INTERNET
The Votes and Proceedings for the House of Representatives are available at

Proof and Official Hansards for the House of Representatives,
the Senate and committee hearings are available at

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

SITTING DAYS—2020

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

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

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

For information regarding frequencies in other locations please visit
http://reception.abc.net.au/
FORTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—FIRST PERIOD

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

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

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

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

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

Printed by authority of the House of Representatives
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albanese, Hon. Anthony Norman</td>
<td>Grayndler, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander, Mr John Gilbert, OAM</td>
<td>Bennelong, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allen, Dr Katrina Jane</td>
<td>Higgins, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aly, Dr Anne</td>
<td>Cowan, WA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrews, Hon. Karen Lesley</td>
<td>McPherson, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrews, Hon. Kevin James</td>
<td>Menzies, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archer, Ms Bridget Kathleen</td>
<td>Bass, TAS</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bandt, Mr Adam Paul</td>
<td>Melbourne, VIC</td>
<td>AG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bell, Ms Angie Marion</td>
<td>Moncrieff, QLD</td>
<td>LNP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bird, Hon. Sharon Leah</td>
<td>Cunningham, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowen, Hon. Christopher Eyles</td>
<td>McMahon, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadbent, Mr Russell Evan</td>
<td>Monash, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buchholz, Hon. Scott Andrew</td>
<td>Wright, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burke, Hon. Anthony Stephen</td>
<td>Watson, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burney, Ms Linda Jean</td>
<td>Barton, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burns, Mr Joshua Solomon</td>
<td>Macnamara, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butler, Hon. Mark Christopher</td>
<td>Hindmarsh, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butler, Ms Terri Megan</td>
<td>Griffith, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byrne, Hon. Anthony Michael</td>
<td>Holt, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chalmers, Dr James Edward</td>
<td>Rankin, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champion, Mr Nicholas David</td>
<td>Spence, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chester, Hon. Darren Jeffrey</td>
<td>Gippsland, VIC</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chesters, Ms Lisa Marie</td>
<td>Bendigo, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christensen, Mr George Robert</td>
<td>Dawson, QLD</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clare, Hon. Jason Dean</td>
<td>Blaxland, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claydon, Ms Sharon Catherine</td>
<td>Newcastle, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coker, Ms Elizabeth Ann</td>
<td>Corangamite, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coleman, Mr David Bernard</td>
<td>Banks, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collins, Hon. Julie Maree</td>
<td>Franklin, TAS</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congahan, Mr Patrick John</td>
<td>Cowper, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connelly, Mr Vincent Gerard</td>
<td>Stirling, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conroy, Mr Patrick Martin</td>
<td>Shortland, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coulton, Hon. Mark Maclean</td>
<td>Parkes, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dick, Mr Dugal Milton</td>
<td>Oxley, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dreyfus, Hon. Mark Alfred, QC</td>
<td>Isacs, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drum, Hon. Damian Kevin</td>
<td>Nicholls, VIC</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutton, Hon. Peter Craig</td>
<td>Dickson, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elliot, Hon. Maria Justine</td>
<td>Richmond, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entsch, Hon. Warren George</td>
<td>Leichhardt, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evans, Mr Trevor Mark</td>
<td>Brisbane, QLD</td>
<td>LNP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falinski, Mr Jason George</td>
<td>Mackellar, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitzgibbon, Hon. Joel Andrew</td>
<td>Hunter, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fletcher, Hon. Paul William</td>
<td>Bradfield, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flint, Ms Nicolle Jane</td>
<td>Boothby, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freelander, Dr Michael Randolph</td>
<td>Macarthur, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frydenberg, Hon. Joshua Anthony</td>
<td>Kooyong, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gee, Mr Andrew Robert</td>
<td>Calare, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georganas, Mr Steven</td>
<td>Adelaide, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giles, Mr Andrew James</td>
<td>Scullin, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gillespie, Hon. Dr David Arthur</td>
<td>Lyne, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members</td>
<td>Division</td>
<td>Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodenough, Mr Ian Reginald</td>
<td>Moore, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gorman, Mr Patrick</td>
<td>Perth, WA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gosling, Mr Luke John</td>
<td>Solomon, NT</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haines, Dr Helen Mary</td>
<td>Indi, VIC</td>
<td>IND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hammond, Ms Celia Monica</td>
<td>Curtin, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hastie, Mr Andrew William</td>
<td>Canning, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawke, Hon. Alexander George</td>
<td>Mitchell, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hayes, Mr Christopher Patrick</td>
<td>Fowler, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill, Mr Julian Christopher</td>
<td>Bruce, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hogan, Mr Kevin John</td>
<td>Page, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howarth, Mr Luke Ronald</td>
<td>Petrie, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunt, Hon. Gregory Andrew</td>
<td>Flinders, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husic, Hon. Edham Nurreddin</td>
<td>Chifley, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irons, Hon. Stephen James</td>
<td>Swan, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones, Mr Stephen Patrick</td>
<td>Whitlam, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joyce, Hon. Barnaby Thomas Gerard</td>
<td>New England, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katter, Hon. Robert Carl</td>
<td>Kennedy, QLD</td>
<td>KAP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kearney, Ms Gerardine Mary</td>
<td>Cooper, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly, Mr Craig</td>
<td>Hughes, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly, Hon. Dr Michael Joseph</td>
<td>Eden-Monaro, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keogh, Mr Matthew James</td>
<td>Burt, WA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalil, Mr Peter</td>
<td>Wills, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King, Hon. Catherine Fiona</td>
<td>Ballarat, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King, Ms Madeleine Mary Harvie</td>
<td>Brand, WA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laming, Mr Andrew Charles</td>
<td>Bowman, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landry, Hon. Michelle Leanne</td>
<td>Capricornia, QLD</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leeser, Mr Julian Martin</td>
<td>Berowra, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leigh, Hon. Dr Andrew Keith</td>
<td>Fenner, ACT</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ley, Hon. Sussan Penelope</td>
<td>Farrer, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Littleproud, Hon. David Kelly</td>
<td>Maranoa, QLD</td>
<td>LNP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liu, Ms Gladys</td>
<td>Chisholm, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marino, Ms Nola Bethwyn</td>
<td>Forrest, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marles, Hon. Richard Donald</td>
<td>Corio, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin, Mrs Fiona Barbouttis</td>
<td>Reid, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McBride, Ms Emma Margaret</td>
<td>Dobell, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCormack, Hon. Michael Francis</td>
<td>Riverina, NSW</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McIntosh, Ms Melissa Iris</td>
<td>Lindsay, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McVeigh, Hon. Dr John Joseph</td>
<td>Groom, QLD</td>
<td>LNP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell, Mr Brian Keith</td>
<td>Lyons, TAS</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell, Mr Robert George</td>
<td>McEwen, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morrison, Hon. Scott John</td>
<td>Cook, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morton, Mr Ben</td>
<td>Tangney, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mulino, Dr Daniel</td>
<td>Fraser, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murphy, Ms Peta Jan</td>
<td>Dunkley, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neumann, Hon. Shayne Kenneth</td>
<td>Blair, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O'Brien, Mr Llewellyn Stephen</td>
<td>Wide Bay, QLD</td>
<td>LNP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O'Brien, Mr Ted Lynam</td>
<td>Fairfax, QLD</td>
<td>LNP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O'Connor, Hon. Brendan Patrick John</td>
<td>Gorton, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O'Dowd, Mr Kenneth Desmond</td>
<td>Flynn, QLD</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O'Neil, Ms Clare Ellen</td>
<td>Hotham, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Members of the House of Representatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Owens, Ms Julie Ann</td>
<td>Parramatta, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasin, Mr Antony</td>
<td>Barker, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payne, Ms Alicia Emma</td>
<td>Canberra, ACT</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearce, Mr Gavin Bruce</td>
<td>Braddon, TAS</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perrett, Mr Graham Douglas</td>
<td>Moreton, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phillips, Ms Fiona Evon</td>
<td>Gilmore, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitt, Hon. Keith John</td>
<td>Hinkler, QLD</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plibersek, Hon. Tanya Joan</td>
<td>Sydney, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porter, Hon. Charles Christian</td>
<td>Pearce, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price, Hon. Melissa Lee</td>
<td>Durack, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramsey, Mr Rowan Eric</td>
<td>Grey, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rishworth, Hon. Amanda Louise</td>
<td>Kingston, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert, Hon. Stuart Rowland</td>
<td>Fadden, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rowland, Ms Michelle Anne</td>
<td>Greenway, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan, Ms Joanne Catherine</td>
<td>Lalor, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharma, Ms Rebekah Carina Che</td>
<td>Mayo, SA</td>
<td>CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shorten, Hon. William Richard</td>
<td>Maribyrnong, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simmonds, Mr Julian Graham John</td>
<td>Ryan, QLD</td>
<td>LNP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith, Hon. Anthony David Hawthorn</td>
<td>Casey, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith, Mr David Philip Benedict</td>
<td>Bean, ACT</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snowdon, Hon. Warren Edward</td>
<td>Lingiari, NT</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanley, Ms Anne Maree</td>
<td>Werriwa, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steggall, Ms Zali</td>
<td>Warringah, NSW</td>
<td>IND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stevens, Mr James William</td>
<td>Sturt, SA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sukkar, Mr Michael Sven</td>
<td>Deakin, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swanson, Ms Meryl Jane</td>
<td>Paterson, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taylor, Hon. Angus James</td>
<td>Hume, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tehan, Hon. Daniel Thomas</td>
<td>Wannon, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Templeman, Ms Susan Raye</td>
<td>Macquarie, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thistlethwaite, Hon. Matthew James</td>
<td>Kingsford Smith, NSW</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thompson, Mr Phillip</td>
<td>Herbert, QLD</td>
<td>LNP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thwaites, Ms Kate Lynne</td>
<td>Jagajaga, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tudge, Hon. Alan Edward</td>
<td>Aston, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vamvakinou, Ms Maria</td>
<td>Calwell, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>van Manen, Mr Albertus Johannes</td>
<td>Forde, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vasta, Mr Ross Xavier</td>
<td>Bonner, QLD</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallace, Mr Andrew Bruce</td>
<td>Fisher, QLD</td>
<td>LNP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watts, Mr Timothy Graham</td>
<td>Gellibrand, VIC</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webster, Dr Anne Elizabeth</td>
<td>Mallee, VIC</td>
<td>NATS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wells, Ms Anika Shay</td>
<td>Lilley, QLD</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wicks, Mrs Lucy Elizabeth</td>
<td>Robertson, NSW</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilkie, Mr Andrew Damien</td>
<td>Clark, TAS</td>
<td>IND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilson, Mr Joshua Hamilton</td>
<td>Fremantle, WA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilson, Mr Richard James</td>
<td>O'Connor, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilson, Mr Timothy Robert</td>
<td>Goldstein, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood, Mr Jason Peter</td>
<td>La Trobe, VIC</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyatt, Hon. Kenneth George, AM</td>
<td>Hasluck, WA</td>
<td>LP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young, Mr Terry James</td>
<td>Longman, QLD</td>
<td>LNP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zappia, Mr Antonio</td>
<td>Makin, SA</td>
<td>ALP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Members of the House of Representatives

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

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

Heads of Parliamentary Departments
Clerk of the Senate—R Pye
Clerk of the House of Representatives—C Surtees
Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—R Stefanie
Parliamentary Budget Officer—J Wilkinson
### MORRISON MINISTRY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Minister</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon. Scott Morrison MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for the Public Service</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Women</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Marise Payne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Cabinet</td>
<td>The Hon. Greg Hunt MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Indigenous Australians</td>
<td>The Hon. Ken Wyatt AM MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister and Cabinet</td>
<td>The Hon. Ben Morton MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development</td>
<td>The Hon. Michael McCormack MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Water Resources, Drought, Rural Finance, Natural Disaster and Emergency Management</td>
<td>The Hon. David Littleproud MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Population, Cities and Urban Infrastructure</td>
<td>The Hon. Alan Tudge MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Regional Services, Decentralisation and Local Government</td>
<td>The Hon. Mark Coulton MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Road Safety and Freight Transport</td>
<td>The Hon. Scott Buchholz MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon. Andrew Gee MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Territories</td>
<td>The Hon. Nola Marino MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon. Josh Frydenberg MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Population, Cities and Urban Infrastructure</td>
<td>The Hon. Alan Tudge MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon. Michael Sukkar MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Housing</td>
<td>The Hon. Mark Coulton MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Superannuation, Financial Services and Financial Technology</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Jane Hume</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Finance (Vice-President of the Executive Council)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Mathias Cormann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Finance, Charities and Electoral Matters</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Zed Seselja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Agriculture</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Bridget McKenzie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Forestry and Fisheries</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Jonathon Duniam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Marise Payne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Simon Birmingham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for International Development and the Pacific</td>
<td>The Hon. Alex Hawke MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Trade and Investment Minister</td>
<td>The Hon. Mark Coulton MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Regional Tourism</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Jonathon Duniam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Industrial Relations</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Christian Porter MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Leader of the House)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Health</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Greg Hunt MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Aged Care and Senior Australians</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Richard Colbeck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Youth and Sport</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Home Affairs</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Peter Dutton MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**Minister for Water Resources, Drought, Rural Finance, Natural</td>
<td>The Hon. David Littleproud MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disaster and Emergency Management**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and</td>
<td>The Hon. David Coleman MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multicultural Affairs**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister for Customs, Community Safety and Multicultural</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Jason Wood MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Paul Fletcher MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Education</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Dan Tehan MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**Assistant Minister for Vocational Education, Training and</td>
<td>The Hon. Steve Irons MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprenticeships**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Industry, Science and Technology</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Karen Andrews MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Resources and Northern Australia</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Matthew Canavan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Angus Taylor MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for the Environment</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Sussan Ley MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister for Waste Reduction and Environmental Management</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Trevor Evans MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Defence</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Linda Reynolds CSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Defence Minister</td>
<td>The Hon. Alex Hawke MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Veterans and Defence Personnel</td>
<td>The Hon. Darren Chester MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Deputy Leader of the House)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Defence Industry</td>
<td>The Hon. Melissa Price MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Families and Social Services</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Anne Ruston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Manager of Government Business in the Senate)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Stuart Robert MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Government Services</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Minister for Children and Families</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Michelle Landry MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**Assistant Minister for Community Housing, Homelessness and</td>
<td>The Hon. Luke Howarth MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Services**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each box represents a portfolio. **Cabinet Ministers are shown in bold type.** As a general rule, there is one department in each portfolio. The title of a department does not necessarily reflect the title of a minister in all cases. Ministers are sworn to administer the portfolio in which they are listed under the ‘Minister’ column and may also be sworn to administer other portfolios in which they are not listed.
Assistant Ministers in italics are designated as Parliamentary Secretaries under the *Ministers of State Act 1952.*
# SHADOW MINISTRY

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

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

WEDNESDAY, 5 FEBRUARY 2020

### Chamber

**COMMITTEES**—
- Selection Committee—
  - Report.........................................................................................................................1

**BILLS**—
- Australian Crime Commission Amendment (Special Operations and Special Investigations) Bill 2019—
- Farm Household Support Amendment (Relief Measures) Bill (No. 2) 2019—
- Special Recreational Vessels Bill 2019—
  - Returned from Senate.................................................................................................3
- Education Legislation Amendment (Tuition Protection and Other Measures) Bill 2019—
- Defence Service Homes Amendment Bill 2019—
- National Disability Insurance Scheme Amendment (Streamlined Governance) Bill 2019—
- Australian Crime Commission Amendment (Special Operations and Special Investigations) Bill 2019—
- Treasury Laws Amendment (Prohibiting Energy Market Misconduct) Bill 2019—
- Aged Care Legislation Amendment (New Commissioner Functions) Bill 2019—
- Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment (2019 Measures No. 1) Bill 2019—
- Farm Household Support Amendment (Relief Measures) Bill (No. 2) 2019—
- Special Recreational Vessels Bill 2019—
- Communications Legislation Amendment (Deregulation and Other Measures) Bill 2019—
- Health Legislation Amendment (Data-matching and Other Matters) Bill 2019—
- Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment (Single Treatment Pathway) Bill 2019—
- Protection of the Sea (Prevention of Pollution from Ships) Amendment (Air Pollution) Bill 2019—
- Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Building on the Child Care Package) Bill 2019—
- Foreign Acquisitions and Takeovers Fees Imposition Amendment (Near-new Dwelling Interests) Bill 2019—
- Interactive Gambling Amendment (National Self-exclusion Register) Bill 2019—
- National Self-exclusion Register (Cost Recovery Levy) Bill 2019—
- Treasury Laws Amendment (Reducing Pressure on Housing Affordability Measures) Bill 2019—
  - Assent.......................................................................................................................4

**BUSINESS**—
- Rearrangement ...........................................................................................................4

**BILLS**—
  - First Reading ..............................................................................................................4
  - Second Reading.........................................................................................................5
  - Third Reading ............................................................................................................12

**MOTIONS**—
- Community Sport Infrastructure Grant Program.........................................................13

**COMMITTEES**—
- Procedure Committee—
- Public Accounts and Audit Committee—
  - Membership............................................................................................................18
- Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Joint Committee—
  - Report.......................................................................................................................19

**BILLS**—
- Financial Sector Reform (Hayne Royal Commission Response—Protecting Consumers (2019 Measures)) Bill 2019—
  - Second Reading.......................................................................................................21
  - Third Reading..........................................................................................................33
- Financial Sector Reform (Hayne Royal Commission Response—Stronger Regulators (2019 Measures)) Bill 2019—
  - Second Reading.......................................................................................................34
  - Third Reading..........................................................................................................37
CONTENTS—continued

National Consumer Credit Protection Amendment (Mandatory Credit Reporting and Other Measures) Bill 2019—
Second Reading........................................................................................................................................... 37
Third Reading............................................................................................................................................... 42

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS—
Veterans: Suicide......................................................................................................................................... 43
Curdie, Mr John, OAM .................................................................................................................................. 43
Chinese Australians......................................................................................................................................... 43
Higgins Electorate: Australia Day Awards ..................................................................................................... 43
Community Sport Infrastructure Grant Program.......................................................................................... 44
Menzies Electorate: Australia Day Awards .................................................................................................... 44
Community Sport Infrastructure Grant Program.......................................................................................... 44
Australian Bushfires...................................................................................................................................... 45
Australian Bushfires...................................................................................................................................... 45
Gold Coast: Australia Day Awards................................................................................................................ 45
Community Sport Infrastructure Grant Program.......................................................................................... 46
Australian Bushfires...................................................................................................................................... 46
Community Sport Infrastructure Grant Program.......................................................................................... 46
Assange, Mr Julian.......................................................................................................................................... 46
Community Sport Infrastructure Grant Program.......................................................................................... 47
Veterans: Mental Health............................................................................................................................... 47
Community Sport Infrastructure Grant Program.......................................................................................... 47
New South Wales Young Farmer of the Year ................................................................................................. 47
Community Sport Infrastructure Grant Program.......................................................................................... 48

CONDOLENCES—
Tchen, Mr Tsebin.......................................................................................................................................... 48

PARTY OFFICE HOLDERS—
National Party of Australia......................................................................................................................... 48

MINISTERIAL ARRANGEMENTS.................................................................................................................. 48

PARTY OFFICE HOLDERS—
Australian Greens.............................................................................................................................................. 50

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE—
Australian Bushfires...................................................................................................................................... 50
Australian Bushfires...................................................................................................................................... 50
Australian Bushfires...................................................................................................................................... 51
Veterans: Suicide........................................................................................................................................... 51
Australian Bushfires...................................................................................................................................... 52
Climate Change............................................................................................................................................... 53
Australian Bushfires...................................................................................................................................... 53
Prime Minister............................................................................................................................................... 54
Economy......................................................................................................................................................... 54
Prime Minister............................................................................................................................................... 55
Coronavirus.................................................................................................................................................... 55
National Party of Australia............................................................................................................................ 56
Drought .......................................................................................................................................................... 56
Community Sport Infrastructure Grant Program.......................................................................................... 57
Coronavirus.................................................................................................................................................... 58
Community Sport Infrastructure Grant Program.......................................................................................... 58
Australian Bushfires...................................................................................................................................... 58
Community Sport Infrastructure Grant Program.......................................................................................... 59
Economy......................................................................................................................................................... 60

MOTIONS—
Prime Minister............................................................................................................................................... 61

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE—
Veterans: Suicide........................................................................................................................................... 67

DOCUMENTS—
Presentation...................................................................................................................................................... 68
CONTENTS—continued

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORTS—
   Reports Nos 17 to 24 of 2019-20 .............................................................. 68
PRIVILEGE ........................................................................................................... 68
MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE—
   Morrison Government ..................................................................................... 68
PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS ................................................................................ 78
COMMITTEES—
   Economics Committee—
      Report ........................................................................................................... 78
   Environment and Energy Committee—
      Report ......................................................................................................... 82
      Reference to Federation Chamber ............................................................... 83
   Intelligence and Security Joint Committee—
      Report ........................................................................................................... 84
   Human Rights Committee—
      Report ......................................................................................................... 85
   Electoral Matters Committee—
      Report ........................................................................................................... 86
BILLS—
   Intellectual Property Laws Amendment (Productivity Commission Response Part 2 and
      Other Measures) Bill 2019—
      Third Reading .............................................................................................. 98
MOTIONS—
   Minister for Health .......................................................................................... 98
BILLS—
   Treasury Laws Amendment (Combating Illegal Phoenixing) Bill 2019—
      Consideration of Senate Message ................................................................. 102
BUSINESS—
   Rearrangement ............................................................................................... 103
BILLS—
   Australian Business Growth Fund Bill 2019—
      Second Reading ............................................................................................ 103
ADJOURNMENT—
   Werriwa Electorate: Commuter Parking ......................................................... 108
   Werriwa Electorate: Cost of Living ................................................................. 108
   Drought ............................................................................................................. 109
   Smart, Mr Leigh .............................................................................................. 109
   Australian Bushfires ....................................................................................... 110
   Australian Bushfires ....................................................................................... 111
   Morrison Government .................................................................................... 112
   Menzies Electorate: Australia Day Awards ...................................................... 113
NOTICES ........................................................................................................... 114
Federation Chamber
CONDOLENCES—
   Australian Bushfires .................................................................................... 115
Questions In Writing
   Accenture Australia Pty Ltd—(Question No. 205) ............................................ 174
   Digital Transformation Agency—(Question No. 218) ...................................... 174
   Hall and Partners Pty Ltd—(Question No. 226) .............................................. 174
   Talent International Pty Ltd—(Question No. 235) .......................................... 175
   Ebola—(Question No. 244) ............................................................................ 175
   Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade—(Question No. 249) .................. 176
   Australian Government Actuary—(Question No. 255) ................................. 176
   Sapere Research Group—(Question No. 272) ............................................... 176
   Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade—(Question No. 273) .................. 177
   Bomana Immigration Centre—(Question No. 276) ....................................... 177
   Indigenous Australians—(Question No. 278) ............................................... 177
Wednesday, 5 February 2020

The SPEAKER (Hon. Tony Smith) took the chair at 09:30, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

COMMITTEES
Selection Committee
Report

The SPEAKER (09:31): I present report No. 10 of the Selection Committee relating to the consideration of committee and delegation business and private members' business on Monday 10 February 2020 and the consideration of bills. The report will be printed in the Hansard for today and the committee's determinations will appear on tomorrow's Notice Paper. Copies of the report have been placed on the table.

The report read as follows—

Report relating to the consideration of committee and delegation business and of private Members’ business and relating to the consideration of bills introduced 2 December 2019 to 5 December 2019
1. The committee met in private session on Tuesday, 4 February 2020.
2. The Committee deliberated on items of committee and delegation business that had been notified, private Members’ business items listed on the Notice Paper and notices lodged on Tuesday, 4 February 2020, and determined the order of precedence and times on Monday, 10 February 2020, as follows:

Items for Federation Chamber (4.45 pm to 7.30 pm)
PRIVATE MEMBERS’ BUSINESS

Notices
1 Mr Georganas: To move:
That the House:
(1) notes with great concern:
(a) Turkey's military operation targeting Kurds in northern Syria;
(b) Turkey's actions which are causing further destabilisation in the region, worsening the humanitarian disaster in Syria, and risk undermining progress against ISIS;
(c) evidence that innocent civilians are being killed and injured by Turkey's military operations and forces associated with Turkey in Syria;
(d) reports of possible war crimes being committed by forces associated with Turkey; and
(e) reports of Turkish intentions to resettle refugees from Turkey into Northern Syria outside of UN-sponsored mechanisms;
(2) recognises that the Kurdish forces in Syria have:
(a) been instrumental in fighting Daesh as an ally of the Global Coalition to Defeat Daesh/ISIS; and
(b) lost over 10,000 fighters in the fight against Daesh in Syria; and
(3) calls on the Government to:
(a) urge Turkey to cease its unilateral military operations in Syria; and
(b) support international efforts to hold Turkey to account for its actions.

(NOTICE given 28 November 2019.)

Time allotted—40 minutes.

Speech time limits—
Mr Georganas—5 minutes.
Other Members—5 minutes each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 8 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

2 Mr Connelly: To move:
That this House:
(1) recognises:
(a) that society is more connected online than ever before in history; and
(b) the importance of keeping Australians safe online; and
(2) notes that:
   (a) the Government established the world’s first Children’s eSafety Commissioner in 2015, and expanded this role to cover all Australians in 2017;
   (b) in 2018 the Office of the eSafety Commissioner undertook research to examine some of the challenges faced by young people aged 8 to 17 in Australia online; and
   (c) this research indicated that:
      (i) 25 per cent of young people have been contacted by strangers/someone they did not know;
      (ii) 13 per cent of young people reported receiving repeated unwanted online messages from someone; and
      (iii) 13 per cent of young people reported having lies or rumours spread about them;
(3) further notes the bipartisan support for the work of the Office of the eSafety Commissioner; and
(4) congratulates the Government for this world first initiative.

(Notice given 15 October 2019.)

Time allotted—45 minutes.

Speech time limits—
   Mr Connelly—10 minutes.
   Next Member speaking—5 minutes.
   Other Members—5 minutes each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 1 x 10 mins + 7 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

3 Mr Gorman: To move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:
   (a) the captioned telephone handset, CapTel, is a popular service amongst the Australian deaf and hard of hearing community;
   (b) according to the Department of Communications there are approximately 4,000 CapTel handset users in Australia;
   (c) the average age of people using the service is 80; and
   (d) with an increasing aging population, it can be expected more and more Australians will need to rely on this service to communicate;
(2) acknowledges the distress and loss that CapTel users and their families are experiencing due to the planned discontinuation of the CapTel service in February 2020;
(3) condemns the Government for its decision to:
   (a) remove the CapTel service without any consultation with its users; and
   (b) purchase an inferior, outdated, and less user-friendly product, forcing often elderly users to learn a new piece of technology or lose the ability to communicate; and
(4) encourages CapTel users and their families to contact their federal member of parliament to explain to them the importance of the CapTel service for the deaf and hard of hearing community of Australia.

(Notice given 3 December 2019.)

Time allotted—40 minutes.

Speech time limits—
   Mr Gorman—5 minutes.
   Other Members—5 minutes each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 8 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

4 Mr Sharma: To move:

That this House:

(1) notes that Malka Leifer, the former Principal of the Adass Israel Girls School in Melbourne, fled Australia in 2008 as child sexual abuse allegations against her surfaced;
(2) reaffirms the formal extradition request that was filed by Australia in 2014 requesting she be returned to Victoria to face 74 charges of child sexual abuse;
(3) acknowledges the bravery of Ms Leifer’s alleged victims—especially Dassi Erlich, Nicole Meyer and Elly Sapper for their tireless pursuit of justice;
(4) further notes that over 5 years have elapsed, and over 60 court hearings have been held in Israel, since this extradition request was first lodged, without any significant progress having been made;
(5) expresses regret and concern at the numerous attempts to prevent and delay Malka Leifer facing justice in Australia; and
(6) calls for the immediate extradition of Malka Leifer to Australia to face 74 charges of child sexual abuse.

(Notice given 25 November 2019.)

Time allotted—remaining private Members' business time prior to 7.30 pm
Speech time limits—
Mr Sharma—10 minutes.
Next Member speaking—10 minutes.
Other Members—5 minutes each.

[Minimum number of proposed Members speaking = 2 x 10 mins + 4 x 5 mins]

The Committee determined that consideration of this should continue on a future day.

3. The committee determined that the following referrals of a bill to a committee be made—

Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters:
• Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Lowering the Donation Disclosure Threshold) Bill 2019.

THE HON A. D. H. SMITH MP
Speaker of the House of Representatives
5 February 2020

BILLS

Australian Crime Commission Amendment (Special Operations and Special Investigations) Bill 2019
Farm Household Support Amendment (Relief Measures) Bill (No. 2) 2019
Special Recreational Vessels Bill 2019

Returned from Senate

Messages received from the Senate returning the bills without amendment.
Education Legislation Amendment (Tuition Protection and Other Measures) Bill 2019
Defence Service Homes Amendment Bill 2019
National Disability Insurance Scheme Amendment (Streamlined Governance) Bill 2019
Australian Crime Commission Amendment (Special Operations and Special Investigations) Bill 2019
Treasury Laws Amendment (Prohibiting Energy Market Misconduct) Bill 2019
Aged Care Legislation Amendment (New Commissioner Functions) Bill 2019
Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment (2019 Measures No. 1) Bill 2019
Farm Household Support Amendment (Relief Measures) Bill (No. 2) 2019
Special Recreational Vessels Bill 2019
Communications Legislation Amendment (Deregulation and Other Measures) Bill 2019
Health Legislation Amendment (Data-matching and Other Matters) Bill 2019
Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment (Single Treatment Pathway) Bill 2019
Protection of the Sea (Prevention of Pollution from Ships) Amendment (Air Pollution) Bill 2019
Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Amendment (Assistance and Access Amendments Review) Bill 2019
Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Building on the Child Care Package) Bill 2019
Foreign Acquisitions and Takeovers Fees Imposition Amendment (Near-new Dwelling Interests) Bill 2019
Interactive Gambling Amendment (National Self-exclusion Register) Bill 2019
National Self-exclusion Register (Cost Recovery Levy) Bill 2019
Treasury Laws Amendment (Reducing Pressure on Housing Affordability Measures) Bill 2019

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

BUSINESS
Rearrangement

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Leader of the House) (09:32):
I move:
(1) the House invite His Excellency Mr Joko Widodo, President of the Republic of Indonesia, to attend and address the House on Monday, 10 February 2020, at 11.30 am;
(2) unless otherwise ordered, at the sitting of the House on 10 February:
   (a) the House shall meet at 11.30 am and the Federation Chamber at 4 pm;
   (b) private Members' business shall take place in the Federation Chamber only, from 4.45 pm;
   (c) the proceedings at 11.30 am shall be welcoming remarks by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition and an address by the President of the Republic of Indonesia;
   (d) at the conclusion of His Excellency's address the House shall suspend until the ringing of the bells, with the first item of business to be questions without notice; and
   (e) the provisions of standing order 257(c) shall apply to the area of Members' seats as well as the galleries;
(3) a message be sent to the Senate inviting Senators to attend the House as guests for the welcoming remarks by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition and address by the President of the Republic of Indonesia; and
(4) any variation to this arrangement be made only by an action by the Speaker or by a motion moved by a Minister.

Question agreed to.

BILLS
Treasury Laws Amendment (2019-20 Bushfire Tax Assistance) Bill 2020
First Reading

Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Frydenberg.

Bill read a first time.
Second Reading

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—Treasurer) (09:34): I move:
That this bill be now read a second time.

Over the course of this bushfire season Australia has faced devastating fires which have deeply affected communities across the country.

The unprecedented scale and damage of these fires has warranted an unprecedented response. The tireless efforts of our professional and volunteer firefighters to protect life and property cannot be understated. Nor can the generosity of the broader Australian and international communities, who have come to the assistance of those impacted by the fires.

The Morrison government is conscious of the enormous challenges of rebuilding bushfire-devastated communities. Australians are resilient and they want to rebuild, and we will be with them every step of the way. The government has made an upfront $2 billion commitment and established the National Bushfire Recovery Agency to coordinate a national response to rebuild communities and livelihoods.

The government is committed to supporting volunteer firefighters involved in the firefighting effort as well as ensuring the communities and businesses affected by the bushfires can get back on their feet.

We acknowledge and support the generous donations being pledged to bushfire-affected communities. This generosity is being seen in the partnership between the Business Council of Australia and equity trustees to establish the Australian Volunteer Support Trust and the Community Rebuilding Trust in response to the 2019-20 Australian bushfires.

The Australian volunteers trust provides support to volunteers and their immediate families where the volunteer has died or become seriously injured during their service in responding to a disaster in Australia. The Community Rebuilding Trust will receive, manage and mobilise donations to help rebuild and re-establish communities affected by disasters in Australia. These two charitable trusts will be chaired by Jeff Kennett AC and General Sir Peter Cosgrove AK CVO MC (Retd) and will be supported by boards of eminent Australians as well as representatives from Australia’s emergency service volunteer organisations. The government has announced it will extend DGR status to these two charitable trusts to encourage philanthropy and provide support for individuals, families and communities affected by the bushfires. This is implemented through schedule 2 of this bill.

Schedule 1 to the bill comes in two parts. The first part gives effect to the Prime Minister's announcement on 29 December 2019 that the Australian government would in cooperation with the New South Wales state government provide tax-free financial support to volunteers in the New South Wales Rural Fire Service who are employed by small or medium businesses and had volunteered for an extended period to assist in combatting the bushfires. This tax treatment will also apply to similar arrangements for volunteer firefighters reached between the Australian government and other states and territories. Payments for eligible volunteer firefighters will be treated as non-assessable non-exempt income, which means:

- the payments will not be counted as assessable income; and
- the payments will not reduce any tax losses that can be carried forward to future years by the taxpayer.

The second part of the schedule gives effect to announcements made by the Prime Minister and myself on 8 January 2020 that in addition to the tax relief for payments to volunteer firefighters, government disaster relief and recovery payments in response to the 2019-20 bushfires will be free from tax.

Under the bill, bushfire disaster payments made or non-cash benefits provided by the states and territories and local governments that are not already free from tax will be made non-assessable non-exempt income. Payments will be made free from tax including the Disaster Recovery Allowance and payments under the disaster recovery funding arrangements 2018.

The bill also creates a regulation-making power which will provide flexibility to ensure later payments that might arise in relation to the 2019-20 bushfires can quickly be made tax-free if required.

Further information on the support being provided by the ATO can be found on the ATO website. Impacted individuals or businesses can also contact the ATO’s emergency support information line on 1800806218.

Schedule 2 to the bill amends the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997 to include the Australian Volunteer Support Trust and the Community Rebuilding Trust on the list of deductible gift recipients. DGR status allows members of the public to receive income tax deductions for the donations they make to these two organisations. Full details of the measures are contained in the explanatory memorandum. I commend the bill to the House.

Leave granted for second reading debate to continue immediately.
Dr CHALMERS (Rankin) (09:39): Thanks very much, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to speak on the Treasury Laws Amendment (2019-20 Bushfire Tax Assistance) Bill 2020. As we've said all along in this horrific summer of fire, Labor's highest priority is to provide support and assistance to those impacted by the bushfires, whether they be local communities, families, businesses, emergency services or others. We do recognise that these are truly exceptional circumstances. We will of course support the bill and we've also supported departure from the usual practice to ensure its quick passage in the House today and, I expect, through the other place tomorrow.

After the contributions made yesterday, nobody in here needs reminding of the truly horrific nature of this summer's fires—33 lives lost, 3,000 homes destroyed, more than a billion animals killed in New South Wales alone—and all of the devastation, difficulty and challenges, whether they be in mental health or other areas, that will flow from this summer as well. Communities have truly been devastated. Our fireys, emergency services, Defence Force personnel and volunteers have saved countless lives and properties. The earlier start to the bushfire season has meant that they've had to work harder and longer than we'd hoped. This is a huge sacrifice, and this week we will ensure that the compensation payments that are to be made to people, communities and businesses are exempt from tax.

This disaster has clearly brought out the best in the Australian community, and yesterday in this place we heard many of those stories of resilience and selflessness. But it is also well worth learning from and reminding ourselves of some of the difficulties that come from the various government programs to support people who are affected. It is important that we not only put this on the record of the parliament but act on the lessons learned. It is important that we make sure the assistance gets to families, communities and businesses as quickly as possible, that the unnecessary bottlenecks are removed and that some of the concerns raised by members in this place, including the members for Eden-Monaro, Gilmore and Macquarie, are properly addressed. Despite all of the best intentions, there have been issues with the implementation of some of the disaster relief programs, and I will get to some of those in a moment.

This bill will ensure that disaster relief payments, including the disaster recovery allowance, are exempt from tax, and that grants made to small businesses and primary producers are tax free as well. It will ensure that payments provided to volunteer firefighters to compensate for the loss of income—a very important issue—are tax exempt as well. This scheme will apply to those who are self-employed or work for small and medium-sized businesses and who have been called out for more than 10 days. It will include farmers, small-business owners, tradies and contract workers in rural and regional areas, who have been hit especially hard by this fire season.

The other part of the bill, as the Treasurer just reminded us, will provide deductible gift recipient status to two trusts that have been established by the Business Council of Australia with support from their members and other businesses. The first of these is the Australian Volunteer Support Trust, which will support the families of volunteers who have tragically died fighting these fires and those who will lose their lives in future disasters. The second is the Community Rebuilding Initiative, which will focus on helping businesses and communities impacted by the fires. This initiative recognises that the task of reconstruction will take some time, so it's focused on assisting over the next five years. I want to put on record that the opposition welcomes and appreciates the BCA's decision to support kids who have lost parents in the fires and to support businesses as they try to recover. We look forward to more detail on how the funds will ensure that spending decisions are guided by the evidence of best value and greatest need.

I think it is important, given we're talking about disaster relief, that we focus on the ways in which government could be doing better when it comes to responding to these fires and providing relief in other programs to Australians who have been affected. In many instances the member for Grayndler, the Leader of the Opposition, has made a series of very constructive suggestions and calls for the government to act in a more substantial way as he has picked up information from so many of the communities affected over the last few months. It is worth noting that, in a number of areas where the opposition has called for action, the government has responded in some fashion. It's true of volunteer compensation, though we still need a more substantial national scheme. It's true of aerial firefighting. There was a response of sorts after the Leader of the Opposition called for one. It's true of national coordination, similarly, as well as ADF deployment, a national health response and other areas, including the environmental impact and some announcements made by the government following calls by the Leader of the Opposition.

But it's worth noting that there are some things we are calling for which have still not yet been implemented. COAG, the Council of Australian Governments, clearly should have been brought together by now. It is unusual and disappointing in the extreme that last year was the first year there was only one COAG meeting. COAG is not due to meet for another five or six weeks. It beggars belief, in my view, that COAG wasn't brought together sooner to deal with some of the Commonwealth and state issues which are clearly at play when it comes to responding to the devastation of these fires.
Clearly the Prime Minister should be sitting down with the fire chiefs, who've got considered views based on many years of experience and who have been trying to meet with the Prime Minister for some time now to relay their serious concerns, many of which, unfortunately, they've been expressing for some time and which have come true this fire season. It is extremely disappointing that the Prime Minister won’t sit down with the fire chiefs to hear what they have to say.

We also want to make sure that the Bushfire and Natural Hazard Cooperative Research Centre's funding is guaranteed, and we have other proposals as well. The government was prepared to act in response to a number of the issues that the Leader of the Opposition raised in his letters and public commentary over the last few months. It should pick up and run with the remaining ones which are still left unattended. That would give the government an opportunity to respond in a more substantial way to what we've seen in this extraordinary summer of fire and smoke right throughout our country. And that's before we get to the broader, important topic of how we deal with climate change in this country.

But, on the specifics of this bill, we support the tax-free status of the bushfire relief payments. We support the DGR status of the funds which have been set up by the Business Council of Australia. We are prepared to support them through the parliament very quickly—through the House today, in fact in the next little while, and our other colleagues in the Senate tomorrow—so that, when this relief is rolled out, Australians who've been impacted enough already financially, emotionally and in other ways are not asked to also pay tax on these arrangements. We think that's a good outcome and we support that.

Ms STEGGALL (Warringah) (09:48): I rise in support of the Treasury Laws Amendment (2019-20 Bushfire Tax Assistance) Bill 2020. For six months Australia has been devastated by the worst bushfires in our nation's history. Communities have been wiped out, businesses irreparably impacted, cities blanketed by smog forcing many indoors, our courageous volunteer services stretched to the limit and our beautiful wildlife and landscape decimated. I'll never forget the images of Australian families being evacuated by the Royal Australian Navy or the first images of singed wildlife searching for water, all on the backdrop of a blood red sky with ashes eerily dropping like snow.

While we will rebuild and communities will recover, the psychological trauma will be with many for years to come. This period will live in the memory of our nation forever. We had repeated warnings from our former fire chiefs that it was all going to be bad, yet we were caught flat-footed. This disaster will give us many lessons, as we will continue to soul search in the weeks and months to come. Various royal commissions will look into the decision-making process, response and past practices that contributed, and all the factors that contributed, to the severity of the disaster. I encourage that. I intend to help by listening and finding solutions to prevent future disasters. The Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy, which I am part of, is tasked with an inquiry into the efficiency of past and current vegetation and land management policy, practice and legislation and their effect on the intensity and frequency of bushfires and the subsequent risk to property, life and environment. We must, of course, also broaden that to look at the impact on the environment and how we preserve the environment and address climate change.

But, for now, we need to focus on those who have been so devastated and provide immediate support. The government's response, if belated, has been adequate. I support the government's existing measures, such as the deployment of the ADF, the mental health counselling and further direct impact on the ground. But we can and must do more. I support this bill, as it will provide further relief to the individuals businesses that have been so impacted by the fires. In particular, we mustn't forget the communities on our North Coast of New South Wales and southern Queensland, who were already impacted in late August and early September, as we focus on the more recently devastated communities further south.

Schedule 1 of this bill will allow tax relief for all disaster relief payments to individuals and businesses impacted by the bushfires. Schedule 2 will provide some tax exemptions for compensation payments made to volunteer firefighters and schedule 3 will provide deductible gift recipient status to two trusts to support families and businesses affected. These are all correct and adequate responses, but consideration needs to be given to the scope of these responses being broadened to make sure that all those who have been seriously and severely impacted are assisted.

In all of this, we cannot overlook the major contributing cause: climate change. Now is, absolutely, the time to talk about it. The Commonwealth Scientific Research Organisation, the Bureau of Meteorology and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change all state that there is a tangible link between increases in background temperatures and the severity and duration of bushfires. We continue to set temperature records: 2019 was the hottest year on record for Australia. It's likely, according to the new study by the Australian National University, that temperatures will likely exceed 50 degrees by 2040 and temperatures in the 40s will happen three times more often. This is all impacting fire severity and danger. In 2019, new records were set for high daily Forest Fire
Danger Index reports in all states and territories of Australia. Australia's fire weather, therefore, will worsen in the future. The number of very high and extreme fire danger days is projected to increase by a further 15 per cent at the minimum—and, at the upper range, by up to 70 per cent—by 2050. It's hard to imagine that kind of environment or how we could possibly prepare and be fully equipped to deal with such a scenario. This will make fire management increasingly more challenging and near impossible. The only way to manage and prevent further worsening is to increase our emissions reduction ambitions, as we are committed to under the Paris Agreement, and limit warming to no more than 1.5 degrees.

On 23 March, I'll introduce a climate change bill—a national framework for adaptation and action—to this parliament, and call for a bipartisan approach so that we can, united, make 2020 the year where we have ceased being divided on climate and where we can work towards a safer future for Australia. It's a positive response to the current disasters and a reposition for Australia as a climate leader.

The bill has four key components: a net zero target by 2050, risk assessment, risk management and adaptation plans. We need to listen to the experts. We need to have a clear, empowered and independent climate change commission so that we have the expertise and the advice to properly manage our response and action. We know these elements work because they have been enacted in the United Kingdom, France, Germany and many other countries. Specifically, in respect of bushfire response, the national risk assessment will assess how increasing bushfires will affect our economy, our environment, our society and our communities as a whole. Following that, we will have mandated adaptation plans that assist in adapting and increasing our response to bushfire risk.

Part of the problem in this disaster was that there were no adequate plans, key agencies tasked with investigating and responding to bushfire risk were defunded and our services did not have the resources they needed to protect our communities. There were many calls during last year for meetings with the government by the ex-fire chiefs. I met with them in both September and November. Their warning and call was clear, but it went unheeded. By having plans set in advance and implemented accordingly, we can ensure that we are adequately prepared when disaster strikes again; sadly, it's not an ‘if’.

The bill mandates five-yearly emissions budgets and emissions reduction plans that are designed to meet a net zero goal in an economically and fiscally responsible way that ensures proper growth for Australia. This is consistent with limiting warming to no more than 1.5 degrees. It is an opportunity for Australia to reset its position in the world, be ambitious and be a leader.

There will be no new normal to adapt to. We must operate in a continued state of readiness. Our defence forces know that. It's no longer acceptable to the Australian community to be unprepared. My heart and my mind are with the many communities that have been affected. For them, in this place, we must be willing to give our strongest effort to prevent these disasters in the future and keep future generations safe.

**Ms SHARKIE** (Mayo) (09:57): Centre Alliance supports the passage of the Treasury Laws Amendment (2019-20 Bushfire Tax Assistance) Bill 2020 and acknowledges that the bill seeks to minimise the financial impact of the bushfires through three stages. The bill provides tax relief to individuals and businesses who receive a disaster relief payment, provides a specific income tax exemption for compensation payments made to volunteer firefighters and gives DGR status to two trusts established to support families and communities affected by this summer's bushfires.

Schedule 1 of the bill provides tax relief for all disaster relief payments to individuals and businesses impacted by the bushfires. The exemption will extend to disaster recovery allowance payments made to individuals and payments that would otherwise be taxable under the disaster recovery funding arrangements, such as grants that may be made to small businesses and primary producers.

I welcome the Prime Minister's announcement of $2 billion in financial support to help communities recover from the bushfires and for the establishment of the National Bushfire Recovery Agency. But, like so many things, the devil is in the detail. Over the last fortnight it has become quite clear to me that the announced assistance packages may not be filtering down to those who need them most and that business owners, primary producers and even accountants have struggled to navigate the grant application forms. I am also concerned that many primary producers and business owners who were affected by the Cudlee Creek and Kangaroo Island fires either do not fall within the strict grant guidelines or have been placed at a financial disadvantage as a consequence of having taken out insurance policies to minimise the economic impacts of bushfires.

To complicate the matter, these individuals are also often unable to source relief funds from charitable organisations unless they have lost their primary place of residence. While many in the Adelaide Hills region were fortunate to have their homes saved by CFS volunteers or their own farm firefighting equipment, their fodder, livestock, orchards and vines were destroyed, along with their shedding and tanks. Anyone who lives on property
knows that shedding and tanks are as vital as the four walls and roof of your home. It's rectifying this damage that requires an urgent injection of funds if we are to maintain our vibrant communities and support local economies.

I wish to raise some issues in relation to the $75,000 grant being made available to primary producers, which is known in South Australia as the PIRSA grant. Firstly, the grant guidelines appear not to permit the purchase of farm firefighting equipment. Farm firefighting units played a vital role, a pivotal role, in defending lives and property on Kangaroo Island and across the Adelaide Hills. Often, CFS trucks just didn't get there; the fire was too enormous and widespread for the CFS to be everywhere. And there is currently no financial support offered to those who seek to purchase, upgrade or even maintain their systems for the remainder of the bushfire season. If we are to encourage preparedness and resilience in the face of worsening conditions, arguably this would be a sensible allocation of funds.

Secondly, the guidelines, by setting the off-farm income threshold at $100,000, do not recognise the unique character of primary production, particularly in the Adelaide Hills. One local accountant I spoke to believes none of his bushfire-affected clients will be eligible for financial support from the government as a consequence of this threshold. Unlike in other locations, many primary producer families in the Adelaide Hills supplement their income through off-farm employment. It's not uncommon for one or both partners to be in full- or part-time employment either in their local community or downhill in Adelaide. Similarly, in the face of worsening growing conditions and declining profits in the agriculture sector, many primary producers in the region have sought to diversify their income by setting up complementary tourism ventures, such as farm produce lines and accommodation. This is particularly relevant to producers on Kangaroo Island. We have been encouraging them for years to have agritourism ventures, and now they are being penalised for that. These primary producers have been operating successful ventures that supplement their modest primary production income—ventures that will no longer be viable without immediate government assistance.

Finally, even if they are eligible, the grant will not meet the costs that are covered by an insurance claim. Accordingly, any claim must be finalised prior to an application being made for the PIRSA grant scheme. This fails to acknowledge the time taken to finalise insurance claims. Dairy farmers, vignerons and farmers I know who are awaiting insurance payments have in many cases been waiting for over six weeks now and are unlikely to receive their payments in the near future. Yet they are unable to access PIRSA grant funds until this occurs and are therefore left without any access to any of the emergency relief funds. In the meantime, they are facing increasing costs in the light of overwhelming demand for fencing and irrigation. One vineyard owner I spoke to was quoted $85,000 for two kilometres of fencing. And a dairy farmer explained to me that every week his fencing quotes were creeping higher and higher. First, it was $10,000 a kilometre and in the next week it was $20,000 a kilometre. He remarked that he had not been insured for that amount and that, if he hadn't been insured, he could simply have taken the PIRSA grant and half of his fencing would have been replaced by now. So primary producers with insurance policies are being disadvantaged by the grant guidelines.

