regime so that is similar to prior to the commencement of the Fair Work Act—consistent with the bipartisan consensus at the time of the 2007 election.

**Right of entry—frequency disputes**

The bill will also provide an effective mechanism for the Fair Work Commission to deal with disputes about excessive right-of-entry visits for discussion purposes.

The previous government amendments to the Fair Work Act in this area were drafted in a way that renders them largely ineffective and only able to be used in extreme circumstances: where there has been an 'unreasonable diversion of the occupier's critical resources'.

These amendments will remove this restriction to ensure the commission has the power to properly deal with excessive right-of-entry visits—for example, by suspending, revoking or imposing conditions on an entry permit. Additionally, the amendments provide that the Fair Work Commission can take into account the combined impact of visits by all unions to the workplace, reflecting that in some circumstances an employer will be subject to visits by multiple unions.

**Right of entry—repeals**

The bill will also repeal the previous government's amendments, made in 2013, that expanded union right-of-entry rights even further by allowing for uninvited 'lunch-room invasions' and requiring employers to pay for the cost of 'union boss joyrides' to remote worksites. Those amendments give unions the right to insist on addressing workers in their lunch room, even when the workers have not requested their presence and are not union members. This is unfair to the 87 per cent of private sector workers who are not union members and for all workers who just want to eat their lunch in peace—and don't we all.

This bill will restore the sensible arrangements that were previously in place, whereby union officials must comply with a reasonable request by the employer to hold discussions in a particular room. Employers will continue to be prevented from nominating locations with the intention of intimidating, discouraging or hindering employees from participating in discussions.

The former government also introduced obligations on employers at remote worksites to provide union officials with transport and accommodation to enable them to access those sites. We will repeal this costly and onerous piece of regulation and instead reinstate the previous approach where unions and employers can reach their own arrangements in these circumstances.

**Greenfields agreements**
Greenfields agreements can be vital for the commencement of major new projects, as investment funding is often contingent on settled labour arrangements being in place. The bill will ensure that these agreements are negotiated subject to good faith bargaining requirements and in a reasonable time frame. These amendments are another step to demonstrate that 'Australia is open for business'. They are essential if Australia is to encourage future investment in new resources projects.

The bill will remove the effective union veto power over greenfields agreements under the current arrangements that have enabled them to frustrate the making of these agreements by seeking exorbitant wages and conditions or refusing to agree at all. As the former government's Fair Work Review noted, in somewhat understated language, these practices 'potentially threaten future investment in major projects in Australia'. This is bad for jobs and bad for the economy.

The bill will extend good faith bargaining rules to the negotiation of greenfields agreements to improve standards of bargaining conduct. This will mean that employers and unions will be required to, for example, attend and participate in meetings with each other and consider and respond to proposals in a timely manner.

To ensure that greenfields agreements can be made in a timely manner, the bill will establish a new, optional three-month negotiation time frame. The three-month time frame will apply where appropriate notice is provided by an employer to the relevant union or unions. If agreement cannot be reached in this time frame, the employer will be able to take its proposed agreement to the Fair Work Commission for approval. The agreement will have to satisfy the existing approval requirements under the Fair Work Act, including the better off overall test. The agreement will also have to satisfy a new requirement that it provides for pay and conditions that are consistent with the prevailing standards within the relevant industry for equivalent work. Consistent with the existing framework, the Fair Work Commission must also be satisfied that the union or unions to be covered by the agreement are able to represent the majority of future employees.

The amendments to the greenfields provisions will help to unlock new investment and prevent needless delays to new projects. This will provide confidence and certainty to investors and ensure that Australia and Australians benefit from the prosperity generated by new projects.

These amendments will send a strong message to overseas investors that Australia is again open for business and that projects can get underway quickly.

**Fixing the 'strike first, talk later' loophole**

The bill will remove the 'strike first, talk later' loophole under the Fair Work Act, consistent with the promises of the Labor Party prior to the 2007 election and the recommendation of the Fair Work Review Panel. In his speech to the National Press Club of 17 April 2007, the then Labor leader said:

… industrial disputes are serious. They hurt workers, they hurt businesses, they can hurt families and communities, and they certainly hurt the economy.

…

They [employees] will not be able to strike unless there has been genuine good faith bargaining.
This is not the case under the Fair Work Act, where employees are allowed to strike before bargaining has even commenced.

The bill will amend the Fair Work Act to provide that protected industrial action can only be taken if bargaining for a proposed agreement has commenced. This amendment will mean that industrial action cannot be the first step in the bargaining process, restoring a balanced and harmonious approach to enterprise bargaining.

The coalition will fix this loophole. In doing so, Labor's 2007 promise will actually be legislated.

**Individual flexibility arrangements**

The bill introduces amendments to provide clarity and certainty for employees around the use of individual flexibility arrangements (IFAs).

IFAs are an important tool introduced by Labor with the intent of enabling workers and their employers to mutually agree on conditions that suit their needs, while ensuring that employees are better off overall compared to their underpinning employment instrument.

IFAs ought to be an important option to enable employees to, for instance, manage their childcare or other caring arrangements, to spend time with family or for other commitments. They are specific to the individual and not designed as a management tool for a business.

These amendments about IFAs are all based on the Fair Work Review Panel recommendations. They also include further new safeguards to ensure that employees are better off.

To be clear, the current IFA framework in the Fair Work Act will stay, with additional protections put in place. This means that:

- an employer cannot force an employee to sign an IFA or make it a condition of employment;
- the employee must be better off overall than what they would have been under the applicable modern award or enterprise agreement; and,
- a worker must provide a statement to the employer saying that the IFA meets their genuine needs and that they are better off overall.

Under the current system, unions can restrict the scope of flexibility terms under enterprise agreements through the bargaining process to only cover a single matter, for instance the taking of leave. This means that workers may be denied the chance to have IFAs on other matters even if they and their employer want to agree to more suitable arrangements. The amendments will deliver on the promises made by Labor in 2007 and provide that IFAs may be made in relation to all of the matters currently prescribed in the model flexibility term, to the extent that those matters are covered in the agreement. This will ensure that workers have access to fair flexibility without a veto by union bosses.

The bill also implements the Fair Work Review Panel recommendation that employers should, in limited circumstances, have a legal defence if they enter into an IFA in good faith believing it meets all the requirements of the legislation when it turns out later it does not. The defence will only apply where the employer believed on reasonable grounds that all statutory requirements have been met in relation to the IFA. The bill will also strengthen protections for employees by requiring a statement setting out that the arrangement meets their genuine needs.
and results in them being better off overall. This will make the position absolutely clear: employees will only make IFAs that provide for non-monetary benefits when the employees themselves make a clear statement in writing why they are better off overall. Two further amendments recommended by the Fair Work Review Panel will be made to provide clarity and certainty to both employers and employees. First, the unilateral termination period for IFAs made under enterprise agreements will be extended from 28 days to 13 weeks, consistent with the position for awards. In addition, the 13-week unilateral termination period for both modern awards and enterprise agreements will be placed in the legislation.

The second amendment will confirm the existing position that the better off overall test for IFAs can be satisfied by exchanging monetary benefits for benefits that are not monetary. This is already the case under the legislation as introduced by the Labor Party that operated while the Leader of the Opposition was the workplace relations minister. This position has been confirmed by the independent Fair Work Ombudsman. The amendment, combined with the government's new requirement for a statement in writing from the employee, will provide greater protection and certainty for all parties.

All other rules relating to an IFA will be retained, including that they cannot be made a condition of employment, must leave the employee better off overall and must be genuinely agreed to.

Anyone who opposes these amendments needs to explain to Australian workers why they should not have the opportunity to be better off overall if the arrangement genuinely meets their own needs, as assessed by themselves individually.

**Other Fair Work Act review recommendations**

The bill will also implement a number of other common-sense recommendations that were made by the now Leader of the Opposition's Fair Work Act Review Panel in 2012 but not implemented by the previous government.

The bill will clarify the interaction between leave and workers compensation by removing an exception that allows employees in a few jurisdictions to accrue or take leave while absent from work receiving workers compensation. This will remove inconsistency and confusion that currently exists for employees and employers and ensure that employees on workers compensation across the country are treated consistently.

In line with the Fair Work Review Panel's recommendation, the bill will clarify the circumstances where annual leave loading is payable when a person leaves their job. The change will restore the longstanding position, that employees are only entitled to annual leave loading when their employment ends if it is expressly provided for in their award or workplace agreement. This will address the confusion that currently exists as a result of the legislation and numerous awards adopting different positions. It will still allow for annual leave loading to be paid (including after employment has ended) if it is in the employee's modern award or enterprise bargaining agreement.

The bill will introduce a requirement that an employer must give an employee who has requested to extend their unpaid parental leave a reasonable opportunity to discuss the request unless the employer has already agreed to the request. To be clear, this discussion does not need to be face to face but can occur by other means, for example a teleconference or videoconference.
The bill will make changes to the transfer of business rules to assist the transfer of employees who wish to move between associated entities voluntarily. Currently, if an employee wants to take on a new position with an associated entity of his or her employer, there needs to be an application to the Fair Work Commission to prevent the employee's industrial instrument transferring with them. Under the changes, the terms and conditions of employment at the new employer will automatically apply to an employee transferring between associated entities on their own initiative. This change will reduce red tape for employers and employees in such circumstances.

In line with the recommendation of the Fair Work Act Review Panel, the bill will give the Fair Work Commission clearer powers to dismiss unfair dismissal proceedings 'on the papers' without conducting a conference or hearing in certain circumstances, such as where an applicant fails to attend a conference or hearing or fails to comply with an order or direction made by the commission. The bill includes safeguards to ensure procedural fairness for the parties before matters can be dismissed. This will help prevent employers incurring unnecessary costs in defending a claim that is not being seriously pursued by the applicant.

**Interest on money held for underpaid workers**

The government is taking action to ensure that employees retain the value of money recovered and held by the Commonwealth on their behalf. When an employee who is owed money, for example unpaid wages, cannot be located then the employer pays the money to the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth holds onto the money until the worker can be found. No interest is payable on these moneys, no matter how long it has been held by the Commonwealth.

The bill will rectify this situation to enable the Fair Work Ombudsman to pay interest on amounts held for more than six months and worth more than $100. Interest payments will be calculated using the consumer price index, similar to the approach used by ASIC for unclaimed money in bank accounts.

**Conclusion**

The government released its workplace relations policy well before the 2013 election to address a range of key problems with the Fair Work laws. With this bill we are continuing to implement the commitments we made in that policy.

This bill will amend the Fair Work Act to provide a more balanced workplace relations system while safeguarding workers' conditions and protections.

The measures in the bill will help encourage investment in new projects that are important to the Australian economy by preventing unions from vetoing greenfields agreements. This will strongly signal to investors that Australia is open for business.

Unnecessary and costly industrial action will be addressed by ensuring that bargaining must have commenced before strike action can be taken.

Improvements to individual flexibility arrangements will enhance productivity and fairness by giving workers greater scope to negotiate arrangements with their employers that meet their genuine needs, as assessed by workers themselves. Everything we are doing on the issue of IFAs was recommended by the previous government's Fair Work Review Panel and clearly articulated in the coalition's election policy.
The bill will deliver on what was promised by the previous government in 2007 on union workplace access but never delivered. It will implement fairer and more effective right-of-entry laws that mean businesses can carry on without unnecessary disruption and employees can access union representation if they want it.

It will also address the failure of the previous government to implement a number of common-sense recommendations made by its own Fair Work Act Review Panel in 2012. The bill implements the coalition's publicly stated election policy—nothing more and nothing less.

The government is strongly committed to these measures. They are necessary to help build a more stable, fair and prosperous future for Australia's workers, businesses and the economy. We would therefore call on the Labor Party and all members of parliament to support the sensible and measured reforms included in this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Social Security Legislation Amendment (Increased Employment Participation) Bill 2014

First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Hartsuyker.

Bill read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr HARTSUYKER (Cowper—Deputy Leader of the House and Assistant Minister for Employment) (09:46): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Today I introduce the Social Security Amendment (Increased Employment Participation) Bill 2014, which provides assistance to help the long-term unemployed, particularly young job seekers, to find and keep a job.

The coalition government is committed to building a strong and prosperous economy that creates jobs for all Australians.

We do not, however, underestimate the size of this challenge.

The coalition has inherited an economy that is in transition and has been burdened by $123 billion in projected deficits and is heading towards $667 billion in debt unless action is taken.

The Australian public knows that the coalition has a proven track record of growing the economy, reducing debt, getting people into jobs and off the unemployment queue.

The coalition has been elected with a clear mandate to get our economy back on track.

The Australian public voted for our plan to achieve this by abolishing the carbon and the mining taxes and removing the excessive red tape that has strangled the economy in recent years.

The coalition understands that it is business, not government, that creates prosperity and generates new jobs. We are committed to establishing the right policy settings to help business grow.
The coalition also understands that it is important to our nation's future that we have as many people as possible in the workforce so that we can meet the economic and social challenges ahead.

We also recognise the damaging effects of unemployment on people. Being out of work for an extended period can erode a person's skills, confidence and sense of pride.

This in turn, can make it harder for people to find and keep a job and leads to a vicious cycle of welfare dependency.

Long-term unemployment can be especially damaging for young job seekers. It is at the start of our working lives that we learn many of the skills that employers value the most—such as punctuality, teamwork and commitment.

This bill introduces two measures that will help to achieve these objectives, namely, the Job Commitment Bonus for young Australians and Relocation Assistance to Take Up a Job.

The government is determined to prevent young job seekers from sliding into long-term welfare dependency and to reward positive, pro-work behaviours.

That is why we are investing in our young people by implementing a job commitment bonus. This new payment will be available for young Australians aged 18 to 30 who have been unemployed for 12 months or more, who have been in receipt of Newstart allowance or youth allowance (other), and who go on to get and hold down a job.

The two bonuses will be available: one worth $2,500 when an eligible young job seeker remains in employment and off income support for 12 months, and another worth $4,000 when the job seeker remains in employment and off income support for an additional 12 months—that is 24 months in total.

The job commitment bonus will reward those young Australians who demonstrate a commitment to the world of work rather than the world of welfare.

The government also recognises that for many job seekers the costs of relocating to take up a new job can be prohibitive.

That is why the government is introducing the Relocation Assistance to Take Up a Job program, to provide funding to eligible job seekers to meet the costs of moving to take up a job.

This targeted program provides financial support to job seekers who have been on Newstart allowance, youth allowance (other) and parenting payment for at least the preceding 12 months to relocate to take up employment or an apprenticeship.

Up to $6,000 will be available to support eligible job seekers who relocate to a regional area to take up a job.

Up to $3,000 will be available to support eligible job seekers who relocate to a metropolitan area from a regional area to take up a job.

This $3,000 payment will also be available to eligible job seekers who relocate from a metropolitan area with higher unemployment to one with lower unemployment to take a job, for instance, moving from Adelaide to Melbourne.

In addition families with dependent children will be provided with up to an extra $3,000 in recognition of the extra costs that can accrue when the family has to move.
Under these measures, for instance, a family moving from Sydney to Wagga Wagga to take up a job could receive up to $9,000 to help meet the costs of relocation. This is $2,500 more than is available under the current arrangements.

Job seekers will be reimbursed for the costs they incur in relocating through payments made in advance in cases of significant hardship or by reimbursement.

Given the financial investment that the government is providing, it is appropriate that we have strong measures in place to ensure job seekers who have received assistance to relocate to take up a job stay in that job rather than return to welfare.

This bill amends the Social Security (Administration) Act 1999 so that participants who leave employment without a reasonable excuse within six months of receiving a relocation payment will incur a 26-week non-payment period before becoming eligible to receive unemployment benefits again.

Conclusion

Together these measures are a significant investment by the government to support the long-term unemployed, particularly our unemployed young people, to take up employment as well as boost Australia’s economic activity.

The measures provide incentives for young people to stay in employment and help to address some of the barriers that the long-term unemployment that they face when they are trying to find work.

Under these measures, for instance, a young job seeker who moves to regional Australia and stays in employment for two years could receive up to $12,500 to help them make this very positive change in their life.

This compares very favourably with the financial costs to taxpayers of a young person remaining on welfare for that period and beyond.

This government is determined to ensure that job seekers are given hope, reward and opportunity and are not abandoned to a lifetime of welfare dependency and despair.

This bill will assist in the delivery of these programs, which are a core component of our commitment to increase workforce participation and help people move from welfare to work so they can build a more prosperous future.

Debate adjourned.

GOVERNOR-GENERAL’S SPEECH

Address-in-Reply

Debate resumed on the motion:

That the Address be agreed to.

Mr BRENDAN O’CONNOR (Gorton) (09:52): I rise to continue my contribution in this debate. As I was saying last night, there needs to be better effort by government to respond to job losses across the nation. To date we have seen no job plan to mitigate loss or to transition workers into emerging jobs, and that is something that the government must address quickly.

I also indicated last night the concern that the government, rather than focusing on fighting for Australian jobs, seems to be distracted by looking to settle old scores or to use the resources and powers of the state to attack what it perceives to be its political opponents. We
believe that is not what the focus should be. For example, the opposition support the Royal Commission into the Home Insulation Program but we do not believe that the terms of reference will provide an opportunity for us to see improved safety in workplaces. We therefore question, as do others, the motive of the government in relation to that commission.

We oppose the royal commission into the entire union movement, five unions of which were expressly referred to in the terms of reference. We believe it is the largest fishing expedition that we have seen to date by this government. We believe the intention is to assault the union movement entirely because the government perceives to be a political opponent, and not to target what are serious allegations of crime. The opposition does agree that those must be targeted.

For that reason, the opposition made it very clear that we believe we can have a task force responding to those serious allegations. Anybody who understands the history of the Australian Crime Commission would understand that it was established as a result of the recommendation by the royal commission to ensure that we had a standing commission that could fight serious and organised crime. We believe that, along with the federal and state police and other Commonwealth and state agencies, it is far better suited to tackle crime—if that is the intention of the government.

Again, people call into question, quite rightly, the motives of the government in using millions and millions of dollars of taxpayers' money to attack what the government perceives to be its political opponents rather than to fight crime, which should be the purpose of the commission. It is also a reflection on the Australian Crime Commission, which has powers as great as any royal commission would have but which, more importantly, has the expertise to tackle serious and organised crime in this country. Therefore, and understandably, it would find it rather strange that it has not been called upon to do such work.

There are concerns that this government is distracted by these matters rather than focusing on fighting for Australian jobs and tackling the challenges that beset our economy. On top of that, although when they were in opposition they said they did not want to return to the industrial relations fights of the past, it seems to be the case that they want to continue to wage that war. We saw the government—the Prime Minister and, indeed, the Minister for Employment—suggest that the reason SPC received no money was their outrageous employment conditions. Firstly, that is an outrageous slur on decent low- and middle-income earners in this country. Further to the point, the cabinet decision was predicated on a false assumption—namely, the conditions of employment that were asserted by the Prime Minister were in fact not true. Was it any wonder, therefore, that the local member, Sharman Stone, called the Prime Minister a liar? This is a concern.

Further to that, we asked the question: why did Cadbury and not SPC receive money? I was watching the Channel 7 news last night and I got to see the former chief of staff of the Assistant Minister for Health sitting next to the now Prime Minister as the Prime Minister announced the $16 million for Cadbury. I am starting to understand the distinction—why SPC receives no money or assistance from the Commonwealth and Cadbury does. It is clear now that the former chief of staff of the Assistant Minister for Health was engaged in ensuring that Cadbury would be in receipt of that money at a time when he owned a lobbying firm—it was 100 per cent owned by him and his wife—that was lobbying on behalf of the parent company of Cadbury. Of course, that is why the government has acceded to that request.
This government needs to have a jobs plan for workers who are losing their jobs. Today Qantas announced another 4,000 job losses in that company. That is now, in total, 5,000 jobs. That is Toyota's and Holden's combined job losses, and what is the government doing? It is trying to settle old scores, use the state to attack its political opponents and help its mates out, including, of course, the former chief of staff of the Assistant Minister the Health.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the address be agreed to. Before I call the honourable member for Griffith, I would remind the House that this is the honourable member's maiden speech and I ask that the House extend to her the usual courtesies.

Ms BUTLER (Griffith) (09:59): Madam Speaker, I acknowledge the Ngunnawal and Ngambri peoples, the custodians of the land on which we meet. I pay my respects to elders past and present. I am honoured today to come into this chamber as the elected representative for the people of Griffith, on Brisbane's south side, so I also pay my respects to the first nations people of that land, the Ugarapul, Yuggera, Jagera and Turrbal peoples.

The south side of Brisbane has a rich Indigenous history and is home to a number of Indigenous organisations. I thank those organisations for their work in preserving cultural heritage and reconnecting members of the stolen generation with their families. I remember the sorry felt across the nation when the Bringing them home report was published in 1997.

Paul Keating had previously acknowledged past wrongs in his 1992 Redfern address, but in the late 1990s the then Liberal-National government was unwilling to follow his lead. Apology was sorely needed but it took a Labor Prime Minister, my predecessor as the member for Griffith, Kevin Rudd, to give that apology on behalf of the nation. Like many others, I was proud that our Labor Prime Minister was doing something so needed, something that the former Prime Minister had obstinately refused to do.

I pay tribute to Kevin for making the apology and for so many other actions that served the national interest. I thank him for ratifying the Kyoto protocol. I thank him for guiding our nation through the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. In my capacity as his former constituent, I pay tribute to Kevin for being a great representative of our community.

I am honoured that the people of Griffith have elected me. I know there is much work to be done to make our local suburbs and our nation a better place for all. Griffith is on Brisbane's south side and it spans the area from West End through to Cannon Hill on the eastern boundary and south to Camp Hill, Holland Park and Annerley. It is a collection of diverse communities and it is an area that has changed rapidly over the last 30 years. These changes have brought challenges, like the challenge of making every school a great school.

We are a young electorate with lots of families with little kids, just like mine. Parents in Griffith should not have to worry about moving into the catchment of a particular school. All of our schools should have the resources they need to be great schools. They should not have to worry about how to afford uniforms and other necessities. I have listened to parents who greatly appreciated the Labor government's schoolkids bonus—help that members opposite want to remove.

In Griffith we also face the challenge of managing and maintaining livability. We must always aim for balance and make sure that development is sustainable and appropriate. Our homes are affected by pollution: noise and dust. These and other issues are part of the familiar urban tension between livability and progress. Griffith faces the challenge of keeping up with
need for public transport infrastructure, including a workable river crossing that serves the interests of people across the electorate, and providing safe passage for our many cyclists. We face the challenge of keeping up with demand for affordable, accessible child care that meets the needs of children for quality early learning and of parents for workforce participation. There are many more challenges in making sure that the services, infrastructure and support that locals, their families and small businesses need are available now and in the future.

People across our nation, in our cities and outside them, face similar challenges to those of Brisbane south siders. It is our responsibility to help our communities meet those challenges. We must be guided by values and by a strong vision for the future. It is the responsibility of this parliament and of the government to take positive action for the betterment of this nation and its people.

Whenever I hear people trying to undermine confidence in the positive role of government in creating a better Australia I know they are from the same ilk as those who lined up to oppose almost every single one of the nation-building reforms that have contributed to Australia's prosperity. If we have been taught anything by our successes, by proud Labor legacies, it is that you cannot cut your way to a better Australia; you must act.

Those of us in this place must listen and we must lead. Labor leads. In government Labor always builds our nation. In opposition we always seek to act in our nation's best interests, guided by the achievements of our past. It took Labor to introduce the age pension and Labor to introduce the largest increase to that pension in 100 years. Medicare is a proud Labor achievement. No other party would have created it. It is a defining achievement of our social democracy.

As has been so clear recently, conservatives are always inclined to attack universal health care. They do so by attempting to convince Australians that we cannot afford it, but Australians are not fooled. We do not want a US-style health system that serves corporate interests ahead of people's interests. We do not want a US-style health system that makes access to health care contingent on money, not need. We have a significant economy in world terms that spends a proportion of its GDP on health care that is nigh on the OECD average. We can afford universal health care.

Australia's superannuation system is another great Labor achievement for working people. Conservatives would have had you believe that our nation could not afford superannuation, that it was a racket. But Labor executed the labour movement's great vision for retirement savings and our nation is reaping the benefits. We are a party that delivers nation-building economic reforms like those of Hawke and Keating that led to Australia's 22 years of uninterrupted economic growth. All of those great achievements and others like them make me proud of Labor's history.

Labor's values like fairness, diversity, opportunity, individual and community responsibility, inclusion, unionism, equity, dignity for people without power and a fair day's pay for a fair day's work are my values. They are the values my parents taught me and they are the values that mattered to me when I joined the workforce. As a university student I worked. Some of my jobs were not glamorous, but I am proud of all of them. I stood at a checkout. I worked in my student union. I temped at an engineering firm. I worked in an aluminium factory, which is still my only job so far that has required a hard hat. As a student I
also worked for the Australian Services Union assisting and empowering white-collar employees, mostly women. I am proud of those jobs.

I am also proud that when I finished my undergraduate studies I went straight into private practice and engaged in the business of the law. I helped community organisations, unions and individual workers. I helped people when they were in times of great personal strife, worried about how they could provide for their family if they were sacked, worried about their reputation and worried about their future employment prospects. That sort of work makes you an advocate for people and it makes you passionate about fairness at work—a fundamental Labor concern. It is because my values are Labor values that I am so proud to be standing here as a Labor representative for Griffith.

My election increased the number of Queensland women who are current members of this House to five. That is five of 30 Queenslanders. That fact, together with the dearth of female representation in this nation's cabinet, reminds us that there is still a lot to be done to advance the status of women. Throughout my life I have supported moves to do so, including supporting Labor's targets for female candidates, supporting autonomy when it comes to reproductive health and lately sitting on the board of that great organisation the YWCA in Queensland. I am proud of my work to support women, and I will never stop thinking about what needs to be done for the benefit of all Australians, now and in the future, and about the sort of country we should strive to be.

Australia should be a nation that takes pride in equality. Great inequality divides people and deprives us of shared experiences. Great inequality leads to unrest, to resentment, to distrust and to violence. Rewards should be real but not limitless. Wages, benefits and pensions should be sufficient not just to avoid poverty but to afford dignity. Equality helps promote national unity. We should be a unified nation that takes pride in its multi-ethnicity and its multiculturalism. We should strive for equality as our society changes. I hope, among other things, that by the time I leave this place the members opposite will have been given a free vote on the question of marriage equality. And I hope that Australians in loving same-sex couples will be able to marry. I will do what I can to bring about that change.

Australia should be a compassionate nation. Where there is conflict in the world, people will need help. And while there is poverty, sickness and powerlessness in the world people will need help. We must open our hearts and refuse to allow fear to prevent us from showing humanity and compassion. Let us remember Ben Chifley's words about the Labor movement. I try to think of the Labour movement, not as putting an extra sixpence into somebody's pocket, or making somebody Prime Minister or Premier, but as a movement bringing something better to the people, better standards of living, greater happiness to the mass of the people. We have a great objective—the light on the hill—which we aim to reach by working the betterment of mankind not only here but anywhere we may give a helping hand.

I say let us provide aid, our helping hand across the world, because it is needed, not to serve other purposes. Let us not be parsimonious in the face of great suffering, and let us treat all people as ends in themselves, not as means to an end.

Australia should be a nation that respects science, rigour and expertise, and knowledge, skills, experience and evidence, because in elevating and celebrating these things lies Australia's future—our ability to compete and to cooperate. We owe it to every Australian to fund scientific research not just when it is perceived to have immediate financial benefit,
because the nature of scientific research is that we do not know what it will lead to; we do not
know what innovations will occur in the future with scientific research. Developing products
from scientific research can lead to job creation—something so important to us on this side of
this House, including in our manufacturing sector of the future, but only if we support
research and encourage researchers to build their prototypes and their production lines in
Australia. And, more broadly, we must promote science and reason. We must resist anti-
intellectualism.

Let us not allow prejudices masquerading as instincts to determine how we act or the
decisions that we make. And let us find ways to speak with nuance, goodwill and respect.
Polarisation, separating people and ideas into goodies and baddies, does not help us find
solutions to the challenges that we face. In grappling with our most thorny problems, let us
deliberately and resolutely maintain optimism that a solution can be found. As Hazel Hawke
once said:

It is very important that we look at what we CAN do, rather than what is impossible to do.
Let us not unthinkingly impute malicious intent to those with whom we disagree. Let us
display generosity of spirit and, importantly, sincerity. Let us not encourage or legitimise
cynicism. Accepting the proposition that every idea and every political party is the same and
that no-one in public life can be trusted leads to powerlessness and, in turn, to
disenfranchisement for the people that we represent.

Australia should be a courageous nation. We can move towards a future where our
Constitution derives its authority not from a foreign monarch but from the will of the people.
We need not fear such a change, because it is within our capacity to build a stable Australian
republic that is consistent with our traditions and our national identity. We can lead by
example when it comes to engaging with the world. We are, as I have said, a significant
economy and a nation that has long engaged internationally, including now through a seat on
the UN Security Council.

Courage in global engagement is a Labor tradition, the sort of courage that led Gough
Whitlam to first formally engage with China as our nation's Prime Minister, to the
disparagement of the opposition at the time—courage that has brought about change. There
are global challenges that must be faced: our changing climate; conflict, persecution and our
moral obligation to those affected; and population growth and demands on natural resources
globally. A modern nation like ours should not make excuses when it comes to doing our fair
share to meet those challenges. We should not claim that other countries' failures, real or
perceived, to do everything they can, are a justification for us not to act. We should lead. We
do not have the luxury of being a bystander.

Let us be a nation that actively seeks to contribute to global prosperity, peace and equality.
Labor stands for building prosperity. Like all Labor people, I believe Australia should be a
prosperous nation. We want Australia to be able to take advantage of the opportunities that
will come in the Asian century, including in relation to the emerging and growing middle
classes in China and India.

Our pathway to future prosperity is built on the foundations of education and training.
Education is not just a private benefit but also a public good that enriches our whole society,
and that is a concept that Labor has always understood. Like many people who are around my
age, and like many other members of this House, I was the first in my family to go to
university. I do not come from blue bloodstock. My great-grandparents had to work for everything they ever got. Roy was a shearer, married to Lily May in Barcaldine. Ernest migrated from the UK as a small child, and with Kathleen's support built an impressive career, becoming Ravenshoe’s first postmaster. George Philip and his second wife, Daisy, lived in a tent during the Great Depression, raising three boys. Before that, GP had served as a mechanic in the Great War. And, finally, my great-grandmother Lucy left London and took her girls back to Yorkshire to keep them safe during the Second World War. Arthur was a prisoner of war. When peace came, they moved to Australia as £10 Poms looking for a better life.

My grandparents made comfortable lives. Hector was a grocer; Leila was a tailor—a talented one. She is a proud and strong woman who has always been a loving grandmother and is now a great-grandmother. Phil started out on the railway, but then he and Doreen went into small business—first with a newsagency and then with a successful plan-printing business. They gave their daughters opportunities to see firsthand what hard work looked like, to work in small business themselves. Phil is proud of me today. Doreen passed away last year, and the last time I heard her speak was to brag to her nurse that I was a lawyer.

My dad worked for Australia Post before joining my mum in the small business that she established. They have had career changes. My dad now works in a public hospital in Brisbane; my mum works in a city law firm. They are hardworking, sharply intelligent people. They did everything they could to make sure my sister and I had every possible educational opportunity—that they did not have. So, unlike them, I got to do senior years of school and I got to go to university. As a consequence, I have had the benefit of a broader education—physics, chemistry and information technology in senior schooling, humanities and laws at university and instrumental music throughout.

The reason I had those opportunities, and all of the opportunities I have had since, is that Labor had, in government, given effect to its belief in the value of education for everyone. In contrast, our new state Liberal-National government has closed schools, attempted to sell off school ovals in Griffith and moved to defund the great state schools instrumental project, Fanfare. It is clear that only Labor genuinely wants to make sure every child can get the best education possible. Labor fundamentally altered this nation by making university education available to people of ordinary means. It did so during the Second World War when it administered financial assistance to students. Advocating in 1944 for the assistance to continue into peacetime, Minister Dedman said:

No Labour government would wish to see the scheme lapse and allow the position to revert to the pre-war state of affairs, where family income largely determined who should receive university education.

It is a belief we have long held. In the 1970s Labor devoted real resources and public policy attention to education for all, and in the 1980s and 1990s Labor actively worked to increase representation in higher education of kids from the lowest quartile by socioeconomic status—working-class kids—because that is what Labor does. Only Labor demonstrate a real commitment to vocational training, demonstrated by record funding and access to trade training centres for all, which the new government is cutting.

But there is much more to be done. Let's improve the way that schools are funded. As Julia Gillard said, announcing Labor's National Plan for School Improvement: ‘We have to aim higher for every child in every school.’ Let's keep working towards equity in participation in
higher education. Let's make sure young and mature people have access to vocational training. When we identify skills shortages, let's not just treat the symptom but also the cause. Australian firms' investment in training is investment in our future. Let's build managerial and leadership capacity in Australian firms. As someone who undertook executive education, I am a strong believer in its place in building Australian managers' and leaders' capacity to improve their businesses and encourage innovation. Innovation and education are crucial to building a stronger economy and a stronger middle class in Australia. Labor has laid the economic and social policy foundations that make our country a great place to live, to work and to raise a family. That is the sort of country that Australia should be.

I express my sincere gratitude to the following people, without whom Labor would not have won the Griffith by-election: Jackie Trad and Angus Sutherland; George Wright and his team, especially Jessie and Seb; Anthony Chisholm and Evan Moorhead and their team, and their counterparts interstate; Jade Thompson, Charlie Campbell and Matt Sellars; Councillor Helen Abrahams; Councillor Shayne Sutton; Senator Claire Moore; Joe Kelly and Matthew Campbell, and Pat Purcell; Kate Duncan and Kat White; and the many shadow ministers and Labor caucus members from across Australia—and especially my Queensland colleagues—as well as the many current and former state parliamentarians and local government councillors who were so generous and supportive.

I particularly want to mention Anthony Albanese, who came to Brisbane on more than one occasion despite other pressing priorities in his life at the time. I thank Queensland and national unions; Maurice Blackburn lawyers; the extraordinary and committed staff in the Leader of the Opposition's office; and their counterparts throughout Labor's shadow ministerial offices. Of course, to all of the many Labor supporters—members, branch leaders, FEC delegates, union representatives and members, Young Labor members, people within the community who have never formally joined Labor but nonetheless supported our campaign who are too numerous to name: there were hundreds of you and I thank you for your time, your effort, your resources and dedication.

As Ben Chifley said:

... the job of getting the things the people of the country want comes from the roots of the Labour movement—the people who support it.

You work:

... not hoping for any advantage from the movement, not hoping for any personal gain, but because you believe in a movement that has been built up to bring better conditions to the people.

To Tanya Plibersek and especially to Bill Shorten: thank you for your generosity, your support, your encouragement, your advice and, most of all, your leadership. Bill chose to give the Griffith by-election his full support knowing how difficult it would be for us to win. Bill's words and, more importantly, his actions demonstrate his leadership capacity and work ethic. I am extremely grateful to Bill. As I have said before, no candidate could have asked any more from a leader.

Finally, to my family: it is possible to be effective in this place only with a strong foundation of love and support at home. I thank my parents, Allison and Larry Butler, and my parents-in-law, Graham and Marguerite Spence, for all of the love and support they have given me. To Lisa, Brad, Jesse and Bailey Gould; Jason and Claire Spence; my aunts Linda, Susan, Gail and Karin; and all of the members of my family who have been part of the fabric.
of my life: I am grateful to you. To my husband, Troy: thank you. Your belief in me has been unwavering and your love and support an anchor. To my daughter, April, and my son, Isaac: I look forward to your hugs and kisses when I come home and I look forward to a time in the not too distant future when you will understand how important your love is to me.

I express again my humble gratitude to the people of Griffith, my community. I will aim to ensure that you find me a hardworking, diligent member who understands the pressures on families and who is always mindful of the future. Thank you.

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEES

Privileges and Members' Interests Committee

Report

Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (10:21): On behalf of the Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests, I present the report concerning registration and declaration of members' interests during 2013.

In accordance with standing order 39(e) the report was made a Parliamentary Paper.

Education and Employment Committee

Membership

The SPEAKER (10:21): I have received advice from the Chief Whip that he has nominated Ms Bird to be a member of the Standing Committee on Education and Employment in place of Ms Ellis.

Mr BILLSON (Dunkley—Minister for Small Business) (10:21): by leave—I move:

That Ms Ellis be discharged from the Standing Committee on Education and Employment and that, in her place, Ms Bird be appointed a member of the committee.

Question agreed to.

GOVERNOR-GENERAL’S SPEECH

Address-in-Reply

Debate resumed on the motion:

That the Address be agreed to.

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde) (10:22): Firstly, I offer my congratulations to the member for Griffith on her maiden speech. It is with great honour that I stand in this House for a second term having been re-elected as the member for Forde. Forde is an electorate that sits halfway between Brisbane and the Gold Coast and covers two local government areas—Logan City Council, the heart of the great south-east, and the Gold Coast City Council. It has been a privilege for the last three years to represent the community of Forde, the community that I grew up in, that my kids have grown up in and where we have raised our family.

Having grown up in Forde, I wish it to be a place where those in our community can enjoy the opportunity to work locally and retire locally and, more importantly, have fun in their local community, whether it is through their involvement in various sporting and service clubs or through other activities they wish to undertake. In particular, I want to see our small
businesses grow and prosper, as they are the major employers in our electorate, creating local employment opportunities and, through that, family security.

I have had the privilege for the last three years of working with our local community to ensure that Forde is a place that is safe for our families and focused on the community. It is through building strong and resilient communities that we create a strong foundation for the future of our country. Nothing is more important to that than our children and their ability to get a great education and to get out and play sports or take part in other activities, secure in the knowledge that they can go out and do that.

Forde is a rapidly growing area that is suffering from many of the issues that other members in this House have touched on in their addresses. Infrastructure failing to keep pace with population growth, loss of housing affordability, increased costs of living and a lack of services are just some of those major problems in my electorate. There are problems with infrastructure projects, such as the M1 from Loganholme to Daisy Hill. This has been a bone of contention for many years, so much so that the Howard government had previously committed $500 million per annum for up to 10 years to finish that particular project. But the previous Labor government sought to ignore this local issue and, as a result, motorists continue to face lengthy delays during peak hour.

Unfortunately, as has become all too evident and all too common in this place, the waste and mismanagement that we saw over the past six years from the previous government has put us in a position where fixing this major infrastructure problem has been put further off into the distance. However, as I committed to in the election campaign and as I will restate today, I will continue to push this local issue onto the federal infrastructure agenda until it is completed.

We also have a major issue in Upper Coomera with exit 54. There was nearly $1 billion of planned development in and around that area, yet we still have an overpass and interchange that is only two lanes. We also have six schools in that area. Businesses and parents complain that in the mornings and afternoons they can sit in the traffic for up to 45 minutes to get across that single interchange. But I did have a very productive meeting with the federal Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development the other day, along with my colleague Stuart Robert, to discuss this very important issue for our local community.

We also need to plan for the future public needs of our residents, particularly in the western part of Forde. During the previous term, I had the pleasure of having the now Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development come out to the western end of the electorate to have a look at upgrading rail lines for passenger transport and also building a freight corridor using the Mount Lindesay Highway. These are all to service the great growing areas of Yarrabilba and Flagstone, which are just outside of my electorate. But, again, as there are some 200,000 people to go into that area, we need to ensure that the infrastructure and services are in place.

Another issue in our electorate is telecommunications infrastructure. It needs enormous improvement, especially in the Yatala Enterprise Area, which is now one of the major industrial hubs in the south-east of Queensland. There we have a growing number of innovative businesses that are looking to expand not only locally but globally, yet they suffer from poor internet access and speeds, which has a negative impact on their ability to carry out business.
It is not only businesses but also residents in our community in various areas who struggle with slow internet speeds. This is why it is so important with the revamped NBN rollout that we get control of the expenditure and the planning of this massive project—so that the electorate of Forde can have the services it needs in the areas where it needs them, because there are also plenty of areas that have good internet coverage. That will benefit not only the electorate but the nation as a whole.

Aside from infrastructure, the biggest issue in the electorate is cost of living. We have seen that the previous government's spending over the past six years has contributed greatly to those costs. For the edification of the House, although it has been repeated here many times already, we have seen six years of chaos, waste and mismanagement which have resulted in delivering higher taxes, record boat arrivals, and debt and deficit as far as the eye can see.

It is interesting to note that the previous government inherited a $20 billion surplus, yet left behind a projected $30 billion deficit. The previous government turned nearly $50 billion in the bank into projected net debt of well over $200 billion—the fastest deterioration in debt in dollar terms to the share of GDP in modern Australian history. This debt from the previous Labor government is already costing us more than $10 billion a year in net interest payments alone. Under Labor, the jobless queues grew by over 200,000, and more than 50,000 illegal boat people arrived under Labor's watch, creating a $1.6 billion blow-out in border protection costs. Finally, and to top it all off, there are accumulated deficits in the forward estimates of some $123 billion in gross debt, heading towards some $667 billion. The constant borrowing by the previous government has not done us any favours, and when we look back at the legacy of Labor's government we see debt, we see waste and we see increased regulation and red tape. We see anything but positive changes for the future of our country; it is all negative. In many cases, these negative changes were done without proper stakeholder consultation, and, to top it off, we have been left with the world's biggest carbon tax, which has made little if any difference to emissions or global temperatures.

Small to medium businesses, many of which are family businesses, are, as I said earlier, the core employers in my electorate. They have been finding it increasingly costly and difficult to access new capital and to expand. The introduction of the carbon tax and myriad new regulations have done nothing to improve these conditions for small business. Small business was largely ignored by the previous government. They could not even keep a stable minister in place. But I am pleased to say that there has been a change. We have a Minister for Small Business who is focused on addressing the issues of small to medium businesses. We have a minister who readily recognises that small to medium business is the engine room of our economy. His door is always open to speak to small business people and to hear their concerns. I thank the minister, who happens to be at the table, for his willingness to speak with our small business communities on a regular basis.

In Forde there are also issues with the protection of high-quality remnant rainforest flora and fauna, including the protection of the Ormeau bottle tree, which is now on the critically endangered species list. We have wonderful community organisations, such as the East Albert Landcare Group and VETO, who are putting in significant resources to fight projects that will adversely affect our community. The electorate also contains a significant number of federally and internationally recognised wetland areas in Carbrook, Eagleby and Cornubia that connect
to the Logan and Albert rivers. As part of our campaign, we announced the Green Army project for the revegetation of the banks of the Pimpama River.

In Forde, we are blessed with a wide range of strong and active community and sporting groups, and over the past three years I have enjoyed sharing their stories and achievements in this parliament. We have strong and active chambers of commerce in Logan, Beenleigh Yatala, Coomera, Ormeau and Browns Plains. These organisations and their members work tirelessly to promote small business and to represent the interests of local business to all levels of government.

There are many people in Forde who have chosen to be involved in voluntary work and activities to give back to their community. This electorate is blessed with groups such as Nightlight, Rosies, Lighthouse Care and the Twin Rivers Co-op. They provide food parcels and low-cost but quality food to the community. In addition to food, they provide furniture and clothing where necessary.

As with all my election campaigns, there are many people who deserve thanks and recognition for assisting me in my re-election as the member for Forde. I would like to take this opportunity to firstly thank the constituents of Forde for placing their trust and confidence in me to represent them for the next three years in this House. I acknowledge that I have been elected to represent all of the constituents of Forde, and my team and I will do this to the best of our ability. I am absolutely committed to the people, communities and businesses in my electorate, and my winning this seat was achieved by having a tremendous team behind me during the campaign.

I would like to acknowledge and thank my wife, Judi, for her tireless efforts during the campaign. If it were not for her support and encouragement and hard work, I would not be here. Her assistance and encouragement are the main reasons for me being able to pursue my goal and for me being here today. I also acknowledge and thank our two sons, Zac and Josh. My role often takes me away from my family—as we all well know as members of this place—and there are many sacrifices that we have had to make as a family. I treasure the time I have with them when I am at home, and I am very proud of both their efforts at university and their activities in the community.

I wish to thank my campaign team: John Broadhurst, Paul and Joel Prokic, Shane Von Senden, Cathy and Jeff Charlesworth. I also wish to thank my staff: Nathan Kucks, Amanda Ainsley, Tracey Woodland, Kylie Keleher, Grady Rodgers, Daniel Heapes, Elissa Wentworth, Bill D'Arcy. And I also wish to thank their families for putting up with the rigours and absences of their loved ones, during the campaign period. All in all, there were more than 350 volunteers who assisted me during the campaign. I would love to be able to mention everyone involved, but they know who they are, and I very much value their support and encouragement. For many of them, this was the second time they have helped me in a campaign, and it was a tremendous blessing to me. I was also blessed in having the support of a number of local business owners, and I would like to thank them for their continued support. I would also like to acknowledge the LNP for their support and commitment to my campaign. My thanks go to Bruce McIver, Brad Henderson, Nigel Everingham, Mark Gorter and the entire LNP team for their support.

On a federal level, I would like to thank Brian Loughnane, Julian Sheezel and the federal secretariat for their support during the campaign. I would also like to thank Tony Abbott, now
Prime Minister, his leadership team and the various shadow ministers at the time, now ministers, who came to the electorate to support us during the campaign.

During the campaign, I fought to secure funding for a number of local issues, and I look forward to working with the local community on delivering these projects. We sought funding and obtained $3 million for the Beenleigh Town Centre development, which is very timely given that this year we also celebrate the 150th anniversary of the settlement of Beenleigh; we sought and received funding of $1 million for CCTV camera projects; we received $20,000 for two of our local SES branches, to provide new equipment; and, as I mentioned earlier, there is the Green Army project on the Pimpama River.

I feel passionately about Australia and our position in the world. I believe that we live in the best country in the world. As a nation we are blessed with many things: abundant natural wealth; sporting talent and opportunity; an attitude which looks for a solution to a problem rather than to simply whinge about the problem; and a spiritual heritage which we should not dismiss and which we should look to in these uncertain times for wisdom and guidance, for it is, in part, the foundation upon which our nation was built. No amount of progressive thinking can or should change that. To quote Thomas Jefferson:

God who gave us life gave us liberty. And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are of the Gift of God?

I believe this is the foundation of the Judeo-Christian principles upon which our nation was built and which will allow it to continue to grow and prosper. I also believe we ignore these principles at our peril. I feel not only humble but also seriously committed to my responsibilities as a member of this House.

My focus will be directed to continuing to make Forde a better place to live, work, raise a family and retire. I will also work for the betterment of the country, for our children and for future generations of Australians to come.

Debate adjourned.

BILLS

Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2013-2014
Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2013-2014

Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 2) 2013-2014

Cognate debate.

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

to which the following amendment was moved:

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

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

(1) the Government repeatedly stated before the election 'that if debt is the problem, more debt is not the answer';
(2) the 2013-14 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook showed a $17 billion blow-out in the 2013-14 budget deficit, which at the time represented a $167 million budget blow-out per day since the Government took office;

(3) 60 per cent of the predicted budget blow-out in 2013-14 was due to the decisions of the Government alone;

(4) the Government has sought to pave the way for deep cuts to the federal budget by deliberately blowing out the budget and establishing its Commission of Audit; and

(5) these cuts would be another example of this Government saying one thing before the election, and doing the complete opposite after it."

Mr KELVIN THOMSON (Wills) (10:40): In question time this week, the Treasurer had a crack at me for making a statement of the bleeding obvious that growth is not an end in itself. The Treasurer is a 'growth artist'—that is abundantly clear—but someone has to point out that the emperor has no clothes. The member for Griffith, in her first speech, delivered recently, talked about the debilitating effects of inequality. A report by Oxfam a month ago stated that the richest 85 people in the world own as much wealth as the bottom half of the world's population, some 3½ billion people, and that half of the world's wealth is owned by just one per cent of the world's population. Indeed, the situation is getting worse. In nearly every country Oxfam surveyed, economic inequality has increased since 1980. The richest one per cent in the US more than doubled their share of national income. In Australia, the richest one per cent doubled their share. After the GFC, the wealthiest one per cent in the US captured 95 per cent of post-crisis growth, while the bottom 90 per cent became poorer.

Growth is not an end in itself. Full employment, work for all who want it, is a better objective. Treasurer Hockey does not even talk about GDP per capita. More people living in your street is growth but it does not mean you are better off. What is the alternative to this government's budget strategy? Perhaps if I say I am going to spend the next 10 minutes talking about Scandinavian models I will attract a larger audience. I think we should spend more time considering the Scandinavian models. The fact is that the four main Nordic countries—Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland—are doing well. If you could be reborn anywhere in the world, you would want to be a Viking, as The Economist said in a report on the Nordic countries. The Nordic cluster at the top of the league tables of everything from economic competitiveness to social health, to happiness. They have avoided both southern Europe's economic paralysis and America's extreme inequality. These nations also have low population growth, with a combined population of less than 25 million, with expected growth of only three million to less than 28 million by 2050. By comparison, Australia is 23 million but with projected growth to between 36 million and 40 million by 2050.

Interestingly, the Oxfam report on inequality shows Australia was second only to the United States on the percentage increase in share of income of the richest one per cent between 1980 and 2012. During that same period, Australia's population grew by over 50 per cent, second only to Singapore. Rapid population growth does correlate with increasing inequality.

Nordic governments demonstrate it is possible to combine competitive capitalism with a larger state and a smaller population: they employ 30 per cent of their workforce in the public sector compared with an OECD average of 15 per cent. They are also transparent, something the Liberal government would do well to emulate rather than hiding in the shadows and using
euphemisms like 'green tape'. The West promotes transparency, but the Nordics 'walk the walk'. The performance of schools and hospitals is measured. Governments are forced to operate in the harsh light of day. Sweden gives everyone access to official records.

There is also an emphasis on the long term, with policies in place to mitigate the harsher effects of capitalism. Denmark, for example, has a system of 'flexicurity' that makes it easier for employers to sack people but provides support and training for the unemployed. An active labour market policy in Nordic countries helps improve qualifications among the unemployed through courses and education, and also encourages the unemployed to actively focus on job seeking. The social security net is not passive, in the sense that all may choose freely between working or not; rather, it provides a secure income as long as the demand for active participation in the labour market is met. Participation in the labour market is also supported by welfare schemes such as child care. An extensive childcare system has a direct welfare effect for families and helps to socialise children. It also helps to ensure gender equality in terms of opportunities to participate in the labour market.

The Liberal government obsessively believes in self-correcting free markets and that workers who have lost their jobs can move seamlessly into other work. The Prime Minister has even referred to this as 'liberating'. But it simply does not work that way. Just ask the workers at Ford, Holden, Toyota, Alcoa or—this morning—Qantas who face the prospect of being added to the likes of the 59-year-old maintenance fitter and turner I told the House about a fortnight ago, who was retrenched back in 2008 and, notwithstanding his qualifications, has only worked a handful of weeks ever since. I wonder what the millions of workers who remain unemployed after 'self-correcting' markets blew up the world economy in 2008 think of the 'liberating' view.

Unlike the Liberal government, which seeks to disparage welfare, the Nordic countries consider the welfare state to be a strength when it comes to economic development. Not only does the welfare state benefit the whole population; it has a positive effect on the economy. The public sector and welfare services have helped the countries to develop a highly skilled workforce and a high level of employment. This, combined with a stable civil society, a strong democratic tradition and an effective regulatory framework, has led to the emergence in the region of extensive social capital, which is one of the main pillars of the Nordic economy.

When it comes to long-term policy vision, Norway's sovereign wealth fund, currently worth $900 billion, is what we should have done years ago and should still do. Set up in 1990, the fund owns around one per cent of the world's stocks, as well as bonds and real estate from London to Boston, making the Nordic nation an exception when others are struggling under a mountain of debts. The fund, equivalent to 183 per cent of 2013 gross domestic product, is expected to peak at 220 per cent around 2030. It is worth $180,000 for every Norwegian man, woman and child. I know that if the Liberal government came to office with something like that, they would sell it off at once. But the Norwegian government uses it to benefit the economy.

As the chief economist at DNB Markets points out, 'The fund is a success in the sense that parliament has managed to set aside money for the future,' which is something Australia should have done but squandered the opportunity. A 2008 paper co-authored by Treasury
official Kirsty Laurie found that, from 2004-05 onwards, the Howard government spent 94 per cent of a $330 billion increase in tax revenue from the resources boom.

Norway's management of their resources boom and Australia's management of ours could not be more different. Norway has maintained a much larger manufacturing sector than Australia—currently just under 30 per cent per working age population. Norway has an employment to working age population ratio that is five percentage points higher than Australia's and an unemployment rate of 3.3 per cent compared to ours at six per cent. Between 1980 and 2010, the cumulative current account surplus for Norway was 200 per cent of GDP, while for Australia the outcome was a cumulative current account deficit of 127 per cent of GDP.

Norway has a population growth rate a third of Australia's and little migration. Norway has instead an aggressive industry policy to maximise pull-over effects to manufacturing from resource expansion. This was done by local content targets during resource expansion and operation, and by subsidies, investment support, training et cetera to ensure manufacturing could meet local content targets at minimum cost to the resources sector. Effective taxation of the resources sector was also implemented, which provided funding to support economy-wide education and training programs; knowledge clusters for research, development and innovation; and regional adjustment and infrastructure expansion.

The sovereign wealth fund's investments offshore have minimised the appreciation of the Norwegian currency, in contrast to Australia, where a high Australian dollar has put pressure on the competitiveness of manufacturing, which in 2004 contributed 12.5 per cent to our economic output but today contributes just seven per cent. There is absolutely no doubt that Australia has contracted Dutch disease. Perhaps we should call ours 'Aus-teoporosis'? Mining has grown but manufacturing has shrunk.

Rather than quarantining our windfall gains generated during the early years of the resources boom, the Howard government returned the cash to taxpayers, fuelling a borrowing binge which increased inflation and interest rates, making Australia a very expensive country in which to do business. Ian Verrender recently pointed out in an article on how we squandered the resources boom:

That was exacerbated by a currency surging on the back of the vast capital inflows required for new mine construction and expansion.

In support of sovereign wealth funds, Ian Verrender said:

How could such a fund have helped us? By investing offshore, it could have helped stabilise the currency, partially offsetting the dollar-boosting effect of a resources boom, thereby easing pressure on our manufacturing and services industries.

As the Liberal government's Commission of Audit look for savings in the budget, they would be wise to dispense with the so-called Washington Consensus about the role of government and instead look to Sweden's grand bargain of fiscal virtue alongside a generous welfare state. Among other benefits, it keeps the employment of women at levels most other nations can only dream of and, on most measures, maintains an equal society which is the envy of the Western world. I heard on the radio this morning that the parliamentary secretary for regulation wants to get rid of the gender-reporting requirements for women in the workforce because they are too onerous. They are not that onerous for the Abbott cabinet: you just go, 'One,' and stop—that is it.
The Economist has reported that Sweden has:

… donned the golden straitjacket of fiscal orthodoxy with its pledge to produce a fiscal surplus over the economic cycle. Its public debt fell from 70% of GDP in 1993 to 37% in 2010, and its budget moved from an 11% deficit to a surplus … over the same period.

Sweden's public accounts, in contrast to the rest of Europe, have swung back into balance after the global financial crisis, and it remains one of the few countries in the OECD whose financial assets considerably exceed its liabilities.

It is a country where more than seven out of 10 workers are members of unions and where top CEO pay has not risen nearly as dramatically as it has in America. Not surprisingly given all this, Swedes' trust in government is over 60 per cent, being amongst the highest in the Western world. This is a vindication for a model based on relative equality and supportive welfare that can coexist alongside a balanced budget funded by high taxation in an economy that is performing well for all of its citizens and not just for vested interests. The lesson from the Nordic countries is a practical one rather than an ideological one. The state is popular not because it is big but because it works in practice.

The Liberal government should abandon their economic fundamentalist agenda. For Australia to progress, we need to look less at tired orthodoxies from either the Left or the Right and study the Scandinavian models instead.

Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (10:54): The member for Wills began his address talking about the emperor not having any clothes, and I would like to stay on the same theme. On 29 May 2013, in a second reading speech, some fine words were read by the former Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations and now Leader of the Opposition:

The Gillard government believes that everyone who is able to work should be able to benefit from the economic security and dignity that having a job brings, which is why we are introducing this bill to help more unemployed Australians to transition into work.

Having a job is essential in ensuring that all Australians can share in the benefits of Australia's economic strength and receive the promise of a long, good life that comes with being an Australian.

In combination, the measures contained in this bill amend the social security law to provide around $300 million to improve the incentive for income support recipients to work, support them in the transition to work and provide extra assistance to engage in study and training.

This package, which I support wholeheartedly, represents the very strong advocacy of government MPs, including the member for Canberra, the member for Page, the member for Chifley and the member for Throsby, amongst many others. I also acknowledge the advocacy of the council of single mothers.

Yes, the member for Canberra is still here, the member for Chifley is still here and the member for Throsby is still here, but I wonder how many single-parent families put paid to the future employment in this House of the then member for Page.

A dark day dawned on 1 January 2013 as the laughably named Fair Work Incentives Bill came into effect, forcing all single-parent families whose youngest child had turned eight onto the Newstart allowance. For a family getting by on the bare minimum it was a savage blow. It did not herald a new start, but rather an abrupt halt. In fact, the only thing that starts when families are forced onto this lesser benefit is a deeper slide into poverty. It is their children I think of most. Former Labor Prime Minister Bob Hawke had the grand aspiration that no
child would live in poverty by 1990, but his party's descendants seemed to have the opposite plan. Sole parents have been trying to dig themselves out of poverty, and the Labor Party would not even give them a spade.

In my electorate of McMillan there are 15,610 people living in single-parent households, among them almost 10,000 children. Around the country, 69,000 families have been stung by this discriminatory legislation. The Leader of the Opposition, Mr Shorten, said on 29 May last year that this legislation would 'provide Australians receiving income support with greater incentives and support to find and keep a job'. The 'incentives' Mr Shorten alluded to were nothing but a mighty big whack with a mighty big stick. Sole parents working 15 hours a fortnight on the minimum wage now have to work twice as long just to get back what they lost.

A single parent on Newstart with two children—one aged eight, the other 12—loses $160 per fortnight just in benefits. She cobbles together a weekly income from family tax benefits A and B, $2.03 from her telephone allowance payment and $4.07 from the income support bonus. This family's rent alone costs $350 a week. The incentive to work has nothing to do with breaking the shackles of disadvantage and everything to do with the survival of that family. Is she rewarded for her commitment to the workforce? No: for every dollar over $62 per fortnight she earns in paid employment, 40c in the dollar is taken from her benefits.

Someone earning $180,000 per annum is taxed just 33c in the dollar. Where is the equity? Where is the justice? Incentives, indeed! On the other side of the divide, a partnered mother whose husband earns $130,000 per year can still work part time, earning $200 per week. Is there a penalty? No: as a nice bonus she receives family benefits of $85.56 per fortnight.

While sole parents were told in no uncertain terms by the former Labor government to get off their lazy backsides, the truth was and still is that most were already working—some 60 per cent, in fact—with most in part-time and casual jobs battling alone to try and meet the parenting and cost pressures of raising a family. Such support, indeed! Not only do sole parents pushed onto the Newstart allowance receive less but they are also allowed to earn less under the previous Labor government's legislation. They are no longer entitled to earn $180.60 per fortnight with an additional $24.60 per child before their benefits are reduced, but now only $62. In addition, the total amount they can earn before their benefits are taken away altogether is $519.35 per fortnight less than what it was.

Under the Work Bonus Scheme a single age pensioner can earn $250 a fortnight in private income without fear of losing benefits. In fact, a pensioner earning $300 a fortnight in private income will only be assessed on $50 if he or she has no other income sources. Because $50 is less than the pension income test-free area of $156 a fortnight, he or she will still receive the maximum rate of the age pension. The pensioner can earn up to $460 per fortnight and nothing is lost.

I do not question the pensioner's right to a chance of earning extra income, but why not a single parent too? Magnanimously, the Labor government decided to bump up the sole-parent minimum earning threshold by $38 a fortnight, a measure to take effect on 20 March this year! It was sold as a wonderful win for those families struggling on Newstart, but the reality is that its effect will be negligible. While our single pensioner can earn up to $406 a fortnight before their benefits are touched, our sole parent with two children earning the same amount...
from private income loses 34.4 per cent of their welfare allowance, or $186.50. Mr Shorten trumpeted the credentials of this insidious legislation, saying:

… everyone who is able to work should be able to benefit from the economic security and dignity that having a job brings.

I read that out before.

"This Government wants to avoid the entrenched disadvantage that can arise from long periods of joblessness," Minister Shorten said.

Fine words, fine sentiments, but how could a woman raising a family alone—and let us not forget sole-parent dads too—believe that the former Labor government was really trying to help her by taking away $110 a week?

In short—

the Leader of the Opposition said—

this is about helping job seekers being able to fulfil the potential which exists in all Australians.

Inexplicably, he did not seem aware of the economic carnage his party had left in its wake. Job seekers were one thing but job getters were a much rarer breed. Incentives and support are truly what sole-parent families need, not just Labor definitions.

Targeting one of the most vulnerable groups in our community, being single-parent families, not only increases the hardship of these people who are already under stress but can compound when the social and emotional impact of these cuts begin to manifest themselves in later life. The economics of reducing the funding to our most vulnerable citizens balanced against these social impacts is a gamble that this nation should not take.

If you indulge me, Deputy Speaker Mitchell, there are a few other things that need to be considered, especially for single parents in rural areas such as mine—and yours. For a single mum raising three small children with no support there are several assumptions being made in this legislation. One is that suitable child care before and after school, not to mention school holidays, is available. For the mother who works in a supermarket or cleans offices, child care is not available to assist them when they have to work early morning shifts or late evenings. The second assumption is that public transport is available. Yes, there are many rural areas with one bus a day to a regional centre, but they do not necessarily fit with working hours or child pick-up times.

There is also an assumption that a job will be available. I point to a constituent of mine who lives in a small hamlet, I will not name where it is, whose youngest child had reached eight years of age so she had to find more work—this so-called transition from paid parenting to Newstart. The problem is that there are no jobs. When she explained that she did not have a car to look further afield she was told to take public transport, but there is no public transport where she lives. Any of my regional colleagues will understand the absolute impracticality of these suggestions. Yes, there are people who need to make a greater effort to join the workforce. However, there has never been any understanding or recognition of the difficulties that rural and regional people encounter.

I know there will be those who are looking at the screen today, saying, 'Here he goes again—the member for the lost, the lonely, the disabled, the single parents!' If that is what I am accused of, here I stand accused. It is hard enough to bring up children in this country when there are two of you, when you have got a caring 'partner', as we say these days, who is
going to support you in times of difficulty when things get a bit rough. And I do not know a family at all where things have not got a bit rough at times. I put to this parliament and to this nation that when things get a bit rough and you are on your own—and because I have not lived it, I can only think what it would be like—and you are on a parenting payment, struggling along on that parenting payment, do you know what is the first thing to go? Every mum in this place will know—it is the $3 to go down to the pool in the summertime; it is $3 a day and mum cannot afford $3 a day. What is the next thing to go? It is the keyboard lessons at school that they cannot afford anymore. But the worst part for the children under this legislation introduced by this opposition leader is that the children know they are different to the other kids because they know they cannot go on the excursion. They know that their clothes are different. They know that mum is struggling. They know how mum responded when they turned eight, which I addressed in a previous speech.

The previous speaker, the member for Wills, pointed out that we are in a wonderful wealthy, healthy nation. Things are a bit tight budget-wise now, yes they are—the wheel will turn. But I say to this House: we have put so much effort into addressing the plight of the disabled; we have put so much effort into addressing the need for greater educational opportunities, which changes the lives of people in this country; we have put a lot of effort into welcoming newcomers to Australia and welcoming them with open arms; yet at the same time we can introduce legislation that affects thousands of families right across Australia and all they are is single-parent families.

I want to finish with this. When I went to Moe the other day to have some discussions with the local television station, I met two local proprietors who own a furniture store and a cafe. They were sitting out the front having a cup of coffee. They said, 'Russell, what are you doing here?' I said that I had come to talk about an issue with the local press that is very important to us. They said, 'What else are you doing?' I said, 'I have actually got a mini campaign on how we treat single parents in this country.' He said, 'There is a single parent,' and there was a lovely lady in her 30s standing there with a pram. I said in my previous address that people are often single parents through no fault of their own. She said, 'That lady is a single parent. Her husband just died of a heart attack at 38 years of age three weeks ago.' So, through absolutely no fault of her own, that lady has gone from being in a stable household to being a single parent, with all the connotations that go with that and all the things she will have to struggle with because of that. Hopefully, that will be a happy story because she will—what do they call it nowadays? They don't call it 'meet another person'; they call it re-partnering, don't they? I hope that that young woman will find another person in her life and she will live happily ever after. However, she is not alone in that, as there are probably lots of other single mums who do not fit the stereotype.

I repeat: the people you attacked in this legislation were vulnerable people who are already doing it hard, and we have made it even harder for them. I point out the comparison between how we treat other people under the system and how we treat single-parent families. If anybody is going to examine their conscience, as the new member for Griffith said with regard to same-sex marriage, I think this House should look to its own conscience about the way it addresses single-parent families. If you are going to consider your conscience, then consider young women, consider young children and consider your conscience about how you treat them as compared to other people who get outlays from the federal government.
Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (11:08): I want to start not with what I was originally going to talk about but by responding to the contribution by the member for McMillan. I have in this House voted twice on the removal of people from parenting payment to Newstart, for a couple when their youngest child turns six and for a single parent when their youngest child turns eight. The first time I voted on that was in 2006 when John Howard introduced in, I think, July a bill which meant that parents would be transferred from parenting payment to Newstart, for couples when their youngest child turned six and for single parents when their youngest child turned eight, for any child born after July 2006. That was the first time. I do not recall the member for McMillan speaking on it, but I could be wrong; he may have done that. That bill passed this House. As of that date, everyone in this House knew that, as of 1 July 2012, parents would start to transition from parenting payment to Newstart because of that legislation passed by the Howard government in 2006. That was several months before the Labor government moved legislation which also put the 'grandfathered' parents in the same circumstances as the parents that had been affected by the Howard government bill. By the time that legislation was introduced, the Howard government legislation had seen parents transitioning from parenting payment to Newstart for at least six months without the kind of outrage by the now government that we are seeing now.

By saying this I am not at all trying to assign blame. I get very tired in this parliament of what I call the 'he bit me first' argument: when you ask a six-year-old why they bit their younger brother and they say, 'He bit me first.' I am really not trying to do that. What I would like to say is that if there is a belief in this House that this approach is inappropriate then it has actually been brought about by both sides of parliament through two bills before this parliament supported by both sides of parliament on a number of occasions. The full story is far more complex than the one we are hearing. The day the members on the other side want to reverse that decision, the day they come to this place with the budget to reverse not just the decision that Labor made but the far more expensive decision that Howard made in 2006, I will take their outrage far more seriously, because the vast majority of parents affected and the large savings in the budget actually came from the Howard decision, not the Labor decision.

What I wanted to talk about today, and I am running out of time, is an event that is likely to happen in this House in the next month. We think it is going to happen. We have been told it is going to happen. We do not know when it is going to happen. We are reading press reports. It is what the Abbott government calls the 'repeal day'—the famous repeal day. We have heard the Minister for Small Business and various ministers on the other side talk about the repealing of 6,000 or 8,000—

Mr Gray: 22,000 sometimes!

Ms OWENS: 22,000 in a year, I think, but 6,000 to 8,000 on 'the' day, the national repeal day, which we will see later this month. We have heard the Minister for Small Business say that all these regulations are tying small business in red tape and that red tape will be removed through the removal of these 6,000 or 8,000 regulations on this day.

I ran a small business and I ran a trade association for small business, so I was involved in it very closely for about 17 years of my life. Quite frankly, if only it was true that on one day in this place 8,000 pieces of regulation that impact on the operation of a small business in a negative way will be removed. That would be an extraordinary thing. Unfortunately, anybody
who pays attention to this and thinks about this would know that this simply cannot be true. It is an extraordinary con on people who expect a great deal of this government and want a great deal from this government.

The figures that the government use are quite extraordinary. The claim is that, for example, Labor introduced 21,000 new and amended regulations since 2007 which have crippled business, according to the government. Let us get clear what we are talking about here. We introduced 566 pieces of legislation in the six years. What they are actually talking about is something that is quite technical, called legislative instruments, and we did: there were thousands of them. For example, there were 3,400 legislative instruments relating to airworthiness directives to enhance public safety. There were 4,200 tariff concession orders issued to the benefit of, and in response to explicit requests from, business. These are legislative instruments that attach onto the back of pieces of legislation that deal with one company here and one company there, or with one product coming into the country. They are very significant things for the businesses involved, but they are instruments that have no impact whatsoever on the vast majority of businesses or families.

There is also a whole stack of instruments that sit on the end of bills, which repeal other pieces of legislative instruments, and they last for a day. Quite frankly, you can come in here and repeal thousands of those—we repealed 4,000 in the three months from April to July 2013, for example—so they are actually easy to repeal. But to suggest that repealing things like that has any impact on red tape in small business is like saying that having us come in here and clean out our old email boxes would impact on the efficiency of small business. It is effectively repealing things which are not used, which do not matter, which have no impact, which have passed their use-by date and which are simply sitting there taking up hard drive. We understand from the rumours that departments have been told to find whatever they can to get that count up. But let us be clear about this: the vast majority of this is going to be simply the clearing out of things that are not relevant anymore, that have zero impact on small business.

Unfortunately, we are also hearing rumours that hidden in that mountain of redundant—as in no longer useful—legislative instruments, which they are calling 'regulations', will be a couple of pieces of real regulation which are actually very important. Repealing them will impact negatively on small business in a very, very serious way. They are regulations—rules, if you like—or philosophies about things that deserve serious public consultation before they are considered in this place. Frankly, it is quite deceptive of the government to try to sneak some of these things through in the middle of thousands of other pieces of regulation which are insignificant.

I am talking about two particular pieces that we are hearing about. The first is the abolition of the Australian Jobs Act. This is an incredibly important piece of legislation. It came into force only a couple of months ago and already we are hearing rumours about the Abbott government dismantling it. It was put in place to help Australian businesses develop their competitiveness and capabilities and, essentially, it requires businesses that are engaging in enormous domestic projects worth $500 million or more to consider how they would provide opportunities for local business. We introduced this act because we heard from businesses that they were being excluded from the tendering processes for the major investment projects in this country in all sorts of ways—for instance, because of the tender documents specifying
Chinese specifications et cetera. They were just missing out. When we came to government there was about $55 billion in large-scale investment in the pipeline. When we lost government, there was $300 billion in the pipeline. That is $300 billion in large-scale mining projects, roads and ports and all the things that go with them, and it is incredibly important that Australian businesses, including small and medium Australian businesses, have access to that river of investment money that is going to flow through this country while we build the infrastructure that will support the mining boom.

Abolish this act and you are not just repealing red tape; you are actually repealing an opportunity to get to work for small business. This is an incredibly important piece of legislation. We have heard rumours. We have seen media reports from the seemingly strategic leaks from the other side that this will be included on 'repeal day'. We will be keeping an eye out for it as it is an extremely important piece of legislation. It is not red tape; it is a piece of legislation that is about ensuring that Australian small and medium enterprises have a foothold in what will be one of the most extraordinary building booms in this country, a building boom that has a limited life.

The benefits of having small business included in that boom are greater than the single contract, if you like. It also ensures that as a country we have the skills in this country to take on the high-tech and heavy engineering work that will be undertaken during that time. If you are looking to the future, you do not just look at what is here now; you look at what you will need in the future. If this country is going to prosper in 10, 15 and 20 years time, we cannot let the benefits of the skills base, the training and the experience that will flow through that building boom go elsewhere and not have a foothold in this country. It is incredibly short-sighted to repeal the Jobs Act. By doing so, they are not just repealing a piece of red tape, as they call it, they are actually repealing very real opportunities for small business.

The second one, which is also incredibly problematic, is the Road Safety Remuneration Tribunal. I know that the current government has a particular dislike, shall we say, for all things collective, and the Road Safety Remuneration Tribunal, because of its collective bargaining capacity, would probably be a particular target for this government. Again, we are hearing from media reports here and there that it is also in the firing line and may be hidden in the mountain of irrelevant work that we are going to do on the so-called 'national repeal day'.

This tribunal is also a Labor initiative. It deals with two aspects. It deals with road safety—the trucks on our roads, whether they are roadworthy and whether drivers are driving safely. It also deals with the viability of a small business which is the owner-driver. It is a rapidly growing sector of the economy. As full-time employed drivers are phased out, owner-drivers who own their own trucks, insure them and pay their own wages come into the sector in large numbers. It ensures that owner-operators get paid an equivalent of a fair hourly wage and a minimum amount to cover safety standards.

What happens these days is that large companies contract out the freight component, the transport component, of their business for a fixed amount. Without regulation like this that creates a base level, we are seeing rates being paid that do not allow a person to maintain and insure their truck and to drive reasonable hours. We have seen media reports on this quite a few times in the last few weeks. We are seeing drivers driving too long and we are seeing trucks on the road that are unsafe. The Road Safety Remuneration Tribunal allows truck owner-drivers to collectively bargain to set a fair rate and it ensures the payment of that fair
rate. Take this away and there is no doubt that we will see an increase in the number of truck drivers driving on our roads for hours that are far too long and with standards that are unsafe—and even, in some cases, in trucks that are uninsured. Again, this is not repealing a piece of red tape: this is repealing a very serious piece of regulation which actually protects small business from an unfair power relationship with bigger business, and it protects people in the street from unsafe practices in the trucking industry. Again, that is incredibly important.

Red tape itself is a nightmare, but I would like to say that there is quite a difference between regulation and red tape. In Australia, you can get on a roller-coaster without fear that it is going to collapse. The wheels do not fall off our trucks, our balconies do not fall down, and if you buy a nut and a bolt a year apart they will manage to fit together because the threads are the same. That is regulation. Red tape is the paperwork and the process that we require people to go through to meet those regulations. That is the bit we should be focusing on, but focusing on that is hard. It actually requires you to understand the purpose of what you are trying to achieve and set about it in a meticulous way, with extensive consultation, to reduce the amount of paperwork and the process that you ask people to go through to meet it.

This is an incredibly difficult task. The repeal day that pretends to do that is nothing but a con. We are going to see a lot of stuff that we repeal. It is as effective as cleaning out your inbox. Hidden in there will be some very important regulations which will reduce the safety and the viability of small business.

Mr RANDALL (Canning) (11:24): I rise to speak on Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2013-2014, Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2013-2014, Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 2) 2013-2014 and the amendment. This is about money. The ABC receives $1.4 billion from the taxpayers of Australia, so at the outset I wish to say that this speech is not about the ABC bias or malfeasance in news and current affairs recording. It is about issues that are relevant to the governance of the ABC and SBS and the efficiency review. This study is being conducted by the Department of Communications, assisted by Mr Peter Lewis, former Chief Financial Officer of Seven West Media Ltd. The terms of reference of the study state:

There is limited transparency to the Australian public, the Government and the Parliament of the breakdown of costs of delivering the ABC and SBS Charter responsibilities and whether these could be more efficiently delivered by the national broadcasters.

They go on to say:

This study will seek to clarify these costs, provide options for more efficient delivery of services … identify risks and any impediments to change and assist the national broadcasters to continue to deliver their Charter responsibilities in ways that minimise costs and maximise benefits for the Australian community.

The study will focus on the costs of inputs—that is the ‘back of house’ day-to-day operational and financial operations, structures and processes applied to delivering ABC and SBS programs, products and services.

Today, I will address some of the points mentioned above.

Information has been provided to me by a respected industry expert—Mr Chris Hetherington of Circling Shark Productions. Circling Shark is a Western Australian based production company that has produced programs including Postcards WA on the Nine Network and Can We Help?—which in fact appeared on ABC TV. If you go to the website you will see many other productions. This company itself is highly regarded, and has won a
Western Australian tourism award and a national tourism award. Chris has almost 30 years experience in television broadcast and video production. This is some of the expert opinion that he has conveyed to me. Firstly, he is generally concerned that our public broadcasters may be under threat, not just from efficiency reviews or any type of budget cuts but from a basic lack of eyeballs—that is, audiences are in decline. Are public broadcast institutions past their use-by date? That is a question we can ask. Are taxpayers really getting bang for their buck?

Mr Hetherington does think the efficiency review will reveal some cost-saving measures, but believes a bigger problem at play is within the heart of the management culture and relates to a lack of will inside these institutions, firstly to admit that the current situation is untenable and then to make the hard calls to ensure that our public broadcasters survive into the future. These concerns directly address the terms of reference for the efficiency review. We should question the decision-making processes of the people entrusted with the job of making both editorial and programming decisions. Are these decision makers left unaccountable and free to change their opinions subjectively in relation to awarding contracts or making programming decisions without any real concern about value for money?

Case in point: Chris Hetherington approached the ABC to pitch an idea for a six-part series that targeted a large section of the traditional ABC audience. The cost to the ABC would have been about $30,000 per episode, without the need for further federal government subsidy or a production rebate. It was presented as a cost-effective model for producing quality Australian programming, as an alternative to purchasing programs from overseas. The cost to taxpayers would have been hundreds of thousands of dollars lower than the current commissioned programs. Producers and others in the film and television industry work in a competitive environment, and of course they are used to knockbacks when they offer these sorts of initiatives. But it was in the decision-making process that any objectivity or checks and balances seemed to be missing. When Mr Hetherington's proposal was knocked back, it apparently came down to one person's opinion: 'No'. He did not think it what was the ABC's audience wanted to see. Was there any process for external review? No. Was there any avenue for appeal? No. So you would have to ask: is this decision-making process transparent and fair? And is it working properly?

At one time, the ABC were looking to do a program on the NBN for Four Corners. An idea for a one-hour documentary and panel-interview-style program was pitched and it was knocked back. In the end, the ABC did produce a program but it failed to address any of the issues that we know plagued the former government's NBN rollout. What it ended up with was an NBN promotional video that starred, and looked like it was produced and directed by, then minister Stephen Conroy. Another program pitched to the ABC and subsequently knocked back was one on the future of public broadcasting. They said it was not topical enough.

So, let us have another look at the decision-making processes at the ABC. Say a producer submits a proposal to the ABC which makes its way to the desk of ex-pat Brit, Anita Brown, commissioning editor of factual entertainment, for the initial appraisal. I am told Anita has many years of experience producing programs for broadcasters in the UK. If Anita likes the proposal, it is then passed along the chain and lands on the desk of Phil Craig, head of factual entertainment. He is also British and he has experience in making programs for UK audiences
as well as international and Australian audiences. If Phil likes the proposal it then goes straight to the top, to ex-BBC sales executive Brendan Dahill. I pause for a moment to wonder if this cabal of British expats are on 457 visas because the ABC could not find any Australians to fill the jobs. That could be an interesting further investigation for another time.

No-one is saying it is an easy job to provide a balance between the audience's needs and wants. No-one is saying it is easy to be spot on the mark each and every time, knowing just which programs will and will not be successful. Commissioning programs is not scientific, but with the use of audience assessment tools and audience data some of the subjectivity can be removed from the equation, rather guesses being made based on personal opinion.

I will make it clear. Chris Hetherington is not knocking the ABC technical staff he has worked alongside. He said they are professionals and great at what they do. He is, however, questioning if the decision-making processes are incorrect and if the way contracts are awarded is flawed and expensive. Are the ABC decision makers considering value for money at all?

Another case in point is the way the production-funding process works. The public broadcasters pay a minimum Screen Australia agreed licence fee to the producer. Screen Australia matches this amount on a dollar-for-dollar basis. State funding agencies then add in around 15 per cent of the overall budget. Following that the producer is eligible for a federal government rebate of around 10 per cent to 30 per cent of the overall budget.

Let us take the Paul Keating series of four interviews as an example. The minimum ABC licence fee for the hour is $120,000. If we times that by four, it is $480,000. Screen Australia's dollar-for-dollar contribution is $480,000, so we are now up to $960,000 for this program. If we add the 15 per cent state based contribution of $144,000, we are now up to $1.1 million. If we add the 20 per cent producer offset rebate, we end up with revenue well over $1 million. These are not exact figures, but this is an example of an independent production deal put through Screen Australia's commissioning guidelines and it shows that some production companies could make pretty large profits. There is nothing wrong with making large profits, but we are talking about value for money.

In comparison, I am told that a quality pilot episode utilising current technologies and emerging talent can be shot on a $3,000 camera and edited on a laptop computer with a $50 program. Why four separate one-hour episodes of Paul Keating's memoirs were required is anybody's guess, especially, as Chris Hetherington pointed out, David Attenborough can cover millions of years of evolution in just one hour. Either way, it is not a bad day's work for ABC stalwart Kerry O'Brien.

The closing credits for the Paul Keating series, Keating: The Interviews, declared it as being a joint production between the ABC and Binna Burra Media, which is owned by O'Brien. Mr O'Brien was paid an undisclosed sum through his production company for the shows. Additionally, the documentary series was proposed by O'Brien himself and then commissioned by the ABC. The ABC won't say how much Binna Burra Media was paid or the resources the company contributed to the production, citing commercial arrangements as being confidential. I respect commercial confidence, but this hardly allows for broad creative ideas and expression or transparency in taxpayer funding.
We know Kerry is much loved by the ABC. He was promoted from *Lateline* to hosting the *7.30 Report* and he is now the host of *Four Corners*. We know his pedigree. He was press secretary for Gough Whitlam and brought his great entrenched political passion to his position at the ABC, as well as his strong love for Labor. Whilst I am reluctant to quote Mark Latham, he is spot on when describing how effective Kerry O'Brien was. As a Labor insider, he exposed O'Brien's time at the ABC and criticised his on-air performance. Latham said that, even at O'Brien's peak, he was never an effective figure and, in his many hundreds of interviews with the nation's politicians, he never recorded a memorable insight, phrase or scalp. Well, do not tell that to the ABC, because he is their golden child. Interestingly, in 2010 Mark Latham said the ABC's charter should be altered to require it to broadcast programs with a wider audience interest, rather than just to the high-earners that make up the bulk of the ABC's audience. He also said that it was time to give suburban consumers the things they want to watch on TV.

Since the mid-1990s it has been reported that the ABC has shown a growing trend of commissioning its content from outside production houses using journalists or presenters that have some link to the ABC. These production houses get this work because they are part of the network of ABC luvvies. Russell Skelton is doing the fact check at the moment. He is well entrenched in the nepotistic ABC family. When you consider these cronyistic processes of the ABC, reputable production agencies such as Circling Shark barely stand a chance of getting a foot in the door, let alone some of the up-and-coming, talented, fresh and creative film and video writers, producers and directors we have in this country.

This is especially so in my state of Western Australia. If you went to see the production going on at the ABC studio in Perth, you would have to push past the cobwebs. Even though it is well set up to do this, there is no local production going on except for *7.30*. Production in ABC studios is also lacking in Brisbane, Adelaide and Hobart. Not only are these states passing up a great opportunity to produce local stories but they have also lost the opportunity to be valuable training grounds for the film and television industry, particularly for those up-and-coming, young, budding producers and directors.

The ABC and SBS receive about $1.4 billion in funding from the government. Two-thirds of this is centralised in Sydney, with half of that going to pay wages for those bunkered down in the concrete building in Ultimo. Director Mark Scott's base salary is $678,940, which is far more than the Australian Prime Minister. Good old Quentin Dempster, another of the ABC's elites, is on $291,505 and does a couple of programs here and there. It would be nice if that money were put into the state based production facilities in Perth, Brisbane or Adelaide. This flies in the face of the ability to undertake productions in the outlying states, where value for money could be achieved.

Chris Hetherington has a bunch of great ideas that those doing the efficiency study should genuinely pay attention to. In fact, they might even want to interview him. He cited as an example the case of a broadcaster in Vancouver, Canada that was formed out of the lack of local programming opportunities there. They were concerned about centralised control of their national broadcaster in Toronto and thought it was not reflective of the west coast. Mr Hetherington said that the Knowledge Network was created from this concern for the dual purpose of providing children's and adult television and is funded from provincial government and donations it raises annually. This station then went on to provide opportunities for local
producers to make programs about their own city and state. So, if Canada can show this type of initiative, why can't Australia and why can't the ABC in Australia?

My underlying concern in all this is for Australia's film and television industry, and seeing that the industry and our public broadcasters are viable in the future. Even though a high-quality program can be produced for $30,000 an episode, the ABC continues to pay to broadcast British re-runs. This week will see the repeats of Doc Martin, Agatha Christie's Poirot, Inside Incredible Athletes, which looks at six British athletes, Grand Designs, Dalziel and Pascoe and New Tricks. Maybe it has something to do with patriotic connections of the ex-pats running the ABC?

While some think the ABC efficiency review does not go far enough, it a good and big step in the right direction. The fact is the face of public broadcasting, and visual broadcast media generally, has changed. Other mediums—Facebook, YouTube, Foxtel et cetera—are all challengers to a traditional broadcaster like the ABC, and their audiences have changed over time as well. Should the taxpayer funded broadcaster try and compete in this commercial space or should they continue to cater to a forgotten demographic: a loyal but not so commercially viable audience? Yes, the ABC targets a certain type of audience demographic, but how much work and research goes into this back-of-house strategy by the bureaucrats tasked with deciding programming for a WA audience, for example, some 3,000 kilometres away in their concrete bunker in Ultimo, Sydney? And, ultimately, to whom is the ABC accountable? I am told it is to the board, and I am told the board is accountable to the minister.

Dr CHALMERS (Rankin) (11:39): I rise today to speak on the appropriation bills. The bills, as the House is aware, are required to pay for the spending announced by the government since the election in September last year, as well as the cuts outlined in the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook. In summing up the midyear update, I find it very difficult to improve on one commentator's view of the document, which is that it was a 'crass political confection'. MYEFO was really just a big, excuse-making exercise. It was a politically motivated document. It was not particularly subtle, which is a pretty common experience from this government. And I must say, just in passing, that I find it hard to hear a speech from the member opposite, the member for Canning, about fiscal responsibility when he is someone who uses the taxpayers' dime to look at rental properties.

The MYEFO document was just a warm-up act for what is to come in the budget in May this year. That budget is going to be a betrayal budget: it will be a budget full of broken promises and it will be a budget based on a big con. We know that because those opposite talked before the election about a budget emergency, and then, last year, after they were elected, they added something like $12 billion to the bottom line in the space of just a few weeks. If they were serious about this budget emergency, the Treasurer would not have spent that $12 billion, which included an almost $9 billion gift, which was not asked for, to the Reserve Bank. We also know that they went to the election promising to pay back the debt, and then when they got elected they sided with the Greens, with the member for Melbourne, and others in the parliament, to give themselves an unlimited credit card for debt.

All the talk before the election of a budget emergency was a pretty obvious political strategy to construct an excuse to rip and tear at the social safety net and to hurt middle Australia. The PM, when he was the opposition leader, spoke endlessly during the election
campaign of Australia's skyrocketing debt. He either failed to understand or refused to understand that the international credit agencies rated Australia's economy and its fiscal position as AAA, with one of the lowest debt levels in the OECD. The first time that the big three ratings agencies gave Australia the AAA rating with a stable outlook was under the former Labor government. It is something that did not occur when Peter Costello was Treasurer and John Howard was Prime Minister.

In confecting his budget emergency, the current Prime Minister was trying to manipulate the community, to con the community, in order to justify harsh cuts fuelled by a cruel and uncaring ideology. As part of this strategy, the MYEFO that came out in December was nothing more than 81,000 words of excuses, or 276 pages of the longest and most obvious exercise in finger-pointing in memory. The then opposition leader promised in his campaign launch speech a 'no surprises, no excuses' government. He promised before the election to restore accountability to government, to take responsibility, but now we see him refuse to accept responsibility for the budget blow-out that was revealed in the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook. The Prime Minister even went so far as to describe that document as Labor's last budget statement—an extraordinary failure to understand that he is now the Prime Minister. It has not yet dawned on those opposite that they are now the government and that they must take responsibility for their own budget decisions.

By far the biggest spending in that midyear update was the $8.8 billion grant to the Reserve Bank fund. We were fortunate to be able to speak to the Governor of the Reserve Bank at a recent public committee hearing. It was very clear from that committee hearing that the one-off nature of the grant was due to the Treasurer's request, and anybody who knows anything about the sort of manipulation of the budget that those opposite seem to be pursuing right now knows that the objective of that one-off grant was to take a hit to the budget in the near term, blame Labor, and then get dividends in the ensuing years. In that committee hearing it was very clear that it was the Treasurer's idea that it be a one-off payment. The Reserve Bank was not particularly troubled by whether it was to be a one-off payment or not, but the Treasurer insisted. I think that is a fairly unfortunate relationship to have with the independent Reserve Bank.

The other key component of the MYEFO blow-out was a change in methodology used to forecast revenue and transfer payments. I know when people talk about revenue forecasts a lot of people's eyes glaze over, but in this context it is important because it goes to the political strategy being put by those opposite, which can be seen in the methodology that was used for forecasting unemployment, for example, prior to the MYEFO. The Labor government used the same methodology that was used by Howard and Costello; the incoming government, the Abbott government, changed that methodology. They also changed a lot of the forecasts from the independent pre-election forecasts that were provided a couple of months before.

Unsurprisingly, the Treasurer came up with a way to be more pessimistic about estimates of revenue and transfer payments so that he could exaggerate the deficit that Australia will face this year and in the forward estimates. It is just part of that political strategy. We know this because, of the almost $70 billion in additional accumulated deficits over the next four years, $54 billion comes from that forecasting fiddle that I just referred to and almost all of the rest comes from spending decisions he has taken since the coalition was elected nearly six
months ago. So again it is very clear that the Treasurer has manipulated the numbers in the MYEFO to create a case for savage cuts now.

When the Australian people voted for those opposite to form a government, they did not vote to line the pockets of the most wealthy in our community with money snatched from the most vulnerable, but that is what they got—this reverse Robin Hood that the government seem keen to pursue. The government scrapped the low-income superannuation contribution, a yearly tax refund of $500 for the 3.6 million low-paid workers in Australia, with the retail and hospitality sectors being hit the hardest by this cut. On the same day as its formal announcement, the government gave the 16,000 wealthiest people in the country a tax break on super earnings above $100,000 a year. The people benefiting from that tax break typically have more than $2 million in their superannuation accounts.

These cuts for low-paid workers and tax breaks for the wealthy are indicative of this government's regressive approach to fiscal policy. Unfortunately, this is just a sign of things to come. There have been plenty of half-announcements, plenty of whispered leaks to newspapers, plenty of plans floated by ministers, plenty of 'wait and see', but the ones that stand out are the health minister's refusal to rule out the $6 GP tax and the social service minister's secret plans for the disability support pension—and, of course, on top of that, the PM's refusal to rule out changes to the age pension.

All of these changes, all of these thought bubbles and all of the cuts that were announced in MYEFO are a warm-up act for those to come in the Commission of Audit. We had a very interesting story today in the Financial Review which referred to the Prime Minister's Paid Parental Leave scheme, which of course gives up to $75,000 to some of the wealthiest mums in our community. That was really quite an embarrassing leak for the Prime Minister, because he should not need a leak like that or a Commission of Audit to tell him that it is wrong to take money off the most vulnerable and give it to the most wealthy mums in our community.

I am from Queensland and we have seen the Commission of Audit strategy play out before. We have seen this approach taken by Campbell Newman as well. He had a Commission of Audit, again headed up by an LNP mate—this time Peter Costello—and he used that Commission of Audit to justify brutal cuts to health, education and services. I think the recent results in the state by-election in the seat of Redcliffe, where our friend the former member for Petrie won so resoundingly, show that the community rejects this sort of Commission of Audit process.

Treasurer Hockey's Commission of Audit will be in the same mould as the Queensland one. We know this because of the way they hand-picked the Commission of Audit panel. He picked it from a very narrow part of society. We welcome business involvement, obviously, in the development of policy, but our point is that, if you do not want a predetermined outcome, you need to have the broadest possible representation on a panel as important as the Commission of Audit panel. If you were fair dinkum about getting a fair result, you would put representatives on there of the charities sector, the welfare sector and the labour movement and from right across the community. So I think that shows that the Commission of Audit outcomes are largely predetermined. They know what they are getting. It will be a re-run of the big business playbook that we have seen before. We also know that the Treasurer got this Commission of Audit report 13 days ago. It is apparently something like 900 pages. I think it
is time for the interim report to be released so that Middle Australia knows what this government has in store for it.

Labor of course supports responsible budget repair, but not on the backs of Australia's most vulnerable low-income earners. Budgets are ultimately about priorities, and to sum up this government's approach it is a war on the weak. They are the type of government who will cut more than $11 million from a multicultural communities program but can find room to pay for a tax break for the wealthiest in the superannuation system. They are the type of government, as I said, who will give $75,000 to millionaire mums who take leave to have a child but will deny a pay rise to low-paid child care workers. They will look for ways to justify cuts to our most disadvantaged on the DSP but are happy to blow $20 million on marriage counselling vouchers and as much as $100 million on a politically motivated royal commission. They are happy to take assistance from hardworking families in the form of the schoolkids bonus but will return $700 million worth of tax avoidance and profit-shifting measures to multinational corporations operating in Australia. Their approach to the budget is motivated by a blind and cruel and harsh and extreme ideology.

Labor has a strong record of fiscal consolidation but fairly shared in the community. We have a history of finding savings in budgets which are carefully targeted and appropriate for economic conditions. At the same time, we have found a way to invest in important reforms for the future—in disability care, the NBN and Better Schools.

Despite what the coalition and their cheerleaders in some sections of the media will have you believe, the Labor Party left the budget in good nick before the last election. Australia's debt as a percentage of GDP at the end of the last government was the third lowest of all countries in the OECD—a podium finish. In April 2013 the IMF director for Asia said that Australia's fiscal position was of 'no concern because of the country's low level of debt'. I would prefer to take their word for it rather than believe in this confected budget emergency claimed by those opposite. The independent IMF praised the Labor government for its 'adept handling of the fallout from the GFC, prudent management and strong supervision of the financial sector'. This is entirely different to their criticism of the big spending during the Howard years.

When considering this appropriation bill and the budget more broadly, we also need to be conscious of the state of the labour market and how it will be affected by harsh austerity. We do know that austerity will affect some parts of this country more than others, and there has been some recent academic work done—some good stuff done by people at Griffith University, Charles Darwin and Newcastle—about employment vulnerability. Unfortunately for my community, some of the red alert suburbs that they identify are in Rankin, my own electorate. They issue a warning that radical austerity will make the situation for employment in my area much worse. So communities like mine have a lot of skin in the game when it comes to the likely recommendations of the government's audit commission.

We also saw the Brotherhood of St Laurence—and I commend them for their work on youth unemployment—come out this week and speak to some of the dangers, including the planned cut to Youth Connections, which is a key project. It certainly does a good job in my electorate of trying to hook young people up to the employment market so that we do not lose them forever. We need to be careful not to cut programs like that one that are doing good.
In summing up, this MYEFO is a big con. It is setting us up for some really bad decisions. It is setting us up for decisions that will hurt vulnerable people, that will hurt Middle Australia and that will do no good in a softening labour market. Unfortunately, I think the MYEFO was just the first salvo in a long war on the weak. The Labor Party will be up for any conversation about budget repair, but we will not be engaged in what is just a thinly veiled ideological exercise and political con on the part of the coalition.

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (11:53): As HL Mencken once noted:

The whole aim of practical politics is to keep the populace alarmed (and hence clamorous to be led to safety) by menacing it with an endless series of hobgoblins, all of them imaginary.

One only has to pick up any newspaper today, listen to the TV or listen to members of the opposition to hear a seemingly endless stream of bad news from the doomsayers. You hear that our dams will never fill again, that we are running out of resources, that our pollution is out of control, that the air is bad and that the water is worse. There is a climate crisis, we are told. The seas will rise and boil, the population growth is out of control, our rainforests are being destroyed, famine and disease are rampant and things are only going to get worse—that is what we are told. These headlines are accompanied by suggestions that we must contract, cut back, make do with less. 'Degrowth', 'decarbonisation' and 'sustainability' are the buzzwords of today. This comes with the implied threat that we must submit to big government and we must have a more powerful bureaucracy that controls our lives if we are to have any chance to survive.

But the good news is that the doomsayers of today, just like doomsayers have been throughout history, are wrong. If we go back to 1789, Malthus predicted an unending misery for humankind. Back in 1968, we had the environmentalist Paul Ehrlich, with his bestseller, *The Population Bomb*, that led with the lines:

The battle to feed humanity is over. In the 1970s the world will undergo famines—hundreds of millions of people are going to starve to death in spite of any crash programs embarked upon now. At this late date, nothing can prevent a substantial increase in the world death rate.

They have all been wrong, wrong, wrong.

It is true that here in Australia we have been through a dark period of stagnation in the last six years under the previous Labor government, with failed policies, with unprecedented reckless and wasteful expenditure and with our unemployment queue 200,000 people longer. That is enough people to fill the MCG twice. Under the six years of Labor government, we saw the real net wealth per person in Australia decline. The good news is that the decline under the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd and Greens government was an aberration in the long-term trend of increased prosperity for all Australians.

I will look at the 11½ years of the previous coalition government. During that period we saw a net creation of 2.4 million new jobs. We witnessed under the previous coalition government a reduction in the number of unemployed by 260,000. That is 260,000 people who went off the unemployment line into paid employment under the previous coalition government's policies. During the previous coalition government, we saw a 20 per cent increase in real wages and a doubling—a 100 per cent increase—in the real, net wealth of the average Australian.
My concern is that many people today simply do not realize how truly fortunate they are to live in this great country at this amazing time in world history, how things have continued to improve over the last two centuries and what a bright and prosperous future Australia has ahead of us. If you look at the facts, rather than the headlines, all indicators show that the almost every quality of human life that we can measure is getting better—the complete opposite of what the doomsayers preach. Today, more than at any time in human history, we are not plagued by the war, genocide, starvation, arbitrary arrest, imprisonment without trial, slavery or disease that our forefathers had to put up with. As we look to the future, although we cannot be so naive as to think that there will not be some bumps along the way, there is every prospect that these positive trends of improvement will continue.

Let us quickly go through the evidence in the time allowed. Firstly, I will look at life expectancy. For thousands of years, the average human being living on this planet could expect to live just 25 to 30 years. Life was nasty, brutish and short. Here in Australia back in the year 1900, at birth, the average Australian male had a life expectancy of just 55 years of age. After a century of progress, someone born in Australia today has a life expectancy of close to 85 years of age. I believe that the most treasured gift we have is life, and our generation has been gifted an extra quarter of a century of life by our forefathers. So we, here, and almost everyone listening to this broadcast today, especially younger people, need to realise that we have 25 more years of life, on average, granted to us, than our forefathers had who were born at the turn of the 1900s.

Let us now look at the decrease in infant mortality. No-one can think of anything worse than a child dying at birth. A century ago, 70 out of every 1,000 children in Australia died at birth. But, thanks to progress, today the ratio is down to four per 1,000. I put these numbers in perspective at a recent presentation I made at a high school in my electorate. At that school 730 students were enrolled. If our society had not made such a reduction in the rate of infant mortality over the last century, six of the 730 at the school would not have been at the presentation; instead, they would have died at birth.

The worst disaster that has ever occurred in this world is the Spanish flu, which struck after the First World War. This pandemic killed between 10 million and 20 million people. More people were killed by Spanish flu than were killed in the entire First World War. The news today is often filled with stories about the dangers of extreme weather, but the fact is that there has been a 98 per cent decline in weather-related deaths since the 1920s. On average, our grandparents were 50 times more likely to die from extreme weather—storms, floods or heat waves—than we are today. Our wealth and our progress have protected us.

Let us talk about air pollution. Almost every indicator in my home city of Sydney shows that air quality has been improving steadily for the last 20 years. I can remember, when I first started to drive, going over some of the high points in the Sutherland Shire and looking out across Western Sydney and there being a brown pollution haze across all of Western Sydney. Today it is not there, because there have been improvements: unleaded petrol and better engine technology and design. The modern truck engine emits just one-sixteenth of the pollution that a truck engine did a decade ago.

Then there is the success we have had in eradicating killer diseases such as typhoid, cholera, typhus, plague, smallpox, polio and diphtheria—all of which afflicted our forefathers and all of which are almost unheard of today. In my home city of Sydney the water quality at
every single beach has substantially improved over the last few decades, and the water continues to get cleaner despite the large increase in Sydney's population. This improvement has come about because we have been wealthy enough to afford to invest in upgrading our stormwater programs and sewage treatment plants.

Today even the least well-off Australians have access to a telephone, television, running water, air conditioning, gas, electricity and a flush toilet. A hundred years ago these were luxuries that even the wealthiest could not imagine having. Deputy Speaker Broadbent, you may be old enough, as I am, to remember the song Red-back on the Toilet Seat. Many of us can remember the days when our bathrooms were outhouses and the worry about going off into the dark and finding a red-back on the toilet seat. But today even the most modest project home has a bathroom of a luxury which would have been unimaginable just 50 years ago.

Another indication of our increasing wealth and opportunity is our ability to travel. Over a century ago it was generally only royalty and the aristocracy—and those being sent off to war—who could afford international travel. In fact, back in 1960, when we had a population of 10 million people, only 77,761 Australians made overseas trips. But last year, with a population a little bit more than doubled to 23 million, the number had increased to the extent that 8.7 million Australians made overseas trips. On a per capita basis, today we are travelling overseas 50 times more than we did back in the 1960s.

Perhaps the best example of our increasing wealth is the iPhone which almost everyone today has in their pocket. When I was a student the only person with a mobile phone was Maxwell Smart, Agent 86, who had his shoe-phone. The idea that there would be a mobile phone was so far-fetched that it was depicted in a comic series. When I first started to work, mobile phones cost the equivalent of $10,000 and weighed the same as two house bricks; you would have needed a large suitcase to carry one. But look at what is in everyone's pocket today. It is not just a mobile phone; it is a high-quality camera which also shoots videos, and it can be used to listen to music and to send messages and as a street directory, a library, a GPS and more. When I was a student each of these technologies would have cost separately over $1 million. Today, for less than $100, I can have all of them in my pocket.

There is more good news: the dire predictions of global warming in the early IPCC reports are simply not coming true. Despite all the claims that the science is settled and that the time for debate is over and the fact that anyone who even dared to question the accuracy of the IPCC's prophecies was labelled a 'denier', for the last 17 years there has been no global warming. We hear the pessimists talking about the limits to growth, but the fact is that we are not running out of resources. Every time someone has predicted we are running out of a resource they have been proven wrong. The reason is that the single greatest resource we have is the creativity of mankind—and that is a resource which has no limits. The doomsayers forget that our history has shown that the biggest counter to any perceived scarcity is not to try to slice the pie into smaller pieces, as those in the opposition do, but to use our human ingenuity to innovate, experiment and take risks to figure out how to make more pies.

While there are so many positives, there are some negative trends. We have seen the breakdown of families and an increase of suicide rates. Today every Australian should be rightfully optimistic about the bright future that we have, though there are some risks. I suggest the main risk to our prosperous future is the failure to understand the drivers of our prosperity over the last two centuries. Those drivers have been our democratic institutions.
which have provided the economic and political freedoms. It has been our Christian heritage. It has been the constant and real reduction in costs of energy. It has been the increase in international trade. It has been the increase of home ownership. It has been the development of an entrepreneurial culture with incentive for individuals to innovate, experiment and take risks. Combining those things has tapped the creativity of our nation and they have delivered an upward spiral of prosperity. One thing we do know is that the greatest tragedy of the past has been too much government, not too little. We need to learn that central planning fails and concentration of political or economic power has always been inherently bad.

Mr GILES (Scullin) (12:08): I rise to speak on Appropriation Bill (No. 3), Appropriation Bill (No. 4) and the Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill. I am not quite sure that all of the previous debate focused on that legislation. I do, however, note one contribution of the member for Hughes that I wholeheartedly agree with. He may be disappointed to hear this. While his broader contribution is on themes that I find uncomfortable personally and in terms of their relationship to the reality that I see, particularly in relation to climate change, I share his confidence in the creativity of our people, men and women, being our greatest asset. However, it is disappointing to me that that concern for productivity is not something which is demonstrated in the priorities of the government as demonstrated in the legislation before the House. I should also say that I rise in support of the amendment moved by the member for Fraser, the shadow Assistant Treasurer, which I believe sets these bills in their proper context.

These three bills reflect additional appropriations for 2013-14, containing details of extra expenditure as a result of government decisions that were in the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook. In total, the government is seeking parliamentary approval for approximately $14.8 billion. Notably, the bills propose additional appropriations from the Consolidated Revenue Fund for the annual services of the government, and for the parliamentary departments. But hidden within these bills are some particularly concerning cuts to services and organisations which will impact in Scullin, as they will elsewhere in Australia. These cuts, and more particularly their consequences, will be the principal focus of my contribution to this debate.

I note that there will be an $11.5 million cut to the vital Building Multicultural Communities Program. This is, in short, a demonstration of how we have a government that knows the cost of everything but the value of nothing. These cuts will damage and indeed diminish communities across Australia. What this means directly for the communities of Scullin is a cut to the Thomastown Little Athletics Club but also a very significant cut to the City of Whittlesea in respect of a $150,000 provision to upgrade the kitchen at Epping Memorial Hall. Epping Memorial Hall is the council's most popular venue and hosts a wide array of different groups, including senior citizens, schools and other community groups. I regularly attend meetings and events there and know it to be a focus for multicultural activities in Melbourne's north. It is a real community hub. I know that groups like the Chaldean Ankawa Social Club, the Community of Cypriots in the Northern Suburbs Senior Citizens Club, the Epping Pensioners Association, the Italian Pensioners Association at Mill Park, the Italian Speaking Senior Citizens Club, the Macedonian Orthodox Community Elderly Citizens Group, the Vedanta Society of Australia and the Whittlesea U3A are reliant on this wonderful facility to bring together their communities and to share community activities. The upgrade to the kitchens would have allowed the hall to host multiple events,
something having only one kitchen precludes. The situation as it currently stands means that, as we head into winter, the council is forced to continue renting a portable kitchen outside the hall for $12,000 a month, as well as to find a further $150,000 from somewhere else within the council's already stretched budget.