Further to that, if you are a hobby farmer you are not technically a primary producer—if you have 20 acres and you have some horses, a few goats, a few sheep and a bit of a veggie garden—you are not entitled to any of the PIRSA grants. That is placing many in the community at a serious disadvantage. I have previously proposed that the grant guidelines be amended to allow for the provision of an immediate grant of $15,000 pending the finalisation of an insurance claim. The payment could be determined on a case-by-case basis by PIRSA officers. It would at least enable people to buy fodder and remove items that have been destroyed, including vines or trees, and it would provide some limited financial relief from the bushfires. Now is not the time for the government to be concerned about the bottom line. It is an unprecedented disaster and the government should be responding accordingly. The more we delay supporting people to get back on their feet, the longer this recovery is going to take for all of us.

In relation to the $50,000 grant made available to small-business owners, I understand that small-business owners are only eligible if they can demonstrate a loss of stock, equipment or other physical damage as a consequence of the bushfires. The grant does not cover loss of income. The small businesses that are in need of immediate assistance are those that have suffered a loss of income as a consequence of the disruption of their businesses. This is true on Adelaide Hills and Kangaroo Island, particularly for tourism businesses. I understand that concessional loans of up to $500,000 may soon be made available, but I'm concerned that yet again the strict eligibility criteria may mean that many small businesses may not be eligible for this assistance either. Those that are likely to be eligible have said to me that they simply cannot face the prospect of sitting down at the kitchen table to decipher yet another incredibly long, difficult government form.

To support people navigating through this grant pathway I have written to the government to request business counsellors to be based at both the Parndana and Lobethal recovery centres. I understand that experienced business counsellors from the Rural Financial Counselling Service are ready, willing and able to provide such
support should the state and federal governments wish to pursue this opportunity. While I think we need them to be based there, they need to outreach. They actually need to go and sit down at the kitchen table with families that have lost everything around their property. They need to be able to meet in a private way and actually support families one on one. I urge the government to review bushfire grant recovery guidelines to ensure that each grant meets the needs of the local communities and that the necessary supports are available to secure the long-term recovery of our bushfire affected regions.

Schedule 2 of the bill relates to payments made to volunteer firefighters and provides a specific income tax exemption for payments intended to compensate for loss of income. In South Australia, volunteer firefighters who are self-employed or employed by a small to medium business who have been called out for more than 10 days may be eligible for financial compensation. This bill ensures that these payments, of up to $300 per day and up to a total of $6,000 per person, are not subject to income tax. I note however that those who have already retired, and therefore do not suffer any loss as a consequence of days absent from employment, will not be eligible for financial compensation, but this does not mean that they did not incur costs as a result of their volunteer efforts. Many retirees are still active members of their local CFS. In fact, across Mayo the majority of people that I meet in our CFS are retired or semiretired, and they do incur costs such as fuel and meals during the course of their volunteer duties. I accept that volunteers do not expect to be paid for their time, but the public expects that the government will take a flexible approach to this reimbursement program and ensure that no volunteer firefighter is left out of pocket no matter their employment status. I think about the length of time fighting these fires that are still going on Kangaroo Island that were only contained; they're not extinguished.

Finally, I wish to reflect on statements made in this place during the debate on the condolence motion. We have seen firsthand the benefits that flow from granting DGR status to charitable organisations. SAVEM is an emergency responder and animal welfare agency that assesses, triages, treats, shelters and returns, to their owners or to the wild, companion and assistance animals, sport and recreation animals, livestock and, as I said before, wildlife. SAVEM are the only charitable emergency management trained veterinarians in Australia and are much valued by my community and across South Australia, especially by farmers affected. However, the lack of DGR status has frustrated SAVEM's capacity to raise much-needed funds to support livestock owners and wildlife in the wake of the bushfires.

I urged the government to expedite DGR status to SAVEM so that they could more effectively assist farmers. Recognising the genuine need, both the Treasurer and Minister Seselja worked swiftly to make the changes necessary to see DGR status granted to SAVEM within a matter of days. I would like to thank the government and particularly the Treasurer for their assistance.

The granting of DGR status to SAVEM enabled the organisation to attract $300,000 in donations, and that figure continues to rise. Those funds have enabled around 20 fireground-trained vets and nurses to rotate through the firegrounds continuously for 40 days. SAVEM worked closely with the ADF's joint task force, RSPCA, Zoos SA and the South Australian department of environment, water and natural resources. Local vets also worked with them. Together they treated over a thousand animals.

I also want to thank Minister Littleproud for the assistance that he has provided to my community on behalf of the government. The minister has travelled to the Adelaide Hills and seen firsthand the devastation that our community has endured. The minister took the time to meet small-business owners, community leaders, farmers and winemakers in the region. I'm hopeful that the concerns that were raised, some of which I've already spoken about here today, will inform the government's recovery response. I look forward to continuing our collaborative relationship for the benefit of many fire affected communities, particularly mine in Mayo.

Finally, I wish to reflect on statements made in this place during the debate on the condolence motion. We heard stories of devastation and tragedy, but we also heard words of compassion and kindness. Similarly, while I have serious concerns regarding the implementation of the financial assistance offered by the federal government, I am optimistic that as the recovery process continues these matters will be dealt with in a fair and just manner.
The recovery process after Black Saturday involved some things that were effective but others that were not enough or were not right for the community. On the one hand, we saw construction of white-elephant infrastructure that was neither asked for nor appropriate for the community's needs. 'Stadiums belong in Melbourne,' one constituent told me. 'We didn't ask for that stadium. It's underutilised and now our rates are going towards its upkeep.' Local government representatives have told me that public buildings were hastily constructed and of poor quality and have led to expensive long-term maintenance by councils that have insufficient funds to maintain them. On the other hand, many issues that should have been addressed properly received insufficient or unsystematic attention. We know that mental health impacts of Black Saturday are still prevalent 10 years on, and we know that parts of the shire of Murrindindi still struggle with a lack of jobs as businesses have struggled to establish, let alone new ones to develop.

As we move forward, though, we must have a community-led and community-centric approach to reconstruction, one which delivers enough support and the right kind of support. I'm really encouraged by a meeting I had last week with Mr Andrew Colvin, coordinator of the new National Bushfire Recovery Agency, who was very clear in his conversation with me that community consultation was his top priority. I look forward to working with him over the months and years ahead.

Today, I'd like to share some further details of people who have been impacted, to ensure that their stories and needs remain in the centre of this discussion and in the centre of legislation that's drafted in this place to support them. In my condolence speech yesterday, I mentioned stories of the impact of fire on people in Indi: the stories of Cindy Penny, who lost most of her cattle near Bandiana; of Sharan and Jay Rivett, whose pumpkin farm was left devastated after three weeks of forced evacuation and a poisoned water supply; and of Stef Antonello, whose grape farm is looking at a 100 per cent loss of crop due to smoke taint. There are many other stories like this.

Rob Hawkings runs a large local grape farm and winery that's been hit by smoke taint. Rob will also lose 100 tonnes of fruit that would have sold for $800,000 if it were not for these fires. For him as a winemaker, that hundred tonnes of fruit he will lose means lost income of $1.3 million worth of wine that will never be made and never be sold. Usually, this week would herald the start of the vintage, where he'd inject $150,000 into the local economy through labour to pick the grapes. None of that will happen this year and that casual workforce will not be spending money in the town, and so the trickle-on effect continues. The support that the government has provided so far is good and it's welcome. But we need to ask: Is it enough to sustain businesses like Rob's that will lose far more than they will get back in support? And, if it's not, what can we do to ensure our regional economies survive, not just in the immediate aftermath but in the longer term?

Diane Gibbons runs Bella's Cafe in Harrietville. She usually takes $700 a day. When she called my office a few weeks ago on a day that was supposed to be in the busiest week of the year she'd just taken $7. Steph Mannix, who runs the Beechworth on Bridge Motel has seen all her bookings cancelled. She called me in late January, frustrated that support for small business had been announced but was not yet accessible and that Beechworth sat outside the zone of ATO deferrals. Fiona Goldman runs High Country Horses in Mansfield. They run midday horse rides into the mountains around the Howqua Hills and Mount Buller. They've cancelled weeks of rides, and even now that the parks have reopened people are very slow to come back. Over the Australia Day weekend, usually one of the busiest of the year, they had but four visitors.

In our Alpine shire we've lost 2,000 hectares of hardwood plantation, meaning a shortage for local timber mills. In Myrtleford, 22 per cent of the workforce is employed in the timber industry. These people will be affected in four to eight years time, when this shortage starts to hit. We need to plan for them too. I spoke to the owner of a restaurant in Tawonga. She employs five staff. On 1 January, during the dinner service, they received a text. It was an evacuation order for the Kiewa Valley. The next day, Alpine shire was declared to be in a state of disaster. Since then the business has been shut. All bookings for January and February have been cancelled. The owner left a fridge full of stock that's gone off, and she told me that she'd have to sell her vehicle and redraw on her mortgage in order to pay her bills. 'I've been putting in 100 per cent to build my business,' she told me, 'and I've worked too hard to go under.'

Likewise, I spoke to the owner of a caravan park in Bright, which employs 24 staff. Usually at this time he is at 95 per cent capacity; today he's at five per cent. A local bread company near Wangaratta has seen trade decreased by 90 per cent. They employ 30 people. The owner told me, 'If we don't have the turnover to pay wages at the end of the week I'll have no income to pay loans and living costs.' For each of these businesses, and for the people receiving the disaster relief payment, the provisions of this bill will mean more money straight into their pockets, so I welcome this and I congratulate the government on this move. But we must do more, and in every step we take we must centre the stories of the people affected to ensure they get the support that they need.

In that spirit, there are four things I've heard from my community that I'm calling on the government to do. Firstly, we must continue to systematically engage affected small businesses and primary producers to identify
whether the support provided is enough to sustain them. If it's not, the government will have to decide what price it's willing to pay to save these regional economies. Secondly, I've talked today about the grapegrowers in Alpine Valleys facing thousands of tonnes of lost fruit, and I've been working with some of my local grapegrowers on proposals to take to government about possible support packages. Unfortunately, we're currently without an agriculture minister. But, when one is appointed, the new minister must urgently look at support for the grape industry nationally. I stand ready to engage with them.

Thirdly, the Australian Taxation Office has allowed affected businesses to defer their tax payments to the end of May. This provides life support to small businesses in the form of a rapid cash injection, and many of my constituents are thrilled to receive this extension. However, this allowance is available only to individuals in eligible postcodes, and this list of postcodes does not cover all those areas where small businesses have faced near-complete loss of income. I have fielded many, many calls from businesses that are desperate for this assistance and cannot access it. I believe the ATO allowances should be expanded to all affected businesses, and I call on the government to review this list of postcodes.

Finally, I'm calling on the government to update its payments to affected individuals. The disaster recovery payment—a non-means-tested transfer to affected individuals of $1,000 for adults and $400 for children—has not been updated since 2006. This means the value of this payment has fallen in real terms. I believe this level is no longer adequate. I'm calling on the government to lift the default rate of the recovery payment to $3,000 for adults and $1,000 for children.

Similarly, the disaster recovery allowance to support individuals who have lost income as a result of natural disaster is limited to 13 weeks. This may have made sense once upon a time when fires were a sudden event. But in our changed climate, where in some parts of the country the fires have been raging for months already and show no signs of slowing, I believe this is no longer adequate. I am calling the government to lift the cap on the allowance from 13 weeks to 26 weeks to enable individuals who are without income for long periods of time to continue to have the support they need.

I have already drafted legislation to give effect to these changes; however, of course, as a private member, I am not able to introduce them to the House, so today I'll be in touch and send a copy of my draft bill to the Minister for Social Services and the Minister for Natural Disasters and Emergency Response, inviting them to support such a bill by introducing it to the House.

Like many MPs, I've heard too many stories of individuals who are scared of being left out in the cold in the wake of this crisis, so this week many have called for cooperation and unity. It is in this spirit that I offer these proposals to government and I look forward to working with them so that together we can support our bushfire-affected and impacted communities.

Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme and Minister for Government Services) (10:21): I thank those members who have contributed to the debate. The bushfire season in Australia has faced devastating fires. They have disrupted the lives of communities right across the country. The government is supporting volunteer firefighters involved in the firefighting effort as well as ensuring that communities and businesses affected by the bushfires can get back up and running as soon as possible. The government is making this support tax-free.

On 29 December 2019 the Prime Minister announced the payments being made to eligible volunteer firefighters will be free from tax. Further to that, given the exceptional circumstances of these bushfires, on 8 January this year the government announced the disaster payments in response to the 2019-20 bushfires will be free from tax. Schedule 1 to the bill gives effect to the announced tax treatment.

Schedule 2 to the bill amends the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997 to include the Australian Volunteer Support Trust and the Community Rebuilding Trust on the list of deductible gift recipients. Deductible gift recipient status allows members of the public to receive income tax deductions for gifts of $2 or more made to these organisations.

I would like to thank the opposition and the crossbench for their constructive engagement on this important bill and for their support for its swift passage through the parliament. I commend the bill to the House.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme and Minister for Government Services) (10:23): by leave—I move:

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

MOTIONS

Community Sport Infrastructure Grant Program

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (10:23): I seek leave to move the following motion:

That the House calls on the government to fund all projects recommended by Sport Australia under the Community Sport Infrastructure program but not funded by the Morrison government.

Leave not granted.

Mr ALBANESE: I move:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Leader of the Opposition from moving the following motion:

That the House calls on the government to fund all projects recommended by Sport Australia under the Community Sport Infrastructure program but not funded by the Morrison government.

Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme and Minister for Government Services ) (10:25): I move:

That the Member be no longer heard.

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

The House divided. [10:29]
(10:29)

(Ayres...)

AYES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Archer, BK
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Conaghan, PJ
Coulton, M
Dutton, PC
Evans, TM
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hammond, CM
Hawke, AG
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Ley, SP
Liu, G
Martin, FB
McIntosh, MI
Morrison, SJ
O'Brien, LS
O'Dowd, KD
Pearce, GB
Porter, CC
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Sharma, DN
Sharma, J
Taylor, AJ
Thompson, P
van Manen, AJ
Wallace, AB
Wicks, LE
Wilson, TR
Wyatt, KG

Allen, K
Andrews, KL
Bell, AM
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR
Connelly, V
Drum, DK (teller)
Entsch, WG
Falinski, JG
Flint, NJ
Gee, AR
Goodenough, IR
Hastie, AW
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Joyce, BT
Laming, A
Leeser, J
Littleproud, D
Marino, NB
McCormack, MF
McVeigh, JJ
Morton, B
O'Brien, T
Pasin, A
Pitt, KJ
Price, ML
Robery, SR
Simmonds, J
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Tudge, AE
Vasta, RX
Webster, AE
Wilson, RJ
Wood, JP
Young, T
Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER (10:34): Is the motion seconded?

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (10:34): It's seconded. This government engaged in match fixing. That's what it was. Clubs thought they were in a fair process. They thought they—

The SPEAKER: The Manager of Opposition Business will resume his seat. The minister has the call.

Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme and Minister for Government Services) (10:34): I move:

That the Member be no longer heard.

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

The House divided. [10:35]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes .................... 75
Noes .................... 71
Majority ............... 4

AYES

Alexander, JG          Allen, K
Andrews, KJ            Andrews, KL
Archer, BK             Bell, AM
Broadbent, RE          Buchholz, S
Chester, D             Christensen, GR

NOES

Albanese, AN          Aly, A
Bandt, AP             Bird, SL
Bowen, CE             Burke, AS
Burney, LJ            Burns, J
Butler, MC            Butler, TM
Byrne, AM             Chalmers, JE
Champion, ND          Clare, JD
Claydon, SC           Coker, EA
Collins, JM           Conroy, PM
Dick, MD              Dreyfus, MA
Elliot, MJ            Fitzgibbon, JA
Freelander, MR        Georganas, S
Giles, AJ             Gorman, P
Gosling, LJ           Haines, H
Hayes, CP             Hill, JC
Husic, EN             Jones, SP
Kearney, G            Kelly, MJ
Keogh, MJ             Khalil, P
King, CF              King, MMH
Leigh, AK             Marles, RD
McBride, EM           Mitchell, BK
Mitchell, RG          Mulino, D
Murphy, PJ            Neumann, SK
O'Connor, BPJ         O'Neil, CE
Owens, JA             Payne, AE
Perrett, GD           Phillips, FE
Plibersek, TJ         Rishworth, AL
Rowland, MA           Ryan, JC (teller)
Sharkie, RCC          Shorten, WR
Smith, DPB            Stanley, AM (teller)
Steggall, Z           Swanson, MJ
Templeman, SR         Thistlethwaite, MJ
Thwaites, KL          Vamvakopoulos, M
Watts, TG             Wells, AS
Wilkie, AD            Wilson, JH
Zappia, A

CHAMBER
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AYES</th>
<th>NOES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conaghan, PJ</td>
<td>Albanese, AN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coulton, M</td>
<td>Bandt, AP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutton, PC</td>
<td>Bowen, CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evans, TM</td>
<td>Burney, LJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fletcher, PW</td>
<td>Byrne, AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frydenberg, IA</td>
<td>Champion, ND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gillespie, DA</td>
<td>Claydon, SC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hammond, CM</td>
<td>Collins, JM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawke, AG</td>
<td>Dick, MD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howarth, LR</td>
<td>Elliot, MJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irons, SJ</td>
<td>Freeland, MR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly, C</td>
<td>Giles, AJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landry, ML</td>
<td>Gosling, LJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ley, SP</td>
<td>Hayes, CP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liu, G</td>
<td>Husie, EN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin, FB</td>
<td>Kearney, G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mcintosh, MI</td>
<td>Keogh, MJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morrison, SJ</td>
<td>King, CF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O'Brien, LS</td>
<td>Leigh, AK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O'Dowd, KD</td>
<td>McBride, EM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearce, GB</td>
<td>Mitchell, RG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porter, CC</td>
<td>Murphy, PJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramsey, RE (teller)</td>
<td>O'Connell, BPJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharma, DN</td>
<td>Owens, JA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stevens, J</td>
<td>Perrett, GD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taylor, AJ</td>
<td>Pibersek, TJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thompson, P</td>
<td>Rowland, MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>van Manen, AJ</td>
<td>Sharkie, RCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallace, AB</td>
<td>Smith, DPB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wicks, LE</td>
<td>Steggall, Z</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilson, TR</td>
<td>Templeman, SR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyatt, KG</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimmerman, T</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Connelly, V**
- **Drum, DK (teller)**
- **Entsch, WG**
- **Falinski, JG**
- **Flint, NJ**
- **Gee, AR**
- **Goodenough, IR**
- **Hastie, AW**
- **Hogan, KJ**
- **Hunt, GA**
- **Joyce, BT**
- **Lanning, A**
- **Leeser, J**
- **Littleproud, D**
- **Marino, NB**
- **McCormack, MF**
- **McVeigh, JJ**
- **Morton, B**
- **O'Brien, T**
- **Pasin, A**
- **Price, ML**
- **Robert, SR**
- **Simmonds, J**
- **Sukkar, MS**
- **Tehan, DT**
- **Tudge, AE**
- **Vasta, RX**
- **Webster, AE**
- **Wilson, RJ**
- **Wood, JP**
- **Young, T**
- **Aly, A**
- **Bird, SL**
- **Burke, AS**
- **Burns, J**
- **Butler, TM**
- **Chalmers, JE**
- **Clare, JD**
- **Coker, EA**
- **Conroy, PM**
- **Dreyfus, MA**
- **Fitzgibbon, JA**
- **Georganas, S**
- **Gorman, P**
- **Haines, H**
- **Hill, JC**
- **Jones, SP**
- **Kelly, MJ**
- **Khalil, P**
- **King, MMH**
- **Marles, RD**
- **Mitchell, BK**
- **Mulino, D**
- **Neumann, SK**
- **O'Neil, CE**
- **Payne, AE**
- **Phillips, FE**
- **Rishworth, AL**
- **Ryan, JC (teller)**
- **Shorten, WR**
- **Stanley, AM (teller)**
- **Swanson, MJ**
- **Thistlethwaite, MJ**
Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER (10:36): The question now is that the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition be agreed to.

Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme and Minister for Government Services) (10:36): I move:

That the question be now put.

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

The House divided. [10:38]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ...................... 75
Noes ...................... 71
Majority ................ 4

AYES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Archer, BK
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Conaghan, PJ
Coulton, M
Dutton, PC
Evans, TM
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hammond, CM
Hawke, AG
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Ley, SP
Liu, G
Martin, FB
McIntosh, MI
Morrison, SJ
O’Brien, LS
O’Dowd, KD
Pearce, GB
Porter, CC
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Sharma, DN
Stevens, J
Taylor, AJ
Thompson, P
van Manen, AJ
Wallace, AB
Wicks, LE
Wilson, TR
Wyatt, KG
Zimmerman, T

NOES

Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP
Bowen, CE

Aly, A
Bird, SL
Burke, AS
Question agreed to.

The **SPEAKER** (10:40): The question is that the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition be agreed to.

The House divided. [10:40]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ................. 71
Noes .................. 75
Majority ............... 4

**AYES**

Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP
Bowen, CE
Burney, LJ
Butler, MC
Byrne, AM
Champion, ND
Claydon, SC
Collins, JM
Dick, MD
Elliot, MJ
Freelander, MR
Giles, AJ
Gosling, LJ
Hayes, CP
Husic, EN
Kearney, G
Keogh, MJ
King, CF
Leigh, AK
McBride, EM
Mitchell, RG
Murphy, PJ
O’Connor, BPJ
Owens, JA
Perrett, GD
Plibersek, TJ
Rowland, MA
Sharkie, RCC
Smith, DPB
Steggall, Z
Templeman, SR
Thwaites, KL
Watts, TG
Wilkie, AD
Zappia, A

**NOES**

Burns, J
Butler, TM
Chalmers, JE
Clare, JD
Coker, EA
Conroy, PM
Dreyfus, MA
Fitzgibbon, JA
Georganas, S
Gorman, P
Haines, H
Hill, JC
Jones, SP
Kelly, MJ
Khalil, P
King, MMH
Marles, RD
Mitchell, BK
Mulino, D
Neumann, SK
O’Neill, CE
Payne, AE
Phillips, FE
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JC (teller)
Shorten, WR
Stanley, AM (teller)
Swanson, MJ
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Vanvakinou, M
Wells, AS
Wilson, JH

CHAMBER
AYES
O'Connor, BPJ
Owens, JA
Perrett, GD
Plibersek, TJ
Rowland, MA
Sharkie, RCC
Smith, DPB
Stegall, Z
Templeman, SR
Thwaites, KL
Watts, TG
Wilkie, AD
Zappia, A
O'Neil, CE
Payne, AE
Phillips, FE
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JC (teller)
Shorten, WR
Stanley, AM (teller)
Swanson, MJ
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Vamvakinou, M
Wells, AS
Wilson, JH

NOES
Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Andrews, KL
Archer, BK
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Conaghan, PJ
Coulton, M
Dutton, PC
Evans, TM
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hammond, CM
Hawke, AG
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Ley, SP
Liu, G
Martin, FB
McIntosh, MI
Morrison, SJ
O'Brien, LS
O'Dowd, KD
Pearce, GB
Porter, CC
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Sharma, DN
Stevens, J
Taylor, AJ
Thompson, P
van Manen, AJ
Wallace, AB
Wicks, LE
Wilson, TR
Wyatt, KG
Zimmerman, T
Allen, K
Andrews, KL
Bell, AM
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR
Connelly, V
Drum, DK (teller)
Entsch, WG
Falinski, JG
Flint, NJ
Gee, AR
Goodenough, IR
Hastie, AW
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Joyce, BT
Laming, A
Leeser, J
Littleproud, D
Marino, NB
McCormack, MF
McVeigh, JJ
Morton, B
O'Brien, T
Pasin, A
Pitt, KJ
Price, ML
Robert, SR
Simmonds, J
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, JT
Tudge, AE
Vasta, RX
Webster, AE
Wilson, RJ
Wood, JP
Young, T

Question negatived.

COMMITTEES
Procedure Committee
Public Accounts and Audit Committee
Membership

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Rob Mitchell) (10:45): I have to report to the House that on 9 January 2020 the Speaker received advice from the Chief Government Whip nominating changes to the membership of certain committees. In accordance with standing order 229(b), as the House was not expected to sit for several weeks, the
appointments became effective on that date. I now call the minister to move a motion to resolve the membership of the committees.

Mr ROBERT (Fadden—Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme and Minister for Government Services) (10:46): I move:

That:
(1) Mr van Manen be discharged from the Standing Committee on Procedure and that, in his place, Mr Vasta be appointed a member of the committee;
(2) Mr van Manen be discharged from the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit and that, in his place, Mr Vasta be appointed a member of the committee.

Question agreed to.

Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Joint Committee Report

Dr McVEIGH (Groom) (10:46): On behalf of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, I present the committee's report entitled Inquiry into PFAS remediation in and around Defence bases—First report.

Report made a parliamentary paper in accordance with standing order 39(e).

Dr McVEIGH: by leave—Today I present the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade's first report into the Department of Defence's national PFAS Investigation and Management Program. This report follows on from the joint committee's previous review of the management of PFAS contamination in and around Defence bases, conducted in the 45th Parliament.

Per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances, known collectively as PFAS, are a growing environmental challenge. These manufactured chemicals have had wide domestic and industrial application for over 20 years. They are very persistent in the environment and are biocumulative in the bodies of living organisms.

The Department of Defence's national program focuses on remediation of contamination by PFAS based firefighting foams. Aqueous film-forming foams have been very effective in containing fuel and chemical fires. Unfortunately, high concentrations of PFAS are now found in soils and waters around Defence bases and are an environmental hazard for surrounding communities.

The joint committee's last parliament report on this matter, tabled in December 2018, made nine recommendations covering national coordination, health advice and obligations to affected communities, among other matters. With government still considering its response to that review, the report I present today commences a program of scrutiny which will not only monitor Defence's progress but also consider government-wide obligations to PFAS-affected communities.

The Department of Defence established its national program in 2016. At the end of last year there were 28 Defence sites under investigation for PFAS contamination. From experience, like other members of this House, I know the presence of PFAS can be very distressing. Oakey, in my electorate of Groom, was the first Defence remediation site. PFAS can divide communities, disrupt local economies and cause uncertainty, because the health impacts are yet to be fully evaluated or confirmed. In this situation, the government's priority has been to remove PFAS from the environment as quickly and as effectively as possible.

Defence told the committee at its review that its PFAS remediation methods are increasingly effective. Advanced technologies extract PFAS contaminants from water to drinking-water-safety standards. Soil is being cleaned for re-use, extracted PFAS concentrations can now be stored securely and research is underway to break these chemicals down. Defence is also to be commended for its public information program. Its website is now well developed. There are reports on all affected sites under investigation and management, with monitoring data regularly updated.

At the same time, the committee notes that there are no financial or detailed performance reports on PFAS identifiable in either the 2017-18 or the 2018-19 Defence annual reports. The committee also considered that information could be better calibrated so that affected communities get the advice they need on core matters, the implications for property post treatment and, of course, the ongoing health and safety of families in those communities.

At the first hearing in this inquiry, the committee heard from the ANU's PFAS health study of the volume of overseas research being done to establish the health impacts of PFAS. The ANU aims to deliver verifiable local data on both the physical and mental effects of PFAS by the end of this year. Meanwhile, the safety standards for PFAS in soil and water are being made more robust as evidence mounts on the detrimental effects of high-PFAS concentrations in the environment. In this context, this first report from our subcommittee does not yet make
recommendations because the committee commits to ongoing and thorough review of the evidence in regular reports as the nature and impact of PFAS and its treatments are being better understood. As I mentioned earlier, in the meantime the committee awaits the government response to the report of the committee in the previous parliament. We are very hopeful of seeing that in the not-too-distant future.

The PFAS subcommittee thanks ANU experts and the Department of Defence for frank evidence given to date, and looks forward to evidence from other agencies in the coming weeks and months. I commend the committee's report to the House.

Ms SWANSON (Paterson) (10:52): by leave—I rise to speak on the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade's report Inquiry into PFAS remediation in and around Defence bases.

I would firstly like to thank the chair of the subcommittee, the member for Groom, and all other members who have played a role in this report, and of course the ongoing and hard work of the secretariat. This inquiry resonates with me, not only as a member of the committee but as the federal representative in this parliament for the people of Williamtown, Salt Ash and Fullerton Cove, who have been living with this disaster for too long. It will be five years this September since my community learned of PFAS contamination and how their lives would be literally turned upside down by it. But the story starts well before five years ago.

In 1938, a chemist by the name of Dr Roy Plunkett was experimenting with refrigerator coolant by placing various chemicals in small cylinders at dry ice temperatures. When he opened a cylinder expecting to find gas, he instead found a white powder. It was heat resistant and chemically inert, and had such a low surface friction that other substances wouldn't adhere to it. PFAS chemicals were created accidentally, used ubiquitously and marketed slickly. He showed this powder to his employer, American chemical giant DuPont, which then marketed PFAS chemicals as the most slippery substance on earth. They went on to be used in over 3,000 products worldwide, including non-stick cookware, waterproof clothing, camping gear, dental floss and even weapons. However, it was the use of PFAS in firefighting foams that caused these chemicals to leech into the land that surrounds RAAF bases all over Australia, including in my electorate of Paterson. The properties that made this chemical so popular also made it extremely difficult to expel from the environment and from the blood and body of humans. This report is the first step into how the Australian government plans to do this.

When this inquiry was announced, there was an overwhelming sigh in my community, but it wasn't a sigh of relief. This is the third inquiry around PFAS contamination and this government is still yet to respond to the last report, as the chair has already mentioned. There is still no PFAS policy, and communication between the Liberal government and residents in my community has been inconsistent, unreliable and inconclusive. In the absence of leadership, a class action was formed by residents in Williamtown, Oakey—as the member for Groom has pointed out—and Katherine, and in April it will finally be before the courts. I have pleaded with the Attorney-General to settle this matter outside of court, and I understand that this battle is ongoing. Regardless, it is a disgrace that it has come to this.

Last year, I welcomed the shadow minister for defence, Richard Marles, to Williamtown, again to meet with residents. It was after that meeting that I started a petition calling on the Prime Minister to visit Williamtown, to meet with residents—and I reiterate that invitation—something both he and the Minister for Defence are yet to do.

Last week, long-term resident and advocate for Williamtown Lindsay Clout penned an article in the Newcastle Herald. He referenced a critically acclaimed Hollywood movie about PFAS contamination in the USA called Dark Waters. It will be released in Australia this month. The film's based on a true story about a lawsuit against the chemical company responsible for contaminating thousands of people with the forever chemical PFAS. The lawyer representing the plaintiffs, Rob Bilott, highlighted how both government and regulators in the US failed to protect communities against PFAS contamination. He told Time magazine recently:

If we can't get where we need to go to protect people through our regulatory channels, through our legislative process, then unfortunately what we have left is our legal process …

Lindsay Clout, from my electorate, wrote in the Newcastle Herald:

That quote hit … home this week after the shutting down of a $6.7 billion road tunnelling project in Melbourne because workers came across PFAS contaminated soil. That project wasn't halted because a regulator said it couldn't go ahead. It wasn't halted because of legislation. It was instead two of Australia's biggest construction companies who said they were not prepared to put workers at risk. That decision highlights the utter contempt with which both the state and federal government have treated the families in Williamtown—

and across the country—

whose homes and properties are also contaminated.

For more than five years, the federal—

Liberal, coalition—

CHAMBER
government has said there's not an issue with PFAS contamination still leaking off the Williamtown airbase. Health and environmental bodies in NSW have given residents confusing and—

at times—

contlicting advice.

Our political leaders and health and environmental regulators have utterly failed PFAS-contaminated communities like Williamtown. And as Rob Bilott says when that happens you have just one option—

the justice system.

I'm proud to be a voice in parliament for these people who I represent, especially those who the government has abandoned. We will continue to look, via this report process, at what the government is and isn't doing and hopefully get one step closer to justice for the people affected by PFAS contamination.

Ms BUTLER (Griffith) (10:58): by leave—I also rise to speak on this very significant report in relation to an issue of great importance to my community—that is, the presence of PFAS on defence sites.

Mr Deputy Speaker Mitchell, as you know, the Bulimba Barracks site is in my community. Last year there was an announcement of a preferred purchaser for the site. The sale of the site has been underway ever since, and I anticipate that settlement will be announced soon. But, in the meantime, it's important to note that last year it was revealed that there had been PFAS found on the site.

I met with the minister to raise with her my concerns about the presence of PFAS on the site and to ask that action be taken in relation to remediation on the site. Alongside my colleagues in the state and local spheres, the Hon. Di Farmer MP and Councillor Kara Cook, we have been supporting a petition to ensure that any contaminants found at the site be remediated promptly. I want to make it very clear to this House that we, the local representatives for that particular area, will continue to insist that contaminants be remediated, particularly contaminants of great concern such as PFAS, especially given the proximity of the site to the river and to neighbouring properties. Thanks very much for the opportunity, Mr Deputy Speaker.

**BILLS**

**Financial Sector Reform (Hayne Royal Commission Response—Protecting Consumers (2019 Measures)) Bill 2019**

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

**Mr STEPHEN JONES** (Whitlam) (11:00): I'm pleased to be speaking to the motion. I wish to move an amendment to the second reading stage, which I provide to the clerks.

The Financial Sector Reform (Hayne Royal Commission Response—Protecting Consumers (2019 Measures)) Bill 2019 finally implements four of the government's long list of unmet commitments from its response to the banking royal commission. This will, when it finally passes the parliament, bring the government to a grand total of 10 of the 76 recommendations that were made by the Hayne commission into the banking and financial services sector.

I'll briefly summarise the effects of the bill and then review each of the schedules before addressing our amendment. Schedule 1 of the bill extends the unfair-contract terms laws to cover insurance contracts. Schedule 2 of the bill brings funeral insurance into the general financial consumer protections regime. And schedule 3 of the bill introduces a best interest duty for mortgage brokers and provides for regulations to reform mortgage broker remuneration.

I will address schedule 1. Can I say, as a preface, it's deeply disappointing that this wasn't introduced into the House before Christmas. Labor have long communicated to the government that they will have our every cooperation in ensuring that the Hayne royal commission recommendations on the banking and financial sector are implemented posthaste, and we'll do whatever we can, from a parliamentary sense, to ensure that those bills can be debated, debated early, improved where necessary and moved from this place to the other place and enacted. We do this because we take the view that the consumers of Australia rely upon it. We also make the observation that many of the recommendations—in fact, most of the recommendations—of the royal commission were not new to government. I'll go to that point when addressing the unfair-contract terms which are subject to one of the schedules before the House.

Given that they're not new to government, the government should have already implemented most of these recommendations. Work should have been well underway. So it's regrettable that here we are in the first session of this year and we are only now debating this legislation. It's regrettable for a second reason. Any Australian
government can predict that, between October, November and December in this country, we approach, with great sadness, the period of natural disasters. Whether it be floods, whether it be cyclones in the north, whether it be bushfires, as we've tragically seen through the summer of 2019-20, or, as we've seen in our nation's capital, devastating hailstorms—all too frequent throughout the summer months—it is a very predictable phenomena. So, against that backdrop, you have to ask yourself: why would any government delay the implementation of legislation which improves the handling of insurance claims—insurance claims that we can predict with calendar certainty are going to increase after the summer period? We can predict with calendar certainty that that is going to occur. As you move through the flood season, the bushfire season, the hail season, you know that those insurance claims are going to increase. And this schedule deals with applying unfair terms to the insurance contracts, providing consumers with additional protections as and when they need to make their claims.

Any responsible government would know that insurance customers are going to need those protections as we move into the natural disaster season. They are not there, they haven't been there; that's bad enough. The government, in the last week of parliament last year, indicated that they were going to introduce this legislation into the parliament. But they chose not to. What was more important to the government than implementing these recommendations that were going to protect insurance consumers? Introducing the already failed union-busting Ensuring Integrity bills. It was a very costly stunt which is going to cost insurance consumers dearly. So if you're struggling with the terms of your unfair insurance contract, if you're struggling with the insurance claims management process and you're wondering who to blame, you need look no further than this mob over here. They were too interested in playing political parlour games and not interested enough in implementing the recommendations of the Hayne royal commission into the banking and financial services sector, most of which have been sitting in the government's lap since 2016.

Let's deal with schedule 1 of the bill. Schedule 1 of the bill brings insurance contracts from the Insurance Contracts Act 1984 into the unfair contracts regime established under the ASIC Act. Many businesses use standard form contracts which are set out on a 'take it or leave it' basis; whether it is a tenant taking out a new tenancy or the purchase of a motor vehicle, it is all too common in the insurance contracts area. These are standard contracts. It's not as if the average consumer sits down with their insurer and negotiates line by line the terms of the contract. They are a standard form contract: 'Here it is. Sign on the dotted line, pay your premium and you have cover.'

This is a reasonable and appropriate business practice when you are dealing with high-volume contracts. But it leaves customers with no power to negotiate with businesses if elements of a standard form contract are unfair. This is why Labor introduced the unfair contract terms regime in 2010—to protect consumers from exploitation and unfairness. Under the regime, terms in standard contracts are nullified if they are found to be unfair by a competent judicial authority. This provides powerful protections to consumers from exploitative business practices. But, until now, insurance contracts have been exempt, for the most part, from this regime.

These reforms have been a long time coming. It was highlighted as an issue by Commissioner Hayne in his final report back in February last year, which recommended that unfair contract terms be extended to cover insurance contracts. But that wasn't the first time that this recommendation has been made to government after thoroughgoing research and consultation with industry. Indeed, it was recommendation 6 of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's interim report into the Northern Australia insurance in 2018. It was recommendation 3.1 of the bipartisan report of the 2018 Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services inquiry into the life insurance industry. Indeed, in 2017, a year earlier, the Senate Economics Committee conducted an inquiry into the general insurance industry and at recommendation 11 they made a clear recommendation to government on exactly the same thing. We can go back to the 2017 Australian Consumer Law review. At proposal 10 it was exactly the same recommendation. I simply ask this: given that the coalition had report after report after report and recommendation after recommendation after recommendation, why is it that it has taken until today for these amendments to be introduced into the parliament and debated?

A 2012 government report estimated, from the available data on insurance, that the cost to consumers was somewhere in excess of $10 million a year. The failure of the government to act on report after report and recommendation after recommendation costs consumers $10 million a year. That may be pocket change to those opposite, but to consumers who are struggling with the devastation of a bushfire, their properties devastated by flood or their cars or premises wiped out by hailstones, that is real money that they need in their time of need. We also know that this $10 million is probably at the bottom end of estimations, because most detriment is likely to be underreported. Consumers often fail to claim and often fail to report issues. Since 2012, we have only seen the intensity of floods and bushfires increase.

To take these numbers as given, Australian insurance customers have suffered at least $20 million in detriments from unfair contract terms while the coalition government has sat on report after report after report recommending...
that they take action, with no action being taken. This means that, while this government has been busy wasting parliamentary time on bills aimed at tearing down workers' protections and workers' rights, Australian families have been left helpless in the face of unfair contract terms. We need a better approach. We need the government to take a serious, concerted, workmanlike approach to the implementation of not only the Hayne commission recommendations but also the series of reports that have recommended the same thing.

These new laws are welcome. They will bring insurance contracts into the unfair contract terms regime. But there are some sensible further refinements that are needed to redress the unique issues relating to insurance contracts. The terms that define the main subject matter of the insurance contract will be excluded from the regime. Terms determining the up-front prices, excesses and deductibles will be excluded where they are disclosed in a transparent manner. The utmost duty of good faith will be unaffected. The utmost duty of good faith, which applies via both statute law and common law to insurance contracts, will persist. These refinements however will ensure that insurers can offer insurance contracts with the knowledge necessary to set prices and assess risks while consumers are protected by the new features of the regime.

I want to go to schedule 2, which deals with funeral insurance. Schedule 2 is the subject of my second reading amendment, which I formally move:

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

(1) notes that:
(a) it has been over 12 months since the Hayne Royal Commission exposed the fact that Aboriginal families have been taken advantage of by the deceptive conduct and the misleading selling of funeral insurance products in Aboriginal communities;
(b) the selling of these products has continued while the Government has delayed the introduction of remedial legislation;
(c) when passed, this bill will present a fundamental challenge to the questionable business model of the marketers of these products; and
(d) if the companies which have promoted those schemes fail, as many as 19,000 policy holders could lose the meagre benefit payments from those policies; and
(2) therefore calls on the Government to work with the Opposition, and representatives of affected communities, to ensure that the policy holders and their families will be protected".

Schedule 2 of the bill ensures that the consumer protection provisions of the Australian Securities and Investments Commission Act 2001 will apply to funeral expenses policies. We are deeply concerned. We congratulate the government on introducing laws to address this matter.

Everything that I have said about the delays in introducing schedule 1 of this bill applies to schedule 2 in double force, because between the time when Commissioner Hayne exposed the rorts and dishonesty in the marketing of funeral insurance, particularly in vulnerable Aboriginal communities, and now the practices have continued.

We still see these little-value or junk insurance products being marketed to vulnerable people in vulnerable communities. We are deeply concerned that that has persisted for more than 12 months—in fact, closer to two years—since the behaviours were originally exposed by the Hayne royal commission. Labour welcome the fact that laws have been introduced but we have some concerns. On 7 December, the shadow minister for Indigenous affairs and myself wrote to the Treasurer outlining our concerns about the consequences of this foreshadowed legislation and I seek leave to table a copy of that letter now.

Leave granted.

Mr STEPHEN JONES: I thank the minister. We welcome the fact that legislation is being moved. The amendments do not—I want to stress this—impact on the treatment of prepaid funerals, which have operated for well in excess of a century by reputable organisations including friendly societies, unions and others. They will continue to operate as funeral benefit funds. But I want to distinguish a product which is marketed as funeral insurance from those funeral benefit funds which will be interrupted by the passage of this legislation. We welcome the change. It is a capstone on a particularly sorry story in our nation's financial history.

Commissioner Hayne was withering in his condemnation of so-called financial expenses policies. They're policies of little value and may be particularly likely to be sold to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in remote and regional Australia. The so-called Aboriginal Community Benefit Fund was one such company, one such fund marketing these insurance products. It's a particularly extraordinary story, exposed by the Hayne royal commission, of a for-profit funeral insurance company marketed as an Aboriginal community benefit fund that was run neither by Indigenous Australians for their benefit nor for the benefit of their communities.
This company is still trading, remarkably, as Youpla Group Pty Ltd. It sells insurance funeral products to Indigenous Australians, which leads to them paying more in premiums than their families could ever hope to claim from the policy itself. Extraordinarily, this company has until recently had a direct relationship with Centrelink's Centrepay system, allowing the company to arrange, perhaps with formal consent but—I wager—rarely with the consent of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person who had available to them the financial advice necessary to ensure that they made a proper decision in respect of that policy. So in a sense, Centrelink's Centrepay system has been incorporated into this great scam. The company has built a business model on exploiting the genuine desires of Indigenous Australians to ensure that their families were not left penniless when they passed away.

Labor welcomes the amendments in this schedule which will see an end to a particularly sorry business model by bringing these products within the regulation of the Australian Securities and Investment Commission and by ensuring that they will be dealt with as if they were any other financial product. It will end the business model which has allowed this exploitation to persist. Labor wants to ensure that approximately 19,000 policy holders who bought funeral insurance on the basis of these dodgy marketing practices will not be left in limbo. We do not want to see these Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians being ripped off twice.

This was the subject of the letter, which I have tabled, that the shadow minister for Indigenous Australians and I have written to the Treasurer. We think a proactive approach is needed to ensure that these vulnerable Australians do not get ripped off twice. We are very keen to work with the government to ensure that such arrangements can be put in place when and if they are necessary.

I will address schedule 3 of the bill, which introduces a best-interest duty for mortgage brokers that will ensure the consumers' interests are prioritised when a mortgage broker provides credit assistance. This will mean a duty will apply in relation to the provision of consumer credit assistance. The policy also provides a regulation-making power to regulate mortgage broker remuneration. The draft regulations set out by the government require that the value of the up-front commissions be linked to the amount drawn down by borrowers instead of the loan amount. It is often the practice that somebody purchasing a house—let's just say, for argument's sake, a $500,000 house with a $400,000 mortgage—may increase that mortgage by another $20,000, $30,000 or $40,000 to pay for other expenses associated with the moving into, the renovation of or the furnishing of that property. They may not spend all of that money at once. Under previous arrangements, a commission available to a mortgage broker was available up-front on the full value of that mortgage, whether or not it was drawn down on, ever, or within a certain period of time. The amendments set out in the schedule make sense, and we support them.

The draft regulations also ban campaign and volume based commissions and payments, together with a capping of soft-dollar benefits. I've spoken about the drawdown phenomena and how commissions have been paid. The draft regulations also amend the period over which commissions can be clawed back from aggregators and mortgage brokers, limiting it to two years, and passing on this cost to consumers will be prohibited.

We support the reforms. We do note that the Productivity Commission has found the competitiveness of the Australian home loan market is now dependent on mortgage brokers. This is an important point—not a point fully ventilated through the Hayne royal commission but relevant to another observation I will make. A few years back, fewer than half of all mortgages written in this country went through a mortgage broker. At the beginning of the Hayne royal commission process it was probably around 50 to 55 per cent. Today it's in excess of 60 per cent. That's six out of every 10 mortgage loans that are written in this country for a home loan going through a mortgage broker. They are now well integrated into the financing of the home loan market and the housing market.

The Productivity Commission has acknowledged this. We'd like to see more competition in that area. We've said time and time again that we do not think there is enough competition driving down prices in the home mortgage market. We believe that mortgage brokers, where properly regulated, are a key to driving more competition, particularly within the home mortgage market.

But it's important that we ensure the reforms that are the subject of this bill work as intended. I note that the government has committed to a review of the mortgage broker reforms in three years time. This commitment doesn't appear as a part of the legislation. Labor won't block the passage of this bill, but we will ensure that this review takes place as promised.

I do want to say something about Commissioner Hayne's recommendation on the business model around mortgage brokers. Commissioner Hayne recommended that the commission based business model for the mortgage broker market be ended. The government has taken a different approach to that. This bill does not contemplate at this stage the implementation of the recommendation. I think there are sound reasons for hastening slowly in this area. As I've already said, 60 per cent of the mortgage market is now written through the mortgage
broker system. Labor agrees with the government to the passage of this bill and not implementing the recommendation, which would ban commission based payments at this stage, but mortgage brokers are on notice. Mortgage brokers are on notice that the system has to work and it has to work in the interests of the customers that they represent, not the financiers whose products they are facilitating. If it emanates over the period of the next few years and evidence comes forward that that is not the case then we will be ensuring that those remuneration arrangements are subject to the review as recommended by Commissioner Hayne and contemplated by the government—in fact, guaranteed by the government.

So we commend both my amendment, which deals with the subject matter of general insurance, and the bill to all members of this place. It is important that the government get a giddy-up on implementing the royal commission recommendations. When this bill passes the House, as I hope it does swiftly, and goes to the other place—hopefully it will be passed before the end of this sitting fortnight—we will still have only met a grand total of 10 of the 76 recommendations of the Hayne royal commission. I think the community expects that we would have done much, much more than that after the more than 12 months since those recommendations were handed down, particularly when you consider that the vast majority of those recommendations have been presented to government not once, not twice, not three times, not four times but in some cases close to 10 times. With those observations I commend the motion and the amendment to the House.

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

Mr Giles: I second the amendment and reserve my right to speak.

Mr FALINSKI (Mackellar) (11:28): I don't propose to speak for long today on this bill, the Financial Sector Reform (Hayne Royal Commission Response—Protecting Consumers (2019 Measures)) Bill 2019. Normally that gets me a round of applause, but apparently not today!

Mr Thistlethwaite interjecting—

Mr FALINSKI: Thank you! The member for Whitlam has spoken eloquently, eruditely and, of course, incorrectly on most of what is in this bill, and we thank him for his contribution today. We do share with him, however, his desire to see this legislation passed as quickly as possible, and perhaps the Labor Party could assist the government by not moving amendments that are both unnecessary and unlikely to assist in helping the consumers they so often mourn.

Unfair contract terms in insurance contracts is the subject of a recommendation of the Hayne royal commission. It is a recommendation that was proposed to that inquiry by ASIC. Just briefly, because the member for Whitlam has already eruditely already summarised what is proposed, the national unfair contract terms laws currently protect consumers and small businesses who purchase financial products and services through standard form contracts. Until now, insurance contracts, for very good reason, have been exempt from the regulation by these laws. The Insurance Contracts Act will be amended, however, to allow the ASIC Act's unfair-contracts laws to apply to all insurance contracts. This measure will offer protection to consumers who lack bargaining power and receive their contracts on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. These consumers are vulnerable to unfair terms, like exclusions or onerous conditions, which can be hidden in the contract. This will provide important protection in cases where an insurer has attempted to deny a claim or restrict the payout available to a consumer or a small business on the basis of an unfair term.

For insurance contracts, the regime will be tailored to increase clarity and certainty for industry and consumers. This includes defining the upfront price as premiums and excess or deductible payable and defining the main subject matter of the contract as what is being insured. This is in line with the royal commission's recommendation 4.7. Consumers and ASIC will be able to apply to a court for a declaration that a term of an insurance contract is unfair. If they succeed, the term will be void and therefore not enforceable.