The letter that informed the community organisations of this news stated that 'the Government has decided to reduce the scope of the Building Multicultural Communities Program'. By this, the government meant it was cutting the program completely—reducing the scope to zero, in other words. This was spending that was approved and accounted for in the last budget. Before the election, the coalition made no mention of these cuts. So much for a 'no surprises, no excuses' government; these cuts were a surprise for these organisations and there can be no excuse for them. And $150,000 is only two paid parental leave payments to millionaires. Make no mistake: these cuts will hurt many organisations and diminish community. Affected groups have already raised their concerns with me and no doubt will continue to do so. But perhaps that is the point. As we have seen before over the last six months, this government does not believe in society and goes out of its way to undermine those that do.

This important program was designed to assist diverse groups establish a sense of community in Australia, to give them more of a stake in our society. So it was unsurprising, although disappointing, to find that Senator Bernardi has been critical of this program, particularly as Senator Bernardi has previously described multiculturalism as a 'significant problem' that 'undermines the cultural values and cohesiveness that brings a nation together'. Needless to say, I disagree with this assertion. But if Senator Bernardi is concerned to bring our nation together, the irony of this contribution is that cuts like these hurt communities and make it harder for these groups to reach out and create a sense of inclusiveness at the grassroots level and build a stronger community and indeed a stronger nation.

I note also that the cuts provide for a $4.6 million cut to the legal policy reform and advocacy funding. This sum, $4.6 million, specifically relates to the 2013-14 year, but the overall cut is $43.1 million to legal policy reform and advocacy funding. The cuts include a $6.5 million cut to legal aid commissions, $19.6 million from the Community Legal Services Program, $13.3 million from the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services and three and two-thirds million dollars from Family Violence Prevention Legal Services, the last being an issue of grave concern to many aspects of the community I represent.

Earlier this week in estimates, Senator Brandis tried to deny that these cuts would have any impact on front-line services, but this is hard to believe. A more plausible motivator is that the Attorney-General has complained about these services conducting policy or advocacy work. This accords with the government's obsession with secrecy and its regrettably thin skin when it comes to the expression of views that may be contrary to its own.

When problems confronting legal services are systemic, what is wrong with them doing policy and advocacy work to bring this government—which has a government—to account and its work to the public's attention? The government may say that it is not the job of these services, but surely these services are the organisations best placed to offer insight in these areas, particularly when we think about service delivery in complicated and pressing social issues like family violence support.
Before the election, in the Scullin electorate, we were fortunate enough to have the former Attorney-General, the member for Isaacs, announcing funding increases for the Whittlesea Community Legal Service. I take this opportunity to ask that the government confirm that this centre will not be subjected to the cuts announced in MYEFO.

On this point about the legal cuts, I note that the Law Council of Australia has already raised its concerns, stating:

… the Law Council is concerned some of the programs may have been inappropriately identified as 'law reform and advocacy' programs and that the proposed cuts will have a significant impact on the capacity of already chronically under-funded legal assistance bodies to provide legal services to disadvantaged Australians …

It said:

… it is clear that those organisations require urgent additional funding in order to meet increasing demand for legal assistance services.

And it said:

These cuts will ultimately create a net burden for the economy and work counter to the Government's objectives.

This is a warning that should have been heeded and should be heeded now.

In respect of higher education, these bills would cut just over $2 million from the Commonwealth Grant Scheme and the Higher Education Loan Program. Whilst I am relieved that these programs still survive in some form from the coalition, these reductions in funding will likely reduce opportunities for those seeking a tertiary education. This is of particular concern to my electorate, which hosts the Bundoora campus of RMIT University and which is adjacent to the neighbouring La Trobe University campus, which is also located in Bundoora but in the electorate of Batman.

The Commonwealth Grant Scheme provides funding to eligible higher education providers for students enrolling in bachelor degrees and other higher education courses of study designated by the minister. For designated courses of study, the Australian government provides funding to public universities for an agreed number of Commonwealth supported places in a given year. La Trobe University had 1,256 Commonwealth supported places for the 2013 grant year, and RMIT University had 2,398 such places. This government now needs to come clean about how its cuts will affect RMIT and La Trobe universities, as well as other universities, their students—including prospective students—and university staff.

Yesterday, we heard how little the Minister for Health had to say regarding preventative health, so perhaps it is unsurprising that this government is also cutting $13.2 million from the health budget, including $1 million from the Chronic Disease Prevention and Service Improvement Fund, $6 million from the public health program, $5.2 million from the National Rural and Remote Health Infrastructure Program and $1 million from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health program. I am deeply concerned about the impact of these cuts to these types of programs in Scullin and across the country.

I note, on the last specific matter I wish to touch upon, that these bills include some cuts to education programs. I take this opportunity to remind the House that before the election there was, famously, a unity ticket between the coalition and Labor on education funding, in relation to schools funding in particular. But this is of course, unfortunately, a government
that says one thing and does another. Yesterday in Senate estimates, it was confirmed that the
collection will do nothing to ensure that states maintain and grow their funding, including
states like Victoria that have signed up to the Labor reforms. What a difference this will make
to schools in Scullin and to the educational prospects and indeed the life prospects of so many
students!

In relation to the $4.8 million cuts from education in 2013-14, these bills cut $1 million
from the Child Care Services Support Program, which provides financial assistance to
childcare service providers to improve access to child care for children, families and
communities. It complements the help given to eligible families through the childcare benefit
and the rebate. There are also cuts, I note, of $1.4 million to general childcare outcomes and
$338,000 to the schools support program, once again showing unfortunate priorities.

I now turn from examining some particular impacts of this legislation to some wider
considerations that have been effectively touched upon already by previous speakers on this
side of the House, and also briefly to the amendment moved by the member for Fraser. Let us
consider the context within which we are debating these bills. The papers this week are full of
speculation about the forthcoming budget. The budget will be informed by the report of the
Commission of Audit, a 900-page document that we in this place, legislators, need to see. We
need to debate it. But, while it appears that the Australian Financial Review
gets a sneak peak
at the report or parts of it, in this place we continue to remain in the dark.

The people of Australia were promised no surprises and no excuses, as well as no cuts to
education and health, amongst many other things, of course. These bills once again nail the lie
about no cuts. Important programs are axed in both education and health. But, sadly, this is
not even the half of it. The Treasurer now says, 'All options are on the table,' but that is his
table, of course. The rest of us—except, it seems, so
some at the Australian Financial Review—are still waiting on the surprises as we continue to be softened up with excuses, including the
substantial provisions in these bills.

These bills show us that the government could make time to make a reportedly unsolicited
donation to the Reserve Bank in the form of an $8.8 billion appropriation to the bank—an
appropriation that I note the Treasurer is yet to provide justification for—but not to make
necessary investments in the people of Australia and their productive capacities. And, if debt
is the problem, more debt is not the answer. That is something we were told about before the
election, but it seems that, like many other lessons of opposition, it has not made the transition
into government.

It is time now for this government to live up to the promises it made to the people of
Australia before the election, to stop being an opposition in exile and to take responsibility for
how it governs. The Australian people deserve better.

In drawing attention to some of the consequences of these bills for the communities that I
represent in this place, I am mindful of the broader considerations that are at stake. These
cuts, these broken promises, are the tip of a huge iceberg. It is telling and, indeed, frightening
that this government continues to hide behind excuses and to rely on surprises in place of an
open and informed debate about its plans. Perhaps this betrays a lack of confidence.

I am deeply concerned that this government is paving the way to austerity by deliberately
blowing out the budget and by the hidden commission of cuts. There is a different approach
that is open to them, even now. Let us have a transparent debate about our future so that we can properly consider how to build the more productive economy that members on both sides are talking about. With that more productive economy I would hope also for a more equal and more sustainable society. Let us now see the end of this opposition in exile. Let us see some responsibility taken by the adults opposite. Let us see responsibility taken for governing now.

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (12:23): Flying into Brisbane international airport you cannot help but notice Moreton Bay and the archipelago of islands flanked by the beautiful North Stradbroke Island: a 60-kilometre-long sand island with extraordinary ecology, freshwater lakes, pandanus-framed beaches and, of course, tourism. Being an island, it needs a hub—and that is Toondah Harbour, where around 7,000 maritime services leave each year to reach North Stradbroke Island. This makes it the second-busiest port in this nation, carrying over half a million visitors and 200,000 vehicles. The Toondah Harbour area is a Newman government Priority Development Area—a very important initiative that allows us to envision what this incredible gem could look like with a common-sense approach to development and to allowing additional features over and above the current area for vehicle departures. This area is potentially a place for residential, tourism, maritime and wharf development, for light retail and other activities.

The idea of a PDA is to leave options open to people and to entities with great ideas. The PDA process is an idea of the Newman government that I support entirely. But, to do it right, you often get only one shot. To do it right, you need all three levels of government working together, and I am confident that, with the work of Redland City Council and the Queensland state government, and even with the overlying federal legislation through the EPBCA, we can get to that place.

Major strategic assets on our coastline are truly rare things. In my area of Redlands, with a coastline of over 150 kilometres, mostly mangrove and beach, there is barely one or two kilometres of actual development. Most of our 'emerald fringe', as we like to refer to it, has been preserved. In the case of Toondah Harbour we are talking about not 200 kilometres but about 200 metres of currently untouched foreshore that is part of the PDA process.

It is important that—as the three levels of government work together to get it right—we look to the future. It is important that whatever does happen there is economically conceived and sustainable and can actually be built. Otherwise there is no point in starting. Finally, we need to remember that, no matter how attractive a beautiful natural asset is, just because we live next to it gives us no right to refuse others the right to visit and enjoy it. When we are looking at what we can do on our foreshore, we need to ask these questions on behalf of those who will follow us decades later: how do we best capture the utility of this place? How do we best optimise its use? How do we make it available to more than just the people who live around it and love it? Sure, by being near it and close to it, as my constituents are, we have a vested interest in doing it right. To that end, I lived on Shore Street North. My immediate neighbour is the Toondah area and, in fact, GJ Walter Park.

There are three great concerns that my constituents have about this development, and that is what I would like to address today. If we are doing anything on Queensland's beautiful coastline, and certainly on the delicate Moreton Bay ecology—that is already a Ramsar site of national significance—we need to be mindful about what we do. We need to be mindful about dredging, we need to be mindful about what we do with changing the foreshore coastline, and
we need to be mindful about the built infrastructure that we create and that necessarily affects people who live behind what we are doing. On those three fronts I would like to elaborate a little further.

This part of Moreton Bay is a Ramsar site and subject to EPBCA review. It is so because of migratory seabirds, green turtles, loggerhead turtles and, of course, seagrass that dugongs feed on. This is an extraordinary place just 30 kilometres from one of the world's most exciting and fast-growing cities, Brisbane. It is an amazing place because you can live on an island and commute to work in a major city—such a rare thing worldwide. There are not one, not two but six or seven of these populated islands where amazing people have built up incredible communities surrounded by an emerald fringe. Each island has its own particular characteristics and personalities, and each island has its own dreams for the future. But all of them rely on those vehicle and passenger movement services. There is Wynnum Creek in the south and Toondah Harbour in the north.

Building heights will always be a sensitive issue along Australia's coastline, and I am confident that through the PDA process there will be an absolute insistence that any proposal for built infrastructure be mindful of views, heights and the open spaces around them. If we are going to be dredging, we have to be mindful about what we do with the spoil, where it comes from, whether it affects migratory seabird areas and, of course, the long-term impacts on hydrology; whether it affects coasts north and south and whether it leads to erosion or to storm surges or other threats that we can have during Queensland's storm season.

Finally, to open space: I do not blame any local for saying, 'I don't mind what plans you have for development, but don't take away the very precious access that my family and friends have to Moreton Bay.' Believe me, so much of it is mangrove fringe that it is actually very hard to take your dogs and your kids down to much of Moreton Bay in my area and to be able to enjoy the water. Whoever comes up with a concept for the development of the Toondah Harbour PDA, we will by necessity have to consider those demands of locals. We cannot afford to have a development that cuts off that access to the water; we cannot afford to have a development that makes it impossible for dog owners to take their pets to the beach. These are things that are now absolutely woven into the lifestyles of those of us who live along the bay.

I do want to respond by quoting into Hansard some of the important comments made by Mark Robinson MP. In a recent letter to the editor he has pointed out to Redlanders in particular how seriously he takes building heights, open space and any proposal to dredge in this area:

With respect to building heights, I can reassure the community that proposed development applications will have to demonstrate how building structures will protect views … I make this comment because in parts of the Sunshine Coast building height limits have simply led to long horizontal proliferations of high-rise buildings just under the maximum height that absolutely obliterate views for all of the residents behind. Sometimes, having a slightly higher high-rise building limit allows what we refer to as view corridors that improve the amenity for people who live in the area. Robinson goes on to emphasise the need for the provision of open space and good urban design outcomes, and says:

While maps in the PDA documents have indicated building heights of up to 15 levels could be considered in the Toondah Harbour proposed scheme, any buildings considered will need to meet this strict criteria.
Robinson also points out, regarding open space:

A continuous public space link along the Toondah Harbour foreshore is proposed to provide new recreational opportunities for the community.

While some current open space at Toondah Harbour may need to be partly used for development, the proposed development scheme will provide better access to the foreshore, land reclamation and the possible relocation of an existing car park currently taking up prime land close to the foreshore.

Robinson's point is a simple one: if we are going to improve this Toondah Harbour area, there are many opportunities not just for focusing purely on preservation but for increasing and optimising the use of this area. Having large concrete car parks along our foreshore is not ideal. Reopening these areas to the public and liberating them should be our goal. You only need to visit other major regional cities up the Queensland coastline like Mackay, Townsville and Cairns to know that that is possible.

The last thing we want in our community is to have empty foreshore areas that have virtually no utility because nothing can be built, nothing can be designed and nothing can be improved. That is not my vision as a local member from my area. My job is not to make sure that nothing changes; my job is to make sure that the world knows that my area is one of the world's greatest places to live, to visit, to spend money, to stay and to consider becoming a local. I know it is a very special place and I know that our community is smart enough to identify what makes it special, to identify what caused us to move there in the first place and to preserve it and show it off; to be proud of it and make it more easily accessible. I know every blade of grass at GJ Walter Park. My daughter Sophie's first birthday party was held in the rotunda. Living across the road from it, I know exactly how many people use the park at every hour of the day, 24 hours a day. It is still one of the best kept secrets in Redlands, and it is virtually unknown to people who are not from Redlands. I know we can do better than that.

What we do not need is a small minority utterly insistent that nothing can change. Every person in my community should have a voice. They have a right to a say. No individual in my community has a right to say to others that they cannot have what they want. We want equal voices, with everyone having a say. If I make one commitment today it is that I will go broadly to my community and talk to them about how they would like to see Toondah Harbour a decade and two decades from now. We will not have a repeat of Labor consultation processes where 100 people turn up and tell us what the community is thinking. I am afraid 100 people, as much as I respect their points of view as individuals, do not cut it as community consultation. Not everyone wants to turn up at a rally and tell you exactly what they want, and in many cases we need to be much more imaginative about how we ask our community what they want. Social media will give us this opportunity, phone polling will give us this opportunity, telephone town halls will open up new possibilities and of course the traditional written surveys are also important. In many cases there is only a 10 per cent return on those surveys, and for me the challenge is to do better: to motivate people to complete surveys and tell me what they think.

The PDA process in Cleveland is an example of how we can do far better. I am confident that both the Queensland state government and Redlands City Council can do that. I am confident that, despite submissions closing on 24 February this year, there will be ample opportunities once submissions are received to examine them, to scrutinise them, to critique them, to debate them and to inspire our friends and neighbours to get involved and improve
those missions where we can. But—let us have considered, informed debate once those submissions are received. It is almost impossible to prejudge submissions that have not yet come to hand. Let us move away from the old ways of getting 100 people around a piece of paper and deciding what the community will get. Let us move away from the old ways where we used bureaucrats to make it impossible to develop areas simply because of the layers and layers of legislative and regulatory impediment. Now is the time that ordinary people should get together and formulate a clear vision of what they love and what they want to see their children enjoying.

I make it very clear that my job in an outer metropolitan community is, above all things, to protect the local ecology while making jobs available to my local families. If my people trust that levels of government can achieve those two goals by working together, then I ask them to join me in that communication and that process in a constructive way. To people on both sides of the debate, I say that if you come to the debate wanting the place levelled and covered in high-rise buildings, or if you come to the debate wanting absolutely not a blade of grass touched, then be prepared to conciliate. Be prepared to open your mind to the possibilities; be prepared to look around the world and see how other places have done it right and let us make sure that Cleveland is added to that list in the years to come.

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (12:36): I want to speak today on Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2013-2014, Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2013-2014 and Appropriation (Parliamentary Departments) Bill (No. 2) 2013-2014 and, of course, on the amendment that Labor has moved. The three bills reflect additional budget appropriation for the 2013-14 financial year and they contain details of extra spending as a result of government decisions that were made in the 2013-14 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook. In total, the government is seeking parliamentary approval for about $14.8 billion of additional expenditure in 2013-14.

While we will not block the passage of these bills, we do want to note the gross hypocrisy and dishonesty when it comes to spending—and previous speakers have highlighted what I am talking about. Before the election, the Treasurer was saying, 'If debt is the problem, more debt is not the answer.' We see in these bills that it is clear that the Treasurer thinks that more debt is the answer, and his deal with the Greens to have 'debt unlimited' is reflected in what is happening with these appropriation bills.

The government has been trying to justify much of its agenda since coming to government by saying that the previous government left the country with a budget emergency. But what are the facts of the budget numbers that were left by Labor to this government? The numbers were verified independently by the departments of Treasury and Finance prior to the election, in the Pre-Election Economic and Fiscal Outlook, PEFO. Labor had the budget going back into surplus in 2016-17. This government has turned around a projected $4.2 billion surplus in that year to a deficit of $17.7 billion. I again remind members that the Treasurer had said, 'If debt is the problem, more debt is not the answer.' As I said, these appropriation bills seek approval for around $14.8 billion in extra spending this year, and the largest contributor to that extra spending is the appropriation that the government is seeking of $8.8 billion for the Reserve Bank. That is a contribution that the Treasurer has consistently refused to provide an adequate justification for.
These bills not only detail spending proposals but also reveal a number of cuts. We should not forget that the Prime Minister said on the eve of the election that there would be no cuts to education, no cuts to health, no change to pensions, no change to the GST and no cuts to the ABC or SBS. We have seen the lie of this in the weeks and months since the election. With these appropriation bills we see it in black and white, with millions of dollars of cuts in the health portfolio and millions of dollars of cuts in the education portfolio—and we have certainly heard public discussion of further cuts, including cuts to the ABC and cuts to the pension to pay for the rolled-gold paid parental leave scheme that the Prime Minister has promised.

The health and education cuts and others detailed in these bills happen this financial year. From the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook we know that, across the forward estimates, Australia's public hospitals will be $400 million worse off. At the same time, the government have announced that they are ending Labor's trades training centres, cutting hundreds of millions of dollars from education.

Mr Thistlethwaite: Shame!

Ms PLIBERSEK: Indeed. The minister sitting at the table, the Assistant Minister for Education, has been out there saying that there is not enough opportunity to try a trade in school at the same time as presiding over—

Ms Ley: Glad you are listening.

Ms PLIBERSEK: I am listening but I am not agreeing. If you think that it is important to give students an opportunity to learn a trade at school, why are you cutting a billion dollars from trades training centres? No answer from the minister.

Other speakers have detailed and will continue to detail the cuts to health, education and other services, but I want to talk about the cuts this government is making within the foreign affairs and international development portfolio. In January this year, the foreign minister confirmed that no region in the world would escape the government's $4.5 billion cut to the foreign aid budget. The $4.5 billion cut was announced only days before the election, but it took the government until the new year to detail how those cuts would hit. The foreign minister's January announcement was of the first $650 million in cuts for the 2013-14 financial year—the announcement more than halfway through the financial year in which the $650 million cuts would hit. These cuts will impact on some of the poorest people in the world.

I do not think there is any Australian who would say that the humanitarian need in Africa is not great and that we should not help. But the Abbott government has already cut more than $90 million from the poorest countries in Africa. The government tried to justify these cuts by saying that they were going to reorient Australia's aid spend towards the Asia-Pacific. I would agree that our region should be our greatest priority. Yet over this same period, this financial year, there will be a $250 million cut to our region—Indonesia cut by $59.1 million; PNG cut by $5.3 million; Vanuatu cut by $6.2 million; the Solomon Islands cut by $14.2 million; and Fiji cut by $2.8 million. The member at the table with me, the member for Kingsford Smith was with me on a trip through the Pacific with the foreign minister as she assured the Prime Minister of Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands and Nauru that there were no cuts to their foreign aid budget coming—yet these figures show that that is absolutely not the case.
It is important to remember that these cuts are retrospective. They come in the middle of a financial year, causing enormous difficulty for aid organisations that had worked so constructively with the previous government and that wish to work so constructively with this government. I will give a couple of examples. Julia Newton-Howes, chief executive of that marvellous organisation, Care Australia, said her organisation had lost half a million dollars from their $20 million budget this year. She said:

This is for aid we had already programmed this financial year. We are now going to have to scramble to work out where we can cut.

Oxfam is another magnificent organisation that assists some of the neediest people in the world. Their chief executive Helen Szoke says it will be forced to scale back a number of programs as a result of the cuts. She said:

We, like many other agencies, will have to tell partners and people on the ground that we'll have to scale back programs.

Real needs that were going to be met this year will now not be met. Before the election, then shadow Treasurer, Joe Hockey, and shadow finance spokesman, Andrew Robb, said:

The Coalition will reprioritise foreign aid allocations towards non-government organisations that deliver on-the-ground support for those most in need.

That will also mean putting more money into NGOs who are on the ground and who can deliver aid more efficiently.

Again, I would agree with that sentiment. It is very important that we support our proven and tested NGOs with partners and staff on the ground, experienced people, delivering high-quality aid. Yet, despite these promises, non-government organisations which deliver that on-the-ground support, such as CARE and Oxfam, had their funding cut midyear. The Red Cross will lose $8.5 million, UNICEF's funding will be cut by $4.2 million and the World Health Organization will lose around $3.4 million. I cannot speak highly enough of these organisations. I admire the work they do. I have been a long-time donor to many of these organisations because I respect them. I know that when you give a dollar to these organisations it gets to people in need. Yet these organisations are facing the cruellest of cuts this financial year.

Late last year, the government failed to deliver the $375 million contribution expected of Australia to replenish the Global Fund. The Global Fund does magnificent work to reduce the spread of HIV, tuberculosis and malaria around the world. It does successful work. We have seen that the Abbott government funding has fallen $175 million short on what was expected to be Australia's contribution. Instead of the expected $125 million a year, the government will give only about half of that.

We are a generous country, and we do what we can to offer a helping hand to those most in need. We do it not only because of our ethical and moral values but also because it is in Australia's interest to live in a peaceful and prosperous world. When we can contribute to that aim, we should contribute to that aim. Under the former Labor government, Australia's aid budget increased every year, by nearly $3 billion in total. And, to those opposite who would say that this is a frivolous indulgence, we looked at every dollar of aid spending to make sure that it was well targeted. We undertook an Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness to ensure that our international development policy was actually working to help people overcome poverty. We were determined to ensure our aid program was not just better
resourced but of a higher quality too and that more was spent on front-line services like health and education. That is why we made enhancing transparency and accountability key planks to ensure effectiveness, and it is also why we were determined to strengthen Australian government partnerships with accountable and proven NGOs.

The cuts to the aid program were followed by revelations in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's portfolio additional estimates statement, released a couple of weeks ago. In that statement, the government's lack of commitment to poverty alleviation was revealed. No longer would Australian aid spending carry with it an obligation to assist developing countries reduce poverty. After the former government's Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness, poverty reduction was entrenched as a primary goal of Australia's aid program. This is now gone, and the change of direction is rapidly taking place under this government.

Why is poverty reduction important? How can it be called an aid budget or an overseas development assistance budget if we do not have poverty reduction as one of the aims of this budget?

The poor start that the government has made in overseeing Australia's international development policy has disappointingly, unfortunately, been mirrored by its clumsy approach to some of our most critical bilateral relationships. Over the last few months I think many Australians have been looking on and scratching their heads as they have seen the decline in our relationship with Indonesia and the decline in our relationship with China. These countries are important to us in our region, and it pains me to say it but our government is letting us down. Of course issues occasionally blow up with countries—even with our very good friends and even with our best friends—but how we handle those issues as they come up is critical.

Our relationship with Indonesia is vital, and that is why we worked with Indonesia so closely. It is why, under Labor, we secured a comprehensive strategic partnership with Indonesia, including annual face-to-face meetings of leaders and foreign, defence and trade ministers to foster better dialogue and strategic consultation between our two nations. Just recently, the Indonesian Foreign Minister said that just five months ago the relationship between our two countries had been 'very close and very positive'. He also said that the relationship was 'maybe the closest' it had ever been. In that very short time, we have seen a very substantial decline in that relationship. We heard today that our Minister for Foreign Affairs got an incredibly frosty reception when she went to China. It is important that we look after our old friendships, but our new friendships and our friendships in the region will be critical to our success in the future, to our prosperity and to our security. The government lets us down when it does not tend to these relationships.

Under Labor, our bilateral relationship with China also matured into a stronger and more diverse partnership. In the Australia in the Asian century white paper, the then government committed to elevating our relations with China through regular high-level meetings between leaders and senior ministers. We achieved that goal at the historic meeting of leaders in Beijing in April 2013, when then Prime Minister Gillard and the Chinese Premier announced the Australia-China strategic partnership. We have, as I said, good and close relationships with our old friends, but it is irresponsible and short-sighted for Australia to turn its back on our newer friends, because those newer friends will be critical to our national wellbeing in the
future. We are capable of good relations with both, and under Labor we had good relations with both.

As I said earlier, we will pass these bills, but we need to remember that, at the heart of them, what we see in black and white is a catalogue of the broken promises of this government—the promises not to cut. We see the cuts here in black and white. We see a broken promise too in the fact that, while Joe Hockey promised to spend sensibly, what we see here is the beginning of debt unlimited.

**WYATT ROY** (Longman) (12:51): This government has a clear-cut plan to boost the productive capacity of the economy, to go for growth. It is a tripartite plan, the first element of which is that we are a government that intends to live within its means. That entails cutting the waste as we maintain an unblinking focus on delivering a sustainable budget.

With the previous Labor government at the levers, this nation's enviable abundance became a political plaything in the form of pink batts, school halls, free cash, and debt, debt and more debt. Consequently, Labor's legacy is 200,000 more unemployed, gross debt projected to rise to $667 billion—that is, $29,000 for every Australian—and $123 billion in cumulative deficits.

The coalition government shares the concerns of our fellow Australians in regard to this careless, flagrant and all-too-rapid decline. We recognise the imperative of taking stock. We will action the people's mandate to us to clean up Labor's mess. And we will return Australia to its rightful realm of prosperity. While our goal is eminently achievable, not one member of this government is unperceiving of the hard work ahead. Nor have we been anything less than frank with the Australian people on the realities of budget repair. Greater prosperity will ultimately result in a greater ability to pay for government services. But to get there, just like the families and businesses in our electorates, governments have to live within their means.

As the Prime Minister articulated this week, you cannot spend money until you have earned it or created the means to pay it back. This year's budget will direct our course. What we will do across government is be utterly mindful in our spending determinations. Less productive spending will be ruled out and more productive spending counted in. That is why, on one side of the ledger, we will abolish the carbon and mining taxes—because the premise that you can tax a nation into prosperity is devoid of logic. In the plus column, we will build the infrastructure of the 21st century and, where the market is not best placed to do so, consider other economic investment in programs that meet our stringent cost-benefit analyses.

The public sector will be trimmed and new bureaucracies scrapped because, when it comes to government, we believe that less is more. We believe that getting government out of the way allows the real wealth creators—thriving businesses, employing expanding workforces—to free their arms.

This government has a responsibility to ensure that each Australian's tax dollar sows as much value as possible. That is why all new spending in the coalition government's first budget will be fully funded, invariably from savings, and targeted towards growing the economy through the productive engagement of all working Australians. This thrust is the very basis of rebuilding our economy, so that within three years Australia will be on track for a sustainable surplus. Hopefully, well inside 10 years Australia will once again be a country of sustainable surpluses in the order of one per cent of GDP.
The second pillar of our plan is rooted in the understanding that strong communities require a strong economy to support and sustain them; and a firing economy is one with creative, energised and profitable private businesses. We know that entrepreneurial interests, not governments, are the hothouses of new jobs. So we have to make sure we do everything we can to unencumber businesses, to give them the clear air to thrive, to prosper and to employ more people.

We are a government that is unabashedly going for growth in the private sector. That is why we are unshackling it from the strangle effects of the carbon tax. After the previous Labor government's 40 new or increased taxes and more than 21,000 new regulations, we have begun our program to slash unwarranted and excessive regulation by at least $1 billion a year. In my electorate, I am working with local businesses to garner our share of these red-tape reductions.

Already, this government, in its foundational days, has limited most of the almost 100 announced but not enacted Labor government's tax changes, meaning lower taxes, less paperwork and more certainty. In turn, lower taxes and less red tape add up to greater productivity, which spells higher economic growth, more jobs and, ultimately, more prosperity. But there is something even more subtle at play here. In business, where confidence is king, nothing could be more crucial than fostering an environment that is positive and not defeatist, where eyes are raised and shoulders are not weighed down, in an atmosphere which, freed of obstacles and shadows, rekindles entrepreneurial spirit and its by-products of investment and employment.

The third step in our economic plan is cast in the iron-clad knowledge that global trade produces infinite possibilities with respect to raising the prosperity of nations. That is why this Australian government wishes to sign well-negotiated free trade agreements, particularly with our neighbours in the region. An emergent Asian middle class of more than a billion people will want to buy our goods and services and they will want to holiday here. It is important that we are opening ourselves to those markets and cultivating access for our exporters.

When the Australia-Korea Free Trade Agreement comes into force, 84 per cent of Australia's exports by value to Korea will enter duty free, rising to 99.8 per cent on full implementation. The wide-ranging wins for Australian industry, including beef and dairy producers, will be worth more than $5 billion in additional national income between 2015 and 2030 and, beyond those first 15 years of operation, will boost the economy to the tune of $653 million a year.

So there it is— the interlocking economic framework of our future laid out. A government that lives within its means, reaches for growth in the private sector and hitches its wagon to the locomotive of global trade. Yet, for all the macro-surgery required to close the wounds of Labor's fiscal failings, the coalition government has no intention of shirking its responsibilities at the local level. Indeed, at the heart of our principles is restoring authority wherever possible to local communities, and that is another reason why we are investing in critical infrastructure. It is a productivity-increasing measure and often a local safety investment, which, in my electorate, will see opportunities blossom in line with the coalition's $8.5 million Bruce Highway upgrade.
Between the Sunshine Coast and the Longman electorate region of Moreton Bay, the Bruce Highway is the connector for employment, for tourism and for many students at the University of the Sunshine Coast. It also carries a large number of commuters from our region to Brisbane. With $3.3 billion of the coalition's Bruce Highway project to be injected in upgrades from the Pine River through to the Sunshine Coast, we have a long-term strategic plan that will make travel safer and unlock the potential of our area. Fifty million dollars has been earmarked for the planning and design of six lanes between Caboolture and Caloundra. The Bruce Highway improvements coincide with the development program for Caloundra south and Caboolture west—all in all, a huge boon for the growth of our region.

Let me assure the House and the people of Longman that the government will be delivering on my other key election commitments, including the upgrade of the dangerous D'Aguilar Highway, a major transport corridor heading west from Caboolture. In the lead-up to the 2010 federal election, I declared the coalition's resolve to reduce the tragedies occurring on the D'Aguilar Highway, pledging a multimillion-dollar funding commitment. Over the next three years, obviously while we were not in government, I persistently lobbied the then Labor government to prioritise the work, but my calls fell on deaf ears. Labor chose to ignore our region. Meanwhile, the highway's deterioration and inherent dangers only got worse. With the election of a coalition government, the D'Aguilar Highway will at last be made safer and more productive.

Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, the Hon. Jamie Briggs, was quick to come to the Longman electorate in the weeks after the 7 September election. In 2014, I will continue to bring Canberra's decision-makers to our region. The assistant minister confirmed during his visit that a $16 million upgrade of the D'Aguilar Highway would start this year, in an example of how under this coalition government local priorities will be vigorously prosecuted.

Another of my election commitments, a $250,000 grant to help redevelop Caboolture's Shirley Tinney Netball Complex, will be funded from the government's newly established $342 million Community Development Grants Program. I take this opportunity to thank the Prime Minister for coming to the netball courts to announce this great initiative for my local community. Further community development funding of $300,000 has been authorised for Dakabin railway station, after I undertook in the campaign to work with state and local governments to reduce the precinct's parking woes and increase safety. Two Green Army initiatives have been prioritised for Bribie Island—the Woorim Beach restoration and the Buckleys Hole stabilisation and upgrade have been approved—along with a third involving riparian repair at Burpengary Creek.

In addition to all the aforementioned community initiatives, the government are backing local hospital boards in my region and across the nation, taking control away from distant bureaucracies and putting the best part of every taxpayer dollar spent on health to patient care. Similarly, with public schools, we are supporting autonomy and the granting of authority to principals and local boards so that communities are having the biggest say in the running of their own schools.

To those opposite who are lost at sea when it comes to a coherent economic narrative for our nation, may my remarks today serve as a reminder that on this side of the House our bearings are set, our objectives are clear. The Australian government have a comprehensive
plan which we have solidly begun, and we will build on it with a calm sense of purpose drawn from experience and expertise. One thing is sure: we will in the end be judged by the Australian electorate not on the words of our vision but on the breadth of our accomplishments. In this, the government are confident, for our plan is a plan of action.

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (13:04): I rise on the Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2013-2014 and cognate bills and in support of the amendment moved by the member for Fraser. One of my first duties as a newly elected lower house MP was to visit local community organisations and find out the best way to support them in their work in the local community. Late last year, I was lucky enough to visit the Ted Noffs Foundation in Randwick. Founded in 1970 by that great Australian humanitarian the Reverend Ted Noffs, the foundation provides essential services for young people and their families who are experiencing drug and alcohol problems and related trauma. The foundation's Randwick service is the Program for Adolescent Life Management, PALM. It is a residential drug and alcohol initiative that offers young people with serious drug and alcohol abuse problems short-term accommodation and support to help them get back on their feet.

During my visit to the Ted Noffs Foundation, I was led around the facility by a young gentleman who had recently been a graduate of PALM. It was apparent to me the pride that he and his contemporaries had in the facility and the positivity that they felt for the future, thanks to their ongoing rehabilitation and the support that had been provided by the Ted Noffs Foundation and its staff. The previous Labor government, through its Building Multicultural Communities Program, last year announced funding support for the Ted Noffs Foundation of $85,000. This financial support under this program was fully assessed, it was notified to the organisations and it was fully costed and fully funded in the 2013-14 budget. Despite the coalition's promise that there would be no surprises, no excuses, one of its first acts was to freeze or cut this program's funding to not-for-profit groups. One of those organisations that suffered was the Ted Noffs Foundation in Randwick. Many other charities, local government organisations and volunteer organisations around Australia were also cut. In fact, I had two organisations that lost funding in my community because of this government's harsh cuts and broken election promises.

The Ted Noffs Foundation is one of many organisations around the country that have been left in limbo by the freeze of $11.5 million awarded under the Building Multicultural Communities Program. Broken commitments have unfortunately become a symbol of this government. They said one thing before the election and now they are doing another thing, but the people of Australia are beginning to learn this. Before the election, the government's commitment was clear—no cuts to health, no cuts to education, no cuts to pensions and no cuts to the ABC. In the wake of the election, we all know what is true, and this bill confirms that: $4.8 million cut from the education budget through this bill, $13.2 million cut from the health budget through this bill and $11.5 million cut from Building Multicultural Communities through this bill. This is a complete contradiction to the commitments made by this government to local communities, my community, the Australian people, prior to the election. All this is confirmed in the legislation we are debating today.

This comes on top of this government completely undermining the Gonski reforms. The Australian education system is failing our kids, and we have known this for quite a while. That is why the previous Labor government invested in a comprehensive study, an analysis of
the problems in the Australian education system. This study was chaired by a prominent businessman and included the work of many academics and consultations with teachers, staff, parents and children about how to make our education system one of the best in the world. This significant reform will be life-changing for many students, but it has been completely sabotaged by this government.

There is no requirement for the states to sign up to additional funding for the delivery of the Gonski reforms. A cornerstone of these reforms was additional funding from the states, but that has been completely wiped out by this Minister for Education. There is no requirement for the states to sign up to a needs based funding model. The Gonski report identified that the problem with the Australian education system is that those who come from low socioeconomic backgrounds, those who have disabilities, those who come from an Aboriginal background and those at small schools in rural communities are falling behind. They are falling behind, and the education funding system is failing them. On that basis, a needs based funding model was put in place. That model rectifies those problems and provides additional funding for those schools and students that are falling behind. What is the response of this government? It has wiped out the integrity of that system.

This bill contains cuts in the order of $13.2 million to the health budget. Those cuts come on top of this government floating the idea of a Medicare co-payment. This co-payment will disproportionately affect low- to middle-income earners in our society, particularly in my community. The pensioner with a crook knee or a crook back who relies on regular visits to the GP for prescriptions and other medical support will be impacted by a Medicare co-payment. The young girl suffering from depression who regularly needs the support of her GP will be impacted by a co-payment on Medicare when visiting the GP. The people who will be stung by this government’s health reforms will be low- to middle-income Australians, the most vulnerable and those who cannot afford the additional costs associated with a co-payment for regular visits to the GP.

Those opposite argue that the fiscal position of the government is unsustainable, and their speakers to this bill have made that point. We in the opposition accept that there needed to be structural reform of the budget position. Labor in government was delivering that structural reform. We improved the efficiency of expenditure when we were in government. To raise additional revenue we looked to parts of the economy that were performing well and were in many respects earning superprofits. We did not target or put that impost on low- to middle-income earners in our economy. A classic example of this is the reforms to superannuation. Labor in government identified that some members of our community had superannuation funds earning superprofits. Some of these people earned more than $100,000 on their money simply being in a superannuation fund. That was a drain on our fiscal system, so Labor sought to ensure those earning those superprofits paid their fair share.

At the same time we sought to encourage savings for low- to middle-income Australians, those who will struggle to fund their retirement because of inadequate superannuation balances. We sought to provide them with an incentive, a boost to their superannuation entitlements through the low-income superannuation contribution. What has this government’s response been to that progressive reform? The response of this government has been to scrap the low-income superannuation contribution and to introduce a tax increase for 3½ million Australians, most of them women. Many of these women are struggling to make ends meet by
working predominantly in part-time and casual employment. They need a boost to their superannuation if they are going to have any hope of retiring without relying on the pension.

Another area that Labor in government identified as a drain on the nation's finances was corporate profit shifting. Labor in government undertook a process of developing reforms to ensure that large corporations making significant profits paid their fair share. Pardon me for being cynical, but at the weekend I laughed at the comments of the Treasurer at the G20 conference in Sydney when talking about the need for cracking down on corporate profit shifting and the need to ensure that large corporations earning superprofits were paying their fair share of tax in Australia. This is what Treasurer Joe Hockey said about corporate profit shifting at the conference:

… we have seen the erosion of domestic tax bases resulting from international tax planning that takes advantage of the gaps in our current taxation systems.

And citizens expect a comprehensive response from the G20 on this, given the inefficiencies and unfairness apparent in the current system.

That was a position of our Treasurer on the weekend at the G20 conference. We do not disagree with any of that; in fact, we support the comments that were made by our nation's Treasurer. But what was the Treasurer's view in March last year? What was the Treasurer's opinion when Labor sought to do exactly that—when Labor sought to introduce those reforms that the Treasurer was speaking about on the weekend—through the introduction of the Tax Laws Amendment (Countering Tax Avoidance and Multinational Profit Shifting) Bill 2013? The view of the Treasurer, funnily enough, was to oppose that reform—opposing the reforms he spoke in support of on the weekend. In his speech to this parliament, not even a year ago, on this very question that the Treasurer was speaking positively about on the weekend, he said this in respect of the bill that was before the parliament to crack down on corporate profit shifting:

This bill is going to overlay complexity and compliance costs onto normal commercial transactions, whether business transactions, new investments or corporate restructures.

It is almost laughable that the Treasurer only 12 months ago saw corporate profit shifting as 'normal commercial transactions'. What an affront to the people of Australia that those opposite seek to come in here and cut money from the education budget, cut money from the health budget, when, at the time Labor was attempting to introduce reforms that would see those who are making big profits in our community pay more tax, those opposite, led by the member for North Sydney, opposed those reforms.

It was not just in that area—there were the thin capitalisation rules, there were the changes to fringe benefits taxation, and even the minerals resource rent tax. They were all opposed by those opposite. They were all reforms that would have ensured that the most profitable businesses paid more tax in our economy—paid taxes that fund better health services, better education services and the reforms that I have been speaking of. That symbolises the approach of this government to fiscal relations in this country. It symbolises the approach of this government to getting elected and breaking their commitments to the Australian community.

Their approach is to hit the most vulnerable, and it is contained in these bills—to hit the most vulnerable by getting rid of the low-income superannuation contribution, to hit the most vulnerable by floating the idea of a Medicare co-payment, to hit the most vulnerable by
getting rid of the schoolkids bonus but at the same time giving a massive break to those who are earning large profits in our community. It is there in the Paid Parental Leave scheme; it is there in their opposition to the minerals resource rent tax; and it is there in these bills. That is why they must be opposed and that is why I support the amendment that was moved by the member for Fraser.

Dr HENDY (Eden-Monaro) (13:18): I rise in support of the three appropriation bills before the House. It gives me an opportunity to speak about the government's plans for jobs and to build a strong and prosperous economy. It also gives me an opportunity to talk about the massive repair job we need to do, given the legacy of the former government. I still find it amazing to contemplate how in six short years the other mob were able to trash Australia's great economic standing, which, in its turn, was the legacy of the Howard government.

Recently we saw the January unemployment rate rise to six per cent. While bad news, it was not a shock, as many commentators said. Indeed, it was a marker point on the way to the 6.25 per cent forecast by the federal Treasury during the dying days of the last Labor government. This is the economic legacy we have been left and now we are dealing with it.

When John Howard left office the unemployment rate was four per cent, and very soon after the 2007 election it fell slightly further to 3.9 per cent. It was a magnificent effort by Prime Minister Howard and his Liberal and National Party team to deliver that 3.9 per cent after inheriting from the Keating Labor government an unemployment rate of over eight per cent in 1996. It is instructive how many years it took—12 years—to get to that 3.9 per cent figure. Unemployment is an incredibly hard social problem to deal with; it takes years of effort. Now we have to again start a repair job after Labor has sent unemployment rising.

These bills help deal with the problem. In the period that the now Leader of the Opposition was employment minister, the number of unemployed people increased by 80,000. Over the full six years of the Labor government the jobless queues grew by 200,000. What is even more telling is that 129,000 manufacturing jobs, over one in every 10, disappeared completely. Labor made it harder for businesses, particularly manufacturing businesses, to employ people by hitting them with the $9 billion a year carbon tax, hitting them with a mining tax, abolishing the Australian Building and Construction Commission and massively increasing red tape. They still do not recognise the destructiveness of those policies.

As the former chief executive of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and industry, I note that the impact on small business has been particularly devastating. In my electorate of Eden-Monaro small business is the lifeblood of rural communities. Across the nation some 21,000 additional regulations were created over that six years, stagnating small business employment levels, resulting in 3,000 fewer small businesses which employed people. The overall result for small business has been staggering. Under Labor 412,000 jobs were lost in small business. In fact, the small business share of the private sector workforce went from 53 per cent to 43 per cent.

Only the coalition has a plan to create jobs by getting the budget in order, taxes down, regulation down and productivity up. The bills before the House, which are the start of the budget repair job, will assist in doing that. The bottom line is that the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd government left us with $123 billion in deficits over the next four years of the forward estimates, which will add to a prospective total debt bill of $667 billion if no remedial action is taken. The minister noted in his second reading speech that there are a number of
significant items proposed for appropriation. They relate to a one-off grant to the Reserve Bank of Australia, alterations to the foreign aid budget, alterations to the budget for immigration and border protection and changes to the defence budget. I will have something to say on all four of these issues.

The largest item in the bills is an appropriation for just over $8.8 billion to the Department of the Treasury for a one-off grant to the Reserve Bank to meet its request to strengthen its financial position and boost the Reserve Bank Reserve Fund. This payment is needed because of the woeful budget practice of the former Treasurer the member for Lilley. The member for McMahon, who was subsequently Treasurer, had a cameo role in this, but it would be unfair to pin it all on him; he will get a further mention later in this speech. The recent treatment of the Reserve Bank Reserve Fund has been the subject of an inquiry by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economics, of which I am a member. I will not preempt the forthcoming review of the Reserve Bank of Australia annual report 2013 that is being prepared by the committee. However, the matter has been the subject of much public commentary, and a public hearing of the Standing Committee on Economics where the RBA Governor, Glenn Stevens, was quizzed on the issue occurred on 18 December.

Without delving into the minutiae, the basic facts are clear. The Reserve Bank Reserve Fund stood at approximately $2.5 billion at 30 June 2013 following distributions from earnings available and paid as dividends to the Commonwealth Treasury. In layman's terms, Treasurer Swan raided the RBA for large dividend payments to shore up his parlous deficit problems and disregarded the need for the RBRF to be adequately replenished when it faced foreign exchange losses. This brought the RBRF levels down to 3.8 per cent of assets at risk. At the hearings of the economics committee on 18 December 2013, the governor stated that the board's view was that an appropriate level for the RBRF was 15 per cent of assets at risk. The government is meeting the advised target. As was stated in the December 2013 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook on page 194:

The grant will ensure that the RBA is adequately resourced to conduct its monetary policy and foreign exchange operations in an environment of financial market volatility.

Simply put, the government is repairing another problem left by the previous government after the dividend raids on the RBA.

The second significant item in the bills is just over $2.5 billion for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade reappropriating amounts previously provided to the former agency AusAID that are required this financial year for expenditure by DFAT. Again, this is an area where the coalition has had to rescue the budget from an uncontrolled blow-out that is simply unaffordable in the current circumstances. This uncontrolled blow-out was principally the baby of the former member for Griffith, Kevin Rudd, when he was Prime Minister and particularly when he was foreign minister. However, the former minister for Perth, Stephen Smith, and former Senator Bob Carr need to take their share of responsibility, for the time when they were respectively the foreign minister.

As we noted before the election, the coalition was concerned about the rapid increase in foreign aid described in the 2011 Independent review of aid effectiveness as 'steep and challenging' in light of real concerns about the ability of AusAID and other agencies to manage such a program efficiently and effectively. The coalition therefore committed to restricting the growth in overseas development assistance to increases in the consumer price
index over the forward estimates. Our commitment will see annual increases in nominal funding in the aid budget and will ensure that Australians can be confident aid will be delivered more efficiently and effectively. Consistent with these benchmarks, the coalition remains committed to increasing the foreign aid program towards 0.5 per cent of gross national income. However, we were not satisfied with either the quality of governance of the program or the strategic priorities which were skewed by Labor’s campaign for the UN Security Council seat. As members will know, since the election we have started the repair job. Principal among the reforms has been the winding up of AusAID and bringing the foreign aid bureaucracy back into the department. This is an important reform. The coalition will also review the priorities within the existing foreign aid budget to consolidate our aid efforts on the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions and to focus on the quality and rigorous administration of that effort.

The third significant allocation in the bills is for just over $1.1 billion for the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, particularly including amounts for offshore asylum-seeker processing. Again, if we are assigning blame for the debacle over border security it is hard to know where to start. Probably the award winner was former Prime Minister Julia Gillard, who proudly claimed authorship, when in opposition, of the immigration policy that catastrophically saw over a thousand people drowned. However, there are few innocents on the other side. The gaggle of immigration ministers, including former Senator Chris Evans and the current members for O’Connor, McMahon and Watson, all need to share the responsibility. As the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection informed the House last sitting week, under the last government border security was in chaos, with 800 boats and over 50,000 illegal arrivals. Most damning of all, there were over a thousand deaths. Someone has calculated that that is a death every two days over Labor’s six years of government.

We can divide up those numbers of arrivals between the Labor immigration ministers. The member for Watson when he was the minister oversaw, in the two months he was in the job, almost 5,000 arrivals. When the member for Gorton was minister he was responsible for 12,500 of them. The biggest stain was on the member for McMahon, who oversighted 25,000 arrivals on some 400 boats. That is your line-up of gold, silver and bronze in a competition that Labor should be utterly ashamed of. They left tens of thousands of people to deal with, with some 8,000 of them being children. This is an awful problem we are now seeking to fix. We are stopping the boats—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): Order! The debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 43. The debate may be resumed at a later hour. The member for Eden-Monaro will have leave to continue his remarks when the debate is resumed.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Senior Goolarabooloo Lawman

Ms MacTIERNAN (Perth) (13:30): Today I acknowledge the very sad and premature passing of senior Goolarabooloo lawman, aged 47. To respect his cultural tradition, he will not be named. The family of this major Kimberley identity on Wednesday made the heartbreaking decision to turn off the life support system and let him go. I had the honour and pleasure in my time as a WA minister of working with this man to ensure that the development of Broome and surrounding areas was compatible with protecting the heritage
and culture of his community. As the grandson of Paddy, he passionately insisted that his children, and Aboriginal children generally, must learn their culture as he had and build pride and confidence through that knowledge. He continued the work of his grandfather in also educating the garria in the ways of the culture.

This man often found himself in a difficult position, having to make a call on conflicting interests, decisions that weighed on him heavily. He took a stand against the James Price Point gas hub. 'No amount of money could compensate for the loss of our heritage,' he said. This position put him at odds with other members of the Kimberley Aboriginal community and, indeed, it was a tough time. This man has been the custodian and promoter of songlines and song cycles of the region. His great dedication to this task will ensure that he will be greatly missed but that his legacy will live on in his country, in his family and in his people. My condolences to his wife, Margie, their children and extended family. *(Time expired)*

**Ovarian Cancer**

**Ms GAMBARO** (Brisbane) *(13:31)*: Tomorrow in my electorate of Brisbane I will be hosting a morning 'teal' to raise awareness of ovarian cancer. Teal is the internationally recognised colour for ovarian cancer and was it teal ribbon many of us wore yesterday in this House. All proceeds from tomorrow's event will go to Ovarian Cancer Australia to support their important work of raising awareness about symptoms of ovarian cancer and about treatment of and support for sufferers. Because there is no early screening test for ovarian cancer, our best weapon is prevention and that begins with knowing what the symptoms are. Yet sadly, one in five Australian women cannot name one symptom of the disease. We really need to change that statistic.

I am delighted that Dr Michael Gattas, one of the world's foremost experts on ovarian cancer, will speak at tomorrow's event on genetics and ovarian cancer. Thanks also to Marie-Louise Theile, who will be our master of ceremonies, and to Vicki Pitts for hosting the event in the beautiful Room with Roses located in the iconic Brisbane Arcade in the CBD.

I am dedicating the event to my late friend Senator Jeannie Ferris, South Australian senator and government Senate whip during the Howard government. Sadly, Jeannie lost her battle with ovarian cancer in 2007. For her, increasing understanding and awareness of the disease and early detection were paramount to improving the outcomes for Australian women. Jeannie would agree with me that increasing awareness and understanding is the best defence in beating this disease.

**Petition: Indi Electorate Telecommunications**

**Ms McGOWAN** (Indi) *(13:33)*: I present a petition that has been approved by the House. This petition has been signed by residents and visitors in and near the Victorian rural towns of Tatong, Molyullah, Lurg and Samaria in my electorate of Indi. The intention of the petition is to draw the House's attention to the serious deficiencies in telecommunications infrastructure in the region. Residents in these communities have little or no access to mobile phone coverage. They also want me to highlight, as has been highlighted numerous times in this place, the inequality between rural and regional telecommunications infrastructure and infrastructure in metropolitan areas. They ask the House to provide funds which would assist in the establishment of a new mobile phone tower.
I support the sentiments of this petition. While the $100 million slated to fix black spots throughout the country is a good first step, it will not come close to solving our communities' black spot issues. A call on the government to consider the extent of this need and move to provide more funding for black spot mitigation throughout rural and regional Australia.

The petition read as follows—

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

This petition of residents and visitors in and near the Victorian rural towns of Tatong, Molyullah, Lurg and Samaria draws to the attention of the House to the serious deficiencies in telecommunications infrastructure in the region. Residents in these communities have little or no access to mobile phone coverage. This is evidence of a marked inequity in communication services available between rural and urban citizens. Telecommunication companies refuse to make any new infrastructure investments due to the low population density in the region and lack of commercial return.

We therefore ask the House to acknowledge the serious problems associated with the absence of mobile phone coverage in the area and to make available funds which would assist in the establishment of a new mobile phone tower.

from 990 citizens

Petition received.

Ms HENDERSON (Corangamite) (13:34): As summer draws to a close, I rise to commend the work of the 167,000 surf-lifesavers across Australia including those in my electorate of Corangamite. In the 2012-13 year, surf-lifesavers completed 11,500 rescues and not one life was lost between the flags. Without these local heroes, summers at beachside towns like Ocean Grove, Lorne, Apollo Bay, Anglesea and Torquay just would not be the same. Corangamite has 12 surf-lifesaving clubs, which are central not just to our way of life on the beach but to each community they serve. These clubs play such an important role in nurturing healthy and happy families and lifelong friendships.

Over the summer I was lucky enough to present winners’ medals at 30 Rip View Swim Classic at Point Lonsdale. I was at Lorne to watch the famous Pier to Pub race, the biggest ocean swim in Australia. Our Prime Minister has been a past competitor which, despite his claims that he swims like a brick, is no mean feat, given the course is a challenging 1.2 kilometres. This year the member for Kooyong made us proud with his efforts. Australia Day marked the official opening of the new $4.2 million Fairhaven Surf Life Saving Club. If ever there was an example of a community which would not give up, it is Fairhaven.

Thank you so much to all surf-lifesavers in Corangamite and across Australia for their vital contribution to our nation.

Charlton Electorate: Local Sporting Championship Awards

Mr CONROY (Charlton) (13:36): I take this opportunity to acknowledge and pay tribute to the fine young athletes who were recently awarded Local Sporting Champions Awards for the electorate of Charlton. I extend my sincere congratulations to: Callan Meir, Yasmin Skene, Stephanie Scigala, Griffin Lea, Joshua Milford, Kathleen Young, Matteo Mazzantini, Edwin Nicholson, Kimberley Russell, Reece Papadimitious and the Macquarie Shores Swim Club. The Charlton sporting champions have excelled in gymnastics, athletics, football, hockey, sailing, cricket and swimming.
I was very impressed by all the Charlton sporting champions. They were a confident and engaging young group of people, fine ambassadors for their sports and a credit to their families, friends and school communities. I am sure that many of these champions will battle it out with other young sports stars from Australia and around the world in the upcoming 48th International Children's Games, which will be held in the electorate of Charlton in December this year. Congratulations to all these sporting champions.

I also pay tribute to their families. Their parents often have the joy of getting up at five in the morning to take them to swimming lessons or swimming comps before school. The families also get to spend their weekends travelling around country New South Wales, going to sporting carnivals, and families often sacrifice their own financial interests to subsidise trips away and trips overseas. It is a great tribute to the families of these young athletes, and I look forward to seeing their exploits in newspaper headlines in the years to come.

**Mallee Electorate: Health Services**

Mr BROAD (Mallee) (13:37): I wish to bring three projects that I hope to work for in the electorate of Mallee to the Australian parliament. If you live in regional Australia you should have access to good health services. Three things that are very evident in my electorate, in the town of Mildura, are that we need a radiation treatment facility, we need a cardiac catheter laboratory and we need a hospice. The radiation treatment facility would capture the towns of Renmark, Broken Hill, Robinvale and Mildura. At the moment, when people need those treatments they have to travel a very long way away and have dislocation of the family support networks that should be around them. That is something that I am very much going to champion.

We do not have a cath lab facility, and yet we have visiting cardiologists who want to be able to practice in Mildura. It is a four-hour drive for people who have to go and get an angiogram and then perhaps a stent. I think that this is something we need to address.

A few weeks ago we went to the honourable member for La Trobe's electorate to look at the federally funded hospice there. I think it is important that we allow people to die with dignity, that we ensure that their families can be around them and that they are in an environment that looks after them. It is one of the things that we are very much working for. The community will self-support it; we just have to make sure that the government is prepared to pay the ongoing costs.

I will just put on the record that these are three key health areas which are very important for my electorate.

**Malone, Mr Harry**

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (13:39): I pay tribute to Harry Malone, a well-known businessman and community volunteer in our community. Harry passed away on 10 February at the age of 91. Harry was born in Randwick and attended Marcellin College. He was an accomplished junior sportsperson but left school early to take on an apprenticeship as a mechanic. On the completion of his trade Harry put up his age to enlist in the Australian Army to serve in World War II. He served for four years in Papua New Guinea. The only thing good out of war, according to Harry, was the lifelong friendships that he made. Upon his return from the war he set up a garage business in Bathurst, where he met his beautiful wife, Catherine, and they went on to have four children.
Harry eventually returned to the east of Sydney and established his famous car yard in Kingsford, Harry Malone Motors, on the corner of Anzac Parade and Botany Street. I used to ride past it on my bike when I was going to university. Harry worked in this yard on his own until his retirement at the age of 87. When he did retire, Harry held the oldest dealers licence in New South Wales.

He was a wonderful community volunteer at the Maroubra Surf Life Saving Club, a foundation member of the Maroubra Seals Club and a president of Maroubra Rotary. Quite simply, Harry was a great Australian. May he rest in peace.

Hughes Electorate: Annual Serbian Festival

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (13:40): On 15 February I had the great honour of officially opening the second Annual Serbian Festival at Darling Harbour, along with the Hon. David Clarke and His Grace the Right Reverend Irinej Dobrijevic, the Serbian Orthodox Bishop of Australia and New Zealand. I must say that I did enjoy the generous Serbian hospitality and culinary delights found at the festival, especially the cevapi, which is a Serbian sausage, washed down with a few cold Serbian beers.

These events are only successful because of the hard work put in by the organising committees. I would like to take this opportunity to properly acknowledge many of those who helped to make the second Annual Serbian Festival such a tremendous success despite the inclement weather that weekend. The management team was Predrag Srebro, Oggie Krstic, Aleksander Ostojic, Father George Veselinovic, Karen Veselinovic and Maja Nogic. And there were many others who assisted on the day, making it a great success, including Jelena Sarovic, Ruza Strbac, Aleksandar Popvic, Dimitrijie Grasar and Stan Srebro.

I am also pleased to be able to acknowledge three of my constituents who helped with the event: Nikola Popovic, Dragan Veselinovic and Maja Gnjatovic. Special thanks also go to the Serbian Orthodox Youth Association of Australia and New Zealand for their exceptional leadership in organising such a wonderful event. I look forward to next year's festival, and to the Annual Serbian Festival becoming an important event on our annual calendar.

North Coast New South Wales Medicare Local

Mrs ELLIOT (Richmond) (13:42): I rise today to talk about the wonderful work of the North Coast Medicare Local and the difference it makes in our community. My local Medicare local covers an area of about 36,000 square kilometres, with a population of over 500,000. In a 12-month period they provided extensive clinical services where there was a gap and unmet need. This included more than 38,000 occasions of clinical service, mostly to communities and groups that are hard to reach and disadvantaged. They provided over 13,000 general practice services, 10,000 occasions of service in the Medical Specialist Outreach Program, more than 6,000 psychology sessions, 7,000 allied health services in smaller towns and nearly 1,500 occasions of service to families with young babies in need of support.

They also support general practices and other allied health conditions. They visited over 360 clinicians and providers on more than 1,300 occasions and implemented many support plans and agreements, with over 75 per cent of general practices, 45 per cent of pharmacies and 65 per cent of residential aged care facilities. They also provided 108 education sessions, with a total of more than 2,000 participants. These are some remarkable statistics from the
Medicare local on the North Coast, providing valuable services to many disadvantaged areas of the New South Wales North Coast.

Of course, all this is under threat with this government's agenda to dismantle Medicare and Medicare Locals. We need services like Medicare Locals to provide outstanding services right across our areas. Again, I say what remarkable work Medicare Locals does on the New South Wales North Coast. This government must keep that and all Medicare locals in place.

Forrest Electorate: South West Academy of Sport

Ms MARINO (Forrest—Government Whip) (13:43): I rise to acknowledge the work of the South West Academy of Sport in Bunbury, which aims to identify talented local athletes and to help them reach their potential. The academy provides high-performance pathways and programs that are delivered locally in the south-west. The academy relies on financial support from the Western Australian state government, local business and the south-west community to meet the cost of providing ongoing high-level training programs. It offers individual scholarship programs and talent development pathways in Australian Rules football, basketball, cricket, hockey, netball and tennis, and it gives local athletes the best possible chance of making it to the top of their sport. Access to top tier coaches, specialist training and services, such as sports psychology and nutrition, rounds out the program and presents athletes with the skills to build a long and rewarding career in sport.

The academy also brings top athletes to the south-west region to inspire local talent. Kim Mickle, who won a silver medal at last year's world athletics championships in Moscow and has her sights set on the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games, was in Bunbury earlier this month with fellow WAIS scholarship holders Cruz Hogan and Morgan Ward to prepare for their upcoming competitions.

This is a very good program. I congratulate the chair, Don Punch; the CEO, Bernice Butlion; and the whole community for getting behind this very worthwhile academy of sport in the south-west.

Gellibrand Electorate: Vietnamese Community

Mr WATTS (Gellibrand) (13:45): I rise today to acknowledge the efforts of Mr Andy Nguyen and the committee of the Saigon welcoming arch in my electorate of Gellibrand. One thing that makes Australia so special is its acceptance and appreciation of other cultures. In recognition of this there is currently a community-led project underway in Little Saigon in Footscray to build a symbolic welcoming arch recognising and celebrating 40 years of Vietnamese settlement in my community. The efforts of Mr Andy Nguyen must be recognised here, as proposals for a welcoming arch have existed since the 1980s. Without his hard work and determination this project would not be where it is today. However, while progress is being made on the welcoming arch project, it is not by any means a done deal.

There has been a great deal of community support for this project through fundraisers and voluntary donations in my community, but the support of other levels of government is still needed to make the project a reality. My local council has already committed to giving $350,000 to the project but further grants at other levels of government are needed. While donations of all amounts for the project are appreciated, the committee and the Maribyrnong City Council are planning to engrave the names of donors who contribute $5,000 and over on...
a brick of honour to be laid around the arch. I am proud to say that I will be personally acquiring such a brick of honour.

The Little Saigon welcoming arch will serve as a permanent testament to the pride we take as Australians in our inclusivity and diversity. I strongly encourage any Australian who is proud of our rich cultural heritage to donate any amount they can spare to such a worthy cause.

**Ovarian Cancer**

*Mrs GRIGGS (Solomon) (13:47):* I rise today to speak about the great work being done in the Northern Territory to boost the profile of and funding for the fight against ovarian cancer. February is Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month. Last Tuesday, 18 February, I attended a lovely function in my electorate at the fabulous Java Spice Café in Darwin's CBD. It was promoted as a high 'teal', as teal is the international colour of ovarian cancer. It was very well attended. I speak both personally and on behalf of those who attended this function when I say that a great time was had by all.

The event organiser is a good friend of mine, Alice Burton. She is the Northern Territory ambassador for ovarian cancer. She was here yesterday when we had a teal breakfast. It was great to see yesterday so many members in this House wearing teal ribbons. It was great that there were so many people supporting this very important cause. Funds raised across the country will help provide much-needed support for those touched by ovarian cancer and will assist Ovarian Cancer Australia to achieve its goal of saving lives and ensuring that no woman with ovarian cancer walks alone.

**Alcohol and other Drugs Council of Australia**

*Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (13:48):* I have spoken about my despair at the Abbott government's decision to axe the Alcohol and other Drugs Council of Australia many times. After 48 years of providing frank and fearless advice to policymakers to reduce the harm caused by alcohol and other drugs, tomorrow ADCA will close its doors for good.

In recent months Australians have been confronted by alcohol related violence in our society. We mourn the death of Daniel Christie. We were troubled that alcohol-related violence in the NT has increased by 15 per cent in the last year. I have no doubt that every single member wants to reduce alcohol and drug related harm, so why close ADCA, the peak organisation working to achieve that? Minister Nash has failed to provide us with a reason. She first said ADCA had a history of financial mismanagement, which was proved to be completely untrue. She then said the work of its incredible resource library was duplicated, only to retract that statement. This library is the only resource of its kind in the world and it would now seem it is destined for the shredder. I wonder if the decision had anything to do with the connections between her former chief of staff and the alcohol industry.

The AMA says closing ADCA is a bad idea. The National Alliance for Action on Alcohol says it is a bad idea. The Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education says it is a bad idea. In fact, nobody who works in this sector thinks it is a good idea. Today, in the name of preventative health and wellbeing, I implore the minister to reverse her decision. *(Time expired)*
Central Queensland University: Agricultural Research

Ms LANDRY (Capricornia) (13:50): I am forever telling this House about the diverseness of the electorate of Capricornia in Central Queensland and the innovation of its people. I would like to highlight some groundbreaking research being conducted by my local university, CQUniversity, in the area of dryland rice cropping. CQUniversity, together with Australian Agricultural Technology Ltd, have been conducting field trials of dryland rice genotypes near Rockhampton. These genotypes are showing commercial potential for growing dryland rice varieties in central and northern Queensland during the wet season.

Both parties have agreed to expand their research and involve more growers in coming seasons. The view is to have the research and development in place to make dryland rice-growing commercially viable. This is an area of huge importance for drought prone Australia as we seek to develop northern Australia as the nation's next food bowl. It is also important for the entire Asia-Pacific region, as pressures on population and food security increase.

CQUniversity has a renowned strength in agricultural research. In fact, it was Queensland's only university to receive the top ranking of five in the Commonwealth Excellence in Research for Australia rankings. This indicates their research in this field is well above world standard. I commend CQUniversity for its engagement with industry to help unlock the potential of Central Queensland. I applaud the innovative local researchers who have been working on this project.

Health Funding

Ms CLAYDON (Newcastle) (13:51): I rise today to highlight concerns raised by my constituents about the government's plan to introduce a new GP tax—a new tax that will hit those who can least afford it the hardest: families with children, older people and those most vulnerable in our community. On the back of this government’s already shocking record of cuts to jobs and services, this new GP tax will blow the household budgets of thousands of Newcastle families. Likewise, age pensioners, who are already worried about the Abbott government’s refusal to rule out future cuts to their pension, are telling me they cannot afford the $6 tax to visit their GP. Imposing an up-front tax of $6 for every visit to the GP will cost Novocastrians an extra $3.9 million per year for their medical care.

The people of Newcastle support Medicare and the principle that all Australians should have equal access to health care. They are worried about this government's move to create a two-tiered health system: one for the haves and one for the have nots. This government made an election commitment to not cut spending to health. Yet the health minister this week flagged that cuts are on the way. As Karen Howard, Chair of the Hunter Medicare Local, wrote this week:

… any considered examination of the health system will confirm what has been consistently demonstrated in international studies for more than a decade: the sustainability of any health system is improved by strengthening primary healthcare.

We need to strengthen our primary health care, and that starts with GPs. Do not make it harder for people by introducing this new tax. (Time expired)

Men's Sheds

Mrs McNAMARA (Dobell) (13:53): Last month I was invited to tour the Bateau Bay Men's Shed and share in some morning tea. Upon my arrival I was greeted with the message,
'You'll need to have thick skin to survive here.' While this may be true, from the friendly banter between the men at the shed I quickly learned the tremendous role played by the Bateau Bay Men's Shed in the lives of its members.

The Men's Sheds movement began as a means to provide retired or unemployed men with social engagement through activities and male companionship. In my electorate the work of community groups such as the Bateau Bay Men's Shed makes a tremendous difference to the lives of men seeking activities and social interaction out of the home. When I asked how the men's shed operated, I was advised men can arrive when they want, stay as long as they want and leave when they want. When I visited the shed, it was packed with 30 men, all of them eager to have a say and enjoy their morning tea. Over morning tea I learned and witnessed firsthand the importance of the shed to its members as they shared stories of their work, friendship and activities outside the shed, and shared a couple of jokes. New South Wales Men's Shed Association Director Mr John Sharples said:

The philosophy of the shed is that, it is good for members to spend a third of their time working on private projects, a third helping to maintain the shed and a third on community activities. Engagement with the community is an important emphasis and the men enjoy working to add value to the lives of individuals and the activities of many community groups.

I would like to commend all those involved with the Bateau Bay Men's Shed and congratulate them for their contribution to our local community.

Youth Connections

Ms KATE ELLIS (Adelaide) (13:54): I rise to draw to the attention of the House a wonderful program that is delivered to young people across Adelaide through the Service to Youth Council—that is, the Youth Connections program. This is a program that is delivered across Australia. It is aimed towards young people who have become disengaged from schooling and are at risk of falling through the cracks and slipping into youth unemployment. This is a program that, up to the end of last year, helped almost 75,000 young people across Australia get a hand up, and the estimates are that by the end of this year that number will reach 100,000.

Sadly, this is a program that is placed at risk; it is under risk of being cut by the Abbott government. All of this was revealed at Senate estimates last night, where we learnt that the department has not confirmed that, at a time when youth unemployment is on the rise, this important Youth Connections program will continue. In fact, at Senate estimates last night it was indicated that the minister responsible has not even asked for advice on the best way to make sure that young people make a successful transition. We know on this side of the House that, at a time when one job has been lost for every three minutes since this government was elected, this is not the time to be cutting support from young people and leaving them at risk of youth unemployment.

Conroy, Senator Stephen

Mr NIKOLIC (Bass) (13:56): The outrageous slur by Senator Conroy against Lieutenant General Angus Campbell marks a new low in senatorial hearings. General Campbell represents the very best of our military, which he has served loyally and apolitically for 34 years. In a former life, I worked closely with General Campbell, and I have personal knowledge of his great ability, quality and character. I am fortunate to call him my friend.
Like all of us, Senator Conroy is entitled to his personal views and ambitions, but he is not entitled to use parliamentary privilege to besmirch the reputation of a military officer who has served Australia with such distinction. General Campbell is undertaking a difficult job that the Chief of the Defence Force selected him to do. He is doing that job with professionalism and diligence. The boats have stopped for 10 weeks now, and General Campbell has made a significant contribution to that most encouraging outcome.

Angus Campbell is in his fourth decade of unbroken service to our nation. He has earned the right to a modicum of respect, particularly from this parliament, in which decency and respect is the anticipated norm. The general would never ask for it, but he does deserve a full and public apology from Mr Conroy. I call upon the Leader of the Opposition to stiffen Mr Conroy's spine and to compel or support him to do the right thing: to apologise in full and in a manner that is appropriately contrite and respectful.

Public Transport

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (13:57): There are growing concerns about safety around the train stations in my electorate, and I urge all levels of government to work together on this issue to make Brisbane's south side safer. In the past three months alone, 168 offences have been recorded around train stations between Rocklea and Kuraby, with Altandi having the most at 35. Sadly, 27 of these offences were good order offences. Kuraby and Coopers Plains were second and third on the list with 28 and 26 offences respectively, with the offences including theft and drug offences.

I urge our Queensland state government to invest in community consultation to eradicate crime from these areas. During the last two elections, I promised CCTVs to the Sunnybank and Sunnybank Hills shopping centre areas. There is currently CCTV footage provided to police, but we need more police and security patrols. A local resident has suggested a 24-hour security guard, or at least a security guard for when it gets dark and for when there are the most pedestrians. This resident also had the idea of a secure station where a go card is required to enter the station grounds. Other local residents have suggested a public building outlet for our youth to accommodate community strength and to give our local police focus to engage with the youth, which would obviously reduce crime.

This is just the start of a crucial community engagement process, and more activity is required to reduce crime around our train stations. I have made a commitment during previous elections to continue to raise this matter with the local government, with the local councillors and with the state government until a better strategy is provided and there is better safety.

Electricity Prices

WYATT ROY (Longman) (13:59): Over the last week I have been conducting my listening posts across my electorate. Local after local came up to me talking about how they were struggling under the rising cost of electricity. I would love to know why those members opposite, members of the Labor Party, come into this place and think locals in my community should pay more for electricity. I extend an open invitation for them to come to my electorate and explain—

The SPEAKER: In accordance with standing order 43, the time for members' statements has concluded.
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Qantas

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:00): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to the Prime Minister's pre-election promise to create one million jobs in five years. Given that the government has known about the potential job losses at Qantas for months, what is the government's plan to support 5,000 Qantas workers who found out they have lost their jobs today?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:00): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. It is a very serious topic. This is a difficult and anxious day for the workers at Qantas—a very difficult and anxious day for them—and it is a very troubling day for everyone who is following this news. I absolutely accept that. I do point out that there are services available to people who lose their jobs, including those at Qantas. I also point out that the fundamental job of government is to ensure that our economy is as strong as possible, and that means getting the fundamentals right. That means trying to ensure that taxes are as low as possible, that regulation is as low as possible, that the ordinary law of the land operates.

The last thing I am going to do today is to play politics or to try to make capital out of what is a very difficult day. But, just as the minister for employment in that government at that time was right then, I am right when I say that there will be better days ahead in a stronger economy when workers can get the jobs they need.

Ms Owens interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Parramatta will desist.

Mr ABBOTT: I grieve with the workers who are facing an uncertain future. But, just as the minister for employment in that government at that time was right then, I am right when I say that there will be better days ahead in a stronger economy when workers can get the jobs they need.

Employment

Mrs WICKS (Robertson) (14:03): My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister update the House on the government's plan to grow a stronger economy and create jobs in the light of the announcement by Qantas today?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:04): I thank the member for Robertson for her question. Again, I reiterate that it is a hard day for the workers at Qantas and it is a hard day for everyone who is following this. But on hard days especially it is important to tell the truth, and the truth is that there are services available to people in this country who lose their jobs, and particularly when we are talking about a company like Qantas people's entitlements are absolutely safe.
But another important truth is that governments do not save businesses. What saves businesses is the management and the staff working together to make the future better than the past.

Ms Owens interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Parramatta is warned!

Mr ABBOTT: It is not government's job to run businesses; it is government's job to get the fundamentals right.

Mr Perrett interjecting—

The SPEAKER: And the member for Moreton is warned!

Mr ABBOTT: As this government understands in the marrow of its bones, it is not government that creates jobs; it is profitable businesses that create jobs. It is not government that creates wealth; it is profitable businesses that create wealth. Government's job is to make it easier for those businesses to flourish.

Our plan for a stronger economy with more jobs starts with abolishing the carbon tax, because let's not forget that the carbon tax is a $9 billion a year tax on jobs and it is a $106 million a year tax on Qantas. It continues with scrapping the mining tax, which has done so much to reduce investment in our country. It goes on with cutting red tape. We are committed to a $1 billion red tape cost saving for the businesses of Australia. We are also committed to trying to ensure that the rule of law operates in all of our workplaces through restoring the Australian Building and Construction Commission, and that in a previous incarnation was responsible for $6 billion worth of productivity improvements.

We will create a million new jobs within five years. We will create two million new jobs within a decade. The challenge of government is not to guarantee every single existing job; the challenge of government is to ensure that there are new and better jobs available to the workers of Australia when they want them and when they need them.

Qantas

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:07): My question is to the Prime Minister. The Treasurer met with Qantas in early December last year. A massive profit write-down was announced by Qantas on 5 December last year. There has been ongoing speculation that the government would provide Qantas with a stand-by facility. Prime Minister, given the tragic loss of 5,000 jobs today, when will the speculation end? When will the government act? Will the government provide a stand-by facility to Australia's national airline?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:07): As the Leader of the Opposition well knows and has just said, this government have been in regular contact with Qantas. As you would expect, we have been in regular contact with Qantas.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The question has been asked; listen to the answer.

Mr ABBOTT: There are a number of things that Qantas would like. This government will do what we can for Qantas consistent with responsible economic management. We are determined to do what we can for Qantas consistent with responsible economic management. That essentially means that we should ensure that Qantas can compete on a level playing
field. We want to ensure that Qantas is not competing against its rivals with a ball and chain around its leg. That is what we are trying to ensure.

As for the other measure that the Leader of the Opposition has sought assurances on, the difficulty is this: what we do for one business, in fairness, we have to make available to all businesses. But I accept that Qantas wants a level playing field, and the government are determined to ensure that it gets an appropriate level playing field. In that sense at least, Qantas does need this government's help. But it also needs the parliament's help. In fact, it needs the opposition's help too. I say to the Leader of the Opposition: join with me in helping Qantas by scrapping the carbon tax and repealing the—

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It is not open to the Prime Minister to be speculating on opposition policy.

The SPEAKER: That is not a point of order. Indeed, it is an abuse of the standing orders. The Prime Minister has completed his answer.

Qantas

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (14:10): My question is to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development. Minister, will you please update the House on issues that are impacting on Qantas and the airline's profitability?

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (14:10): I thank the member for Ryan for her question. This is certainly a tough day—

Mr Champion interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Wakefield is a slow learner. He is warned.

Mr TRUSS: for Qantas and its workers and their families. Indeed, it is an important day for the future of aviation in Australia. It is obviously a particularly difficult time for those families that are uncertain about their future. It is vital that Qantas works constructively with its workforce, the unions and others associated with the industry to try to make the transition that they are going through as smooth and painless as possible.

The reality is that Qantas plays a vital role in providing air services through our nation and it will have a key role also into the future. This government and all Australians want Qantas to be a strong company in the years ahead so that it can continue to be a national icon known around the world. But the reality is that aviation is changing. New aircraft have modern technology, and so many of the jobs that were required in the past will not be needed in the future. We do not put our cars in for a grease-and-oil change every 1,000 kilometres anymore, and new aircraft are the same. They do not require the same level of service as required in the past. You cannot maintain a 747 maintenance facility if you have only eight aircraft. You cannot open up a new service facility if you have only a dozen 380s. So many of the jobs that were required in the past are not required for the future. New technology is making such a difference.

Qantas must work its way through these kinds of issues and ensure that it takes control of its own future destiny. The board and the management have a responsibility to the shareholders to make sure that their company is profitable and a national icon to the people of Australia and to ensure that they are able to provide the services that are required.
But there are more issues than this. The carbon tax will cost Qantas $106 million this year. Next year it will be $168 million. Honourable members opposite think that that is unimportant. Those two numbers together are more than the loss that Qantas announced today. If you look forward over the coming few years, if there were no carbon tax a good quarter of the $3 billion that Qantas want to save would be saved. That $3 billion could be saved if Labor were prepared to vote to get rid of the carbon tax. And the mining tax has similar figures. Labor can help to make Qantas more profitable.

**Qantas**

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (14:13): My question is to the Deputy Prime Minister and minister for transport. Does the Deputy Prime Minister stand by his comments of today that workers' entitlements at Qantas are responsible for some of the job losses that have occurred today? I say to the Deputy Prime Minister: is there any occasion on which workers lose their jobs when this government does not blame those very workers themselves?

The SPEAKER: The latter part of the question is ruled out of order. The first part of it will stand.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. We have had answer after answer in this parliament where those opposite have blamed the workers, and we are entitled to put that back to the minister.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. As the Manager of Opposition Business is perfectly aware, the rules apply to questions, not to answers. I call the honourable the Deputy Prime Minister.

Mr Bowen: Just let me clarify this: there are no rules on answers under your Speakership—not a rule at all.

The SPEAKER: Is the member for McMahon reflecting on the chair, or does he wish to withdraw?

Mr Bowen: I withdraw.

The SPEAKER: Thank you. The member for Grayndler on a point of order.

Mr Albanese: I referred in the question to the fact of the Deputy Prime Minister's own comments this morning that spoke about—

The SPEAKER: I said that part of the question stands.

Mr Albanese: workers entitlements, including 'The Qantas wage and cost structure places them at a significant disadvantage'.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order, and the former manager of government business knows there is no point of order.

Mr Albanese: Madam Speaker, it might assist you if I tabled the Deputy Prime Minister's own comments—

The SPEAKER: No, it would not assist me. It would not assist me at all.

Mr Albanese: in the *Sydney Morning Herald* this morning.

The SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat.

Mr Albanese: Madam Speaker, I sought leave to table this document.
The SPEAKER: He will answer your question at this stage, so far as I am aware. Do you want an answer or not?

Mr Albanese: He can give me the answer and then I will seek leave.

The SPEAKER: You can seek leave later; that is fine.

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development) (14:16): The shadow minister is misrepresenting my comments. I do not blame the workers for the fact that technology has moved on, that aircraft do not require as much servicing as they previously did. I do not blame the workers for that. That is simply a statement of fact. However, it is important to note that the significant losses that Qantas is currently incurring and which it has incurred over the last year or two have been in its international division. That is where the major difficulties are for Qantas. It is simply beyond dispute that Qantas is faced with the difficulty of having to compete with airlines in countries where the wage structure is very different from what it is in Australia. That is not the fault of our workers. It is a reflection of the fact that there are lower wages paid in other parts of the world. That does not mean that I am arguing that our workers should not be well paid—of course they should be. I want not just our airlines to be prosperous; I want their workers to be prosperous as well.

But one of the real challenges that Qantas face is that its new competitors are not European airlines or American airlines, where the wage structures are perhaps closer to Australia’s; their competitors are from Asia, their competitors are from the Middle East, where the wage structures are different. That is one of the many challenges that Qantas has to face if it is going to be a competitive airline in the years ahead. It has to find ways that it can make up for the fact that costs in Australia are higher, so that it can continue to be competitive in the future. That does not mean that the wage structure in Australia is going to change dramatically. We appreciate that those wages reflect the cost of living and the lifestyle of Australians, which we all enjoy, but it is an issue which Qantas has to address in being a competitive airline globally.

Mr Albanese: Madam Speaker, I seek leave to table the article from The SMH today: 'High costs and wages key to Qantas’ problems, says Deputy PM Warren Truss.'

Leave not granted.

Biofuels

Mr KATTER (Kennedy) (14:18): My question is to the Prime Minister. Australia’s self-sufficiency in oil throughout the last half-century saw it send, in 2001, under $1 billion to the Middle East. Australia now sends $23 billion. Since foreign oil pays only 6c tax, whereas Australian ethanol pays 40c, and since Minister Macfarlane is proposing a bowser tax of 40c, is the Prime Minister going to adopt the biofuels policy of the USA and Brazil, both nearing self-sufficiency, or the Minister for Industry’s policy, which the NRMA report says will see the abolition of all Australian production in 15 years.

The SPEAKER: The member for Kennedy’s time has elapsed but he also neglected to say to whom the question was addressed.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: To whom is the question addressed?
Mr Katter: The Prime Minister.

The SPEAKER: The question is addressed to the Prime Minister. I think sufficient of it was heard.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:19): I do thank the member for Kennedy for his question and I acknowledge his deep commitment to the ethanol industry, which is shared by a number of members in this House, particularly the member for Dawson, who is sitting very close to the member for Kennedy. I wish to make two fundamental points in response to the member for Kennedy. First, this is a government which is determined to keep faith with businesses which have made investment decisions honestly and fairly on the basis of government policy. Second, this is a government which will do its best to ensure as far as is humanly possible a level playing field between the domestically produced and the imported product. We will do our best to ensure that there is a level playing field. As for the policies of the United States and Brazil which the member for Kennedy refers to, I will gladly have a look at those policies and see whether they are instructive for us, but I do have to point out to him and to all members that, in the end, the policy that we adopt in this country, as far as this government is concerned, will be based very much on Australia's national interests.

Economy

Ms SCOTT (Lindsay) (14:20): My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer outline the importance of improving productivity in the Australian economy. What are the alternative approaches? How will increasing productivity benefit the people of Lindsay?

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There is a great deal of precedence and specific reference in practice against asking for alternative approaches. Ministers are here to answer about their own policies.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. I call the honourable the Treasurer.

Mr HOCKEY (North Sydney—The Treasurer) (14:21): I thank the member for Lindsay for her question and recognise that she is obviously very focused on the issues which are directly relevant to the long-term interests of her community. That is unlike her predecessor, who was part of a government that let go of Australia. They lost control of the Australian economy. That was best illustrated by the fact they lost control of the Australian budget. It has just been revealed by the IMF that—under the last Labor regime—for the six years going forward, the legacy of Labor on the budget, from 2012 to 2018, is that we would have the largest increase in spending of the 17 IMF advanced economies profiled. So Labor buried in the budget spending increases faster than any other major advanced economy in the world—more than Korea, Canada, Germany, France or Japan. That is Labor's legacy—big promises, big spending and 'Don't worry about the bills; someone else will have to pay them.'

The challenge is: we have to rein that in. It is impossible to have an economy saddled with the biggest spending promises of any advanced nation in the world. Labor promised everything but they delivered little. When it comes to productivity, when it comes to the capacity of the Australian economy to produce more, the Labor Party left us behind. In fact, if we want to sustain our national income growth just at our 30-year average, if we want to
sustain our quality of life just at our 30-year average, we have to increase labour productivity
growth to over three per cent a year. Currently it is stuck at around two per cent. That three
per cent would be a historic high.

What does that legacy mean for Lindsay? Under the infrastructure Prime Minister and the
infrastructure government, we will get on with the job of building things like WestConnex.
What does that mean? For Western Sydney, WestConnex will allow the constituents of
Lindsay to bypass 52 sets of traffic lights and save over 40 minutes on their trips to Sydney.
What does that mean for productivity? It means that the trucks and the transport that are
driving the Australian economy and the economy of Western Sydney will get a fair go, will
get the opportunity to do more with less. That is what it is about. It is a huge task. Instead of
the opposition bleating, I say to the opposition: get on the agenda. We are dealing with your
legacy of debt, deficit and structural problems. Get on board with trying to fix it!

Qantas

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:24): My question is to the
Prime Minister. I refer to ongoing speculation since early December that the government
would offer support for a stand-by facility. Prime Minister, what will be the implication for
Qantas jobs, the Qantas share price and Qantas shareholders if that speculation does not result
in action, and when will the government act to support Australia's national airline?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:25): This is a very serious subject and it
deserves to be taken extremely seriously by this parliament. This government is determined to
ensure that, as far as reasonably possible, there is a level playing field for competition and that
Qantas is not competing against its fierce rivals with a ball and chain around its legs. That is
what we are determined to ensure. We know that Qantas would like some further additional
assistance. The difficulty with that request is this. Why should the government do for one
what it is not prepared to do for all? That is the issue. We are determined to help Qantas.
We will help Qantas by establishing a level playing field and we will help Qantas by cutting its
costs—

Mr Watts interjecting—

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

The member for Gellibrand then left the chamber.

Mr ABBOTT: and we will help Qantas by saving it some $270 million in carbon tax costs
over two years. That is what we want to do to help Qantas. The government is prepared to
help Qantas in these important ways but, for the government to help Qantas, we need the help
of the opposition. We need the help of the opposition to sort out the Qantas Sale Act. We need
the help of the opposition this side of July to sort out the carbon tax. I ask members opposite:
are they prepared to help?

Carbon Pricing

Mr PASIN (Barker) (14:27): My question is to the Minister for Small Business. Will the
minister outline the impact of the carbon tax on small business? What is the government
doing to ensure prices for electricity and gas fall, particularly in my home state of South
Australia?
Mr BILLSON (Dunkley—Minister for Small Business) (14:27): It is pretty easy to describe the impact of the carbon tax on small business—horrendous! At a time when there is a challenging marketplace, and small business and enterprising people want to create more jobs, to secure more opportunities, they are laden down and held back by a needless tax which is not effective but acts as a disincentive for employment, which impacts on the cost structure of those businesses, which puts our businesses at a disadvantage when they are competing with international businesses that want the markets that we should be able to make our own, to secure job and economic opportunities for us. I was pleased that the member for Barker hosted me at a meeting with small business people in Mt Gambier. The information that came through there was just how tough things were in the local government area of Murray Bridge. The unemployment rate when the previous Labor government was elected was seven per cent. The most recent figure is 9½ per cent.

Mr Stephen Jones: Under your watch!

Mr BILLSON: They are pretty keen, aren't they? Those figures were from June 2012.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr BILLSON: That is always the problem, is it not? I always say to members opposite: don't peak early! The facts matter. We have seen an erosion of employment and an undermining of small business enterprise.

Ms Kate Ellis interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Adelaide will desist.

Mr BILLSON: At that forum and at so many others, dairy farmers like the one the member for Colac and I joined in Colac said, 'What is it about this Labor Party? Do they not realise that needless cost impacts on small business impact on jobs and viability or do they simply not care?'

Mr Champion interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Wakefield. You have already been warned. Next time it's out.

Mr BILLSON: It could well be either. It could simply be that Labor does not understand that small business cannot keep getting more and more taxes and more and more burdens.

Mr Dreyfus interjecting—

Mr BILLSON: I hear the member for Isaacs, a tourist in our region, singing out about us being the government. This government went to the electorate, including to your community where you will not even turn up at your manufacturers because they know how disinterested you are, and we said, 'Let's abolish the carbon tax.' Our plan—

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Do members on that side get asked to speak through the chair as well?

The SPEAKER: The minister will address his remarks through the chair.

Mr BILLSON: Pressures on small business are real. Small business people say to me, 'Is it that Labor just don't care or do they not understand it?' They have been warned time and time again that the carbon tax would be an impediment to job creation and prosperity in small business. We have seen 412,000 jobs lost under Labor. We have a chance to end an anti-jobs,
anti-small business, anti-growth tax. Those small business people are saying to me, 'Why won't Labor join with the Abbott government in trying to relieve that pressure to reactivate small business, the engine room of the economy?' We say to them, 'We don't know why that is'—

**Mr Albanese:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. On a day when 5,000 Qantas workers have lost their jobs, him talking about jobs has to be out of order according to irony and the provisions that are in the standing orders.

**The SPEAKER:** There is no point of order. The minister has the call.

**Mr BILLSON:** So the impact of the carbon tax on small business is all bad. It is anti-jobs, it is anti-enterprise, it is anti-growth and it is anti-opportunity. Let me ask the question that is asked of me, 'Why is Labor standing in the way of repealing this tax?' Join jobs; join enterprise; axe the carbon tax.

**Mr Dreyfus interjecting**—

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Isaacs will desist!

**Ministerial Staff: Code of Conduct**

**Ms KING (Ballarat) (14:31):** My question is to the Prime Minister. What was the role of the former chief of staff to Senator Nash at the event in this photo, where the Prime Minister announced a $16 million grant for Cadbury?

**The SPEAKER:** The member will resume her seat. The member knows perfectly well that props are not permitted in the chamber.

**Mr Burke:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Props were allowed when they were used by the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection. Props are allowed when they are used by ministers over there. You cannot apply a rule to this side of the chamber that you refuse to apply over there.

**The SPEAKER:** The member will resume his seat. To the Manager of Opposition Business, if he draws my attention to anyone else using props, they will get the same attention.

**Mr Burke:** Madam Speaker, a point of order: we have and you don't. That is exactly what happens.

**The SPEAKER:** The member is reflecting on the chair and I would ask him to withdraw.

**Mr Burke:** I am not sure what the reflection is, Madam Speaker. If you can tell me what the reflection is—

**The SPEAKER:** You are compounding your felony.

**Mr Burke:** I will withdraw the reflection if you tell me what it was. I described what has happened in this chamber.

**The SPEAKER:** You will withdraw or else leave the chamber, one or the other.

**Mr Burke:** I withdraw.

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Ballarat has asked her question but she will not use props again.
Mr Abbott (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:33): On a day when 5,000 jobs have been lost at Qantas, I am a little surprised that the opposition are back on this subject. And I am surprised that the member for Grayndler is not equally surprised after the point of order he has just taken. There was an event—it was such a secret that half the press gallery were at it. It occurred in the election campaign last year. At that event, I announced the coalition's support for $16 million worth of tourism infrastructure in Tasmania. Maybe the member opposite could say whether she supports that $16 million.

Ms King: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order, on relevance. The question was: what was the role of the Assistant Minister for Health's former chief of staff at that event? That was the question. What was his role there?

The Speaker: If that was simply the question, it would have been very touch and go whether it was in order, but it will stand. Prime Minister, have you completed your answer?

Mr Abbott: At the event that was so secret that half the press gallery were at it, at the announcement of the grant that was so sinister that it was supported by the people of Tasmania, the role of that gentleman in question, as I understand it, is that he was the economist for the company.

Carbon Pricing

Dr Hendy (Eden-Monaro) (14:34): My question is to the Minister for the Environment. I refer to the Australian Capital Territory's draft electricity price determination that shows that prices would fall by 12 per cent without a carbon tax. Will the minister inform the House what steps the government has taken to deliver this price reduction?

Mr Hunt (Flinders—Minister for the Environment) (14:35): I particularly want to acknowledge the fact that the member for Eden-Monaro is a distinguished former head of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. In that role he worked with numerous small, medium and large businesses, and was always concerned about unnecessary bills, electricity bills and bad bills of all kinds. Against that background, on this day of all days, we should all be concerned about unnecessary costs on Australian businesses and Australian workers. The context for this question is against immense global pressure on Australian firms and immense internal pressures on the costs facing Australian firms. These matters define the Australia of today. Global costs and domestic costs, global challenges and domestic challenges—these are the great challenges that we face. Against that background, the question was what steps are we taking to reduce electricity prices?

Mr Snowdon interjecting—

The Speaker: The member for Lingiari will withdraw that comment.

Mr Snowdon interjecting—

Mr Hunt: Exactly as the Prime Minister promised, the first piece of legislation introduced by this House was repeal of the carbon tax. Exactly as the Prime Minister promised, the first piece of legislation passed by this House was repeal of the carbon tax.

Mr Champion interjecting—

The Speaker: The member for Wakefield, it saddens me to say, will remove himself from the House under standing order 94(a).

The member for Wakefield then left the chamber.
Mr HUNT: On 2 December, of which we will face the three-month anniversary next weekend, the Senate received the carbon tax bills. Right now we are waiting for the Leader of the Opposition, who professes his concern about jobs and costs, to do something about jobs and costs. We can actually make a difference to electricity costs, because what was it that the ACT regulator said?

The Commission estimates that complete removal of the price on carbon … would reduce retail electricity prices in the ACT by about 12 per cent.

But it is not just in the ACT. In Queensland, the QCA said, as quoted by the Minister for Trade in Queensland:

Businesses would save between 7 and 10 per cent on their electricity bills depending on which tariff they are using. The only people standing between small business operators and lower electricity bills are your local Labor Senators

The head of the ACCC has also said that electricity prices would fall. The head of the Energy Supply Association has also said electricity prices would fall. Only two days ago, what we heard from EnergyAustralia is that they gave their guarantee to pass on the full cost of electricity reductions. If you want lower electricity prices, get the Leader of the Opposition to get out of the way in the Senate.

Ministerial Staff: Code of Conduct

Ms KING (Ballarat) (14:38): My question is again to the Prime Minister. When did the Prime Minister or his office first become aware of Cadbury's request for a $16 million grant to redevelop its manufacturing facility in Hobart? Did the Assistant Minister for Health's former chief of staff or his company make any representations on this project?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:39): I just wish to make two points in response to the member's question. On a day when 5,000 jobs have been lost at Qantas, you would think members opposite would be supporting a job-creating project in Tasmania. I say to the member opposite: if she is serious about this, what is her view? Was this a good proposal or was this a bad proposal?

Mr Burke: On a point of order on direct relevance, Madam Speaker: if the Prime Minister is drawing a link because Cadbury is a tourism company and therefore he thinks there is a link with Qantas, maybe. But beyond that there is no relationship between what the Prime Minister is talking about now and the question before the House.

Mr Pyne: Madam Speaker, on the point of order: the Prime Minister was good enough to rise to answer this question—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr Pyne: but the fact remains that there is a serious question mark over whether this inquiry from the opposition was in order, given that the circumstances they inquired about did not occur while the Prime Minister was the Prime Minister or had any executive responsibility in the way that they are trying to convey.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, to take a point of order about the content of a question, as you have frequently ruled, it needs to be taken at the time. We would never be allowed to raise the point that he is raising right now.

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister wishes to continue and he has the call.
Opposition members interjecting—

Mr ABBOTT: The second point I make to the member for Ballarat is that this was a decision taken by the coalition in opposition. It was submitted to the people at the election, and the people supported it.

Carbon Pricing

Mrs GRIGGS (Solomon) (14:41): My question is to the Minister for Industry. I refer to comments by the Northern Territory Treasurer that the Northern Territory Power and Water Corporation has a carbon tax bill of over $20 million. How would scrapping the carbon tax deliver lower power bills?

Mr IAN MACFARLANE (Groom—Minister for Industry) (14:42): I thank the member for her question and remind the House what a tireless worker she is for the people of the Northern Territory. At least that part of the Northern Territory gets excellent representation.

Mr Snowdon interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Lingiari might be anxious to go home early.

Mr IAN MACFARLANE: The people of Darwin are currently being expected by those who sit opposite us to continue to pay for electricity prices at a premium because those who sit opposite do not care what the cost of living is for those people in the Northern Territory. If they care, I ask them to demonstrate that concern by instructing their brothers and sisters in the other chamber to get out of the way and allow us to revoke a carbon tax which the people of Australia were promised by those who sit opposite would never be introduced. They said there would be no carbon tax under the previous Prime Minister's government and yet we know what happened the moment they got into government.

They have a chance to redeem themselves for a deliberate misstatement by the then Prime Minister about her intentions for what the Labor Party would do when they got into government. They have the opportunity to save the nine entities in the Northern Territory which have been hit with a carbon bill of over $66 million. They have a chance to redeem themselves—it is a small chance, but they have a chance. All they have to do is say—

Mr Conroy interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Charlton will desist.

Mr IAN MACFARLANE: You got thrown out last time, mate; go again.

Mr Mitchell interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for McEwen will also desist.

Mr IAN MACFARLANE: The Labor Party is more than happy to sit by and watch the Northern Territory Power and Water Corporation being—

Mr Conroy interjecting—

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

The member for Charlton then left the chamber.

Mr IAN MACFARLANE: Everyone gets what they deserve, Madam Speaker.

The Northern Territory Power and Water Corporation is being served a carbon tax bill of $20.3 million, and those who sit opposite are happy to see that happen. They are happy to see
Santos QNT pay a bill of half a million dollars, Newmont pay a bill of $1.5 million, and EDL NGD pay a bill of $4.6 million. That is millions and millions of dollars that end up being charged against the consumers of electricity and power in the Northern Territory. Do the right thing.

Ministerial Staff: Code of Conduct

Ms King (Ballarat) (14:45): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to the role of Senator Nash’s former chief of staff in the redevelopment of the Cadbury factory in Tasmania. Can the Prime Minister guarantee that the former chief of staff or his company have not been, nor will be, direct financial beneficiaries of the government’s decision to fund this $16-million upgrade?

The Speaker: I will hear from the Leader of the House.

Mr Pyne: Madam Speaker, this is simply a fishing expedition on the part of the opposition. It is entirely hypothetical. And the Prime Minister—it is not within his executive control to answer.

The Speaker: That is not a point of order. The problem with that question is that it is not within the control or the responsibility of the Prime Minister to control a private enterprise firm.

Mr Burke interjecting—

The Speaker: I am making a statement! Sit down. Take your seat. If the member would care to rephrase her question so it is acceptable, we can try again.

Ms King: Madam Speaker, I do need to seek your assistance on this matter. The $16 million is in the government’s control. Contractual arrangements around that $16 million are in the government’s control, and that is what I was referring to.

The Speaker: The problem with your question is that you are asking the Prime Minister to guarantee something which is not in his control to do.

Ms King: I will ask it again, but I do beg your assistance and I apologise for that. My question is again to the Prime Minister. I refer to the role of Senator Nash’s former chief of staff in the redevelopment of the Cadbury factory in Tasmania. Can the Prime Minister guarantee that neither the former chief of staff nor his company will be a direct financial beneficiary of the government’s contracted $16 million for this upgrade?

The Speaker: I am sorry; the member has not rephrased her question. But, if the Prime Minister wishes to answer, he may.

Mr Burke interjecting—

The Speaker: The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat. There is no standing order that gives you the right to ask for guidance during question time.

Mr Burke: But, Madam Speaker, you have just ruled that there is a problem with the question, which is putting a limit on our capacity as to whether we can ask who is going to benefit from government funds. If we are not allowed to ask who is going to benefit from government funds, that is an extraordinary—
The SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat. He knows as well as anybody else that is not the point on which I was asking the member to rephrase her question. I call the honourable the Prime Minister.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:48): I am happy to do my best with all this, but I think I should point out to the House that this really does go to the judgement of the opposition. On a day when 5,000 jobs have been lost at Qantas, this is the best the opposition can do—

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Those on my left will desist, and the member for Ballarat will resume her seat!

Mr ABBOTT: to flog this particular dead horse, and dead horse it is.

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister will resume his seat. What is the point of order?

Ms King: Madam Speaker, on relevance. This is a very serious issue about public funds and integrity.

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister has hardly opened his mouth. The member will resume her seat. I have been very tolerant of her this afternoon. Prime Minister, have you concluded your answer or do you wish to continue?

Mr ABBOTT: This $16 million grant towards tourism infrastructure in Tasmania was designed to boost employment and help the Tasmanian economy. This suggestion that there was something improper about this grant I deeply reject. I deeply reject it. There was absolutely nothing improper about this. It was so secret that it was taken to the election!

Ms Owens interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Parramatta has been warned. If she wishes to leave she will continue.

Mr ABBOTT: It was so secret it was announced before half of the press gallery! It will benefit jobs and workers in Tasmania and I call on the opposition to support it.

Australian Defence Force

Mr SIMPKINS (Cowan) (14:50): My question is to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, representing the Minister for Defence. I remind the minister that each year thousands of men and women in the Australian Defence Force serve their nation in theatres of war and conflict, putting their lives at risk. Will the minister advise the House of the importance of respecting the professionalism and integrity of our men and women in uniform?

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin—Minister for Foreign Affairs) (14:50): I thank the member for Cowan for his question and I recognise the deep respect that he has for our defence forces and the work that they do around the world. Indeed, as the member for Cowan knows, our defence forces are deeply respected in the region for the humanitarian work that they carry out at the direction of the Australian government. Recently in the Philippines after Typhoon Haiyan, 550 of our finest men and women worked to redress that humanitarian disaster. Indeed, our men and women are respected globally for defending Australia's interests and upholding our values.
That is why we on this side are deeply concerned that the shadow minister for defence is refusing to redress the ‘extreme offence’—those were the words used by General Angus Campbell—felt by General Campbell after Senator Conroy’s outrageous slur, indeed the libel, that he uttered against General Campbell, designed to dishonour an honourable man. As the Chief of Defence, David Hurley, said, referring to Senator Conroy’s defamatory words:

I was surprised at the accusations made against Lieutenant General Angus Campbell. I am pleased that these accusations were withdrawn. But, unfortunately, once they are said, the shadow will linger. Lieutenant General Campbell has a reputation—in Canberra, more widely in Australia, and overseas—of integrity, intellect and studied impartiality.

I should not have to point this out, but when a slur or a libel or a defamation is uttered not only should the offending words be withdrawn but an apology should be offered to redress the hurt and the offence felt by those who have been libelled.

Labor is making a bad situation worse, for yesterday, in the debate on the motion by the Independent member for Denison, the Leader of the Opposition made his own outrageous slur against Senator Michael Ronaldson that not only reflected on Senator Ronaldson but also reflected on former Chief of Army Ken Gillespie. The Leader of the Opposition falsely claimed that, in estimates, Senator Ronaldson had called General Gillespie a coward. That was a false claim. After Senator Ronaldson demanded a retraction, hours later the Leader of the Opposition crept in just before the close of the House's business and apologised, but he did not withdraw the false allegation, so that allegation stands.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, on a point of order: the minister now is going to issues unrelated to the question.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr Burke: She is also—

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, she is also dealing with issues which were dealt with in the parliament last night within three minutes of Senator Ronaldson—

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat. The minister has the call.

Ms JULIE BISHOP: So that was a false claim, and after Senator Ronaldson demanded a retraction—

Mr Shorten: Madam Speaker, to help the Minister for Foreign Affairs—

The SPEAKER: She doesn't need help.

Mr Shorten: I withdraw.

The SPEAKER: That was a quite inappropriate intervention. You may do it at the end of question time. The minister has the call.

Ms JULIE BISHOP: Thank you, Speaker. I now note that the Leader of the Opposition apologised last night and now has withdrawn the words. I accept that and I am sure Senator Ronaldson will. But what he must now do is direct Senator Conroy to withdraw the words and apologise, and I give him an opportunity to do so now. (Time expired)
Tasmania: Cadbury

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (14:55): My question is to the Prime Minister. If the Cadbury grant was a part of normal industry assistance, why didn't Cadbury apply to the government as part of the process that we established for the 2013 Tasmanian jobs plan?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:55): I do thank the member for Grayndler for his question. I point out that the $16 million was a tourism infrastructure grant. It was an election commitment. We made it in the context of an election. We made it openly and publicly. It was so secret that it was witnessed by half the press gallery. It was so sinister that it was approved by the people of Australia at an election. And let me remind the member for Grayndler and all those other rather noisy members opposite: the member for Franklin described the project as 'a great project that gets our support'. Well, get behind it. It is a good project and it will create jobs.

Trade Unions

Mr VASTA (Bonner) (14:56): My question is to the Minister for Education, representing the Minister for Employment.

Ms King: Madam Speaker, on a point of order: the Treasurer made a most unparliamentary remark at me. I would ask him to withdraw it.

Mr Hockey: I did: I called them hypocrites. I withdraw.

The SPEAKER: Quite right; it is unparliamentary.

Mr Burke: Point of order, Madam Speaker: if anyone from our side did exactly that, you would have ejected them. You would have done that for any one of us, and you would have been right to do so, Madam Speaker.

The SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business is tempting me. The Treasurer has used the word 'hypocrite'. It is unparliamentary and he has withdrawn. The member for Bonner has the call.

Mr VASTA: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My question is to the Minister for Education, representing the Minister for Employment.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence! The member for Bonner will begin again.