Schedule 2 specifically deals with funeral expenses facilities and funeral insurance contracts. The financial services royal commission uncovered evidence of the significant harm caused to vulnerable consumers by the poor sales practices adopted by funeral expenses policy providers. The exemption in the Corporations Act that has allowed these providers to escape the scrutiny of the Australian Securities and Investments Commission will be removed once this bill is passed into law. They will be subject to the Australian financial services licensing regime. The bill will ensure that consumer protection provisions in the ASIC Act apply to funeral expenses policies, clarifying any ambiguity that may exist on this matter. The removal of this exemption will ensure consumers have appropriate protection when taking out policies to help fund the costs associated with a funeral. The provision of prepaid funerals will be unaffected by these reforms, on the ground that it will be able to rely on the funeral benefit exemption in the Corporations Act. The bill will come into effect after royal assent. Providers of funeral expenses policies that do not already hold an Australian financial services licence will be required to gain a licence by 1 April 2020.
Schedule 3 deals with mortgage brokers. Prior to the election, I found the recommendations of the royal commission on mortgage brokers to be somewhat contradictory. Labor, of course, backed these recommendations, but I’m glad to hear the member for Whitlam now saying that Labor agrees with our amended provisions here.

The Financial Sector Reform (Hayne Royal Commission Response—Protecting Consumers (2019 Measures)) Bill 2019 fulfils the government’s commitment to implement its response to two recommendations of the Royal Commission into Misconduct in the Banking, Superannuation and Financial Services Industry. The bill will introduce a best-interest duty for mortgage brokers and reform mortgage broker remuneration. The regulations set out the details of the reform to remuneration. The best-interest duty will require mortgage brokers to act in the best interests of consumers when providing credit assistance in relation to credit contracts. The obligation will bring the law into line with what consumers currently expect of mortgage brokers. The bill and regulations make changes to mortgage broker remuneration by requiring the value of upfront commissions to be linked to the amount drawn down by borrowers instead of the loan amount, banning campaign and volume based commission and payments, and capping soft-dollar benefits. The new rules will also limit the period over which commissions can be clawed back from aggregators and brokers to two years and prohibit the cost of clawbacks from being passed on to consumers. The royal commission identified evidence of mortgage brokers recommending loans based on the commission they would receive. Both the best-interest duty and the reforms to mortgage broker remuneration will mitigate the incentive for mortgage brokers to suggest loans that are not in the best interests of consumers.

It would be remiss of me not to make some comments about this piece of legislation. First, the evidence out of the royal commission, particularly in its interim report, is that banks have been using behavioural science to create a blizzard of products in the market, confusing consumers and giving the appearance of competition without there being actual competition. We’re seeing this in the superannuation sector as well. Increasingly, mortgage brokers and financial planners are becoming critical to Australians’ financial wellbeing, both now and into the future. As we are creating a more complex financial system, of which we should be rightly proud—whether it be in insurance, or superannuation and retirement incomes, or simply in mortgage products to buy a house or build an investment policy—it is important that we avail all Australians, regardless of their income, of the capacity to get the most and the best form of advice that they can get, and not simply reserve that advice for high-net-worth individuals and insiders who know where to go. My problem with the royal commission is that we may have the unintended consequence of creating yet more complexity while denying people the capacity and the ability to reach out for that advice that they so sorely need at the time when they need it.

The Hayne royal commission also pointed out a lot of anecdotal evidence about a lot of consumers being badly impacted by financial service companies and providers. What it failed to understand was that this parliament has already passed laws which those consumers and ASIC could have used both to shut down and to prosecute those providers who had done wrong by the consumers. It should have made the point and should have asked the question why those laws had not been invoked, rather than insisting that this parliament create yet more complexity to confuse yet more consumers and to deny yet more Australians capacity to understand and to seek the advice that they so need.

We have now given ASIC enormous powers. We have cloaked it in great and immense capacity to do great good and to do great harm. We have provided it with more resources than it has ever had before, and yet it comes back to this parliament and asks for more powers and more resources. We understand why, on this side of the House, but we expect ASIC to finally put an end to this. We expect fewer reports, less lobbying, less communication and less of ASIC trying to impact this parliament and wanting more regulation. We expect it to undertake its role in what it does in the manner and form which promotes competition and empowers consumers, rather than reducing the choices that they have.

The member for Watson is often heard saying that this side of the House wishes to impose on unions laws that company directors would never have. However, when we have retorted that we are very happy to apply the Corporations Law to unions and to union leaders, he often falls silent on the idea that unions should be subjected to the Corporations Law. The truth is that company directors in this country now are very much on the hook for virtually anything that goes wrong and for any consumer that is harmed. Litigation funders run rampant through our legal system with billions of dollars, driving fear into the hearts of people who are simply trying to provide products and services to consumers so that they can be better off.

These laws will ultimately protect consumers, but this parliament must be very careful that we do not introduce so many laws that we reduce the choice and the capacity for consumers to seek advice and to run their lives in a manner and form that they see fit, not in the manner and form that members of this House believe that they should.
Ms Ryan (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (11:38): I'm pleased to rise after the member for Mackellar's short contribution, as he prefaced, in the debate on the Financial Sector Reform (Hayne Royal Commission Response—Protecting Consumers (2019 Measures)) Bill 2019.

Labor supports this bill because Labor is always on the side of consumers and Australians. Unlike the coalition, which had to be dragged kicking and screaming to have a royal commission into banking and financial services, Labor led from the front to end the rorts and the rip-offs that were being identified as our residents and communities came to us with what they saw as an unfair system. We'll continue to push to implement the recommendations of that royal commission.

The Liberals and Nationals never wanted a royal commission into banking misconduct and now they continue to drag their feet in implementing the recommendations. We don't really need to remind those members in this House—but perhaps after the member for Mackellar's contribution it is worth noting that the Prime Minister himself voted 26 times against the Hayne royal commission. One year after receiving the final report—until this piece of legislation passes this House—only six of those recommendations have been implemented by this government. When this piece of legislation passes this House, that will take it to 10 of the 76 recommendations being implemented. On Saturday, it was the anniversary of those recommendations coming down. This government continues to drag its feet. There was a commitment that parts of the schedules of this legislation were going to be passed before the end of 2019, and, despite us sitting at the end of 2019, we had to wait until now for this bill to be before us. Not even the full horror of the banking royal commission, which revealed a culture of appalling rorts and rip-offs, was enough to spur this government into fast-enough action.

Schedule 1 of this bill goes to impact unfair contract. It will bring insurance contracts from the Insurance Contracts Act into the unfair contracts regime under the ASIC Act. In 2010, Labor introduced the unfair contract terms regime to protect consumers from exploitation and unfairness. Under the regime, terms in standard contract terms are nullified if they are found to be unfair. A government report in 2012 told us that, from the data they had on insurance claims, there could be an up to $10 million a year hit for consumers in detriments in this space. And, because consumers were unlikely to report the issues, that detriment was unlikely to be reported and unlikely to be challenged. This is becoming increasingly important. With the effects of climate change worsening, the intensity and the number of natural disasters, like floods and bushfires, have increased since 2012 when this report was handed down and that creates more impetus for why this schedule is important and why Labor supports it today.

But the government has adopted this go-slow approach, despite being told by report after report that Australian insurance customers are suffering by now at least an estimated $20 million worth of detriments per annum in unfair contract terms. Perhaps the government should be more focused on fighting for a better deal for Australians rather than, as we've seen this week, fighting one another. This affects Australians affected by floods and fire—that's the bush! Instead, the National Party, members of the coalition, would rather fight over the deputy prime ministership.

The new law that we're talking about today will bring insurance contracts into that unfair contract terms regime, and this is welcomed. But there are some further sensible refinements needed to address the unique issues related to insurance contracts. These refinements will ensure that insurers can offer insurance contracts with the knowledge necessary to set prices and assess risks while consumers are protected by the new features of the regime.

Schedule 2 of the bill goes to funeral insurance—and it goes to the amendment that is before us now. Schedule 2 makes sure that funeral expenses policies are covered by the Australian Securities and Investments Commission Act, and the amendment does not change prepaid funeral arrangements which continue to operate as funeral benefits and, as most of us here across the chamber hear from our communities about, are seen to have benefit and are seen to deliver that benefit. We welcome that change. As the shadow minister told us, in the Hayne royal commission we heard the dreadful story of the Aboriginal Community Benefit Fund, which this schedule will change. This fund was neither Indigenous nor run for the benefit of communities. It is a for-profit company now rebranded as Youpla Group. This fund sold expensive funeral expenses policies to Indigenous Australians like Ms Tracey Walsh, an Indigenous woman from Mooroolbark, in Victoria. These policies were marketed in a misleading way, leading to men and women like Tracey Walsh paying far more in premiums than their families could ever receive in funeral benefits. Until recently the fund even had an arrangement with Centrelink which let them deduct payments automatically from Centrelink recipients.

This amendment calls on the government to ensure that the 19,000 Australians who have these policies are protected and looked after beyond this legislation, that the government ensure that these Indigenous Australians and their families are protected and their interests seen to. Labor will be working closely with these communities to ensure that their voices are heard here in the parliament and around Australia if this amendment does not pass.
this parliament. So schedule 2 is welcome, but there are 19,000 Australians who already have policies in this space that need the government's attention and we need to ensure that they suffer no further negative impacts.

The third schedule goes to mortgage brokerage. Schedule 3 of the bill introduces a 'best interests' duty for mortgage brokers that will ensure that consumers interests are prioritised when a mortgage broker provides credit assistance. The draft regulations set out by the government require that the value of up-front commissions be linked to the amount drawn down by borrowers rather than the loan amount. It bans campaign and volume based commissions and payments and caps 'soft-dollar' benefits.

We support these reforms and note that the Productivity Commission has found the competitiveness of Australia's home loan market is now dependent on mortgage brokers. I know colleagues who have sat with local mortgage brokers and I know that, like others in this chamber, I spend a considerable amount of time with the mortgage brokers in my electorate hearing stories of opportunities where my local people are working diligently to assist people, particularly those on the margins, to enter the housing market. They are strong advocates for ensuring that, in this space, people behave in an honest and a responsible manner. We must, however, ensure that the reforms that are in this schedule work as they are meant to.

Despite promising a review of the mortgage broker reforms in three years, this appears nowhere in this legislation. I would further call on the government to ensure that that review happens so that we can have confidence that my local mortgage brokers, operating in a community that is in a growth corridor—we are building thousands of houses a year, and there are thousands of mortgage contracts being drawn up in a year. My community needs to know that they can, in all confidence, use a mortgage broker if that is their choice and know that they are going to be treated fairly in the longer term. The opposition will not be blocking any part of this legislation, but it is not a blank cheque. Labor will work tirelessly to make sure that this review occurs in three years.

In conclusion, it's a year on and the government haven't done enough to implement the royal commission's recommendations. At this moment, in this parliament, only six of the 76 recommendations have been implemented. When this bill passes the parliament there will be 10 of the 76 recommendations implemented. I know that I speak for those on this side of the House, who heard the harrowing stories and saw the rorts and the rip-offs, and I know that in my community we want to be able to know that our banking and financial services sector is operating in a fiscally and morally responsible way. The inaction coming from those opposite is not giving us comfort.

Their inaction means that families who suffer claims-handling issues from the devastating bushfires, hail storms or other extreme weather events this summer are still left without protection. The Morrison government missed their own deadline to introduce this legislation by the end of 2019, and I know that's going to reverberate in communities in Victoria who've been impacted dreadfully by the bushfires. No compensation scheme of last resort is in place for distraught customers. No new disciplinary system is in place to punish unscrupulous financial advisers. Mortgage brokers have no legislated duty to act in the best interest of their customers. Unscrupulous operators will be able to hawk junk insurance over the phone, and car dealers will still be able to claim commissions on dodgy add-on insurance products. ASIC still lacks essential enforcement powers, and industry codes of conduct remain completely unenforceable.

The Morrison government has a dismal record when it comes to going soft after this royal commission. The Prime Minister and the Treasurer pretended to care about the recommendations of the banking royal commission but their actions since tell us another story. While the coalition continues to ignore those recommendations, Labor will always push to fight for consumers, to protect the Australian people and to ensure that this parliament delivers on its promises.

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (11:51): The Financial Sector Reform (Hayne Royal Commission Response—Protecting Consumers (2019 Measures)) Bill 2019 is late. Like many of the government's responses to the royal commission, it comes delayed to this parliament. This particular provision relating to unfair contract terms in insurance contracts was identified as something of a priority by the Hayne royal commission into financial services when it reported in February last year. Aside from that, this is an issue that has been identified by this parliament for close to a decade now as something that required urgent attention to protect consumers from what is often a very complicated financial transaction relating to the negotiation of insurance contracts.

These are really important reforms for consumers. They provide additional and fairer protection for consumers when it comes to insurance and funeral insurance and to dealing with mortgage brokers and accessing mortgage broker services. As I said, these are complicated financial transactions. They often involve very long product disclosure statements. Most people don't read these statements, so they are not aware of the finer details when they
are entering into these contracts. In relation to insurance, when people go to make claims and they haven't read the fine print, they find that they are not eligible for compensation for particular items they thought they were insured for. On many occasions, to the average Australian, the negotiation and the inclusion of those terms would seem unfair.

I mentioned that these are issues that have been identified by this parliament going back almost a decade. It was first identified under the previous Labor government, when David Bradbury was the minister. In 2013 he attempted to bring legislation to this parliament to enforce unfair contract terms in the insurance contracts regime. Unfortunately, the parliament lapsed before that could be prosecuted. In addition, there have been numerous inquiries imploiring the government to act on this issue. Recommendation 6 of the ACCC's first interim report on the Northern Australia insurance inquiry in 2018 recommended provisions such as these. Then there was recommendation 3.1 of the report of the 2018 Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services inquiry into the life insurance industry; recommendation 11 of the 2017 Senate Economics Committee inquiry into the general insurance industry; and proposal 10 of the 2017 Australian Consumer Law Review. So the government's argument that the royal commission only reported 12 months ago and the government has been consulting—there has been an exposure draft—and gaining the necessary evidence to bring this to parliament does not hold up. This is an issue that has been identified through parliamentary and other inquiries for close to a decade now. Unfortunately, it is too late. Many Australians have suffered at the hands of large insurance companies when they should have been protected by earlier action from this government on these issues. Nonetheless, this bill does finally bring the unfair contract term regime to the parliament and Labor will be supporting this particular provision.

The bill contains three schedules which implement some of the recommendations of the financial services royal commission. Schedule 1 extends the existing protections of the unfair contract terms regime under the ASIC Act to insurance contracts governed by the Insurance Contracts Act. Schedule 2 extends consumer protection provisions of the ASIC Act to cover funeral insurance policies. Schedule 3 sets out a new best interest duty for mortgage brokers and allows for new regulations to restrict conflicted remuneration being received by mortgage brokers.

Schedule 1 finally implements the financial services royal commission recommendation 4.7 to extend the provisions and protections of the ASIC Act to unfair contract term provisions to insurance contracts covered by the Insurance Contracts Act. This means the bill will only apply to insurance contracts taken out by consumers or small businesses, not group insurers. One of the problems under our current insurance contracts regime is that the ASIC Act presently excludes terms that define the main subject matter of the contract from the unfair contract term regime. This bill will rectify that deficiency and it will amend the ASIC Act to provide that the main subject matter of an insurance contract is limited to the description of what is being insured.

The bill will also amend the ASIC Act to exclude terms that set the quantum or existence of the excess or deductibles in an insurance contract from the unfair contract term regime. This bill also amends the ASIC Act to allow for third-party beneficiaries to bring actions against insurers under an unfair contract term regime. They would be examples where a son or daughter of someone under a particular form of personal insurance seeks to bring a claim that's been denied by an insurer. This regime will allow a person to bring an action under the provisions of the act where they believe that there has been unfairness. But the test of unfairness, importantly, under this bill relates to what's been negotiated between the parties to the contract—in other words, the insurance for which the person was covered, not the third-party beneficiaries. It also maintains the current obligation under the Insurance Contracts Act for the parties to insurance contracts to act with utmost good faith.

In addition, the bill will ensure that terms that define the main subject matter of an insurance contract will be excluded from the UCT regime; however, terms defining the main subject matter of an insurance contract will be limited to terms which define what is being insured: for example, a house, a car or a person. Terms defining the upfront price payable for an insurance contract will continue to be excluded from the unfair contract term regime. Terms defining the quantum or existence of the excess or deductible of an insurance contract will also be excluded from the regime if they are disclosed up front and they are transparent and known by the person taking out the insurance.

Some examples of how this particular bill, once it is enacted, will assist consumers and rectify, hopefully, or provide the opportunity for people to take actions to rectify deficiencies in insurance contracts include home building insurance terms that provide that the most the insurer will pay in the event of loss of damage to a building is the cost to the insurer of rebuilding or repairing the building as opposed to the actual cost of the repair, which may be higher for the insured. When you go to insure your house you believe, if it burns down or something like that, it is going to be repaired in a similar vein to what you had there in the past. There have been
provisions in contracts that allow insurers to get away with not repairing or not providing recompense to what was there in the past.

Other examples include: car insurance terms that require the insured to provide the name, registration and contact details of an uninsured at-fault driver when making a claim; consumer credit insurance terms that prevent an insured from making a disability claim if they were not diagnosed with a disability prior to leaving work; and travel insurance terms that allow a claim to be denied on the basis of a blanket mental health exclusion. They are examples of some of the provisions which will provide people with the opportunity to launch actions if actions such as those are taken by insurers in the future, once this act is enacted.

Schedule 2 of the bill implements the financial services royal commission recommendation 4.2, which recommended the removal of the exclusion of funeral expenses policies from the definition of 'financial products' under the Corporations Act and also recommended amending the ASIC Act to put beyond doubt that the consumer protection provisions under that act apply to funeral expenses policies. The ASIC Act currently provides that funeral benefits are not financial products and are, therefore, not subject to the consumer protection provisions of the act. The effect of this carve-out from the act is that providers of funeral expenses policies do not have to obtain an Australian Financial Services licence, are not bound by the general conduct obligations contained in section 912A of the Corporations Act and are not restrained by the anti-hawking provisions in the Corporations Act. As a result of that, we've seen some terrible behaviour that was highlighted in the financial services royal commission in this space by people and organisations selling dodgy products to, in particular and unfortunately, First Australians—Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians—in situations where people are vulnerable.

The royal commission uncovered evidence of the significant harm that can be caused to vulnerable consumers through poor sales practices adopted by some funeral expenses policy providers. Funeral expenses policies provide for the payment of funeral costs up to a nominated limit, and the payout of a policy only covers the cost of the funeral or things incidental to it, but nothing else. Some of the stories that were uncovered by the royal commission in the examples found that people with funeral insurance were paying considerably more in premiums than the payout that they were actually getting upon the case of death. There is a significant concern amongst consumer advocates that the Aboriginal Community Benefit Fund, which was heavily criticised in the royal commission, may not be able to conform to these changes. A failure of this organisation may leave a large number—it's estimated at about 19,000—of Indigenous policyholders without any insurance, after paying for it for many years. The royal commission heard evidence that this fund was accused of ripping off and misleading Indigenous families by creating pressure through sales tactics to sell them expensive funeral plans. When the fund's CEO appeared before the commission, it became clear he had no background in insurance at all and no qualifications that you would expect to be necessary for someone selling these types of policies to people.

The shadow minister, the member for Whitlam, has moved a second reading amendment calling on the government to protect the customers of the Aboriginal Community Benefit Fund. People simply cannot be made worse off because of the passage of this bill—that's something that we implore the government to take notice of. The government must protect these people in this situation. It's been identified by the royal commission as a big issue, and, if the passage of this bill means that that particular fund falls over, those people deserve protection. They've paid for that insurance over the course of their lifetimes.

Schedule 3 implements some of the financial services royal commission recommendations in respect to mortgage brokers, specifically recommendations 1.2 and 1.3, which recommended applying our best interest duty for mortgage brokers and banning conflicted remuneration for mortgage brokers. One would think that mortgage brokers would act in the best interests of their clients, but, unfortunately, as the royal commission uncovered and as numerous inquiries have uncovered, like most of financial service transactions in this country over the course of the last decade, that hasn't been the case. Notably, the government has chosen not to accept royal commission recommendation 1.3, unfortunately. This schedule, instead, provides for regulations to restrict the circumstances under which conflicted remuneration can be given in relation to mortgage brokers' services. The best interest duty will require mortgage brokers to act in the best interests of their clients and put their clients' interests as a priority when providing credit assistance. As I said earlier, one would hope that they do act in that manner, but that hasn't been the case. This government doesn't have the best record, I've got to say, when it comes to implementing best interest duties for financial services for consumers.

We all know that the government opposed FOFA when it was originally introduced by the Labor Party back in 2012, which provided a best interest duty generally for the provision of financial services in this country. Believe it or not, those opposite opposed that. They opposed the provision of a best interest duty in the FOFA regulations in that catch-all provision. The regulations restricting conflicted remuneration are expected to prohibit a number
of forms of conflicted remuneration, including volume-based benefits, campaign-based benefits and benefits that include a clawback period greater than two years.

In conclusion, we support this bill. I do want to thank the Consumer Action Law Centre, CHOICE, Super Consumers Australia, the Financial Rights Legal Centre and WEstjustice for their feedback in Labor formulating our position on this important reform. It's overdue but it's now time for the government to get on and implement these important reforms and protect consumers in financial services.

Ms BURNEY (Barton) (12:06): People, including the previous speaker, the member for Kingsford Smith, have outlined in very clear detail what Labor's position is in relation to the Financial Sector Reform (Hayne Royal Commission Response—Protecting Consumers (2019 Measures)) Bill 2019 and that is, of course, that we will support it, but we've moved some second reading amendments, and they are done very, very seriously. I want to restrict my remarks to schedule 2, which extends consumer protection provisions of the ASIC Act 2001 to cover funeral expense policies.

I have spoken previously to the Treasurer about the seriousness of this particular part of the legislation. It goes very much to what I am sure previous speakers have spoken about from this side of the House and that is around funerals. The Hayne royal commission has been clearly outlined, and it made some very real comments about the efficacy or lack of efficacy of the Aboriginal Community Benefits Fund. I just want to speak very clearly about that and the absolute need for the government to make sure that the people who have invested in that scheme—and we know that there are thousands of those people—are not disenfranchised because of the passing of this bill and the potential for organisations to fall over.

Within the Aboriginal community—and I will outline it here very clearly—the life expectancy, as people know, is much, much shorter than in others. The rate of disease is much, much higher. I have to say that there are many funerals that I have been to that are of people that are very young. Had they not been Aboriginal, they would still be with us. We know that infant mortality is much higher. We know that death from homicide is much higher. We know death from suicide is much higher. We know death from a number of diseases, including cancer and in particular heart disease, is much, much higher. We know diabetes is much, much higher. These are often comorbidities. So the issue of death is also, from a cultural perspective, viewed in a very different way. I can't tell you, Madam Speaker, how many funerals I've been to where people say to me, 'The only time we see each other now is at funerals,' and that is the reality for First Nations people in this country.

Thousands and thousands of First Nations people have taken the step of investing early, and they believe they've done it appropriately, in funeral benefit funds. I pay tribute to my very dear friend, Mr Graham Mooney, who died a dreadful death. He died far too young. I spent most of my holidays, as many others did, helping to organise and officiate at Graham's funeral. Graham had invested in this fund. It is so important that the government and the departmental people understand that this is a very real issue. We're talking about people who are poor. We're talking about people who have not wanted to burden their families, because they knew their families could not bear the cost of a funeral, so they have invested in this fund, often in very difficult circumstances. It is absolutely critical that this group of consumers is taken particular notice of, and that particular care is taken of them, if the passing of this legislation is going to null and void those insurances.

Many of them have been paid over and over again, because the investment was often when people were very young. In fact, there are many circumstances where parents actually signed their children up to these funeral funds because of the circumstances that I have outlined. So I urge the government, from a very human perspective, to please take notice of this and to please make sure that this group of consumers—I think you were talking about how many, Mr Jones?

Mr Stephen Jones: About 19,000.

Ms BURNEY: About 19,000 people—that they are not disadvantaged by this legislation. That would be a dreadful unintended consequence. That would be a cruel unintended consequence. Once again, I put on record that it is absolutely critical that this group of consumers is considered in the passing of this legislation. If they are not, it makes a mockery of the reason why we are supporting this bill, and if they are not, then it really does add another dreadful mark to a sorry history.

Like I have said, people have invested in good faith for the absolute right reason, and that is not to burden their families with the expense of a funeral. They have invested in these funds because they know the death rates of Aboriginal people and the ages of Aboriginal people in this country. We're not talking about statistics here; we're talking about real people and real families. Once again, I urge the government to make sure that the consideration in the implementation very much considers appropriately the group of people I'm speaking about.

Firstly, I would like to thank those members who have contributed to this debate. The government is committed to implementing its response to the Royal Commission into Misconduct in the Banking, Superannuation and Financial Services Industry by extending unfair contract terms to insurance contracts; ensuring that adequate consumer protection provisions apply to funeral expense policies; introducing a best-interest duty requirement for mortgage brokers; and reforming mortgage broker remuneration.

Schedule 1 of the bill implements recommendation 4.7 of the royal commission. Extending an unfair contract terms regime to insurance contracts will ensure that consumers and small businesses are protected from insurers using unfair terms in standard form contracts. By preventing insurers from including unfair terms in insurance contracts and providing a mechanism to enforce, it enhances consumer rights and provides consistency in financial service regulation. The bill has been tailored to the specific features of insurance contracts to ensure its effectiveness. Applying the unfair contract terms regime to insurance is an important component of the reforms to this sector which, together, represents real, beneficial change to the insurance industry.

Schedule 2 of the bill ensures that the consumer protection provisions in the ASIC Act apply to funeral expenses policies. Many vulnerable consumers have been harmed by the poor sales practices adopted by funeral expenses policy providers. These reforms will subject providers of funeral expenses policies to the Australian financial services licensing regime.

Schedule 3 of the bill will impose a duty on mortgage brokers to act in the best interests of the consumer when providing credit assistance regulated by the National Consumer Credit Protection Act 2009. The reforms being introduced to mortgage broker remuneration will require the value of upfront commissions to be linked to the amount drawn down by borrowers instead of the loan amount, ban campaign and volume based commissions and payments, and cap soft-dollar benefits. Further, the reforms introduce a limit to the period over which commissions can be clawed back from aggregators and mortgage brokers to two years and prohibit the cost of clawback being passed on to consumers. Collectively, these reforms will mitigate the incentive for mortgage brokers to suggest loans that are not in the best interests of the consumer and will improve consumer outcomes. I commend the bill to the House.

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

The House divided. [12:20]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes .......................... 69
Noes .......................... 78
Majority .................. 9

AYES

Albanese, AN  
Bandt, AP  
Bowen, CE  
Burney, LJ  
Butler, MC  
Byrne, AM  
Champion, ND  
Claydon, SC  
Collins, JM  
Dick, MD  
Elliot, MJ  
Freelander, MR  
Giles, AJ  
Gosling, LJ  
Hill, JC  
Jones, SP  
Kelly, MJ  
Khalil, P  
King, MMH  
Marles, RD  
Mitchell, BK  
Mulino, D

Aly, A  
Bird, SL  
Burke, AS  
Burns, J  
Butler, TM  
Chalmers, JE  
Clare, JD  
Coker, EA  
Conroy, PM  
Dreyfus, MA  
Fitzgibbon, JA  
Georganas, S  
Gorman, P  
Hayes, CP  
Hasic, EN  
Kearney, G  
Keogh, MJ  
King, CF  
Leigh, AK  
McBride, EM  
Mitchell, RG  
Murphy, PJ

CHAMBER
AYES

Neumann, SK
O'Neil, CE
Payne, AE
Phillips, FE
Rishworth, AL (proxy)
Ryan, JC (teller)
Smith, DPB
Stanley, AM (teller)
Templeman, SR
Thwaites, KL
Watts, TG
Wilkie, AD
Zappia, A

O'Connor, BPJ
Owens, JA
Perrett, GD
Piberserk, TJ
Rowland, MA
Shorten, WR
Snowdon, WE
Swanson, MJ
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Vamvakinou, M
Wells, AS
Wilson, JH

NOES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Archer, BK
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Conaghan, PJ
Coulton, M
Dutton, PC
Evans, TM
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Haines, H
Hastie, AW
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Joyce, BT
Laming, A
Leeson, J
Littleproud, D
Marino, NB
McCormack, MF
McVeigh, JJ
Morton, B
O'Brien, T
Pasin, A
Pitt, KJ
Price, ML
Robert, SR
Sharma, DN
Steggall, Z
Sukkar, MS
Tudge, AE
Tehan, DT
Vasta, RX
Webster, AE
Wilson, RJ
Wood, JP
Young, T

Allen, K
Andrews, KL
Bell, AM
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR
Connelly, V
Drum, DK (teller)
Entsch, WG
Falinski, JG
Flint, NJ
Gee, AR
Goodenough, IR
Hammond, CM
Hawke, AG
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Ley, SP
Liu, G
Martin, FB
McIntosh, MI
Morrison, SJ
O'Brien, LS
O'Dowd, KD
Pearce, GB
Porter, CC
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Sharkie, RCC
Simmonds, J
Stevens, J
Taylor, AJ
Thompson, P
van Manen, AJ
Wallace, AB
Wicks, LE
Wilson, TR
Wyatt, KG
Zimmerman, T

Question negatived.
Original question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Mr LITTLEPROUD (Maranoa—Minister for Water Resources, Drought, Rural Finance, Natural Disaster and Emergency Management) (12:25): by leave—I move:

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

Financial Sector Reform (Hayne Royal Commission Response—Stronger Regulators (2019 Measures)) Bill 2019

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:
That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Whitlam) (12:26): I am pleased to be speaking on this important piece of legislation, another one of the royal commission implementation bills. I'll interrupt myself and say the bill goes by the name of the Financial Sector Reform (Hayne Royal Commission Response—Stronger Regulators (2019 Measures)) Bill 2019. It could equally go by the title: ‘The Hayne royal commission has given us a boot in the backside for sitting on a report that we have been sitting on for well over two years and have done nothing on. We voted against a royal commission 27 times, and were dragged to the mark, and, by God, we better be seen to be doing something about this bill in 2020’. That would be a more accurate title for this bill.

With that said, we welcome the fact that, after sitting on a report that they themselves commissioned back in 2016, a report to government about what they needed to do to strengthen the powers of the enforcement regulators, of the corporate regulators, they've finally done something. They wanted to be seen to be doing something when they actually weren't. After commissioning the report, and then sitting on it since 18 December 2017, and with all the speed and agility of a wounded wombat, they have brought this bill into the House today and they expect a pat on the back. We will support the bill, but we're not going to issue them with a pat on the back. We will support the bill but there'll be no pats on the back.

The bill provides ASIC with some new powers to help them combat corporate crime and bad behaviours by banks—powers that they've needed for a long time. Schedule 1 and 2 of the bill extend ASIC's powers to search and receive evidence, providing them with new capabilities that will help prosecute serious offences. Schedules 3 and 4 of the bill enhance ASIC's licensing and banning powers, giving the corporate regulator a greater ability to stop bad actors before they go too far—sensible stuff.

Labor support the enhancement to ASIC's powers and we will support the bill. But, as I've said in my introductory comments, we do ask why it's taken the government so damn long to get here. Why has it taken them so damn long to get here when the ASIC Enforcement Review Taskforce handed down its findings more than two years ago and the government then sat on those findings? Schedule 1 of the bill actually harmonises and aligns ASIC's various search warrant powers with those contained within the Crimes Act, removing the current requirement for ASIC to forewarn those under investigation. That's important. If we're going after these crooks we don't want to put them on notice and give them the opportunity to avoid detection. We don't want to be providing corporate wrongdoers with the opportunity to destroy or conceal evidence of misconduct. ASIC is responsible for investigating serious indictable offences involving corporate criminal misconduct, those that carry a prison sentence of 12 months or more. In cases like this, ASIC should have the powers of any law enforcement body charged with investigating serious crimes. The government has our full support.

Schedule 2 of the bill also amends the law to allow ASIC to access and receive telecommunications and intercept material to investigate and prosecute serious offences, bringing them into line with other agencies responsible for investigating serious offences. In fact, it might surprise many that they don't already have the ability to receive this information. They don't, but they should have. The chief officer of an interception agency will be able to provide an ASIC member or staff member with information about an interception warrant or lawfully intercepted information—that is, they are able to pass on that information. It makes sense and should be supported by all members of this House. This will apply where the information relates to matters involving a serious offence or the likely commission of a serious offence. These are serious powers only because—

An incident having occurred in the chamber—

Honourable members intreating—

Mr STEPHEN JONES: Who said Siri's not listening!

Schedule 3 of the bill—now that I've switched off the interception powers of Silicon Valley—strengthens ASIC's licensing power. This will also help ASIC ensure that credit and financial service licensees and the people who control them are fit and proper to be carrying on financial services businesses. Ensuring that controllers such as significant shareholders are fit and proper is essential in deciding whether a license should be granted or retained. Too often we saw that in evidence before the royal commission, and I dare warrant members of this place have had representations from constituents who have been victims of poor financial advice. I myself, in my first term in office, received representation after representation from victims of the collapse of Trio Capital. They
had been sold investments into these by financial advisers who were subsequently disbarred. The enforcements actions of ASIC should have kicked in a lot earlier. We want to make it a sufficient bar. It is described within the industry as a nuclear option but it is an option that should be available to ensure that we aren't creating more victims, as many members of this place will attest to.

Schedule 4 of the bill expands ASIC's power to ban people from the financial services industry. They're important reforms. As Commissioner Hayne has shown, there are too many shonks and shady operators that have been allowed to swim in the sea of finance. It is consumers and investors who are the victims. The schedule 4 reforms will give ASIC a much broader range of grounds to make a banning order against such a person. Importantly, that will include noncompliance with financial service laws—and so it should—and the management or oversight of the conduct of a financial services or credit business.

In the course of my contributions I was unusually interjected on by my phone, the voice of Siri shouting, 'I'm on it.' If only it were so easy to get reform in this place as to bark to your mobile phone—that would be a good thing. The reforms recommended by the ASIC review handed to government two years ago would have already been implemented. And there were the recommendations—the giddy-up—given by the Hayne royal commission, instructing the government that it really ought to have implemented the recommendations of that review over 12 months ago. It behoves the government and all upright thinking members of this place to act in the interests of their constituents, of the consumers of financial advice and of all of us who rely on having a financial services sector staffed by professionals and overseen by regulators who are ready to ensure that wrongdoers are brought to justice. With those brief and precise comments, I commend the bill to the House and I move the amendment circulated in my name:

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

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

(1) has taken more than two years to implement the recommendations of the ASIC Enforcement Review Taskforce; and

(2) chose in December 2019 to prioritise failed anti-union bills instead of legislation to implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission."

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

Mr Thistlethwaite: I second the amendment and reserve my right to speak.

Mr FALINSKI (Mackellar) (12:36): After such a stirring speech, I am inclined to sit down and just say we agree with the member for Whitlam. No-one else can take 10 minutes to say 'I agree' as well as the member for Whitlam. So stirring was his speech that even Siri wanted to get in on the act! I can't follow that. I can't beat what he said, so I will keep it brief. We are moving the Financial Sector Reform (Hayne Royal Commission Response—Stronger Regulators (2019 Measures)) Bill 2019. The bill seeks to do the following. The financial sector reform bill forms part of the government's comprehensive response to the Royal Commission into Misconduct in the Banking, Superannuation and Financial Services Industry, which is set out in the Financial services royal commission implementation roadmap released on 19 August 2019. The bill implements a number of recommendations of the 2017 ASIC enforcement review taskforce report, and will benefit Australians by strengthening ASIC's regulatory powers, helping ASIC to better protect consumers—

(Quorum formed) What a disgrace. The Labor Party claims to be in favour of consumers and this is how they treat this House. They say that they want to pass the Hayne royal commission recommendations. They can't help but play games. They are a disgrace. They say they want to protect consumers. They just want to protect their union mates and industry super, who are only interested in ripping money off consumers in Australia. They will shut down for as long as they possibly can any speaker who points out their hypocrisy. They say that no-one in this House who wants to speak on consumer protection is important enough to shut down, but they can't help but move their silly recommendations and their stupid amendments while they say that they're in favour of the bill. They are a disgrace. The people of Australia should realise that the one party in the parliament of Australia that is standing between them and consumer protection is the Labor Party.

I will also say this: the Labor Party had six ignominious years in government between 2007 and 2013. They gave ASIC more powers, more resources than they've ever had before, and what did it result in? It resulted in the Hayne royal commission. They talk about Trio. They talk about Storm. When did they happen? They happened under Julia Gillard, under Kevin Rudd, under Bill Shorten, under all of their ministers, under their entire government. They have nothing but the most reprehensible record when it comes to financial services. They have nothing but the most ignominious record when it comes to protecting consumers, but they have the gall to come into this House and lecture us. And the minute someone stands up and tries to point out their hypocrisy all they can do is shut down debate, because that's what the once great Labor Party has turned into. This House should
pass this bill and it should do it now. It should do it without considering the amendments of the member for Whitlam.

Mr LITTLEPROUD (Maranoa—Minister for Water Resources, Drought, Rural Finance, Natural Disaster and Emergency Management) (12:42): It gives me great pleasure to be able to summarize this bill, an important bill, as we've heard from our passionate speakers from both sides. I thank all members for their contribution in this debate. Obviously, it's an important part of reform that the government has taken seriously, and the government has been calm and methodical in its implementation. We will make sure that this has considerable impact on the community moving forward. Obviously, I commend the bill to the House.

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

The House divided. [12:47]
(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ...................... 67
Noes ...................... 78
Majority ............... 11

AYES

Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP
Bowen, CE
Burney, LJ
Butler, MC
Byrne, AM
Champion, ND
Claydon, SC
Conroy, PM
Dreyfus, MA
Fitzgibbon, JA
Georganas, S
Gorman, P
Hayes, CP
Husic, EN
Keaney, G
Keogh, MJ
King, CF
Leigh, AK
McBride, EM
Mitchell, RG
Murphy, PJ
O'Connor, BPJ
Owens, JA
Perrett, GD
Plibersek, TJ
Ryan, JC (teller)
Smith, DPB
Stanley, AM (teller)
Templeman, SR
Thaites, KL
Watts, TG
Wilkie, AD
Zappia, A

NOES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Archer, BK
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Conaghan, PJ
Coultou, M
Dutton, PC
Evans, TM
Fletcher, PW

Allen, K
Andrews, KL
Bell, AM
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR
Connelly, V
Drum, DK (teller)
Entsch, WG
Falinski, JG
Flinn, NJ
Question negatived.
Original question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Mr LITTLEPROUD (Maranoa—Minister for Water Resources, Drought, Rural Finance, Natural Disaster and Emergency Management) (12:52): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

National Consumer Credit Protection Amendment (Mandatory Credit Reporting and Other Measures) Bill 2019

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Whitlam) (12:53): I am pleased to be speaking on this important piece of legislation, the National Consumer Credit Protection Amendment (Mandatory Credit Reporting and Other Measures) Bill 2019. It concerns mandatory credit-reporting arrangements. It is probably worth explaining a little bit how these arrangements work. For a bank or any financial organisation to pass personal financial information to a third party, they would need the permission of the owner or the party to whom the information relates. Otherwise, they would be in breach of the National Privacy Act and the National Privacy Provisions. However, Labor has always considered that there was a consumer benefit in having a national credit-reporting arrangement. We think it's pro-competition because it sets up a regime whereby we can have a standard and objective set of measures which enable a bank or another financial institution to assess the creditworthiness and the credit history of an applicant for a credit product. To enable such an arrangement to be put into place, clearly we needed to make some amendments to the national privacy legislation. Indeed, that's exactly what Labor did back in 2012. We put in place a comprehensive credit reporting regime by amending the Privacy Act to allow for credit providers to share repayment information with credit reporting agencies who can consolidate that information and then onsell it to lenders. We believe it's pro-competitive. It supports competition in the financial industry. It allows small banks...
and lenders who do not have access to the significant amounts of information and perhaps the market reach to get access to financial data, enabling them to make better lending decisions.

I make the point of identifying small banks and small financial institutions for this reason: most of the large banks have already got this information. If they've been dealing with a customer for many, many years and have access to multiple financial product information and the repayment history, they'll have that data. It's the small banks who won't have access to that data. Therefore, when they get an application from a consumer who wants to switch banks, it's that much harder for them to assess their credit history and therefore their creditworthiness.

Credit reporting also allows for increased price discrimination by lenders and may reduce the ability of people with bad credit histories to receive loans. The legislation before the House, in part, goes to this issue. Let me explain this: the current framework for the Privacy Act does not adequately support transparency of credit reporting information and does not currently support all of the passing on of information that we think is necessary.

One of the things that has been identified is what is described within the industry as a hardship flag. Let me explain how that works. Let's take a very probable set of circumstances that can occur at the moment, after the bushfires, the floods and even the hailstorms. Somebody has a credit arrangement with their bank. Their property has been burnt down and their business has been burnt down. They're going to have a period of time out of work or with disrupted income flows. The bank knows that. The banks, for the most part, have published nationally their willingness to enter into hardship arrangements, suspend repayments et cetera. That person goes to their bank and they say, 'Look, I need a holiday on my repayments because of this hardship.' A good banker, and most of them are, will agree and put in place an informal suspension of repayment requirements.

For the most part, in those sorts of hardship circumstances where it's a natural disaster or some other unforeseen event, it won't constitute a variation to the credit contract. The credit contract remains in place but there's an informal arrangement between the bank and the creditor. A hardship arrangement is flagged within the bank's system but is not passed on to the credit reporting agency as a hardship flag. What is passed on is that the repayment history has been interrupted. What the bank actually passes on to the national credit reporting agency is what is referred to as RHI, or repayment history information, that relates to each and every one of those individual customers. So, if we take the current bushfires as an example, when an informal arrangement is reached with your bank and you're not meeting your mortgage repayments, the bank will still pass on information to the national reporting agency, and that will affect your credit score.

This obviously has to be dealt with and, in the context of widespread disruption to economic activity visited upon businesses and households by the bushfires, this should be urgent business. We should be dealing with this. This should be urgent business to ensure that the initial hardship visited on somebody by the natural disaster is not compounded by the fact that they have a hard-to-repair interruption to their repayment history information. We want to have that fixed. We were actually concerned when this matter came before the last parliament that we needed to be cognisant of a review that was going on with the Attorney-General's Department so as to ensure the feedback through the Attorney-General's Department was reflected in the legislation. Our initial view is that most of that has. I will flag here that we won't be opposing the bill in the House—we support the general thrust of what is being proposed here—but it is almost certain that we will be moving some amendments in the other place.

Labor believes that there is a need to ensure that the current credit-reporting arrangements allow more-frequent and more-detailed access to information on behalf of consumers. We want to ensure that consumers are able to have access to information that relates to them. There are two reasons for that. It's their information, and there may be errors in the information or the need for them to repair some of that credit history information. Quite often when somebody is going to take out a new loan or apply for the refinancing of a loan the bank will have access to the information but the individual may not. We want to ensure they have that. Under current arrangements, the current framework within the Privacy Act, individuals are only allowed to access a free copy of their credit information once every year and in certain other specific circumstances. In addition, under the current arrangements reporting agencies have used loopholes within the Privacy Act to refrain from disclosing what is known as 'credit scores'—RHI credit scores. As a result, credit-reporting agencies have developed quite a profitable side business in the onselling of those credit scores—in fact, charging customers to access the individual's personal credit history. We think it's the individual's information and that they should have access to that and should have more timely access to that information.

The sorts of amendments that we will be proposing will allow individuals to access a copy of their credit information held by a credit-reporting agency free once every 10 days. They will require derived or generated credit scores to be disclosed to individuals as part of their rights of access to credit information. They will require the individuals to receive a statement summarising the key determinants of their credit score as part of their rights of access to credit information. They will allow the Australian Information Commissioner to create rules in
relation to each of the above proposals. These are propositions that are strongly supported by consumer advocates. It is worth pointing out that similar provisions currently exist in New Zealand. We don't believe, on the information available to us, they will impose any significant new cost on the credit-reporting industry. They will, however, provide additional rights to consumers and additional competition benefits to the sector as a whole.

With these observations, I commend the bill to the House. I hope it has a swift passage here, and I look forward to progressing in the other place some of the issues that I've foreshadowed.

Mr FALINSKI (Mackellar) (13:04): I appreciate the opportunity to speak on the bill. I also appreciate that this time the member for Whitlam has decided to agree with us without moving an amendment, so we are finally making progress in the House.

The National Consumer Credit Protection Amendment (Mandatory Credit Reporting and Other Measures) Bill 2019 will deliver benefits for both consumers and credit providers, and increase competition in the lending market by reducing credit data advantage held by the major banks. Comprehensive credit reporting seeks to achieve several benefits both for credit providers and for consumers. Consumers will have better access to consumer credit, with reliable individuals and small-business owners drawing on their credit history to seek more competitive rates when purchasing credit. In addition, consumers that possess a poor credit rating will also be able to demonstrate their credit worthiness through future consistency and reliability.

Credit providers will have the ability to obtain an accurate and comprehensive picture of a consumer's financial situation. This will enable providers to better meet their responsible-lending obligations and price credit according to a consumer's credit history. As the member for Whitlam pointed out, schedule 1 of the bill means that the five largest banks will be required to supply 50 per cent of their comprehensive credit information to credit-reporting bodies within 90 days from 1 April 2020. The information on the remaining accounts must be supplied within 90 days from 1 April 2021.

The security of consumer information is of high importance to the government. The Privacy Act already has strict provisions that apply to how consumer credit information is handled. The bill maintains these provisions, and also requires credit providers to satisfy themselves that a credit-reporting body is meeting reasonable security standards before they supply consumer data. The bill also requires the credit-reporting body to store credit information within Australia and external territories or according to alternative security requirements in regulations, if established, for storage outside Australia. The Australian Securities and Investments Commission will enforce the new mandatory regime. Where credit providers and credit-reporting bodies are subject to requirements under the bill they will be subject to penalties if they fail to comply.

The second schedule of the bill will establish a new type of credit information—financial hardship information—in the Privacy Act to allow reporting of consumer credit contracts affected by hardship arrangements, with hardship indicators to identify such circumstances. To ensure consumers are not being unfairly disadvantaged by this change, the bill will amend the credit act to prevent banks from using financial hardship information as the sole reason to freeze an existing credit account or to reduce a credit limit on an existing credit account. The bill will also prevent credit-reporting bodies from incorporating financial hardship into credit scores. The Office of the Australian Information Commissioner will continue to oversee the credit-reporting system, including receiving and attempting to receive complaints about mishandling of credit information or inaccurate credit information. The OAIC also has the power to investigate, order compensation and issue fines. The bill also requires the government to complete, prior to 1 October 2023, an independent review of the mandatory regime and the credit-reporting provisions, including the impact of hardship-reporting requirements.

The state of Georgia in the United States, for reasons known only to them, decided to ban credit-reporting bureaus until the year 2004. When they finally legalised this form of credit reporting, it allowed people, banks and financial institutions in that state to massively increase the amount of credit available to consumers by over 50 per cent, reduce margins by over half to all consumers, and to grow the economy in Georgia by an above-average rate for the next decade and a half. Credit reporting is key to what the financial services sector does in order to make sure that our economy gets to grow, in order to ensure that people are able to live their lives to the full capacity they want to live them.

This parliament now insists—in my view dangerously, but nonetheless—that financial institutions are responsible for the decisions that consumers make in terms of whether they can or cannot afford the credit that they have decided to borrow and that that falls solely on the financial institution, which they're doing. This parliament has hamstrung financial institutions from doing that by only allowing them to have limited information in terms of credit scores. It has also stopped third-party people from being able to provide applications and services which allow them to help consumers break through the complexity of our financial system to find the best products that they want.
This bill and the reforms contained within it are critical to us delivering a better life for millions of Australians who have been denied credit, who have been denied the best form of credit that they can have and who sometimes have been provided with credit they should not have taken. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (13:10): The continuing flow of credit is the lifeblood of the Australian economy, and this must be effectively balanced by the need for free-flowing credit along with responsible protections for customers and their personal data. Since Labor's 2012 reforms to the credit reporting system, we've encouraged competition in the credit lending marketplace. This system allows smaller banks and lenders who do not have access to significant amounts of financial data themselves to make better lending decisions.

This bill legislates the requirement for major banks and credit providers to provide detailed credit information to credit reporting bodies, with the aim of enabling credit providers to better meet responsible lending obligations. At the same time, it provides protections for consumers to ensure that the supply of that credit information can't be abused by unscrupulous operators within the sector.

Schedule 1 of the bill requires major banks to provide detailed credit information to credit reporting agencies from 1 April 2020. This element of the bill will have no immediate effect. All eligible major banks already supply this detailed credit information to credit reporting agencies, so it is basically legislating something that already occurs within this industry. But, admittedly, it is a reform that the banks have only taken on in recent years.

Schedule 2 sets out new standards for how people in financial hardship should be treated by credit reporting agencies. The new standards will create two hardship flags that are placed into credit reports for individuals. The hardship flags will set out whether an individual has a permanent variation or a temporary variation to their credit obligations.

The changes in this legislation bring it into line with current industry best practice and will allow for customers to better demonstrate their credit worthiness. This change will also generate more transparency and accountability and competition in the credit market. The bill also establishes new standards, as I mentioned earlier, for people who are experiencing financial hardship. These two financial hardship flags can be placed into credit reports for individuals. Those hardship indications will better distinguish between customers experiencing long-term hardship and a permanent variation to their credit obligations and customers experiencing a temporary variation to their credit obligations. This allows customers more freedom to access hardship provisions without undue fear of negatively affecting their credit rating into the future.

These protections are important. We have all seen how, in other jurisdictions, credit ratings can be used against customers—in particular, vulnerable customers—to deny them credit in situations where they otherwise would not be affected. By allowing customers greater access to nuanced hardship provisions, the bill seeks to ensure the continued flow of credit in our economy and to allow customers to access legitimate hardship provisions before their financial situation deteriorates beyond repair.