Mr VASTA: My question is to the Minister for Education representing the Minister for Employment. I refer the minister to the Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption. Why is it necessary to ensure the highest levels of probity in the union movement in Australia, particularly given their historic links to registered organisations?

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (14:58): I thank the member for Bonner for his question. It is true that Australian workers do deserve the highest levels of probity in the management of the union movement. The royal commission does create the opportunity to root out corruption in the union movement. Let's put this in perspective. Even after the scandals involving the HSU were public, Kathy Jackson described this scene at the 2011 HSU council meeting in Sydney:

There would have been 900 delegates … I kid you not … This is after I went to the police … (Michael) Williamson got a standing ovation … they played the Rocky theme when he walked in … there were
people heckling me and screaming at me and … Marco Bolano … that I was a traitor to the movement … people were calling out 'Judas' from the crowd … this went on for … hours.

It is that level of delusion in the union movement that the royal commission will help root out so that Australian workers get representation from their union leaders that is genuine and real, and not the kind of scandalous grubbiness that we saw in the HSU.

But what is standing in the way of being able to achieve this? What is standing in the way is the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition is opposing the royal commission. He is opposing the Australian Building and Construction Commission being reoriented. He is opposing the Registered Organisations Commission. But, also, yesterday he refused to do what he himself did. Yesterday he apologised and withdrew for saying something was untrue in this place about Senator Ronaldson, but he will not require the same of Senator Conroy. What is good for him should be good for Senator Conroy—what is good for the goose should be good for the gander. Why can't he do it? Because he is the factions' choice, not the people's choice.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order on relevance. If direct relevance in the standing orders means anything, it means the Leader of the House is out of order.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the House and minister will resume his answer, directing it to the question.

Mr PYNE: Correct, Madam Speaker, and I am being very relevant. What is standing in the way of being able to deliver probity in the union movement is the connection, the umbilical cord, between Labor and the trade union movement. The Leader of the Opposition will not discipline Senator Conroy because he cannot. He is the factions' choice—there is the people's choice! The member for Grayndler surprised even me—

The SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat. Manager of Opposition Business, we have already had one standing order.

Mr Burke: Correct, Madam Speaker, but, given that on the last one you actually agreed with me, which was good, the minister is defying your ruling.

The SPEAKER: The minister will return to the question.

Mr PYNE: Madam Speaker, I am explaining the relevance. The point is that the Leader of the Opposition cannot act because he is a union official first, representing union officials. That is why he will not act against the factional boss Senator Conroy—because he is the factions' choice, not the people's choice. He is not pretty but he is the people's choice.

The SPEAKER: The minister will resume his seat. The Manager of Opposition Business is reminded that we have already had irrelevance.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, the Leader of the House is continuing to defy your ruling and should be brought to order.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The minister has concluded his answer.

Qantas

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (15:01): My question is to the Prime Minister. Given the Prime Minister's tenacity in fighting for the job of the assistant health minister, and given the Prime Minister's failure to outline any plan to support Qantas workers today, why won't the Prime Minister stand up and fight for the 5,000 people who
found out that they have lost their jobs, and why won't he fight for the rest of the jobs and for keeping Qantas majority Australian owned?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (15:02): Every single person in this House is concerned about the predicament that those 5,000 workers find themselves in. But the whole point of government is not to guarantee every single job—no government can do that. The point of being in office is not to run a chequebook government. The point of being in government is to get the fundamentals right, and that is what this government is trying to do. We want to get taxes down, we want to get to regulation down, we want to get productivity up—

Mr Shorten: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order on relevance. I was not asking the Prime Minister to guarantee; I just want him do something and fight for jobs.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order, and that is an abuse of standing orders.

Mr ABBOTT: I am fighting to ensure that Qantas gets a fair go. I am fighting to ensure that Qantas is not shackled by a $106 million carbon tax bill one year and a $168 million carbon tax bill the next year. I am fighting to ensure that as far as is humanly possible Qantas is operating on a level playing field, and the last thing that I want to do on a difficult and anxious day for Qantas is to make political capital out of the difficulty that this business finds itself in. That is the last thing I want to do.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition has asked a question and he is getting an answer!

Mr ABBOTT: I absolutely accept that Qantas would like the government's help. The help I am offering is to level the playing field and save Qantas from costs which it should not face. I invite the Leader of the Opposition to join with me and to give this great Australian icon the legislative help that it needs. That is what we should all be doing in this parliament today—giving this great Australian icon the legislative help that it needs. It is a difficult and anxious day for Qantas; there is no doubt about that. But our duty in this parliament is to ensure that Qantas is stronger tomorrow than it was yesterday, and that is what I am determined to do.

Asylum Seekers

Mr IRONS (Swan) (15:05): My question is to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection. Will the minister update the House on how many weeks have passed since the last successful people-smuggling venture made it to Australia? Will the minister advise on the key factors responsible for this outcome?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (15:05): I thank the member for Swan for his question and his keen interest in this issue. I said once before in this place that I would not be running a shipping news service for people smugglers. But there is no shipping news to give, because for the past 10 weeks—for the last 70 days—there has not been a single successful people-smuggling venture to Australia. I note that 70 days was the amount of time the Manager of Opposition Business served as Minister for Immigration up until the election—70 days. In the last 70 days we have not had a successful people-smuggling venture come to Australia.
I am asked about the key factors that have produced this outcome. I would suggest the following. Firstly, there are the people in the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service, our Navy, our Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Department of Immigration and Border Protection. These are the people who go out there every day and implement good policy. That is what they do. They are doing a sterling job despite what Senator Conroy might say or others might choose to reflect on in other places. They are doing an outstanding job.

The other thing that has been a key factor in the success has been the policies themselves. One thing that those opposite do not seem to understand is that we have the same people that they had to do the job, we are faced with the same challenges that they were faced with to do the job and the problem was as great; the circumstances were different. But there is one thing that is very different, and that is that the policies are different. The policies that those people are putting in place are different. The most significant one that has had the impact on the success over the last 70 days has been our operations at sea. Operations, which—

Mr Dreyfus: Which you aren't telling us about.

Mr MORRISON: I will be specific, for the member for Isaacs: denying illegal entry of vessels into our waters and removing them from those waters. That is our policy, and that is exactly what we are doing—

Mr Dreyfus: Own up and tell us what you're doing!

Mr MORRISON: You said—through you, Madam Speaker—all of them said, that it could not be done! It could never be done! They came up with excuse after excuse after excuse for why it could not be done, and the boats just turned up, didn't they—day after day after day? The third ingredient was the result of a government which believed in policies that would work and wanted to address the problem.

So it has been the people, it has been the policies under this government and it has been the resolve of a government which believes in the policies we are implementing that mean we and can give those good people—whether they are in our Navy or our Customs and Border Protection—the support they need to get the job done. And 70 days, and counting, on, they are getting that job done.

Paid Parental Leave

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (15:08): My question is to the Prime Minister. Given the revelation that the Commission of Audit has called on the government to dump its excessive, gold-plated Paid Parental Leave scheme, will the Prime Minister now abandon his signature policy?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (15:09): Well, no, I will not. Let me say of the Commission of Audit—

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The noise on my left will desist. The Prime Minister has the call. You have asked the question; now listen to the answer.

Mr Dreyfus: We've had the answer.

Mr ABBOTT: I am happy to elaborate. I am very happy to elaborate and to say why we will not. It might surprise members opposite, but this is a policy that I deeply believe in. This
is a policy that I announced on International Women's Day in 2010. This is a policy that the coalition took to the 2010 election. This is a policy which the coalition expounded and defended throughout the last term of parliament. This is a policy which we took to the election. And, I have to say, this is a policy which the Australian public well and truly understood when they voted in last year's election.

This is a policy whose time has come. It is a policy that will deliver an historic reform for the women of Australia. I think that one day members opposite will be a little embarrassed at the stance that they have taken on this policy. I believe that the women of Australia should have a real choice to combine family with career. They should have a real choice to combine family with career, and that is exactly what this policy gives them.

This is an historic change. This is a mighty social and economic advance for the women of Australia. It is good for women, it is good for families and it is very good for our economy, because if we can get the participation rate up we will get our productivity up, we will get our prosperity up and it will be good for everyone. I absolutely stand by this policy.

**Illicit Drugs**

**Mr CRAIG KELLY** (Hughes) (15:11): My question is to the Minister for Justice. Will the minister inform the House how federal law enforcement agencies are making the streets of my electorate safer from the dangers of illicit drugs?

**Mr KEENAN** (Stirling—Minister for Justice) (15:11): I thank the member the Hughes for this question. I acknowledge that he has personally shown me the effects of illicit drugs within his own electorate.

**Mr Perrett:** Really?

Honourable members interjecting—

**The SPEAKER:** We will have some quiet.

**Mr KEENAN:** Perhaps I could have phrased that better, but I think the House knows what I mean. This is a very serious issue. Strong and prosperous communities are central to our government's plan to build a better Australia. Too many of the lives of our communities around the country are blighted by organised crime. It remains a serious threat to the social and economic fabric of Australia.

The Australian Crime Commission recently noted that organised crime costs our community up to $15 billion a year, and the illicit drug market remains the principal source of income for organised criminals. It is this government's commitment to take steps to strike at the heart of this market and to give the law enforcement agencies the resources and the powers they need to go after organised criminals and drug dealers. This is a change in direction for this government compared to that of the previous government, which, budget after budget, cut the resources to Commonwealth law enforcement agencies. I am pleased to report to the House the significant work that has been done in targeting the illicit drug market in the past short while.

In the six months to January this year, federal law enforcement agencies seized over $1 billion worth of illicit drugs. This is $1 billion that has been taken out of the criminal economy and over three tonnes of drugs that are not circulating on our streets. Cocaine seized was over one tonne, with a street value of $427 million. Over one tonne of precursor
chemicals have been seized, with a street value of $220 million. Specific operations include Task Force Eligo, which, while being primarily aimed at money-laundering, has resulted in the seizure of over half a billion dollars of illicit drugs, the seizure of $26 million of cash and the restraint of more than $30 million worth of criminal assets.

Imagine what could have been achieved if the previous government had not cut savagely the budget of Commonwealth law enforcement agencies. The Australian Crime Commission, the body that is tasked with fighting organised crime, had its budget cut by 30 per cent under the previous government—30 per cent. It had its personnel cut by 30 per cent under the previous government, and yet they have still managed to do an extraordinary job in tackling organised crime and tackling the illicit drug market. The Australian Federal Police had their budget cut by $128 million under the previous government, and I congratulate both of these agencies for what they have been able to achieve even though the previous government tied one hand behind their backs.

The new government will tackle organised crime and the illicit drugs market, and we will support the agencies that are tasked with doing it.

**Mr ABBOTT** (Warringah—Prime Minister) (15:14): Madam Speaker, after 21 well-answered questions I ask that further questions be placed on the Notice Paper.

**DISTINGUISHED VISITORS**

*The SPEAKER* (15:15): During the, shall we say, vigorous question time we had today I neglected to say that we have had in the gallery the Hon. Ross Cameron, the former member for Parramatta, and we welcome him.

**Honourable members:** Hear, hear!

**PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS**

*Mr SHORTEN* (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (15:15): Madam Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation.

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

*Mr SHORTEN:* Yes, I have been. Today in question time the Leader of the House falsely claimed that I was standing in the way of the Abbott royal commission into unions. The Leader of the House is wrong. I publicly committed to cooperating with the royal commission, including on Tuesday when I said that Labor will cooperate with the royal commission.

**AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORTS**

*Report No. 21 of 2013-14*

*The SPEAKER* (15:15): I present the Auditor-General's Audit report No. 21 of 2013-14 entitled *Pilot project to audit key performance indicators.*

Ordered that the report be made a parliamentary paper.
MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Abbott Government

The SPEAKER (15:16): I have received a letter from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition proposing that a definite matter of public importance be submitted to the House for discussion, namely:

The Government's repeated failure to deliver on its election promises including its failure to deliver honest and accountable government.

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

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

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (15:16): Today we are debating a very serious matter of public importance: the government's repeated failure to deliver on its election promises, including its failure to deliver honest and accountable government. We have had, day after day, week after week, month after month, broken promise after broken promise. The government that said before the election that there would be no cuts to health, no cuts to education, no cuts to the ABC or SBS and no threat to pensions has threatened every one of those things. The government that said that they would be a government of adults, that they would be accountable and that they would be transparent have been running interference for weeks now for the Assistant Minister for Health and the stench around her chief of staff and his dealings.

Before the election the Prime Minister said they would be a government of no surprises and no excuses. Since then he has said, 'There has been no broken promise and there will be no broken promises under this government.' If only that were true. Let me start with the assistant health minister. The coalition promised before the election in their real solutions booklet—do you remember that one?—to 'restore accountability and improve transparency measures'. What we have seen this week in parliament, what we saw the previous week in parliament and what we have seen right through Senate estimates is obfuscation and unwillingness to answer questions. From the Prime Minister today, question after question was left unanswered.

Not just that—the government has refused to release incoming government briefs and information on border protection and has refused to comply with Senate orders or even, in most cases, to return journalists' calls. The Prime Minister said in October last year that what he wants is a government that is transparent and open, yet the Assistant Minister for Health's chief of staff was a junk food lobbyist and was employed by a company that got a $16 million grant from this government, and the Prime Minister is refusing to answer any questions about the relationship of that lobbyist, his role in securing a grant and whether he personally or his company benefited from that grant.

Today we heard the news of job losses at Qantas. All of us on both sides have a great deal of deep concern for those workers who are going home today to talk to their families about their future. My father worked for Qantas for 21 years and I know how we felt about the security of his job. He would come home every week in the days of the cash pay packet and hand over the envelope with cash in it to mum. That was everything for us: that was the roof over our heads, food on the table, me being able to go on a school excursion and mum being
able to buy me school shoes. That pay packet paid for all of that. Our whole family knew how important it was. That is one of my earliest memories. Because the people at Qantas do not know who will lose their jobs there are thousands of Qantas employees going home today who can no longer give their family that security, who can no longer be confident of their economic future.

Let us compare this government's rhetoric before the election campaign with their practice since the election. Before the election they said they would create one million jobs. What has actually happened since their election? One job has been lost every three minutes. Every time a minister on the other side fails to answer a question in this place one job is lost. For every answer not given, for every obfuscation, there is one job lost. Up to today there have been 63,000 jobs lost and, with Qantas's announcement today, another 5,000 jobs will be lost. Contrast that with when we were in government. There were one million jobs created while we had the worst economic circumstances in three-quarters of a century—the global financial crisis. What do we have from the Prime Minister? We have: 'I know nothing. I can do nothing.' The lack of—

Mr Bowen: Regret.

Ms PLIBERSEK: There is a lack of regret, as one of my colleagues says, and a lack of a plan. One of the most important things a government can do, one of the greatest responsibilities of a government, is to look to the future and say: 'What sort of economy will we have? What sort of society will we have? What will the jobs of the future be? How do we equip our people to make the most of those opportunities?'

Has anybody heard a plan for the future from this government or any vision for these workers who have been 'liberated' from the car factory production line? Where are their jobs coming from? These workers who have been 'liberated' from the production line at SPC Ardmona—where are their jobs coming from? These Qantas workers—the Deputy Prime Minister wants to ship their maintenance jobs overseas—where are their jobs going to come from in the future? The Prime Minister pretends that we are saying to him, 'You need to guarantee every single job'. But do you know what would be a great comfort to these workers? A great comfort would be to know that they were going to get immediate assistance from the government to help them cope with the biggest change in their lives. The other thing that would help these workers is to know that the people sitting opposite have some inkling, some idea, some plan for the future.

Those opposite also said there would be no cuts to health and no cuts to education. No cuts to health? Let us have a look at the difference between the 2013 budget and the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook under those opposite. What came out of hospitals in that time? More than half a billion dollars—$560.3 million—cut between the budget in May and the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook.

Ms Henderson interjecting—

Ms PLIBERSEK: Oh, one of the members opposite is talking about Victoria. Guess what Victoria is going to lose between the budget and the midyear economic forecast—$277 million. What do you say about that? And there is not only the change to hospitals—what about the $265 million that was announced for upgrades to Westmead Hospital? There is no upgrade for Westmead, no upgrade for St George Hospital, no MRI machine for Mount Druitt
hospital, no specialised cancer care in Western Australia and no cancer care coordinators. And the South Australian government needed to step in and build the neonatal unit at Flinders Medical Centre that was already budgeted for. That money was set aside. That money was in the budget, and those opposite cut it. They cut it, despite their promise.

Honourable members interjecting—

Ms PLIBERSEK: And education. The Minister for Education never comes in here to answer a question on education. When was the last time anybody heard the member for Sturt say a single thing about education? Instead—

Government members interjecting—

Ms PLIBERSEK: I'm talking about education—he is off on some frolic of his own. But he promised no school worse off under your government, and all of you have to go home and you have to explain to your schools why you are robbing them, why you are robbing those children of education funding.

Government members interjecting—

Ms PLIBERSEK: You have to go home and explain why you are cutting education funding. Labor's Gonski proposal—

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: We will have some quiet in the chamber, and I would say to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition: she will address her remarks through the chair.

Ms PLIBERSEK: Madam Speaker, $14.65 billion was our proposal. What is their proposal? It is $2.8 billion. What is the difference between $14.65 billion and $2.8 billion? The difference is the education of our children, investment in future generations of Australians to prepare them for the jobs of the future—and you have robbed them. You have robbed them of that future. When the member for Sturt said 'no school worse off', he was wrong. It is just one of the many lies told by this government.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a quick point of order. While I respect that it was rowdy on both sides during that, it is highly disorderly when people interject out of their seats, and I draw your attention to the member for Mitchell.

The SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business is quite correct. If you wish to interject, you must be sitting in the correct seat—simple rule.

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for the Environment) (15:27): It is irony day. Let me begin with a simple 'who said' quote. Who said, 'There will be no carbon tax under the government I lead'? Who said that? Who could possibly have said that? It would not have been the ALP, through the guise of the then Prime Minister, before the 2010 election, would it? It would not have been then. It is just worth remembering. You may not have picked it up from the deputy opposition leader's speech as to what this so-called matter of public importance is about.

Ms Hall: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Could you assist me? I always thought—

The SPEAKER: It is not a point of order to assist you.
Ms Hall: No; the member is standing over there and not sitting down. He has been talking in the aisle. It is my understanding—

The SPEAKER: The member will resume her seat. Will people who wish to have a conversation either go outside or take their seats.

Mr HUNT: I will assist the member for Shortland. The topic of this MPI is: The Government’s repeated failure to deliver on its election promises—
And it goes on to talk about delivering 'honest and accountable government'. That is why this is about irony.

First of all we have the question of the carbon tax. It is a small matter of importance—just a small matter—because it represents not just a fundamental breach of faith, a fundamental defiance of a commitment prior to an election, a fundamental denial of that which was taken to the people, but also rotten economic policy. Right now, on the day that they are concerned about Qantas—as we all rightly are—Qantas had a $106 million bill. They paid that bill last year, they will have a similar bill this year and they will have a similar bill next year. The difference, of course, is that this year's carbon tax is likely to be higher than last year's carbon tax because the carbon tax has gone up, and next year's carbon tax, under what they are proposing to occur if it is not repealed—although we will repeal it—would be even higher. In short, at the very moment that they come to this House and talk about trust and election promises and honesty, they are responsible for the most significant and gross and fundamental breach of a cornerstone election promise that this House, this parliament and this country has seen in decades and decades. So that is why it must be an element of irony which is confronting us.

Let us move forward, though, because there is a second component. Prior to the last election, who said, 'We will abolish the carbon tax'? We did. We went to the election pledging, promising and committing, not just once or twice but on hundreds of occasions in hundreds of for a—whether it was the then Leader of the Opposition, the now Prime Minister, or any of the frontbenchers or any of the pre-existing members of the House, or any of the candidates who have now been elected to the House, they all, on various occasions, I believe, pledged, committed and promised—to repeal the carbon tax if elected. So what did we do? We came into office. We did exactly what we committed to.

The first piece of legislation which was brought before this House was to repeal the carbon tax. The first piece of legislation passed by this House was the repeal of the carbon tax. And now what do we see in the Senate? We see an opposition, which says it is fundamental to uphold your promises, doing everything they can to ensure that a government does not uphold its promise. There may be a certain element of hypocrisy. Now, of course, I cannot allege that against any individual member of the opposition, but, collectively, they might just want to consider: if they bring a motion about a failure to carry out election promises, and if they bring a motion about honesty and accountability, perhaps—just perhaps—looking in the mirror might be a great place to start!

Having said that, this was the same group that, when in government, pledged that there would be no budget deficits. I remember the great Kevin Rudd saying: 'Our budget orthodoxy is identical to the Howard government's. There is not a sliver of light between us. I'm an economic conservative and that means budget surpluses.' Except, let me remind the House:
$27 billion, $54 billion, $47 billion, $43 billion, $18 billion and, this year, well over $30 billion and climbing—those are the deficits from their six budgets. Six budgets; a perfect record of six deficits!

Ms MacTiernan interjecting—

Mr HUNT: No, I believe in budget surpluses and we will deliver budget surpluses.

They promised to be tough on borders. They were going to maintain, as, I think, Kevin Rudd said, a very hard line, a very tough line, on people smuggling.

Mr Chester interjecting—

Mr HUNT: Well, as the member for Gippsland says, how did that go? Not altogether well! But we pledged that we would take measures to stop the boats, and we are stopping the boats. It is 70 days and counting—we are not claiming victory yet; we are not overclaiming; but 70 days and counting is an especially good record so far.

They promised that they would not touch the private health insurance rebate. Well, we can forget that one. And then they promised there would be no new taxes. Apart from the carbon tax, there was the superannuation tax free changes, the restrictions on business losses, the changes to the employee share scheme, the impost of the mining tax—Oh, the mining tax! How are you going, member for Perth? It's great to have you in the House!—the ethanol taxation increases, the LPG increase, the tightening on restriction on medical expenses, and the increase in the luxury car tax.

But let me turn, now that we have looked at the issue of broken promises, to the second part of this motion, which is all about honesty and accountability. I cannot help but go to the words of none other than the Leader of the Opposition, who has an eye for honesty and accountability wherever he goes, talking to Neil Mitchell:

Neil Mitchell:
You've run a union, you understand these things, do you support him?

They are talking about Craig Thomson. 'Oh, yeah,' says Bill Shorten—all he had to say was, 'I support him'—

Oh, yeah, I believe him.

Neil Mitchell:
You believe him, no case to answer?

Bill Shorten:
I believe him …

Talk about an eye for honesty!

So that is what we say to these people: you come here talking about honesty? Let us remind you about a couple of other things. The Leader of the Opposition said, in 2012, on 18 June:

The 2012-13 budget delivers on the government's commitment to return the budget to surplus …

Oops! $18.8 billion dollars was the deficit which you guys had. That was the deficit which the Leader of the Opposition declared was a surplus. He also went on to say, on another occasion: 'It's a remarkable accomplishment.' I just want to repeat that:

It is a remarkable accomplishment when you look around the rest of the world to see how well this government and our Treasurer have done—
that was when they were still friends—
in producing a surplus.
Oops! Not quite! Then he went on, on another occasion, to talk about:
… delivering on our commitment to return the budget to surplus and with surpluses growing over the forward estimates.
Except for the fact: there were none!

Ms MacTiernan interjecting—

Mr HUNT: I will tell you what we did: we delivered 10 out of 11 surpluses.

Ms Rishworth: In the mining boom.

Mr HUNT: You have now delivered 11 out of 11 deficits.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr HUNT: I will take on some of the comments here. ‘It was the mining boom.’ Their whole philosophy of government is: 11 out of 11 deficits, and they are unlucky; and we deliver 10 out of 11 surpluses and we are just plain lucky. So, if you want to understand the difference in approach—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr HUNT: They believe that government is about luck and bad luck. We believe that government is about—

Ms Rishworth interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): Order! The member for Kingston is interjecting outside of her place.

Mr HUNT: good policy and bad policy. We also believe that government is about openness, honesty, transparency and accountability, and that is why, when we said we would repeal the carbon tax, we carried out our carbon tax commitment. We brought it into this House. We had it repealed. We are waiting for you in the Senate. And if you actually believe one word of this motion, which, as I said, is about failure to deliver on election promises, let us deliver our election promise. The only people standing between us delivering on the carbon tax repeal election promise are those on the other side and their senators, who are out on strike. I have to say: we have work-to-rule in the Senate from the ALP senators. As of Sunday, it will be three months exactly since the carbon tax repeal bills were delivered in the Senate. So, if you want to see openness, honesty, accountability, transparency and delivery of election promises, get out of the way and repeal the carbon tax. (Time expired)

Ms KING (Ballarat) (15:37): That was a fairly extraordinary contribution from the Minister for the Environment, which is a title many members of the environmental movement say now with tongue in cheek. The Abbott government has certainly failed its first test of integrity. Mr Abbott’s assistant health minister, Senator Nash, has breached the Prime Minister's ministerial standards. Let me take you to those standards. They are standards that require that ministers act with the greatest integrity of office, not allow their decisions to be affected by bias and make decisions in the public interest. In fact, that is principle 1.3 under those standards, which says:

(i) Ministers must ensure that they act with integrity …
(ii) Ministers must observe fairness in making official decisions—that is, to act honestly and reasonably, with consultation as appropriate to the matter at issue …

(iii) Ministers must accept accountability for the exercise of the powers and functions of their office—that is, to ensure that their conduct, representations and decisions … are open to public scrutiny and explanation.

By any standard, the Assistant Minister for Health has failed those standards.

There was a conflict of interest at the heart of her office. That conflict has led to an infected public policy decision. It is so corrupted by the conflict of interest that the only way to resolve it is for the Minister for Health to reverse it. The Minister for Health claims to be so concerned about the health impacts of obesity and diabetes, but he has let this infected public policy decision stand. Worse, he has allowed the ridiculous antics of the member for Herbert to mock a health policy that every public health and obesity expert in the country supports. Sixty-six eminent public health professionals have written that this infected public policy decision should absolutely be reversed, and all he can do is mock.

Instead, the government has sought to destroy two years of work on the health star rating system and to trash the strong relationships that the former shadow parliamentary secretary, the member for Boothby, spent years developing with the sector. They trashed those relationships with the sector that the member for Boothby developed. The member for Boothby has shown some integrity in this debate by standing up for the health star rating system. A former health professional himself—

Mr Christensen: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member can disagree with our argument but she cannot question our integrity just because she is opposed to it.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): There is no point of order.

Ms KING: The member for Boothby has shown great integrity in this debate, standing up for the health star rating system. I cannot say the same for the Assistant Minister for Health. When the conflict of interest emerged, she tried to cover it up. Now she continues to mislead parliament and refuses to accept responsibility. She misled Senate estimates yesterday. She said her former chief of staff, Alistair Furnival, had resigned his directorship of SMI, which owns the lobbying firm Australian Public Affairs. This is not true. The records show that he still held that directorship on 13 February. She said the Prime Minister's statement of standards allowed for staff to divest interests to their spouses. This is not true. The statement says that transferring interests to family members is not an acceptable form of divestment. Senator Nash told estimates that she had required her chief of staff to divest himself of these interests and directorships. She said: 'I required those undertakings. It was my responsibility. I ensured that they were done.' The trouble is that these things were not done. But now she is refusing to accept any responsibility.

What emerged further last night was just how close this cosy little relationship was between the Prime Minister, the assistant health minister's former chief of staff and the announcement of $16 million for Cadbury. Only a candidate between them at the announcement. Pollie Pedal, sponsored by Cadbury. There are photos of the Prime Minister and the former chief of staff together, teammates in the Cadbury Pollie Pedal that I was denied the right to have a ride in. If ever there was a case of something being rotten in the state of Denmark then this is absolutely it. The Prime Minister should reverse this infected policy decision now. (Time expired)
Mr Nikolic: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member was impugning improper motives towards the end of that. I ask the honourable member to withdraw that last section of her speech.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Ballarat would assist the chamber in the interests of getting on with the job if she would withdraw.

Ms King: I am unable to withdraw because it is simply true. There is a close relationship between the Prime Minister, the assistant health minister's former chief of staff and the $16 million Cadbury—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Ballarat does not have the call. I will now ask the member for Ballarat to withdraw. If you do not, you will be defying the chair and you know the consequences.

Ms King: Regretfully, I am defying the chair.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Just withdraw.

Ms King: Regretfully, I am defying the chair.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: You are standing by your statement that you will not withdraw. Under 94(a) the member for Ballarat will leave the chamber for defying the chair.

The member for Ballarat then left the chamber.

Mr CHESTER (Gippsland—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence) (15:44): What an outrageous slur we have just heard from the member for Ballarat. It is outrageous to come into this place and disparage, of all things, the Pollie Pedal ride. The Pollie Pedal ride has raised literally hundreds of thousands of dollars for extremely worthy causes in this nation. It has had bipartisan support in the past. Members of both sides have participated in the Pollie Pedal. I am staggered that the member for Ballarat would seek to disparage a charity ride like that in this place and then defy the chair—but I am not surprised, because this matter of public importance goes straight to the issue of trust. It goes straight to the heart of the difference between this government and the previous government.

I know it hurts those members opposite—they have suddenly gone very quiet, haven't they?—those government change deniers opposite. The Australian people made a decision in September last year, and that decision was that they simply do not trust the Labor Party anymore. They simply do not trust the Labor Party to deliver value for money with taxpayers' dollars. They did not trust the Labor Party to repeal the carbon tax, they did not trust the Labor Party to regain control of our borders and they did not trust the Labor Party to deliver responsible government after years of sleaze and scandal. They simply did not trust the Labor Party to govern the greatest nation in the world. In voting for their local Liberal and National Party candidates at last year's election, the people instinctively understood that they were leaving us with a huge job to do—and we are up to that job. They know we have a mess to clean up.

Mr Dreyfus: You failed in six months.

Mr CHESTER: Rumpole, they know we have a mess to clean up. They know there is a huge repair job ahead of us.

Ms Owens: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would ask the Deputy Speaker to ask the member to refer to members by their title.
The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Gippsland knows that he should refer to members by their title or their electorate.

Mr CHESTER: I withdraw 'Rumpole'. Sorry.

Ms Owens: Mr Deputy Speaker, on a point of order: the member is defying your ruling.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, he withdrew.

Ms Owens: Mr Deputy Speaker, he repeated the insult—not withdrew it. I would ask him to withdraw it.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Gippsland will withdraw the comment unreservedly.

Mr CHESTER: Unreservedly. As I was saying, the Australian people understand that we have a mess to clean up. It is more likely that the Australian people would phone their local Jim's Cleaning service to clean up this mess than ask the Labor Party to do it. I actually had the time during question time to check with Jim's Cleaning in Canberra. They are currently offering a no-obligation free quote for their cleaning service. Their promotional material is very interesting stuff. I would like to quote from it:

In this day and age security and trust are vital for the consumer …

I would say that they are vital for the Australian voters as well. But the big advertising message for Jim's Cleaning right here in Canberra is very insightful:

So sit back, relax and let us do the dirty work while you spend your spare time doing the things you enjoy!

There you go! Perhaps someone from Jim's Cleaning right here in Canberra is sending a new political strategy to the Australian Labor Party:

So sit back, relax and let us do the dirty work while you spend your spare time doing the things you enjoy!

Now what would that be? What do those members opposite like doing? I don't know. Stacking branches, perhaps? I don't know. Plotting against their leader? Wasting taxpayers' money running false scare campaigns, opposing every new thing that this government puts forward?

Mr Christensen: Sledging military leaders.

Mr CHESTER: I take the member for Dawson's interjection. I encourage those opposite to get back to what they enjoy doing and let us get on with the job of cleaning up this mess. I am amazed, as the member for Flinders was, at the audacity, the irony and the hypocrisy of those opposite in proposing this matter of public importance which speaks about a failure to deliver on promises.

We only have to go back two or three years ago and reflect on what the member for Lilley told us in his budget speech in 2012:

The four years of surpluses I announce tonight are a powerful endorsement of the strength of our economy …

He went on:

This Budget delivers a surplus this coming year, on time, as promised, and surpluses each year after that, strengthening over time.
And then there was the member for Lalor, who said:
I rule out a carbon tax ... There will be no carbon tax under the government I lead …

No-one on this side of the House, no-one in the Australian community, has forgotten that fundamental breach of trust between the former Labor government and our nation. It goes to the core of every bit of anger in the community in the lead-up to last year's election. It explains why the Australian people simply do not trust the Australian Labor Party and why they want to us clean up the mess.

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (15:49): It is a sad day when I am having to rise to actually point out to those on the other side their repeated failure to deliver on their election promises. The list is very long, and I will get to that point. There is also their failure to deliver honest and accountable government. Before the election, we heard the Prime Minister say, 'There will be no surprises and no excuses,' from a coalition government—there will be no nasty surprises and lame excuses from the people that you have trusted with the future. But, unfortunately, day after day we see this Prime Minister come in here and make lame excuses and announce nasty surprises. Of course, it starts with jobs.

There was a promise before the election of one million jobs in five years. But, day after a day, we see this Prime Minister say that it is regrettable there are job losses at Holden; it is regrettable there are job losses at SPC and it is regrettable there are job losses at Alcoa—and the list goes on and on. He does not come in here and actually explain what he is going to do. He does not come in and say what his plan is to create one million jobs. He just comes in here. But it gets worse. He will go on TV or send in one of his cheerleaders to blame the workers: 'They get paid too much at SPC.' 'They get paid too much at Qantas.' 'It is the workers' fault that they are losing their jobs.' Then he will blame the unions: 'It is the unions' fault for standing up for their members and asking for too much money.' Heaven forbid that they should ask for penalty rates in an enterprise agreement! That is outrageous. 'If only they didn't do that, they would not be losing their jobs.' Then from time to time the government blame the companies: 'The companies have not negotiated good, lean, efficient agreements. It is their fault that people are losing their jobs.' Of course, over and over again we hear this Prime Minister make excuses about why there are job losses, but there is never an explanation about how he is going create one million jobs. There is never an explanation for why he is cutting co-investment from places like Holden and Toyota—places that are creating jobs. The exception is if you are a chocolate company. If you are a chocolate company then there is a special deal of co-investment. I think this has really highlighted to the Australian people that, despite the promises before the election of honest and accountable government, the disparity in the government's behaviour. To SPC and Holden, they say, 'We won't give handouts to these companies; they don't deserve it; private companies shouldn't be propped up,' but for Cadburys it is a different issue.

The government have failed to explain how it is different. They have come with—in the Prime Minister's words—lame excuses about how one is a tourism grant and the other is investment in industry, but there is no difference between the two, except one important point—that is, as we have heard today, it is not a junk food lobbyist; it is a chocolate economist. That is the difference between SPC and Qantas and Cadbury. It is appalling that they have not had to go through proper accountability measures. All it took was one person, one lobbyist, to sit down next to the Prime Minister and have a quick word in his ear. We now
know that he was given as a reward a promotion to sit in the Assistant Minister for Health's office, to whisper in her ear, to get more deals done.

Mr Hawke: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Under standing order 90, the member is imputing a motive against the Prime Minister. I would ask her to withdraw that.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): The member for Kingston will withdraw that imputation if she wants to continue speaking.

Ms RISHWORTH: I am happy to withdraw the imputation. It was not to the Prime Minister, though; it was to the Assistant Minister for Health. I have to say that the broken promises of this government are endless. I will start with the broken promises in health. I have the member for Chifley here. The member for Chifley worked hard to secure an MIR machine for Mount Druitt. It was funded in the budget and this government cut it. This government cut it from the hardworking people in Mount Druitt. The member for Chifley will continue to stand up, as will this opposition, for health and to stop health cuts in this place. Unfortunately, this government needs to stop making up lies—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The word 'lie' will be withdrawn.

Ms RISHWORTH: I withdraw that. Stop misleading the people of Australia about health cuts. (Time expired)

Ms O'DWYER (Higgins) (15:54): It takes a particular type of chutzpah to come into this place and to claim that those on the other side of the chamber were people who delivered honest and accountable government and delivered on their promises and that we on this side of the chamber are not doing so. In fact, it is not just chutzpah; it actually takes a breathtaking arrogance to make such a claim. Let me remind the chamber of the record of the previous Labor government. Let us start with the carbon tax. At the last election, Kevin Rudd claimed that he was going to get rid of the carbon tax. This was off the back of Prime Minister Julia Gillard declaring that there would be no carbon tax under the government she led. So initially they promised not to do it; but they did it. Then they said they would get rid of the carbon tax; but now the Leader of the Opposition, Bill Shorten, is blocking us scrapping the carbon tax, as we promised the Australian people we would do, in the Senate. This is quite extraordinary. This is a $9 billion a year tax that they are blocking us getting rid of in the Senate today. If anybody is standing in the way of us delivering on our promises it is, in fact, the Labor Party. They have a very poor record of being able to deliver on theirs.

The second issue I would like to draw the attention of the chamber to today is the claims of the previous government that they would be economic conservatives. Kevin Rudd claimed he would be an economic conservative. Julia Gillard said she would continue on in that tradition—and, boy, did she ever!—and Wayne Swan guaranteed that he was going to be a Treasurer who delivered surpluses. He actually guaranteed this, along with Julia Gillard and Kevin Rudd, over 500 times. In fact, he even claimed that he had delivered a surplus. Many people in the electorate were misled by the previous government because they distributed pamphlets saying it had been done. Of course, their record was to deliver not one surplus over six years. In fact, they delivered six deficits, cumulative deficits that added up to more than $190 billion.

If we did nothing today and simply went down the same path, the same trajectory the Labor Party had set for us, there would be $123 billion of deficit to come and gross debt of more
than $650 billion. We are not going to do that, because we acknowledged to the Australian people that we needed to repair the damage done by the previous Labor government, that we needed to repair the national balance sheet. We said that we would do that by making sure that we as a government would live within our means and that we would be true economic conservatives, because we know how to deliver a surplus and we know how to balance a budget.

We have put in place already a Commission of Audit, which, line by line, is going through all of the spending, all of the schemes, all of the programs, put together by the previous government and that we need to repair, and this will form part of our next budget package when it is delivered in May by the Treasurer.

The third thing I want to draw to the attention of the House is border protection. The previous government said it was going to be tough on border protection and dismantled the previous very successful Howard government scheme. We saw more than 50,000 people arrive, unauthorised, by boat, we saw more than $11 billion blow out in the budget as a result and, tragically, we saw more than 1,000 lives lost. We have now put in place Operation Sovereign Borders, and we have done that so as to stem the loss of life on the seas. We have done that because we believe it is important first to have sovereignty on our borders. This has already yielded very strong results. Already, we have seen not one boat arrive for more than 70 consecutive days; whereas at the same time in the previous year under the previous Labor government more than 1,800 people arrive, unauthorised, by boat. We are delivering on our promises. We are delivering on the promises we made to the Australian people, because we are a responsible government. We believe it is important to keep the trust of the Australian people. We will not have the same failure that the previous government had on this issue of trust, and we will continue to deliver for the people of Australia. (Time expired)

Dr CHALMERS (Rankin) (15:59): The 5,000 people at Qantas who found out today that they will not have a job anymore, the 63,000 full-time employees who have found out since the election that they will not have a job anymore, the workers in Gove and the workers at Toyota and Holden will be really, really relieved to hear today from the Prime Minister that, instead of a plan for jobs, he is offering a glass and a half of hope. The reality is that hope will not put food on the table for all of those tens of thousands of workers while the Prime Minister determines that he is above coming up with a jobs plan for our community.

The Prime Minister's word might mean something if you are a chocolate lobbyist or a chocolate economist. If you are a former Howard government minister, his word might mean something. As I have said before, the job market is flash if you used to be in the Howard cabinet. But for 63,000 people, it is pretty ordinary. The members who spoke before me, the good speakers from our side, talked about the broken promises in health, education, and in terms of transparency and standards, and there are the other broken promises on things like the ABC and the NBN. I know that the Prime Minister has said before that you can only take him at his word when it is a scripted comment, so I thought we should probably go back to his campaign speech. He would not only like to pretend that he is not the same guy who made all these promises; he would like to pretend that he has never met him. Let us remind people of what he said in his election campaign speech:

It's performance, not promises, that will earn your respect; it's actions, not words, that you are looking for.
When it comes to the jobs market, it is not enough to have a glossy brochure about a million jobs when you are going backwards by 63,000 jobs. The then opposition leader also said in his campaign speech—and I agree with him:

… you don't build a better society by issuing a press release.

The same is true about a glossy brochure about a million jobs. Another thing that the then opposition leader said in his campaign speech:

I want our workers to be the best paid in the world …

That is what he said in his campaign speech when he was looking for people's votes. He wants people to be the best paid in the world, unless they are in aged care, child care, small business or any of the other industries where we have seen wages cut. He also said:

I want to lift everyone's standard of living.

Again, that is unless you are in aged care, child care, small business; unless you are relying on the schoolkids bonus or low-income super; unless you are a multicultural community relying on a grant to help out your community; unless you want to take your kids to the doctor, particularly if you have a big family, and paying $6 every time stings. That is what he said about the standard of living.

Those opposite will like this one. He said:

We'll get the budget back under control …

Those opposite are all into that. Then he did a grubby deal with the Greens to take off the debt limit on the national credit card. He said before the election, 'We'll get the budget under control,' and then he did a deal with the Greens to jack up the debt.

An opposition member interjecting—

Dr CHALMERS: It is the Buzz Lightyear deal: 'To infinity and beyond.' The next thing he said in his campaign speech was that Australia will be 'open for business'. Again, that is unless you are GrainCorp, Holden or Toyota; unless you are the small businesses that he took the investment allowance and the loss carry-back from. Australian is open for business except if you are in any of those industries. Another thing he said really got my attention when I was reading it today. He said:

I will govern for all Australians.

Again, not if you are in a multicultural community and you require a grant, not if you have sick kids and you cannot afford to go to the doctor, not if you are in small business and you need loss carry-back or the investment allowance, not if you are someone who needs a couple of hundred dollars at the start of the year to buy the textbooks, not if you are a childcare worker looking after little kids in our community—

Ms Henderson: Racist.

Mr Hunt: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would ask the member to withdraw the comments in relation to multicultural communities. They are offensive and carry deep and dark implications and should not be allowed to stand.

Ms Bird: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would ask the member to withdraw the accusation of 'racist'.
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): I will firstly rule on the minister's point of order. It has been a lively debate and I will let the comments stand unless the member for Rankin would like to withdraw it in the interests of the chamber.

Dr CHALMERS: Yes, I will do that. Thank you.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I thank the member for Rankin. And I would ask the member for Corangamite to withdraw the comment in the interests of the chamber.

Ms Henderson: Given the previous reference has been withdrawn, I happily withdraw. Thank you.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will give the member for Rankin some extra time. He has about 40 seconds.

Dr CHALMERS: It remains the case that the multicultural grants have been cut and the Victorian branch turned around after cutting the multicultural grants and asked for a donation from the multicultural community. Those are the facts of the matter. The reality is that this is not the government that people voted for. They did not vote for lower wages. They did not vote for fewer jobs. We will keep holding the government accountable. (Time expired)

Mr LAUNDY (Reid) (16:06): It is an honour to speak for the first time on a matter of public importance. As if it could not get any more ironic than the topic of the MPI, I get to follow the member for Rankin. This MPI is really two MPIs in one: 'the government’s repeated failure to deliver on its election promises' and 'failure to deliver honest and accountable government'. I will talk about the second part first. I could not help but note with interest the member for Rankin's comments, and I note also that he is a doctor of economics. If I am not mistaken, the member for Fraser is also a doctor of economics and in the former parliament there was another doctor of economics, the Minister for Trade and Competitiveness. I cannot help but think that, given the fact that we are to be honest and accountable, we should start with accountability. I am glad that a medical doctor takes the Hippocratic oath and has to promise not to kill anybody, but that does not apply to doctors of economics because their field of expertise is the economy.

After six years of the Labor government, the economy is in bad shape. Yes, we are in government right now. We have $123 billion of debt in the forward estimates and gross debt will hit $667 billion. This economy is in a state of cardiac arrest. It needs strong and stable government and decisions that are taken in the nation's interest and not for political expediency. The Abbott government will do that, and I am proud to be a part of this government. It is ironic to have our honesty questioned when we have to deal with the legacy of a government responsible for probably the biggest election fraud in our history. In a lot of ways that is probably a motivation for my standing before you today.

This is a great country, but it had a bad government. This country has opportunity and prosperity in front of it, but it needs good government. As for failure to deliver our promises—and other members have commented on this—70 days without a people smuggler's boat is a start. It is not the end; it is the start. Getting the carbon tax repeal legislation through must be done. All the economists on the other side can sit around and talk about theory, but I come from a family business background. I can talk about economics in practice, what happens on the ground. The expense side of every P&L statement of every
business in Australia, irrespective of size, has been mercilessly persecuted over the last six years.

It will be small and medium-sized businesses that will solve the employment problem this country has. Whilst today is a tragic day for Qantas, it will not be government, it will not be unions and it will not be big businesses that solve the employment issues this country has. It will be, as it has always been, small and medium-sized businesses that do so. They are the backbone of not only Reid but Australia and they should be supported. The best way to support them is to allow us to implement our election commitment, get out of the expense side of their profit and loss statements and let them employ people.

This government is building infrastructure, and in my electorate that infrastructure is the WestConnex. My electorate is cut in half, and Parramatta Road has become slower and slower. It is great to be out on the ground, working with my two state colleagues in delivering this vital piece of infrastructure. Parramatta Road is a car dealership haven. It is also great to be part of a government that did not follow through with an act of lunacy that would have killed car dealerships Australia wide by not legislating on the fringe benefits tax. These are some of the issues we have confronted already. I, like my colleagues, urge those opposite to get out of our way and let us get on with offering Australia the government it voted in on 7 September. We will make decisions to enable companies to do the lifting and employ people to give our kids the future they deserve.

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (16:11): The performance of the Abbott government is summed up by one fact and one quote. The quote is from the now Prime Minister on 28 November 2012:

… I am committing a future Coalition government to creating one million new jobs within five years …

The fact is this: in the first six months of the Abbott government, 63,000 Australian full-time jobs have been lost. That is the reality of the situation—the quote, the reality. Today an additional 5,000 hardworking, dedicated Australians are being shown the door at Qantas.

On 5 December Qantas lost their investment-grade credit rating. Since that time they have been screaming out for some form of government assistance. We have all seen Qantas management walking up and down the hallways of Parliament House in the last three or four months. They have been seeking some form of government assistance and commitment to a national carrier. What response did they get from this government? The same response that Holden got, the same response that the workers at SPC Ardmona got—not a thing. They did not get one whimper from the government about the importance of Qantas as a national carrier. In fact, they got the complete opposite—just as Holden were goaded into leaving Australia, Qantas have been goaded into taking on their staff or getting ‘their house in order’, as the Prime Minister and others opposite have said. The implication is that Qantas will drive down the wages and working conditions of their employees as a condition of getting this government to do anything to assist our national carrier.

I say to those Qantas workers, to those who are uncertain, particularly those in my community, where many of them reside, that Labor does not blame them. We have sympathy for them and we are thinking about them. Labor will fight to ensure that Qantas has a future in this country, that Qantas has its board in Australia, that Qantas does maintenance in Australia and that Qantas remains our national carrier. That is our commitment to job creation and to
the workers of Qantas, unlike those opposite, who will not lift a finger to help our national carrier.

When it comes to education, our nation's education system is failing our kids. We have all seen the results from the fall in standards in education. Labor developed a new model for funding schools—a needs based model to ensure that those kids that are falling behind, many of them in country areas, in low socioeconomic areas, kids with disabilities, get the support that they need through our education system. It was a thorough study undertaken over many years comprising consultations with academics, experts, teachers, principals, parents and students. It was the Gonski reform model. What was the commitment of the Abbott government prior to the election? It is in this quote from Tony Abbott:

… as far as school funding is concerned, Kevin Rudd and I are on a unity ticket.

That is what the Prime Minister said. What did the Minister for Education say? On 29 August 2013 he said at an education forum:

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

What is the reality? The reality is they have completely undermined that needs based system of funding by not ensuring that the states put additional money into the Gonski reform package, by not ensuring that the states are committing to a needs based funding model. In my home state of New South Wales we have seen, to his credit, the education minister stand up to Tony Abbott and to Christopher Pyne—stand up to the education minister and say, 'It's not on.' He understands that if you are going to improve results, if you are going to improve student outcomes in New South Wales, you need to be investing in education, and they have committed to putting more money to funding the Gonski reforms—unlike the education minister, who said to Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory: 'It's okay. You don't need to put more money into education. You don't need to invest in a needs based model.'

Mr TONY SMITH (Casey) (16:16): We rightly point out on this side of the House that those opposite are divided on so many things, but we have seen today that they are united on one thing: they are completely, utterly unembarrassable. Have a look at the front of this MPI—to come in and lecture the government on honesty and accountability, when the previous six years of government was littered with dishonesty and incompetence which was covered up with more dishonesty and incompetence.

Speakers on this side have rightly pointed out the uncountable number of times the former Treasurer, the member for Lilley, pledged a surplus and then announced a surplus and declared a surplus when it never existed. We can go right back to the time they had their first deficit. The instinct of those opposite was to cover up. The member for Lilley delivered the budget speech with a deficit except he omitted to actually mention what the deficit was. When you add up a budget, when it all comes down to it, it comes down to a number—a surplus or a deficit. Having gone into deficit and missed target after target, he then projected surpluses and, as we know, announced that that surplus had occurred. It was the budget equivalent of Photoshopping.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): Order! The time allocated for this discussion has expired.
Cognate debate.
Debate resumed on the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.
to which the following amendment was moved:
That all the words after "That" be omitted with a view to substituting the following words:
"whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading the House notes that:

(1) the Government repeatedly stated before the election 'that if debt is the problem, more debt is not the answer';

(2) the 2013–14 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook showed a $17 billion blow-out in the 2013–14 budget deficit, which at the time represented a $167 million budget blow-out per day since the Government took office;

(3) 60 per cent of the predicted budget blow-out in 2013–14 was due to the decisions of the Government alone;

(4) the Government has sought to pave the way for deep cuts to the federal budget by deliberately blowing out the budget and establishing its Commission of Audit; and

(5) these cuts would be another example of this Government saying one thing before the election, and doing the complete opposite after it."

Dr HENDY (Eden-Monaro) (16:18): Earlier today I was talking about the border security allocation in the appropriation bills. I was noting that we are stopping the boats, with no illegal arrivals by boat since 19 December last year. That is 70 days. We have also closed four detention centres, saving over $80 million. However, there is a lot more to do, as evidenced by the allocation for border protection contained in these bills.

The fourth significant allocation in the bills before the House is for just over $540 million for the Department of Defence for overseas operations. It is to supplement foreign exchange movements and is for the reappropriation of amounts between the appropriation acts aligning with Defence's current work programs.

This allocation reminds us of the fourth policy failure of the former government. It is like the four horsemen of the apocalypse, the fourth failure being in the area of defence. This must be sheeted home to the various ministers for defence, both cabinet and junior ministers, in the previous government. That group includes former cabinet members—the member for Hunter; Senator John Faulkner; the former member for Perth, Stephen Smith; and the junior ministers from the New South Wales Right—the member for Blaxland and my old nemesis in Eden-Monaro, Mike Kelly—and their left-wing mates, Greg Combet, Senator Kim Carr and the member for Lingiari. None of them can escape blame for the more than $25 billion that was ripped out of defence in the course of the last six years.

As a former chief of staff for the Minister for Defence I have been appalled by the mismanagement over recent years. The Rudd-Gillard-Rudd government showed an utter disregard for the service of the men and women of the Australian Defence Force. This has
placed Australia's national security at risk not just now but over the long term. In fact, the Labor government cut almost $30 billion out of Defence investment through broken promises, deferments, delays and cancellations. Defence spending in 2012-13 alone was cut by 10.5 per cent to help plug Labor's budget black hole. This was the largest annual reduction since the end of the Korean War in 1953. The share of GDP spent on defence in the 2013-14 budget is just 1.59 per cent, the lowest level since 1938.

The coalition will restore spending on defence. There will be no further cuts to overall defence spending under a coalition government. As the Commonwealth's budgetary position improves, we will restore the real growth in defence investment that marked the final seven years of the Howard government and whose continuation was promised in Labor's 2009 defence white paper but not delivered by the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd government. So in defence we are also repairing Labor's mess.

In conclusion, what is one of the lessons we can reasonably reach after this little exploration in recent history? It is not that it was about Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard that they lost the last election. It was the collective failure of the Labor Party. It was the frontbenchers' collective failure on their policies overall. That is what they need to fix. And that is what we are trying to fix to strengthen—

**Mr CONROY** (Charlton) (16:22): I rise to speak on the appropriation bills and the amendment moved by the opposition. Before I go to the substance of my speech, I did enjoy the reference by the member for Eden-Monaro to his long experience in the Defence portfolio, including as a chief of staff. It would be remiss of me not to point out that this was during the period of the children overboard affair, which saw the most gross politicisation of the Defence Force in our nation's history.