Further amendments could be made to reduce the length of time for these hardship provisions and how much information is stored by credit reporting bodies once the hardship provisions have ended. We know that people go through situations in life where they experience hardship in terms of their financial position, but they get out of it. They work their way through it. That financial hardship doesn't last forever. Similarly, when people access these nuanced provisions and are taken by the hardship flags, once they are out of that situation that particular classification shouldn't last forever on their credit file. Perhaps that's something the government should consider further into the future. This will further remove barriers for customers to access hardship provisions, which will be better for both credit providers and customers, allowing credit providers to receive the money they're rightfully owed and ensuring customers can continue to make repayments within their means.

The banking royal commission has demonstrated that customers need more protection and freedom, and under this bill customers will continue to be eligible to only one copy of their credit information each year. This puts customers at a disadvantage when making financial decisions and shopping for the most competitive credit. Individuals should be able to access their own credit information significantly more often. They should also be entitled to know how this credit information is calculated and what the key determinants of their scores are. In the credit market, information is powerful. It's time that we levelled the playing field and gave customers access to their own information about their own credit scores. The credit-reporting system should be as transparent as possible so that people can access, understand and seek corrections to their credit-reporting history.

The Information Commissioner should be given the liability to protect sensitive personal data, as customers have seen too often in recent years that large financial institutions we trust with our personal data have been unable or unwilling to adequately protect some of that data. Effective oversight of personal information available in the credit-reporting marketplace is central to ensuring public trust of credit reporting systems. This bill reflects...
many of those concerns which we've heard from the industry, customers and the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner by allowing credit providers to withhold personal credit information if they reasonably believe that the credit-reporting body is not complying with the data security requirements of the Privacy Act. That's an important reform as well.

The bill in its current reform goes some way to bringing the legislation in line with current industry practice, but the government should consider further reforms in ensuring protections for customers seeking credit and information on their personal data in a regular and timely fashion. Nonetheless, this bill is an improvement and a codification of the way the industry works at the moment. On that basis, Labor will be supporting the bill and its passage.

Ms HAMMOND (Curtin) (13:18): I'm pleased to speak in support of the National Consumer Credit Protection Amendment (Mandatory Credit Reporting and Other Measures) Bill 2019. The government has consulted widely with credit providers and consumer groups in relation to this bill, and all are supportive. The bill is another example of the reforms implemented by this government that are designed to increase competition in the financial sector. The bill is going to implement the government's comprehensive credit-reporting regime and will place Australia in line with many other developed nations who already have comprehensive credit-reporting regimes in place—this includes the US, the UK and New Zealand. This regime will provide benefits to lenders and borrowers while also preserving and enhancing important security and consumer protections. It will also increase competition in the lending market by reducing the credit data advantage held by the major banks.

Consumers are going to have better access to credit, and those with a reliable credit history will be able to use this to seek more competitive rates. Those consumers who possess a poor credit rating will be able to demonstrate their credit worthiness through future consistency and reliability. Credit providers will have a more complete picture of a consumer's financial situation. This will help them to better price credit, better assess risk and meet the responsible-lending obligations.

Schedule 1 of this bill amends the credit act to establish a mandatory, comprehensive credit-reporting regime which will apply from 1 April 2020. It does this through requiring our largest banks, those with total resident assets of over $100 billion, to provide comprehensive credit information to credit reporting bodies from 1 April 2020. By mid-2021 our largest banks will have supplied comprehensive credit information on all consumer accounts to every eligible credit reporting body.

This bill, importantly, is also going to ensure the security of consumer credit information. That's an issue of high importance to this government, and data privacy is an issue of grave and significant importance to all Australians. This bill is going to strengthen the already strict provisions of the Privacy Act relating to how consumer credit information is handled. The current provisions in the Privacy Act regarding disclosure and use or collection of credit information are maintained. This amendment is not going to affect those, but this bill is going to add to the protections in a number of ways, including, firstly, requiring credit providers to satisfy themselves that a credit reporting body is meeting reasonable security standards before they supply their customer data, and, secondly, requiring credit reporting bodies to store credit information within Australia and external territories or according to alternative security requirements in regulations for storage outside Australia, if established—if the regulations are put in place.

As I said before, while people are happy accessing and providing information, people are very concerned about what their data and information are utilised for. This particular bill will enhance the existing protections relating to credit. It should also be noted that the Australian Securities and Investments Commission is going to enforce the new mandatory regime. Where credit providers and credit reporting bodies are subject to requirements under the bill, they will be subject to penalties if they fail to comply.

Schedule 2 of the bill incorporates the results of a review by the Attorney-General into the treatment of financial hardship information, providing the legal certainty required for this information to be shared. Based on this review, the bill establishes a new type of credit information in the Privacy Act that will indicate consumer credit contracts affected by a financial hardship arrangement. To ensure that consumers are not unfairly disadvantaged by this change, the bill will amend the credit act to prevent banks from using financial hardship information as the sole reason for freezing an existing credit account or reducing a credit limit on an existing credit account. The bill will also prevent credit reporting bodies from incorporating financial hardship information into credit scores. This should assuage any concerns that consumers have with respect to their data.

The Office of the Australian Information Commissioner will continue to oversee the entire credit reporting system, including receiving and attempting to resolve complaints about the mishandling of or inaccurate credit information. The OAIC has the power to investigate, order compensation and issue fines.
As with most laws, a balancing act needs to be taken. In this case, as with everything that came out of the Hayne royal commission, we want to make sure that there’s not an undue restriction on people’s access to credit. As has been noted before, particularly in light of the disasters and the tragedies that happened throughout the end of last year and the beginning of this year, it is important for our small businesses and our families to have access to credit and to not have that access restricted. At the same time, and to balance that, we need to measure it against irresponsible lending practices and risky borrowing. This bill achieves that. It will set up a framework that will make sure that that balance is actually attained. To that end, I commend this bill to the House.

Ms SHARKIE (Mayo) (13:25): I rise to briefly speak on the National Consumer Credit Protection Amendment (Mandatory Credit Reporting and Other Measures) Bill 2019. The bill will establish a mandatory comprehensive credit reporting regime to apply from 1 April this year. It will provide that a credit provider cannot refuse to provide further credit, or reduce a consumer’s credit limit, merely because of financial hardship and that information that will exist.

While Centre Alliance support the bill, we are concerned that the hardship arrangement indicators scheme, as outlined in schedule 2, may lead to unfair outcomes for people who are financially vulnerable. However, it has been noted by both the Financial Rights Legal Centre and the Consumer Action Law Centre that the retention of hardship information for a period of 12 months may ultimately mean people are less likely to reach out to credit providers to help for fear of having a hardship flag placed on their file. As noted by the Financial Rights Legal Centre, this may have a perverse impact on those families and businesses that are coming to terms with the financial consequences of the bushfires.

Many banks are offering assistance packages to those who may be unable to meet their financial obligations in the short-term. However, those individuals who then access any assistance will have a hardship brand on their credit report, and that hardship information will remain on their credit report for a period of 12 months, notwithstanding their financial difficulties may only have been for a few months or even, indeed, weeks. As a consequence, individuals may be forced to seek out riskier forms of credit such as high-cost payday loans, which are trapping Australians in a cycle of debt. Similarly, as individuals in hardship are unfairly rejected for credit, there may be no other option for those experiencing financial hardship than to turn to those payday lenders and consumer leases to secure the goods they need to recover from the recent bushfires. This will make getting out of the poverty trap, out of the debt trap, even more difficult.

In relation to payday lenders and consumer leases, I again note that there have been over 1,000 days since the government accepted the independent Review of Small Amount Credit Contracts and that the government is still yet to introduce legislation to address all of the recommendations of the SACCs review. I therefore move the following amendment in the terms circulated in my name:

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

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

(1) the retention of hardship information on individuals' credit reports for 12 months is unfair and will discourage people from seeking help from credit providers;

(2) this bill may encourage people to seek out riskier forms of credit, such as high-cost payday loans that are trapping Australians in a cycle of debt; and

(3) it has been over 1,000 days since the Government accepted the recommendations of the independent Review of Small Amount Credit Contracts but the Government is yet to introduce legislation to address these recommendations.

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

Dr Haines: I'm pleased to second the motion and I reserve my right to speak.

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

Question negatived.

Original question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Ms LANDRY (Capricornia—Assistant Minister for Children and Families) (13:30): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Veterans: Suicide

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (13:30): Last week I rang Julie-Ann Finney. I rang her on the day after the anniversary of her son's tragic death from suicide. He was a veteran who took his own life. I rang her just to ask how she was going. At that point, she still hadn't visited her son's grave because she was determined not to do that until there was a royal commission into the extraordinary—and tragic—number of veteran suicides. The announcement by the government this morning not to go down the road of a royal commission but to have a National Commissioner for Defence and Veteran Suicide Prevention, is an important step forward. It isn't what Labor and the veteran community asked for, but I'm not going to let the perfect be the enemy of the good. I spoke to Ms Finney this morning, and she was able to visit her son's grave for the first time last night with the knowledge that there was some progress on these issues.

Labor will ensure that any implementing legislation will give the commissioner all the powers of a royal commission, including the ability to launch own motion inquiries, compel the production of documents and other evidence, and conduct public and private hearings. We'll also work to ensure that the commissioner and the advocate are appropriately resourced and able to do their jobs. We owe it to all those affected by these tragic events to understand why they happen and to act to prevent them.

Curdie, Mr John, OAM

Mr ALEXANDER (Bennelong) (13:32): Australia Day is a day when we recognise the locals who give back to our community, work hard for that matter and make our suburbs a better place to live. In that vein, I'm absolutely delighted to inform the House about Mr John Curdie OAM, who was recently named an Australian hero by Parramatta council. John was a key founder of the RSL sub-branch in Epping and has subsequently served as its president for 20 years. He is well known in our community and he has worked tirelessly to assist those who have served in uniform and their families—a pertinent role today as we start a long-overdue conversation about the mental health of veterans in this country. He has contributed in numerous ways, including the upkeep of memorials, organising remembrance days and Anzac services, and providing support to members of the RSL community. Outside of his work at the RSL, John is a professional surveyor and he has made substantial contributions to his profession. I've known John personally for over seven years, and I can attest to his hard work, diligence and commitment. He is a wonderful asset to our community in Epping, which would not be the same without his work. It is very fitting that John should receive the City of Parramatta's Lord Mayor Community Service Award and I congratulate him. John is a good man to call a friend.

Chinese Australians

Mr GILES (Scullin) (13:33): In recent days, I have attended many events marking Chinese new year and I take this opportunity in this place to wish everyone all the prosperity, wisdom and good health that the Year of the Rat should bring. But, of course, this has been a very, very difficult time for the Chinese-Australian community. The coronavirus is an issue that we all have to confront and respond to, but its impact is particularly felt by Chinese Australians, and I extend my sympathies to everyone who is concerned for family and friends here or abroad. This is, of course, an issue of public health, and our response requires an evidence based public health response. I'm pleased to see this being undertaken, but it is being undermined. We are hearing constant and challenging stories of racism being directed at Chinese Australians and, indeed, Asian Australians more generally. This is not happening in a vacuum; it's happening against the background of increasing racism in our society. That is why Labor has called for the re-funding of a national antiracism campaign, which would counter this and the insidious campaigns, raised by politicians in this place on Facebook, that undermine our social cohesion. Words matter. This is not a Chinese disease. Actions matter too. Racism stops with all of us.

Higgins Electorate: Australia Day Awards

Dr ALLEN (Higgins) (13:35): I rise to honour the Australia Day honours recipients for 2020. In my wonderful electorate of Higgins there are many very worthy recipients. I'm pleased to say that a number of women have been honoured this Australia Day. Professor Rachelle Buchbinder AO was honoured for distinguished service to medical education in the fields of epidemiology and rheumatology and to professional associations. Rachelle, who is based locally at the Cabrini hospital, the only hospital in Higgins, is a rheumatologist who has worked to help thousands of patients with back pain. She has encouraged patients and doctors to move away from addictive opioids and surgery that can be dangerous and focus more on losing weight and staying active as a treatment for lower back pain.

Dr Erica Frydenberg AM was honoured for significant service to psychology. Dr Frydenberg is not only a neighbour of mine but the mother of our federal Treasurer, Josh Frydenberg. Her work over a 50-year career has
developed key psychological tests to assess adolescent resilience and adult coping. It is such important work. The former executive director of the Australian Psychological Society Lyn Littlefield honoured Dr Frydenberg for her work, acknowledging her reputation in research and clinical excellence.

Professor Lenore Manderson AM was acknowledged for her service to education, particularly medical anthropology, and to public health.

These are fantastic women. This year, 41 per cent of Australia Day honours went to women. I'd like to see more of that. Congratulations!

Community Sport Infrastructure Grant Program

Mr GORMAN (Perth) (13:37): The minister’s office used the spreadsheets provided to it by Sport Australia to undertake a parallel assessment process as a basis for the minister deciding which projects should be funded, with additional analysis on "marginal" electorates held by the coalition as well as those electorates not held by the coalition that were to be "targeted" in the 2019 election. These aren't my words or Labor's words; these are the words of the Australian National Audit Office. The Prime Minister and his team broke the rules. They'll be going into the hall of fame 100 years after the Chicago White Sox, who conspired with gamblers to fix games. This Prime Minister would probably defend Lance Armstrong. We know that his beloved Cronulla Sharks couldn't count either. They couldn't follow the salary caps.

But what this government did was worse. They were trying to fix an election, cheating community organisations that had done the right thing, that had written their applications in good faith. They had spent their time doing it. These are volunteer organisations, like the Noranda Netball Association, that have been cheated out of half a million dollars by this government. The Chung Wah Association, which has been in the electorate Perth for 110 years, was denied $50,000 because of political interference. The Mount Lawley Bowling Club still can't get an answer as to why their grant application wasn't approved. Twenty per cent of the applications in the top 50 that were unreasonably denied by this government were from Western Australia.

Menzies Electorate: Australia Day Awards

Mr ANDREWS (Menzies) (13:38): I'd like to recognise those residents from Menzies who were recipients of Australia Day honours for 2020. Professor Roy Robins-Browne, from Templestowe, was awarded an Officer of the Order of Australia in recognition of his outstanding contribution in the field of microbiology and immunology. Vianney Shiel, also from Templestowe, was made a Member of the Order of Australia for significant service to electronic engineering and to education. Judith Sammut, from Doncaster East, was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia for service to community health. Alfred Tregear, from Doncaster East, also received a Medal of the Order of Australia for services to Australian Rules football.

Melissa—or Mel, as she's known—Noonan, also from Doncaster East, was awarded a Member of the Order of Australia for significant service to people with a disability. I know Mel quite well and had the honour of presenting her with the Manningham Australia Day Perpetual Trophy in 2019, which I present annually as part of my Menzies Community Australia Day Awards. Mel is an above-knee amputee with a background in national account sales and marketing. She's held board and advisory member positions for local and state governments and for disability community not-for-profit organisations. Since co-founding Limbs 4 Life, Mel has been credited with a number of awards and has been recognised for her work within the community. Limbs 4 Life empowers amputees with knowledge and support to make a real difference, because no-one should have to go through limb loss alone. It's the peak body for amputees. It supports hundreds of people across Australia.

I congratulate Mel and all the other recipients from Menzies.
that all he cares about is ensuring women don't have to change behind the bushes. If he really believes this, I invite him to come to Williamstown to meet the women and girls of the Willie football club. I'll even arrange a baseball cap for him, and he can explain why when they had a go they didn't get a go, and he can tell them why they are not getting funding from the Morrison government.

**Australian Bushfires**

**Mrs ARCHER** (Bass) (13:41): It has been very heartening to see communities across Australia band together to help those devastated by the recent bushfires. Fortunately northern Tasmania has so far had few fire events this summer, although our season is just beginning. This hasn't stopped many members of our community rallying together to raise funds for our interstate friends.

I would like to commend the wonderful actions of Ella Manion and Emily Hogarth from Lulworth, who are 11 and 12 years old. They decided that if life was handing out lemons then making some lemonade may help. Together they set up a homemade lemonade stall and with donated fruit and ice raised over $1,000 for the bushfire appeal. Well done, girls. Every dollar you raised will make a difference.

I would also like to acknowledge Launceston City Council Deputy Mayor Danny Gibson. In true Danny style, in just a few days and while overseas, he managed to pull together an incredible gala event last week, engaging the business, arts and general community along the way. It was a sell-out event and has raised over $72,000 and counting. All funds and donations will be managed through Danny's local Rotary Club of Tamar Sunrise to support the Rotary National Bushfires Appeal.

We know that money can't replace all that has been lost in the fires and that the after-effects of this summer will be felt for many years to come; however, any funds raised goes someway to rebuild lives and give hope to shattered communities. I thank everyone in northern Tasmania who has donated and raised money for those affected by this unprecedented event.

**Australian Bushfires**

**Dr HAINES** (Indi) (13:43): Today I recognise the brave staff of the Walwa Bush Nursing Centre, who showed such extraordinary dedication to their community in the recent fires. On 30 December 2019, fires bore down on the tiny Upper Murray township of Walwa. All telecommunications, radio and electricity were lost, cutting it off from the outside world. As the only place with power, the centre rapidly transformed into a relief centre for those who stayed to protect their farms and defend the town. Many took refuge inside. The fires returned twice more. Nursing staff slept on the floor to be on call 24/7. The centre's generator kept its fridge and freezer going, allowing it to provide over 600 meals to firefighters and the community.

When I met CEO and nurse practitioner Sandi Grieve, she'd been working for 16 days straight, sometimes bandaging up farmers in the back of a ute so they could get straight back to feeding their cattle and fixing fences. Funding for her service stops at the New South Wales border, only five kilometres away. But bushfires and health care for those affected has no border. It's time we answer the calls from Sandi and her community to flexibly fund the services that help people on both sides. The centre exists because of its tough, independent and tight-knit community. In these fires, the centre has returned the favour in care, shelter, compassion and hugs. They weren't equipped for this kind of emergency but, in the spirit of rural Australia, they did whatever it took to serve their community.

**Gold Coast: Australia Day Awards**

**Ms BELL** (Moncrieff) (13:44): Some of the Central Gold Coast's most inspirational residents were honoured at the recent Gold Coast Australia Day Awards. I'd like to highlight the Gold Coast Citizen of the Year, Professor Mark von Itzstein, who I've commended in this place before. He's director and research head at the Griffith University Institute for Glycomics. Mark was recognised for his incredible work in the biomedical field of glycomics and has raised the city's profile as a leader in education and research. In December, the institute signed a multimillion-dollar deal partnering with Hong Kong medical giant China Grand Pharma to further develop the drug to combat the human parainfluenza virus, one of the most common causes of respiratory illnesses in infants and the sick and elderly. Professor von Itzstein has been working on the breakthrough drug for a decade.

He was one of many recognised for their outstanding contributions to our community, including Judith Ferber for her service to the performing arts, Carol 'Carlotta' Spencer also for her service to the performing arts and the LGBTIQ community, Grant Hunt for his service to tourism, William Goodrem for his service to the Southport community and John Witheriff for his service to business. Thank you to all of you for your tireless service to the Gold Coast community and for making our city a much better place to live.
Community Sport Infrastructure Grant Program

Mr JOSH WILSON (Fremantle) (13:46): When the Prime Minister pretends there's nothing wrong with a sports rorts fiasco, he is telling Australians like idiots. Every member of the government who parrots the line that all clubs who received a grant were eligible is treating their community members like idiots. We teach kids in this country to play fair, but for this government anything goes. We teach kids to play by the rules and the spirit of the game, but for this lot every rule can be bent and broken if it's to their political advantage—with taxpayers' money.

In my electorate, the Fremantle Tennis Club made an application on two occasions and missed out. They received feedback from Tennis West to the effect of: 'Bad luck. It's a political decision. You're not in the right seat.' Elsewhere in my electorate, the East Fremantle tennis club did get a grant, and I'm glad for that club. It caters to a range of sports and community users, but the question has to be asked: why one club and not the other? The East Fremantle announcement was attended and promoted by the Liberal candidate in Fremantle, Nicole Robins, and, as it happens, that club sits in the marginal state seat of Bicton. It's absolutely a target seat for the WA Liberals. Who is now in line to run as the Liberal candidate for the state seat of Bicton? Nicole Robins. Maybe the political payoff for the murky and deeply corrupted sports rorts fiasco didn't end with the 2019 federal election. But what we know for sure is that this government used taxpayers' money for its own political benefit at the expense of community clubs around—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hogan): I call the member for Monash.

Australian Bushfires

Mr BROADBENT (Monash) (13:47): On 30 December last year I received a phone call from a friend to say that the Far Saracen was being diverted to Mallacoota. Solstad Offshore and Esso had immediately diverted one of their ships to go to Mallacoota. It was a great phone call. Amongst their crew, of course, were members of the Australian Institute of Marine and Power Engineers. They were absolutely instrumental in actually saving people off the beach, housing them and giving them water and fuel for other things that were needed in Mallacoota. A great shout out to Solstad Offshore and Esso.

I'm also very proud of the fact that my strike teams from South Gippsland and West Gippsland were part of the major fight. It's very hard when these strike teams go out because often, as is the case in many of these brigades, they are father-and-son duos. You can imagine the anguish of those people that go out on those strike teams. But south and West Gippsland—and right across Gippsland—were part of the effort into East Gippsland. I give a shout out to them. I honour them for the work they do, for the great training they've had and for deploying on behalf of other people. It's also particularly hard for volunteer firemen who are out on their work duties when their own houses are under threat, and that happened a whole lot in East Gippsland. Good job, boys.

Community Sport Infrastructure Grant Program

Mr CHAMPION (Spence) (13:49): This is a government with no standards and no shame. They've engaged in maladministration. They've engaged in rorting, and it's all with the express purpose of electing people to this place who should not be here. They won by rorting government money to sporting clubs to get swings in seats that were critical to this government's election. It has the taint of illegitimacy over it, the taint of complete illegitimacy over it. This behaviour is obscene banana-republic style behaviour. If you heard about it happening in another country there'd be a lot of tut-tutting from those opposite. We know that they've engaged in match fixing. We know that they've engaged in cheating. That's what happens when you take the winner—say, Salisbury council, who got 90 out of 100—and make them a loser. It's cheating. If you take a losing club and make them a winner that's cheating, isn't it? We'd say that was wrong in any other field of human endeavour, but, apparently, if it's about electing a government it's somehow okay. I think we all know that it's not okay. It's not just that Salisbury council, one of the finest councils in the state of South Australia, who got 90 out of 100 for their application and who, in a press release, tell us they spent a hundred hours preparing that application, for what? Why would they have the highest levels of public administration when you do not? (Time expired)

Assange, Mr Julian

Mr CHRISTENSEN (Dawson) (13:50): In less than two weeks time the member for Clark and I will travel at our own expense to meet with Australian citizen and journalist-publisher Julian Assange, who is being detained in Belmarsh prison in London. The social visit with Mr Assange will take place on Sunday 16 February. We want to see firsthand how Mr Assange is faring, because of a number of concerning reports about his health and the severity of his treatment within the UK prison system. We appreciate the cooperation of the British authorities at Belmarsh in confirming our social visit.

My concern is that a foreign country, the US, is seeking to extradite an Australian citizen from another foreign country for breaching laws of a foreign country that they were not subject to as they were not in that country, the
US, to breach those laws. What is the alleged breach? It is the receipt of information that was in the public interest that he then published. That should not be a crime. It is my view and the view of the Parliamentary Friends of the Bring Julian Assange Home Group that extradition proceedings should cease and Mr Assange should be brought back to Australia. Mr Assange has been pursued for 10 years, and he spent more than six years holed up in an Ecuadorian embassy ahead of his arrest and imprisonment at Belmarsh. Mr Assange must now be allowed to return home.

Community Sport Infrastructure Grant Program

Ms BIRD (Cunningham) (13:52): I am really angry on behalf of volunteers and sporting organisations across the country who went into a competition that they thought had rules and would be played fairly, not knowing that this government would break rules, would not play fairly and would engage in industrial-scale rorting of Australian taxpayers' moneys through the Community Sport Infrastructure grants.

The Coledale Football Club have increased their membership from 500 to 600 players in the past few years. Another 10 young people turned up recently because they'd heard how great the club is. The blatant rorts of the grants process is a slap in the face for community volunteers who keep groups like the Coledale Waves going. What has been particularly galling for the club and their volunteers is that nine of the successful grant applicants were submitted late, three or four months after the closing date. Our hardworking volunteers at Coledale Waves worked frantically to get their application in by the deadline. The fact that these late applications were funded is a further slap in the face for the team in my area. They worked very hard, putting hundreds of hours in. They have a massive team of women players—in fact, they've lost one team of women players because they couldn't get the upgrades that are needed. This government should hang its head in shame. It should do the right thing by these clubs.

Veterans: Mental Health

Mr CONNELLY (Stirling) (13:53): This Prime Minister and this government are absolutely committed to raising the bar on the support that is provided to our veterans, supporting those who have served our nation. That is why this morning the PM announced a national commissioner for defence and veteran suicide prevention, because whilst most veterans leave defence brimming with skills that they take into businesses and into the community there are some who struggle. We have already undertaken inquiries which have identified some systemic challenges. Let's be clear, we did not need another review. The most recent Productivity Commission report made it clear that there are changes which need to be made at the Department of Veterans' Affairs, and those changes are underway.

The minister and the PM consulted widely, including with veterans in parliament, and they took their time on reaching this decision. I can confirm from my experience and from the feedback from veterans in my community in Stirling that this is the right approach. The national commissioner will identify issues and make recommendations to support suicide prevention, setting out a long-term path to help reduce suicide risks within the military and veteran community.

Today, on behalf of veterans, I thank the PM and the minister for their passionate support.

Community Sport Infrastructure Grant Program

Mr DREYFUS (Isaacs—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (13:55): Last year, the Kyneton District Soccer Club applied for a community sports infrastructure grant. An independent assessment by Sports Australia gave the club a score of 87 out of 100. With 74 the cut-off for funding, the club clearly had a winning score. But then the Morrison government's secret assessment process got its claws into these grants and the game was fixed: the club got nothing. And why? Because the club was located in the seat of the member for Bendigo and was not a coalition target seat.

That the sports rorts scandal reveals government corruption is beyond question, but the response to this scandal by the Prime Minister reveals far more, because the response of Mr Morrison to this corruption is not to clean it up but to cover it up—in this case, with a secret report by a former Liberal Party staffer that the Prime Minister refuses to let the Australian people see. It is said that the fish rots from the head, and the stench from this scandal is strongest in the Prime Minister's office.

Australia needs a national integrity commission, and we need one now, because only a real national integrity commission—one with all the independence, powers and resources of a standing royal commission into corruption—can uncover and eradicate the corruption that surrounds the Morrison government.

New South Wales Young Farmer of the Year

Mr CONAGHAN (Cowper) (13:56): I had the pleasure of meeting the New South Wales Young Farmer of the Year last week. At just 29 years old, Renae Connell cares for 160 head of dairy cattle with her husband Scott
at Megan, near Dorrigo, in my electorate of Cowper. She, like many farmers, has been through a lot—the current drought, the effect of fires and succession planning for the family property. Add to the mix two lively daughters, aged 11 and eight, and the Connells have the recipe for a very busy life.

And yet, amazingly, Renae makes time for others. It's this aspect of her personality that I've been most impressed by. She holds representative positions in farming and community groups and presents at conferences, and she has already been primed as a future leader of the dairy industry, having analysed Valley Rose Jerseys to make it more profitable and sustainable.

She is honest with others about the difficulties she experiences with farming: the isolation, the loneliness and the depression that can sometimes result from so many hours of work and living remotely. She has shared with the public the steps that she has taken to improve her life and mental health, like reaching out for support and installing new technology on the farm to reduce her workload.

This young family is going great guns, and their shift to the traditional Holstein-Jersey herd, capable of producing A2 milk, is delivering them better profits and a better life. Well done, Renae, on becoming the New South Wales state government's Young Farmer of the Year for 2019.

Community Sport Infrastructure Grant Program

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (13:58): It is time the Prime Minister apologised to the Australian people for his sports rorts scandal. The Prime Minister said that the purpose of this sports rorts scheme was:

… ensuring young girls don't have to change in their parents cars or out the back of the shed.

Well, if this were the case then South Adelaide Football Club, in my electorate, which has more women’s premierships than female toilets, was surely deserving of the money!

This club dutifully went through the process to apply for female change rooms, and when they found out they were unsuccessful they accepted the umpire's decision. Little did they know that the deck was always stacked against them. We now know the government was funnelling this program for their own political purpose. But what added insult to injury to this club—like many others—was when they found out that while they didn't receive a grant to support their girls and women, down the road the Old Collegians Rugby Union Football Club, in the marginal seat of Sturt, did receive a grant for female facilities despite not having one female player! Not one single female team!

This grants program was pork-barrelling on an industrial scale. It is time the Prime Minister apologised to the women and girls of South Adelaide Football Club, who, because they were not located in a marginal electorate, are most likely still having to get changed in their parents' cars or out the back of a shed.

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

CONDOLENCES

Tchen, Mr Tsebin

The SPEAKER (14:00): I inform the House of the death on 25 November 2019 of Tsebin Tchen, a former senator. Tsebin Tchen represented the state of Victoria from 1999 until 2005. As a mark of respect to the memory of Tsebin Tchen, I invite all present to rise in their places.

Honourable members having stood in their places—

The SPEAKER: I thank the House.

PARTY OFFICE HOLDERS

National Party of Australia

Mr MCCORMACK (Riverina—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development and Leader of the Nationals) (14:01): I'm pleased to advise the House that the honourable member for Maranoa has been elected as the Deputy Leader of the Nationals.

MINISTERIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:01): I present a revised ministry list reflecting acting arrangements for the ministry and changes to representative arrangements in the other chamber.

The document read as follows—

SECOND MORRISON MINISTRY

5 Feb 2020
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prime Minister</th>
<th>The Hon Scott Morrison MP</th>
<th>Senator the Hon Matthias Cormann</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minister for the Public Service</td>
<td>The Hon Scott Morrison MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Matthias Cormann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Women</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Manse Payne</td>
<td>The Hon Sussan Ley MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Cabinet</td>
<td>The Hon Greg Hunt MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Matthias Cormann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Indigenous Australians</td>
<td>The Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Anne Ruston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister and Cabinet</td>
<td>The Hon Ben Morton MP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development</td>
<td>The Hon Michael McCormack MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts</td>
<td>The Hon Paul Fletcher MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds CSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Water Resources, Drought, Rural Finance, Natural Disaster and Emergency Management</td>
<td>The Hon David Littleproud MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds CSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Population, Cities and Urban Infrastructure</td>
<td>The Hon Alan Tudge MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Matthias Cormann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Waste Reduction and Environmental Management</td>
<td>The Hon Mark Coulton MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Forestry and Fisheries</td>
<td>The Hon Trevor Evans MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon Andrew Gee MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Territories</td>
<td>The Hon Nola Marino MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon Josh Frydenberg MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>The Hon Alan Tudge MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon Michael Sukkar MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment</td>
<td>The Hon Michael Sukkar MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister to the Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate</td>
<td>The Hon Michael Sukkar MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Road Safety and Freight Transport</td>
<td>The Hon Romanaint Duniam</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Regional Tourism</td>
<td>The Hon Romanaint Duniam</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attorney-General</td>
<td>The Hon Christian Porter MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Manse Payne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Industrial Relations</td>
<td>The Hon Christian Porter MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Manse Payne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Health</td>
<td>The Hon Greg Hunt MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaela Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Aged Care and Senior Australians</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck</td>
<td>The Hon Greg Hunt MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Youth and Sport</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck</td>
<td>The Hon Greg Hunt MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Home Affairs</td>
<td>The Hon Peter Dutton MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaela Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Water Resources, Drought, Rural Finance, Natural Disaster and Emergency Management</td>
<td>The Hon David Littleproud MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs</td>
<td>The Hon David Coleman MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Customs, Community Safety and Multicultural Affairs</td>
<td>The Hon Jason Wood MP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Education</td>
<td>The Hon Dan Tehan MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business</td>
<td>The Hon Steve Irons MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Karen Andrews MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Vocational Education, Training and Apprenticeships</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Karen Andrews MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Acting) Minister for Resources and Northern Australia</td>
<td>The Hon David Littleproud MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Industry, Science and Technology</td>
<td>The Hon Karen Andrews MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction</td>
<td>The Hon Angus Taylor MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Defence</td>
<td>The Hon Linda Reynolds CSC</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds CSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Leader of the House</td>
<td>The Hon Linda Reynolds CSC</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds CSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Defence Industry</td>
<td>The Hon Darren Chester MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds CSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Families and Social Services</td>
<td>The Hon Linda Reynolds CSC</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds CSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Manager of Government Business in the Senate)</td>
<td>The Hon Peter Dutton MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds CSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme</td>
<td>The Hon Alex Hawke MP</td>
<td>The Hon Stuart Robert MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Government Services</td>
<td>The Hon Darren Chester MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Anne Ruston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Children and Families</td>
<td>The Hon Melissa Price MP</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Anne Ruston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Community Housing, Homelessness and Community Services</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Anne Ruston</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Anne Ruston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Superannuation, Financial Services and Financial Technology</td>
<td>The Hon Jane Hume</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each box represents a portfolio. Cabinet Ministers are shown in bold type. As a general rule, there is one department in each portfolio. However, there can be two departments in one portfolio. The title of a department does not necessarily reflect the title of a Minister in all cases. Ministers are sworn to administer the portfolio in which they are listed under the 'Minister' column and may also be sworn to administer other portfolios in which they are not listed. Assistant Ministers in italics are designated as Parliamentary Secretaries under the Ministers of State Act 1952.
Mr Morrison: I also inform the House that the Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs will be absent from question time today and until further notice. The Minister for Population, Cities and Urban Infrastructure will answer questions on his behalf.

PARTY OFFICE HOLDERS

Australian Greens

Mr Bandt (Melbourne) (14:02): I wish to inform the House that I've been elected as the parliamentary leader of the Australian Greens.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Australian Bushfires

Mr Albanese (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (14:02): My question is to the Prime Minister. I refer to my November letter to him calling for eight measures on bushfires, including a coordinated national approach endorsed by COAG, appropriate emergency services funding, more aerial firefighting assets, financial support for volunteer firefighters and action on climate adaptation and mitigation. Why did the Prime Minister summarily dismiss Labor's constructive proposals by rejecting a national approach to the crisis, saying COAG might meet later 'should the need arise'?

Mr Morrison (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:03): I'm sure the House won't be surprised that I don't accept the Leader of the Opposition's characterisation of these issues. What I can tell the House is that the government's response to the national bushfire emergency over this 'black summer' has been unprecedented with the compulsory call-out of the Defence Force reserves, which is the first time that that has occurred in response to a national disaster of this kind. In addition to that, we moved quickly to establish the National Bushfire Recovery Agency and to appoint Andrew Colvin, the former head of the Australian Federal Police. I thought those opposite supported these measures, but they come in here and, with the first question of the day, seek to politicise the bushfire response. I find that very disappointing, but I'm happy to inform the member that we not only provided additional support for aerial firefighting assets—that is, the water bombers—but also a further $20 million—

The Speaker: The Prime Minister will resume his seat. The Leader of the Opposition, on a point of order?

Mr Albanese: It goes to relevance. My question very specifically went to my correspondence in writing to the Prime Minister, in November, and his response—

The Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat.

Mr Albanese: when he was still saying it was a state issue—

The Speaker: No, the Leader of the Opposition will not debate the matter. The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. The question mentioned a number of things in the correspondence, and the Prime Minister is addressing the response to the bushfires. He is in order. He is entitled, in doing that, to mention other actions that have been taken. The Prime Minister is in order.

Mr Morrison: Thank you, Mr Speaker. We provided the additional funding for those water bombers and then we provided additional funding on top of that in response to the request from the fire chiefs, who had sought that additional support. They sought one extra. We provided four extra.

Mr Albanese interjecting—

Mr Morrison: I note the constant interjecting from the Leader of the Opposition. He's been very chatty on this issue today. I would have thought he'd be supporting these measures. If he wants to politicise bushfires, that reflects more on him than it does on the government.

Australian Bushfires

Mr Conaghan (Cowper) (14:05): My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister outline to the House how the Morrison-McCormack government is working practically to meet the challenges Australia faces including responding to the devastation this bushfire season has caused communities across Australia, including in my electorate of Cowper?

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr Morrison (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:06): I thank the member for Cowper for his questions, and I note the interjections from those opposite—again—on the issue of an important question about bushfires. I was with the member for Cowper in Wauchope during those bushfires that ravaged the Mid Coast, as I was with other members across the Mid Coast and up the North Coast as the fires
went through those communities. I saw the devastation with the member and my many other colleagues as we visited the many areas that were affected by those fires—including with the New South Wales Premier, who was there with me on that occasion when we went to Wauchope and visited the incident response centre. I want to thank all the members for their great cooperation and support—as we did in this House yesterday when we memorialised the terrible losses that were endured over this bushfire season, this 'black summer', which continues to this day.

What this government has been doing for the last six years is ensuring that the government has been in a place to build the strength and resilience, particularly of our financial resources, to ensure that, at a time of crisis, we can act and move forward and put resources into place. That's why we established the National Bushfire Recovery Agency, under the leadership of Andrew Colvin, and immediately put in another $2 billion to support the bushfire recovery effort and the rebuilding process to build back better, which this government will lead and ensure we are supporting those people on the ground. And we were able to do that without applying an emergency levy and tax on the Australian people. We didn't have to do that, like our predecessors did. We were in a position to do so because we had brought the budget back into balance. That is something those opposite were unable to do, and the only way they could provide that support is if they tax other Australians.

We have not done that. We did the work to ensure that we could rebuild the financial resilience of the government to be able to provide $76 million in important mental health support, $50,000 grants to small businesses directly impacted by these fires and a further $500,000 in loans where you don't pay anything back for two years—no interest—and then have discounted rates of interest over the balance of the eight years. We are providing $75,000 grants to primary producers, and more than $6 million of that support is already out the door. We have provided over $100 million in disaster recovery payments to over 75,000 people—including over 34,000 children to ensure that they could be supported particularly as they went back into school. We have supported our tourism industry. We are supporting those who are supporting wildlife and habitat, and the councils providing the response. That's action. That's the response. (Time expired)

Australian Bushfires

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (14:09): My question is again addressed to the Prime Minister. Does the Prime Minister regret using his official resources to create and launch a party-political advertisement on a catastrophic day at the height of the bushfire crisis, which included defence imagery, a jingle and a link to a Liberal Party donation button?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:10): The Leader of the Opposition has come to that dispatch box and told a complete falsehood. The government and the members opposite know, on any—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr MORRISON: I note the constant interjections on matters of bushfires from those opposite. But on every piece of communication that you provide on video, the advice is that that material must be authorised. I have noted that the Leader of the Opposition—

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister can pause for a second. I know it's the start of a new year and it's the first question time, but members won't have forgotten the number of times I've said it's important for me to hear the question and the answer. I am going to hear both. If that means ejecting people, I'll do it very freely—and bear in mind that I haven't done it for a while. We've had a bit of a break, and we're now back.

Mr MORRISON: Those communications require an authorisation to be compliant. That's what the government has done. That's what the Leader of the Opposition has done with his video communications on these types of issues. The only person trying to politicise the response to the bushfire crisis is the Leader of the Opposition.

Veterans: Suicide

Mr THOMPSON (Herbert) (14:11): My question is to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister outline to the House the action the Morrison government has taken to establish a national and permanent rolling commission into veteran suicide and its prevention, so we can better serve and protect those who served us, including veterans in my electorate of Herbert?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:12): I thank the member for Herbert for his question and I thank him for his service, as I thank all members of this House who've served in that way—in our defence forces. I thank all Australians who've served in our Defence Force and who are veterans, or who are currently serving. I thank them for their service.
The price of peace is eternal vigilance, and we must be eternally vigilant about the mental health and wellbeing of our veterans and our service personnel. Veteran suicide is heartbreaking—any suicide is heartbreaking—and the incidence of suicide amongst our veterans is alarming: 2½ times the rate of what it is otherwise in the population. I commend the Minister for Veterans' Affairs for the excellent work he has done in consulting and listening, not reacting in a knee-jerk way to leap onto this issue. He did the work of listening, understanding and caring, and in response to that it has been his recommendation, which cabinet agreed to this week, that we will establish a national commissioner for defence and veteran suicide prevention. This commissioner will have the rolling powers, effectively, of a royal commission to ensure that we can look at every single occasion—to understand it and learn from it—to ensure that we can prevent any further such suicides amongst our veteran community.

In addition to that, we will be ensuring it has a first task to look back at those veteran suicides that have distressed so many, to learn the lessons and to understand what needs to be done to address those situations. There will also be a veterans' families advocate, because as we listen to the families—and, in particular, I pay tribute to Julie-Ann Finney, who led this courageous and brave advocacy to bring this to our attention and to understand it. My response to her is that we need more than a royal commission. I was pleased to speak to her last night and convey to her the decision that we have made. She told me that she was going to tell her son.

This is the right thing to do. This is the right response. This puts us on the footing of eternal vigilance on behalf of our veterans, to ensure that we understand what happens, the stresses that they are under and the terrible outcomes that occur from the decisions they take in these instances.

I want to say this though: our veterans are strong, our veterans are not broken, our veterans have served and they continue to contribute to our country, and they are outstanding contributors. If you're a veteran out there today, all of this chamber believes in you. All of this chamber believes in your capacity, in your potential. If you're a veteran out there today and you're daily battling this, then this chamber, the other chamber, this nation stand behind you, and the national commissioner for defence and veterans' suicide prevention will be there to support you.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (14:15): on indulgence—I associate myself with the support for action when it comes to veterans' suicides. I spoke to Julie-Ann Finney just last week. It was the day after the anniversary of her son's tragic death, and she had not visited the grave of her own son, who went into the Defence Force to defend our nation and who was, tragically, just one of the many victims of suicide of veterans. We called for a royal commission last year, but we are not going to let the perfect be the enemy of the good. We will support what the Prime Minister has announced. We will be vigilant to make sure it's properly resourced. We say that today is a day which should give comfort to people in the veterans' community, including Julie-Ann, who have campaigned so strongly for this.

Australian Bushfires

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (14:16): My question is again to the Prime Minister, and I refer to his previous answer, where he suggested that it was necessary to have a Liberal Party authorisation on his ad which had a Liberal Party donation button attached to it. Isn't it a fact that only electoral matters require party authorisation and there is long precedent for government information which is not party political to not require such an authorisation? The only reason it was authorised by the Liberal Party is because it was so political. (Time expired)

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:16): The video presentation was posted on my Facebook page, and that requires an authorisation. That is the advice that is provided to me. That is the same as is practised by the Leader of the Opposition, and I table his tweet that says:

Listening to people. Respecting people. Putting forward practical suggestions that would make a difference.
That's what I've been focused on. That's what I'll continue to do.

... ... ...

Authorised by Anthony Albanese, ALP, Canberra

I have just followed the practice in communicating with the Australian people. For the Labor Party to characterise it in the way they have is simply false and a misrepresentation by a Labor Party leader who wants to politicise the bushfires.

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Members on both sides! The member for Sydney is warned. The member for Gorton is warned.
Climate Change

Ms STEGGALL (Warringah) (14:18): To the Prime Minister: In a time of crisis, the Australian people have rallied and been united in their response. They are looking to us now in this place for unity and leadership to be safe in the future. It's been predicted that, without action now, impacts and events resulting from global warming will get much worse. Will you honour the sacrifice of all those impacted during this bushfire crisis by showing bipartisan support for effective, long-term plans to lower our emissions, mitigate the worst of climate change and, united, keep Australians safe?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:18): I thank the member for her question. In the royal commission that we are seeking to establish—and I have written to the state and territory premiers and chief ministers to get their comment and feedback on that royal commission's terms of reference—it is accepted that climate change has impacted Australia; that we're in for longer, hotter, drier summers; and that there are actions that we need to take to protect Australians into the future. Those actions are many. In my address to the National Press Club last week I set out what they were.

Of course Australia must continue to take the actions we are to meet and beat our emissions reductions targets, which have already seen us reduce emissions by 12.8 per cent since 2005. We have an emissions reduction target out to 2030 that we took to the Australian people and that will see emissions per capita fall by half. We are ahead of countries like New Zealand and we are ahead of countries like Canada in meeting and beating our targets. We will beat our Kyoto emissions target by some 411 million tonnes. At the same time, our renewable energy per capita is more than double what's being achieved in Germany and in many other countries around the world. We have one of the highest levels of investment in renewable energy anywhere in the developed world. In fact, we have the highest target for emissions reduction out to 2030 in Asia, compared to those nations.

Emissions reduction is important, and we're acting on that reduction. But I can tell you that your resilience to climate is also important, and hazard reduction is important, if not more important, than emissions reduction when it comes to protecting people from fire and hotter, drier, longer summers in the future. Also, in a country ravaged by drought and the impacts that we have experienced—and that drought continues—building dams is climate action now. That's what it is. All of these measures—resilience, adaptation and emissions reduction—I see the puzzlement on Labor members' faces—

Mr Dreyfus interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Isaacs is now warned!

Mr MORRISON: They don't think that building dams is a way to ensure that we're building resilience for a climate in the future which is racked by the impact of longer, hotter, drier summers. The Labor Party—

Ms Butler interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister will pause for a second! The member for Griffith will leave under standing order 94(a).

The member for Griffith then left the chamber.

Mr Fitzgibbon interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Hunter is also warned. The Prime Minister has the call.

Mr MORRISON: The Labor Party don't seem to understand that one of the things you have to do to make the climate resilient in the future is to build dams. We have to broaden this conversation. We have to broaden the conversation about climate. It must deal with resilience, it must deal with adaptation and it must deal with emissions reduction. But this government will not tax people more to get emissions reductions down. We won't put their electricity prices up to get emissions reductions down and we will not wipe out industries to get emissions down. (Time expired)

Australian Bushfires

Mr PITT (Hinkler) (14:22): My question is to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development. Will the Deputy Prime Minister inform the House how the Morrison government is building resilience to ensure regional Australia recovers and thrives after the devastating bushfires?

Mr MCCORMACK (Riverina—Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development and Leader of the Nationals) (14:22): I thank the member for Hinkler for his question. Resilience is an important word, and no more important than after the summer we have had and the summer we're still enduring. The fire season is not over yet.

Our communities are resilient. They are the best, the strongest, the bravest communities. Regional Australia is made up of people who are so, so resilient and so, so courageous. In the face of these fires, they want to build
back better. 'Build back better': that's the theme of the National Bushfire Recovery Agency, headed by former Australian Federal Police commissioner Andrew Colvin. Those communities do want to build back better. They know how much this fire season has had an effect on them. They know the toll. But, as I said yesterday as we were honouring our bushfire victims and our bushfire affected communities, regional Australia ain't broke. Regional Australia has optimism. Regional Australia has a bright future. It will build back better after these fires. It will build back better after this drought.

We'll do it by building more dams, as the Prime Minister has just said. We will do it by helping businesses such as Greg Mouat's apple orchard in Batlow. I know the member for Eden-Monaro would probably know Greg Mouat. His family has been in business since 1926. He wants his son Richard to continue the family tradition of growing the best apples that he can. And of course there is Barney Hyams and Ian Cathels—they're great apple growers. When an apple orchard burns it takes years to replant and years to get the full recovery from those fire effects. But build back better they will in Batlow, and in Tumbarumba and in Tumut, where their pine plantations have been so devastated.

This is indeed devastating for the Visy mill. The GDP, the local shire gross domestic product, for Snowy Valleys is underpinned 70 per cent by pine plantations. I know how much of an effect this is going to have on Hyne and Visy, but they will bounce back because they are resilient.

Mr Burns interjecting—

Mr McCormack: All the communities I visited, and I went to Queensland—

The Speaker: The Deputy Prime Minister will pause. The member for Macnamara can end his conversation and leave the chamber under 94(a).

The member for Macnamara then left the chamber.

Mr Rob Mitchell interjecting—

Mr McCormack: I visited Queensland; I visited New South Wales, down the South Coast; I visited in Victoria. I talked to fire authorities there, CFA firefighters who had saved the town of Walwa by a change of wind direction. They were looking forward to helping their community, helping Jingellic, helping all of those communities to build back better. I'm glad that in Oberne, which is in the Wagga Wagga local government area, we've provided that category C assistance so that they too, even though the local government area isn't devastated by fires, can get the help they need. (Time expired)

Prime Minister

Mrs Phillips (Gilmore) (14:25): My question is to the Prime Minister. Why does the Prime Minister claim he always acted on the advice of fire commissioners when he ignored, for two years, their advice to provide a permanent boost to Australia's aerial firefighting capability?

Mr Morrison (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:26): I thank the member for her question, and can I, through her, pass on, again, my sincere condolences and sympathies and support to all of the members in her electorate. I have members of my own family who live in your electorate, and I want to thank you for the work you have done, as all members have done over the course of this bushfire season in supporting their local communities. I'd be grateful if you could do that, if you have the opportunity.

The member has raised the matter of the recommendations that were made, through fire chiefs, regarding the aerial firefighting assets. What the government did was respond to that with two separate tranches of funding which matched what they originally asked for. I dealt with this matter during the course of the bushfire season; but, in addition to those two funding allocations of $11 million, on top of that we announced a further $20 million. That was over and above the $15 million that was being provided each and every year as part of the arrangement that we had. We were pleased to do that. I also noted that the ongoing funding, which was being sought, would be addressed in this year's budget.