I move on to the substance of my speech, which will touch on the Reserve Bank and the transfer of $8.8 billion to the Reserve Bank Reserve Fund which is contained within Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2013-2014. While Labor supports the supplementation of the RBRF, this transfer has been done in the most nakedly political manner. The decision to inject all the funds this financial year is driven by base political motives. The Treasurer wants to pad out this year's projected budget deficit, blame it on Labor and then reap the dividends from the RBA in future years to bolster those budgets.

The Governor of the Reserve Bank appeared before the House Standing Committee on Economics late last year, on 18 December. While I will not comment too much on this because the report is yet to be tabled, the public *Hansard* from this hearing does provide some startling revelations. These revelations include that at the first meeting of the Reserve Bank governor and the new Treasurer, when you would expect the Reserve Bank governor to outline his priorities for the Reserve Bank and ask for support from the Treasurer, he did not go to that meeting seeking the immediate injection of the $8.8 billion. He did not go to the member for North Sydney and say, 'I need all this money urgently—I need it now.' Furthermore, the governor indicated that the RBA expects to be in a position to return dividends to the government in August 2014. So we are in a situation now where, because of a decision by the Treasurer, we will see $8.8 billion injected into the Reserve Bank as late as May this year and then, only six or eight weeks later, the Reserve Bank will turn around and provide a dividend to the government. This is a pea-and-thimble trick of the highest order.
Those on the other side have already tried to claim that the last Labor government drove down the RBRF in some irresponsible manner. This is utter rubbish. According to the last RBA annual report:

The RBRF is essentially the Reserve Bank's capital. Its primary purpose is to provide a capacity to absorb losses when it is necessary to do so. The RBRF served this purpose when it was substantially depleted in 2009/10 and 2010/11 by large accounting losses as the exchange rate appreciated.

Let me repeat that point, from that direct quote from the annual report. The RBRF served its purpose as the capital for the Reserve Bank to handle movements in our currency.

We have no argument with the need to supplement the RBRF. What we have an argument with is the naked political manner in which the Treasurer is doing this. In his testimony, Governor Stevens was very clear that there was no crisis necessitating the urgent top-up. He said:

… the bank was not insolvent and not close to insolvent. The notion of insolvency for a central bank is not one anyway.

So we have an artificial, confected crisis by the Treasurer. We have him going to a meeting where he proposed a one-off injection with the goal of having his future budgets bolstered by this nackedly political move. This is consistent with the various assumptions and changes in parameters that we witnessed in MYEFO. It is the Australian taxpayer that pays for all this because the annual interest bill on this $8.8 billion transfer is, on current long-term Commonwealth bond rates, around $400 million or just over $1 million a day.

The interest cost of this political exercise for just 10 days equates to the cut I would like to talk about next, which is also contained in these bills, and that is the sneaky and cruel cut of $11½ million to the Building Multicultural Communities Program. In November last year I raised in the Federation Chamber the situation concerning two community groups in Charlton—the Filipino-Australian Society of the Hunter Valley and Vedic Samiti Newcastle—as well as the Ethnic Communities Council of Newcastle and Hunter Region. These groups had been successful in receiving grants through the Building Multicultural Communities Program; however, they were advised by the new government that this funding was under review. I want to make this abundantly clear: these grants were not election promises by the Labor Party. These grants were from an established program and the awarding of these grants was announced by the previous government before the caretaker period began. They were awarded under a proper process and fully funded in the 2012-13 budget.

I wrote to the Minister for Social Services, Minister Andrews, in November on behalf of these organisations calling for the government to honour these commitments. The only response I received was a pathetic one-line response from the minister's parliamentary secretary that advised that the Australian government had made a decision about the BMCP funding and the outcome of this decision had been communicated to all organisations that were awaiting this advice. It was a one-line response where the parliamentary secretary did not even have the guts to repeat their decision to cut a government program that was fully funded.

I have kept in close contact with these groups, as has my colleague the member for Newcastle with affected groups in her electorate. The grant cut is very disturbing. These groups have now been officially advised by the Department of Social Services that they will
not be receiving this funding. This is truly a shocking move by a callous and calculating government, which says one thing in opposition and does another when it is in government. This funding had been allocated, including $22,000 to the Filipino-Australian Society to build a new kitchen and install additional doors in their hall. I met members of the society when this grant was announced and I cannot emphasise enough how grateful and excited they were about this grant and how much they were looking forward to using this money to grow their society and improve the services they provide not just to Filipino Australians but to the broader community that enjoys the facilities around the hall. This society has done great work raising funds and goods to help victims of Supertyphoon Haiyan in the Philippines. It is an absolute disgrace that this funding has been cut by the new government.

Vedic Samiti was to receive approximately $100,000 to extend their hall, including further car park provisions and an upgrade to their audio system. This was another great example of a local community using grants smartly to improve their facilities and provide additional services to the very significant Indian community that calls the electorate of Charlton and the broader Hunter area their home. This is another ethnic group that is suffering under the new government. This is an absolute disgrace and we all keep fighting to continue.

Debate interrupted.

ADJOURNMENT

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott) (16:30): Order! It being 4.30 pm, I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

Live Animal Exports

Mr KELVIN THOMSON (Wills) (16:30): The Department of Agriculture released a report this week on a complaint from June last year which showed that the company Livestock Shipping Services had breached the Exporter Supply Chain Assurance rules concerning the supply of sheep to Jordan. The House needs to bear in mind that Livestock Shipping Services are also being investigated concerning the ESCAS breaches in October and January. I believe that the Department of Agriculture should now issue a show cause notice to Livestock Shipping Services as to why their export licences should not be suspended or revoked.

One of the October complaints, like the June complaint, concerned the supply of sheep to Jordan, and was accompanied by appalling incidents of animal cruelty. During the Festival of Sacrifice, thousands of Australian sheep were sold outside approved supply chains in Jordan. The sheep were dragged from their pens, abused and shoved into car boots, and eventually had their throats slashed open on the streets and in private backyards.

Since its introduction, there have been no fewer than 25 formal complaints of cruelty in importing countries under the ESCAS, most of them instigated not by the industry, not by the ESCAS auditors, but by animal welfare groups. This suggests that exporters are still having to be dragged kicking and screaming towards good practice rather than embracing it.

Government claims that transitioning out of this cruel trade would be bad news for the Australian economy are baseless. First, most Australian farmers do not live export. In fact, just eight per cent of cattle and 11 per cent of sheep raised for food in Australia last year actually went into the live export trade. Second, live export represents a tiny fraction of
Australia's overall exports, making up just 0.3 per cent of our total exports. Third, any political decision to end live export would of course be a transition over a number of years, allowing farmers time to adjust their businesses.

Fourth, Australia's chilled meat trade is more economically valuable. Exports of chilled and frozen meat are worth six times more to Australia's economy already than live export. Fifth, the shift away from live export is already happening. Just last year boxed lamb exports to the Middle East jumped 50 per cent to become worth $60 million more than live sheep exports to that region.

Sixth, ending live export will create jobs in Australia. The vast majority of jobs currently supported by live export will still exist without it. In fact, more jobs will be created if we stop sending animals offshore. Western Australian abattoirs already have capacity to take all the sheep currently going into the live trade, a transition predicted to create an additional 2,000 jobs in Western Australia. Furthermore, a 10-year analysis of prices has proved that live export does not underpin the price of sheepmeat on the domestic market. The research determined that sheep prices are similar across all geographic locations in Australia regardless of exposure to the live trade.

Rather than apologising for government actions to protect animals, this government needs to take some action to protect animals. This government's apologetic indifference and inaction tells exporters that they have nothing to lose and everything to gain if they flout the rules. I believe the Australian public are sick of it. I believe that they are sick and tired of having to bear witness to animal welfare atrocities over and over again. The department's response to this report is a test which will show whether we have an effective regulator, whether there is any substance to the ESCAS rules, or whether it is simply lip-service, a rubber stamp that allows animal cruelty to go on out of sight, out of mind.

Longman Electorate: Economy

WYATT ROY (Longman) (16:34): The big employers in my local region are small business, retail, tourism and light industry. They require confidence to invest, freedom from government regulation and lower taxes. That is why this coalition government is moving to scrap the carbon tax and why it has already eliminated most of the almost 100 announced, but not enacted, Labor government tax changes. Together, these actions will mean lower taxes, less paperwork and more certainty. The government is also relieving businesses of at least $1 billion a year in red and green tape, and I am actively working with businesses in the Longman electorate to secure our share of these savings. As part of my commitment, the honourable Josh Frydenberg, the Prime Minister's parliamentary secretary responsible for deregulation, came to our region shortly after last September's election to talk to local businesspeople about their individual cases of regulatory excess. With that red tape gone, they will be able to breathe again and grow again, and they will be able to employ more locals.

It is the coalition's absolute conviction that the private sector, not government, holds the aces when it comes to realising the nation's vast economic promise. Small businesses are the engine room of our economy. They are run by hardworking, community minded entrepreneurs who are prepared to go out there. They are prepared to have a go and they are prepared to take on a risk and employ people. After the hammering they have copped during the past two terms of punitive Labor maladministration, this government will not only stand
by them but do everything in its power to encourage them to dream bigger, to reach a little bit further.

My community is a growth region with a bright investment future. New commercial and residential projects are crucial and that is why I am elated to see such progress on North East Business Park. I, along with the state government, have been a strong advocate of the development, which will create 27,000 jobs and ignite local economic activity. Indeed, this government is focused on building better infrastructure, for the huge return in economic and social capital on offer. Further unlocking the Longman region's potential, billions of dollars of the government's Bruce Highway project will be invested in upgrades from the Pine River through to the Sunshine Coast.

Underscoring Labor's legacy of failure is a gross national debt projected to rise to $667 billion; that is $29,000 for every single Australian. It is also $123 billion in cumulative deficits and more than 200,000 Australians unemployed. The coalition has responded to the latter blow as only it knows how: with action that provides a hand up, not a hand out. Benefiting both employees and employers, the pro-investment and pro-employment coalition government has announced a number of incentives that will start on 1 July to help more Australians secure a job.

Job seekers aged 18 to 30 who have been unemployed for 12 months or more and are receiving Newstart or youth allowance will receive $2,500 if they get a job and remain off benefits for 12 months, and a further $4,000 if they remain employed and stay off benefits for two years. As well, job seekers receiving Newstart, youth allowance or parenting payment will receive up to $6,000 for relocating to a regional area to take up a job. Up to $3,000 will be paid to eligible job seekers who relocate from a regional area to a metropolitan area to take up a job.

And employers will receive up to $3,250 when they hire mature-age job seekers—those aged 50 and over—who have been on Newstart, parenting payment, age pension, disability support pension or carer payment for at least six months and then continue to employ them for at least six months. Madam Speaker, I know that you were a great advocate of that policy when we were in opposition. And let us not forget the Abbott government's landmark Paid Parental Leave scheme, a policy designed to help women stay in the workforce. Effectively, Paid Parental Leave is another of the government's productivity-increasing measures.

I am proud to be a member of this coalition government, a government unafraid to think large, in strategic pictures, but which is equally attuned to building up communities through powerhouse local economies.

Container Deposit Scheme

Ms MacTIERNAN (Perth) (16:39): Today, I call out 'Big Plastic'. I am sure many here have seen the alarming stories of plastic pollution around the globe. Degrading plastic has so extensively polluted oceans around the world that it is now not only killing fish but has entered the human food chain. The most graphic display of this is the Great Pacific garbage patch, which covers, conservatively, 700,000 square kilometres.

In my earlier roles in local government I have championed state-wide legislation for container deposit schemes in Western Australia, including running locally based trials so we could build the case for state and federal action. It is not rocket science to support a container...
deposit scheme. South Australia introduced their legislation 30 years ago, and now the scheme covers cans, plastics, glass bottles and coloured cartons. It has created a major cultural shift in that state, which is now the nation's best recycler.

The South Australian scheme supports charities and community groups, with the South Australian scouts earning $9 million per annum through their activities. You never see bottles or cans on the streets of Adelaide. West Australians often notice the difference with the garbage on either side of the border as they drive across the Nullarbor, leaving South Australia and entering Western Australia. South Australians now divert 70 per cent of waste from landfill to recycling, which is much better than the 50 per cent Australian average, and certainly much better than WA's poor 32 per cent.

With Australians throwing away an estimated seven billion cans and bottles each year, what is stopping us from achieving a better outcome? The answer is 'Big Plastic'. Big plastic is the vested interest of companies like Lion and Coca-Cola Amatil, which actively oppose container deposit schemes by whatever means necessary. One of my staff told me this week that during a trip last year they visited the Washington executives at Coca-Cola Amatil and they asked about the fledgling Northern Territory scheme. She was told by Coke that they would always use any means and any grounds in any court to fight container deposit schemes. So I suggest that we give naming rights to the Great Pacific garbage patch to Coca-Cola.

While big plastic oppose container deposit schemes they have found an unlikely ally in Australia in the Keep Australia Beautiful National Association. Keep Australia Beautiful's mission is:

A litter free and sustainable Australia.

Their objectives are:

- to lead, influence and advocate for environmental sustainability

... ... ...

- to deliver effective partnerships and programs ensuring mutually beneficial environmental outcomes

Given that returning beverage containers for a refund reduces rubbish going to landfill or ending up in the environment, increases recycling rates, lowers greenhouse gas emissions, reduces water use, creates jobs and generates cash for our hip pocket, it is astonishing that Keep Australia Beautiful does not support container deposit schemes.

Why is this so? It is all about the money. In their annual report for 2012-13, Keep Australia Beautiful lists their supporters, and they include the Food and Grocery Council's Packaging Stewardship Forum, Coca-Cola South Pacific and the Coca-Cola Foundation. The same report gives thanks to the generous sponsorship of Coca-Cola for making their beverage container recycling grants possible. Keep Australia Beautiful have been bought out. This is no different to big tobacco propping up their captured agencies, such as the Institute of Public Affairs, or big pharmacy's support for the ADHD drug lobby. In contrast, Clean Up Australia is actively advocating the introduction of a container deposit scheme, as they understand it will assist in reducing litter and keeping it out of the environment. Keep Australia Beautiful have allowed themselves to be put into a position where they have accepted money to run a grants program that serves the big plastic industry.

I am pleased to say that Keep Australia Beautiful's WA branch supports a container deposit scheme in Western Australia and across Australia. Under the stewardship of Mel Hayward,
Keep Australia Beautiful continues to support the endeavours of all individuals and organisations who are lobbying for this support.

Robertson Electorate

Mrs WICKS (Robertson) (16:44): I rise to update the House on the coalition's growth plan for the Central Coast. According to the last census, my electorate is home to around 135,000 people, including 36,000 families, who live in one of the most important and beautiful regions of Australia. As their representative in this parliament I am determined to fight for a better future for every single one of them. I am proud to represent the community where I grew up, worked and now live with my husband and two children.

The people of Robertson elected the coalition to scrap the carbon tax, get the budget back under control, create more jobs, stop the boats and deliver better infrastructure, investment and services. People on the Central Coast want to see our region thrive and grow. I share their determination and am working hard to ensure we deliver our positive growth plan. Our growth plan for the Central Coast reflects the determination by the Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, to build a strong, prosperous economy and a safe, secure Australia.

I am also determined to ensure that the Central Coast has the hope and opportunity it richly deserves. That is why we are already delivering on our growth plan commitments. In the first six months more than $10.5 million has been committed to my electorate of Robertson. This includes $7 million to fund the development of the Kibbleplex centre in Gosford. The Kibbleplex will help promote growth and innovation. The university, library, childcare centre and teleworking hub within the Kibbleplex centre will encourage interaction and collaboration. As we support Gosford City Council to deliver this project, it is shaping up to be a state-of-the-art facility that will support more of our community's needs. I am deeply aware of how small businesses may benefit from the Kibbleplex, especially as it will encourage more people into the heart of the Gosford CBD every day.

When meeting with local business leaders and workers they remind me of the need to take action to make it easier for businesses to operate, grow, thrive and prosper. It is clear to them just why the coalition needs a repeal day in parliament. So, in less than a month, the coalition government will tackle red tape in a major way. We will target counterproductive, unnecessary and redundant legislation. Overall, more than 8,000 regulations will be repealed to lift the burden on businesses.

Businesses are also desperate for the government to axe the toxic carbon tax. The coalition's commitment to abolish the carbon tax will lift a $9 billion a year tax burden from Australian businesses and households. It will save the 36,000 families in my electorate an average of $550 a year and will result in the removal of 19 separate acts and 1,100 pages of legislation. This plan to build a stronger economy is good news for businesses in my electorate.

The head of an award-winning recruitment agency located opposite the Kibbleplex recently told me she is already seeing change. Kristy-Lee Billett from Footprint Recruitment spoke with genuine determination and vision when we chatted about being able to attract a range of skills to the coast. She said there has been a noticeable shift since November, just after the election of the coalition government. Companies are hiring more permanent staff and looking to add casual and part-time workers. Businesses want to be part of a competitive and vibrant
Australian economy. There is renewed confidence that they can have a fair go. That is what we need more of on the Central Coast and the coalition's growth plan will only add to this drive and conviction to see our electorate thrive.

To that end, the coalition government are also committed to boosting employment and investment by locating a Commonwealth agency, or part thereof, in the Gosford CBD. We want this to happen in our first term of government. It has got the potential to provide around 250 to 300 new jobs for the Central Coast. As well as direct employment, it will have a positive economic flow-on benefit for cafes, retail businesses and many other businesses. Our growth plan is in line with the coalition's plan for nation building. It is about giving people on the Central Coast a sense of hope and optimism in their future in a rapidly changing world. The Central Coast was let down for too long by Labor. Under our positive growth plan I believe the coalition are on the right track to deliver a stronger, more productive future for the people in my electorate.

Holt Electorate: Australia Day Awards

Mr BYRNE (Holt) (16:49): On a quintessentially Australian day this year I had the pleasure of hosting the 10th annual Holt Australia Day Awards in Hampton Park. We honoured 39 individuals and two local organisations for their contributions to our community. The 2014 Holt Australia Day Awards were presented at the Day of Nations celebrations in Hampton Park and large crowd of families and friends turned up to support the recipients. I would like to thank specifically the Hampton Park and District Progress Association and the City of Casey for their support and assistance with our Holt Australia Day Awards. In particular I would like to acknowledge and thank the Holt Australia Day Award committee members—Erica Maliki, Judy Owen, Chris Drysdale, Anne Atkin and Leanne Petridis—for selecting the award recipients.

I would like to read out the award recipients so we have in this place a permanent record of their achievements. The recipients were: Alfred Goldburg; Father Elias Matta; Neville Worthington; Helen Appleman; Sean Balfour; Thomas Barnes; Keith Barrot; Calvin Bell; Roland Blaschak; Colin Booth; Rebekah Booth; Johnathan Clarke; Simon Dewar; Savio Gonsalvez; Steve Chapman; Marianne Dawes; Luke DeLutiis; Mehmet Salih Dogan; Keith Edwards; Bryce Eishold; Joan Graham; Joan Green; Mary Haigh; Rosemary Hutchins; Julie Johnstone; Mary Jonker; Mark Jouvelet; Srijani La’Brooy; Peter O’Hagan; Christine Gladwell; Eileen Hillis; Louise MacDonald; Shaun Petrie; Keith Pimblett; Brian Regan; Sadiq Sarwari; Carolyn Scott; Colin Smith; Lima Stanikzai; Oliver Thomson; Sharon Thomson; Slobadan Todic; Shelly Peluso; Eda Vistac; Noorullah Noori, who received a posthumous award; the organisation Carols by Twilight by the Casey City Church; and Painting with Parkinsons. There were 39 individuals and two local organisations. There are such vibrant, strong stories to tell about the contributions that these people made to the community that merited their awards.

One of the reasons I commissioned this award some time ago was so I could acknowledge the massive amount of work that was being done in our community by people who were not seeking public acclaim and public recognition. I thought, given the contribution they had made to the community, it was important that we have a ceremony on Australia Day to recognise the contribution that people made to our community. As I said, this is the 10th Holt Australia Day Awards, and the enthusiasm of the family members and those connected to the
nominees is quite palpable—we would have had a crowd of about 400 or 500 people there—and it generates more enthusiasm.

It is important to note that, in our community, there is a lot wrong. Recently, I think in Cranbourne—we have heard all about it on 3AW and elsewhere—there was a problem with a young man who was stabbed. That is a terrible thing. But I have never been contacted by 3AW about this. There are so many great stories about our area, but how often do we hear about the contributions that are made by these people? Because they actually enhance the community, they do not wind up on 3AW. But, when something bad happens, it is there in a flash and you are asked to comment about it. Really, you just get sick and tired of it. People who live in my community know that it is a fantastic community to raise a family in, to plan future in, to live and to work in and to be in.

As part of this process, as I can assure people in my electorate and in the Casey region, I will continue to talk about the good things that happen in our community. Frankly, this seems to be about the only place where that happens. As I said, I will continue to do so. So, again, thank you to the Hampton Park Networking Group, to Erica Maliki in particular, and to those hundreds and hundreds of people who labour day in and day out through non-government organisations, through cricket clubs, through mosques, through family groups and through Casey Little Athletics clubs. They labour away—they use their family time, the time that they could have available to them—to strengthen the community and to make the community a better place. On behalf of this chamber, to all of those people whose names I read out, I thank them for their contribution to our community, making it a stronger and a better place.

**Economy**

Mr RUDDOCK (Berowra—Chief Government Whip) (16:54): In this adjournment debate I wish reflect for a moment on issues relating to employment. I have been surprised about the extent to which members opposite have ignored the advice of one of their colleagues Mark Latham, a former leader of the Labor Party. He wrote a piece in today's newspaper about the need for an economy that grows and generates wealth and opportunity if you are going to create wealth. It was an article that also reflected upon former Labor leaders such as Paul Keating, whom he took the opportunity to quote. I often speak about the nature of our economy because I think a lot of people fail to understand that, to generate jobs and to generate opportunities, there needs to be markets, there needs to be wealth generation. In many respects, the Labor Party, in office over a period of time, has been sapping from our economy the opportunity to generate that wealth.

My late father was an economist. I am not, but I took note of what he had to say. He used to speak about the Liberal Party and the Labor Party philosophies. He said that the Liberal Party is the party that has the philosophy of generating greater wealth, growing a bigger cake. He said the Labor Party's expertise is only in how you cut it up. And I have seen, in my time in public life, all of that. It may have been seen by members opposite that it was unfortunate that the Labor Party was out of office for some 23 years between 1949 and 1972, but it did have a very significant impact. People do not reflect upon it very often, but the impact was to produce a government that was in a hurry. It had some views, some views about policy, which invariably cost money, and it determined to pursue them all at once.

There might be some people around Sydney who were glad that they put a bit of effort into sewering parts of Sydney that had not been sewered. There may have been some people in the
country who were glad that they established the department—I think it was called DURD—that was about regional development. I could go further and emphasise the large number of programs that involved extraordinary amounts of expenditure because I know that, at the time I came into public life, the impact of these programs on the Australian economy were disastrous. They generated enormous inflation, they increased unemployment and, while it was thought that these were beneficial programs, they did an enormous amount of harm.

I would have to say, and I do not speak about these things a lot in the House, that, surprisingly, Paul Keating and Bob Hawke did learn some lessons from the Whitlam administration. One of those lessons was that you needed to have an economy that was capable of generating wealth. And they did embark upon some economic reforms, although not all of those that were necessary. I suspect the Labor Party that came into office in 2007 had lost some of those lessons that Hawke and Keating had learnt. They came in wanting to implement programs, all of which involved expenditure of money, but had no idea about how they were going to generate growth in the Australian economy to be able to afford them. We are suffering now a great deal when we lament the extent to which unemployment is growing in our economy today. It is because of a failure of policy on the part of the former government. They want to blame this side, after we have been in office for a matter of three or four months, but the responsibility lies properly with the Labor Party in relation to those issues that they have raised.

The SPEAKER: It being 5 pm, the debate is interrupted.

House adjourned at 17:00
The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott) took the chair at 9:30.

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Fremantle Electorate: Mrs Paula Wiley

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (09:29): It is my honour to rise today and speak about one of my constituents, Mrs Paula Wiley of Beaconsfield, who is having a profound impact on the lives of young children at the school where she teaches, Bannister Creek Primary School. At a breakfast ceremony on 2 December 2013, Paula was named the WA Premier's Early Childhood Teacher of the Year, for her keen focus on the social and emotional wellbeing of the children in both her kindergarten and pre-primary classes and for her ability to develop children in all areas. In the words of the word judge, Dr Christine Howitt:

Paula demonstrates respectful, thoughtful and authentic consideration of each child in her class. She has genuine conversations with them, listening to their ideas and actively encouraging them to have a voice, make their own decisions, and be in control of their own learning.

Helping children develop in their early school years is critical to their educational and social achievements later in life, not least through building a positive attitude to learning. Paula combines her knowledge of child development to reassure and support parents, while making her classroom a place of trust, safety and fairness. As Bannister Creek principal, Marie Hand, has said:

Students are bursting with excitement at the end of each day to share with their parents what they have achieved in class.

The award comes as no surprise to Paula's family who, in secretly preparing the nomination, listed her achievements and the endeavours that have led Paula to this pinnacle. Having already successfully completed high school earlier in life, Paula undertook to do what few others would contemplate: she repeated year 12 many years later just to assess her capacity to study while juggling family responsibilities. A general exhibition in English and human biology for year 12 was a result of that self-assessment and proof that this teacher has both a love of and aptitude for learning. With her 2002 Bachelor of Education with honours would also come the Mensaros Prize as the education student who achieved the best overall results and the World Fellowship Prize for academic excellence.

Although a latecomer to teaching, Paula's caring nature was evident in every thing she had previously done. Earlier in her career Paula worked as a nursing assistant at Lady Lawley Cottage, a private Red Cross hospital which provides respite care for families with disabled children. When Paula was raising her own young family, she took a part-time position at the Cerebral Palsy Association of Western Australia. It was while guiding her own three children through their schooling that Paula learnt about the vital role that teachers play in children's lives and discovered her own interest in teaching children. From that interest grew a passion and commitment that is now benefiting every child fortunate enough to call Mrs Wiley his or her first teacher.

I take this opportunity to congratulate Paula Wiley for her achievement and to recognise the work of all early childhood educators. We must do more to support educators like Paula,
including through the provision of fair pay and conditions, because, in the words of Benjamin Disraeli:

Upon the education of the people of this country the fate of this country depends.

**Paterson Electorate: Heavy Vehicles**

Mr BALDWIN (Paterson—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry) (09:33): Today I rise to bring to the attention of the House an issue critical not only in the Hunter Valley but indeed across Australia. The day of 10 February was to have been a day of streamlining for the heavy motor vehicle industry because that was the day when the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator was to come into effect—albeit way beyond the anticipated start-up, due to delays.

The National Heavy Vehicle Regulator was to be a single one-stop shop. People have lined up and put in applications for permits for the movement of oversize and other mass loads, but the permits have not been not forthcoming. I have been inundated with phone calls, particularly from constituents I represent, like Mark Goldspring and Hogans Heavy Haulage. We are a large epicentre of heavy-vehicle movements in the Hunter Valley because of where we are in the mining industry. This is what has happened: because of mismanagement and having to work through the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, the former government has brought our nation to a standstill. To give you an idea: of the applications that had been put forward as of Monday, some 2,050 applications, 258 have been approved. I have an example from Four Mile Creek mine, where they want to move an excavator from Rix's Creek down to Ashtonfield—only a very short trip—but cannot get the permit through to get the truck down to service. This is holding up industry—and this is being replicated all around Australia. In one of the emails I received from Mark Goldspring, he said that he had applied for permits to move it on 13 February and to this date he has not had them back. He has had all the escort vehicles, police, crew, men and trucks sitting and waiting. He has lost in excess of $400,000—and he is but one.

Former transport minister Albanese was gloating about how well this would go and boasting that it would save around $1.5 billion to $2.4 billion a year. It has collapsed. I do not know what the regulator has done in the time frame that he has had to set this up, but obviously the communication through the states down through to local government—and the problem, in essence, is local government signing off on the permits—is bringing this nation to a standstill. As an interim we have gone back to the old system and the states are handling the permits. It needs to be fixed—and it needs to be fixed as soon as possible.

**Human Rights: North Korea**

Mr DANBY (Melbourne Ports) (09:36): Since coming to this parliament I have had a consistent interest in exposing the Gulag-style system in North Korea and its widespread abuse of human rights. In 2009 my office took on the ambitious task of running the ninth international conference on human rights in North Korea, held in Melbourne, together with the Citizens Alliance, a support group of North Koreans living in South Korea. This was the first of these international conferences to be opened by a foreign minister and was attended by 250 domestic and international delegates, including government officials, human rights activists and MPs from around the world.
Last week we welcomed the release of a 372-page report by the United Nations commission of inquiry into human rights in North Korea, official chaired by Australia's former High Court Justice Michael Kirby. According to Kirby, the purpose of the report was so that 'We can't say we didn't know.' Fairfax reported that David Hawk—a former UN human rights official and leading researcher into North Korea's prison camps—said that legal scholars, human rights lawyers and non-government groups have previously concluded that there were crimes against humanity taking place in the DPRK, but that 'this was the first time,' he said, 'experts authorised by UN member states have made that determination.' 'This unrivalled and damning report, a year in the making, has presented evidence of countless abuses by the North Korean government and military that shocked the conscience of humanity,' according to the Wall Street Journal, 'including arbitrary detention, torture, starvation, denial of thought, denial of freedom of movement, abductions and discrimination.'

Kirby said the panel would recommend that the situation be referred to the International Criminal Court where hundreds of North Korean officials, including Kim Jong Un himself, will be held accountable for their crimes. However, it is suspected that China, a long-term ally of the DPRK, will block this in the Security Council. Kirby hoped that this report will refresh a dialogue on the atrocities committed by the North Korean government and that 'the international community will be moved by the detail, the amount, the long duration, the great suffering and the many tears that existed in North Korea,' according to the New York Times of the 18th of this month.

It is clear that for years we have needed more discussion of the practical steps that can be taken by the international community on this matter. This is why I thought it was important to publish a map of the places where these concentration camps are located. You can find this map on my website. We have seen in the past the international community willing to stand up to despotic rule. It is not difficult to see the parallel between North Korea's crimes and the crimes committed in the 1930s. During a press conference on the report's launch, Kirby concluded:

When you see that image in your mind of bodies being burned it does bring back memories of the end of world war two, and the horror and the shame and the shock. I never thought that in my lifetime it would be part of my duty to bring revelations of a similar kind.

I honour Mr Justice Kirby. I think the report is a great achievement for both him and the United Nations. (Time expired)

Page Electorate: Economy

Mr HOGAN (Page) (09:39): I would like to inform the House this morning that, since the federal election, confidence in the future has soared across my electorate of Page. In the latest quarterly business confidence survey conducted by Griffith University, 72 per cent of businesses in Page said the election of the new, coalition government gave them new hope and that many were now planning to employ more people. This is a major turnaround from the gloom and doom of a pre-election survey, which showed a 20 per cent fall in confidence between July and August last year.

Griffith University Pro Vice-Chancellor of Business, Professor Michael Powell, who conducted the survey, put the reason for this collapse in confidence squarely at the feet of the previous, Labor government and its job-destroying carbon tax. The recent poll is a tick from my local business community for the direction of the new government—from the scrapping of...
the job-destroying carbon tax to naming 19 March as our first national repeal day, when we will get rid of thousands of pieces of regulation that are stifling the 10,000 small- to medium-sized business in my electorate and those around the country. I thank the many people who have been into my office—people from small businesses, not-for-profit organisations and from almost every sector across our community—who have told me of the legislation that they would like to see repealed, because there is so much of it.

Our agriculture sector has also hailed the benefits of our recently signed free trade agreement with Korea, which will slash tariffs on our exports—in some cases from as high as 300 per cent to nothing. The chief executive of the Casino based Northern Co-operative Meat Company, Simon Stahl, declared it as very advantageous for our cattle farmers. Given the current drought they need every assistance they can get.

This is why 58 per cent of businesses hold positive or highly positive views about the year ahead, with only 14 per cent remaining negative. Businesses are already reporting the benefits, with more than 40 per cent saying that they just notched up the best Christmas-New Year period. Conditions are set to improve even further, with Professor Powell predicting that the declining Australian dollar will lead to more in-bound international tourism. The weaker dollar will also assist local companies to export their goods. In a region with an unemployment rate above the national average, 17 per cent of Page's local businesses said that they were planning to increase their staff levels, while 74 per cent said that they would maintain staff levels—an increase of 20 per cent. Again, that is a dramatic turnaround from the previous survey.

For six years, regional Australia has been bleeding due to a dysfunctional government, but this survey shows that, with the new, coalition government we are on track to bring jobs and economic growth back to Page.

Calwell Electorate: Health

Ms VAMVAKINOU (Calwell) (09:42): Last Friday, it was my very great pleasure to conduct the sod-turning for the new super clinic that will be built in Broadmeadows by Dianella Community Health. The huge super clinic is a result of a $7 million contribution from the Commonwealth—in fact, from the previous, Labor government. It will be a one-stop medical shop, with doctors, pathologists, a pharmacy, physiotherapists, podiatrists and occupational therapists in house, available for my constituents.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all of my constituents who fought so hard to make this clinic happen. In particular, I thank the Dianella Community Health service and its chief executive Ms Veronica Jamison and board chairman Dr John Hodgson. Veronica, who is our newly appointed CEO, was known for saying that 'it would have been criminal' for the project not to go ahead. As she said on Friday, it was with a sense of joy that Dianella was able to provide this health service to the people of Broadmeadows. Notwithstanding the views that are being expressed at the moment by the current health minister regarding the value of the former government's super clinic program, I want to say that, at least in my electorate, the concept of the super clinic as a model for addressing the shortages and the inadequate availability of health services is absolutely the right approach.

Parts of my electorate—in particular, the suburb of Broadmeadows—constantly show up in statistics as areas of very high need. My electorate is one of the neediest areas in Australia.
Things such as chronic heart disease, mental health issues and diabetes are very prevalent in our community. This super clinic will go a long way to addressing a need for adequate, best-practice medical and allied services. I want to thank the former Labor government for giving the Broadmeadows community the $7 million grant and therefore funding the superclinic. This is an opportunity we have been given to have access to medical services that will mean that my constituents will not have to miss out on quality, available health care just because of their postcode.

The issue of inadequate health services in Broadmeadows and the fight to secure them has a very long history. It predates me as the member for Calwell and it goes almost all the way back 30 years when the Broadmeadows community raised some $3 million as its contribution to the building of a hospital that was being considered at the time. Broadmeadows unfortunately lost its bid to secure the hospital. It effectively ended up in another electorate to our north. So, we consider this investment by the former Commonwealth Labor government as righting a wrong and correcting an opportunity that was lost all those years ago. Dianella Community Health Service is probably one of the best organisations to lead and administer this superclinic for Broadmeadows.

Telecommunications

Mr CHESTER (Gippsland—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence) (09:45): I rise to speak on the need to improve mobile phone coverage in regional Australia, particularly in my electorate of Gippsland. The recent bushfires across the Gippsland electorate have highlighted once again the desperate need for improvements mobile phone black spots. Unfortunately, the previous government completely neglected this area of public infrastructure. It was Kevin Rudd who abolished the coalition's $2.4 billion Communications Fund in Labor's 2008-09 budget and squandered that money which was held in reserve to pay for future upgrades of telecommunications in rural, regional and remote parts of Australia.

There is good news in that the current government, the coalition government, has committed $100 million for a new program to work on mobile phone black spots throughout regional, remote and outer metropolitan areas. This $100 million is expected to leverage at least an additional $100 million in investment from the mobile phone carriers themselves. Our policy will provide $80 million for mobile phone network expansions on the major transport routes and in particular assist with the emergency text alert system, which I will speak about in just a moment. There will also be an additional $20 million for a mobile phone black spot program to work on areas of high seasonal demand. This is obviously attractive to parts of the Gippsland electorate which have a heavy influx of tourists over the summer season. At that time of the year it is very difficult for people to access their iPhones, iPads or any other technology.

The key issue I want to raise is in relation to the lack of mobile coverage during natural disasters. There is absolutely no point in developing the emergency text alert system any further until we can provide more coverage in the areas most prone to these natural disasters. In Gippsland the most prone areas for fires and floods also have the worst coverage. Unfortunately, people have come to expect they will receive an emergency alert, but if they are living in one of those areas of visiting one of those areas, they do not receive any message at all. I would encourage people throughout the summer season to not rely on only one form
of information when it comes to these natural disasters and encourage them to listen to their local radios and make sure they keep fully abreast of the situation.

Right across Gippsland over the past five years I have been talking with communities and there are literally dozens of different communities which have a mobile phone black spot problem. I have reported that through to the new minister and the new parliamentary secretary and invited them to visit my electorate and gain an appreciation firsthand of the issues we are facing. I am a huge supporter of the $100 million mobile phone black spot program that the coalition government is committed to. I will be working with my community to make sure that we receive a fair share of that funding. It is essential, primarily, from an emergency perspective, but also from an economic perspective it brings benefits in terms of doing business, allowing people to stay in contact with their customer base, and from a social perspective it allows people from more remote and rural areas to remain in touch with family and friends on a more cost-effective basis. I commend the program; I commend the current government for its work in this space; and I can assure the people of Gippsland that we will receive a fair share of that $100 million as it is distributed.

Federation University

Ms KING (Ballarat) (09:48): I rise to speak about the exciting things that are happening at the newly-named Federation University. It is a university that the member of the Gippsland and I share and it is a very important part of the fabric of both of our regional communities. My community, Ballarat, is certainly a university town and our iconic higher education facility has started the academic year with a number of new and innovative teaching spaces coming on line that will attract the best and brightest to our region. Just last week, the brand new science and engineering and sports and recreation buildings were opened at the Mount Helen campus.

I will be at the SMB campus tomorrow for the opening of Federation College.

Funded by the former state Labor government, Federation College will deliver programs for secondary students from year 10 onwards, providing an opportunity to learn a trade whilst at school and to support a pathway to VET and through to higher education. This enables young people toward the end of their secondary schooling to sharpen their skills, to get an apprenticeship, to go on to further study, to build a career and to stay engaged with education.

To further support these career pathways, the facility adjoins the tertiary level Manufacturing Technology Training Centre, which I had the pleasure of opening last year. Covering some 4,700 metres, the Manufacturing Technology Training Centre marries traditional technical manufacturing skills based training and infrastructure, including welding, metal fabrication, mechanical fabrication, plant maintenance, workshops and classrooms with laboratories, computer automation, mechatronics and robotics. It is a fantastic training centre. I want to commend Federation University for having the vision and initiative to prepare our region to embrace the manufacturing jobs of the future and the skills that we will need in the future.

One of the things that links all of these projects is that they were funded by Labor governments. They were funded by Labor governments because we had a very strong belief in education, in regional communities and in skills training. But it is very much about our belief in our policy priorities. We do support education and training. We support
manufacturing, job creation and infrastructure investment, and we support regional communities through that. That is unfortunately in stark contrast with the state Liberal government, which has cut very deeply into our TAFE sector.

Education investment not only pays huge dividends for our economies but also provides young people with the skills that they need for life. These are major investments in the future of regional young people but also major investments in the economies of our regions. I am very proud of Federation University. I want to wish all of the universities in my electorate well. While Federation University is the topic of this speech, I wish all of the new students who are starting their academic year well, as I do for the Australian Catholic University.

**Ovarian Cancer**

**Mr WOOD (La Trobe) (09:51):** On Wednesday, 19 February, I hosted an ovarian cancer afternoon ‘teal’ in my electorate office. I was lucky enough to speak to many women in our community about this very important issue. I had the great pleasure of also meeting Dr Oliver Klein, an oncologist from the oncology unit at St John of God Hospital in Berwick. The unit is treating about 20 patients per week, and they have an amazing new facility with five chairs. I congratulate Dr Oliver Klein for his very informative speech and I also congratulate all the medical staff at St John of God Hospital. They are doing an incredible job.

During the morning tea we also had a long conversation with Kirsty Rosie, an Ovarian Cancer Australia ambassador. Kirsty, sadly, lost her sister to ovarian cancer and she gave a very moving address to our guests. In attendance we had Jan Hooper, Joanne Masters, Joy Ablett, Councillor Amanda Stapledon, Councillor Louise Berkelmans, Emma Berelmans, Kay Morland, Bridget Scott, Brittany Shanahan, Venezia Wadsworth, Michelle Coburn, Julie, Jennifer, Adele, Sue, Fiona, Kerri, Collette, Olga Kalweit, Joy Davy, Jeanette Claire, Nina Pletheo, Cary and Melinda. It was a great gathering.

The scary thing was the statistics we heard. In 2010, ovarian cancer was the second most commonly diagnosed gynaecological cancer in Australia. Each day in Australia four women are diagnosed with ovarian cancer, and three women will die from the disease. Ovarian cancer has the lowest survival rate of any women’s cancer, and there has been little improvement in survival in the past 20 years. Ovarian cancer is most common in women over 50; however, it can affect women of all ages.

One of the biggest issues with ovarian cancer is taking note of the symptoms and being able to diagnose properly. Women should watch for symptoms such as abdominal or pelvic pain, increased abdominal size or persistent abdominal bloating, needing to urinate often or urgently, or feeling full after eating a small amount—especially if they are over the age of 50.

The causes of ovarian cancer are not known, but research continues in Australia and overseas. There is not one test that can be used to diagnose ovarian cancer. Like many of these terrible diseases, awareness raising for early detection is a critical component to ensure women have the best chances of recovery. As Dr Oliver Klein said, early detection is very important so I strongly recommend to any woman who has those symptoms and is over the age of 50 that she see her doctor.

**Australian Broadcasting Corporation**

**Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (09:54):** There are more than 200 ABC employees in the Australian Capital Territory. They cover national politics from Parliament House and local issues from
Dickson. They cover everything from disasters to national politics. Of course, under this government, those are not mutually exclusive categories. I do not always agree with their perspective or the questions, but I absolutely respect the role of the ABC.

I am fortunate to chat regularly with Waleed Aly and Senator Sinodinos on Radio National, a conversation with two men I genuinely respect and which I think probably makes me a better politician. When I am at home, my three boys love watching Bananas in Pyjamas, the Wiggles and Playschool. If we are in the car, you will likely find us listening to triple j, NewsRadio or one of the thoughtful podcasts such as Conversations with Richard Fidler; the Religion and Ethics Report, with Andrew West; or Geraldine Doogue's Saturday Extra.

Thousands of my constituents have registered their support for a robust, well-funded and independent national broadcaster. They are worried that this government confuses state funded media with state run media. They were worried when they heard ABC managing director Mark Scott tell Senate estimates this week:

If our funding were somehow cut, we would need to look at all our services—radio, television, online—in the cities and in the bush.

The ABC's mandate is to inform, entertain and educate. It is not all about ratings and it is certainly not about pleasing political masters. The ABC has earned strong audience support as one of Australia's most trusted and highly valued institutions.

In 2004, the Howard government announced a funding adequacy and efficiency review. Its subsequent findings, not made public, were reported to have shown the ABC's value and cost-effectiveness. Under stingy budgets in the Howard era, the ABC maintained audiences and grew platforms. Under Labor, funding was expanded, and the multimedia platforms that the ABC developed to engage news audiences are now the envy of its competitors.

But history has a way of repeating, and now we have another efficiency review commissioned by communications minister Malcolm Turnbull. Some see this review as the prelude to an amputation, a ritual of permission that will justify deliberate excisions.

Every Australian government has an obligation to provide the ABC with the resources it needs to bring Australians rigorous reporting and analysis and to fiercely expose what is in the public interest. But will the Prime Minister's pre-election promise not to cut the ABC end up as just one more broken promise? Australians cherish their national broadcaster. Regardless of where they live or how they vote, people are passionate about the ABC.

Prime Minister, don't put the Bananas in the blender. Don't stifle our frank and fearless public broadcasters, and don't put narrow partisan agendas ahead of the national interest.

(Time expired)

Eden-Monaro Electorate: Telecommunications

Dr HENDY (Eden-Monaro) (09:58): I rise today to speak about the issue of mobile phone coverage in my electorate of Eden-Monaro. Earlier this year I was very pleased to circulate a discussion paper released by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Communications, the member for Bradfield, seeking feedback on how to structure the coalition's $100 million regional mobile phone coverage program. The coalition made an election commitment to invest $100 million to improve mobile phone coverage in outer metropolitan, regional and remote communities, and we expect to leverage at least an additional $100 million in...
investment from the mobile phone carriers and other parties. Inadequate mobile phone coverage is a significant concern for regional communities.

The discussion paper describes several possible options for allocating this funding and seeks comment from those with an interest in the program. The government is keen to hear from mobile phone carriers and other industry participants, and the comments are due by the end of this week.

I am delighted that the parliamentary secretary has agreed to come to Eden-Monaro on Friday, 14 March to talk about the coalition's plans in this important area. The parliamentary secretary has agreed to participate in two roundtable discussions that I am convening in Eden-Monaro with my constituents on mobile phone coverage. The first roundtable discussion with me will be in Queanbeyan, with constituents mainly from the Braidwood, Bungendore and Nelligen areas. The second roundtable be in Cooma and will allow people from as far away as Tathra to discuss with the parliamentary secretary and me any specific concerns, preferences and issues with respect to mobile phone coverage.

As with many other regional and rural parts of Australia, Eden-Monaro has many pockets where mobile phone reception is particularly bad or non-existent. That is of real concern to communities, particularly during the bushfire season and in emergencies. Lives can literally depend on being able to access mobile phone networks in emergencies, so expanding mobile phone coverage has clear benefits to public safety as well as to the productive capacity of regional communities. It can also impact on the tourism surge we experience, for example, down the south coast in summer and in the Snowy Mountains in winter. This can cause peak overload issues as well. This is a golden opportunity for my constituents to have access to a senior coalition government representative. I particularly want to thank the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Communications for being so willing to come out and spend time in Eden-Monaro and to talk with my constituents about the best approach to a black spot program and mobile phone coverage.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): Order! In accordance with standing order 193, the time for constituency statements has concluded.

STATEMENTS ON INDULGENCE

Baird, Corporal Cameron Stewart VC, MG

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (10:01): It is with great honour that I rise today to pay tribute to Corporal Cameron Stewart Baird VC, MG on the occasion of his posthumous award of the Victoria Cross for most conspicuous acts of valour, extreme devotion to duty and ultimate self-sacrifice.

It was an honour to attend the ceremony at Government House this month where Corporal Baird's parents received the VC on behalf of their son. The Governor-General conducted the ceremony with great dignity, grace and respect. It was deeply moving to witness the CDF salute Corporal Baird's parents.

This is the second time I have paid tribute to Corporal Baird in this place. When I spoke last year following Corporal Baird's death I said that he was an outstanding special forces soldier. He exemplified what it meant to be a commando, living by the attributes of uncompromising spirit and honour, which, in turn, earned him the unconditional respect of his fellow commandos.
His leadership in action was exemplary, constantly inspiring those around him to achieve greater things. He was an extremely dedicated and disciplined soldier and that is saying something for this group of people. If anyone knows that group of people they will know that they are extraordinary individuals and extraordinary warriors. For him to shine amongst that group, he must have been an incredibly extraordinary individual. These commandos are extremely dedicated and disciplined. So for those qualities to be highlighted demonstrates that he was an exceptional man, always striving for excellence in everything he did.

At the time of his death we did not know much about Corporal Baird because, due to the nature of the commandos, the aspects of their work, their actions must not be disclosed. But we have learnt much more about him since that time, both about his personal qualities and his actions in service. Everything that we have learnt has further demonstrated that Corporal Baird was an exemplary leader who showed the utmost dedication and courage and, above all, humility.

Many times before in this place I have spoken about the special bond that exists within commando regiments. When a soldier joins the commandos he and his family are commandos for life. Commandos are more like a brotherhood than any other regiment I know. So when one of their fellow commandos dies in action it is just like losing a brother. Today I would like to pass on my sympathies and condolences to the 2nd Commando Regiment. I know that you have lost a brother and I also know that Corporal Baird's family will take comfort from the ongoing support they will receive from you and from the love and respect that you have shown their son. They were out in full force at the Governor-General's event this month. It was wonderful to see them bonding with the family, supporting the family and surrounding the family with support, love and compassion. The citation for Corporal Baird's VC reads:

Corporal Baird's acts of valour and self-sacrifice ... preserved the lives of his team members. His actions were of the highest order and in keeping with the finest traditions of the Australian Army and the Australian Defence Force.

My deepest sympathies and respect go to Corporal Baird's parents, his brother, his extended family and friends, and his fellow commandos. Australia will never forget your sacrifice. Corporal Baird is truly deserving of this great honour.

Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Assistant Minister for Defence) (10:04): On 24 June last year I joined the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and the Minister for Defence to honour a fallen commando, Corporal Cameron Baird, then MG, now VC, MG, who was tragically killed two days earlier whilst fighting with the Special Operations Task Group in Afghanistan. He was then the 20th member of the Special Operations Task Group to fall in combat, an example of the price paid by some of our elite soldiers, a disproportionate price—half of our combat deaths—being paid by our SF elements. Of those 20 souls that have fallen in special forces, 10 were patrol commanders. Half of our special forces killed in action were the men who commanded from the front. Such was Corporal Baird.

Two days before I gave that speech, on 22 June, Corporal Baird led his men into battle as a patrol commander. He would lose his life in extraordinary close combat with a highly trained and determined enemy. He repeatedly drew fire away from team members and charged enemy fire five times through a building. His actions enabled the enemy to be neutralised and his team survived—mission successful. He was awarded the Victoria Cross in recognition of exceptional and conspicuous act of valour, extreme devotion to duty and ultimately self-
sacrifice. The Victoria Cross for valour is appropriate in this regard. To charge a door where you know there is a sustained enemy force behind that is resisting every element, to charge once is bloody gutsy; to charge it twice is a serious act of courage and leadership at a command level; to keep going back, in this case five times, until the enemy is done with is nothing short of extraordinary.

I used on 24 June 2013 an analogy from the Spartans. Heroditus tells us the Spartans never asked how many of the enemy there were, they simply asked where they were. I said it then and I reflect upon it now: Corporal Baird did not know how many enemy he faced that night. The fire was sustained, direct and accurate. The enemy was courageous and resilient and was not prepared to give in. He did not know how many, all he knew was where they were, and that is where he went. That is, frankly, the stuff of legend, highly deserving of the Victoria Cross. I pay tribute to this extraordinary man.

I acknowledge his father, Doug, his mother, Kaye, and his brother, Brendan Baird. They have lost a son; they have lost a brother. They have lost him in extraordinary circumstances but they have lost him still. We share their grief while at the same time acknowledging his heroism. The Baird family said they are extremely proud of Cameron. They were honoured to accept the VC on his behalf and were grateful to the Governor-General and the ADF for bestowing this honour upon Cameron—gracious words from a grieving family honouring a lost son.

Cameron joined the Army in January 2000. He served for 13 years. Oddly enough, he discharged in 2004 and rejoined in 2006, both periods assigned to the 4th Battalion, now the 2nd Commando Regiment. His operational service included Operations Tanager, Falconer and Bastille and five tours on Operation Slipper. He was previously awarded the Medal of Gallantry as a lance corporal for his actions during close combat in Afghanistan in November 2007, then leading his team forward under heavy fire to recover a wounded comrade. Many acts of bravery occur on battlefields. The interesting thing about Corporal Baird is that he knew what faced him. He had faced fire many times. He had led his team forward previously in extraordinary circumstances in November 2007. He knew what fire sounded like. He knew the crack-thump of incoming rounds. Yet on that fateful day, 22 June, he went forward again. It was an extraordinary act.

In acknowledging Corporal Baird's gallantry and his sacrifice of his life let me also acknowledge the men and women of the 2nd Commando Regiment. Their list of battle honours—the men and women who have won both individual honour and of course the Eastern Shah Wali Kot Battle Honour for the regiment—speaks volumes about their training, their tenacity and their courage. We are lucky to have had such fine men and women serve us in the ADF. I am especially pleased to see that Joel Fitzgibbon, the member for Hunter, a former defence minister in this place is here to speak on this. I welcome his comments and his commitment. He was a Minister for Defence while we were at war, which brings with it a special responsibility and is something that I know bears heavily on his shoulders and that he took seriously when he was defence minister at the time.

Corporal Baird's VC is the 100th that our nation has given out. It is an award given rarely, because rarely do we find such enormous acts of heroism that are worthy of such an honour. Corporal Cameron Stewart Baird VC, MG is deserving of that. He has paid an extraordinary price for an extraordinary act of gallantry for the nation, for mates and for units. It is a proud
day on which I as Assistant Minister for Defence can speak in this place to acknowledge such a great Australian. I know the nation is proud of him. This parliament is proud of him. The government is proud of him.

Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter) (10:11): I thank very sincerely the Assistant Minister for Defence for his comments. He is right: serving as the Minister for Defence of this country is a great honour and privilege but it brings with it a very heavy weight of responsibility, none greater than knowing that you have responsibility for those who serve in overseas operations and in such dangerous circumstances. It has been my very deliberate habit always to speak to motions such as this, usually in sadness, immediately following the death of a soldier, but on this occasion in recognition of the bestowal of the Victoria Cross on Corporal Cameron Baird.

I do not intend to go through Corporal Baird's honours and awards, because that has all been done. However, I do associate myself with the words of the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, the Minister for Defence, the Assistant Minister for Defence and all those who have spoken to this motion—indeed, the whole parliament, which by resolution has recognised Corporal Baird's bravery and commitment to his country.