Economy

Mrs McIntosh (Lindsay) (14:27): My question is to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer explain to the House how the Morrison government's responsible budget management provides the financial resilience necessary to respond to economic shocks like the coronavirus, bushfires and drought? Is the Treasurer aware of any alternative approaches?

Mr Frydenberg (Kooyong—Treasurer) (14:28): I thank the member for Lindsay for her question, and note the work that she and members of her community have done to help those in fire affected areas: the provision
of community care kits that have linen, pots and pans, stationery for kids going back to school and the like—all prepared by the member for Lindsay and her team in her electorate.

It has been a devastating summer with the bushfires taking lives and destroying livelihoods. We've seen the ongoing drought and, of course, the coronavirus and the harm that it has brought. The Morrison government's response has been unprecedented. What we have seen in relation to the drought is $1.3 billion of commitments since the election, on top of what was previously announced.

In relation to the bushfires, and the Prime Minister has alluded to it, we've established the national bushfire recovery fund with $2 billion, which is initial and additional to other payments and allowances that the Commonwealth makes through the states. It's money for mental health, money for the tourism sector, money for small businesses and for primary producers, and money for wildlife habitat restoration and to support those many, many animals that have been injured in these bushfires.

Our ability to respond to these crises has been enhanced by the fact that we have been disciplined economic managers. We inherited a budget deficit of $48½ billion dollars and we've delivered the first balanced budget in 11 years. This has given us the ability to spend on those areas of need. We have a strong economy because more than 1½ million jobs have been created since we've come to government. Unemployment under Labor was at 5.7 per cent; today it's 5.1 per cent. Under Labor, employment growth was one-third of what it is today. Under Labor, 62,000 small businesses closed their doors in their last year in office, and in the last reported year 75,000 small businesses have been created by this government. The contrast is very clear. Earlier today the Governor of the Reserve Bank addressed the Press Club. This is what he said about the Australian economy: Australia's economic fundamentals remain very strong and they provide a solid foundation for us to be optimistic about our future.

This is the Governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia. There's only one group of people talking down the Australian economy, and it is those opposite.

Prime Minister

Mr MARLES (Corio—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:31): My question is to the Prime Minister. Can the Prime Minister explain how his entire office found time to attend a marketing seminar run by ad man Russel Howcroft on a catastrophic fire day in December? Why did the Prime Minister organise a meeting with Russel from marketing but refused to meet with the 23 former fire chiefs who were pleading for the government to take this bushfire season seriously?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:31): The meeting that you refer to was not a meeting that I attended. The meeting that you said was requested, and it has been well publicised, related to former fire chiefs, as you know. I engage with current fire chiefs. The current fire chiefs provided advice going into this fire season that was the same fire advice that was provided by Emergency Management Australia when I asked Emergency Management Australia to come and brief cabinet well before the fire season last year on what was necessary and to ensure that we were compliant and that we were taking action to ensure the Commonwealth was in the best position it could be to support state and territory authorities as they moved through this devastating fire season. That included the additional funding that we announced that I referred to earlier, in response to the member for Gilmore's question, to support the aerial bombers. In November the government undertook a trial program for the compulsory call-out of reserves to ensure that, in the event we were to move to that situation, it could be done seamlessly.

This has been one of the most significant responses of the government to ensure that we went from a situation of around 895 Defence Force personnel on the ground in December to 6½ thousand and more that were on the ground in January. That changed because the government changed the disposition of Defence forces on the ground—not to respond to requests but to take this to the extreme of constitutionality; to respond to the situation that emerged that week, where on the Thursday it was the first day that the state of disaster had been declared in Victoria. That hadn't occurred before. That happened on the Thursday. There was the compulsory call-out on the Saturday. The preparations for that compulsory call-out were already underway when Victoria made that declaration. Those opposite, in their questions today, are betraying a willingness to seek to politicise this disaster, and it's very disappointing.

Coronavirus

Ms BELL (Moncrieff) (14:34): My question is to the Minister for Health. Can the minister please update the House on the steps the Morrison government is taking to protect Australians from the spread of coronavirus?

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Cabinet) (14:34): Thank you very much. I want to thank the member for Moncrieff and many members of the
Mr FITZGIBBON (Hunter) (14:38): My question is to the Deputy Prime Minister. Why is it that yesterday, when the rest of the parliament was focused only on memorialising bushfire victims, National Party ministers and members were more focused on fighting amongst themselves?

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the House?

Mr Porter: Even on the broadest interpretation, that can't be related to the ministerial duties of the Deputy Prime Minister.

The SPEAKER: I'll just hear from the Manager of Opposition Business. And, given how—unusually—the question was short, I might ask for it to be read again, if that's okay.

Mr Burke: Thank you. The question asks about the actions of ministers. That's what it specifically asks about. It asks about National Party ministers, and the person the question is directed to is a National Party minister.

The SPEAKER: Yes. But I think the problem with that question is that the Deputy Prime Minister can only be responsible for his portfolio area; he can't answer with respect to other ministers' responsibilities.

An honourable member interjecting—

The SPEAKER: He is the Deputy Prime Minister. The big point is he's not the Prime Minister. That's the point. The Prime Minister can be asked anything, and every other minister can only be asked—so it's an unbridgeable gap, I have to say. I'll go to the next question.

An honourable member interjecting—

The SPEAKER: A little bit of time for reflection is often good; that's all. The Leader of the Opposition on a point of order?

Mr Albanese: I rise on a point of order, Mr Speaker. Perhaps the Deputy Prime Minister might want to answer this question?

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. I made the point to a former Prime Minister who wanted to answer a question that wasn't in order that I really didn't care if they wanted to answer it or not. If it is out of order, I am not going to allow the question; otherwise, it makes a mockery of standing orders.

Drought

Dr WEBSTER (Mallee) (14:40): My question is to the Minister for Water Resources, Drought, Rural Finance, Natural Disaster and Emergency Management. Will the minister outline to the House how the Morrison-
McCormack government is working to build resilience in communities that have been affected by drought, including in my electorate of Mallee.

**Mr LITTLEPROUD** (Maranoa—Minister for Water Resources, Drought, Rural Finance, Natural Disaster and Emergency Management) (14:40): I thank the honourable member for Mallee for her question and for the leadership of her community through one of the worst droughts in our nation's history and in Mallee's history. While a lot of attention has rightly been on the devastating fires this summer, we as a government have not forgotten those impacted by drought, with our over $8 billion response to this disaster that has spread like a cancer from one side of this country to the other.

Only last week, the Prime Minister and I went to Orange to meet with the new drought advisory committee led by Shane Stone, to make sure that the commitment that we as a federal government have made is hitting the mark and getting money out there and supporting our three-pillar national drought strategy, while also making sure that there isn't duplication with the states, because the states also have a responsibility in this. But our three-pillar strategy is having an impact.

The first pillar is around the here and now: putting money in farmers' pockets through the farm household allowance, giving them the respect of being able to put household items and food on the table, to live with dignity and to make decisions with the help of rural financial counsellors. Through the Regional Investment Corporation we have introduced new loans of $2 million for farmers and $500,000 for small businesses, which will mean they will pay no interest and make no repayments if they refinance their debts from commercial banks to the Regional Investment Corporation. We are taking that out of the big banks' pockets and putting it back into farmers' pockets.

The government understand the drought extends past the farm gate; it goes to the communities that support them. Last week we announced another 52 shires that can apply for up to a million dollars under the Drought Communities Program to stimulate these local economies, the small businesses in these towns, and get new money flowing through these communities. Also, in terms of education, with children going back to school, we are taking the burden off the cost of education with another $10 million to help families pay for those education expenses, to take that burden away at the start of this year.

The Morrison government is also the first government to look to the future with drought. We have created a new future fund. In fact next week, that plan, the future fund plan that will give a dividend of $100 million a year, will be presented to this parliament. This is a plan that the parliament will decide on, not politicians; it will not be a political decision. This is about making sure it is done in an equitable and proper way.

The government are also investing over $3 billion in dams. We are looking to the future to try and build resilience. We have got the money on the table and we are asking the states, which have the constitutional responsibility to build the dams, to work with us hand in hand. We have also asked them to come with us and pay the rates of small businesses and farmers, and remove payroll tax in these drought-affected communities. The states have a role to play to support and complement what the federal government has done in its commitment to supporting regional and rural communities. Our national drought strategy is just about making sure these communities not only survive but thrive when it rains.

**Community Sport Infrastructure Grant Program**

**Mr ALBANESE** (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (14:43): My question is addressed to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister fund all projects recommended by Sport Australia under the community sport infrastructure scheme but not funded by his government?

**Mr MORRISON** (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:44): Funding these important infrastructure projects is and has been a priority of this government. The program received applications for some $400 million and we allocated $100 million. As I said last week, we think that this infrastructure is important to local communities. I did say at the Press Club last week that I will be working with the Treasurer as we prepare for this year's budget to see how we can provide further support for this important infrastructure that brings communities together.

**The SPEAKER:** The Prime Minister will resume his seat. The Leader of the Opposition, on a point of order?

**Mr Albanese:** Yes. This a very tight question—

**The SPEAKER:** The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. I listened very carefully to his question and I am listening very carefully to the answer. The Prime Minister is being relevant. Has the Prime Minister concluded? He has.

**Mr Perrett:** What about the roller derby!

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Moreton, you'll roll out the door in a second!
Coronavirus

Dr MARTIN (Reid) (14:45): My question is to the Minister for Home Affairs. Will the minister outline to the House how the Morrison government is strengthening our nation's borders to protect Australians and build our resilience to the coronavirus emergency?

Mr DUTTON (Dickson—Minister for Home Affairs) (14:45): I want to say thankyou to the member for Reid for her question. It's a very important one. The government has been working very closely with the health department. Across government, all agencies have been working very closely together. Agencies within the Department of Home Affairs, particularly at our borders, through the Commissioner of the Australian Border Force, Michael Outram, have been able to work with the airlines. As the Australian public knows, the Prime Minister made a decision, the right decision, to stop people coming in who weren't citizens or people in other categories, including permanent residents, who had been in mainland China on 1 February.

There is a significant logistical operation involved. As you would appreciate, the Commissioner of the Australian Border Force led that operation, and it's a great credit to him and to our staff at the airports. Obviously we don't want to put our staff in harm's way, but they were able to support people coming off those flights and redirect them into the hands of some medical advisors who were there at the airport and to turn some people back to their country of destination, and they made sure that this was all done in an orderly way.

The message, as the Minister for Health pointed out before, is that the government will respond to any of these instances. We will make sure, given we rehearse plenty of scenarios—the National Security Committee of cabinet comes together on a regular basis to look at ways in which we can respond to a crisis of this nature—that we put in place whatever resources are required to keep Australians safe. What we've had at the forefront is a desire to keep Australians safe here at home and to make sure that where Australians are stranded, whether it's in the Hubei or Wuhan province, wherever it might be, we can provide support to those people as well.

As Australians know, we have been able to repatriate, with the assistance of a chartered flight by Qantas, 241 people. Those people are currently in isolation and will be able to leave the Christmas Island facility when they get clearance from the doctors. This is a fast-evolving threat not just to our country but right across the world. We are working with the World Health Organization. We are meeting daily with all the state chief medical officers. All of us who are involved within the home affairs department will make sure we do whatever is possible to support the orderly transition at our airports of people, as I say, in whichever direction they need to go. We are doing whatever it takes to make sure we can deal with this virus. I really do want to commend the frontline officers from the home affairs portfolio, from the department. We will make sure we continue to do that work into the future to keep Australians safe both at home and abroad.

Community Sport Infrastructure Grant Program

Mr CONROY (Shortland) (14:49): My question is to the Prime Minister. Were the projects that received money under the community sports infrastructure scheme the ones that had the most merit?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:49): I believe funding community sports infrastructure always has merit.

Australian Bushfires

Mr BROADBENT (Monash) (14:49): My question is to the Minister for the Environment. Will the minister update the House on the steps the Morrison government has taken to help our native wildlife and landscapes recover from the recent bushfires and build their resilience to future fire events.

Ms LEV (Farrer—Minister for the Environment) (14:50): I thank the member for Monash for his question and commend him for his extraordinary speech on the condolence motion for bushfires yesterday and the passion he shows for his affected communities in East Gippsland. There's absolutely no doubt that the damage to the built environment, the rural environment and the natural environment has been extraordinary; in fact, we have witnessed an ecological tragedy. Up to 80 per cent of the World Heritage area of the Blue Mountains has been burnt, and that's just one example.

I've travelled throughout the firegrounds on the Mid North Coast and the South Coast of New South Wales and in the Adelaide Hills and I've met with amazing people—wildlife carers, vets, Indigenous rangers, farmers, state agencies and, of course, property owners who've been left devastated. The Treasurer and I announced a $50 million initial response for wildlife and habitat recovery—

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Members on my left! The minister has the call.
Ms LEY: and we've appointed an expert panel, chaired by Threatened Species Commissioner Dr Sally Box, to advise on immediate and medium-term stages of recovery and our investment. Some 100 participants have attended three roundtables—environmental science, wildlife and land management—and they've really, really informed the development of this response. Money is hitting the ground. For example, in 17 fire affected natural resource management regions we've signed new work orders and we will see immediate work on pests, weeds, feral animals, fencing off of unburnt areas—all of that practical action on the ground. Five million dollars is going to Greening Australia for seed banks and $2½ million to Conservation Volunteers Australia. It's extraordinary that 10,000 volunteers have already lodged expressions of interest through—

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Members on my left will cease interjecting or they'll be leaving the chamber. The minister has the call.

Ms LEY: Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is extraordinary to see the volunteer effort on the ground, and I'm sure members opposite have witnessed it. Ten thousand volunteers have registered their interest, through an online portal, with Conservation Volunteers Australia. Again, we will support that effort for practical action.

We've provided a million dollars each for Taronga, Zoos Victoria and Zoos South Australia. They are front line in their conservation efforts to recover insurance populations and absolutely work at the front line of that important conservation.

Small wildlife shelters will be able to apply for programs for their amazing backyard carers, and we will continue to coordinate strategies to build resilience against the impacts of climate change, from funding climate science through to practical actions that we see on our farms and in our community environment programs every single day. Our response to the fires will focus on both immediate recovery and a long-term plan for the environment that supports us all.

Community Sport Infrastructure Grant Program

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (14:53): My question is to the Prime Minister. In his previous answer the Prime Minister failed to endorse decisions made by his own government to reject projects that had been assessed as above 90 out of 100 for merit. Were the projects that received money under the community sports infrastructure scheme the ones that had the most merit?

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Members on my left—the member for Cowan, the member for Corangamite. I haven't called the Prime Minister yet. The Prime Minister has the call.

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:54): As the member knows, the program was set up that gave total authority to the minister to make decisions—

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Members on my left!

Mr MORRISON: I’m only referring to what the findings of the Auditor-General's report were, Mr Speaker. That report articulated that the authority to make those decisions was by the minister, and the Auditor-General's report made a very important recommendation, which the government accepts. That recommendation was recommendation 4, which deals with the issue of the application of the Commonwealth Grant Rules and Guidelines. As the Auditor-General's report outlines—and which we accept—those guidelines should be applied in the future by organisations such as Sport Australia. The government has accepted that recommendation, and we believe that that will assist these—

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister will resume his seat. The Manager of Opposition Business on a point of order.

Mr Burke: On direct relevance. The question does not go to future programs. The question goes to decisions that were made by this government and whether or not the Prime Minister believes those decisions were made on merit.

The SPEAKER: Just before I call the Prime Minister, I take the point of order from the Manager of Opposition Business. I heard the question to have exactly what he said and some other question at the end about what the considerations were.

Mr Burke interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Okay, I'll listen to the Prime Minister carefully. The Prime Minister has the call.
Mr MORRISON: The point I was seeking to make is that the minister made the decisions about where the projects should be supported based on her assessment of what would be the projects of greater support and merit in the community. And she had the authority to do that. They were based on her assessment—

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister will just pause for a second. The members for Perth and Lyons will leave under standing order 94(a). The Prime Minister has the call.

The member for Perth and the member for Lyons then left the chamber.

Mr MORRISON: So the minister, who had the authority to make those decisions, made those decisions. And, as she made very clear in her own statements at the time, she was seeking to make those decisions in the best interests of what that program was seeking to do.

Now, the point I was making is that the Commonwealth Government Grant Rules and Guidelines are there to ensure that where a minister may take a view about what she believes is a project that has greater merit there is a process for setting out how that might be different from what advice or recommendation she might have received. But, Mr Speaker, I can tell you what the Auditor-General's report did not find. It did not find that elected members of this House, and it did not find that ministers, should not be making decisions about the expenditure of public moneys to suit the programs that have been established. The process is to ensure that you get good advice, and you can consider that advice, but ministers must make decisions.

Now, if those opposite think that ministers should be order-takers from public officials, who aren't elected, that's for them to say. I believe every single member of this House would advocate for the needs of their community. And these members advocated for the needs of their communities, and the minister made decisions. They were all eligible projects and she made the final decisions, as was her authority under the program as it was established. Where there are improvements to be made to that program in the future, they have been accepted.

Mr Gosling interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Solomon will withdraw an unparliamentary remark he made.

Mr Gosling: Which one?

Government members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: No! I tell you what, members on my right! This is not going to take long, member for Solomon. You either withdraw or withdraw from the chamber. It's pretty simple.

Mr Gosling: I withdraw.

The SPEAKER: Thank you. Is the Prime Minister indicating that the Second Deputy Speaker made an unparliamentary remark? I have no option but to—

Mr Rob Mitchell interjecting—

The SPEAKER: No, you haven't got the call yet. You're certainly not going to question anything. You know the standing orders as well as anybody! If you want to ask a question you can do that in another way. I'm in the situation where the Prime Minister is saying that the Second Deputy Speaker made an unparliamentary remark. All I can do is ask whether the Second Deputy Speaker did make an unparliamentary remark.

Mr Rob Mitchell: I didn't, but for the sake of the House I withdraw it.

The SPEAKER: I thank the Second Deputy Speaker.

Economy

Ms FLINT (Boothby—Government Whip) (14:59): My question is to the Minister for Education, representing the Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment. Will the minister outline to the House the steps the Morrison government is taking in response to the devastating bushfires and the outbreak of the coronavirus, particularly in relation to the education sector and the trade and tourism sector?

Mr TEHAN (Wannon—Minister for Education) (15:00): I thank the member for Boothby for her question. I know she is a passionate advocate for the tourism, trade and education sectors in this country and in South Australia in particular. There is no doubt that the bushfires and the coronavirus have created an unprecedented challenge for our tourism, trade and international education sectors. That's why the government is acting to protect jobs and businesses. It is why the government is working with the tourism sector, the trade sector and the international education sector to minimise the impact of the bushfires and the coronavirus.

My counterpart the Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment has been working with businesses, peak bodies and state and territory counterparts to put together a package for the tourism industry following the impact of the bushfires. It's a significant package: $20 million for the Holiday Here This Year domestic marketing campaign,
$25 million for an international marketing campaign to reinforce to global audiences that Australia is safe and open for business, $10 million for tourism initiatives to attract visitors back into fire affected regions, $6.5 million to get more international businesses and buyers to the Australian Tourism Exchange, $9.5 million for an international media hosting program and $5 million for public diplomacy initiatives. The government is serious about doing all it can to help our tourism industry.

When it comes to education, following the fires there's an $8 million mental health support package which is being delivered through beyondblue. There's funding for school chaplains and funding for community child care. Those from bushfire areas have been exempted from the activity test for the childcare subsidy. And there is special consideration for students from bushfire affected areas for the rural and regional enterprise scholarships.

When it comes to the coronavirus, my counterpart minister Simon Birmingham is working with the sector to deal with the impacts of the coronavirus—ongoing. We continue to engage with them. We've been engaging with my counterparts in the higher education sector on an almost daily basis. We've been engaging with state and territory ministers. We want to minimise the impact of the coronavirus on the education sector, on the tourism sector and on the trade sector in this country. That involves us all working together to do that, working with state and territory counterparts and with peak bodies. We'll continue to do it because it's absolutely vital for Australia's economy and for us to keep all Australians safe.

MOTIONS

Prime Minister

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (15:03): I seek leave to move the following motion:

That the House:

(1) notes the Prime Minister:

(a) has repeatedly refused to admit his failings in handling the ongoing bushfire crisis;

(b) has tried to cover up his failings with a series of false claims;

(c) is ignoring the damning report of the independent Auditor-General concerning his corrupt sports rorts scheme, and is instead relying on a secret report by his former Chief of Staff;

(d) refuses to give straight answers to simple questions; and

(e) has no plan for this country, only a marketing plan for himself; and

(2) therefore, calls on the Prime Minister to stop acting in his own interest and start acting in the national interest.

Leave not granted.

Mr ALBANESE: I move:

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

(1) notes the Prime Minister:

(a) has repeatedly refused to admit his failings in handling the ongoing bushfire crisis;

(b) has tried to cover up his failings with a series of false claims;

(c) is ignoring the damning report of the independent Auditor-General concerning his corrupt sports rorts scheme, and is instead relying on a secret report by his former Chief of Staff;

(d) refuses to give straight answers to simple questions; and

(e) has no plan for this country, only a marketing plan for himself; and

(2) therefore, calls on the Prime Minister to stop acting in his own interest and start acting in the national interest.

The fact is everyone knows that this has been—

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Leader of the House) (15:05): I move:

That the Member be no longer heard.

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

The House divided. [15:10]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ..................... 75
Noes ..................... 68
Majority ............... 7
AYES

Alexander, JG  Allen, K
Andrews, KJ  Andrews, KL
Archer, BK  Bell, AM
Broadbent, RE  Buchholz, S
Chester, D  Christensen, GR
Conaghan, PJ  Connelly, V
Coulton, M  Drum, DK (teller)
Dutton, PC  Entsch, WG
Evans, TM  Falinski, JG
Fletcher, PW  Flint, NJ
Frydenberg, JA  Gee, AR
Gillespie, DA  Goodenough, IR
Hammond, CM  Hastie, AW
Hawke, AG  Hogan, KJ
Howarth, LR  Hunt, GA
Irons, SJ  Joyce, BT
Kelly, C  Laming, A
Landry, ML  Leeser, J
Ley, SP  Littleproud, D
Liu, G  Marino, NB
Martin, FB  McCormack, MF
McIntosh, MI  McVeigh, JJ
Morrison, SJ  Morton, B
O'Brien, LS  O'Brien, T
O'Dowd, KD  Pasin, A
Pearce, GB  Pitt, KJ
Porter, CC  Price, ML
Ramsey, RE (teller)  Roberts, SR
Sharma, DN  Simmonds, J
Stevens, J  Sukkar, MS
Taylor, AJ  Tehan, DT
Thompson, P  Tudge, AE
van Manen, AJ  Vasta, RX
Wallace, AB  Webster, AE
Wicks, LE  Wilson, RJ
Wilson, TR  Wood, JP
Wyatt, KG  Young, T
Zimmerman, T

NOES

Albanese, AN  Aly, A
Bandt, AP  Bird, SL
Bowen, CE  Burke, AS
Burney, LJ  Butler, MC
Byrne, AM  Chalmers, JE
Champion, ND  Clare, JD
Claydon, SC  Coker, EA
Collins, JM  Conroy, PM
Dick, MD  Dreyfus, MA
Elliott, MJ  Fitzgibbon, JA
Freelander, MR  Georganas, S
Giles, AJ  Gosling, LJ
Haines, H  Hayes, CP
Hill, JC  Huscic, EN
Jones, SP  Kearney, G
Kelly, MJ  Keogh, MJ
Khalil, P  King, CF
King, MMH  Leigh, AK
Marles, RD  McBride, EM
Mitchell, RG  Malino, D
Murphy, PJ  Neumann, SK
O'Connor, BPJ  O'Neil, CE
Owens, JA  Payne, AE
Perrett, GD  Phillips, FE
Plibersek, TJ  Rishworth, AL
Rowland, MA  Ryan, JC (teller)
Sharkie, RCC  Shorten, WR
Question agreed to.

The **SPEAKER** (15:12): The question now is whether the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition is seconded.

**Mr BURKE** (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (15:12): The motion is seconded. This is a corrupt scheme from a Prime Minister who thinks taxpayers’ money belongs personally to him—

**Mr PORTER** (Pearce—Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Leader of the House) (15:12): I move:

That the Member be no longer heard.

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

The House divided. [15:13]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes ...................... 75
Noes ...................... 68
Majority ................ 7

AYES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Archer, BK
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Conaghan, PJ
Coulton, M
Dutton, PC
Evans, TM
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hammond, CM
Hawke, AG
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Ley, SP
Liu, G
Martin, FB
McIntosh, MI
Morrison, SJ
O’Brien, LS
O’Dowd, KD
Pearce, GB
Porter, CC
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Sharma, DN
Stevens, J
Taylor, AJ
Thompson, P
van Manen, AJ
Wallace, AB
Wicks, LE
Wilson, TR
Wyatt, KG
Zimmerman, T

NOES

Smith, DPB
Stanley, AM (teller)
Swanson, MJ
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Vamvakinou, M
Wells, AS
Wilson, JH

Snowdon, WE
Steggall, Z
Templeman, SR
Thwaites, KL
Watts, TG
Wilkie, AD
Zappia, A
Question agreed to.

Mr MARLES (Corio—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (15:14): Corrupt sports rorts—an idea—

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Leader of the House) (15:15):
I move:
That the question be now put.

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

The House divided. [15:16]
(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes .................... 75
Noes .................... 68
Majority ................ 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AYES</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alexander, JG</td>
<td>Allen, K</td>
<td>Andrews, KL</td>
<td>Bell, AM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrews, KJ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archer, BK</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadbent, RE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chester, D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conaghan, PJ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coulton, M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutton, PC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evans, TM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fletcher, PW</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frydenberg, JA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gillespie, DA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hammond, CM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawke, AG</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### AYES

- Howarth, LR
- Irons, SJ
- Kelly, C
- Landry, ML
- Ley, SP
- Liu, G
- Martin, FB
- McIntosh, MI
- Morrison, SJ
- O'Brien, LS
- O'Dowd, KD
- Pearce, GB
- Porter, CC
- Ramsey, RE (teller)
- Sharma, DN
- Stevens, J
- Taylor, AJ
- Thompson, P
- van Manen, AJ
- Wallace, AB
- Wicks, LE
- Wilson, TR
- Wyatt, KG
- Zimmerman, T
- Hunt, GA
- Joyce, BT
- Laming, A
- Leeser, J
- Littleproud, D
- Marino, NB
- McCormack, MF
- McVeigh, JJ
- Morton, B
- O'Brien, T
- Pasin, A
- Pitt, KJ
- Price, ML
- Robert, SR
- Simmonds, J
- Sukkar, MS
- Tehan, DT
- Tudge, AE
- Vasta, RX
- Webster, AE
- Wilson, RJ
- Wood, JP
- Young, T

### NOES

- Albanese, AN
- Bandt, AP
- Bowen, CE
- Burney, LJ
- Byrne, AM
- Champion, ND
- Claydon, SC
- Collins, JM
- Dick, MD
- Elliott, MJ
- Freelander, MR
- Giles, AJ
- Haines, H
- Hill, JC
- Jones, SP
- Kelly, MJ
- Khalil, P
- King, MMH
- Marles, RD
- Mitchell, RG
- Murphy, PJ
- O'Connor, BPJ
- Owens, JA
- Perrett, GD
- Plibersek, TJ
- Rowland, MA
- Sharkie, RCC
- Smith, DPB
- Stanley, AM (teller)
- Swanson, MJ
- Thistlethwaite, MJ
- Vamvakou, M
- Wells, AS
- Wilson, JH
- Aly, A
- Bird, SL
- Burke, AS
- Butler, MC
- Chalmers, JE
- Clare, JD
- Coker, EA
- Conroy, PM
- Dreyfus, MA
- Fitzgibbon, JA
- Georganas, S
- Gosling, LJ
- Hayes, CP
- Husic, EN
- Kearney, G
- Keogh, MJ
- King, CF
- Leigh, AK
- McBride, EM
- Mulino, D
- Neumann, SK
- Payne, AE
- Phillips, FE
- Rishworth, AL
- Ryan, JC (teller)
- Shorten, WR
- Snowdon, WE
- Steggall, Z
- Templeman, SR
- Thwaites, KL
- Watts, TG
- Wilkie, AD
- Zappia, A

Question agreed to.

The **SPEAKER** (15:21): The question is the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition be agreed to.

The House divided. [15:21]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)
Ayes ..................... 65
Noes ..................... 78
Majority ............... 13

AYES

Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP
Bowen, CE
Burney, LJ
Byrne, AM
Champion, ND
Claydon, SC
Collins, JM
Dick, MD
Elliot, MJ
Freelander, MR
Giles, AJ
Hayes, CP
Husic, EN
Kearney, G
Keogh, MJ
King, CF
Leigh, AK
McBride, EM
Mulino, D
Neumann, SK
O’Neil, CE
Payne, AE
Phillips, FE
Rishworth, AL
Ryan, JC (teller)
Smith, DPB
Stanley, AM (teller)
Templeman, SR
Thwaites, KL
Watts, TG
Wilkie, AD
Zappia, A

Aly, A
Bird, SL
Burke, AS
Butler, MC
Chalmers, JE
Clare, JD
Coker, EA
Conroy, PM
Dreyfus, MA
Fitzgibbon, JA
Georganas, S
Gosling, LJ
Hill, JC
Jones, SP
Kelly, MJ
Khalil, P
King, MMH
Marles, RD
Mitchell, RG
Murphy, PJ
O’Connor, BPJ
Owens, JA
Perrett, GD
Plibersek, TJ
Rowland, MA
Shorten, WR
Snowdon, WE
Swanson, MJ
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Vanvakinou, M
Wells, AS
Wilson, JH

NOES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Archer, BK
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Conaghan, PJ
Coulton, M
Dutton, PC
Evans, TM
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Haines, H
Hastie, AW
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Joyce, BT
Laming, A
Leeser, J
Littleproud, D
Marino, NB
McCormack, MF
McVeigh, JJ
Morton, B
O’Brien, T
Pasin, A
Pitt, KJ
Price, ML
Robert, SR

Allen, K
Andrews, KL
Bell, AM
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR
Connelly, V
Drum, DK (teller)
Entsch, WG
Falinski, JG
Flint, NJ
Gee, AR
Goodenough, IR
Hammond, CM
Hawke, AG
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Ley, SP
Liu, G
Martin, FB
McIntosh, MI
Morrison, SJ
O’Brien, LS
O’Dowd, KD
Pearce, GB
Porter, CC
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Sharkie, RCC
Mr CONNELLY (Stirling) (15:24): My question is to the Minister for Veterans and Defence Personnel. Will the minister please update the House on how the Morrison government is supporting our veterans and, specifically, how we're addressing suicide within both the serving and the ex-serving community?

Mr CHESTER (Gippsland—Minister for Veterans and Defence Personnel and Deputy Leader of the House) (15:25): I thank the member for Stirling for his question, and I recognise his service in uniform to our nation, as I also recognise all members in this place who have served. I say to them, quite simply, thank you for that service. I know that I speak on behalf of all members in this place when I say that the only acceptable number of suicides in our veteran community and our defence community is zero.

This government has made mental health an absolute priority in the Veterans' Affairs portfolio over the last eight months. Since the election I've conducted a national summit involving ex-service experts in the field. We've also had a review of the national strategy, the action plan dealing with mental health issues, and that draft is out now for public consultation. And, very importantly, we've also listened to the grieving families, those who've lost their loved ones.

We did hear the calls for a royal commission. The Prime Minister and I both met with families and heard those calls. The Prime Minister asked me to look at all the options. Over the past two months we have looked at all of the options. The policy we announced today, a national commissioner for defence and veterans' suicide prevention, is better than a royal commission. The reason I say it's better than a royal commission is that it provides enduring powers to investigate all deaths by suicide of veterans and defence members that tragically occur not just now but into the future. We also announced today that there would be the appointment of an interim commissioner to review the more than 400 deaths by suicide since 2001, and we announced the position of a family advocate. Those positions will be advertised in the normal course of business over the coming weeks.

I want to take the opportunity today to thank the grieving families who had the courage to talk to me, to talk to the Leader of the Opposition, to talk to other members in this place and to the Prime Minister. To them I would say this is a victory for you, and I hope you can draw some solace from this announcement today. It doesn't bring back your lost sons and daughters, but it will help to save lives in the future.

This is a very complex policy area. Each case is unique, and there are multiple factors that contribute to a person taking their own life. There have been some major changes in the last few years. The government now provides more than $230 million through the veterans' affairs department for veterans' mental health. We provide free mental health support for veterans and their families. There is a new veteran payment in place. And I must say that those changes were all made with the support of those opposite. We now provide mental health training through our RSLs, and for the first time psychiatric assistance dogs are being provided by DVA to veterans where we believe it will help. We're also working to improve the transition from Defence into the civilian community.

I'd encourage anyone listening today who is concerned by anything we've said in this place that is affecting their own mental health to contact Open Arms on 1800011046. We need to start working together to reduce and prevent suicides in our veteran community. The hard work begins today. We have the basic framework in place. Now we need to implement it in cooperation with the states.

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (15:28): on indulgence—I associate the opposition with the remarks of the minister. I thank the minister for the constructive way that he and his staff have worked with myself and the shadow minister for defence in relation to the briefing today. Labor offers constructive bipartisanship. He's absolutely correct—one death is one death too many. I thank the brave men and women who serve each and every day, their families and
particularly the advocates who have fought for a good outcome for those they're serving and those in the communities they're dealing with. We mourn with them for the tragic loss of their loved ones.

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

DOCUMENTS

Presentation

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Leader of the House) (15:29): Documents are tabled in accordance with the list circulated to honourable members earlier today. Full details of the documents will be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings.

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORTS

Reports Nos 17 to 24 of 2019-20

The SPEAKER (15:29): I present the Auditor-General's Audit reports Nos 17 to 24 for 2019-20. Details of the reports will be included in the Votes and Proceedings.

Ordered that the reports be made parliamentary papers.

PRIVILEGE

The SPEAKER (15:29): On 5 December last year the honourable member for Watson, the Manager of Opposition Business, raised as a matter of privilege whether in statements made to the House the honourable member for Hume had misled the House such as to constitute contempt of the House. The member for Watson tabled a number of related documents. I have examined these as well as his statement to the House, and I am satisfied the member has raised the matter at the earliest opportunity. I note that the member for Watson referenced the honourable member for Hindmarsh as having referred to the Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests a separate matter about the member for Hume's obligations in relation to the registration of members' interest.

Deliberately misleading the House is one of the matters that can be found to be a contempt. While claims that members have deliberately misled the House have been raised as matters of privilege or contempt on a number of occasions, no Speaker has ever given precedence to allow such a matter to be referred as of right to the Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests. To establish that the contempt has been committed, it would need to be shown that: (1) a statement had in fact need misleading; (2) the member knew at the time the statement was incorrect; and (3) the misleading had been deliberate. In relation to the question of a matter being a contempt, I note also that it must meet the test of section 4 of the Parliamentary Privileges Act 1987 and be conduct that is intended or likely to amount to an improper interference with the free exercise by the House of its authority or functions, or with the free performance by a member of the member's duties. There needs to be prima facie evidence of these aspects to establish a case for the precedence to be given to a motion.

I have considered the information provided by the honourable member for Watson. I understand that this matter is surrounded by differing views. However, the matter of deliberately misleading the House is a very serious one and rightly there should be prima facie evidence that the House has been misled, and that the misleading has been deliberate. As it does not seem that a prima facie case has been made out in terms of the detail that Speakers have always required in relation to such allegations, it then follows that in accordance with the practice of the House, precedence as of right to a motion for this matter to be referred to the Committee of Privileges and Members' Interests cannot be given.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Morrison Government

The SPEAKER (15:32): I have received a letter from the honourable the Leader of the Opposition proposing that a definite matter of public importance be submitted to the House for discussion, namely:

The failure of the Government to provide leadership.

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

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

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (15:32): Everyone knows that this has been a summer of disaster. For the Prime Minister and this government, though, it's been a summer of complacency. It's been one where their arrogance and their hubris has been on full display before the Australian people, one in which the Prime Minister refuses to ever admit that he made a mistake, one in which facts are twisted to suit the Prime Minister's own political position, one in which the Prime Minister has been exposed as an ad man without a plan—without a plan for the nation's economy, without a plan for the bushfire crisis, without a plan for social
advancement, without a plan for this nation's future and, certainly, with no plan for energy and no plan to deal with the challenge of climate change.

The fact is that, on this government's watch, economic growth has slowed since the coalition came to office, productivity growth has halved from 2.2 to 1.1 per cent and wages growth is now the worst on record. Those opposite, presiding over an economy that is flatlining, have no strategy to lift the economy, no strategy to boost jobs and no strategy to boost wages. They think that if they just get out of the way the market will sort it out all out. Well, what the market is doing is having more casualisation, less security in the workplace, more fly-in fly-out jobs and fewer secure jobs. People working next door to each other doing the same job are being paid sometimes $50,000 or $60,000 less than the person they're working next to. They have no plan to deal with enterprise bargaining in our wages systems. They have no plan for the country's future. They have no plan to support business. Business investment is down by 20 per cent since the Liberals and the Nationals came to office. It's now at its lowest level since the 1990s recession.

This summer Australians came to realise that the Prime Minister isn't the man he pretends to be. And it's not like he wasn't warned. Way back in 2008, the Garnaut report said:

Recent projections of fire weather suggest that fire seasons will start earlier, end slightly later, and generally be more intense. This effect increases over time, but should be directly observable by 2020.

We know that the fire chiefs tried to meet with the Prime Minister and that he treated them with contempt. What would they know? Just hundreds of years of experience. We know the Department of Home Affairs produced a national disaster risk reduction framework in 2018 that said:

However, with the driver of a changing climate there is growing potential for some natural hazards to occur at unimaginable scales, in unprecedented combinations and in unexpected locations.

They ignored it completely.

In November we wrote to the Prime Minister with eight practical suggestions—not playing politics but putting forward constructive ideas like, 'How about there be a national approach?' Bushfires don't recognise state boundaries, nor should this approach. What we had from the government and from the Prime Minister day after day, week after week, month after month was: 'This is a state issue. It's not our fault.' He said—remember those words?—'I don't hold a fire hose.' We had a circumstance whereby he was simply missing in action when it came to what was required. He was complacent throughout it all. He wrote back saying, 'Don't worry, we'll get COAG to meet should the need arise.' Bear in mind we'd already had Queensland fires, North Coast fires and Mid Coast fires. The Gospers Mountain fire was already off and running. We had fires throughout this country, across different states, and we had no national leadership.

Today in question time we spoke of the measures we called for: the call-out for and support for increased involvement of our Defence Force; increased aerial firefighting, a capacity that we took to the last election in accordance with the recommendations of the experts; a national approach; a disaster plan being updated; climate change mitigation and adaptation measures, the support that we called for on an ecological audit about the impact on our native animals; and the support we called for on mental health. On all of these, it took weeks and months before the government finally acted. The truth is: if Scott Morrison had been captain of the Titanic, he would have been the first person into the lifeboats after it hit the iceberg. And then he would have denied that there was an iceberg! Indeed, if 'Captain Morrison' had been asked by anyone about the iceberg, he would have disagreed with the premise of the question. And then he would have said that the iceberg was unsourced gossip. And then he would have said that it was an editorial. And then he would have said that it wasn't an iceberg; it was just a bubble that you could just go through.

That's what we saw today in question time, whether it was about the bushfire crisis, whether it was about the sorry sports rort saga where we had the corruption of a program—the Auditor-General's report is very, very clear. It says that decisions were based upon the marginality of seats and that they were political decisions not based upon merit. Today in question time we asked the Prime Minister a very simple question—it was asked twice: could he say that the projects were funded based on merit? Instead we got obfuscation—all the usual nonsense. This is a Prime Minister who cannot answer a straight question. He is someone who thinks that Liberal-National party money is the same as taxpayers' money. They have gone out there and thrown Bridget McKenzie under the bus but they are still defending this scheme. The member for Brisbane did quite well out of it, in his seat. The member for Longman announced that the Prime Minister made a strategic decision, along with the secretariat, about the $500,000 that went to the club up in his area that he is a member of. We had Georgina Downer, not even a member of this place, with a big cheque with a photo on it, and her name, as if it was her money. We had the rugby club get money for women's change rooms—they didn't have any women!—and the AFL club down the road, in the member of Kingston electorate, not get money. We had clubs that rated 98 out of 100 not get funding.
The fact is that this government, wherever they are, just act on politics. We asked today about the political advertisement that was done at the height of the bushfire crisis. The Prime Minister made an announcement—and what were the instincts of his office? 'Let's do an ad. Let's use all the military facilities that we can. Let's have photos of warships. Let's have music. And let's link it to a donation box for the Liberal Party!' And on that day the Prime Minister couldn't pick up the phone to Shane Fitzsimmons and tell him that this was happening—the same person who could pick up the phone to the New South Wales Police Commissioner over his mate Angus Taylor, who remains on the front bench. And Bridget McKenzie must wonder how she is not on the front bench but the member for Hume is still there.

This is a government that is characterised by its arrogance. It is characterised by its sole purpose being to look after its own interest, not the national interest. This government is always behind even when it does something good like it has done today on the issue of veterans affairs months after Labor called for just such an initiative and for action in this area. This is a government that is arrogant and complacent. It has been involved in a victory tour since May last year. They don't have a plan for the economy. They don't have a plan for climate change. They don't have a plan for the ongoing bushfire crisis. They just have a plan for day-to-day internal management of their crises. And that's why they can't act on climate change. You've got a Deputy Prime Minister who just today has done an interview in which he once again denies the human link with climate change. So they can't act. This is a government that is not worthy of staying in office. (Time expired)

Mr GEE (Calare—Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister) (15:42): How bizarre it is that those opposite come into this place and lecture this House on leadership. These are the same people who took an uncosted emissions policy to the last federal election. These are the same people who carried out a shameless attack on the retirees of this nation and tried to spirit away their savings. These are the same people who sold working Australians down the river in a naive bid to pander to inner-city voters while turning their backs on working Australians and working families. You turned your backs on the mining communities and told them you wanted to put them all out of a job. You turned your backs on the power workers of Australia. And you dare to come into this place and lecture us on leadership!

There is one thing on which I do agree with the Leader of the Opposition, and that is that this has been a very uncertain time for our nation. We've had the tragedy and destruction of these bushfires, the coronavirus and, of course, the debilitating and devastating effects of this drought. On all of these issues, this government and the Prime Minister have shown leadership.

Many parts of my electorate of Calare are reeling under the effects of these bushfires. They have swept from Clarence to Lithgow, up the Castlereagh Highway, through to Ilford, Running Stream into the Bylong Valley. We've seen large amounts of federal funding go into the bushfire fight and the relief effort; and there has been state and community funding as well, which has been gratefully received. But one form of assistance that has been particularly well received has been the involvement of the Australian Defence Force. I'll elaborate on what they're doing in my part of the world shortly, but I just want to give the House a bit of background about how they came to be in our area and many others around Australia. Before Christmas it became clear to me and others in our area that, as this emergency continued and resources became increasingly stretched, more help was going to be needed in terms of logistics and also actual firefighting, because we were asking so much of our volunteers and they were stretched to breaking point. I was at the Ilford hall one night during the RFS shift change. The fireys were there having a meal and I was having a coffee, and we were talking about what was needed. It was a pretty long list. It included things like more hazard reduction burning in national parks. They were talking about having to wade through leaf litter that was knee-high. They wanted the national parks opened up. At the moment they're all padlocked; you can't get into them. The fireys want fire trails cleared and maintained, which is not happening at the moment.

But they also said that you can see how tired our volunteers are, and wouldn't it be great to have some ADF assistance out here? They wanted it in terms of logistics but also for the firefighting role, and I'll come to that in a minute. As I sat there in the Ilford hall, amongst our wonderful volunteers, I asked, 'Would you like me to invite the PM to look at it?' And they said, 'Yes, we'd like to talk to him.' I told them they could tell him firsthand what they needed, and they said that would be great. So, I did. I contacted the PM's office and asked his staff if they could please invite the PM to Ilford, because we'd like to see him. I also spoke to Captain Matthew Maude, who is the captain out at Ilford, and he was very keen to get the ADF involved in all manner of assistance in our area. Matthew Maude personified leadership through this crisis. He worked himself to the point of exhaustion. He led his team. He led his community. If those opposite want an example of leadership, well, Matthew Maude is your man there.

The Prime Minister did turn up, to his credit. He came to Ilford and he spoke directly to Captain Matthew Maude, and we both said to him, 'Prime Minister, we do really need the ADF out here, not only for logistical
support but also for firefighting.' Matthew Maude could not have made it clearer. We both knew—we all knew—that there was an issue with New South Wales actually requesting ADF assistance. I was aware of that, and so were the RFS members. And Matthew Maude and I both said to the Prime Minister, 'Can you have a chat to New South Wales and get them to agree, because we really need some help out here as this thing goes on and on and on.' The Prime Minister listened, and do you know what happened then?

On 4 January, the compulsory call-out occurred. This is what appeared on the New South Wales RFS Ilford/Running Stream Brigade website after the call-out: 'Well, he did listen, and look what is happening. Great to see. Even if our fire is now contained, it now is set in history, so for anything moving forward, this will happen.' And they were grateful for that announcement. Then, two days after that, the Army arrived on the ground at Ilford. So the Prime Minister, to his credit, came to Ilford and listened and delivered the ADF. It's fair to say that we don't often get Black Hawks at Ilford—or anywhere else in our area. So, that was an experience, but it was great to see the Prime Minister there and listening.

They've been clearing fence lines in the Ilford and Running Stream area. We've lost so much in terms of pastures and fence lines, and the ADF's been there clearing fence lines so that farmers can get the stock back inside the fences and off the roads. They've also been clearing trees on private property. Up at Clarence and Dargan, the community said very clearly at a bushfire recovery meeting that they need the ADF to get involved in tree clearing, because these trees are burnt out and there's a danger that they're going to fall down and kill people. It's a huge issue, besides the fencing. And the ADF got up there to Clarence and Dargan, and we had community members organising these lists of people who need the assistance. They've been out there felling those trees. The local councils have been working with them. They send in a team of arborists to identify what trees need to come down and then they go around and take down the trees that are in danger of falling on fence lines and also buildings. That work has been crucial. So that's leadership: getting the help to where it's needed.

The fireys in my area—and I put out the call myself. I put it out on social media before Christmas: 'We need the ADF out here.' To his credit, the Prime Minister not only came out but listened in the heat, the dust and the wind of Ilford. He took on board what they were saying and he delivered the ADF. And that's leadership. I was very pleased to hear that we've got the royal commission that has been announced. That's leadership too. I want that royal commission to look at all the causes of these fires. Did we get the fireys in there early enough to put them out when they started, like at Gospers Mountain? We want it to look at things like hazard reduction. We want it to look at all aspects of the emergency, like how we can make things better and the things that went right. Getting that royal commission in here is leadership. We're talking about a very serious issue here, and yet it's all about the politics for them.

I'd like to see that royal commission come to our area, because I want the royal commission to hear our stories from our people who are out there on the front lines. I want them to hear the experiences of those fireys—Matthew Maude and Captain Richardson from Glen Alice. I want the royal commission to hear those stories so that we don't have to go through this again. In terms of the ADF, wouldn't it be great if we could get a recommendation that ADF personnel be trained in firefighting so that our senior fireys, some of whom are probably in their 80s, don't have to go day in, day out, knocking themselves out in goat-and-goanna country, fighting fires for the rest of the community? Wouldn't it be great if we could get them some relief? That's leadership, and it was delivered by the Prime Minister on both counts. He got the ADF here—he knocked the heads together and got them here—and also has that royal commission.

We've also had the Prime Minister out in Blayney recently on the drought, and we can't overlook that. We need to make sure that, despite this national effort on the bushfire emergency and recovery, our drought-hit communities are not overlooked. The Prime Minister came to Blayney just a few days ago and he heard firsthand from farmers what they are experiencing. He listened to them. He was out there delivering more help for local councils, looking at our Drought Communities Program and the great work that's happening.

If those opposite want an example of leadership, look to those who are delivering it, but don't come into this place with phony and bogus arguments about who is doing what or who isn't doing what when their track record is absolutely appalling. (Time expired)

Mr CONROY (Shortland) (15:52): It's clear that the member is just continuing his very moving condolence motion from yesterday. It was a very weak defence of the Prime Minister. He didn't focus on the MPI at all. The MPI concerns the government's failure to provide leadership. It's a failure which permeates this government and it's a failure which comes from the top, from the man who occupies the office of Prime Minister but who does not understand the responsibilities of that office—a man who has not displayed any of the characteristics of leadership, like honesty, empathy, respect or integrity. It is a failure of leadership that is no more evident than in the Prime Minister's approach to the bushfire crisis and his approach to the wider climate change crisis.
Australians know a failure of leadership when they see it. That's why Australians had such a visceral reaction when this Prime Minister was missing in action when it came to the bushfires. Prime Minister Morrison said aloha to Australia at the height of one of its biggest peacetime emergencies. He said aloha to leadership and aloha to the responsibilities of his office. Australians were fighting to protect their homes, their neighbours and their communities, and that's why they responded so angrily when this Prime Minister finally came home with the demeanour of a petulant toddler: resentful, belligerent, complaining and clearly begrudging the responsibilities of his office.