I do not know whether I knew Cameron Baird. I may have; I may have met him during my time as defence minister. I have said in this place before that while I am not sure I knew him I knew what he was—in a sense, I knew who he was. There is an amazing common thread that runs through all of our special forces soldiers, but this time I can say it more confidently, because I spoke at length with his parents on the day that it was announced in the parliament that he would be the next recipient of the Victoria Cross. In that discussion it was confirmed that everything I was thinking about who and what Cameron Baird was was absolutely correct. I learnt and had confirmed that he wanted to be doing what he was doing; he absolutely believed in what he was doing—not only the cause but the way in which we are conducting the operations; and of course he understood the risks very well, as you would expect someone who was doing their fifth tour of Afghanistan would.

That is an important point. These young men who serve in our Special Forces do so voluntarily, do so enthusiastically, do so really believing in the cause and their mission, and do so understanding the risks absolutely. Notwithstanding that, they do that work with great dedication, energy and enthusiasm and with the greatest of skill. One cannot help but be superimpressed by the skills and talents of the young men who serve in the Special Forces.

Cameron Baird was on his fifth tour. His parents told me that he had been out of the Army for some time. Many who leave cannot live in that outside world, and he was drawn back into the service. Of course, as we know now, five tours was one too many. I encourage any Australian who might be conscious of this discussion happening today to have a look at the citation of Cameron Baird. As the assistant minister said, what he did was nothing short of amazing. That is true of course of every one of the 100 recipients of the Victoria Cross. I found Mark Donaldson's citation amazing; I found Ben Roberts-Smith's citation amazing. These people really have demonstrated that they have no fear and that there is no limit to their commitment to their country. We salute them all.

I again extend my sympathies to Cameron's parents and his brother, Brendan, and to all those he loved and who loved him. I knew him in a sense by knowing what he was, but I think we can all lament the fact we did not know him well. He was obviously a very special
Australian, and that is official now that he has been awarded the Victoria Cross. With everyone else who has made a contribution to this debate, I salute him.

**Mrs ANDREWS** (McPherson) (10:16): I rise today to pay tribute to Australia’s most recent Victoria Cross recipient, Corporal Cameron Stewart Baird VC, MG of the 2nd Commando Regiment. The Victoria Cross is our pre-eminent award for valour, a quality demonstrated time and time again by this fine young soldier. Corporal Baird has posthumously become the 100th soldier to be bestowed with the Victoria Cross. In Australia the Victoria Cross was established in 1991. The late Corporal Baird has become the fourth recipient from the Afghanistan campaign and the first to be awarded the Victoria Cross for Australia in that campaign posthumously.

Cameron Baird was born in Burnie, Tasmania, in 1981. He was an athletic young man and an outstanding sportsman. He joined the Army in January 2000, at the age of 18. On completion of his initial training, he was assigned to 4th Battalion (Commando), The Royal Australian Regiment, now the 2nd Commando Regiment. He briefly left the armed services in 2004, returning to the 2nd Commando Regiment in 2006, where he quickly displayed leadership skills. Corporal Baird was deployed seven times, including on operations in Timor L’Este, Afghanistan and Iraq. In February 2007 he deployed on Operation Slipper in Afghanistan, where he was awarded the Medal for Gallantry for his actions during a clearance of a Taliban stronghold. In November 2007, under heavy fire and with complete disregard for his personal safety, he led other team members to recover a wounded soldier. He killed several combatants and undoubtedly prevented further casualties through his actions.

His final deployment was also to Afghanistan, this time with the Special Operations Task Group, in February 2013. On 22 June 2013 he was killed in action by small-arms fire whilst engaged with insurgents in Oruzgan province. His final encounter with the enemy demonstrated the qualities that made him not only a great soldier but a great human being. His heroic efforts to repeatedly draw fire away from his fellow commandos and charge enemy positions exemplify the most courageous of acts. Not once but three times he regained the initiative and saved his team members’ lives. With bullets firing around him, and at one stage even having to seek cover because of a jammed rifle, his actions were both valiant and selfless.

He has been described by his comrades as ‘one of the most iconic figures’ in the regiment. This is high praise indeed from members of a distinguished unit—one which has suffered more casualties in Afghanistan than any other Australian unit.

His personal humility, leadership and concern for his fellow soldiers uphold the finest traditions of the Australian Defence Force. He is undoubtedly a most worthy recipient of our highest decoration for conspicuous acts of valour and is an inspiration to us all.

Corporal Baird has left behind his parents, Doug and Kaye; his brother, Brendan; and his nephews, Max and Riley; and I extend to them the sympathies of the electorate of McPherson. We grieve their loss, knowing that their much loved family member has made the ultimate sacrifice to protect his nation and its values. We know, however, that their grief and sadness will also be mixed with a sense of pride in their son’s character and his achievements.

When the Baird family were presented with Corporal Baird’s Victoria Cross medal at Government House in Canberra on Tuesday, 18 February, it was an occasion that not only
honoured who he was but what he believed in and fought for. The ceremony also paid tribute to Corporal Baird's brothers-in-arms, the 2nd Commando Regiment. Corporal Baird was a true hero, albeit a humble one. He held steadfast when most people would falter. We can all aspire to his examples of courage, mateship and loyalty. For his bravery and selflessness, Australia will be forever thankful. Corporal Baird will forever hold a special place in Australian history and the hearts of our people. We will always be grateful to him and we will always remember him. Lest we forget.

Mr SNOWDON (Lingiari) (10:21): I am honoured to speak about our 100th VC winner and the fourth from the Afghanistan Campaign and, sadly, our 40th combat death in Afghanistan. You will recall, Mr Deputy Speaker, that three other brave men have been awarded the VC in Afghanistan. Corporal Mark Donaldson VC, then a trooper, was awarded the Victoria Cross for Australia on 16 January 2009, and was the first Australian in almost 40 years to receive the nation's highest military honour. Corporal Ben Roberts-Smith VC, MG, became the second recipient of the Victoria Cross for Australia. Corporal Daniel Keighran VC received his award on 1 November 2012. And now Corporal Cameron Baird VC, MG, is the fourth recipient of the Victoria Cross for Australia and the first to be awarded posthumously.

I have reflected on the citation for Corporal Baird and his medal. It tells us that Corporal Baird enlisted in the Australian Regular Army in 2000, was discharged in 2004 and re-enlisted in 2006. In both periods of service he was assigned to the 4th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment (Commando). His operational service includes Operations Tanager, Falconer and Bastille, and five tours on Operation Slipper. He was awarded our second-highest in the order of awards, the medal for gallantry, for his service in Afghanistan in 2007 and 2008.

What we know about this man from this citation is his bravery, his commitment, his courage and his intelligence. I never met Corporal Baird, sadly, but have been greatly privileged to meet many of his fellow commandos. I visited Tarin Kot on a number of occasions and visited men in the field, and there is no doubt that Afghanistan has been an awful and very difficult campaign. As a result, we now know, at the end of our time there, that 40 Australians have lost their lives.

This citation is extraordinary. Whilst I could read it in total, I am sure many would have read it in any event. Corporal Baird charged an enemy compound three times—not once, not twice but three times. That is how they ended up getting him—because his commitment to his team pushed him on. Words cannot really do true justice to the service of Corporal Baird or, indeed, his comrades. As the CDF recently said, there is not enough recognition really given to those who have worn our uniform on our behalf in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

As I have had cause to say on previous occasions in this place, those of us who have never worn the uniform in battle, those of us who have never been fortunate enough to serve this country because we made different choices, should stand in awe of those who do—no matter what they do. Whether it is working, as Corporal Baird did, as a commando, as part of our special forces, someone working on a patrol boat doing border protection work or someone flying one of our wonderful aircraft in our RAAF, these people do wonderful work for us which too often goes unheralded. I think the CDF was correct to point to us our obligation to pay greater tribute to those who wear the uniform on our behalf.
For my own part, I have had the great privilege of being a minister in the defence portfolio for five years. It has given me an opportunity to meet with many of these brave men and women and to learn about and understand this commitment that so many brave Australian men and women make. As you would know, Mr Deputy Speaker, being a former Minister for Veterans' Affairs, I was also a minister for veterans' affairs and that gave me the opportunity to meet so many, many people who have done great service for this country. We have an obligation to them. Today we have an opportunity to pay homage to Corporal Baird and, through that homage, to say thank you to all of those men and women in uniform who serve us. I am reminded of the Soldiers Code, which I think sums up well Corporal Baird. It says:

I have the honour to be a Soldier in the Australian Army. I am a custodian of traditions forged in battle by the ANZACS.

I treat others with dignity and respect and expect others to do the same.

I strive to develop my proficiency and competency in the Profession of Arms.

At all times I act in ways that will bring honour to Australia, and credit upon the Army, my unit and my fellow soldiers.

We can say to Corporal Baird: you epitomised every element of that code. The Soldiers Code sums up to you a tee, as it does for so many others.

It is trite for us to stand here and say how difficult it must be for Corporal Cameron Baird's family, but they should know that this nation is so grateful for his courage and his sacrifice. Corporal Baird, God bless you and thank you.

Mr McCormack (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance)

Words, however heartfelt, are never enough to replace what Corporal Cameron Baird's family have lost. But I must say I know how heartfelt are the words of the member for Lingiari, the former veterans affairs minister. The member for Lingiari is a hard man but I know he was choked with emotion at the end of that very eloquent speech. I have not seen that before, and I pay him great credit for his very emotional words. He knows what men and women in uniform do for our nation, for our nation's spirit and for the Anzac spirit which lives on. I can only endorse the very eloquent words of the member for Lingiari. Well done.

The member for Lingiari said, 'God bless you,' to Corporal Baird at the end of his speech. That is so important. I know that Senator Barnaby Joyce finishes most of his speeches with, 'God bless you.' It is an antiquated, Christian phrase, but it means so much. As a nation and as a people, we say, 'God bless you,' to Corporal Baird, who gave his life for his mates and for a just cause—a righteous cause.

Before I came to this place I never really thought about the fact that the people who wear our military uniform—they wear it so well!—voluntarily go off to war. They want to do that. They serve with great pride and distinction, but they do it because they want to. Before I entered parliament I did not realise how much of a heavy heart I would have when I learned of each and every one of those 40 deaths. Of course it meant a lot to me. It means so much more to me as a parliamentarian because it is the parliament which enacts the legislation that sends those young men and women off to do battle on behalf of our nation and on behalf of a cause. I learned of each and every one of the 40 deaths in Afghanistan with such a heavy heart.
I know that view of those deaths is shared across parliament. This is not a partisan thing. This is not a political thing. We are all Australians in this parliament; we all want our men and women who go off to serve our nation, to come home. Godspeed them home. Thankfully, they are coming home from Afghanistan. Their duty is done in Afghanistan. Afghanistan is a far better place now than the one which our troops—our brave men and women—first entered. It is a far better place. It has taken a heavy toll. We have lost 40 of our bravest young men—our best and our brightest: heroes, all. We can only say, as a nation, 'Thanks.' But words are never enough.

On 13 February the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and others, made fine speeches at the announcement of the Victoria Cross for Australia award of valour for Corporal Cameron Stewart Baird VC, MG. When the announcement of the VC was made, many parliamentarians from both sides lined up and passed on their condolences to the family of Corporal Baird. I will never forget his mother. She was not shedding tears. She was so stoic. It is hard to find words to say to a mother who has lost a son in such tragic but extraordinary circumstances, a son who gave his life—paid the ultimate sacrifice—on behalf of his nation. What can you say to a mother who has lost her boy but, 'Thanks; I am sorry.' She said, 'No, no; this is recognition for all his mates. He would have wanted this recognition for his mates. He would have wanted it to be shared with his mates.' No individualism; that is the Army way. It is: do it for the team. Do it for the unit, the regiment, the Army as a whole, but most of all do it for your mates.

It is hard to grasp that concept of self-sacrifice but our men and women have been doing it since the first men from these colonies went to the Sudan in 1885. The Boer War was the first war in which the Victoria Cross was awarded to Australians. Now it is the Victoria Cross for Australia but back then it was the VC. Sixty-four VCs were awarded in World War I, two of which went to people from the Riverina who could proudly call the Riverina home. There were others with connections to my region but there were two in particular who were born and bred in the Riverina. William Jackson from Gunbar, between Hay and Carrathool, was and still is the youngest ever VC recipient. He was 18 years young when he received his Victoria Cross for bravery in France, on the Western Front. He was also the first recipient of a VC in action on the Western Front. Like Cameron Baird, he went out again and again to help his mates, to look for others who were wounded, to repel the enemy.

Some time later, William Jackson was helping Sergeant Hugh Camden to bring in mortally wounded Private Alfred Robinson when he was hit by an exploding shell. Jackson said the he didn't feel much, just a numbing sensation, but he had actually lost his right arm. His right arm was just hanging like a limp thread. Sergeant Camden, from Moree, told a local reception for Billy Jackson later, 'Bill had gone out looking without his arm. Not looking for a VC but for a cobber.' That is what I am sure Corporal Baird also did—not looking for any accolades or awards, certainly not a VC. He just went there to do what he was trained for: to do his best for his mates. Another VC recipient from Tumut was Jack Ryan, who earned his VC just weeks out from the armistice in 1918, on the Hindenburg Line—another brave hero from the Riverina.

In World War II we had Jack Edmondson, who earned his VC in Tobruk. I talk about the Riverina and Corporal Baird was familiar with the Riverina because he, like so many of his comrades in Afghanistan, did his initial training at the Army Recruit Training Centre—
previously known as the First Recruit Training Battalion—at Kapooka, just south-west of Wagga Wagga. He enlisted on 4 January 2000 and did his initial training with many of his mates at Kapooka. Each time there has been a casualty, let alone a loss of life, in combat for Australia, it has been with a heavy heart that I have always stood in the parliament and talk of that loss, because so many of those brave young souls did their initial training at Wagga Wagga. Wagga Wagga is a tri-service city. It is unique for an inland regional city to be a tri-service city. Even though we are a long, long way from sea water, we have a Navy base, we have a historic Royal Australian Air Force Base, and every recruit who enlists with the Australian Army—that wonderful organisation—goes through ARTC at Kapooka, where we have a new commandant in Steve Jobson, who is doing his best to turn out the fine men and women to serve in our Army.

As I said, Corporal Baird's mother, Kaye, is very proud of her son, as she should be. His Victoria Cross award is for most conspicuous act of valour, extreme devotion to duty and ultimate self-sacrifice at a village in Uruzgan Province in Afghanistan as a commando team leader. You do not get to become a leader unless you are very, very special. (Time expired)

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (10:39): I join other members of this House in honouring Corporal Cameron Stewart Baird as the 100th recipient of the Victoria Cross. Corporal Baird, as other speakers have already pointed out, was killed on 22 June 2013 whilst on duty in Afghanistan. He was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross. Much has been said about Corporal Baird both at the time of his death and more so in recent days in response to him having been awarded the Victoria Cross.

I did not personally know Corporal Baird, but the comments that I have read and heard about him from those who did know him and the comments contained in the award citation leave no doubt in my mind that he was a very worthy recipient of the Victoria Cross, an award given to very few people—in fact, 100 people in the history of our nation. From looking over his previous awards and his military service, including operations in Timor-Leste, Iraq and Afghanistan, my view is that Corporal Baird had, prior to his death, displayed all of the virtues for which the Victoria Cross is awarded.

Of course, as others have also said, words will not bring back Corporal Baird or ease the loss to his parents, Doug and Kaye; to his brother, Brendan; or to his Defence mates, some of whom perhaps owe their own lives to him and to whom I offer my personal condolences. I can only imagine how they must be feeling right now. But the award, however, may ease the grief in the knowledge that Corporal Baird's actions made a difference to the lives of others and that, in his giving his life for his country, his country has in turn acknowledged him by awarding him the highest possible military honour.

As Australia's participation in the Afghanistan war draws to an end, historians and military analysts will offer their views on the war. Sadly, for those 40 from Australia who lost their lives in Afghanistan, for the many others from all the other countries who in one way or another participated and for those who remain physically or mentally injured—and for their families—regardless of which country they came from or whom they fought for, the Afghanistan war is another reminder of the terrible social and economic costs of war. It is a cost that I see all too frequently when I look into the faces of and speak with war veterans and their family members.
I represent an electorate that is adjacent to the Edinburgh Defence base. Over my years in public life, I have had cause to associate with just about all of the Defence groups in the area, including the National Servicemen's Association members, the Vietnam vets, members of the Defence Force who have served in Afghanistan on several occasions, members who served in World War II and members who served in the Pacific region in the 1950s and 1960s. The member for Lingiari quite rightly pointed out that not enough recognition is given to those who have served our country, and it is on that point that I want to make some additional remarks.

February was a month where I attended, every week, different military commemoration services in one place or another. On Wednesday last week, I attended a service at the Salisbury RSL commemorating the bombing of Darwin. It has become an annual service at the Salisbury RSL. It is one of those events about which I do not believe that we as a nation give enough recognition and acknowledgement to those people who were subject to those attacks.

To summarise those attacks: between 19 February 1942 and November 1943, Darwin, Broome, Wyndham, Port Hedland, Derby, Katherine, Townsville, Mossman and Horn Island were all attacked by Japanese aircraft. The first and most destructive of those attacks was that on Darwin on 19 February 1942. Although the precise numbers will never be known, it is estimated that around 250 people, both civilian and Defence personnel, were killed and hundreds more were injured. In service I attended, Pam Ward read a letter that her husband had written to her from Darwin immediately after the attacks. Her husband Fred was a soldier based at Darwin and was there throughout the air raids. He was lucky because he survived. The sense of fear and helplessness and the devastation that took place are difficult for anyone who was not there to imagine. Hearing the words from a person who experienced it all brings home the terrifying ordeal for people there at the time.

The service enabled all of us to remember the people of Darwin and other places in Australia who were subjected to the attacks over that 18 month period. It also enables us to think about the futile loss of innocent lives and the destruction that took place between February 1942 and November 1943. Like all other past wars, the attacks on Darwin in northern Australia are sad reminders of the senseless cruelty and carnage of wars, but they are equally reminders of the people who serve this country and how they put their lives on the line in doing so.

A week later I joined the Para sub-branch of the National Servicemen's Association in their annual commemoration service at Salisbury, marking National Servicemen's Association Day. As a friend and a long-time supporter of the sub-branch, I frequently attend National Servicemen's Association events and I have made many personal friends from among them over the years.

Between 1951 and 1972, around 300,000 or thereabouts young Australians were called up for national service with some called up through a ballot system, particularly those who were called up during the Vietnam war period. Quite a number of them were involved in active service in places like Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam. I understand that a considerable number of them voluntarily enlisted in the Australian Defence Forces when the national service period had ended. Of course, they are all now into their retirement years and many of them have even passed away. The friendship and bonds that were established in the
course of this service have, however, endured. It is often the mateship that helped them cope with the struggle and tough times that so many of them confronted with from time to time. I have to say they are a great bunch of guys and they have a terrific sense of humour. It is that mateship point that I simply want to focus on for a moment.

Corporal Baird gave his life for his mates. If ever you want to understand what it means to be a true mate, look no further than Corporal Baird. In my view it is the extreme sense of true mateship when you are prepared to go that far, and he was. It is because he did that that he was awarded the Victoria Cross. I suspect that there are many other people who have served in our Defence Forces who equally put their lives on the line, not only for our country but for their mates. Regrettably, for one reason or another, they will never be given the recognition that Corporal Baird has received, but that in no way diminishes their commitment to our country and to their mates. Corporal Baird, however, will be recognised, and has been recognised, in a deserved way for what he did for his country and his mates. His family and his friends at least know that the country has recognised him with this award and in doing so, I believe, it is the most appropriate way to show our respects and appreciation for him. May he rest in peace.

Ms Scott (Lindsay) (10:49): Sitting here in the chamber for the last hour, I have heard some of the most exceptional tributes to Corporal Cameron Baird, and I would like to thank you for the tributes just made. On behalf of my community of Lindsay, we are a proud military community and I am privileged today to rise to pay tribute to Corporal Cameron Baird VC, MG, the 100th recipient of the Victoria Cross.

The Victoria Cross has long been a distinguished part of Australian military history and it is our highest military award. To Corporal Baird's family, Doug and Kay, as well as the entire family, I express my sincere condolences and gratitude for the son you have lost. You must be so proud of your son, such an amazing young man, who has been taken away from you way too soon. Like the 40 other Australians who have lost their loved ones in Afghanistan, you now feel the bittersweet pain of the loss and the hole in your lives this gives, within the pride of what they have achieved and done in service to our nation.

I would like to echo the sentiments of the Prime Minister at the ceremony on 18 February, and I quote:

What can we say but this—greater love hath no man than to lay down his life for his friend.

We will always draw strength from his actions for we are a nation of memory, not just memorials. His name will live forever. As members have already noted this medal is a:

... decoration for according recognition to persons who in the presence of the enemy, perform acts of the most conspicuous gallantry, or daring or pre-eminent acts of valour or self-sacrifice or display extreme devotion to duty.

In reflecting on these qualities, it is only fitting that Corporal Cameron Baird receive the Victoria Cross for Australia.

Corporal Baird made five special forces tours with the Australian Defence Force, serving in East Timor, Iraq and Afghanistan. On the night of 22 June 2013, whilst serving in Afghanistan, Corporal Baird made the ultimate sacrifice. Corporal Baird charged the enemy line, the compound, three times. He repeatedly and fatally drew enemy fire away from his
team members and charged the enemy positions. That was the act of a truly brave and noble soldier and an act of valour.

In short, Corporal Baird was an outstanding leader of men. We have heard this in detail today by many speakers. He put love of his country before himself but, greater than that, love of his mates. He is the embodiment of the Anzac spirit and that of the Australian soldier. The final line of the Australian soldier's code states:

At all times I act in ways that will bring honour to Australia, and credit upon the Army, my unit and my fellow soldiers.

Corporal Baird: you most definitely achieved that. You have in every way been an ultimate soldier and right to the very last moment you have most definitely embodied the Anzac code.

In receiving the Victoria Cross, the bravery of Corporal Baird will be remembered and instilled in Australia's military history. On behalf of the Lindsay community and which I represent: we express our deepest sympathy to your family, your mates and your regiment. As a nation we will be forever in your debt and grateful for your bravery and sacrifice. We will remember you. Lest we forget.

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (10:53): I rise today on behalf of the people of my electorate of Ryan, to join with my colleagues to highlight the heroism of one young Australian: the late Corporal Cameron Stewart Baird. The Ryan electorate is home to Gallipoli Barracks. I note that this award and the bravery and sacrifice it recognises is of particular significance not only to the serving men and women of Gallipoli Barracks and to the veterans and defence families living within Ryan but also to the whole community.

Corporal Baird is the 100th Australian to receive the Victoria Cross, our highest military honour. The Victoria Cross, hand-fashioned from the metal from Russian guns captured at Sebastopol during the Crimean war, from 1854 to 1856, has been awarded posthumously to Corporal Baird in recognition of his remarkable bravery. Displays of courage, loyalty, duty, endurance, initiative, sacrifice, humility, discipline and mateship; behind every award of a Victoria Cross is a remarkable story involving all these qualities which Australians hold dear as part of what has become known as the Anzac spirit.

I spoke to Lieutenant Colonel Todd Vail when he was in my office as part of the Australian Defence Force Parliamentary Program last year. Todd has undertaken many overseas deployments, including to Afghanistan. I asked Todd for his thoughts, to try and understand, even in a small way, how it feels to lose a comrade. This is what he said:

The first notification usually strikes you to the core. I was at home at the time and found out through friends who had heard it on the news. Everyone who you meet or talk to will ask questions about who it was and the circumstances in which it occurred. Expecting you as a member of the Defence Force to have all the answers. However, you know no details due to the blanket media ban, which is not lifted until the next of kin have been notified and approved the release of the name. During this time you speculate along with everyone else. Being a member of the ADF you do wonder if you knew him—particularly as the media said he was in a leadership role.

The news brings a sense of reality which hits home. You realise that the profession you have chosen can be deadly. You think of his family and what they must be going through. It makes you think of your own family and you put yourself in their shoes and wonder how they would cope. You also think of the injured and hope their injuries will not leave them maimed with little quality of life.
Having spent time in Afghanistan you can visualise the incident, your senses are alert to the sights, sounds and smell of the Afghan countryside, they play over and over again in your mind on a never ending loop.

In the end you reconcile your feelings by knowing he died doing what he loved, surrounded by his mates.

When Queen Victoria created the Victoria Cross in 1856, after the Crimean War, she had it be inscribed with the words ‘For Valour’. Valour: the perfect word to describe Corporal Baird's actions. On 22 June 2013 Corporal Baird displayed conspicuous valour, leading to his ultimate sacrifice in close combat with a determined enemy, as a commando team leader in Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan. He repeatedly drew enemy fire away from his team members and charged enemy positions under heavy fire. His actions enabled the enemy to be neutralised and his team kept safe.

We must never forget that we as a nation send young men and women to war and that they fight on our behalf with honour and courage. Corporal Baird was an outstanding special forces soldier. He exemplified what it meant to be a commando, living by the attributes of uncompromising spirit and honour—truly in keeping with the finest traditions of the Australian Defence Force. Corporal Baird's commitment to his chosen career as a soldier and to our mission in Afghanistan was unwavering and his leadership in action was exemplary, consistently inspiring those around him to strive for more. We must not let the loss of his life be in vain. His bravery and sacrifice will never be forgotten. Lest we forget.

Mr SIMPKINS (Cowan) (10:58): I welcome this opportunity to speak on the award of the Victoria Cross to Corporal Cameron Stewart Baird VC, MG. Reading the citation and the story about the air-mobile assault on Ghawchak village in Uruzgan province really does bring home the extraordinary efforts of our soldiers in Afghanistan. Not only is this in many ways a typical, or classical, fight in these sorts of operations, you can visualise the fog of war in it as well—the confusion that reigns and the uncertainty of the circumstances.

When you travel in that part of the world you often see these compounds—pretty much small forts—that dot the region. When intelligence shows that the Taliban are holed up there and they are in prepared positions within that compound, it is a very difficult circumstance—there is no doubt about it. This is clear when you read through the citation and hear exactly what took place: assault going on; one team gets held up; Corporal Baird's team then moves to provide support there; then they come under attack from the flank, to the side, and on and on it goes like this; and then Corporal Baird, as a great commander, a great leader—although a corporal, still a great leader of men—takes command and moves his forces and leads from the front, in the very finest traditions of the Australian Army.

When we look back through history, we see that this country is in many ways defined by what took place at Gallipoli. Indeed, Anzac Day is probably the one day of the year that is closest to being a holy day for us; more so than even Australia Day really is. It is a day when this country was defined. The landings at Gallipoli helped define this country and defined us as a people. Again and again throughout history since then, our soldiers, sailors and airmen have helped redefine the nature of our country—things that we can be exceptionally proud of. Afghanistan was a good cause and people have been greatly helped by our efforts there. The mortality rates for children have been reduced. Access for women and girls to education has been dramatically improved. In many ways, it is a far better country, and that is because of the
efforts of our soldiers. Particularly when we have someone like Corporal Baird showing the finest traditions of our country through bravery it is a great Australian story. I pay tribute to and salute Corporal Baird for his efforts. It is such a tragedy it came with the loss of his life but, whether it was the Medal of Gallantry or the Victoria Cross, Corporal Cameron Stewart Baird VC, MG has really defined himself as a great Australian and he will be remembered for ever more.

I would also like to raise an interesting point regarding the date of Corporal Baird's death. The day that they moved into that fight was 22 June. I looked back through my diary to that date—I think it is wise to put these things into perspective—and found that on 22 June I was at events at a couple of local shopping centres. In my view I was doing important things—campaigning for the forthcoming federal election. It really put it into perspective for me: I was at a shopping centre chatting with people and, at that very time, Australian soldiers were out there putting their lives on the line. As I have said in previous speeches when we have lost some of our soldiers in this war, it really does put it in perspective that, whilst we are in places where there is no threat whatsoever, out there in the world Australian soldiers are putting their lives on the line not only for this country but also for a better future for those countries that they are actually fighting in. So it is very easy to salute Corporal Cameron Stewart Baird VC, MG—a great Australian doing great work for the good things in this world. Thank God that we have Australian soldiers who are prepared to do that—that people are prepared to put the uniform on—for that better world. Thank God we have people of such fine character and outstanding courage in this world. Again, I salute Corporal Cameron Baird—a great Australian.

Mr WHITELEY (Braddon) (11:04): 'For the most conspicuous acts of valour, extreme devotion to duty and ultimate self-sacrifice.' They are the opening words of the Victoria Cross citation for Corporal Cameron Stewart Baird VC, MG. The citation goes on to record the events surrounding Corporal Baird's actions and ultimately his death in the typical understatement and lack of pathos that has come to typify the Australian Defence Force's attitude toward the bestowing of an honour upon itself. Nonetheless, the understatement is harrowing in its description of the events that took place on 22 June 2013 at Gorchuk village, Uruzgan province, Afghanistan. I would like now to read part of the citation:

With complete disregard for his own safety, Corporal Baird charged towards enemy positions, supported by his team. On nearing the positions he and his team were engaged by additional enemy on their flank. Instinctively Corporal Baird neutralised the new threat with grenades and rifle fire, enabling his team to close with the prepared position. With the prepared position now isolated, Corporal Baird manoeuvred and was engaged by enemy machine gun fire, the bullets striking the ground around him. Displaying great valour, he drew the fire, moved to cover and suppressed the enemy machine gun position. This action enabled his team to close on the entrance prepared positions, thus regaining the initiative.

While pathos is found wanting in this description of the battle, it certainly evokes images of selfless service, courage and loyalty to one's mates. As a man who has never served Australia in the military, I am filled with an immense sense of pride and thankfulness in all serving and past members of the defence forces, including Corporal Baird, when I read descriptions of battles like this one.

It is a special honour today to be able to speak to this statement because Corporal Baird was born in my home town, Burnie, in the midst of my electorate, Braddon. He was born in
1981. He ultimately moved to Gladstone Park in Victoria, where we often do send some of our best, where he remained until after his high school education was complete. Corporal Baird was a keen sportsmen and a talented footballer. Following his schooling Corporal Baird enlisted in the Australian Army and was posted to the 4th Battalion Commando, the Royal Australian Regiment, now the 2nd Commando Regiment, based at Holsworthy Barracks in Sydney, New South Wales. Despite Corporal Baird's young age at the time of his death, he was an experienced soldier, having been deployed on no less than seven tours, including to Timor-Leste, Iraq and Afghanistan. On a previous tour to Afghanistan Corporal Baird was awarded the Medal for Gallantry for 'gallantry in action during close-quarters combat'. So it is quite clear to me that Corporal Baird's actions, though courageous, were not unique to the events on 22 June 2013, rather they typified his action and attitude toward serving his country.

Following the recent ceremony at Parliament House in honour of Corporal Baird I had the opportunity and the honour to meet Corporal Baird's parents. I spoke to Mr Doug Baird, his father, on the floor of the parliament on that morning. Mr Baird expressed his desire to visit his son's birthplace, which, as I said, is in the electorate of Braddon. He wanted to go back to the place in which his son was born. So as one of those elected representatives for Burnie I would like to say to Mr Baird that we would be honoured to receive him, be it publicly or without mention. He and his wife, Kaye, and Cameron's brother, Brendan, are very welcome.

In closing, I want to read the closing of Corporal Baird's Victoria Cross citation, as I believe it summarises the words spoken both in the main chamber of the parliament and here in the Federation Chamber. It reads:

Corporal Baird's acts of valour and self-sacrifice regained the initiative and preserved the lives of his team members. His actions were of the highest order and in keeping with the finest traditions of the Australian Army and the Australian Defence Force.

May he rest in peace.

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (11:10): The date of 22 June 2013 will forever be etched in our nation's military history. It was the day Corporal Cameron Baird MG became the 40th Australian casualty to fall in Afghanistan. But it was his brave and noble actions on that fateful day that would see Corporal Baird posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross, our nation's highest award for gallantry, which was presented to his parents on Tuesday last week. By fate, Corporal Baird has been elevated as our 100 recipient of this most prestigious honour. But elevation was not something this soldier sought.

In 2007 Corporal Baird was awarded the Medal for Gallantry for displaying complete disregard for his own safety when he led his team forward under heavy enemy fire to recover a mortally wounded team member. Corporal Baird, of Holsworthy's own 2nd Commando Regiment, was a Special Forces commando in every sense. He was disciplined, he was physically and mentally tough, he was a man dedicated to those around him. He was a real team man, a man who lived life free, fearless always. He was a warrior. He was not someone who sought the highest honour. He cared more for his comrades, his brothers on the front line. That is perhaps the reason, more than any other, that he deserves to be recognised in this way. His brother has said that he was a very humble person who shunned the limelight and would have seen this not as a reward for himself but as a recognition for his fellow soldiers. If somehow he could have seen into the future and known that one day he would be awarded the
Victoria Cross, with his unit having been awarded the first battle honour in over 40 years, it would have meant a lot to him. The 2nd Commando Regiment was awarded the Eastern Shah Wali Kot Battle Honour, the first battle honour awarded since 1969, on 19 June, just three days before the tragic loss of Corporal Baird. I know that this would have been a great source of pride for a man like Corporal Baird, someone who gave himself to all those around him.

At this time I think of all those who served alongside Corporal Baird and who had the privilege of knowing him—his mates. They are the men and women who live today to tell the story of his life and of his service to his nation. For them, and for all of those who have known and served alongside him, the awarding of this honour may be tinged with sadness, but there is also pride for the man who made the ultimate sacrifice heroically defending his mates from danger. This feeling of pride, tinged with sadness, reverberates across my local community, which surrounds the Holsworthy Army base. Addressing parliament following Corporal Baird's passing last June, I discussed the hurt and shock felt across our region when the news comes of the loss of one of our local soldiers, because the defence community is so tightly intertwined with the local community. Now I can say that the pride generated from the awarding of the Victoria Cross to one of our own reverberates just as strongly.

Corporal Baird enlisted in 2000 and, following basic training, was posted to the Holsworthy Army base in the electorate of Hughes, which I represent, serving with the 4th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (Commando), which became the 2nd Commando Regiment. The men of the 2nd Commando Regiment live by the motto 'Without warning'. Their motto acutely describes the field of battle in which the 2nd Commando Regiment is utilised as a modern, highly trained forward unit and it describes the strategies used by the commandos on the ground. It also describes the individuals themselves. The men of the 2nd Commando Regiment have no fear. They are always ready and will strike and take the initiative without warning.

In the run-up to the previous election campaign I had the great honour of visiting, with the Prime Minister, the 2nd Commando Regiment at Holsworthy. I remember walking around. To this day, the thing that struck me was the fitness, strength and even the height of these men. These are our best Australians. I could not help thinking that day, 'Thank goodness that they are on our side!'

Corporal Baird was the personification of this powerful motto. His colleagues described him as an iconic figure in the regiment. For him, his service was not a vocation; it was a calling. At this time I think it is important to recognise and remember the reasons that Corporal Baird was in Afghanistan. We must never forget the evil of the Taliban. This is a group that uses children as suicide bombers. Perhaps the true evil of the Taliban, which Corporal Baird fought against, is best exemplified by their attacks on a 14-year-old school girl, whose crime, in their eyes, was to advocate for the education of girls. The Taliban actually sent their hit men, armed with guns, onto a school bus to shoot that young girl in the head. That is the evil that we were up against.

It is education—especially the education of girls—that is the silver bullet in many countries they can counteract poverty, instability and general inequality. Those are the three things that allow groups like the Taliban to prosper and thrive. That is why they are so opposed to these things. That shows the absolute evil of this group, and that is what Corporal Baird was fighting against. That is why he was in Afghanistan, and we should never, ever forget that.
There is a quotation commonly attributed to Winston Churchill:

We sleep soundly in our beds because rough men stand ready in the night to visit violence on those who would do us harm.

This is something that we should be thankful for. This is why men like Corporal Baird, and those he served alongside, have our eternal gratitude and our deepest respect. Lest we forget.

Ms MARINO (Forrest—Government Whip) (11:17): I acknowledge the contributions of all members in this condolence motion. I am sure each one of them will mean a lot to Corporal Baird's family. Corporal Cameron Baird is Australia's 100th Victoria Cross holder—the latest to join this elite group of military personnel. He does so posthumously.

Cameron served his country in East Timor, Iraq and Afghanistan. I am very proud to speak on this condolence motion today. In 2007, Cameron Baird was awarded the medal for gallantry for his recovery of a wounded team member under heavy fire. We saw his bravery yet again—clearly it was just part of who Cameron Baird was—on 22 June last year, when he repeatedly drew enemy fire on himself with the sole purpose of protecting his comrades. In doing so, he laid down his life for his mates.

Corporal Baird, as we know, was leading a team in an assault on an enemy compound in June last year, in Afghanistan. When they came under heavy machine gun fire he broke cover—a courageous move—to draw the fire upon himself. Regaining momentum, he forced his way into the compound. It was here that he lost his life. His courageous charge into the compound under fire is the reason he has been awarded the Victoria Cross. We all stand in awe of his courage. It is often quoted, 'Greater love hath no man than to lay down his life for his friend.' It is far less often witnessed. I would suggest that Cameron Baird's bravery on that day will live on and on in the hearts and the minds of those who were with him at that time.

I would like to pass on my deepest respects and condolences to Cameron Baird's family. We were honoured to meet them on that day in the parliament. What a courageous family they are: Doug and Kaye and his brother Brendan, as well as the wider Baird family and his friends. All of his friends would be feeling this in equal quantities: they would be proud but they would be sad because they have lost someone they loved. So, I would say it is pride mixed with great sorrow. The family and Cameron have a nation's gratitude. In that citation the words of self-sacrifice and preserving the lives of his team members are in the finest traditions of the Army and Defence Forces and describe who Cameron Baird was. I will echo the sentiments of my colleagues: rest in peace. Again, I offer my condolences to his family.

Mr BUCHHOLZ (Wright—Government Whip) (11:20): I rise also to associate myself with the comments of previous speakers. I rise to honour a brave Australian who paid the ultimate sacrifice for the freedom of our country. Recently Corporal Cameron Baird was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross; he was the 100th recipient of the medal, the highest award presented for bravery. Corporal Baird displayed selflessness and heroism in Afghanistan which saw him pay the ultimate self-sacrifice in order to save the lives of his team members, and his actions embody the Victoria Cross inscription for valour.

The Victoria Cross has a rich history within the Australian armed forces. Australian troops were first recognised for their gallantry during the Boer War in 1899, and since then 96 Australians have been awarded the imperial Victoria Cross. Since its inception in 2009, the Victoria Cross for Australia has been presented to four brave men, including Corporal Baird.
With great pride I discovered that Lance Corporal Bernard Gordon, who was awarded the Victoria Cross during World War I was a resident of my electorate of Wright for many years and his family continues to operate farms in the area.

In my electorate of Wright we have a very proud and active RSL movement with a large number of former and current armed service men and women calling Wright their home. We have 14 RSL branches and sub-branches within Wright who work tirelessly to promote the interest of returned and serving Defence Force members and their families, as well as playing active roles within their respective communities. RSL members of Wright would want to be associated with these condolence speech. I would like to acknowledge the President of Tamborine Mountain sub-branch, John Brookes, for his contribution; Nev Watterson from the Helidon sub-branch; Eric Guilfoyle from the Beaudesert sub-branch; Ernie Hardgrave from the Rathdowney Sub-branch; Brian Ranse from the Laidley sub-branch; and Marcus Bruty of the Jimboomba branch. They all wish to associate themselves with this condolence for a fallen colleague.

The local RSL movement is helped exponentially with the involvement of living Victoria Cross recipient, Keith Payne. Keith was awarded his VC for gallantry during the Vietnam War, where he located and rescued 40 men after an attack, while struggling with his own injuries and avoiding enemy fire. Keith is the last living recipient of the original imperial VC and he is a living legend. I have had the good fortune of knowing Keith for over 20 years. Keith resides in Mackay. I used to manage a pub, and the guy who introduced me to Keith said, ‘Keith's a VC.' Being young and impressionable, I asked, 'What's a VC?’ As a result, I had to shout the bar. Keith's workload as a VC should also be recognised. He attends events on behalf of the RSL throughout the area. He has spent his time since retiring from the armed services as an active member in the veteran community. In particular, Keith has invested a lot of his time in counselling returned service men and women who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder—an issue which he feels continues to be ineffectively dealt with. Keith has said in the past that the battle for recognition of PTSD and other mental casualties of war is ongoing. He is truly an inspirational man who has given himself fully to his comrades at war and now to the RSL movement.

In my electorate is Canungra warfare training centre. There is a memorial there planted with small trees to emulate the forests they fought in in Vietnam. It is not uncommon to see Keith disappear into the scrub and sit quietly where he feels he can best connect with those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice.

Corporal Cameron Baird at a young age proved he was a truly inspirational man and made the greatest sacrifice for the safety of others and the freedom of our nation. To his father, Doug, his mother, Kaye, his brother, Brendan, and his nephews Riley and Max I offer my deep and heartfelt condolences. Our nation owes Corporal Cameron Baird and his family a debt that we can never repay. Mother Nature is not designed so that parents have to bury their children. It is a cruel injustice. An unintended consequence of this condolence motion is that it has made me put the face of my own daughter on that sacrifice. I would struggle as a parent to have to bury my own child. It must be a heart-wrenching experience for this family. However, this award places him in Australia's military history. Lest we forget.

Ms O'DWYER (Higgins) (11:26): I am deeply moved by the speeches I have heard in this chamber today and throughout the condolence motion. I associate myself with the comments
that have been made by my colleagues. I rise to speak about one of Australia's true heroes, Corporal Cameron Baird. Corporal Baird is the 100th Australian recipient of Australia's most prestigious medal awarded for valour in military action, the Victoria Cross. This is the highest military decoration for valour in the Commonwealth.

Corporal Baird's story is a truly remarkable one. Born in Burnie, Tasmania, in 1981, Corporal Baird was an avid athlete before he joined the army. He was a member of the Calder Cannons, a feeder team to the AFL, where only the best young players in the country have the opportunity to display their talents. As the world brought in a new millennium, a young Cameron Baird joined the armed forces. After completing his training he was posted to the 4th Battalion (Commando), Royal Australian Regiment. Corporal Baird would later go on to join the special forces. During his time in the armed forces he would serve in Timor-Leste, Iraq and Afghanistan. Incredibly, he served a tour in Afghanistan five times. His fifth tour of Afghanistan would prove to be his last.

Corporal Baird has been described as a natural leader, and it was while leading on the field of battle, tragically, that he lost his life. During an operation to secure an enemy position Corporal Baird valiantly stormed the compound, taking grenade and gunfire and drawing attention away from his comrades. This selfless act allowed his fellow special forces mates to take the position. It was a selfless act that cost Corporal Cameron Baird his life. This act of bravery was hardly surprising, given his previous actions in the field. Corporal Baird received numerous awards and citations and the deserved accolades that went with them. Not including this most recent recognition, Corporal Baird received the Medal for Gallantry; the Australian Active Service Medal with clasps East Timor, Iraq 2003 and International Coalition Against Terrorism; the Afghanistan Campaign Medal; the Iraq Campaign Medal; Australian Service Medal with Clasp Counter Terrorism/Special Recovery; the Australian Defence Medal; the United Nations Medal with Ribbon United Nations Transitional Authority in East Timor; the NATO non-article 5 Medal with Clasp ISAF and Multiple Tour Indicator 3; the Infantry Combat Badge; and the Returned from Active Service Badge. Corporal Baird joins other VC recipients from the Afghanistan war: Corporal Mark Donaldson VC, Corporal Benjamin Roberts-Smith VC, MG and Corporal Daniel Keighran VC. Corporal Baird is survived by his parents, Doug and Kaye, and his brother, Brendan.

I would like to share these words from David Harkins's poem entitled He is Gone with them:  
You can shed tears that he is gone  
Or you can smile because he has lived  
You can close your eyes and pray that he will come back  
Or you can open your eyes and see all that he has left  
Your heart can be empty because you can't see him  
Or you can be full of the love that you shared  
You can turn your back on tomorrow and live yesterday  
Or you can be happy for tomorrow because of yesterday  
You can remember him and only that he is gone  
Or you can cherish his memory and let it live on  
You can cry and close your mind, be empty and turn your back
Or you can do what he would want: smile, open your eyes, love and go on.

Mr and Mrs Baird and the entire Baird family: we, on behalf of the Australian people, give thanks for your son. Your son is a hero and, although no words will ever bring him back, we take solace in the knowledge that his actions saved many others so that other families need not share a similar pain. We grieve with you and acknowledge your terrible sacrifice. Corporal Cameron Baird VC, MG—lest we forget.

**Mr CHESTER** (Gippsland—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence) (11:30): I join with colleagues on both sides of the chamber to speak in relation to Corporal Cameron Stewart Baird VC, MG, and I say at the outset, on behalf of the people of Gippsland, that I would like to extend my personal condolences to Corporal Baird's family and associate myself with the remarks of many other speakers who have spoken in a very emotional and moving way in relation to his extraordinary service to our nation.

Corporal Baird was on his fifth special forces tour when he was killed in action. He was the 40th Australian soldier to be killed in Afghanistan. His unit, the 2nd Commando Regiment, incurred the highest casualties of any Australian unit during the Afghanistan campaign, and it is a testimony to the gruelling operational tempo of that distinguished unit.

Corporal Baird's acts of valour and self-sacrifice preserved the lives of his team members. His actions were of the highest order, and in keeping with the finest traditions of the Australian Army and the Australian Defence Force. He was the 100th recipient of the Victoria Cross, and it could not have been more appropriately awarded.

The Victoria Cross is not an honour that people actively seek out. The Victoria Cross has been described as a golden thread linking acts of extraordinary courage and selflessness. As the citation reads, Corporal Baird's Victoria Cross is:

For the most conspicuous acts of valour, extreme devotion to duty and ultimate self-sacrifice at Ghawchak village, Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan …

as a Commando Team leader. As one of his comrades testified: 'By disregarding his own safety numerous times in order to assault a heavily armed and fortified enemy position, Corporal Baird's courage and resolve provided the tipping point. His repeated attempts to attack that room with six insurgents inside was the bravest event that I have ever seen.' And they are strong words when the bravest of the brave speaks so highly of one of their fallen comrades. As Prime Minister Tony Abbott said in his address last week:

Our country has lost a citizen, a soldier, a hero.

Fittingly, the Chief of Defence announced yesterday that the Australian headquarters at Al Minhad Air Base in the United Arab Emirates will be renamed Camp Baird in memory of Corporal Baird's self-sacrifice.

As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence, I am acutely aware of how precious these awards are to the serving members and their families. It is important that we do recognise their service and acknowledge these moments of extreme bravery and sacrifice. I think it is also fitting that this parliament pauses and expresses its views and support on behalf of their constituents.

It is the former Liberal leader Brendan Nelson who once said in this place words to the effect that there is no greater service to our nation than to put on the uniform of our Army, Navy or Air Force and place yourself in harm's way. As I meet with more members of the
Australian Defence Force on a daily basis, I am constantly struck by two things. The first is their age—it must be a sign of my accumulated birthdays that I am constantly struck by the youthfulness of the men and women in the Australian Army, Navy and Air Force. The other thing that strikes me as I meet with our defence personnel is their dedication: they have remarkable values of courage, honesty and commitment to duty, and they are extraordinarily professional and they are dedicated to the job they have chosen to do.

I also have responsibility, in my role, for the Australian Defence Force honours and awards, within my portfolio. I receive daily correspondence from serving members and their families detailing the courage of our Australian defence forces. I would like to thank Doug, Kaye and the Baird family for lending their medal to the Australian War Memorial. There probably can be no better example of a bittersweet moment for the Baird family than to have lost their dearly loved son but have seen the outpouring of support from a grateful nation which has expressed its thanks with its highest possible military honour. As Prime Minister Abbott remarked at his address at the Victoria Cross investiture ceremony, 'We will always draw strength from his actions, for we are a nation of memory not just of memorials.' The medal will be displayed in the Hall of Valour, for young Australians to learn about the actions of Corporal Baird and his unit and to serve as a reminder of the courage and selflessness of serving Australian men and women.

Lest we forget.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: As a mark of respect to the memory of Corporal Cameron Baird, I ask members to stand in silence.

Honourable members having stood in their places—

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (11:35): I move:

That the Federation Chamber do now adjourn.

Petition: Food Colouring Additives

Petition: Use of Pesticides

Ms PARKE (Fremantle) (11:35): I rise to make some remarks in relation to two petitions that I have been asked to lodge on behalf of concerned Western Australians and I hereby table those petitions.

The first petition was brought to my attention by a young man in my electorate, Leeuwin Prince-Ruiz, who is concerned about the impact of certain food colouring additives, and it calls for regulatory changes that would mean the use of such additives could only occur with appropriate warning labels. The second petition, by Alexandra Jones, a resident of Nedlands, concerns the use of pesticides. Both petitions go to the general issue of our potential exposure to chemicals; to the proper regulation of such chemicals, especially where they have the potential to affect our health; and to the appropriate disclosure of their presence.

I am sure all members of this place are pleased when they meet or hear from young people who are engaged in matters of public policy. So, naturally, it was fantastic to be approached by Leeuwin, with his strong interest in the issue of food additives and their health risks, especially for young people. Leeuwin's petition is clear and to the point. It notes that six food
colourings which are commonly used in a range of food products available in Australia, and which are most commonly present in foods designed for consumption by children, have been found to be associated with hyperactivity and behavioural problems. It notes that the food standards regulator in the European Union has required that foods containing these colouring additives carry a warning which informs people that such ingredients may cause hyperactivity, and it calls on Australia's food regulator, Food Standards Australia New Zealand, to introduce the same requirement.

I am aware that FSANZ has considered the issue of food colouring additives and has taken account of the Southampton study referred to in the petition, while noting the European Food Safety Authority's more recent view that the available evidence is unclear. Nevertheless, European food labels do carry the warning and I support Leeuwin's position, based on the precautionary principle that this is an area that merits ongoing scrutiny and consideration of a precautionary label in future.

I have spoken a number of times on the importance of accurate and informative food labelling. It is always strange to hear arguments against market transparency in the form of labelling requirements. These include the claim that proper labelling constitutes the unnecessary intervention of the 'nanny state'. But markets operate best when people are properly informed in making their choices from a range of competitive options. This is precisely the way in which markets are supposed to deliver the best outcome, in addition to doing so with the most efficient use of resources. If you take the position that manufacturers ought to be able to put products into the market without providing transparent information about that product, especially its health risks and in addition you take the position that manufacturers ought to be able to issue unregulated and inaccurate claims about the benefits of their product, and that consumers should simply take their chances in the face of both that secrecy and that misrepresentation, that is not a 'pro-market' position; that is simply the law of the jungle. The position you support is 'anything goes', and that is unconscionable. Once again I congratulate Leeuwin Prince-Ruiz for his insightful petition.

The second petition relates to the use of pesticides and herbicides, and specifically to the practice of chemical weeding undertaken by local and state government authorities. The petition has been formed and circulated by the Pesticide Action Group WA, and I am grateful to Alex Jones for bringing it to my attention on the group's behalf. The group has grown particularly concerned with the decision of the Nedlands local council to change from a steam-weeding regime to the more risky use of pesticides. Chemical treatment of weeds involves the use of pesticides, such as glyphosate, which pose known health risks and which can persist in the local environment. Glyphosate is known to break down into chemicals that can be more mobile and toxic than glyphosate itself.

Because of their propensity to adhere to soil, dust and hard surfaces these pesticides present a risk of leaching into local drains, streams and rivers through run-off. That means chemicals can find their way into water systems, including the Swan and Canning Rivers in metropolitan Perth.

The attraction to chemical means of weed control is chiefly in relation to cost savings and, apparently, the return to the use of pesticides by the Nedlands Council has produced an annual saving of some $83,000. The petitioners argue that such savings do not take into account the public health and environmental costs of pesticides and that is a very legitimate argument.
The Pesticide Action Group WA has voiced its opposition to chemical weeding through the local government channels available to them without success and, therefore, clearly feels that wider investigation and action on this issue is necessary.

The petition calls for a royal commission to consider the use of pesticides by local and state governments, and the related risks and harm to public health and the environment.

When it comes to the issue of pesticides, I agree that further research and analysis should occur, especially in relation to their use in highly populated areas, and where food production and water ecosystems are involved.

**Ovarian Cancer**

Ms GAMBARO (Brisbane) (11:40): Yesterday was Teal Ribbon Day, an internationally recognised day to raise greater awareness of ovarian cancer. Ovarian cancer is one of the most commonly diagnosed gynaecological cancers in Australia. It is expected that around 1,400 Australian women will be diagnosed with ovarian cancer this year. That equates to approximately one Australian woman being diagnosed every eight hours. Like all diseases, ovarian cancer does not just affect individuals; it affects families and communities.

In 2011, ovarian cancer was the most common cause of gynaecological cancer death among Australian women, affecting hundreds of families who lost a mother, a grandmother, a sister, a daughter or an aunt. That is a significant cost to one, let alone hundreds of Australian families.