Australians know a lack of leadership when they see it. They know it wasn't leadership to refuse to even meet with the coalition of emergency leaders last year to listen to their advice about the risk of catastrophic bushfires. It is not leadership to force a young pregnant woman to shake your hand at Cobargo. It's not leadership to stand by as your National Party crony assaults that young woman. It's not leadership to then claim you had a conversation with the young woman in question. It is not leadership to force an exhausted firefighter to shake your hand. It is not leadership to politicise the ADF in a Liberal Party ad. It's certainly not leadership to fundraise for the Liberal Party off the tragedies of the fire. What a grubby, grubby effort. It's not leadership to go to Kangaroo Island and claim that no-one died when two people tragically died fighting those fires. It's not leadership to background against state governments while the nation is on fire. It's certainly not leadership to let the National Party conduct a public brawl on a day of national commemoration for the bushfires. It is not leadership to allow your party room to again push for inaction on climate change. It is not leadership to allow senators like Jim Molan to deny the science of climate change on national television. It's certainly not leadership to claim that we'll meet our emissions reduction targets when we'll only be 0.3 per cent below 2000 levels this year and only 4.7 per cent below 2000 levels in 2030.

The truth is that the Prime Minister hasn't got the courage to fight the climate deniers in his own party room. He hasn't got the courage to fight for action on climate change and to provide leadership on this critical issue, because he stands for nothing but himself. He is the ultimate chameleon of politics, lacking in values, honesty, integrity and courage, and only standing up for his own narrow interests. You've seen that in the sports rorts affair, an affair we saw on display today, where he refused to admit that he handed out money for purely political gains, where 73 per cent of the projects approved in round 3 were not recommended by Sports Australia. You've seen that in the disgraceful Building Better Regions program, where 94 per cent of the projects went to coalition seats or coalition targeted seats. As a regional MP, as a member with councils who are desperate for capital finance to support projects, I say: shame! What a disgrace.

We have a leader who will change electorates to get a seat. We've got a leader who will change footy teams for political advantage. We've got a leader who was sacked from Tourism Australia. We've got a leader who will blow up at any opportunity. No wonder this government lacks leadership. What was the lesson he said he learnt during his press conference today? That he needed to show up. That was the one lesson he had learnt from this entire crisis, that a leader needs to show up. We'd get that answer out of a four-year-old, let alone the Prime Minister. What a farce. What an empty suit. When we needed a national leader during an unprecedented crisis, we instead got Scotty from marketing. What a disgrace.

Mr TIM WILSON (Goldstein) (15:57): When I looked at this matter of public importance, I thought to myself: what is going through the minds of the opposition? They're literally consulting Twitter based arguments now; opposition via Twitter is their approach. They literally had someone in their leader's office who was such a genius that they turned around and thought, 'We'll do a motion saying they don't show any leadership.' They thought it was so brilliant, so clever. It went through the brains trust of genius that they turned around and thought, 'We'll do a motion saying they don't show any leadership.'

Let's look at the leadership that this government provides. Look at the resilience of the Australian economy. It doesn't happen by accident and it certainly doesn't happen under a Labor government. It happens because you have leaders in positions of responsibility—the Prime Minister and the Treasurer—leading the economic debate to make sure we are in the best position to steward the Australian economy to deliver for the Australian people. We know the context that we're now in. We've obviously had a significant drought that continues to put great pressure on one of our chief primary industry exports, the agriculture sector. Yes, we've had fires, and we know every day that that's having an impact on small and regional towns, on the tourism sector, on forestry and on retail as well as many of the other important and critical industries that support our country. And, of course, we have the coronavirus at the same time, which, again, is impacting our tourism and our education sectors.
Against all of those challenges, the Australian economy remains strong because we have come to this parliament, and over the term of this government and in previous terms of government in this parliament—

Dr Mulino interjecting—

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hogan):** The member for Fraser is warned!

**Mr TIM WILSON:** and provided the budget strength that this country needs. We've done so not by accident, but because we've done exactly the opposite of what the opposition has put forward to the Australian people. We have gone to the Australian people and said, 'We want to cut taxes, so we can put money in people's hip pockets, so they can go and spend, so they can create jobs in small businesses across our great country, because we have an economy built from the citizen and the enterprise up.' What was their alternative? Their alternative was to turn around to Australians and say the solution to the economy was themselves: 'I know! We'll just hoard more money in our hip pockets and we'll spend it because we in Canberra somehow have a better idea how to govern this country and run business and grow jobs.' That is the fallacy at the heart of the opposition and their policy agenda. It's the exact opposite of how you build a strong economy. It's a type of leadership—I won't argue it—but it's a leadership to wreck an economy, and wreck the opportunities and prosperity of this great nation.

Now, the fundamentals of the Australian economy are strong. We have high employment levels. We have low welfare dependency. We've done an enormous amount in making sure we have an export oriented and competitive economy. But these things do not happen by accident. The strength and the opportunity that comes from that is that we have a budget position where we're able to turn around in times of crisis, just like we have now, and put money on the table for those who are in need and to assist today those regional and rural communities that are doing it tough. We'll help them rebuild, stimulate the local businesses and create the jobs that have been lost.

We're looking to the future for what we can do in expanding our trade opportunities to the world. Under the UK free trade agreement that we're going to negotiate with a post-Brexit Britain—a great moment for all countries around the world—we're going to create the opportunities that have been lost in the past because of the UK's absorption into the European Union.

When I saw this motion was the matter of public importance for today, I just shook my head. When you think about the intellectual thought that went on behind it—it reminded me of a moment in the debate between Walter Mondale and Ronald Reagan in 1984. They threw out all sorts of attacks, and Reagan just had to turn around and make the simple point: in endorsing his strategic defence plan, his long track record was to vote against it at every step of the way and Mondale would be standing in the sea. That's where the opposition stands—in the sea of irrelevance and absent ideas.

**Dr MIKE KELLY (Eden-Monaro) (16:03):** It's the job of the opposition to hold the government to account; that's what this democracy is all about. There is no more important issue to keep accountable than the issue of leadership, particularly the role of the Prime Minister. Obviously the Prime Minister has control over the fates of the Australian Defence Force, for example—men and women whom we expect to spend months and years, over the course of a career, away from their families—and so it was particularly shocking when we saw the way that this disaster season has been handled in that respect.

The position of the Prime Minister is to set moral standards, to set the technical leadership that the country needs. All of us in this place are elected to challenge the bullshit artists and the ratbags out there who misguide, mislead and misinform the public, particularly in this day and age when all the forms of social media make that such a difficult challenge.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hogan):** The Assistant Minister for Community Housing, Homelessness and Community Services on a point of order?

**Mr Howarth:** It's unparliamentary language. Please, think of another word.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Yes, I think it's a good point of order by the minister. I ask the member for Eden-Monaro to withdraw.

**Dr MIKE KELLY:** I withdraw. The bottom line is that there is a challenge out there right now to make sure that the right information is out there, and not to pile on the garbage we've heard about arson attacks. The fire that started in Eden-Monaro on 26 November, at the North Black Range, was started by dry lightning, and the firestorms that are generated in these megadisasters create their own thunderstorms and further dry lightning, which light further fires. It is not arson attacks and it is not hazard reduction that have created this megadisaster. Hazard reduction has a role to play. It's issues like that that the Prime Minister needs to take a lead on in making sure that the right information is out there.

I've been greatly disappointed by what we've seen in the regional joint infrastructure program rorts. I had to write to the Audit Office to get that looked into and their report was scathing. Of course, that's been followed up.
now by the community sports rorts report from the Audit Office, and added to that is what we've seen in the council drought assistance program. For a long time now I've been saying just look up the New South Wales DPI map on the website. Most of Eden-Monaro is in severe drought. And now I can't get Yass Valley, I can't get Queanbeyan, I can't get Palerang and I can't get Eurobodalla that assistance which they richly deserve. Why not? Why are we ignoring the standards that New South Wales DPI has set? It has to be the basis of this political decision-making that we've seen in these other programs.

What I'm deeply disappointed about, going to the fire response situation, is it seems to have been treated as a marketing exercise and not a disaster response. I can't imagine the John Curtin cabinet in 1941 when Pearl Harbour was attacked saying, 'Quick, grab Russel Howcroft.' This is a situation where you had fireys and experts out there wanting to talk to the Prime Minister and being stiff-armed. We needed to talk to the experts. We needed an earlier fire response. We needed the Prime Minister, the defence minister and the emergency minister of New South Wales. We needed them here.

I've known since I first came into this parliament in 2007 that in Eden-Monaro I can't leave the borders during the disaster season. I never go on leave during that period. We needed the Prime Minister to be on deck and he responded too slowly.

We also saw a disgraceful politicisation of the ADF in using that political video. You don't have to listen to us. You don't have to take our word for it. The Australia Defence Association—not exactly a hotbed of communism—said:

… milking ADF support to civil agencies fighting bushfires is a clear breach of the (reciprocal) non-partisanship convention applying to both the ADF & Ministers/MPs.

This was clearly for party political advantage.

Of course we've had the reference to the manhandling, effectively, of Zoey Salucci-McDermott. She refused her consent to shake hands. The Prime Minister grabbed her arm and shook her hand, and then to compound that he turned his back and walked away. I know all the members in this House deal with tough moments with their constituents and you have to stand there and cop it. You have to stand there and listen. I was just shocked that he turned his back on her and walked away. That's going to be the emblem.

I make these points because the Prime Minister can either have the rest of his time categorised, classified and defined by those images in this disaster or he can change the narrative. He can show the leadership we need on issues like climate change. He can get out there and recast himself and respond to my request to reach out across this chamber, or he will forever be captured by those photographs, forever be condemned for his attitude and for the leadership that he didn't show. I'd just ask him to look across the seas to Jacinda Ardern, who during this very week that he exercised this failure was passing bipartisan legislation setting zero carbon emissions targets for 2050—(Time expired)

Mr HASTIE (Canning) (16:08): The opposition today have chosen a rather childish topic. It is quite disappointing. The member for Shortland got up earlier and just sprayed the chamber with utterings from Twitter like a malfunctioning Russian bot. It was disappointing to listen to, but given his limitations, and the limitations of those of those opposite, we can't be too hard on them. They have, after all, raised the important subject of leadership. So it gives me and my colleagues great pleasure this afternoon to discuss the leadership shown by this government, particularly in veterans and defence policy.

Leadership is ultimately defined by what you do, and today was the announcement of a National Commissioner for Defence and Veteran Suicide Prevention, the announcement of an independent review of past Defence Force and veteran suicides—tragically 419 lives have been lost between 2001 and 2017—and the announcement of a veteran family advocate to consult with the veteran community and always keep veteran families at the centre of the policy that we make in this place.

The Prime Minister today referred to the words that adorn many RSLs across this great country. He said, in question time, 'eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.' They are beautiful words and they are a reminder to all of us here that we can't take our security or our freedom for granted, particularly when so many Australians lives have been lost in previous wars—60,000 in World War I. We need to remember this truth. But the PM extended its meaning beyond the direct meaning of always being ready to defend ourselves with violence if necessary. He meant also the threats within our society. Suicide is an enduring challenge and threat to many young Australians. I've been touched by suicide myself. I lost my cousin three years ago to it. It's a terrible, terrible thing and it is incredibly damaging to families. Too many veterans have taken their lives over the last 20 years and beyond.

So this government is acting. After a long period of consultation with members of this government and the opposition, the Prime Minister today announced those three things that I mentioned earlier. But the process itself has demonstrated a high calibre of leadership. The Prime Minister, the defence minister and the Minister for
Veterans and Defence Personnel have been consultative, they have listened and they have sought to understand perspectives from the bottom up. I recall the Prime Minister's roundtable where the relevant ministers were present, numerous members of our backbench, the CDF, people from the department. We even had family members affected by suicide sitting around the table discussing this very important issue. Now in the new year, we've come to a point where we've found a policy solution and we're moving forward.

So the national commissioner with the authority, powers similar to that of a standing royal commission, including the power to compel evidence and summon witnesses, is a great change. That national commissioner will act as an unblinking eye, a check and balance against the failings of the Department of Veterans' Affairs. All of us here have had emails from veterans who've been deeply frustrated by their experience, so I welcome this. It is all good and well to have a royal commission but this is an enduring, institutional change. Everyone here should be welcoming that on behalf of our veteran community. I also welcome the review. We do need understand the data. We do need to understand why young veterans and serving members are taking their lives, so a comprehensive look at the last 400 or so suicides and understanding why people have taken that tragic step of taking their lives is very, very important.

Finally, the veteran family advocate is really important and I welcome it. Defence does a great job of looking after their families. My family was once a Defence family and I can recall, happily, my time in Defence and particularly the way Defence cared for our family. But once you leave Defence, it can't just stop there. That's why the addition of a veteran family advocate who will undertake engagement, liaison and advocacy across the veteran sector is such a welcome addition to this government response.

In closing, the Prime Minister has demonstrated leadership, the Minister for Defence has demonstrated leadership, the Minister for Veterans and Defence Personnel has demonstrated leadership, and this government has demonstrated leadership.

Ms TEMPLEMAN (Macquarie) (16:13): If ever there was a time for someone to step up and lead this nation it was the spring and summer of 2019-20. In fact, that is exactly what happened. But it wasn't the Prime Minister who led. The Prime Minister created a vacuum and that was even before he decided to escape the smoke and disappear to Hawaii. He left the vacuum. We all know that there is a vacuum, someone will fill it and they did. Let's look at a few of them. Greg Mullins, the former New South Wales fire chief and other fire chiefs, with their hundreds of years of experience, stepped up. They stepped up nearly a year ago. They had used their perspective to identify that we may have been under-prepared for a potentially dangerous and disastrous fire season. They were concerned about the capacity of emergency services to cope. They were concerned about the number of firefighting aerial facilities that we had. And they were concerned about our reliance on volunteers. They saw there was a need for things to change. They showed leadership.

I heard my colleague the member for Eden-Monaro yesterday acknowledge that during these fires the leader of the National Party reached out to him and I have to say that the new National Party deputy stepped up and reached out to me. I think leadership means being willing to set aside self-interest and partisan politics to be able to address the very real issues that people face. Now, I'm not going to pretend that those problems have been solved yet, but the member for Maranoa was able to do something the Prime Minister and others have been incapable of, and that was to rise above party politics. That's leadership. Equally, our own leader, the member for Grayndler, ditched the politics and stood side by side with people to hear about their experiences with these fires, as firefighters and as survivors. It would have been easy—so easy—to simply attack the Prime Minister for his failures. But instead we had a consistent, constructive voice. Our leader offered workable solutions and a willingness to welcome positive steps by the government, slow and small as they were. Yet that was never acknowledged. I was very grateful that he understood, joined me and stood side by side with people as they went through possibly the most horrific fire season of their lives. That's leadership.

At a local level, many others showed leadership. Mayors and state and federal members of parliament in fire-affected areas joined together, irrespective of politics, to support their communities. Many of them did this while their homes were under threat or their family members were facing their own personal fire traumas. They put their communities' interests ahead of their own. That's leadership. Our emergency services personnel showed leadership. They focused on the job and they did not seek to glorify their role. That's leadership.

But the Prime Minister failed on every one of these measures. It extends to his inability to take responsibility for anything, his lack of judgement, his errors and his ignorance. The sort of thing we teach our children is that you have to own your mistakes. You have to accept responsibility and you have to be honest about it. The Prime Minister has failed on all those measures.

I think one of the saddest things was the day the ad came out, when finally we had some action from the government to support our firefighters with ADF support and with additional firefighting capacity. But the first
thing that we saw of that was a flash ad linked to the Liberal Party donations page—that on a day when many people were facing catastrophic conditions, when ember maps were showing huge swathes of New South Wales potentially under attack. We got an ad; that really says it all.

The sad thing is of course that we need leadership from the Prime Minister urgently. We can't afford to sit around and wait for another leader to come along—although, who knows, we may not be waiting that long! Our need for leadership by this Prime Minister is urgent, and the thing he needs to lead on is action on climate change. He and Australia could show the world that we have learned from this summer. So let's be clear: this Prime Minister hasn't been missing in action just over spring and summer; he was missing long before then. It's his character that has failed us. It's who he is, and we really shouldn't expect—(Time expired)

Mr SIMMONDS (Ryan) (16:18): Well, it's a new year, isn't it, but it's not a new approach from the Australian Labor Party. It's a new parliamentary sitting week, but still they are focused on themselves. We know that this summer has been a season of challenges and crisis, but the Labor opposition opposite can't get over their own crisis, which was their loss in May. Still they are trying to re-litigate it. Still they are trying to delegitimise the decision that was made by Australians just last May.

What the government did in its response and continues to do in the bushfire crisis and in the coronavirus issue was all about supporting our fellow Australians—protecting our fellow Australians. It's being there in their time of need. Nobody seeks to take these actions to get credit or to grandstand on them. But, given the attacks of the Labor opposition, I'm not going to stand here and allow them to rewrite history. I'm not going to stand here and allow the crass and political characterisations that they are trying to make. Leadership is about this—

Opposition members interjecting—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hogan): The member for Jagajaga and the member for Dunkley are both warned.

Mr SIMMONDS: Australians know that leadership is doing everything it takes to support their fellow Australians in their time of need. That's exactly what the Prime Minister and this government have done over the summer, what we have done since May and what we will continue to do. The Labor members opposite referenced some Twitter moments, because that's where they get their leadership from. What policy would they have done differently? I haven't heard them mention any of that.

Ms Thwaites interjecting—

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

Mr SIMMONDS: Would they not have offered the $50 million in immediate assistance for bushfire victims like the PM did? Would they not have made our first national compulsory call out of reservists to help bushfire-affected communities like the PM did? Would they not be now working with the states to get the learnings of the last summer exactly as the PM is doing? In fact, what they tried to do during question time today was take retrospective credit for those decisions. We know that it was the PM and this government that showed the leadership to take those actions during the summer.

It has been a time when there have been issues which have challenged our fellow Australians. It has been a time when the government was focused on getting Australians who were doing it tough the assistance and support they needed. In fact, it was only today that we announced a national and permanent rolling commission into the issue of veterans' suicide, a heartbreaking issue affecting veterans, their families and their communities. There are so many issues, including the drought and others, that require the full attention of this House and the full attention of every member of the House. What was Labor focused on today in the face of these issues? It was focused on politicking the bushfire crisis we've just had. That's what we saw from the Leader of the Opposition today in question time. He tried to take credit retrospectively for the decisions and the leadership that the PM and the government have made over the last few months.

Not only are the PM and the government showing leadership when it comes to issues where we need to support our fellow Australians, they're doing it on economic management too. We as a government know that if you don't show leadership on economic resilience then you can't be there to support your fellow Australians when they really need it. That is where it is chalk and cheese between this government and the Labor opposition. Employment growth is more than three times what we inherited from Labor. We are one of only 10 developed nations in the world to retain a AAA credit rating. There have been more than 1.5 million jobs created for our fellow Australians, above and beyond what Labor ever managed to achieve. There has been a balanced budget after years of Labor deficit so that when our fellow Australians needed our support, we could be there with the financial assistance that they needed.
Mrs PHILLIPS (Gilmore) (16:23): I don't know what the Prime Minister is talking about. He does not care about Gilmore. He flew into Nowra to do a press conference and then he flew right out again. He is a fly-in fly-out PM. He didn't even take the time to visit my fire impacted communities. I've spent every day since early December talking with people impacted by fire in my electorate. They have many stories to tell, and the common theme in all of these stories is that this government has plain and simply failed to provide the leadership, the guidance and, most important of all, the help that people need to recover from this crisis.

Last week, when I was in Batemans Bay, I stopped in to speak to Joe in Batheaven. Joe is a well-known local real estate agent. People know Joe and they rely on Joe. For weeks people have relied on Joe to navigate the complex system of assistance that has dripped through over the last few months. Joe told me how people have been going into his office because they are so afraid of Centrelink that they come in shaking. People who, as I said yesterday, have been through hell on earth are left shaking at the thought of calling Centrelink. One 87-year-old lady was told by the staff at the call centre that she wasn't eligible for any help and that she would need to 'go up a ladder' to take down her curtains if they were so smoked damaged. This poor lady was so distressed she was convinced the police were going to come after her just for asking. So Joe has sat by their side and helped walk them through the process so they can access their thousand-dollar payment from the government. Joe has heard their stories and knows how much they are all suffering. They have already been through hell and now they're dealing with the second round. Joe's rental manager, Michelle, told me how she had spent her entire day refunding holiday rentals because of cancellations—hundreds of cancellations worth thousands of dollars. When all day long you see people coming in, shaking and crying and telling you heartbreaking stories and then you have to process hundreds of cancelled bookings knowing this will only make things worse—that is a tough pill to swallow.

When Senator Murray Watt, shadow minister for disaster and emergency management, came to the South Coast recently, we met with a group of local tourism operators. They were from places like Berry, Kangaroo Valley and Jervis Bay, areas that were not necessarily directly impacted by fire, at least by the government's definition, but who have seen a 70 to 80 per cent decrease in their income since December. What some people may not be aware of is that, during the height of the bushfire crisis, a tourist leave zone was issued. It was absolutely necessary and appropriate for the situation, no question there. But the leave zone extended from Nowra all the way to the Victorian border—14,000 square kilometres off limits at the height of the tourism season. The key thing that these tourism operators had to say was this: 'The government told people very loudly to leave, but they're not telling them very loudly to come back. And if they don't start we will not survive.'

That day, while in Burrill Lake with Murray, we enjoyed some amazing fish and chips from the famous fish shop—something I highly recommend. And I have been spreading that message far and wide ever since. But, to put it bluntly, this simply will not be enough to stop local businesses from going under. It has already started. When I was in Batemans Bay I was told about six stores that had closed their doors. Where is the government? What action are they taking to stop these businesses from going under and to help people who have been through the trauma of the bushfires only to be left broke and broken?

Businesses in my electorate did not have the 16 days it took for this government to open applications for their small business loans. They need more help than a loan can provide, and they need it now. Where is the tourism campaign? Where are the grants and stimulus to get people back to the South Coast? Where is the leadership from the Prime Minister to respond quickly to this crisis? The fly-in fly-out Prime Minister needs to come and meet with local businesses on the South Coast, but he'd better do it soon because, if he waits too long, there may not be any left.

Ms LIU (Chisholm) (16:28): I would like to thank the member for Grayndler for giving us the opportunity to speak about the government's leadership on the issues that matter to everyday Australians. This government is leading the way on many important issues. This government shows leadership on the economy, fire and drought. But I would like to speak about the Morrison government's world-leading response to the coronavirus.

One of the privileges of being a member of this government is seeing firsthand the tireless work of the Prime Minister and his ministerial team. I would like to thank the Prime Minister, Scott Morrison. In these difficult times he has shown exemplary leadership. The first job of any Prime Minister is to ensure that Australians are safe, and this is exactly what the Prime Minister has done. He has taken advice from our top health officers and has made decisive decisions to ensure that every Australian is kept safe. He is responsive when I send him a text about this coronavirus issue; he calls me within minutes. He listened when I told him that people coming back from China would self-isolate and that other people would deliver essential food and other things. He cares, he listens, and he praises them. And he wants me to pass this message to them. He cares so much that he wants to make sure that people affected by the virus know what's going on. He has regular WeChat updates to let people know that they don't need to panic: Australians are in good and safe hands. Australians can go about their day freely, knowing that they are safe from the coronavirus because of the decisions of this government.
I would also like to acknowledge the leadership shown by the Australian foreign minister, Senator the Hon. Marise Payne. Without her tireless work 243 Australians would still be in China, in lockdown. Her actions have made sure that a pregnant woman is safely here with her partner in Australia. I would also like to acknowledge the leadership that Minister Payne has shown in negotiating with the Chinese government to ensure the safe return and the safe assisted departure of people who are locked down in China. I understand that she is also doing the negotiation to help the second lot of people to come back to Australia.

I would not be able to speak on leadership without acknowledging the health minister, the Hon. Greg Hunt. His leadership in these difficult times has been outstanding. He has kept me up to date about the coronavirus on a regular basis, and I want to thank him for that. Not only that, he has also been updating the public through media conferences. People would know exactly what is happening and would know that they don't need to panic. It is a global emergency on health, but Australia is ready.

I would also like to mention the leadership shown by the Minister for Education, the Hon. Dan Tehan. He has been dealing with this matter by helping international students know exactly what they can do. And this is not to mention the work that the Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs and his department have been doing, handling hundreds and thousands of inquiries from visa holders—whether student visas, temporary visas or working visas. There are many concerned people and their families, and these are handled very well by the department.

I just want to say that the Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, and his leadership team have ensured that Australia is well equipped—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hogan): I thank the member. The time for the discussion has concluded.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Mr ZIMMERMAN (North Sydney) (16:33): Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek to make a personal explanation.

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

Mr ZIMMERMAN: I do.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please continue.

Mr ZIMMERMAN: On the last sitting day of 2019, the Manager of Opposition Business raised with the speaker a question in relation to my role as a member of the Speaker's panel in the Federation Chamber during proceedings that day. During his question he suggested I was encouraging government members to move that an opposition member be no longer heard from the chair. This was not the case.

On the occasion in question, a government member was seeking to gain my attention to move a motion. I sought to indicate to the member that to do it properly he would need the call and would need to rise to do so. I was not seeking to direct the member to undertake a particular course of action, but I apologise to the House if any such perception were created.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I thank the member.

COMMITTEES

Economics Committee

Report

Mr TIM WILSON (Goldstein) (16:34): On behalf on the Standing Committee on Economics I present the committee's report entitled Review of the Reserve Bank of Australia annual report 2018, second report, together with the minutes of proceedings.

Report made a parliamentary paper in accordance with standing order 39(e)

Mr TIM WILSON: by leave—After a long period of interest rate stability, the Reserve Bank of Australia lowered the cash rate in June and July 2019 to one per cent. Commenting on the decision to leave rates on hold in August 2019, the governor said the RBA:

… judged that after having moved twice in quick succession it was appropriate to wait and assess developments both internationally and domestically.

These two reductions by the RBA were scrutinised at length at the committee's public hearing on 9 August 2019. The governor said the RBA expects growth in the Australian economy to strengthen gradually, with the RBA's central scenario forecasting GDP growth of around 2.5 per cent over 2019 and 2.75 per cent over 2020. I need to note those were statements at the time. Obviously, events since have raised questions about those projections. This outlook, the governor commented, is being supported by 'the low level of interest rates, recent tax cuts, ongoing...
spending on infrastructure, signs of stabilisation in some housing markets and a brighter outlook for the resources sector.’

However, the governor also identified that Australia is vulnerable to economic headwinds from the global economy, in particular the ongoing trade and technology dispute between the United States and China. The governor remarked that the dispute has disrupted trade flows, resulted in business investments being postponed or reconsidered, increased volatility in financial markets and has increased the likelihood of other central banks reducing their rates.

Inflation remains low in the Australian economy, and underlying inflation has been below two per cent for around three years. CPI inflation was 1.6 per cent in June 2019 and is forecast to lift gradually to around two per cent by 2021.

The governor defended the effectiveness of the RBA’s inflation target, which aims to keep CPI inflation between two and three per cent, on average, over time. He noted that recent inflation data suggests that there has been more spare capacity in the economy than previously thought and the Australian economy can have a lower unemployment rate without producing inflation pressures. Consequently, the RBA has revised down its estimate of the non-accelerating rate of unemployment, or the NAIRU, an indicator of full employment, from five per cent to 4.5 per cent. The governor commented that ‘the economy has generated a huge number of extra jobs, and the employment-to-population ratio has never been higher in Australia than it is right now.’

Despite this, within only three months, the RBA reduced the cash rate further to a historical low of 0.75 per cent in October 2019. Commenting on the decision to keep rates on hold at 0.75 per cent in November 2019, the governor said that the RBA board ‘is prepared to ease monetary policy further if needed to support sustainable growth in the economy, full employment and the achievement of the inflation target over time.’ After three relatively quick reductions in interest rates, the efficacy of monetary policy is being publicly brought into question, including by myself.

In answers to questions on notice to another inquiry, the committee found that, following the June and July interest rate cuts, between 0.4 and seven per cent of the big four banks’ principal and interest mortgage holders actively requested a reduction in their interest repayments. By comparison, the overwhelming majority of customers passively accepted higher principal repayments. This data suggests that the benefits of interest rate cuts according to economic theory are not necessarily being realised in practice.

Similarly, the data also showed that the impact for interest-rate-bearing depositors was immediate and real. While low interest rates may encourage some people to borrow and invest, low rates reduce interest income for others. Many Australians, particularly those relying on interest-bearing deposits for their income, have been negatively affected by persistently low interest rates and further reductions in the cash rate in June, July and October of last year.

The RBA’s rate cuts also sit against a global backdrop where currency effects appear to be a core motivation for monetary policy decisions. As Governor Lowe rightly cautioned foreign central bankers at a conference in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, last year:

… if all central banks ease similarly at around the same time, there is no exchange rate channel: we trade with one another, not with Mars.

The committee will continue to hold the RBA to account, including this Friday at our next hearing, for the effects of its rate decisions on all Australians and the Australian economy, as well as the emerging discussion surrounding unconventional monetary policy options as global interest rates may head towards zero.

During the global financial crisis, the RBA used a form of unconventional monetary policy through expanding the repayment terms of funding for banks to increase liquidity. That decision was made in the face of a temporary liquidity crisis. The challenges facing Australia’s economy today are neither temporary nor as a result of liquidity. The challenges are structural.

If enacted, quantitative easing would be one of the most significant economic decisions made since floating the Australian dollar. We acknowledge and accept the right of the RBA to independently set monetary policy, but this does not render them immune to scrutiny. Monetary policy is currently determined independent of the government and the parliament. The independence of the RBA obliges parliamentarians to scrutinise their decisions on behalf of Australians as part of their core representative function. This justifies heightened scrutiny on the preparation of any measures for consideration by the RBA, the decision pathway for their use, their practical implementation and their efficacy, particularly with unconventional monetary policy.

In answers to questions on notice posed by the committee, the RBA outlined that unconventional monetary policy options range from purchasing government securities to providing longer term funding to banks to support
credit creation to purchasing private-sector assets such as mortgage-backed securities and foreign exchange intervention.

Through speeches and interactions with the media, the RBA has continued to familiarise Australians with its thinking on potential unconventional monetary policy approaches. The practical consequences of these approaches should be considered. Recently, former RBA board member Warwick McKibbin warned that QE is corrosive to capitalism itself through the misallocation of capital and may reduce business investment in innovation, decreasing their long-term viability.

A 2018 study from Wei Cui and Vincent Sterk from the University College London concluded that QE 'come with strong side effects on inequality, which can substantially lower social welfare'. This analysis is backed up by 2018 Congressional Budget Office data, which shows that from the start of the Federal Reserve's QE program until 2014 in the context of it the global financial crisis, average income growth before taxes were stable or declined for low- and middle-income earners while it increased markedly for high-income earners. Disturbingly, the study finds that within the highest quintile income was highly skewed towards the very top of the distribution, mostly through the increased pricing of assets and stabilisation of their prices. In practice, QE acts as a wealth transfer through asset price inflation from the young, who are trying to get ahead, towards those who are already established, exacerbating existing issues of intergenerational equity.

At an economy wide level, the benefits are also dubious. Stephen Roach from Yale University concluded the US QE 'payback was disappointing', highlighting that over the six years form November 2008 successive QE programs added $6.3 trillion to the Fed balance sheet, which amounted to nearly 25 per cent more than the $2.9 trillion expansion of nominal GDP over the same period. In fact, for every dollar of QE, you got less of your dollar back.

In a recent speech, the RBA governor dampered down expectations that they would adopt QE. He observed Australia's financial markets were operating normally and our financial institutions were able to access funding on reasonable terms, so QE to address liquidity is unjustified. The RBA governor outlined he has no appetite to undertake outright purchase of private sector assets such as part of a QE program and the only option they would consider would be to purchase government bonds to lower risk-free interest rates along the yield curve with effects on the exchange rate. In that context, the RBA governor outlined such a scenario would be considered at a cash rate of 0.25 per cent but not before that. Consequently, the committee has an amplified responsibility to closely scrutinise any rate cut because of the cascading consequences to licence QE. On that basis, I welcome the decision only yesterday not to cut rates.

In his speeches and in other public remarks, the RBA governor has outlined the options available to Australia—monetary policy, fiscal policy and structural reform. In doing so, much of the discussion has focused on the progressive exhaustion of monetary policy. Media commentary of the RBA governor's speeches appear to have an overweighted focus on his remarks on fiscal policy—and I might note that continues even this year—without recognising his regular reflections on capital constraints, notably in infrastructure. Obsessing over high-GI spending that increases public debt for an economic sugar hit is not sustainable, despite its periodic advocacy by some people in this House.

More emphasis needs to be put on the RBA governor's commentary on the potential of low-GI structural reform that yields long-term results, encourages business investments and would aid in the progressive expansion of the economy to the benefit of the Australian people through jobs. The options are manifest from further broadening and flattening of the tax base, reforming litigation funding models, the grounds for shareholder class actions and the application of responsible lending laws that can all foster unnecessary costs and risks as well as many other measures. The RBA governor has also outlined it is not clear the experience with negative interest rates has been a success, outlining the risks of a reversal interest rate—that is, the interest rate at which lower rates become contractionary rather than expansionary—and there is a confidence we are still a fair way from it.

The answers provided from the banks to the committee on the stimulatory effects of interest rate cuts at such low levels backs up the RBA governor's statements, narrowly. But at these levels reducing interest rates for stimulus appears to be equivalent to tapping an empty well—that is, there may technically be shallow puddles of water still at the bottom, but it would be more effective and sustainable to look for alternative sources of water.

The committee notes that on 5 November 2019 the Treasurer, the Hon. Josh Frydenberg PM, announced that the current statement on the conduct of monetary policy would remain unchanged. This continues the September 2016 agreement between the Treasurer and the governor of the Reserve Bank that an appropriate goal is to keep consumer price inflation between two and three per cent. On average, over time, it's the government's view that this provides continuity and consistency at a time of global economic uncertainty.
On behalf of the committee I would like to thank the governor of the Reserve Bank, Dr Philip Lowe, and other representatives of the RBA for appearing at the hearing on 9 August 2019. I'd also, of course, like to thank the committee members and the secretariat, who ably assisted at every point in the task and duty of the committee. And I know at times I can be a challenging chair! The committee will scrutinise the RBA at further public hearings this Friday 7 February and Friday 14 August 2020, and I very much look forward to scrutinising every decision the RBA makes, as I'm sure the opposition does as well, on behalf of the Australian people. I commend the report to the House.

Dr LEIGH (Fenner) (16:45): by leave—The Australian economy is in a bad way. In its latest business outlook, Deloitte Access Economics forecast below trend growth of two per cent in 2019-20 and 2.4 per cent in 2020-21. These figures are significantly below the Morrison government's midyear budget forecasts. Deloitte says:

The nation's growth won't lift that much from today's decade low and we don't expect unemployment to drop or wages to accelerate through 2020.

Retail, as they point out, is already amid its deepest downturn since 1990. You can see the collapse of the retail sector in the shuttering of so many household names among major Australian retailers. This sector is doing it tough under the Morrison government. Deloitte points out that construction is shrinking at its fastest rate since 1999. And, as the shadow Treasurer pointed out, this is what happens when a Liberal government in its seventh year spends all its time spinning, pork barrelling and playing politics instead of actually coming up with a plan to meet the big challenges of the economy.

The government would have us believe that the challenges of the economy are all down to bushfires and coronavirus. They want us to forget the fact that the economy has been in a bad way through their time in office. Growth is down. Wages are down. Productivity is down. The start-up rate has fallen. The government that likes to talk about small business is creating fewer small businesses than the economy did decades back. And a government that likes to talk about microeconomic reform is failing to do that hard work that ensures that we see more start-ups and fewer monopolies. We've got mergers going through the roof and start-ups going through the floor. We have innovation that is putting us well below OECD levels. If you look at the top five per cent of Australian firms, they've fallen off the productivity frontier of the top five per cent of firms in other advanced nations. According to recent research from Treasury, the productivity of the bottom 95 per cent of firms has not moved since Sydney hosted the Olympics in the year 2000. Ninety-five per cent of Australian firms according to Treasury haven't improved their productivity in two decades. It is a shocking record. And that's before we get to deep-seated challenges, such as inequality and climate change, which the government seems incapable of tackling.

Interest rates are at a record low because the government has failed to engage in the structural reform, the fiscal policy that the economy needs. They've done the worst of all things when it comes to a proposal for accelerated depreciation: they have said they may do it in the budget this year. That means if you're a firm sitting around wondering whether to invest, your incentive right now is to hold back on investment because you might get a better deal in the budget. Rather than taking on the proposal that Labor took to the last election of an Australian investment guarantee and saying they'll do it straightaway, they're promising that they may do it later, almost guaranteeing that we lock in low investment in a time when the economy is sluggish.

The Reserve Bank says full employment is in the order of four to 4½ per cent, yet we have the economy sitting with unemployment between five and 5½ per cent. This is a full percentage point higher than unemployment in Britain, the United States, Germany and New Zealand. If we had the unemployment rate of those countries, hundreds of thousands more Australians would be in work. We would see more opportunities for young Australians and for people with lower-level skills. We would see more opportunities for women and migrants. Discrimination is harder when unemployment is lower. Lower unemployment would finally put some upward pressure on wages. We'd see more rapid household income growth. And yet, because the government is doing so little on this front, the Reserve Bank has had to step in, cutting interest rates down to three-quarters of a per cent.

But there's also a question, which is raised in the chair's foreword, as to whether the Reserve Bank is doing all it can and whether further rate cuts would be appropriate. The context in which we're currently sitting is one in which we've had on average across Australia over the course of the last two years, though not in all markets, falling house prices, taking away some of the concern about asset price inflation which previously was cautioning against rate cuts. For almost the entirety of Governor Lowe's tenure, inflation has sat below the bottom level of the target band. As I mentioned before, we've got unemployment a full percentage point above Britain, the United States, New Zealand and Germany and above what the Reserve Bank classes as full employment. The Reserve Bank has neither managed to hit its inflation target nor its full employment target.
The member for Goldstein, in the chair's foreword to the report, claims that rates shouldn't be cut, because there is an impact on savers. It is certainly true that some Australians are net savers, just as some Australians are net borrowers. But we have categorical evidence that on average, as the Reserve Bank puts it:

…the share of people who have debt and who have a positive effect on their cash flows when interest rates fall more than outweighs the effect on consumption from the people whose incomes have been reduced somewhat.

The member for Goldstein points out that, for many borrowers with fixed-rate mortgages or variable-rate mortgages, when you cut rates mortgage repayments don't automatically fall. The Reserve Bank has gone to exactly this issue and has pointed out that there is, nonetheless, a confidence effect when households see a positive impact on their balance sheets as a result of rate cuts. The member for Goldstein says that the exchange rate channel is potentially muted if all other countries cut at the same time. I don't see coordinated cutting. What I see when I look around the world is a range of other central banks that are at or near the lower bound.

The member for Goldstein claims that quantitative easing would be unfair to young people. But the point is that it's unemployment that's most unfair to young people. I graduated high school in 1990, in the teeth of Australia's last significant recession. I've seen what a deep recession does to young people. When unemployment is a percentage point higher than it should be, that means it's young people who suffer. By the way, I can't help pointing out that the only time the Liberals seem to care about inequality is when it comes to discussing monetary policy. Certainly the policies that the member for Goldstein championed at the last election were not policies which would have had the effect of equalising asset distribution among young people and older generations.

We also went to a range of other issues in speaking with the Reserve Bank governor. The Reserve Bank governor criticised public sector wage caps for 'cementing low wage norms across the country'. That was a critique not just of governments like New South Wales which have locked in those public sector wage caps, making it more difficult to get the wage growth that supports household spending and retail sales; it's also a critique of the Morrison government's approach to public sector bargaining, which has entrenched lower wage norms across the country. Whether it's customs officers, teachers or police officers, entrenching lower wage norms has been one of the factors that has dampened wage growth in the public sector and flowed on to the private sector and to household spending.

We also heard from the Reserve Bank that they don't regard climate change as 'a hobbyhorse issue', to quote members of the government this week. The Reserve Bank is looking at the impact of climate change on stress scenarios for the economy. They, like other central banks worldwide, are taking climate change seriously and considering the impact that it could have on the macroeconomy.

We also had an exchange over transparency. I put the view to the Reserve Bank that when compared to other central banks they are relatively opaque. They don't, for example, publish transcripts of meetings or voting records. I continue to find that disappointing and think that the Reserve Bank could do better on the transparency front.

We will hear from the Reserve Bank governor on Friday, as the member for Goldstein has mentioned, but we know a little of what to expect from the Reserve Bank governor's speech to the National Press Club today. He said, 'Looking back at last year, economic growth was weaker than we had expected.' He said the 'most important factor is a domestic one'. The Reserve Bank governor pointed to a noticeable step down in wages growth, a troubling decline in productivity growth and the downward trend in investment and spending.

As the shadow Treasurer has pointed out, the Prime Minister's and Treasurer's inaction and incompetence have left the Reserve Bank to do all the heavy lifting. The government will continue to claim that this is an issue of bushfires and coronavirus. It is not. It is a deep-seated economic malaise which traces its roots back to 2013.

**Environment and Energy Committee Report**

Mr TED O'BRIEN (Fairfax) (16:56): On behalf of the Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy, I present the committee's report, incorporating dissenting reports, entitled, Not without your approval: a way forward for nuclear technology in Australia, together with the minutes of proceedings.

Report made a parliamentary paper in accordance with standing order 39(e).

Mr TED O'BRIEN: by leave—I am pleased to present to the House a report entitled Not without your approval: a way forward for nuclear technology in Australia. This is a report of the House Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy. We all know that energy is one very hotly contested area of public policy in Australia as we transition to a system that is delivering affordable and reliable electricity while also reducing emissions. This is no easy feat and it requires a preparedness to consider all types of technologies, including nuclear technology.
The conclusions reached by the majority of this committee gave rise to three recommendations; firstly, that nuclear energy be considered as part of Australia's future energy mix. I underscore two words there: 'considered' and 'future'. To be clear, we are not recommending that Australia races ahead and adopts nuclear energy; rather, that this zero-emissions baseload technology that accounts for around 11 per cent of the world's electricity generation be put on the table for fair consideration as part of our future energy mix post-2030.

Secondly, we recommend a body of work be undertaken, including an economic assessment, technological assessment and readiness assessment—assessments that have never been done before in the Australian context—as well as a two-way engagement program with the Australian public, recognising the importance of a social licence for any successful management of a civil nuclear program.

Thirdly, we recommend a partial and conditional lift of the moratorium—partial in that the current moratorium on nuclear energy should remain for the older technologies but lifted for the new and emerging technologies, such as Generation III+ and Generation IV, including of course for small modular reactors; conditional in that the moratorium should be subject to a positive technological assessment and the prior informed consent of the local communities that might be impacted by the building of either a nuclear power plant or a waste facility. In summary, Australia should say a definite no to the old nuclear technologies but a conditional yes to the new and emerging technologies.

While proud to lay this report here in the chamber today, I do concede that it is with an element of disappointment because of the position taken by the Australian Labor Party. I'm not reflecting here on the character or conduct of the Labor members of the committee; they give me no reason to do so. However, I am reflecting on the blatantly political nature of their dissenting report. The Labor Party say they believe in climate change. Yet they deny Australians an opportunity to even consider the possibility of using the single largest source of emissions free base-load technology the world has ever seen. The Labor Party say they trust science. Yet they flatly reject the science that underpins a source of energy representing 11 per cent of electricity around the world, adopted by many countries—many of our allies and like countries—and with another five countries entering the sector as we speak.

The Labor Party have in the past been very quick to embrace and speak about the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and some of their reports. Yet they go deathly silent when the IPCC comes out and says nuclear energy is 'a mitigating technology for climate change'. The Labor Party claims to be the party of the worker and the party of civil society. Yet when it comes to considering the possibility of nuclear energy in Australia, they defy the will and the request of many of their rank and file, and they snub their nose to the possibility that the Australian people should have a right to be engaged in this public debate. The Labor Party says it believes in free markets. Yet it argues that nuclear technology should be illegal in Australia because 'it might be too expensive'. When has any technology ever been banned in Australia because it might be too expensive? Even the basis of that argument is flawed data: there was a lot of debate in the committee base-load technology the world has ever seen. The Labor Party say they trust science. Yet they flatly reject the science that underpins a source of energy representing 11 per cent of electricity around the world, adopted by many countries—many of our allies and like countries—and with another five countries entering the sector as we speak.

The Labor Party argue that nuclear energy is not safe by referencing the Three Mile Island, Chernobyl and Fukushima incidents. They know very well that trying to set this up as some sort of binary choice between nuclear energy and renewable energy is false logic. Renewables need partners to firm up. World over, nuclear is one of those technologies that provides the firming; the base-load and the newer technologies have the ability to ramp up and ramp down to make them compatible with the intermittency of solar and wind.

Let me close by recognising the importance of the topic of nuclear energy. As a country, we certainly cannot go down the path of adopting nuclear energy without bipartisanship. The report that has been tabled today does not say that Australia must adopt nuclear energy; it says we need to have a conversation. We need to have that conversation. But the Labor Party, despite all of its rhetoric about climate change, is refusing the Australian people the right. I commend this report to the House and I commend the report to the government. I move:

That the House take note of the report.

Debate adjourned.

Reference to Federation Chamber

Mr TED O'BRIEN (Fairfax) (17:05): I move:

That the order of the day be referred to the Federation Chamber for debate.

Question agreed to.
Mr HASTIE (Canning) (17:05): On behalf of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security, I present the following reports: Review of administration and expenditure No. 17 (2017-2018)—Australian Intelligence Agencies; Review of the re-listing of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent, Islamic State in Libya and Islamic State Sinai Province under the Criminal Code.

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

Mr HASTIE: by leave—I rise today to present two reports. The first is a report by a statement of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security for the review of regulations relisting four organisations as terrorist organisations under the Criminal Code Act 1995. The relisted organisations considered in this review are al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent, Islamic State in Libya and Islamic State Sinai Province.

Regulations that specify an organisation as a terrorist organisation cease to have an effect on the third anniversary of the day on which they take effect. Organisations can be relisted provided the minister is satisfied on reasonable grounds that the organisation continues to directly or indirectly engage in terrorism or advocate the doing of a terrorist act. These organisations were last listed on 26 and 29 November 2016, and the regulations to relist them were tabled in the parliament on 11 November 2019.

The committee's review examines the minister's decision to relist these organisations. Section 102.1A of the Criminal Code provides that the committee may review a regulation which lists or relists an organisation as a terrorist organisation and report its comments and recommendations to each house of the parliament before the end of the applicable 15-sitting-day disallowance period. This statement serves this purpose and is being presented within the required period.

In determining whether the regulations relisting these four organisation should be supported, the committee reviewed the merits of each relisting in accordance with the Minister for Home Affairs' explanatory statement, ASIO's statement of reasons for each organisation and other publicly available information, including submissions received by Dr Tony Murney and Mr Dominic WY Kanak. These submissions provide reflections on and question the applicability of the listing and relisting process, which remain considerations of the committee for this and all future reviews.

In its deliberations, the committee determined that al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula is still an active affiliate of al-Qaeda. It subscribes to al-Qaeda's Sunni Islamist extremist ideology, which promotes violence and is strongly anti-Western. While no known attacks have killed or injured Australian citizens, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula remains committed to conducting and encouraging others to undertake terrorist attacks against Western targets, which includes Australian interests.

Also an active affiliate of al-Qaeda, al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent's objectives are to prepare for military jihad against their enemies, to liberate Muslim lands now ruled by non-Muslims and to revive the Islamic caliphate. The committee considers al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent a threat to Australian citizens due to their anti-Western ideology and confirmed threats made against an Australian Navy vessel.

Islamic State in Libya is an active affiliate of Islamic State which promotes extreme violence against those who do not agree with its interpretation of Islam. Islamic State in Libya has issued statements threatening Westerners and Western interests in general, including the US and its allies, of which Australia is one.

Islamic State Sinai Province, also an active affiliate of Islamic State, adheres to global jihadist ideology, promotes sectarian violence and targets those who do not agree with their interpretations of Islam with extreme violence. This includes the West—in particular the United States, of which Australia is an ally.

These four organisations remain a real threat to Australians and the Australian way of life. There is strong evidence that each has engaged in and continues to engage in terrorist activities that are targeted at countries with Western values such as ours here in Australia.

In examining the evidence that has been provided to the committee and in considering the concerns of submitters, the committee is satisfied with the relisting processes and considers that they have been followed appropriately for these four organisations. The committee therefore supports the relisting of the organisations under section 102.1A of the Criminal Code in order to protect Australians and Australians' interests and finds no reason to disallow the regulations.

I now turn to the report of the committee's Review of administration and expenditure No. 17 (2017-2018)—Australian intelligence agencies. The Intelligence Services Act requires the committee to conduct annual administration and expenditure reviews of the six agencies which comprise the Australian intelligence
community, namely: the Office of National Intelligence, the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, the Australian Secret Intelligence Service, the Australian Signals Directorate, the Australian Geospatial-Intelligence Organisation and the Defence Intelligence Organisation.

Each year the committee discharges this responsibility by examining agencies' financial performance and the budgetary framework within which they operate. We also consider administration matters such as the strategic direction and organisational structure of each agency, their human resource and performance management, the public accountability and public relations of each agency, and legislative changes impacting their operation and litigation matters.

Our review of the 2017-18 financial year found that all six agencies managed their administration and expenditure appropriately in a period of significant change arising from the partial implementation of the 2017 Independent Intelligence Review and the evolving security and technological environment in which the intelligence community now operates.

Throughout the reporting period, to varying degrees all agencies were reviewing and reforming their strategic priorities, technical capabilities and organisational structures to ensure they remained relevant and highly effective into the future.

The intelligence community is also expanding. All agencies reported larger workforces and slightly lower separation rates for the reporting period, and some agencies noted plans for further recruitment. With an expanding workforce, training and development remains a shared focus across agencies.