In 2007 this very parliament lost one of its own to ovarian cancer and I lost a good friend and colleague. From the time she set foot in parliament in 1996, Senator Jeannie Ferris was a tireless campaigner for increasing awareness, particularly among women, of gynaecological cancers. She never stopped fighting to raise awareness and secure funding for research into gynaecological cancers.

As a senator for South Australia, she used her natural charm and influence across both sides of politics to initiate a far-reaching inquiry into gynaecological cancers, which resulted in increased funding. When asked publicly about her involvement in the inquiry, she said it was:

… a very clear example of Senate women coming together to work on an issue.

Her determination and persistence saw increases in funding for cancer research, including a federal grant of $1 million in February 2007 to Cancer Australia to establish a new centre for the study of women's cancers. Sadly, senator Jeannie Ferris passed away in April that very same year.

She was first diagnosed with ovarian cancer—often called 'the silent killer'—in 2005 but continued to work to raise awareness right up until her death. In 2013 a tribute to her work was created in the Jeannie Ferris Cancer Australia Recognition Award, which was established by Cancer Australia. This award recognises outstanding contributions to improving outcomes for women with gynaecological cancers.

This Friday, to continue the theme of Teal Ribbon Day, I am hosting a 'Morning Teal' for ovarian cancer in my electorate of Brisbane. We are extremely fortunate that our guest speaker at Friday's morning tea, Dr Michael Gattas, is one of the world's foremost experts on ovarian cancer. Dr Michael Gattas is a renowned clinical geneticist. I am grateful that he has
made the time in his very busy schedule to help increase awareness and understanding of this disease. Our best prevention is greater awareness, understanding the disease and its symptoms, and encouraging other women to do the same. All proceeds from the event are going to Ovarian Cancer Australia to continue the great work that they do in educating and informing women about this disease.

I am dedicating the event to my late friend senator Jeannie Ferris, because increasing understanding and awareness of this disease and early detection were key areas of concern to her. Jeannie was particularly concerned about the fact that too few women failed to understand that Pap smear tests do not identify ovarian cancer. There is still no screening test for ovarian cancer.

According to Ovarian Cancer Australia, around one in five Australian women cannot name one symptom of the disease. This statistic is made more tragic when you realise that more than two-thirds of women diagnosed with ovarian cancer are at an advanced stage, making successful treatment difficult. But it is never too late to help prevent another life lost to this disease. Indeed, it is never too late to educate ourselves about detection and prevention because the risk of developing ovarian cancer increases with age.

Ovarian cancer is not a silent disease because there are symptoms. Every Australian woman needs to be aware of these: abdominal or pelvic pain, increased abdominal size or persistent abdominal bloating, needing to urinate often or urgently, feeling full after eating a small amount. There are plenty of avenues of support, and that is something that we women do best. I applaud the work of Ovarian Cancer Australia and their efforts to raise awareness of the disease so that, as we have done with cervical cancer, Australia can help lead the way in reducing the incidence and preserving the lives of more and more Australian women. Prevention begins with greater awareness.

**Renewable Energy Target**

Mr KELVIN THOMSON (Wills) (11:46): If anyone was inclined to believe this government had any intention of promoting the use of renewable energy then the terms of reference for the inquiry into the renewable energy target announced by the Minister for the Environment on 17 February—10 days ago—should disabuse them of that notion. A senior Liberal was more to the point when he recently told the ABC that the purpose of the inquiry was, 'Let's kill the RET.'

Given the extreme weather that we have been seeing—heatwaves, bushfires, drought—one would expect that any examination of the effect of the renewable energy target would see carbon dioxide emissions at the top of the list of the terms of reference. However, it is not there at all. We find, instead, is that the inquiry will focus almost entirely on the effect that the renewable energy target is having on power bills. Let me note that the Prime Minister preempted the findings of the inquiry by claiming that the RET scheme is significantly increasing electricity prices. He said in November last year:

... not only is the carbon tax adding about 9 per cent to everyone’s power bills, and we’re going to get rid of that as quickly as we can, renewable energy targets are also significantly driving up power prices right now.

This is a claim that we should examine. I invite the House and the Prime Minister to read the Australian Energy Market Commission’s final report, for 2010-11 to 2013-14 on retail...
electricity price estimates. It stated, 'The impact of the carbon price at the national level is approximately six per cent in 2013-14.' The commission went on to state, explicitly, that the renewable energy target made a three per cent contribution to national price increases.

That report went on to detail the contributors to the national price increase in electricity for the years 2012-13 to 2013-14. The small-scale renewable energy scheme had a -0.8 per cent impact on prices. The large-scale renewable energy target had a 3.8 per cent impact on prices. The feed-in tariff and similar state based schemes had a 5.1 per cent impact on prices. The transmission system accounted for six per cent of the price increases. The retail side was 12 per cent of increases. The distribution side contributed 33.6 per cent and the wholesale side contributed 40.2 per cent. So, it is clear that the impact of the carbon price was minimal compared to the aggregate increase of 92 per cent for transmission, retail, distribution and wholesale costs. The real question is: if the government is genuinely concerned about the increasing price of electricity why has it set up an inquiry into the origins of the 3.8 per cent increase of the renewable energy target and overlooked the 90-plus per cent increase coming from other sources? By all means, let's have an inquiry into electricity prices but let's look at the real drivers: gold-plating of the poles and wires.

The Prime Minister is not alone in failing to read that report. There was a speech last year by the now Minister for the Environment, who said

According to the New South Wales IPART in the year just past we had an 18 per cent price rise in New South Wales electricity, of which nine per cent was the carbon tax—10 per cent on average around the country—and 0.3 per cent came from the renewable energy target ...

So, according to the environment minister, in June last year the renewable energy target added 0.3 per cent, or perhaps three per cent, to the price of electricity. Yet somehow, according to the Prime Minister in November, 'renewable energy targets are also significantly driving up power prices right now'. It is just nonsense.

If the claim that the renewable energy target is adding just 0.3 per cent or even three per cent to the price of power, what is the government's real justification for this inquiry? Indeed, there is research suggesting that renewable energy is helping to meet demand at peak times, such as during the recent heat waves, and therefore putting downward pressure on electricity prices. I congratulate the ACT government, which is far more forward looking, on the initiatives that it has just announced to lift the renewable energy target. It should be congratulated on its foresight and its commitment to giving us a liveable world in the future and not a world dominated by heat waves, droughts and bushfires. If the federal government wants to have an inquiry into electricity prices, I urge it to make sure that it is a serious inquiry that covers all the things that are impacting on electricity prices.

Closing the Gap

Ms O’DWYER (Higgins) (11:51): I take this opportunity in the adjournment debate to support the statement made by the Prime Minister during his inaugural Closing the Gap address.

Aristotle is often quoted as saying, 'You can judge a nation by the way it treats its most vulnerable citizens'. In Australia we do care for the most vulnerable in our society. We have a safety net for people who, through circumstance, are unable to care appropriately for themselves or their family without some support. With this in mind, it is deeply troubling that
there are still people who live in poverty and violence in Australia. A disproportionately high number of these people come from Indigenous communities. They are our fellow Australians. In one of the wealthiest nations in the world there is a whole subset of society that lives in third-world conditions.

Much has been said about the supposed rancour and acrimony that exists between the two major parties. And, yes, at times parliament can descend into what appears to be nothing more than a slanging match across the dispatch box. However, one thing I never question is the sincerity of all members in this place when it comes to wanting to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous living standards. That is why the Prime Minister paid appropriate tribute to Kevin Rudd for his foresight with the Closing the Gap report. I would like to echo those sentiments.

There is no doubt at all that the current Prime Minister is as equally dedicated to improving Indigenous welfare as his predecessors. Beyond his many years working in remote Indigenous communities he wants to be known as a Prime Minister for Aboriginal affairs. In so doing he has moved Indigenous affairs into the portfolio of Prime Minister and Cabinet as well as dedicating one week of the year, every year, for cabinet to work in Indigenous communities. The Prime Minister has also made it clear that he does not want our government to be measured by how many words we say on this topic but rather on the outcomes that we achieve together. That is why in Closing the Gap we will feature a seventh test to benchmark our results on: school attendance. As the Prime Minister said in his statement, 'No one ever received a good education by not going to school.’ Education is the key to long-term, intergenerational improvement within Indigenous communities. After all, your chances of getting and holding a job are almost negligible without an education. And without a job, you cannot improve your economic circumstances.

I know that in my own electorate of Higgins there are a number of independent schools that now offer scholarships for Indigenous students. These students receive a top education throughout their secondary years and often go on to further their studies at university. Their job prospects are very strong. It is this value for the educational experience and culture of learning that we need to embed in Indigenous communities.

The Closing the Gap report does have some good news. The target of having 95 per cent of remote children enrolled for preschool has almost been met. In addition to this, the target to halve the gap in year 12 attainment by 2020 is also on track. However, in other areas the progress has not been as successful. Life expectancy is still about a decade apart between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. There has been very little change over the years. This is despite the fact that there has been significantly increased funding over those years, particularly between 2009 and 2012, when there was a 56 per cent increase in spending. Indigenous employment has also gone backwards. This is another key challenge, one that was at the forefront of the Prime Minister's mind when he formed the Prime Minister's Indigenous Advisory Council led by Warren Mundine. There is still so much work to be done, and we have to be prepared to countenance some radical options.

I would like to conclude by revisiting part of my maiden speech, which I gave in this place just on four years ago. In that speech, I said:

Basic fairness and compassion mean a strong social safety net is essential, but I want as few people as possible to rely on it. In particular, we need to break the nexus of intergenerational welfare dependency,
a problem tragically apparent in some of our Indigenous communities and, equally tragically, not confined to there. Our policies must encourage self-reliance and resilience.

This is what we will work towards in this parliament and the next, and we will be, rightly, judged on what we achieve.

Vietnamese Senior Citizens Group of Hume

Ms VAMVAKINOU (Calwell) (11:56): Firstly, I would like to associate myself with the comments of the member for Brisbane, especially insofar as they relate to our former colleague the late Senator Jeannie Ferris. As an indication of how friendships can be formed amongst people from both sides of the fence in this place, Jeannie and I travelled together. In my first term, when I became the member for Calwell, both she and I were IPU delegates and I had the opportunity to get to know Jeannie very well and become good friends with her. She was a woman who was as beautiful as she was larger than life. Her battle with ovarian cancer touched many of us and she is missed, I am certain, by her family but also by all of us who had the opportunity to know her and to work with her.

Today I wish to speak about a celebration that I attended recently in my electorate, the Vietnamese Senior Citizens Group in Meadow Heights, who I join annually for their New Year celebrations. This year is of course the year of the horse. These celebrations are always a feast of cultural tradition and great food, and on that day I left with copious amounts of traditional Vietnamese cuisine, which I should say my son enjoyed thoroughly. I would like to talk about the Vietnamese community in my electorate. In particular I want to talk about the people in the community who work as volunteers to service and take care of the social needs of the community. As late as 2013 there were approximately 1,200 Australian citizens of Vietnamese background living in Calwell, and about 200 of those have reached the age of 60 and above. Most of them have been socially and economically disadvantaged and for years have been living in isolation or in self-imposed social exclusion, largely because of language barriers and cultural differences, and of course because of ill health. More so, for those who are elderly the loss of their partners has added to this isolation, and transport difficulties mean that they are not able to get around as easily as they want to.

In terms of language and social deficiencies, many of them rely on social activities that are put together for them—in this case, by the Vietnamese Senior Citizens Group. The Vietnamese Senior Citizens Group of Hume was founded in 1995, and its main purpose is to assist Vietnamese citizens, or Australians of Vietnamese background, to integrate into mainstream Australian society, while assisting them to maintain their cultural heritage. But, more importantly, the group exists in order to mitigate against social isolation or self-imposed social exclusion and, above all, to help people live a healthier and safe life. The group also works to inform citizens of their rights and obligations and to provide mutual support for them.

During the 18 years of the group's existence, it has assisted older Vietnamese Australians and has done a terrific job. In many cases it provides cultural and welfare support because often it is left having to deal with a lot of the difficulties. I want to commend the group for conducting over 300 social gatherings and 20 information sessions and providing 300 hours of assistance with matters that involve translation and interpreting services. They have conducted over 200 visits to members who are in stressful home situations and they support their members during times of grievance and at funerals. They even provide basic English
classes and they run a wonderful physical education program which involves tai chi, walking and lots of other things that are of great use to the elderly in particular. Importantly for all of us who love eating, they have conducted 25 cooking lessons of Vietnamese traditional cuisine.

I want to thank president Danh Duc Tran and his wonderful wife, Gia, for their commitment, vice president Mr Lieu Van Nguyen, secretary Mr Duong Van Nguyen and treasurer Mr Cong Chinh Vu for the amazing work they do for the Vietnamese community.

**Casey Electorate: School Leaders**

Mr **TONY SMITH** (Casey) (12:01): I rise today to make mention of a number of school leaders in the Casey electorate. As all members here know, leadership presentations are an important time for our local schools, and last Friday I had the privilege of congratulating school leaders and presenting certificates and badges at their assemblies. First, to Ruskin Park Primary School in Croydon, I have had the pleasure of being at this leadership presentation every year since my election back in 2001 with principal Elle May Laikve. I want to make mention of the school captains, Emma Williamson and Josh Tilker; the house captains for Red House, Margot Toynton and Connor Tisch; Blue House, Maija Siljander and Jaydyn Carter McMurtry; Green House, Alicia Woodman and Alan Lopez; and Gold House, Wendy Wang and Cooper Foulis.

The Casey electorate, Mr Deputy Speaker, as you well know, is a very diverse electorate of about two and half thousand kilometres of outer suburbs and country areas encompassing the Yarra Valley. Later in the morning I travelled to Dixons Creek Primary School in the heart of the Yarra Valley, a small, historic country primary school that is very much the hub of the local community there. Dixons Creek is an area that came into the Casey electorate following the redistribution after the 2010 election. Those members from Victoria, two of whom are with me here today, will know that Dixons Creek was one of those areas affected by the Black Saturday fires. It is north of Yarra Glen on the way to Yea. The principal, Sharon Walker, and her staff are obviously doing a fantastic job. The captain, Harrison Phelan, and the vice-captain, Tameka Fossey, were presented with their leadership certificates and badges at the special school assembly to pay tribute to them. I want to mention the great work that the teachers are doing in those schools, their parents, and their school leaders who have the job for the year, trying to make their schools the very best they can be.

**Fatal Dog Attacks**

Dr **LEIGH** (Fraser) (12:04): More often than we like we are confronted by the hurt, loss, guilt and confusion that bleeds out through families and communities after a fatal dog attack.

Three years ago in Victoria a group of children were playing in their front garden. At the same time, a neighbour's hunting dog had found its way free from its yard. The dog was agitated by the activity and noises of the children, and its instincts took over. It began to stalk the children. As they ran from it, it pursued them into the family home. When the mother of one of the children tried to fight it off, the dog focused its attack on her four-year-old daughter. Unfazed by the mother's efforts to drive it off, the dog began to maul the young girl; the mother was helpless. It was only when the child stopped struggling that the attack began to subside. Then the dog returned calmly to the yard. Paramedics soon attended, but only to
take the dead child from her home. They would later reassure the mother that her daughter's
death had been quick.

Tragedies of this kind confound the community. Since the year 2000 there have been
around two deaths annually from dog attacks, and typically the victims are children under
five. Children are the least aware of how to behave around dogs and the most vulnerable to
the severest consequences of attack. The event I have described prompted a change in the
Victorian state laws to recognise the accountability of dog owners and to match the extreme
consequences of negligence with fitting penalties. It also prompted former Attorney-General
Robert McClelland to acknowledge that the time had come for the federal government to
work with states and territories to establish uniform dog laws.

Sharing our lives with dogs makes us happier, healthier, better at making friends and more
empathetic to others. But dogs are not born tame, and dogs and people do not always
understand each other, so living with them involves risks. Fatal dog attacks are very rare.
They are the extreme consequence of a more commonplace problem. But the horror stories—
—the needless, senseless tragedies and the haunted, shattered families they leave behind—
stay with us. They are hard to ignore and even harder to forget. The kind of intense
community engagement and political investment that flares up in response to high profile dog
attacks can be productive—but only to a point. We should draw on the shock and dismay we
share with suffering families to galvanise a commitment to get the solution right. Then, with
cool heads, we should gather facts, listen to the experts and collect evidence about what
works.

The facts show that a more widespread problem underlies the headlines. While two people
a year die from dog attacks, around four people every day are hospitalised by dog-bite
injuries. That is 1,400 victims annually, and these 1,400 cases are only the most severe of the
14,000 dog-bite victims who present to emergency departments each year. Add to them the
cases who take their injuries to a GP and you end up with around 100,000 dog-bite incidents
per year. The Australian Companion Animal Council estimates that each year we spend $7
million patching up victims of dog bite injuries.

So what are the experts saying? They are now telling us that local and state initiatives must
feed into and be guided by consistent national regulations, by consistent conditions of
enforcement and by clear expectations about owner accountability. Around the country we
have a patchwork of regulatory frameworks which have often crystallised suddenly in
reaction to a single incident. These approaches are a banked fund of policy capital. But they
have been generated in isolation and stored separately; what we need to do now is to pool our
capital. Doing so, as Mr McClelland saw, requires the guiding hand of the federal Attorney-
General. The process of establishing a framework for productive collaboration across all
levels of government still has some way to go, and it is Senator Brandis who must now
provide the guiding hand.

Across states and territories there have been moves in the right direction. Dangerous-dog
laws have been updated in New South Wales and Victoria, and in the ACT classifications
made by any other jurisdiction are recognised as if they were issued by territory authorities.
But, if the experts are right that clarity and consistency are critical to solving the problem of
dangerous dogs, the first step must be a set of guidelines which do not change when we cross
a state or territory border.
What about evidence? We do not have enough of it. That, too, is why federal oversight of a nationally coordinated strategy is crucial. We can look at evidence from strategies trialled across the world and learn, for instance, that banning specific breeds does not reduce dog attacks; but our own record-keeping is fragmented and incomplete. One of the fundamental building blocks of a national strategy should be a national register of dog bites—a database to track incident rates countrywide. Without reliable data, how can we know the extent of the problem or which measures are working to reduce it? Authorities need clear guidelines from enforcement. Our children and our communities deserve better than a make-do patchwork of local law.

The strategies which would serve to reduce dog attacks are not complicated. But, without the national consistency Commonwealth oversight can deliver, a meaningful and long-term approach to education, prevention and regulation is impossible.

**Second Sydney Airport**

Mr MATHESON (Macarthur) (12:09): I rise today to represent the people of Macarthur and communicate their concerns over the government's proposal to build a second Sydney airport at Badgerys Creek. Badgerys Creek is situated in my electorate, and there are many neighbouring suburbs in close proximity to the proposed flight zone for this airport. As the voice of Macarthur, I would like to reaffirm my opposition to a second airport at Badgerys Creek on behalf of my constituents. As one can imagine, the proposed development of a second international airport in the vicinity of a developing residential area has the potential to significantly alter the amenity and quality of life of all residents in Macarthur, as well as in the greater Western Sydney region.

Whilst the proposed airport at Badgerys Creek is anticipated by advocates to deliver social and economic benefits to Western Sydney, we are yet to see details outlining the scale of the project or the economic, environmental and operational impacts it will have on the region. Residents of Macarthur have many questions for the government, but they have not yet been provided with adequate answers or details.

A key issue for Macarthur residents is whether the airport will contribute to growth in local employment, as many advocates have promised. I am all for more jobs, but there is little or no detail on exactly what jobs will be created and where they will be located. So, I ask the government: how realistic is this forecast and what jobs does it guarantee for Macarthur residents? An analysis prepared by Deloitte Access Economics for the NSW Business Chamber forecast that a Western Sydney airport would generate close to an additional 30,000 jobs for the Sydney region overall. However, when these projected figures are put in perspective, we are talking about 30,000 jobs over 40 years, and that is not even 1,000 jobs a year.

Infrastructure is another major concern highlighted by my constituents. The good people of Macarthur want to know how the government plans to deal with and fund pretty much non-existent road and rail infrastructure that south-western and Western Sydney will need to cope with a second Sydney airport. If infrastructure is not executed in an effective and timely manner, there is the potential to severely disrupt the local and regional economy, business productivity and everyday lives of people in south-west Sydney and Macarthur.

Another key question raised by my electorate is how the government plans to regulate noise levels, as flight paths will affect residential areas in various directions in the region. Of
the three runway alignment options suggested in the 1990s, I believe it is only option A—two parallel runways on a north-east access—that would have the least impact on the amenity of local residents. This issue was raised by landowners with previous state Labor governments, when land was being released for urban development within the south-west growth centre. As I have done before, I call for the Western Sydney Airport Alliance, the group that has been campaigning forcefully for an airport, to be honest with my community about the other two runway options, which would have a much greater impact for Macarthur residents. It is critical that we look into the serious impacts the airport would have on the quality of the life of those residents moving to the south-west growth centre, particularly in areas such as Oran Park, Gregory Hills, Harrington Grove, Harrington Park and East Leppington. It will be interesting to see any proposed business case to prove the sustainability of a second Sydney airport. We still do not know if it is going to be privately owned or a public-private entity.

Macarthur residents are seriously concerned about the long-term operational viability of an airport located outside the Sydney CBD. Unlike Sydney's current airport, Badgerys Creek is not an accessible location for tourists and business people, or a location that provides for safe and quiet departures. Before spending billions of dollars on a second airport, I urge the government to seriously review and update Sydney airport's maximum operating capacity. Sydney airport currently operates with a number of artificial, government-imposed restrictions that prevent it from maximising or even operating to its full capacity, and these restrictions have undergone little or no reform since 1997 when first implemented. The approved aircraft list has not been updated since 2005, and since then many quieter, new generation aircraft have entered the market but cannot be used. Data provided by Sydney Airport Corporation show that with a slight aircraft movement and slot management reform Sydney airport would be able to significantly improve operational performance and increase its ability to maximise noise sharing opportunities.

At this stage a decision has not been made, but I do hope that the government will take the concerns of my electorate seriously. I commend and welcome the recent move by Prime Minister Abbott to assemble federal Western Sydney MPs on a special committee. This will allow us to give advice on the potential impacts that an airport at Badgerys Creek will have on our electorates. It will also allow us to report the concerns of our constituents to the Prime Minister and the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure and, ideally, gain some understanding of what will be proposed for Badgerys Creek airport. It is time to provide my community with the details that have been lacking from this proposal. There are livelihoods at stake, and the people of Macarthur deserve some answers.


**Medicare**

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Throsby) (12:14): This year is the 30th anniversary of the establishment of Medicare by the Hawke government. It was established on the principle that all Australians, no matter what their background or circumstances, should have equal access to health care. For many it has been lifesaving. When Medicare was introduced Australia did not have a universal healthcare system. As Prime Minister, Bob Hawke warned that without it two million people faced potential financial ruin in the event of a major illness.

With the 30th anniversary of this important national institution, we on this side of the House fervently hope that it enjoys a 35th birthday, because for regions like mine it really makes a difference. In my electorate we have a higher than national average incidence of a lot
of chronic diseases—diabetes, for example. The instance of sufferers of diabetes as a national average is around about 5.6 per cent of the population. In the Illawarra region it is around 6 to 6.5 per cent, close to one per cent above the national average. In my view, the government has a responsibility to make sure that patients like these have access to primary care, because if we have learnt anything about dealing with chronic health conditions over the last decade it is about ensuring that people have access to decent primary care, and that includes access to their general practitioner.

Slugging these patients with additional charges to visit their GP is not the answer. It appears that everyone but this government understands this point. Providing universal access to GPs is an opportunity to ensure that we are able to detect these conditions before they take hold. It is an opportunity for the general practitioner to sit down and put in place a health plan for the person who is at risk of contracting a chronic health condition. Ultimately, we all save money by these sorts of intervention.

We are seeing a pattern unfold where the government has consistently said one thing before the election and then after the election done a completely different thing. Before the election the Prime Minister said he would not introduce any new taxes, but now we are seeing a dressed-up tax. The proposal for a $6 surcharge is nothing more than a GP tax. It is nothing more than providing another tax on the services that are provided by our GPs when somebody wants to visit their GP. Not only is the GP tax a broken promise to every Australian; it is a tax that is going to hit our health system hard. It will have a knock-on effect for hospitals, because people who cannot afford to go to their GP will go to the emergency department of the local hospital. It will clog up the hospitals, the waiting lists will get even longer and the public health bill will get even higher. If we know anything about the incidence of cost shifting, we know that it is a lot cheaper for us to treat a patient in a GP surgery than in an emergency facility at a general hospital.

This is a cruel tax that will hurt families right across the country. And it is going to have a big impact in my electorate. We have seen an increase in bulk-billing rates over the last six years in the Illawarra area, and in Throsby in particular. In my electorate 91.7 per cent of all GP visits are bulk billed.

Mr Danby: What percentage?

Mr STEPHEN JONES: It is 91.7 per cent, member for Melbourne Ports. There is a reason for that. The general practitioners in my area understand that the cohort of patients in my area require bulk-billing in order to have access to GP services and primary health care. It is a cruel tax which is going to impact directly on people like this, and I suspect that I will not be the only person who will stand in this place to raise these sorts of concerns.

In the House a few days ago we heard the Prime Minister utter that he was the best friend that Medicare has ever had. All I can say, Mr Deputy Speaker, is that with friends like this Medicare does not need enemies.

Mills, Mr Terence Kennedy (Terry)

Mrs GRIGGS (Solomon) (12:19): I rise today to pay tribute to my good friend the former Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, Terry Mills. As some might be aware, Terry announced last week his retirement from politics to pursue a different interest, and his decision was effective immediately. My husband, Paul, and I have known Terry for many
years and consider him a very good friend. He had and still has an enormously high profile around Palmerston, and he was a friendly face at the markets, the local shopping centres and many community events in Palmerston. He was always up for a chat. He shared a joke and liked to discuss issues that were affecting the lives of workers, families and businesses around Palmerston. But it was during the very protracted campaign to have a hospital built in Palmerston that we were fortunate enough to really get to know him particularly well.

It was at one of the very first community meetings at the CMAX cinema that I remember Terry making a compelling case for why a new hospital at Palmerston should be built. We all agreed with him when he outlined a staged model for the proposed hospital. He spoke of a methodology required to obtain Commonwealth funding, and he organised a petition that eventually attracted 15,000 signatures. That was about half the population in Palmerston at the time.

At the time, there was incredible resistance within the Northern Territory government. They were a Labor government, and they really were opposed to the Palmerston Hospital, particularly when Terry announced in 2008, at the election, that the Country Liberals would start work on a hospital straightaway. The Labor government said it was a cruel hoax. We lost the election, but eventually community pressure was such that Labor were forced to come around, and of course they claimed that it was all their idea. They completely misread the community mood and failed to grasp the necessity of adding to the Territory's health infrastructure.

It was with enormous pride that, during the 2013 election campaign, I was able to work with my coalition colleagues to secure an additional $40 million to add to the $70 million already committed to fund the construction of a hospital in Palmerston. Terry's perseverance around this issue was not just a template of how to run a classic grassroots political campaign. The hospital was something that he felt was right and necessary and that the government should absolutely provide. That is why I am delighted to be associated with this very important project for our community.

Terry was a community politician in the classic sense. As much as anything, this was what helped him secure the Territory's top job of Chief Minister. Many people have said that nice people do not really make it in politics. In Terry's case, he was the exception to the rule. In 2008, in the election campaign I spoke of earlier, he took the Country Liberals from four seats to 11 seats, from a political rump on the verge of oblivion to within a heartbeat of power. In the four years leading up to the 2012 election, his team developed a suite of policies that enabled the Country Liberals to present an alternative, credible government. Notwithstanding the internal pressures his leadership sometimes faced, Terry was always positive and confident, and he believed that, if he continued to work hard, engage the community and treat people with respect, the cards would eventually fall his way. The night of the 2012 Territory election was undoubtedly the highlight of his political career, one of the high points in his life: leading the Country Liberals to government after 11 years of hard Labor.

I would like to finish by saying that I wish him and Ros all the very, very best for their life after politics. I would like to thank him and Ros for the support that he has provided me personally and also politically. I thank him for his support and friendship and wish them all the very, very best. On behalf of all Territorians, good luck.
4th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment: 50th Anniversary

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (12:24): On Saturday 2 February my wife Vicki and I attended the 50th anniversary reunion gala dinner of the 4th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, held at the Adelaide Entertainment Centre. It was a national event with attendees from around the country. Dignitaries included the South Australian Governor, His Excellency Kevin Scarce, and Mrs Scarce, and the event was superbly emceed by Adelaide ABC radio personality and friend of the defence veterans community in Adelaide, Peter Goers.

The 4th RAR was established at Woodside in Adelaide in 1964 after the commencement of the Vietnam War. The battalion completed two tours of duty in Vietnam, the first commencing in 1968 and the second in 1971. Not surprisingly, many of the people present at the dinner were Vietnam War veterans. The 4th RAR military involvement was not limited to Vietnam; it has also been associated with deployments in Malaysia, East Timor, Iraq and Afghanistan. Vietnam was nevertheless central to the reunion dinner and artist Ross Morgan was commissioned to paint what he thought best depicted the Vietnam war. He chose to paint a Chinook helicopter, and the painting was donated as a major prize on the night.

Australia's engagement in Vietnam was very different from other conflicts, not just because of the end result but also because of the controversial nature of the conflict and the political arguments both for and against our involvement. It was a war which divided our nation and left so much pain and suffering with so many Australian families. With few Australians left from the World War I and World War II eras, Vietnam has become the war that so many Australians can now identify with. Vietnam veterans are present in just about every community around the country. For so many of those veterans the suffering continues, particularly with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder.

As with all wars, Vietnam had its own uniqueness about it, and that uniqueness was very much associated with conscription, horrendous jungle warfare, the use of chemicals and a considerable loss of life and injury. Nothing encapsulates Australia's participation in the Vietnam war better than John Schumann's classic song I was only 19. At the reunion dinner, John sang a moving mention of the song, undoubtedly bringing back memories to the veterans present and receiving a standing ovation for his performance. I note that the song has now been produced in the form of a children's book, which was launched in Adelaide this week. It will be a terrific educational book. The term mateship is often used in association with defence personnel and the Australian identity. I can think of no better demonstration of mateship than that which exists amongst our Vietnam veterans. That is why the reunion dinner was so important and meant so much to those who were able to attend. It was about getting together with mates—people who meant so much to each other at such a crucial time of their lives and whom they will never forget even if they have since gone their separate ways.

Organising the 50th anniversary reunion dinner was of itself a huge commitment and I applaud the organising committee of Wayne Langford, Malcolm Love, Rod and Corrina Harris, Matthew Swan, Richard Scurrell, Jack Campbell and the Hon. Dorothy and Brian Kotz. I also acknowledge the entertainers on the night, Acoustic Juice, Linda McCarthy and the band of the 10th/27th Battalion RSAR, whose music choice and superb performances hit a chord with everyone present. It was an honour for Vicki and me to have been invited guests on the night, and we had a fantastic time not only mingling with so many of the people we
knew but also simply being part of a national event. The next national reunion dinner will be hosted by Townsville in 2017. There were people from Townsville in Adelaide and they committed to ensuring that that will also be a wonderful night for those who are able to get there. I extend my best wishes to the organising committee for the Townsville event in 2017.

Sunshine Coast: Employment

Mr BROUGH (Fisher) (12:29): As a member of the old 2nd/4th Battalion, I commend the member for Makin for his work and his words in the parliament today.

I am standing here today on behalf of the 8,400 15- to 19-year-olds on the Sunshine Coast who are unemployed. These are people who are, quite frankly, almost locked out of the workforce in a way that they do not wish to be.

The Sunshine Coast has a bright future economically. A lot of good things are happening. But, unfortunately, there are too many young people whose dreams and aspirations are not being met because they are not getting a start in life. I am sure that if you went around the 150 MPs in this place and the senators in the other place you would find so many of them started in the workplace in part-time work, often in kitchens or pumping petrol, as you used to once do—that was my first paid job; I actually worked in a shop for six years for my family business and I got paid with love from my mum!

An honourable member interjecting—

Mr BROUGH: Very valuable. And happy birthday to dad today, who is 80-something. I come back to this really important issue for the coast. We have a young population and we lose too many of them, who feel they have to go away for employment opportunities.

This week I received a letter from an employer who wants to employ more people but simply cannot. He owns one cafe; he had two. He had to close one of them and put off nine staff. I want to quote a few of the sentences that he wrote to me: 'The end result is that it costs around $50 per hour to employ a staff member on a public holiday, which many hospitality businesses just cannot afford. The rate now paid on Sundays is not a great deal less, which sees many hospitality businesses either begin to reduce opening hours—thus, this happens on both Saturdays and Sundays—or close altogether.' He concludes: 'When a business closes on a public holiday or a Sunday, due to the costs of penalty rates, no-one gains. The business owner gets no income but still needs to meet ongoing expenses, such as rent and power. The employees get no income and the government doesn't gain from taxes such as GST and PAYG that would have been raised for that day. Economically, no-one gains from this situation.'

To put a bit of meat on the bones, what does this actually mean in dollar terms? For a pharmacy worker, the current 19-year old, level 1 rate is $17.98 an hour, or $22.48 an hour for a casual. But come a public holiday, when the Sunshine Coast needs to be open to provide the ambience and the options that the public who go there for the beauty of its beaches and its hinterland want to experience, the rate is $49.45 an hour for that same 19-year-old, level 1 employee. It is the same in the hospitality industry. The wages go from $17.49, up to $48.10 an hour. No-one begrudges people getting those wages but if the business is not open then no-one gains, as the employer says.

I went on to do a little more research rather than just listening to anecdotal accounts. Red Rooster in its submission to Fair Work Australia included a submission that had been put
together by Deloittes. It found the following from its members: decrease in hours of operation during periods when penalty rates apply—49 per cent were franchisees; increase in operators' own working hours, 75 per cent were franchisees; decrease in the number of employees, 65 per cent were franchisees; and decrease in the hours offered to employees, 72 per cent.

Similarly, in the pharmacy industry where they did a similar survey: 54 per cent of pharmacists decreased their overall hours offered to employees; 62 per cent reported a decrease in the use of casual employees; 39 per cent reported the proprietor was working more hours; and 34 per cent reduced or ceased trading on public holidays. No-one wins when it is out of kilter. I am not against award wages being increased for acknowledgement of working after hours—penalty rates—but when they get out of kilter and people are locked out of the labour market we are denying people the start in life that they need. One fact we know is that any job is better than no job and that any job leads to a better job. And for the 6,500 young people on the Sunshine Coast who are locked out, that task has been made more challenging.

I put out my own survey in April last year and found that a large percentage of businesses, from butchers to bakers, from gift shop owners to restaurants, closed over Easter and reduced their hours. I was supported by the federal Labor candidate Bill Gissane, who said this: What I'm looking for is successful negotiation so businesses can prosper and the people who are employed in our service-based industries, who are among our lowest paid, are not disadvantaged … We need to do more for the youth of the Sunshine Coast and Australia by addressing this issue. (Time expired)

Employment

Ms BIRD (Cunningham) (12:34): I also want to talk about unemployment and jobs today. Indeed, my own area of the Illawarra was identified as the second-highest in New South Wales in a recent survey about youth unemployment. It is a very, very important issue that many of us face. I want to commence my comments by also expressing my own personal care and concern for thousands of workers who today are in a terribly difficult circumstance as a result of Qantas's announcements and the many hundreds who have been affected more recently by announcements in the automotive industry and Alcoa. Coming from the Illawarra, I and my colleague, the member for Throsby, went through this situation not all that long ago, with the restructuring of BlueScope. It is a good outcome for BlueScope in the long-term and there has been some good reporting for the current year, but it was a really tough time for hundreds of workers in our area. So I sincerely acknowledge that it is a particularly tough time for them now.

I want to report to the House that the member for Throsby and I attended on 19 February a jobs expo in the Illawarra. This was a really tremendous outcome. It directly flows from the investment that the Federal Labor government made in the area through the Illawarra Regional Innovation and Investment Fund, which was established following the BlueScope announcement, and the work of the local employment coordinator, Jane Robertson, on positions that were established for local employment priority areas by former Prime Minister Rudd at the time when the global financial crisis was hitting and we need to shore up employment opportunities in local areas. Jane and her team have been organising these job expos as a way to link the companies that got funding—and, indeed, any other companies in the area that had job opportunities—with job seekers in the local area. They had a tremendous
turn-out. Over 300 jobs were available as well as training places available on the day, and the expo was very well attended, as they always are.

I was able to catch up with four companies there who were direct recipients of the funding program under the Illawarra Regional Innovation and Investment Fund. It was a co-funding program. So the companies themselves were investing money in collaboration with the federal government and they were then obviously to create jobs out of that—that is the whole purpose of it. Four of those companies were there on the day with jobs available. Internet Solutions Australia Pty Ltd is a computer-based platforms company that is doing very well—not only Wollongong established and developed but also now trading internationally. They were targeted for six jobs for their particular program. Also there was Skydive the Beach, which is quite an alternate and very different type of program, involving jumping out of planes skydiving—something that they were trying to encourage me to undertake but I was pleased to see them prosper without my participation. They indicated to me that their target was 20 jobs and they are actually exceeding their target for recruiting people into that business. So that is another great story.

Superfine in Focus is a printing company—so still jobs and opportunities in the broader manufacturing sector. They do a lot of the mass printing that we would be familiar with around catalogues and things like that. They established in the Illawarra as a result of that fund. Their target was 190 jobs and they said that they are well on the way to that target. These are not only full-time jobs; they are also particularly targeting apprentices—which goes to the issue that the previous speaker was talking about in terms of those entry level opportunities into the job market for young people. They were very keen, though, to tell me that their apprentices have ranged from 18 to 56 years old. So they are also targeting and recruiting mature-age apprentices. That is great, because that is part of the story that we want to engage with the BlueScope workers about—that there would be opportunities for mature-age workers as well. South Coast Private Pty Ltd are a mental health facility, and they were there at the expo recruiting as well.

There were some good outcomes—recognising that these are tough times—and I want to acknowledge the great work of the local employment coordinator, AusIndustry and our Department of Human Services, who were all there to work on the day.

Tasmania: Tourism

Mr HUTCHINSON (Lyons) (12:39): We all love our country. Indeed, Australia is truly blessed to have places of great beauty. In fact, my electorate of Lyons is home to many of the most iconic natural attractions in this country, which bring visitors from around the world to experience same.

In the electorate of Lyons we have the majestic Cradle Mountain-Lake St Claire National Park. We have the Narawntapu National Park up on the north-west coast and Mount Field National Park, the second oldest national park in Australia. We have the Tasman National Park, the Ben Lomond National Park and the Walls of Jerusalem National Park. We have the magnificent Freycinet National Park, Maria Island and the beautiful surrounding east coast beaches. The historic Port Arthur penitentiary site, one of Tasmania's most visited attractions, is also in my patch.
The latest Tasmanian tourism figures tell us that the state had more than one million visitors in the past 12 months, who spent in our state more than $1.5 billion. That was an 11 per cent increase on the previous 12 months. The visitor numbers were also up on the previous year by 18 per cent. The total number of visitors holidaying in Tasmania in the last 12 months was 410,300 compared to 349,000 the previous year.

Tourism is an important and growing industry for my state, which is struggling, as you well know, Deputy Speaker, financially. In my electorate of Lyons, 2,892 people or 7.1 per cent of the workforce are employed in tourism. We have 1,132 tourism related businesses, which represents 13.7 per cent of all businesses, according to the latest data from the National Tourism Business Count and Employment Atlas.

Cafe and restaurant jobs account for the largest proportion of tourism jobs—24 per cent in the electorate—followed by jobs in accommodation, 20 per cent; and in the retail sector, a little less at 17 per cent. Tourism is a critical economic driver across Australia, generating $95 billion of expenditure and directly employing 514,000 people and supporting 283,000 businesses. It is no less important in Tasmania and in my electorate.

As deputy chairman of the coalition backbench committee on tourism I know the value of the industry to my state as it struggles to work through the tough economic times it is being dealt by the collapse of the forestry industry and the poor economic management of my state by consecutive Labor governments over 16 years. I am determined to do what I can to help rebuild Tasmania as a vibrant and self-sufficient economy. Tourism will be an important part of that.

I note the comments today in one of the major newspapers in my state by the Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania that suggests that, going into the 15 March election, neither major party has a plan, particularly in relation to the Spirit of Tasmania. I dispute this very strongly, because, certainly from the federal government's point of view, we are working through the Productivity Commission and the ACCC review into Bass Strait.

I just note, that in terms of the mechanics of getting across the highway, that the vessel is owned entirely by the state government. One wonders, given that people come from both directions, whether there is a case for Victoria—the other beneficiary of that highway—contributing to that vessel.

There is a plan. Tasmanian Liberals have a plan to support tourism generally. I support that plan. It will help the industry grow and contribute to the state's economic development. Will Hodgman will be the minister for tourism, we hope, after 15 March. The policy includes a plan to open up our national parks and world heritage areas to tourists by calling for expressions of interest from private investors and tourism operators. No better example could be given than in the Cradle Mountain hut experience and Simon Currant and the Pumphouse Point development. Proponents would have to propose sensible, low-impact ecotourism experiences and infrastructure. This would broaden the range of unique experiences on offer in Tasmania's national parks. Cradle Mountain is a great example of how sensitive development can be done. Appropriate development around state parks and reserves would encourage and drive visitation, and unlock the potential of the parks to the broader community.
I compliment Tourism Tasmania for the work that they have done in the past 12 months with their Go behind the Scenery campaign and the good work being done by the regional tourism organisations. I seek leave to table the document ‘Liberal plan to create new tourism jobs: unlocking our parks and World Heritage areas’.

Leave granted.

**Israel: Boycotts**

**Mr DANBY** (Melbourne Ports) (12:44): Many years ago—it may even have been before my incarnation as an MP—I sat down with my old sparring partner Andrew Hewitt, a Communist Party organiser in student politics, who was then the executive director of Community Aid Abroad, which later begat Oxfam. We reached a modus vivendi not to descend back into the days of student politics and have endless fights about the Middle East. It was a very wise policy for me and for Oxfam—we could both proceed with our lives. Unfortunately, under pressure from the mother country it seems that people in London whose decrees do not jive with the new world seem to have given the impression that Oxfam internationally is very closely associated with the boycott of Israel movement. That is very unfortunate, because Oxfam does excellent international humanitarian work and human rights work. I am sure that it does not fit with the Australian mentality. That is why a number of Labor MPs this week made it very clear that we are opposed to the boycott of Israel, just as when the previous government was in office then foreign minister Rudd, Treasurer Swan et cetera joined me, people from the current government and other people from public life at various Max Brenner outlets to show our opposition to this selective boycott.

The current focus of the concerns of this selective boycott movement is a company called SodaStream, which has one of its 18 factories in a place called Ma'ale Adumim. The factory employs mainly Palestinian workers who, I understand, are paid exactly the same wages. Ahmed Nasser, who works in the factory, when he was meeting a delegation from the Presbyterian Church said, ‘They're the best conditions in the West Bank. Everything is according to the law.’ He added that he receives an hour-and-a-half worth of breaks in a standard 12-hour shift and that prayer times are not deducted from break allowances. Perhaps we could institute some of these ideas in the Australian industrial relations system!

Anyone who supports this boycott, especially those who pretend to be left wingers, has to look into the eyes of those who survived the Hitler regime and their descendants when discussing boycotts of Israeli or Jewish businesses. Some years ago I received a glossy booklet from this boycott group that advocated boycotting L'Oreal, Revlon and Vidal Sassoon, none of which companies are based in the Middle East. They are all famous international cosmetic companies whose only commonality was that their owners were Jewish. It is clear that the motives of the boycott movement are not to promote peace, they are not to promote the current negotiations that are being fostered by President Barack Obama, they are not to promote a peaceful solution for the Palestinian people; the boycott is a vehicle for hardliners seeking to cloak their unacceptable political ends in the rhetoric of human rights.

Do not take my word for this. On 14 December last year, in the US magazine *The Nation*, Omar Barghouti the guru and founder of this international boycott campaign said, ‘Going back to a two-state solution, beside having passed its expiry date, it was never a moral solution to start with.’ In the same article, he said, ‘Good riddance. The two-state solution for the
Palestinian-Israeli conflict is finally dead. But someone has to issue an official death certificate before the rotting corpse is given a proper burial and we can move onto a unitary state where, by definition, Jews will be a minority.’

If you were in Israel—a highly successful, high-tech, pluralist, democratic state where there are Arab members of the Knesset and of the supreme court and so on—and viewing events in Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Lebanon and Egypt, you would not easily be giving up the pluralist, democratic, technocratic state you live in for of the aims of very hard-line people.

(Time expired)

Corangamite Electorate: National Broadband Network

Ms HENDERSON (Corangamite) (12:50): I rise to speak about the major problems with internet connections in my electorate of Corangamite. As we know, the NBN was meant to solve most of our communications problems—particularly those of rural and regional areas of Australia. But it was no less than an unmitigated disaster under Labor.

After three years, Labor's NBN was two years behind schedule. The cost, as we now know, was going to rocket to $79 billion—$29 billion more than Labor promised it would cost. So far, very disappointingly, after four years and $6.4 billion in funding, the NBN has reached just three per cent of Australian premises. Minister Turnbull famously described the NBN under Labor as an 'arthritic snail'.

Even more disappointingly, no basic cost-benefit analysis was done by Labor on the NBN. The NBN was not undertaken with even a basic understanding of the availability of broadband—where the good areas were and where the deficient areas were. As a member representing an important rural and regional part of Australia, I know that the availability of broadband is incredibly important.

In addition to all of these failures, in 2012, when Labor announced its rollout, the NBN excluded most of Corangamite, including the southern suburbs of Geelong—Grovedale, Waurn Ponds, Marshall, Highton and Belmont—and important centres such as Colac. When the rollout plan was updated in May 2013, these critical areas were still left out.

Labor's rollout of the NBN was completely political; the only map that Labor looked at for its NBN rollout was the electoral map. There is very strong evidence that most of Corangamite was left out of the NBN purely due to politics. The former member for Corangamite, Mr Darren Cheeseman, had attacked former Prime Minister Gillard on her leadership, and the very strong evidence is that the exclusion of Corangamite from the NBN was a political payback. Of course, the people who suffered were the people of my electorate.

I am very proud that last week we launched the MyBroadband website and a full broadband availability and quality report. For the first time, Australians have access to a map which shows how good or bad broadband is in their area. It is quite incredible that Labor did not do such basic work. An article in December last year in the Geelong Advertiser and written by Greg Dundas was titled 'second-rate internet', and that is exactly what my electorate has. That is why I am fighting very hard for the NBN to come to my electorate. The Geelong map of ADSL quality is reproduced in it, and you can download it too. It really tells the story—it shows that, in places such as Highton and Marshall in particular, broadband is abysmal.
We are getting on with the job of delivering the NBN in a methodical and systematic way. The next step we will take is the introduction of a speed test by which local people can go to the MyBroadband map of their electorate and check the speed of their internet connection. The data created will be sent straight to the Department of Communications. With this data, the department will be able to track the internet connection speed of everyone, including the local people in my electorate of Corangamite. It is a wonderful initiative which will be available in a month or so. Today I am calling on everyone in Corangamite who has poor or slow broadband to do the speed test so that we have the data and can assess what we need to do in various areas.

One of the most critical parts of our NBN—and we are very proud of this—is that areas where there is deficient broadband will be prioritised. Unfortunately, Labor did not think that putting such areas first.

What we are doing is calling out to all Australians and saying, 'Where are the poor areas? Where are you suffering? Frankly, you need attention more than anyone else.' That is what we are going to do. Our government under Minister Turnbull will be directing the NBN Co to prioritise those areas. In Geelong and other parts of my electorate—Inverleigh, Bannockburn, Torquay—we have many deficient areas. I am very proud of the wonderful work we are doing to progress the NBN.

**Centrelink**

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (12:55): For the information of the member for Corangamite, the Abbott government has delivered a real surprise—a real present—to the people of Shortland electorate: they have cut any proposal to have the NBN in Shortland electorate. For the information of the government, the people that I represent are extremely disappointed and disturbed about the actions of this government.

They are just as disturbed about the changes that have taken place in Centrelink, particularly the long waits they are facing, whether at a Centrelink office or on the telephone or with an appeal. It may shock and horrify members to know that a person submitting an appeal after being rejected for a disability pension, a carer's payment or any other allowance are waiting for up to 12 months. I do not know if other members have had calls like this to their office, but every day that I have constituent interviews someone comes in about the waits at Centrelink.

I find it really disturbing that people who attend Centrelink offices are quite often in dire need of help. When they have to wait for very long periods of time, it causes them enormous angst and they become very upset, particularly elderly people. Shortland is an older electorate and a number of my elderly constituents attend the Centrelink office, only to be handed the telephone and told to call. They will not be seen by a Centrelink officer, but when they phone they are given an appointment to go and see a Centrelink officer in so many weeks time. They are given this information over the telephone. This is very, very confusing for people. It is not one person who has come and complained to me about this—this is happening each and every day.

The No. 1 complaint that we receive in our office at the moment is in relation to Centrelink, the wait times and the call system—being put on the telephone to talk to someone rather than being able to see somebody in a Centrelink office. I think it is unacceptable, and I
think members opposite are indicating that they think it is unacceptable. I have spoken to
Centrelink management about it and I have raised this issue in a number of different areas; it
is really very difficult.

A government member interjecting—

Ms HALL: I am sorry, but I misheard what the member on the other side was saying. He
thinks it is acceptable that people have to ring on the telephone and have to wait 12 months to
have an appeal heard. I do not agree with that, and I know that on this side of the House we
find it totally unacceptable that people are asked to wait in this way.

I had an elderly lady come to see me in the office. She had been up to Centrelink twice; she
rang the help line and waited an hour and a half on the phone; and they suggested that she try
another Centrelink office. She then travelled around the other side of Lake Macquarie to the
Toronto office and was told exactly the same thing there. She was handed the telephone. So,
she came back around to the eastern side of Lake Macquarie to a smaller, collocated
Medicare-Centrelink office behind my office in Belmont. She went up there, and they said,
'Sorry, we can't see you unless you've got an appointment.' So, they gave her an appointment.
When she came back, it started again.

The reason I think this is happening is not because Centrelink officers are inefficient but
because there has been a dramatic cut in the number of staff available in Centrelink. Each and
every day those officers in Centrelink are being asked to deliver a lot more than they can with
the resources they have. I believe the Abbott government stands condemned for the actions it
has taken in relation to Centrelink.

Basketball: Townsville Fire

Mr EWEN JONES (Herbert) (13:00): It is with great pleasure that I rise to speak about
something that is very near and dear to my heart. This weekend the Townsville Fire, the
Women's National Basketball League team, travels to Melbourne to take on the Dandenong
Rangers in what will surely be a win for the Townsville Fire and will surely result in us
making our second grand final in a row. If you draw a line from Perth to Brisbane, there is
one professional women's sporting team north of that line. In more than half the country there
is one professional women's sporting team north of that line, and that is the Townsville Fire.
These girls have just beaten the Melbourne Boomers twice in two weeks. We are taking on
the Dandenong Rangers and will probably have to go to Bendigo the week after that to finally
beat Bendigo.

These girls have degrees but work in basic jobs. They travel around to pursue their passion.
Some people say they are putting their lives on hold for basketball but I do not think anyone
there agrees with that. What they are doing is pursuing an absolute passion. They play for
next to nothing, some contracts being as little as $5,000 per annum. You could fit an entire
Women's Basketball League team into the salary of a marquee player in the men's basketball
league. When you look at Australia and the Olympics, twice women's basketball silver
medallists and unlucky at that, it is something we have to look at as a nation.

I would like to mention for the Hansard that Jayne Arlett, who took this franchise on, is a
very busy and professional person. She has taken on this role because she believes in women
in sport. She is a podiatrist by profession and she believes in the community, so she got a
board together and saved the Townsville Fire. She brought coach Chris Lucas from South
Australia. She has got ex-Canadian Olympian Claudia Brassard, who played with the old Fire and is now a permanent Townsville resident and Australian citizen, I believe, as the assistant coach. Judy Higgins is the acting general manager and Eleni Millios, one of my best friends in the world, is the part-time sales and marketing manager. I will run through the players' names: No. 4, Alex Wilson, No. 5, Rachel McCully, who used to be Rachel Flanagan; No. 6, Tiana Mangakahia; No. 7, Stephanie Cumming; No. 8, Suzy Batkovic, multiple Olympian; No. 9 and No. 11 are the Froling twins, Alicia and Keely; No. 10 is Mia Newley, who has had the hottest of hot hands in the last couple of weeks. Kayla Standish has been playing with a busted shoulder like you would not believe. She has finished games in tears with the pain but it has not stopped her manning up, or womening up, on the court. Rosie Fadljevic; Olivia Thompson is No. 15 and Micaela Cocks is No. 32. She is a Kiwi international with a degree in science. She works in Townsville and she is a great basketballer. Development players Emma McKenzie and Shanekia Ross are doing a great job. I thank the House for the opportunity to wish these girls the absolute best for the weekend. They are truly great things for sport in Australia. They are truly great role models that you can have an education, you can have a sporting passion and you can follow it through in this country.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Whiteley): I thank the member for Herbert, who is obviously a frustrated sports commentator!

Question agreed to.

Federation Chamber adjourned at 13:04