This has led the committee to recommend that the Australian government ensure the newly-formed Office of National Intelligence is adequately resourced to facilitate national intelligence community-wide learning and development programs as part of its enterprise management mandate. We think that community-wide training and development programs have the potential to increase understanding and connections between agencies, enhance staff mobility, reinforce fundamental skills and deliver cost efficiencies. We'd like to see training focused on enhancing leadership, fostering a shared understanding of the community, increased staff mobility across agencies, and strengthening fundamental skills and capabilities.

We also recommend that the Australian government review the application of the efficiency dividend to the Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation, the Australian Secret Intelligence Service and the Office of National Intelligence with a view to safeguarding their operational budgets.

If the efficiency dividend continues to be applied, the committee would like to see the funding of other intelligence agencies deliver sufficient budget certainty to sustain their operations in a changing environment. We will continue to monitor this issue in our future reviews of the administration and expenditure of Australian intelligence agencies. With that, I commend this report to the House. Thank you.

Human Rights Committee Report


Report made a parliamentary paper in accordance with standing order 39(e).

Mr PERRETT: by leave—I rise as deputy chair to speak to the tabling of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights Report 6 of 2019, which was tabled in the Senate on the last sitting day of 2019. This report contains a credible technical examination of legislation with Australia's obligations under international human rights law, as required under the committee's statutory mandate. It sets out the committee's consideration of 18 bills introduced into the parliament between 16 September and 19 September 2019, two bills previously deferred and legislative instruments registered on the Federal Register of Legislation between 9 August and 19 September 2019.

In this report the committee seeks further information in relation to four bills and three instruments. This process of requesting information from the legislation proponent reflects the committee's role in establishing and maintaining a dialogue regarding the human rights implications of legislative measures. This process of dialogue contributes to the broader respect for and recognition of human rights in Australia.

In addition the committee has made concluding remarks in relation to three bills, including the Migration Amendment (Repairing Medical Transfers) Bill 2019. In Report 4 of 2019 the committee sought information from the Minister for Home Affairs in relation to this bill. The majority committee report concluded that the repeal of the medevac laws did not breach any international human rights. However, half of the committee, comprising all committee members from the Australian Labor Party and the Greens, has issued a dissenting report in relation to
this conclusion. We consider it regrettable that it has become necessary to prepare another dissenting report for this historically well-functioning committee.

As members no doubt know, the mandate of this important committee is to examine all bills and legislative instruments that come before either house of the parliament for compatibility with Australia's human rights obligations under the seven international human rights treaties ratified by Australia and then to report to both houses of the parliament on that issue. As members of this committee, we must never lose sight of the committee's important mandate. This committee does not exist to be partisan or to rubber stamp government policy irrespective of the political party occupying the treasury bench. I was on this committee when it was reviewing legislation through the human rights prism put forward by the Rudd and Gillard Labor governments. The legislation scrutinised in this report and those to follow deserved to be properly considered by this committee through a human rights framework.

Reputable bodies have raised concerns about outcomes flowing from decisions of the coalition government. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has cautioned about a deteriorating health situation in Papua New Guinea and Nauru which has led to significant risks of irreparable harm and loss of life. The Queensland state coroner has raised concerns in relation to the death of Hamid Khazaei that insufficient, transparent and accountable procedures for acting upon serious health concerns can have life-threatening and tragic consequences. Hamid Khazaei was a 24-year-old Iranian citizen who became ill while detained on Manus Island. Throughout his time in detention, the Australian government had significant responsibilities for Mr Khazaei's health and wellbeing. I mention these matters in tabling this report by way of reminder that legislation can save lives. It can be transformative. But, in some cases, when human rights are limited to such an extent to cause harm, it can be deadly. It is why the human rights committee is so important, and its work should not be hindered or tainted by partisanship.

The dissenting members, in considering the international human rights law implications of such legislation, concluded that the repeal of medical transfer provisions could lead to the return of persons to regional processing countries in circumstances that may not be consistent with Australia's non-refoulement obligations and the right to an effective remedy. We also found that, as the medical transfer provisions repealed by the bill would appear to provide a higher degree of access to healthcare, repealing this legislative safeguard might represent an unjustified retrogressive step in relation to the realisation of the right to health for refugees and asylum seekers in regional processing countries.

I conclude by noting that, as the work of the human rights committee is closely followed by similar committees internationally and by the judiciary, it would be a horrible reflection on the members of this committee if, in the 46th Parliament, the human rights committee became politicised. I encourage my fellow members, the government and others to examine the committee's full report. I commend the committee's Report 6 of 2019 to the House.

Electoral Matters Committee

Report


Report made a parliamentary paper in accordance with standing order 39(e).

BILLS

Intellectual Property Laws Amendment (Productivity Commission Response Part 2 and Other Measures) Bill 2019

Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson—Minister for Industry, Science and Technology) (17:19): I present the revised explanatory memorandum to this bill and move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Intellectual Property Laws Amendment (Productivity Commission Response Part 2 and Other Measures) Bill 2019 is the second piece of legislation that delivers on the Morrison government's commitment to review and reform our intellectual property system.

The intellectual property system, or IP system, is an important part of the economy. It encourages the development of new technologies, products and markets. In 2016 the Productivity Commission undertook a comprehensive review of Australia's IP system, including copyright, trademarks, patents, designs and plant breeder's rights. We asked the commission to make recommendations to ensure that the IP system continues to
provide incentives for innovation and investment. The IP system should do so without unreasonably impeding competition and access to goods and services.

The Australian government responded to the commission's recommendations on 25 August 2017, and within a year the first tranche of reforms received royal assent. These changes were supported by the opposition, and updated the trademark and the plant breeder's rights systems.

This second tranche of reforms updates the patent system. The Productivity Commission stated that its proposed reforms are intended to rebalance the patent system to take more account of the benefits to the broader community and ensure that all Australians benefit from the system.

These reforms have been complex to develop, so the government has taken additional time to consult extensively, giving stakeholders several opportunities to provide feedback and express their views. The government has listened and is confident that the amendments strike the right balance between the needs of inventors, users of technology and the general public.

Schedule 1 to this bill will amend the Patents Act. It gives effect to the recommendations made by the commission, by introducing a statement of the objectives of the Patents Act and phasing out Australia's second-tier patent.

Part 1 introduces an objects clause into the Patents Act. The objects clause provides a general statement of principle about the purpose of the act. This will make it clear what Australians want from their patent system, specifically a system that promotes economic wellbeing through technological innovation and the transfer and dissemination of technology. This will ensure that the patent system remains adaptable and fit for purpose as new technologies are developed in the future.

Part 2 begins the phasing out of the innovation patent system. This second-tier patent was intended to incentivise small to medium-sized Australian businesses to invest in research when it was introduced in 2001. However, in the 18 years since then, it has become clear that the second-tier patent has been more harmful than helpful for SMEs. There is widespread agreement among stakeholders that the system is not fit for purpose. Some people argue that the second-tier patent should be reformed, but there is no agreement on a workable alternative.

Both the Productivity Commission and the former advisory council on IP recommended that the innovation patent system be abolished. Both found there is no evidence that the second-tier patent stimulates innovation or research in Australia. What it does do, according to both bodies, is lead to uncertainty, confusion and a higher regulatory burden, particularly for our Australian SMEs.

The bill will amend the Patents Act to prevent the filing of new applications for innovation patents. The amendments ensure that existing rights, filed before commencement, are maintained and protected, ensuring a balanced phasing out.

Schedules 2, 3 and 4 implement recommendations made by the commission in its 2013 report into the compulsory licensing of patents. These changes will improve the balance between the rights of IP owners and the interests of the public, bringing greater clarity and certainty to the legislation.

Schedule 2 improves the transparency and accountability for Crown use of patented technology. There is some uncertainty about when Crown use can be invoked at the present, and this bill makes it clear that, while it is rarely used, it can be invoked when any Australian federal, state or territory government has the primary responsibility for providing or funding a service. This ensures that Crown use can cover the full range of services that the public expects our government to provide.

Schedule 2 also protects the rights of patent holders, by improving accountability for Crown use as well as providing more guidance for determining the remuneration to be paid to the patent owner. Government agencies will be required to seek to negotiate with the patent owner and to obtain the authorisation of the relevant minister before invoking Crown use. At the Commonwealth level, the relevant minister is the minister responsible for administering the Patents Act, and at the state and territory level, it is the Attorney-General. This will ensure that Crown use is only used in appropriate circumstances.

Schedule 3 will make the same amendments to the Crown use provisions in the Designs Act. Crown use will then operate in the same way for both patents and designs.

Schedule 4 improves the clarity and certainty for compulsory licensing of patents. It requires the courts to consider whether it is in the public interest to grant a compulsory licence. There was concern that the previous test had the potential to protect the interests of a particular industry, at a net cost to the broader community. The new test will ensure that compulsory licences are only granted when there will be an overall net benefit to the Australian community.
Schedule 4 will also clarify the process for compulsory licensing of inventions that build and improve on a previous patent.

The remaining schedules to the bill make minor technical amendments that will streamline procedures and improve the efficiency of the IP system, ensuring the system is fit for purpose and keeps up with today's accelerated pace of technology.

I am very pleased to introduce this bill, which builds on a broad consultation and enhances Australia’s IP system, supporting innovation, creativity and business growth in this country.

Ms O'NEIL (Hotham) (17:27): It's a great pleasure to make a contribution on behalf of the opposition on the Intellectual Property Laws Amendment (Productivity Commission Response Part 2 and Other Measures) Bill 2019. I will move a second reading amendment at the close of my speech but in part of my comments, I'll speak to some of the aspects in that second reading amendment. Intellectual property laws can perhaps sound a little bit dry to the ordinary person, but the bill before the parliament today actually relates to one of the most pivotal discussions that we have in this chamber, and that is: how do we create a high-skill, high-wage economy for Australians for this generation and the next? This is a really urgent question.

You would have seen, Mr Deputy Speaker, that the Governor of the Reserve Bank made a statement today about some of the critical concerns he has about the Australian economy's performance. He raised three issues in his statement today. He talked about this persistent problem of low wages growth that is affecting the quality of life of the people in the communities represented by every one of the 151 people in this chamber. He talked too about the declining productivity growth we are seeing in our economy and the downward investment spending. These are really crucial problems for us because they're telling us something not just about what's happening in the Australian economy today but about what's going to be happening tomorrow and in a year and in the year after that.

The bill we're talking about today strikes right at the heart of these latter two issues that the Reserve Bank governor discussed. They answer the simple question: how should we in this parliament reward the creation of a new idea? What benefits, privileges and protections should this parliament provide to new inventions that make sure that the very clever people of this country are incentivised to spend their time and their energy thinking about something new rather than exploiting something that already exists?

Last October the government put forward some plans to make some quite substantial changes to the way that our intellectual property system works in Australia. One of the biggest changes that they proposed was to abolish something called the innovation patent scheme. It is a special eight-year patent which ostensibly is designed for small and medium enterprises around Australia. It is the sort of bill that comes before the parliament, and I think it would have been easy for opposition parties to play some cheap political games with this, but we really did want to engage with this bill on the substance, because I think the evidence is there that there are really significant issues with the way the innovation patent has been used in Australia. We have a Productivity Commission report and IP Australia coming out and saying the scheme isn't actually being utilised that well by small and medium enterprises and it should be reformed.

The issue that Labor members of parliament raised in reaction to the bill is that the government was essentially proposing that we abolish this bill—that we take away something that exists specifically to assist small business—and not put anything in its place. We had a great problem with that. The reason for that is that the only alternative that would have left would be the standard patent systems. Standard patent systems are difficult: they're very complicated, it's very expensive to get one and it's administratively burdensome. That's fine when you can absorb all the expenses associated with that into a company which might have a whole legal department and might have its own intellectual property lawyer, but if you're running a small business with a couple of people on the books there is just no way you can put the effort into creating an application for something like that.

So we were very worried about that on behalf of the 2.2 million small businesses of this country. We know that the people running these businesses are the economic dynamo that drives growth in our country. It's incredibly important that when we design public policy in this chamber, we don't design policy that will only suit the top 20 businesses listed on the ASX. We actually want to help these 2.2 million small businesses grow. So we were concerned about the removal of the innovation patent, and to address this gap we proposed two substantive amendments to the bill that's before the House which would have allowed some improvements to this problem, which I'll describe.

I just want to place on record the opposition's acknowledgement about the way the government handled our critique of the bill. I don't think it's wrong for me to point out that there is a bit of petty stubbornness that can permeate the work that we do in this chamber, but we didn't get that from the government. We got good reactions
from them and good consultation, and, ultimately, I think the government recognised the merits of the reforms that we were proposing and agreed to support them.

The changes that were made because of our suggestion were twofold. The first was that we want to make sure that there's a proper, thorough statutory review done into the appropriateness of the IP system for small business, to make sure that we are thinking about these 2.2 million small businesses when we create a system and when we make legislative change. The second part of this was just giving small business a bit more time. So many of the people I talked to about this were concerned at the pretty crude nature of the cut-off point when innovation patents would no longer be accepted. So we were able to negotiate with the government to provide quite a significant amount of time for businesses to transition to the new system. Notwithstanding the concerns with the bill as originally introduced, there is a lot of merit to some of the things that the minister has just talked about that are outside of this innovation patent that I've discussed. We shouldn't be in any doubt that there is bipartisan support for the main intent of the bill across the chamber.

I want to quickly mention some of the issues that we do see in the innovation patent, and I hope that these will be fed into the statutory review that's undertaken on this matter. The Productivity Commission, in its review of intellectual property in Australia, raised two issues with the way this works at the moment. Probably the most critical one was that the innovation threshold to get an innovation patent—basically how 'new' does the thing that you've invented have to be to get the protection of the law—was just too low. What the law was doing was effectively protecting things that probably didn't deserve the chamber to create a special legal mechanism for them. One of the examples that the Productivity Commission likes to point to was a pet bed—literally a small raised bed that sat above the ground. That was the subject of an innovation patent. The other one the Productivity Commission likes to talk about is the pizza box that converts to a bib, which also obtained the protection of the innovation patent. It's very useful for many, I'm sure! So I think there was an issue around the inventiveness and innovation threshold that you had to reach before you were able to get an innovation patent—it was a bit low.

The second one was, having created a legal protection for something that wasn't as difficult to attain, that of course lawyers—doing what they do in their very clever way—were actually using the innovation patent to game the system. The one thing we do not want our IP system to do is be used by people to stop other people inventing and innovating—that would be a failure for an innovation and IP system. So it was a bit concerning that in fact there were plenty of examples where patent attorneys were advertising the way that they could help someone use an innovation patent to stop other people in the economy inventing something. Of course, when we see the law being used to subvert innovation in that way, that's certainly not something that the innovation minister would want, and neither would I.

We understand the government is committed to raising the inventive step requirements for standard patents, but, given their initial approach was to scrap the whole thing altogether without thinking about how we might do it differently, that was really where our concern came from. Furthermore, IP Australia identified a problem with low usage. Basically we had this system where we had the innovation patent but SMEs were actually not the main users of the patent, even though that's what it was designed for. So we had around 400 innovation patents a year by SMEs. Approximately 70 innovation patents were actually certified and went to that extra step of achieving enforceable rights. In comparison to that, Australian SMEs filed between 1,000 and 1,400 standard patents each year. The standard patents are the ones that require that extra step and extra administration. So we can see there that the standard patent is being put to use much more by SMEs in the economy.

I think that, having resolved some of the issues—and I'm very glad that the government was able to see things as we did: that it was important that small business have more of a voice in this reform—we're very pleased to be able to support this bill with the amendments that Labor was able to negotiate with the government.

I want to broaden the discussion a little bit and make some comments about the overall picture of innovation in Australia, because the IP bill that we are discussing of course sits within a framework that is very broad about is about all the things that the government could do or should be doing to make sure that we have an appropriately innovative economy here in Australia. We had a very flourishing discussion in this parliament about innovation for perhaps three months when Malcolm Turnbull came in, and there were the ideas boom and all the other things that went on, but it was pretty clear that, as soon as Malcolm Turnbull was no longer Prime Minister, the government effectively dropped that issue like a hot potato. We had the former Prime Minister come out recently and say that innovation is not in the Prime Minister's comfort zone. We didn't really need to be told that, because it's incredibly obvious from the things that are not being done to make this system work and that are very clearly urgent national priorities. Leadership isn't about operating in your comfort zone; it's about operating in the national interest. That's the big opportunity that's being missed at the moment.

On the government's watch, Australia's innovation ranking has fallen on the World Intellectual Property Organization's Global Innovation Index. The recent Harvard Atlas of Economic Complexity has us 93rd in the
world in economic complexity. This is a very famous global study that looks at how many different things are working in an economy to create growth. It is a very effective predictor of future growth for a country, and we are 93rd, behind Morocco, behind Senegal.

The truth is that too much of what we export in this country is grown or dug out of the ground, and I say that not in any way to trivialise mining and agriculture. These are critical parts of our economy, and we're generally world-leading in how we do both. But diversity and a bigger focus on value-add to what we do would be a good thing.

There was a notable Treasury report released earlier this year that showed that, on the whole, the best-performing Australian firms lagged global best practice. Meanwhile, the government is not doing anything to address any of these pivotal challenges that are going to profoundly affect the economy that we have in five years and in a decade, and the economy that my six-year-old is going to graduate into in 2032.

The specific innovation things I've talked to are only part of the picture here. This government has introduced cuts of $2.2 billion from universities over the coming years. A further $3.9 billion was removed from the sector with the closure of the Education Investment Fund. Today, of the 34 advanced nations, Australia ranks 30th in government spending on universities. That is the sound of the ball being dropped. How do we expect that we are going to have a world-leading economy in 30 years time when we are underinvesting at this rate?

Since the Turnbull era, the coalition have become really timid in this area of innovation and technology. They're too scared to go near the ball, but that's the ball that needs to be used to kick goals, and we just can't take that approach any longer. Something about this has to change.

We see the same thing when we look at our research and development spending as a country. Our national spending on R&D is less than 1.8 per cent of GDP. World-leading countries are spending more than four per cent of their GDP, and the OECD average today is well above ours, at about 2.4 per cent. What really scares me is that when we look at the numbers, even knowing that this is a problem—and I'm sure the minister across the table, Minister Andrews, knows this is a problem—we see that our spending is falling. When we look at the numbers for 2015 to 2016 versus 2017 to 2018 we see that government expenditure on R&D fell almost 20 per cent in real terms. This is an incredibly important problem. Just because the Prime Minister might not feel comfortable talking about innovation issues, it doesn't make them any less important.

This is the pointy end of a longer-term issue. There are actually 2,000 fewer people working in government funded R&D programs today than there were in the mid-1990s. We've got further issues coming before the parliament. The government has mooted big changes to the research and development tax incentive. That is the main way that government incentivises spending on research and development, and there's absolutely a reform opportunity there. I don't deny that we can improve how we use that money, but the primary goal of government seems to be to return money to the budget bottom line. It'll see a further reduction in the R&D spending that we do as a country.

The other thing I'm very worried about is the way that this money is being spent. With somewhere in the order of two per cent of the global R&D spend, we're a pretty small country here. And the mechanism the government uses to fund different types of research and development projects around the country is an indirect one—that is to say, you qualify for your project and, no matter what the subject of that project, you're given government support to undertake it. The best-practice countries around the world are thinking more strategically about how they make the very best use of taxpayer dollars in this space. With our two per cent of the global R&D spend, instead of thinking that we might be the best at everything in the world we need to target that spending, to think about how we use that money to make sure we get the best bang for our buck.

To sum up this conversation about research and development spending: there was a report by Universities Australia in 2019 that said government spending on R&D today is the lowest it has been in four decades. How scary is that? We're going into this great unknown future of a tech-dominated society, and our R&D spending as a country is the lowest it's been in 40 years. This just can't continue. I really hope that, behind closed doors, people in the government are pushing to see this critical problem addressed.

I want to make two other quick points about some of the issues in our innovation system that we are really going to be pressuring the government to address over the next two years. One of those is our rate of collaboration as a country. What we know from best-practice countries around the world is that we are going to get the best out of our innovation system if different sectors of the economy work together. So we want to see the brightest minds in business, universities and research institutes actually collaborating. That's where the brilliant new ideas will really spark and come to the fore. Collaboration between industry and the scientific research sector in Australia is much, much too low. The share of projects being run in partnership is around 43 per cent in Germany and 37 per cent in Japan. In Australia we're running at four per cent. That's actually the lowest number in the OECD—lucky
last. But it's not the sort of thing you want to be lucky last in. Absolutely this could and should have been addressed by the government seven years ago, but I'm still urging that we have a look at this very significant problem.

I want to mention one area where the issues in investment are starkest, and that's artificial intelligence. There is absolutely no doubt that over the coming decades artificial intelligence will be one of the pivotal drivers of growth in our economy. In fact, one estimate is that $22.9 trillion will be added to the global economy by 2030 just because of artificial intelligence. I realise that some people feel very nervous about artificial intelligence. It does mean that things done today by humans might in the future be done by computers. The point is that $22.9 trillion is going to be invested somewhere, and all of these countries around the world who can see that prize are competing and fighting and trying to get the investment in their own country. The countries that lead on this are going to create so many jobs out of it. For example, the Chinese government's latest venture capital fund is expected to invest more than $30 billion in AI and related technologies. In fact, one Chinese state alone will devote $5 billion into AI technologies and businesses. There's a major port in Tianjin which is investing $16 billion in its local AI industry. Stanford has recommended that the US government invest $120 billion in various AI initiatives over the next decade, France is committing $2.4 billion over five years and the South Korean government is committing $2.7 billion over that period. In Australia, the Morrison government has committed to $29.9 million over four years—that is million, not billion. Anyone can see what's going to happen if nothing changes and that is we're going to get steamrolled in this new economy.

I just want to finish by making a couple of comments on science, technology, engineering and maths. We've talked a little bit about other aspects of the innovation system, but, if we don't have enough Australians who are actually here to capture these brilliant opportunities that are being created, we're not going to be able to reap the benefits. We know how important STEM education is to our economic future. A very widely quoted statistic is that 75 per cent of the fastest growing occupations around the world require some kind of STEM training or expertise, so this is going to be an issue that will be incredibly important for our national growth.

If there's a canary in the coalmine in all of the discussion we've had today about this, it's this: participation in STEM subjects in Australian schools has been declining for decades. Enrolment in these subjects today is the lowest that it's been for 20 years, even given everything we know about the direction our economic future is heading. Performance in STEM subjects is slipping. In 2003, five countries outperformed Australia in maths. By 2012, it was 16. That's a big slide in nine years. The proportion of Australia's population who have a post-school qualification in STEM has fallen in the last decade. I think this statistic shows it better than anything. In 2002, the number of Australian domestic students completing an IT related degree was 9,494. Last year, it was 6,302.

I have just one final set of numbers. According to Deloitte, over the next six years Australia is going to need 121,000 workers with undergraduate or postgraduate training in IT related fields. On our current trajectory, we'll produce 38,000 graduates in that time. So what we're talking about here is 83,000 high-paying, permanent jobs of the future sitting right there. On our current trajectory, we're going to be short 83,000 young Australians to fill those jobs. That's not good enough, and it's not meeting the expectations that Australians have for the work that we do in this chamber. I know these are big and difficult problems, but they're fixable.

The thing that worries me most when I look at what is going on with innovation policy is the lack of focus. We don't hear about this from the other side of the parliament. In fact, I think Scott Morrison has hardly uttered those words since he came to the prime ministership because he doesn't want to be seen to be talking about this issue. I say to the government today: we don't have a choice in the matter. This is going to happen and the question is: will Australia reap the benefits of the changing economy or will we simply pay the cost? That's the choice that we face. I move:

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

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

(1) acknowledges that protecting the intellectual property of Australia's businesses is critical to the innovation system and our future economic growth;

(2) notes that Australia's ranking on the World Intellectual Property Organization's Global Innovation Index has fallen during this Government's time in office;

(3) expresses concern about broader issues with Australia's innovation system which have not been addressed by the Government, such as falling government expenditure on research and development, declining collaboration between industry and the scientific research sector, 20-year low enrolments in STEM subjects in Australian schools, and record low performance in maths; and

(4) calls on the Government to:

(a) re-engage innovation as a key driver of Australian productivity and economic growth;
or business growth and job creation through joint ventures and through licensing. This success
engendering generations of innovation, investment and the creativity required to shape our future. The underlying legislation.

An important consideration for small and medium enterprises. Intellectual property law can be considered highly technical and complex to small and medium businesses. It is imperative that the minister’s review referred to in this bill, pinpoints gaps and challenges that are preventing small and medium enterprises from accessing the intellectual property scheme and the necessary changes that will need to be made to reduce vulnerability in the competitive market. The bill as it stands does not make the application process or cost for standard patents easier for small and medium enterprises, and it also does not make any changes to the standard patent process to account for the incremental innovation gains often secured by smaller businesses.

I challenge the government to consider the broader problem of access to justice in small and in medium enterprises. Intellectual property law can be considered highly technical and complex to small and medium enterprises—interesting though it is to all of us here! Consultations undertaken by the department in 2019 found that the majority of small and medium enterprises consulted did not have the skills or the experience to effectively recognise and exploit their intellectual capital, and they lacked the foresight, or the resourcing, to deal with enforcement and infringement actions as they arose.

These concerns have also been voiced by the Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman, who has noted that, while this bill goes some way towards simplifying the application process for small businesses to obtain and protect intellectual property, it does not improve the legalistic language or reduce the complexities of the underlying legislation.
As a former negligence lawyer, I understand how difficult it can be for everyday workers to figure out legal jargon and how that very easily becomes an entire barrier to accessing justice. This becomes a significant problem for small and medium enterprises who can often not afford the equivalent strategic legal advice that larger corporations have access to—that larger corporations often have internally within the firm. As the member for Hotham discussed previously, this is especially concerning in light of the view that there is now evidence that some law firms specialising in intellectual property are strategically using these very innovation patents as a way to increase uncertainty over the scope of rights for competitors and improve their own clients' bargaining position in patent disputes and to frustrate entry by competitors.

What are we going to do about it? We must strengthen intellectual property to make sure that small and medium enterprises in Australia are able to take full advantage of the commercial opportunities available to them. We must have fair reward for invention. Amending Australia's intellectual property scheme is only a small portion of the work needed to be done to encourage small and medium enterprises to pursue innovative ideas. Innovation and intellectual property are globally tradeable assets that have the potential to play a significant role in our economy. Australian businesses are no longer competing with the shop down the road. We need to make sure that these businesses have the tools and the infrastructure that they need to compete and succeed against global giants.

In response to the Productivity Commission's report, the Morrison government stated that more targeted access will stimulate innovation in small and medium enterprises in Australia. So my question is: where is this targeted assistance? Despite the wealth of opportunities for Australians, the Morrison government has no plan to address the systemic shift in technology and globalisation. Only $5.5 million of the coalition's research infrastructure investment plan was spent in the 2018-19 financial year. The Morrison government plans to spend less on innovation over the next four years than it did in the previous four.

While the Morrison government rests on its laurels, our global competitors are out there being smart and strategic. Artificial intelligence is at the forefront of the cyber revolution, and while other countries are already locked in an arms race to capitalise on the opportunities, the Morrison government is gazing contentedly at its navel. PricewaterhouseCoopers estimates that artificial intelligence will deliver $22.9 trillion to the global economy by 2030. China has a very public and very well-funded commitment to artificial intelligence. It has been estimated that the total spending on artificial intelligence in China in 2017 was $12 billion, and it's estimated to grow to $70 billion by 2020. In France, President Macron developed a national artificial intelligence strategy, and earmarked 1.5 billion euros to fund the plan. Germany has planned to invest three billion euros to accelerate the adoption and development of artificial intelligence technologies. The Russian Direct Investment Fund raised $2 billion to support domestic companies developing artificial intelligence solutions. In the US, venture capital investment in the artificial intelligence sector tops $8 billion.

And Australia? The Morrison government has allocated $29.9 million over four years in artificial intelligence. How will we compete? We won't compete. This complacency does over huge opportunities for enterprising Australians, and it's a shame. Small and medium enterprises cannot compete in a global market when they are receiving such a small fraction of competitive country funding. There is a huge economic opportunity right in our line of sight. In 2018, the World Economic Forum projected that artificial intelligence will create 58 million new jobs across the globe by 2022. We want those jobs. We want them here and we want them in our local economies.

But to drive job growth governments must take an active role in supporting existing workforces through reskilling and upskilling. Australian TAFEs and universities are the springboard for innovation and the pursuit of skills and knowledge. Education and training is the great equaliser, because it gives all people of all backgrounds, no matter their postcode, an opportunity for self-improvement and to pursue their own aspirations. While higher education and innovation are inextricably linked, there is a myth that innovation will be the ultimate demise of traditional job security and traditional jobs.

But where a candle is blown out, a light bulb, and preferably an LED light bulb, is switched on. According to Deloitte, over the next six years Australia will need 121,000 workers with undergraduate or postgraduate degrees in IT related fields. The benefit of reskilling workers to meet this demand could potentially be worth more than $11,000 per employee per year. I know from the mobile offices I did in my electorate each Saturday last year in the six months after I was elected that there are plenty of people struggling in this soft economy who would welcome a shot at that. However, looking at our current trajectory on 2018 numbers, we'll produce about 38,000 graduates in that time, which is a projected shortfall of around 83,000 qualified applicants for high-skill and highly paid local jobs.

In 2002, the number of Australian domestic students who completed an IT related degree was 9,513. In 2017, there were only 5,958. So as we're watching this opportunity, the giant global jobs growth in the cyber-revolution, pass us by, what is this government doing? They're cutting funding. As the member for Hotham articulated before
me, the coalition government has introduced cuts of $2.2 billion from universities over the coming years, and a further $3.9 billion was removed from the sector with the closure of the Education Investment Fund.

In 2019, of the $1.1 billion TAFE and training budget, the Morrison government only spent $928 million, which is an underspend of $170 million in our TAFE and training budget. This is a pattern of behaviour we have come to expect from this seven-year coalition government. In 2014 and 2015 they spent $138 million less on VET programs than promised; $247 million less in 2015 and 2016; $118 million less in 2016 and 2017; and $202 million less in 2017 and 2018. In total, that's almost $919 million of promised investment not spent over the past five years. Meanwhile, we have 150,000 fewer Australians in apprenticeships than when the coalition government came to office.

By cutting funding to universities and to TAFE we are robbing both millennials and older Australians of the opportunity to retrain, to upskill and to seize the job opportunities the cyber-revolution presents us with. As technology changes the way we work, Australia has the potential to be a world leader in exciting innovation and to create highly skilled, high-wage local jobs. But we are going to get left behind if we don't get competitive in the global innovation race, and there is no time to lose. Today represents a wasted opportunity. We need an innovation platform and a pathway to patents within this system that genuinely contribute to our national prosperity and the growth of new, modern jobs for our local economies and our coming generations. It is so disappointing to see that intellectual property is just another area that shows this government is led by an ad man with no plan or vision for future innovation in Australia.

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (18:02): I rise to speak on the Intellectual Property Laws Amendment (Productivity Commission Response Part 2 and Other Measures) Bill 2019. This bill makes some technical amendments to Australia's intellectual property arrangements. They're largely noncontroversial and we will be supporting the legislation. Obviously, I commend the amendment moved by the member for Hotham and thank her for her fine contribution, and also that of the member for Lilley.

The bill does contain one significant change to the patent system in schedule 1: the abolition of the innovation patent system. This is a special eight-year patent design for small- to medium-sized enterprises. The abolition of this patent system will leave the standard 20-year patent as the only form of protection. The innovation patent has its shortcomings. It wasn't my area of law, but I do know that. Labor understands that, but abolishing the innovation patent scheme without ensuring fair and affordable access to patent protection will have a negative impact on SMEs in Australia that require IP protection.

Removing the innovation patent scheme without any alternative mechanisms being put in place simply creates a significant and serious gap for small and medium businesses seeking support to access the patent system and to innovate. This gap now stands as the primary concern of the opposition, even as we support the broader reform and improvement objectives of this bill. To address this gap, Labor has put up amendments to extend the grandfathering period for the innovation patent.

Put simply, innovation is the process of commercialising new ideas. As consumers, we get excited when a business delivers new products or services. For the businesses, those innovations create more profit. But businesses need to protect their IP, or their intellectual property, in new innovation. IP protection is central to an innovative economy. The success of an organisation hinges on its ability to bring valuable new products and/or services to the market. The proper management of intellectual property will lead to improved revenues and profitability. New ideas and innovation don't just happen. They take work—often years and years of work—behind the scenes before they are able to be taken to the market. First, there is the basic conception of the idea. It takes talent and ability to apply that to innovation. Universities should be given their fair share of credit for their role in research and development in Australia, and I will also add in there some of the TAFEs. I've seen TAFEs at Acacia Ridge in my electorate that do incredible work when it comes to welding in the gas industry. That's just one example. They're able to solve problems that the professors at Harvard couldn't solve. During the research and development stage, investigations of other third-party IP patents will need to be made, so intellectual property owned by other parties is also protected.

The commercialisation of a product requires funding. One of the considerations that a potential backer of a product will look at is whether the intellectual property is protected and to what extent—as in: will they get a return on their money? Once it goes out into the public domain or people are copying it without protection, the money invested might not come back. IP ownership is also important when entering into partnerships with third parties, particularly if there is going to be manufacturing taking place in another country that doesn't necessarily have our strong protections or even our common law system. If a partner adds further technical development, it may be necessary at this stage to further identify and protect intellectual property. Once the product goes to
market, the IP patent should be completely locked down. Once at the market, the product is ripe to be copied if the IP patent is not tightly held by its owner.

This part of this piece of legislation is a significant concern for me. Generally, as I said upfront, we'll be supporting it, and the minister knows that. But we have put forward some amendments that we ask the government to consider. I know that the current patent system is difficult, especially for SMEs, to access. As a general observation, SMEs aren't using the innovation patent very much at all. Meanwhile, sadly, on the Coalition government's watch, Australia's innovation ranking has fallen on the World Intellectual Property Organisation's Global Innovation Index. This is not just a statement for lawyers. This means that we are effectively going backwards, because in the world today you must run fast just to stay in your current place, and you need to run even faster to get ahead as a country in this digital revolution that we are experiencing. IP lawyers and innovation systems experts must concede the status quo isn't good enough as it currently stands. Some of the stakeholders have acknowledged this current inadequate state of play in discussions with the opposition in recent weeks.

That is why the opposition is urging the government to promptly address the need for greater support for Australian SMEs in protecting their intellectual property through the standard patent. Smaller businesses should be given more time before the innovation patent is removed, and they ought to have greater opportunities to present their case to officials about how the innovation patent is being used in individual cases and what can be done going forward to ensure a replacement system is put in place in a timely way. We urge the government, particularly in these difficult economic times, to support Labor's amendments, and, in so doing, do the right thing by smaller- and medium-sized businesses that are especially frustrated by the government's approach to date.

I have some faith in the minister at the table, the member for McPherson. I know that she understands business, comes from a business background, and came through with an engineering degree at a time when there weren't a lot of women taking up engineering. And I've worked on the committee with the minister. But I do have some concerns about the Prime Minister when it comes to innovation. I don't know the Prime Minister well. I haven't ever been on a committee with him, but someone who does know about him is former Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull. An article by Lucy Cormack on 22 November last year says:

Malcolm Turnbull has told a technology conference in Sydney that innovation is not Prime Minister Scott Morrison's 'comfort zone ... he doesn't have the background or enthusiasm …'

So that's the former Prime Minister, who worked closely with his trusted Treasurer. So we know that the Prime Minister doesn't have an appetite for innovation. Perhaps focusing on the past is where he's comfortable, rather than the challenges of tomorrow.

One of those challenges is obviously the fact that Australia is not producing enough graduates in science, technology, engineering and maths. We know the opportunities that will come. The previous speakers, the members for Hotham and Lilley, have detailed the opportunities that will come in the IT and STEM areas. Basically, enrolments are the lowest they've been, as a percentage, for the last 20 years. That means there will be a shortage of jobs for young Australians and instead we'll be turning to people overseas.

I would urge the minister and the Prime Minister to not stick with the status quo. We are not doing enough. We are effectively going backwards. We have seen the productivity figures that reflect much of this in terms of where the economy is either flatlining or worse, and that will only be exacerbated by not having enough STEM graduates. I commend the legislation and particularly the amendments put forward by the member for Hotham.

Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson—Minister for Industry, Science and Technology) (18:10): I thank those opposite for their contribution to the debate today, and I want to assure them that the government remains committed to dedicated support services to help Australian SMEs navigate the patent system and establish a strong intellectual property portfolio. Those few small and medium enterprises that regularly use innovation patents will receive support and services to help ensure they are not negatively affected. Importantly, it will make the system less complex and ensure that second-tier patents aren't being used inappropriately by big business.

During the course of the debate tonight, there were a number of issues raised by those opposite. I don't intend to address every single one of those issues, but what I can do is, firstly, assure the House that this government is committed to making sure that Australia is an innovative nation. We are committed to making sure government plays a role in that but also that businesses play a role, because what is clear is that business investment in research and development has declined; it's not where it needs to be. We are calling on businesses to look at what they are doing with research and development and look at opportunities to expand, to work closely with our science agencies, including CSIRO, and also to work with our universities. What we do need to make sure of so that Australia becomes an innovative nation is that industry and researchers are working very closely together.

Both I and the education minister, Dan Tehan, are committed to making sure that we are engaging with our researchers and our research organisations and that we are doing all that we can to promote engagement between
industry and researchers. We already have in place many programs that do support that engagement. We have the CRCs, we have the CRCPs, we have industry growth centres, and we have many programs that are designed to make sure that there is a commitment from our businesses to growing research and development in this country and also innovation.

What is important to note, though, is that many enterprises—in particular our medium and larger businesses—engage in innovation that is outside traditional research and development but is important. It's generally referred to as non-R&D innovation, so those engaged in businesses would understand clearly what I am saying. What is important is that we don't just look at what is happening through the benefits of the research and development tax incentive but that we look at the innovation that's happening every single day in almost every single business right across Australia, whether that is looking at a new system, a new procedure, new material or a new way of marketing their particular product. This is all innovation. It is all development of the products of their services.

We need to encourage that rather than become a country of people who do nothing but put down those that are trying to have a go. This government is committed to supporting those businesses taking very proactive action in the innovation space, whether that is in traditional R&D or whether it is the non-R&D innovation.

The other issue that I would like to speak about is science, technology, engineering and maths. Everyone in this place knows how committed I am to encouraging young students to study science and maths at school and to pursue STEM careers as an option. We are well aware that the number of students studying higher level maths is declining right across Australia. That's not a new phenomenon and it's also not a phenomenon that's restricted to Australia. When I speak to my counterparts in many other nations around the world, they are also experiencing issues in attracting enough people to study science and maths. We have some unique issues in Australia, and a lot of it is within our education system where students are encouraged to take the subjects that are going to result in them getting the highest entry score for university in year 12. What I'm committed to doing is to change the narrative so that our young people understand that 75 per cent of the jobs of the future will require those STEM skills. They shouldn't be selling themselves short when they are at school. They should be studying maths, they should be studying higher level maths and the science subjects, and looking at the careers. Now, it may not be that they become scientists and work at a bench, but there will be opportunities for them to use those STEM skills that they have acquired at school almost each and every day as they enter the workforce. It is a significant issue. The former chief scientist, Professor Ian Chubb was particularly engaged on how to address these issues.

This government has committed considerable funding to make sure that girls, in particular, are given an opportunity to study science, technology, engineering and maths. We are very committed to making sure we increase those numbers. As an engineer myself, the unfortunate thing was that at the time I graduated many years ago, I was one of two girls in a class of about 25 to 30 students. We actually were the first girls to graduate in mechanical engineering from the Queensland University of Technology. Many years later, whilst there are some changes in a number of the engineering disciplines, overall the figures are not where they need be for women and there is no reason why women should not be studying science and maths and undertaking STEM careers. So I acknowledge that there is more work to be done, but I will say very clearly that, as a government, we are absolutely committed to addressing where we have skill shortages. To do that, we need to make sure that we are encouraging people to study science and maths at school and I will continue to work to make sure that that happens. I commend the bill to the House.

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

The House divided. [18:22]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes .................68
Noes .................77
Majority .............9

AYES

Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP
Bowen, CE
Burney, LJ
Butler, MC
Byrne, AM
Champion, ND
Claydon, SC
Collins, JM

Aly, A
Bird, SL
Burke, AS
Burns, J
Butler, TM
Chalmers, JE
Clare, JD
Coker, EA
Conroy, PM

CHAMBER
### AYES

Dick, MD  
Elliot, MJ  
Freelander, MR  
Giles, AJ  
Gosling, LJ  
Husic, EN  
Kearney, G  
Keogh, MJ  
King, CF  
Leigh, AK  
McBride, EM  
Mitchell, RG  
Murphy, PJ  
O'Connor, BPJ  
Owens, JA  
Perrett, GD  
Plibersek, TJ  
Rowland, MA  
Shorten, WR  
Snowdon, WE  
Swanson, MJ  
Thistlethwaite, MJ  
Vamvakinou, M  
Wells, AS  
Wilson, JH  

### NOES

Alexander, JG  
Andrews, KJ  
Archer, BK  
Broadbent, RE  
Chester, D  
Conaghan, PJ  
Coulton, M  
Dutton, PC  
Evans, TM  
Fletcher, PW  
Frydenberg, JA  
Gillespie, DA  
Hammond, CM  
Hawke, AG  
Howarth, LR  
Irons, SJ  
Kelly, C  
Landry, ML  
Ley, SP  
Liu, G  
Martin, FB  
McIntosh, MI  
Morrison, SJ  
O'Brien, LS  
O'Dowd, KD  
Pearce, GB  
Porter, CC  
Ramsey, RE (teller)  
Sharkie, RCC  
Simmonds, J  
Stevens, J  
Taylor, AJ  
Thompson, P  
van Manen, AJ  
Wallace, AB  
Wicks, LE  
Wilson, TR  
Wyatt, KG  
Zimmerman, T
Question negatived.
Original question agreed to.
Bill read a second time.

Third Reading
Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson—Minister for Industry, Science and Technology) (18:28): by leave—I move:
That this bill be now read a third time.
Question agreed to.
Bill read a third time.

MOTIONS
Minister for Health
Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (18:28): I seek leave to move:
That the House:
(1) notes that the Health Minister:
   (a) has attempted to influence independent Therapeutic Goods Administration processes to secure the review of a ban of a DIY flu-testing device in order to benefit a Liberal Party donor;
   (b) denied ever meeting representatives of Ellume, the maker of the device, when in fact he had his photo taken with the son of the Chairman in Parliament House in September 2017;
   (c) has a history of using his position to benefit the Liberal Party, including awarding lucrative MRI licences to a Liberal Party Vice President and donor; and
   (d) has to date failed to explain or account for his conduct; and
(2) therefore, calls on the Minister to make a statement to this House, explaining why his behaviour makes him fit to be the Minister in charge of our nation’s health system.

Leave not granted.

Mr BOWEN: I move:
That so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended as would prevent the member for McMahon from moving the following motion immediately:
That the House:
(1) notes that the Health Minister:
   (a) has attempted to influence independent Therapeutic Goods Administration processes to secure the review of a ban of a DIY flu-testing device in order to benefit a Liberal Party donor;
   (b) denied ever meeting representatives of Ellume, the maker of the device, when in fact he had his photo taken with the son of the Chairman in Parliament House in September 2017;
   (c) has a history of using his position to benefit the Liberal Party, including awarding lucrative MRI licences to a Liberal Party Vice President and donor; and
   (d) has to date failed to explain or account for his conduct; and
(2) therefore, calls on the Minister to make a statement to this House, explaining why his behaviour makes him fit to be the Minister in charge of our nation’s health system.

This is at its core a corrupt government. This is at its core a government which abuses the power that it holds. This is a government which has abused every element and lever at its disposal, and the health minister is no different to the others.

Mr BUCHHOLZ (Wright—Assistant Minister for Road Safety and Freight Transport) (18:31): I move:
That the Member be no longer heard.

The SPEAKER: The question is that the member for McMahon be no further heard.
The House divided. [18:36]
(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ayes</th>
<th>Noes</th>
<th>Majority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>74</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AYES
Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Andrews, KL

CHAMBER
AYS

Archer, BK
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Conaghan, PJ
Coulton, M
Dutton, PC
Evans, TM
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hastie, AW
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Joyce, BT
Laming, A
Leeser, J
Littleproud, D
Marino, NB
McCormack, MF
McVeigh, JJ
Morton, B
O’Brien, T
Pasin, A
Pitt, KJ
Price, ML
Robert, SR
Simmons, J
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Tudge, AE
Vasta, RX
Webster, AE
Wilson, RJ
Wood, JP
Young, T

Bell, AM
Buchholz, S
Christensen, GR
Connelly, V
Drum, BK (teller)
Entsch, WG
Falinski, JG
Flint, NJ
Gee, AR
Hammond, CM
Hawke, AG
Howarth, LR
Irons, SJ
Kelly, C
Landry, ML
Ley, SP
Liu, G
Martin, FB
McIntosh, MJ
Morrison, SJ
O’Brien, LS
O’Dowd, KD
Pearce, GB
Porter, CC
Ramsey, RE (teller)
Sharman, DN
Stevens, J
Taylor, AJ
Thompson, P
van Manen, AJ
Wallace, AB
Wicks, LE
Wilson, TR
Wyatt, KG
Zimmerman, T

NOES

Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP
Bowen, CE
Burney, LJ
Butler, MC
Byrne, AM
Champion, ND
Claydon, SC
Collins, JM
Dick, MD
Elliot, MJ
Freelander, MR
Giles, AJ
Gosling, LJ
Hayes, CP
Husic, EN
Kearney, G
Keigh, MJ
King, CF
Leigh, AK
McBride, EM
Mitchell, RG
Murphy, PJ
O’Connor, BPJ
Owens, JA
Perrett, GD
Rowland, MA
Sharkie, RCC
Smith, DPB
Stanley, AM (teller)

Aly, A
Bird, SL
Burke, AS
Burns, J
Butler, TM
Chalmers, JE
Clare, JD
Coker, EA
Conroy, PM
Dreyfus, MA
Fitzgibbon, JA
Georganas, S
Gorman, P
Haines, H
Hill, JC
Jones, SP
Kelly, MJ
Khalil, P
King, MMH
Marles, RD
Mitchell, BK
Mulino, D
Neumann, SK
O’Neil, CE
Payne, AE
Phillips, FE
Ryan, JC (teller)
Shorten, WR
Snowdon, WE
Steggall, Z
Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER: Is the motion seconded?

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (18:41): I second the motion. This is corruption; that's what it is. This is meant to be an independent process—more independent than any other. It's about people's health—

Mr BUCHHOLZ (Wright—Assistant Minister for Road Safety and Freight Transport) (18:41): I move:

That the Member be no longer heard.

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

The House divided. [18:42]

(The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith)

Ayes .................. 74
Noes .................. 70
Majority .............. 4

AYES

Alexander, JG
Andrews, KJ
Archer, BK
Broadbent, RE
Chester, D
Conaghan, PJ
Coulton, M
Dutton, PC
Evans, TM
Fletcher, PW
Frydenberg, JA
Gillespie, DA
Hastie, AW
Hogan, KJ
Hunt, GA
Joyce, BT
Laming, A
Leeser, J
Littleproud, D
Marino, NB
McCormack, MF
McVeigh, JJ
Morton, B
O'Brien, T
Pasin, A
Pitt, KJ
Price, ML
Robert, SR
Simmonds, J
Sukkar, MS
Tehan, DT
Tudge, AE
Vasta, RX
Webster, AE
Wilson, RJ
Wood, JP
Young, T

NOES

Albanese, AN
Aly, A
The question is that the motion moved by the member for McMahon be agreed to.

The House divided. [18:48]

(18:43) The Speaker—Hon. Tony Smith

Ayes ..................... 67
Noes ..................... 77
Majority ............... 10

AYES

Albanese, AN
Bandt, AP
Bowen, CE
Burney, LJ
Butler, MC
Byrne, AM
Champion, ND
Claydon, SC
Collins, JM
Dick, MD
Elliot, MJ
Freelander, MR
Giles, AJ
Gosling, LJ
Hayes, CP
Husic, EN
Kearney, G
Keogh, MJ
King, CF
Leigh, AK
McBride, EM
Mitchell, RG
Murphy, PJ
O'Connor, BPJ
Owens, JA
Perrett, GD
Rowland, MA
Sharkie, RCC
Smith, DPB
Stanley, AM (teller)
Swanson, MJ
Thistlethwaite, MJ
Vavakionou, M
Wells, AS
Wilson, JH

Alys, A
Bird, SL
Burke, AS
Burns, J
Butler, TM
Chalmers, JE
Clare, JD
Coker, EA
Conroy, PM
Dreyfus, MA
Fitzgibbon, JA
Georganas, S
Gorman, P
Haines, H
Hill, JC
Jones, SP
Kelly, MJ
Khalil, P
King, MMH
Marles, RD
Mitchell, BK
Mullino, D
Neumann, SK
O'Neil, CE
Payne, AE
Phillips, FE
Ryan, JC (teller)
Shorten, WR
Snowdon, WE
Steggall, Z
Templeman, SR
Thwaites, KL
Watts, TG
Wilkie, AD
Zappia, A
AYES

Neumann, SK  O'Connor, BPJ
O'Neil, CE  Owens, JA
Payne, AE  Perrett, GD
Phillips, FE  Rowland, MA
Ryan, JC (teller)  Shorten, WR
Smith, DPB  Snowdon, WE
Stanley, AM (teller)  Swanson, MJ
Templeman, SR  Thistlethwaite, MJ
Thwaites, KL  Vamvakinou, M
Watts, TG  Wells, AS
Wilkie, AD  Wilson, JH
Zappia, A

NOES

Alexander, JG  Allen, K
Andrews, KJ  Andrews, KL
Archer, BK  Bell, AM
Broadbent, RE  Buchholz, S
Chester, D  Christensen, GR
Conaghan, PJ  Connelly, V
Coulton, M  Drum, DK (teller)
Dutton, PC  Entsch, WG
Evans, TM  Falinski, JG
Fletcher, PW  Flint, NJ
Frydenberg, JA  Gee, AR
Gillespie, DA  Haines, H
Hammond, CM  Hastie, AW
Hawke, AG  Hogan, KJ
Howarth, LR  Hunt, GA
Irons, SJ  Joyce, BT
Kelly, C  Laming, A
Landry, ML  Leeser, J
Ley, SP  Littleproud, D
Liu, G  Marino, NB
Martin, FB  McCormack, MF
McIntosh, MI  McVeigh, JJ
Morrison, SJ  Morton, B
O'Brien, LS  O'Brien, T
O'Dowd, KD  Pasin, A
Pearce, GB  Pitt, KJ
Porter, CC  Price, ML
Ramsey, RE (teller)  Robert, SR
Sharkie, RCC  Sharma, DN
Simmonds, J  Steggall, Z
Stevens, J  Sukkar, MS
Taylor, AJ  Tahan, DT
Thompson, P  Tudge, AE
van Manen, AJ  Vasta, RX
Wallace, AB  Webster, AE
Wicks, LE  Wilson, RJ
Wilson, TR  Wood, JP
Wyatt, KG  Young, T
Zimmerman, T

Question negatived.

BILLS

Treasury Laws Amendment (Combating Illegal Phoenixing) Bill 2019

Consideration of Senate Message

Bill returned from the Senate with amendments.

Ordered that the amendments be considered immediately.

Senate's amendments—

(1) Clause 2, page 2 (table item 1), omit "Sections 1 to 3", substitute "Sections 1 to 4".
(2) Page 2 (after line 11), after clause 3, add:

4 Review of operation of amendments

(1) The Minister must cause an independent review to be conducted of the operation of the amendments made by Schedules 1, 3 and 4 to this Act.

(2) The review must start as soon as practicable after the end of 5 years after this Act receives the Royal Assent.

(3) The persons who conduct the review must give the Minister a written report of the review.

(4) The Minister must cause a copy of the report to be tabled in each House of the Parliament within 15 sitting days of that House after the report is given to the Minister.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Wicks): I understand that it is the wish of the House to consider the amendments together.

Mr BUCHHOLZ (Wright—Assistant Minister for Road Safety and Freight Transport) (18:53): I move:

That the amendments be agreed to.

Mr STEPHEN JONES (Whitlam) (18:53): When this matter of the Treasury Laws Amendment (Combating Illegal Phoenixing) Bill 2019 first came before the House we moved some amendments. We moved them again upstairs and we welcome the fact that the government has accepted the amendments after discussions with me and my office.

The bill deals with phoenixing. It's a serious issue. On a weekly basis members of this place have walking through their doors small businesses who have been done over by unscrupulous actors. We want to close that down and we want to work with the government to ensure that we can close it down. We are sceptical that the measures within this bill will do the job that's needed. When the bill first came before the House we moved an additional schedule, which went to the provision of director identification numbers.

Between that time and now, the government, which didn't support our amendments on director identification numbers in the House, after a period of consideration moved its own bill in relation to registries which would provide for the introduction of director identification numbers. This is the real gain: being able to track down directors who are recidivists in this area, who go from one company to another and put in place strategies which are specifically designed not only to defeat their creditors but to defeat the Australian tax office as well. We welcome the fact that the amendments have been agreed to and we call on the government to get its skates on in relation to the other matter.

Question agreed to.

BUSINESS

Rearrangement

Mr BUCHHOLZ (Wright—Assistant Minister for Road Safety and Freight Transport) (18:55): by leave—I move:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent:

(1) the Federation Chamber meeting for the following times tomorrow, 6 February: from 9.45 am until 1.30 pm; and

(2) the Prime Minister's motion of condolence on the Australian Bushfires to be the only item of business.

Question agreed to.

BILLS

Australian Business Growth Fund Bill 2019

Second Reading

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Dr CHALMERS (Rankin) (18:56): Labor strongly supports small and medium-sized businesses in Australia. We want to see them thrive. They're a critical driver of the economy. Currently, more than three million SMEs employ around seven million Australians. Clearly, they're a crucial part of the economy and we need to give them support where we can out of this building so that they can continue to serve Australians right around Australia, particularly right now, at a difficult time for so many in bushfire-affected communities. Labor does support, in principle, the legislation that is before the House tonight, given the importance of SMEs and the challenges that they face in accessing the finance they need to grow and to employ more people.

As the Reserve Bank, the Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman and others have pointed out, small and medium-sized businesses have faced big challenges in accessing finance, particularly in the post global financial crisis environment. The Australian Business Growth Fund Bill 2019 authorises the
government to invest $100 million in a Corporations Act company that will become the Australian Business Growth Fund. The fund itself is intended to increase access to finance for SMEs through equity funding by the government, partnering with financial institutions such as banks and superannuation funds. It's based on the model proposed in 2018 by the Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman, which was informed by similar funds that exist in the UK and Canada.

It's important to note for the House that the bill itself doesn't contain much detail on the operational and governance arrangements of the fund. But what it does do, according to the government, is provide long-term equity capital investments of between $5 million and $15 million to eligible Australian businesses where they've generated annual revenue of between $2 million and $100 million and can demonstrate three years of revenue growth and profitability. The fund can only have an investment stake of between 10 and 40 per cent of an eligible business so that SME owners maintain a controlling interest. The fund itself won't be a Commonwealth company. The Commonwealth will not have a controlling interest in the fund itself.

Labor support this fund in principle, as we've indicated before, including in the previous term of this parliament. We want to see it work properly. We want to make sure that it does benefit commercially viable SMEs that need finance but are currently unable to access it. We do have some concerns, including the fact that the government allowed something like four days of consultation on the draft legislation. We think that, if the government were serious about getting this right and making sure that the $100 million injected by the federal government had every chance of being effective and well invested, they should have, as part of the consultation period, given people more than four days to consider it. I also think the government hasn't provided enough detail on the governance and operation of the fund, and I think it's really important that we clarify that given the government's poor record in recent times—but not just in recent times—when it comes to governance and especially when it comes to integrity.

For these reasons, Labor will support the bill in the House but will seek to refer it to a short Senate inquiry for the purposes of seeking clarity on the governance and operational arrangements of the fund and getting views from stakeholders and experts on how best to implement the fund. We think that this Senate inquiry can happen quite quickly. It needn't hold up some of the other progress that needs to be made in time if the bill does stack up and gets through the houses of parliament, but we think it's important that we allow some of these issues to be aired, discussed and considered, because we don't think the government has given sufficient time for that sort of consultation to date.

We also need to be clear on what the bill doesn't do. The bill won't be enough to turn around the economy, which has been floundering on the government's watch since well before the events of this summer. It doesn't fix the government's failures when it comes to small business. It doesn't fix the fact that the government has let small business down by failing to act to ensure small businesses get paid on time, by delaying any action on unfair contract terms and by taking action to combat illegal phoenixing only after ongoing pressure from Labor after refusing to take action on this issue for years. Whether it's payment times, unfair contract terms or phoenixing, it's clear in my view that those opposite take the small business community for granted. So we will continue to hold them to account to ensure small and medium sized businesses are not left exposed by this government failing to manage the economy in the interests of ordinary communities right around the country. That's why I move:

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

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

(1) notes the Government's lack of adequate public consultation in relation to the Australian Business Growth Fund; and

(2) further notes that the Government has failed to support the economic climate faced by small and medium sized businesses, with the economy deteriorating well before the bushfire crisis and the coronavirus outbreak hit".

Under the Liberals—and we've seen it time and time again in recent releases of key economic data—the economy is defined by below-trend growth, stagnant wages, weak consumption, falling business investment and record high net debt. The economy has been floundering for some time now. It has substantially deteriorated since the election. Growth has almost halved since Treasurer Frydenberg took over. Quarterly growth slowed in the most recent quarter. The government's own midyear update downgraded growth in wages and said the private sector was going to rise. The private domestic economy has gone backwards for two quarters. Consumption is at its slowest pace since the GFC and business investment at its slowest pace since the early 1990s recession. The list goes on and on, unfortunately.

In this context it is important that we take steps like the one that we are discussing today. But it's not enough. More needs to be done. Right around Australia, whether it's the calls from the business community or the calls from others such as expert economists, other analysts and peak groups like the AiG, there is a recognition that something needs to be done to turn the economy around. The government needs to plan not just to get through an
election by spraying around dodgy grants in marginal seats; it needs an actual plan to get the economy going again and to get wages going so there is some consumption and small businesses can thrive in this country.

What we're talking about today is important in that regard if we get the details right, and the Senate inquiry will help us with that, but more needs to be done to support our small businesses. Part of that is making sure that people have the incomes to spend in the shops of this country so that small businesses get the customers and the business that they need and deserve in order to employ more Australians.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Wicks): Is the amendment seconded?

Mr Josh Wilson: I second the amendment and reserve my right to speak.

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde—Chief Government Whip) (19:04): It's always a pleasure to rise in this House and speak about the things that this government is doing for business across the country and, in particular, small to medium businesses. The Australian Business Growth Fund Bill 2019 seeks to establish the Australian Business Growth Fund. The purpose of this special fund is to help small and medium businesses to more readily access equity funding to raise capital, fund their growth and prosper in the long term.

I know from many discussions I've had with small-to-medium business enterprises across my electorate, and I have some 17,000, that access to capital at affordable interest rates or through other avenues is one of their greatest dilemmas. It is always far easier for the big end of town to raise capital reasonably cheaply from a range of sources. The provisions in this bill go a long way towards establishing another avenue for small-to-medium businesses to access equity funding rather than constantly having to put their house on the line and then, when their equity in their house runs out, running out of access to capital to continue to build and grow their business.

The provisions in this bill would authorise the Commonwealth to invest in the Australian Business Growth Fund to be established as a company under the Corporations Act. Essentially, this would allow the government to invest and purchase shares or debentures in the company. The government has previously committed $100 million to the Australian Business Growth Fund in addition to investment already committed by participating financial institutions. The investment capacity of the fund is currently at $540 million with the potential to grow to around $1 billion.

The case for establishing the Australian Business Growth Fund is clear. We know there is a gap in the Australian market for patient equity capital for small-to-medium enterprises that is not directly addressed by venture capital or private equity. We've also seen over time attempts at employee share ownership schemes, but they never seem to have gained the traction here that they have in many other countries around the world. Many SMEs find it difficult to raise capital for expansion or to fund innovation without taking on additional debt or giving up control of their business. That's where this equity funding, and equity funding more generally, is the best source of finance for many SMEs, because it provides a solid long-term foundation on which to grow their businesses.

In 2018, the Reserve Bank released a report highlighting the difficulties Australian SMEs face in trying to secure finance. The first is the well-known fact that banks are often reluctant to lend to small business, particularly start-ups, because of their perceived risk of default. Further, SMEs are often asked to put up real estate or other business assets as collateral to secure finance. Meanwhile, obtaining unsecured finance is normally difficult but also extraordinarily expensive in terms of the interest rates and fees they are likely to face.

(Quorum formed) One of the difficulties for small-to-medium enterprises in obtaining finance many times is the cost of that finance, particularly where it is unsecured. All these finance requirements are on top of strict prudential requirements associated with financial institutions lending to small businesses for equity investments.

As was mentioned by the member for Rankin in his contribution, small-to-medium enterprises are the backbone of our economy. They create jobs, drive innovation and boost competition across the Australian marketplace and overseas. When businesses are doing well, they'll generally employ more people. As a consequence, Australians right across the country are better off. We have over 2.2 million SMEs, which account for over 68 per cent of our private sector employment and over 35 per cent of our gross domestic product. A healthy small-business sector is a prerequisite for a growing economy creating better employment opportunities.

This government is committed to backing business and, by extension, hardworking Australians. We have been backing them in a range of areas: through giving them tax cuts, with the lowest business tax rate in 50 years; through red tape relief by simplifying business activity statements and with the Deregulation Taskforce; through the extension of the instant asset write-off to $30,000 for businesses with a turnover of less than $50 million; by improving access to finance, with the establishment of the $2 billion Australian Business Securitisation Fund so that small businesses can get the funding they need to grow and prosper; and by providing the ability for smaller banks to securitise their small-business loan book to free up capital.
As I mentioned earlier, my electorate has over 17,000 small-to-medium business enterprises. With the requirements around the Australian Business Growth Fund for long-term capital equity investments above $15 million, where these businesses have generated between $2 million and $100 million in turnover or annual revenue and three years of revenue growth and profitability, there are some 800 businesses across my electorate that may well benefit from the Australian Business Growth Fund. I’ve talked to a number of businesses recently who are looking to expand their operations. They’ve said to me, 'I'm not going to borrow any more money, and I'm looking for capital equity investment.' This bill presents the opportunity for these businesses to realise their growth potential without longer term access to equity funding across a range of industries each year, without being a burden on the assets they might already have secured for the loans they currently have.

The Australian Business Growth Fund will take a minority stake in businesses it invests in of between 10 and 40 per cent, to allow owners to retain control of their business while also allowing the fund to retain sufficient capital to encourage business growth. One of the advantages I see with this fund, with these equity injections, is that it may actually provide an opportunity for some of these SMEs to reduce the debt load on their businesses and make their businesses more profitable and more viable for the longer term.

Similar successful business growth funds have been established in the UK and Canada and have shown there is a demand for this type of finance and that patient capital investment can be profitable for investors. As such, the Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman supports the establishment of the Business Growth Fund for the private sector in Australia as was highlighted in its research paper in June 2018.

The Australian Business Growth Fund will operate commercially and independently from the government and participating financial institutions. The Commonwealth will make arrangements relating to the operations of the fund but will not retain any controlling interest and will hold less than 50 per cent of the shares. The Australian Business Growth Fund will be run by an independent board and management team, investment decisions will be made by professional managers and performance will be assessed on a fully commercial basis in accordance with private-sector funding models.

I commend the work and the effort of the hardworking small-to-medium business owners and operators around the country and I trust that this bill and this Australian Business Growth Fund will further help them by giving them an additional opportunity to continue to grow, develop their businesses and continue to create wealth for Australia, employing Australians right across our great country. I commend this bill in its original form to the House.

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (19:16): Labor will support the Australian Business Growth Fund Bill 2019 subject to the amendment moved by the shadow Treasurer in the House but will refer it to a Senate inquiry. The reason for that is there are many unanswered questions and issues regarding the operation and governance of the company that is established by this bill that will be important in deciding whether or not the government should be investing $100 million of taxpayers' funds into a company that is essentially a partnership between the government and some big Australian banks.

This particular bill authorises the government to invest up to $100 million in a Corporations Act company that will soon become the Australian Business Growth Fund. The bill allows the Commonwealth to make arrangements relating to the operations of the fund but won't allow the Commonwealth to control the fund. The fund is intended to increase access to finance for small-to-medium businesses through equity funding by the government and partnering financial institutions such as banks and superannuation funds.

The fund is based on a model proposed in 2018 by the small business ombudsman, Kate Carnell, which was informed by similar funds that exist in the UK and Canada. The bill does not contain much detail on the operational and governance arrangements of the fund, and that is why Labor sees fit to refer this to a Senate inquiry, to try and get more information out of the government about how this fund is going to operate and, importantly, how the government arrangements will work. According to the government, the fund will provide long-term equity capital investments of between $5 million and $15 million to eligible Australian businesses where they have generated annual revenue between $2 million and $100 million and can demonstrate three years of growth and profitability. It can only have an investment stake of between 10 and 40 per cent of eligible businesses, with SME owners maintaining the controlling interests.

In addition to the government's commitment, each of the four major banks have agreed to commit $100 million to the fund, and Macquarie Group and HSBC will each contribute $20 million. The government aims to grow the fund from the current investment capacity of $540 million to $1 billion as it matures. The fund will not be a Commonwealth business enterprise or Commonwealth company; it will be a company incorporated under the Corporations Act, and the Commonwealth effectively will be a minority stakeholder in a private company.
The bill allows the Commonwealth to make arrangements relating to the operations of the fund but it must not control the fund. According to the Treasurer's office, the fund will have four independent directors, including a chair, with the Commonwealth and each of the banks appointing one director. The Commonwealth-appointed director is likely to be a senior Treasury official. The fact that this is a private company and not a GBE raises questions about how the Commonwealth and the banks will work together for that common purpose, and this is hard to know given the fund doesn't have a clear mandate.

These are the questions that we're asking the government to answer and to supply information about to the parliament before we can all make an informed decision about whether or not $100 million of taxpayers' funds should be invested in this company. We need to know about the investment mandate of the fund. Who will be on the board? What happens with profits that are generated by this particular fund? Will it offer dividends to shareholders? And what, importantly, do these banks get out of being involved in this particular fund? These are questions that the government has been unable to answer to date, despite attempts by some outside of parliament and by the opposition to get those questions answered. Yet they expect the parliament to sign off on a $100 million investment of taxpayers' dollars basically without doing their due diligence, without providing the necessary information for due diligence to be done to credit whether or not this is a wise investment.

Labor is correct to be sceptical about the operation of this fund, particularly given that there is a similar example of this that occurred in New South Wales with the establishment of the GO NSW Equity Fund. That is a fund that is currently being wound up because of problems and dubious investments that were made by the fund. According to media reports, one circumstance that related to an agricultural investment made by the fund was controversial because one of the investment advisers was a majority shareholder in an investment that was made by that particular fund. These are all of the issues that have to be sorted out before the parliament should properly sign-off $100 million worth of taxpayers' funds going into this particular investment.

It surprises me somewhat that the banks are making an investment in this. When the former CEO of Westpac appeared before an economics committee and was asked about this, he stated: I'm not sure it's going to make a material change in the overall growth of the SME sector.

That was the view of the CEO of a bank that's making an investment in this, yet this government expects the parliament to just blindly sign-off on a $100 million investment without the necessary due diligence being done.

There are some concerns that the fund risks replacing other private sector investment into SMEs that would otherwise be able to attain equity finance, rather than providing finance to commercially viable business that are currently missing out. Concerns were also raised about the short time frame provided for public consultation in respect of the exposure draft of this bill, which was only four days. So that consultation period on a $100 million investment of taxpayer funds ran from 4 November to 8 November. That, and the fact that the submissions weren't made public, raised red flags for us on this side of the parliament about this particular fund. And, as I said earlier, the bill doesn't provide much detail around the fund's governance mandate or its operational arrangements. This should be explored as part of a Senate inquiry, particularly given this government's poor record when it comes to fund governance in other areas of government.

In conclusion, we will be supporting the passage of this bill through the House, but it is correct and it is right for the Labor Party to refer this to a Senate inquiry and to ask the government to provide the information, not only to the people who are potentially going to use this fund but also to the Australian public who, no doubt, want to see value for taxpayers' dollars in investments that are being made by the government in cooperation with the banks in establishing a company. On that basis, we request that this bill go to a Senate inquiry to sort out those issues and for a report to be given before it comes back to this place so that we can vote on it. This will ensure that the integrity of the fund is assured and, importantly, that its operational requirements and its governance are first-class and ensure that taxpayers get value for money.

Mr Falinski (Mackellar) (19:25): I will speak briefly about the Australian Business Growth Fund Bill 2019, but not so briefly that you cannot call a quorum on me!

Australia is a very interesting country. We have never had an abundance of capital and we have never had an abundance of risk capital. It is for this reason that when we look at the top 20 companies the United States has by capitalisation, all of them bar one were founded or started after 1975. In Australia, when we look at our top 20 companies by capitalisation, the youngest of those companies—the one that was founded at the latest date—was Woolworths in 1928. When we think about the challenges facing our economy at the moment, which the Labor Party points out to us on a regular basis, it is normally the case that we have seen productivity growth halve since the time of the Howard government due to the onerous and negligent laws introduced by the Gillard-Rudd government that have so tied up our corporations and financial service companies in red tape, ensuring that they
do not have the ability or the capacity to allocate capital in our economy as efficiently and as effectively as we would otherwise want them to have.

The result of this has been that, because productivity has been lower, we have seen that real wages have been lower. Because productivity has been lower, consumers have suffered because we have not seen the formation of new companies. We have seen an increase in the barriers to entry for new corporations. Consumers do not get the innovation in products and services that they would normally have because of the fact that there are no new companies coming into the market. If Apple had been founded in Australia it would never have got off the ground because of the laws and policies that the Labor Party have inflicted upon the people and the economy of Australia. And we need to understand that the same would go for Google, the same would go for Microsoft and the same would go for a whole raft of companies that have created untold wealth, products and services for individuals everywhere across the world.

It is interesting that Australia's most famous and probably most successful IT company is a little company called Atlassian, founded by Scott Farquhar and Mike Cannon-Brooks. When they came to the point of listing that company, they didn't choose Australia to list that company in; they chose the Nasdaq in the United States. We have companies, like Palantir, which have had to move large parts of their workforce to the United States because of the tax laws introduced by 'Chairman Swan' when he was Treasurer of this country. This meant that no-one wanted to start an employee share scheme.

So we have the so-called party of the workers ensuring that when the people who were working hard to make these companies as successful as they are, who were putting their intellectual nous and all that they had into the starting of these companies and the success that they were—and the founders wanted to share that success; they wanted to share the upside of their ventures, their ideas, their sweat and their labour—that it couldn't happen. They must go outside this chamber and hang their heads in shame at the damage they have done to Australian workers in this country.

But now the Liberal Party is the party of the worker, because we care about people getting a fair share of what they put into the work and effort that they put into their companies. This bill is only necessary because of the onerous financial service regulations introduced by the Labor Party, which, by the way, did not help consumers. In fact, they did quite the opposite. There was more harm at the hands of financial service companies under the Labor Party than there has ever been under the Liberal Party! They had Trio and Storm Financial—and that's just two!

And we don't have to go far back to the Victorian government under John Cain. They had the State Bank of Victoria that at one point made every Victorian poorer than your average citizens of some very developing countries. That's what you get under the Labor Party. This bill is necessary because we need to free up risk capital in Australia, and I recommend this bill to this House in the unamended form.

Debate interrupted.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Wicks)** (19:30): It being 7.30 pm, I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

**Werriwa Electorate: Commuter Parking**

**Werriwa Electorate: Cost of Living**

**Ms STANLEY** (Werriwa—Opposition Whip) (19:30): Over the past few months I have had the distinct privilege of listening to many speeches in this chamber, particularly by members on this side of the House. On reflection, I've noticed a disappointing and recurring theme in all of them: the need for our constituents, the people we represent, to receive their fair share. We have a commuter parking crisis at Edmondson Park train station in the electorale of Werriwa. Just before Christmas, the New South Wales Liberal government admitted it would fail to deliver its election promise of a new car park at the station by mid this year, and now it will force local commuters to wait yet another 12 months for adequate parking. Call me a cynic, but this is another in a long line of unfulfilled promises and lack of action for commuters who use this station. Now they have to wait until mid-2021, when the parking spots will apparently be delivered.

Over the past few months, there have been several reports which paint a grim picture of what life is like for the people in my electorate and the outer suburbs of Sydney. They are a confirmation of this government having no plan and no strategy to deal with unemployment, the stagnation of wage growth and escalating costs of living. Research released in November from St Vincent de Paul showed that between July 2015 and July 2018 in Edmondson Park over 11 per cent of households had their electricity cut off—as well as having no parking. They are forced to choose between paying bills, putting food on the table or paying their mortgage. A report from May
last year using ABS data found that a fifth of households in Edmondson Park are in mortgage stress. Hardworking family members who are working two, three and sometimes four jobs are barely able to keep a roof over their heads.

While these Australians work to provide for their families, in 2016-17 one-third of Australia's largest companies paid no tax. AGL, EnergyAustralia and Origin Energy earned a combined $36 billion, but together they paid no tax. These are the same companies that are disconnecting Australians from the grid. Many suburbs in my electorate face economic disadvantage. Based on the New South Wales Council of Social Services' household income adequacy measure, the suburbs in Green Valley are placed in the top 50 most economically disadvantaged in 15 out of the 24 demographics measured. Those living in Green Valley are the second-most disadvantaged in New South Wales, with nearly one in every three people living with some form of disadvantage. And it isn't a case of them not working hard enough. The average percentage of economically disadvantaged people that are employed full-time in New South Wales is 4.8 per cent. We now have a situation similar to that of the US, where we have working homeless and working poor. Not only are the full-time workers in my electorate facing economic disadvantage; more importantly, their children are. Statistics tell us that 17 per cent of Sydney's children are living in households experiencing poverty. But in suburbs in my electorate the percentage is 42 per cent—a staggering 24 per cent higher than the state average. How is it possible for working families who pay taxes to be experiencing such economic disadvantage while there are companies paying no tax and cutting off power to families such as these? The safety net was designed to protect Australian families, not multinational corporations.

Speaking of safety nets: the latest healthcare access data shows us just how bad the government is at managing health care right across Australia. There is no plan for health care, and this is shown nowhere more clearly than in Werriwa, where, since the Liberals came to power, GP fees have increased 44 per cent. In an area that is feeling the brunt of the lack of economic management from the Morrison government, they are faced with increasing costs of health care and essential utilities and are suffering from a stagnant economy that has stagnant wages. These are the numbers, but you never truly know the impact of these numbers until you get out in the community and speak to amazing Australians who aren't afraid to share their issues, as they have done with me. Like the pensioner couple in my electorate who are both on pain medication but can only afford for one of them to actually buy the medication they need. They can't afford to buy the medicine they both need to live a comfortable retirement.

The common theme from everyone I've spoken to is that this government has no plan for them and no plan for Australia. We must address the stagnation of wage growth and escalating costs of living so that my constituents can be confident of their future no matter their age, background, health situation or employment status.

Drought

Smart, Mr Leigh

Mr ALEXANDER (Bennelong) (19:35): Australia is going through some of the toughest times on record: fire, flood, ash clouds, hailstorms and, underlying it all, a deep and crippling drought. People across Australia are doing it tough. In Bennelong, we have been fortunate. Our only direct impact from any of this weather chaos has been a spot fire in North Epping and the impermeable smoke that all of Sydney has had to deal with. This is a pittance compared with the daily struggles many in the west of New South Wales are facing every day.

In response to this devastation we have seen Australians come forward in droves to support those in need. Millions of dollars have been donated to numerous causes, and Australians far and wide have opened their hearts and their wallets to help those in desperate need. We may not have seen the devastation in our area, but we have seen the generosity. There are thousands I could single out from Bennelong who have given their all and more, but I will be singing the praises of just one today: the great Leigh Smart.

Leigh is a stalwart of the community. Founder and manager of Formula Chemicals, his family business, he now runs a team of dozens of committed people. From pool chemicals to industrial ones, Leigh and his team ensure that the chemicals we rely on in our everyday lives are provided as safely and sustainably as possible. Success in business has allowed Leigh to become a philanthropist, spreading his generosity around the community and the greater region. After hiring a number of Fijian workers and hearing their stories, he created the WOW Foundation to provide education and healthcare needs for people on the outlying islands of Fiji who don't have access to essential utilities and services we take for granted.

With a history like this it's no surprise that he has been at the forefront of the charity efforts in Bennelong, but the efforts he has gone to are amazing. He has taken part in the Caring for our Farmers convoy since November and just last weekend was part of the smart drought relief water run out to Baradine. As part of his business Leigh has access to large tanks and several trucks, and, recognising their potential in this crippling drought, signed up to take approximately 150,000 litres of water out to the bush for the first Caring for our Farmers convoy in
November, using his vehicles to transport the water. When this became known in his company, he was swamped with volunteers to take the run, eventually settling on a team of six, which included some of his team who had never been out west before. News also leaked to the community, and an incredible three tonnes of food, drinks and presents were donated, which went to the Baradine CWA food pantry. Melrose Park Public School was incredibly generous, as were dozens of local companies and even Arnott's Biscuits, which stepped up to provide 400 kilograms of Tim Tams, thus saving Christmas for many. Leigh also donated 1,000 litres of chlorine for the local swimming pool, to give the local kids a place to play out of the sun during the heat and the long summer holidays.

The convoy was a huge success, and Leigh tells of all that he witnessed: not only heartbreaking suffering but also the gratefulness, community strength and resilience. By all accounts, the need for the actions of Leigh, his team and the other convoy members was acute, and the response to the convoy was immense. There is always more to do, which is why Leigh set out again over the Australia Day weekend. In the weeks between convoys Leigh purchased a 30,000 litre water tank from Queensland, as none were available in New South Wales. This was filled with potable water, and it joined the convoy alongside four other trucks carrying 10,000 litres of cattle water, 680 fifteen-litre drums of drinking water, 8,000 kilograms of fruit and vegetables and, critically, a pallet of beer—or maybe two. Leigh has described this as a life-changing event for everyone in his team. In his own words: 'We really don't know how lucky we are here in the city. Don't ever complain again about the trivial matters in your life when you understand that these poor farmers are doing it so tough.' Leigh, you and your team are champions. You are a tribute to your community. Your compassion, as well as your can-do spirit, has made a real difference to Australians doing it tough. We are in your debt. I might say that Leigh is much older than I am, and he works seven days a week.

**Australian Bushfires**

**Dr MIKE KELLY** (Eden-Monaro) (19:40): While we are still in the midst of fighting these fires, we really need to aggressively address the recovery issues now, and so there are a number of ideas that I've been gleaning from the community that I want to put forward in this first instalment, as a suggestion to the government.

We've been seeing a lot of this relief stuff come through but unfortunately now it is taking business away from those small businesses that really need to be getting back up and running. I would like to suggest that people adopt a voucher approach or a ticket approach to support those businesses and encourage people to come to them to buy their goods. We had a situation in Cobargo, for example, where the co-op there that sells poly pipe was being asked to distribute it for free—they did it, but we need to now start supporting those small businesses locally by channelling things through them. A good suggestion is tax deduction for accommodation in fire-affected areas. This would be a great way of getting an immediate impact by encouraging people to come now to take the holidays that they need to, particularly over the winter season when there's going to be some new activities and festivals introduced to try to bridge the gap between the summer seasons. It would be good if we could extend BAS relief to those businesses until next summer, because they really need to bridge that gap, as I mentioned, and that would be very helpful.

I'd just like to pass on to the government: walk away from the decentralisation policy. It doesn't create new jobs in the regions. It's stealing from one region to create a job in another. My region depends so much on the lifeblood of the travelling and driving holiday-makers from the Canberra, Queanbeyan, Yass and Murrumbateman area, and it really needs them right now. So please walk away from this decentralisation policy.

On the assistance that the government could provide, it would be great if through the next few months it could step in to supplement—and replace in many cases—the sponsorship that local small businesses would normally provide to festivals like the Narooma Oyster Festival, which they just won't be able to do for a number of months. In that vein the government could also temporarily fund project managers over this period to help implement these new festivals and activities that are going to be needed to keep these small businesses alive, otherwise many will fold.

We need to have small-business advisers and Centrelink people in the field now, in temporary shopfronts, in a number of locations right around our region. It doesn't have to be permanent but the biggest feedback I'm getting is just how tough it is to navigate online and other processes to access the assistance—it's just a nightmare. A small-business adviser or Centrelink person in those key locations in towns around the region is very important.

I want to see us double the number of Indigenous rangers so we can get them involved in the cultural burning program and also get our Indigenous youth employed.

There are a lot of infrastructure projects we could be looking to bring forward like the Brindabella road across to Tumut, the rail project to Eden, the caravan park at Tumbarumba, the Tumut airport, the Bobeyan Road, B-double access from the port of Eden up to the Monaro Highway and the wave attenuator at Eden. These are quick-
fix projects which would be real value adds to the economy in general and very good investments and would get work happening right now. We need to restore funding to the Destination Southern NSW organisation. Its funding was cut and we really need marketing support now, so restoring that funding would be terrific.

In particular, I want to focus on the Carbon Farming Initiative and the use of climate change as part of this recovery process. We can't resuscitate our timber industry unless we enhance the Carbon Farming Initiative to allow international trading, because investors aren't going to get involved when they have to wait 11 or 25 years for a return. The Australian Forest Products Association and the Softwoods Working Group all really want to see this happen. An international trading regime would attract investors so they could start earning money from replanting forests from day one because the forests would be a carbon sink. That would be the short term fix they really need right now.

In addition to that, farmers can come on board by offering up sequestration options on their properties. Our plan was to create a timber co-op so that farmers could assign less productive or marginal parts of their property to timber plantation and, similarly, earn money from the sequestration opportunities that offers for, potentially, local investors, because there's a lot of money sloshing around in our managed funds—$3 trillion. A lot of that could be directed and focused on the sorts of climate change options that create the new economy. The fifth industrial revolution is going to be about decarbonising and new energy sources and new farming techniques. We can get started on that right now. So I really urge the government to at least carve out the Carbon Farming Initiative as part of that effort.

### Australian Bushfires

Dr ALLEN (Higgins) (19:45): It's been a tough start to the year and, indeed, the decade for Australians. The devastating bushfires have been tough for many in bushfire affected communities. But the bushfire recovery effort has already begun, and the Morrison government, the Rural Fire Service, the Country Fire Authority and the Australian Defence Force are all to be congratulated on their timely and practical response to the fires.

The Minister for Health, Greg Hunt, has made a number of important announcements that will ensure the health and wellbeing of these communities now and into the future. This includes $76 million for assistance with mental health in the gruelling period of recovery for those fire affected communities. My in-laws were affected by the bushfires on Black Saturday. Having watched that community recover from the bushfire, I know it doesn't take days and it doesn't take weeks; it takes months to years. Ensuring that we have support for these people as they rebuild their lives and their communities is essential.

A further $5 million has been committed to undertake medical research into the health effects of the fires and to understand what can be done to prevent adverse health consequences in any future events. We all know about the smoke pools across the major cities on the east coast. It will be important to understand not just the effect that has on immediate admissions to hospitals with asthma but also the long-term effects that may occur. We need to make sure we can monitor those aspects.

But it's not just immediate help that these rural communities are going to require. In the long run, all levels of government will need to work together to make sure we support and sustain health services in these rural and remote communities as they rebuild. I'd like to pick up on a point that the Minister for Health, the Hon. Greg Hunt, made about attracting and retaining rural GPs to remote and rural communities. Approximately 80 per cent of Australia's population lives on the east coast of Australia, meaning there are huge expanses of sparsely populated areas. Attracting and retaining rural GPs is one of the biggest challenges facing rural and regional health services. The distance between towns, and the cost of providing health services with towns getting smaller, makes it harder to attract professionals like doctors. It can be harder to find a spouse or a partner. They're away from family and friends. It's very important in this rebuild that we make note that, as these communities are under stress, so too are the services that will be provided to them.

The federal government has announced recently a rural generalist pathway. This is a really important initiative. It's the creation of a new specialty known as the rural generalist medicine pathway, and it sits under the specialty of general practice. The Australian government has allocated $62 million to the pathway. It's supporting 186 rural generalist training positions, with another 100 in 2021. It builds on the government's $550 million Stronger Rural Health Strategy.

Local GPs in the country do so much work and it is so varied. Births, chronic disease management, palliative care, emergency services, surgery and dealing with the rise of mental health issues are just a few of the daily issues that can face a local GP. We need to incentivise doctors to stay in these country towns or return back to their home town once they've completed their training in the city. It is a two-way street. If you have a well-serviced town with a good doctor, people will stay. If you have a town that's busy with patients, doctors will stay.
The commitment of successive governments to the delivery of innovative services has helped bridge the gap in health outcomes for Australians living in rural and remote communities. As a nation, we have benefited from the emergence of the digital age for those in rural and remote communities. They can now access telehealth, meaning a doctor is just a phone call or a video chat away. There has also been an increase in funding to regional universities. There has been a federal government workforce incentive program for the doctors' stream.

Most importantly, at the heart of these intentions is a commitment to support and encourage equitable access to high-quality health care for those who don't live in our cities. The government's announcement on creating a national rural generalist pathway helps deliver on that vision. As a country, as we rebuild after these terrible bushfires, it will be important to make sure that we provide the services needed by all Australians across this wide brown land.

**Morrison Government**

Ms MURPHY (Dunkley) (19:50): At its best, politics is a vehicle for enlarging opportunities and expanding our national imagination. At its best, politics carries a national conversation about who we are, who we want to be and how we're going to get there. At their best, politicians carry that national conversation through advocacy and debate in the media, in our communities and in this parliament—advocacy and debate conducted with honesty, openness and respect for people, for institutions and for standards. At their best, politicians not only listen to what it is that others are saying; they strive to understand it and then, sometimes, to persuade. They choose integrity and transparency over spin and sophistry. They admit when they are wrong and they take responsibility for their mistakes.

When politicians don't do that, politics, politicians and the national conversation are dumbed down and this parliament is diminished in its capacity to tackle difficult challenges, and the trust of the Australian people in politics, democracy and government declines. Sadly, that is what has occurred under the Morrison government; it might not have started there, but the decline in democracy has certainly become worse under this government. Before Helloworld and Paladin; before Clive Palmer influenced the outcome of an election with an extraordinary sum of money; before the unresolved pile of ethical and legal scandals surrounding Angus Taylor; before the AFP raided journalists' homes and places of work; before the media reported revelations of links between Liberal donors and health funding decisions; before the Prime Minister's office refused under FOI to reveal how much taxpayers' money was spent on his Hawaiian holiday during a national emergency; before the Prime Minister denigrated and undermined this national parliament by calling it a bubble, shutting down debate on topics the government doesn't like, and refusing to provide explanations to the parliament and the Australian people on difficult issues; and before Australia burnt—before all of this, less than half of all Australians were satisfied with the way democracy works. Before all of this, we had already seen trust in government in a 20-year slide—from 48 per cent to 26 per cent. The democracy alarm bells are ringing, and they have been ringing for some time. But, instead of taking heed of the warnings, this government has amassed that list of scandals, actions, inactions and decisions—and so much more—which have only served to make the trust deficit in politics so much worse.

And now we have the sports rorts. The Prime Minister has seriously undermined the public's trust in politicians by leading a government that has treated taxpayers' money as its own political campaign pot and has treated community sports clubs and volunteers like mugs. And then Mr Morrison got his former chief of staff, now secretary of his department, to produce a report that the public is not allowed to see, backing the government's sport rorts and contradicting the findings of the actually independent Auditor-General that it was clear that the focus was on marginal electorates held by the coalition as well as those electorates held by other parties or independent members that were to be targeted by the coalition at last year's election.

We know that almost half the funds of first-round applicants went to politically targeted seats and we know that this political corruption ramped up until the third round, where clubs that didn't make applications got grants and clubs that ranked 98 out of 100 didn't. And we all, of course, know about the infamous colour-coded spreadsheet and the email evidence that the Prime Minister's office was involved in the whole tawdry affair. As David Thodey said in his recent review of the Australian public service, 'Scepticism is part of a healthy democracy, but extreme low trust is detrimental.' There are many drivers of trust in the public sector, but integrity is the most crucial determinate. Mr Morrison's decision to involve Mr Gaetjens in what looks and smells very much like a political cover-up, and Mr Gaetjens' decision to do Morrison's bidding, has undermined and compromised a public service full of tremendous people who are doing their best day in, day out to serve this country.

This government is dumbed down by its refusal to accept the urgency of mitigating man-made climate change. Its reliance on political advertising and spin over straight talk and policy action is embarrassing. We must do better. We must have better behaviour and processes in question time, better integrity in the political system and ICAC upholding principles of Westminster responsibility. I believe all parliamentarians—*(Time expired)*
The SPEAKER: Just before I call the next member, I remind the member for Dunkley in future to refer to members of this House by their correct titles.

Menzies Electorate: Australia Day Awards

Mr ANDREWS (Menzies) (19:55): It was my great honour to present 46 local community champions and two organisations with Menzies Community Australia Day Awards on Sunday 26 January 2020. These awards are nominated by local community members for local community members and are a great way to honour those who make Menzies an even better place to live.

Manningham Promoting Character received the special recognition award this year. Although ceasing operations after 19 years of service for the local community, it seemed fitting for special recognition. It is an organisation that has been much loved in the local community and has helped to foster a sense of pride and belonging in Manningham. Indeed, Manningham Promoting Character aimed to do just that, to promote character development by recognising and rewarding citizens who showed good character. Manningham Promoting Character, therefore, deserves the recognition for its commitment to the local community, for its love of the local community and for its tireless efforts in making Manningham an even better place.

Eltham Men's Shed received the community organisation award of the year. It is a wonderful organisation that not only provides a home away from home but also gives back to the local community through various projects. Established in 2014, the men's shed has become a thriving organisation that is truly supportive of its membership. It also benefits the greater community through projects like bicycle maintenance and recycling, with the bikes donated to deserving children, families and groups. The Eltham Men's Shed is an organisation that not only supports its members but also supports the local community.

The 46 individual recipients were from a variety of different groups in the community and are so well deserving for the honour. I will mention just a few. Malihe Amini and Tanya Warns are from MannaCare. A lawyer from Iran, Malihe came to Australia unable to practice and so joined MannaCare first as a volunteer and then as a cleaner. She is now the rostering coordinator for the flexicare at MannaCare and is much loved. Tanya is currently a volunteer coordinator at MannaCare. She is well respected in the community and held in high regard with the volunteers she oversees.

Annette Bass and Jan Skinner are from the Kiwanis Club of Manningham. Annette and Jan have dedicated much of their free time to help with local fundraising events.

Lula Black and Patricia Taylor are from the Manningham U3A. They share the role as tutors of the written word class at the U3A. Both Lula and Patricia encourage and assist members of their class to become writers of short stories. Together they have published six volumes of short stories and poems—The Golden Quill numbers one to six—written by class members since 2009.

Acting Sergeant Damien Bouman and Inspector Craig Pearson are from the Doncaster Police. In 2019, Damien led junior police officers in the creation of the precinct policing model, a community partnership policing concept with local traders at shopping strips across Manningham. Damien, unfortunately, was unable to attend the awards because he was doing something very important: helping with the bushfire efforts elsewhere in Victoria. Craig is a local area commander in Manningham. He builds trust and likes to make people feel better within their community, as well as among members of the police force. Already Craig has implemented the Convo with a Cop program, where schools and community organisations are encouraged to engage with members of our local police station.

Liana Poon and Sam Fan are from the Chinese Senior Citizens Club of Manningham. Sam always goes the extra mile and assists with numerous duties required to ensure the smooth running of the club and its many activities. He also does a great job in the kitchen, assisting with the purchase, organisation and preparation of more than 180 meals each week. Liana oversees critical administrative activities such as welcoming new members and renewing memberships. She also contributes positively to the Manningham Council seniors reference group and assists with video recording at major festive occasions in our community.

These are just some of the 46. They included, from Doncare, Joan Brownlie, Jenny McMahon, Marilu Packer, Carolyn Burns and Pria Woolston; from the Diamond Valley Railway, Alan Calder and Cherill Thomson, who do a wonderful job and have been doing it for many years on that project; from St Mark's Anglican Church, Judith Cotterill and Rosanne Spry; and, from Rotary Club of Manningham, Anthony and Valerie Fernandez and David Rosenwax. In addition to these, among the winners were Delwyn Caulfield, from the Warrandyte RSL; Jenny Chan, from the Chinese Fellowship of Victoria; Ian Hook, from the Warrandyte Football Club; Anise Khoshmashrab, Babak Missaghi and Amin Riazi, from the Baha'i community; Anastasia Koutsoheras, from Fronditha Care; Violet Lorenz, from the Australian Air League; Scott Lynn, a local community advocate; Ross McDonald, from the Friends of Kangaroo Ground War Memorial Park; Leon Moore; Ian Morris; Parivash...
Payman; Alicia Privitera; Bob Slater; Eva Sommers; and Meredith Wall. All are very worthy recipients of the 2020 Menzies Community Australia Day Awards.

House adjourned at 20:01

NOTICES

The following notices were given:

Mr Sukkar to present a Bill for an Act to amend the law relating to taxation and superannuation, and for related purposes. (Treasury Laws Amendment (Reuniting More Superannuation) Bill 2020)

Mr Robert to present a Bill for an Act to amend the law relating to social security, family assistance, student assistance and veterans’ entitlements, and for related purposes. (Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment (Simplifying Income Reporting and Other Measures) Bill 2020)

Mr Robert to present a Bill for an Act to amend the law relating to paid parental leave, and for related purposes. (Paid Parental Leave Amendment (Flexibility Measures) Bill 2020)
Wednesday, 5 February 2020

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Goodenough) took the chair at 09:45.

CONDOLENCES
Australian Bushfires

Consideration resumed of the motion:

That the House:

(1) acknowledge the devastation across our nation occasioned by the bushfire season including the loss of 33 lives, the destruction of over 3,000 homes, the unimaginable loss of so much wildlife and the devastating impact on regional economies across Australia;

(2) extend its deepest sympathies to families who have lost loved ones and to those who have suffered injuries or loss;

(3) place on record its gratitude for the service of David Morei, Geoffrey Keaton, Andrew O'Dwyer, Samuel McPaul, Bill Slade, Mat Kavanagh, Ian McBeth, Paul Hudson and Rick DeMorgan Jr, fire-fighters who lost their lives during the fires and extends its deepest condolences to their families;

(4) recognise the contribution of thousands of volunteer and career fire-fighters and the dedication of emergency services personnel across Australia;

(5) honour the contribution of 6,500 Australian Defence Force personnel, including 3,000 ADF reservists, and the work of Emergency Management Australia throughout the summer;

(6) recognise the generosity of individuals, families, schools, churches and religious groups, service clubs and businesses from across Australia and elsewhere in the world during the evacuations and following the fires;

(7) express its gratitude to Australia's friends, allies and neighbours who provided or offered support;

(8) recognise the unceasing efforts and close cooperation between state and local governments, demonstrating the strength of our Federation;

(9) commit itself to learning any lessons from this fire season; and

(10) pledge the full support of the Australian Parliament to assist affected areas to recover and rebuild.

Mr HOGAN (Page—Deputy Speaker) (09:45): My community, like many around the nation, unfortunately, has been very badly impacted by the fires that have been burning, in some cases for many months. To give you a quick snapshot: in my community alone we have lost two lives and we've had 254 houses destroyed, a further 100 houses damaged, close to 1,000 outbuildings destroyed or damaged, and up to 100 other community facilities, like halls and things, destroyed or damaged. That's obviously just the physical impact, never mind the emotional and psychological impact this has had.

I start with the very sad loss of two lives, of Gwen Hyde and Bob Lindsey, both very well-known and very loved people in our community. Bob used to run one of the petrol stations in Casino for many, many years and was well known and well loved, as was Gwen, who was very active in the community. The loss of their lives was very significant and a sad day for our community.

I'm going to go through four different fires across my electorate. Fires often merged together, and they formed four major but different fires. The first one I want to talk about is the Border Trail fire. This was on the Border Trail between Queensland and New South Wales and it was burning from north to south and threatening the community of Woodenbong. I actually went to Woodenbong around 8 and 9 November. Residents of Woodenbong were advised to leave unless they were defending their homes or the Woodenbong assets. They were asked to leave and, if they were going to leave, they had to leave then. On 11 November the main route into Woodenbong, Summerland Way, was shut off, and I went around the long way to go to the community to see how they were faring.

I've got to say it was one of the most inspiring examples that I've seen of a community coming together. They had been under siege at that stage for about a week, and under serious siege for three or four days. What do I mean by 'serious siege'? They had a fire that had all but surrounded them. They were getting aerial support and they had RFS groups, but Woodenbong was in the way, and that's where the fire was naturally going to go. It's a town of 500 or 600 people, a great, resilient, tight community. I don't think anyone left. They were all there. Every single person in that community was doing something in the defence of their town against this fire. They had what they called the 'pod brigade'. Anyone who had a ute had a water tank in the back and had a hose with them. Any time an ember flew into the town or threatened a building or threatened anything in their village, they put it out, and they did that for weeks. There were a great team at the golf club making food. Again, every single person in that town was mobilised about this fire. And, to their credit, they won, and the fire in the end went south around them.
For this very reason, I went to Woodenbong on Australia Day, just to acknowledge what they'd done and to celebrate Australia Day with them. There was obviously a lot of acknowledgement of the RFS volunteers and the 'pod team'. There were people like Michael Smith, who has a huge earthmoving business, and every piece of equipment that he had was being used in the defence of that town, for clearing containment lines. It was really very inspiring to be with them and see them unite as a community. One night in town they counted 53 utes. This is in a town of 400 to 500 people. There were 53 utes filling up with water with their hoses to defend their town.

That's the first fire. Why I went there, why this on its own was a major event was because of the size of this fire and what it was doing. It was one of four burning across the wider region. In the media it was just an add-on because there was so much more going on. The second fire was the biggest fire in the sense of how much it burnt out. In my community, give or take a bit, let's say a million hectares was burnt out. The next fire, the Myall Creek fire, which merged with other fires, was certainly the biggest of those. It burnt down houses. It burnt down a mate of mine's house. Actually that was a related fire that was just next to this one. But at Bora Ridge it burnt down a mate of mine's house. Doug Wood was defending his parents' house, because that was where the fire was coming from. He jumped over to his parents' house, and it burnt down his house. This is the type of thing that was happening. That fire went down the Pacific Highway and was threatening communities like Woombah and Iluka and Ashby Heights, moving into the Clarence Valley. Again, the RFS did a magnificent job. The community of Woombah—if you haven't been there I encourage you to come; it's a beautiful part of the world near Iluka and the Clarence River—is surrounded by bush. These people are living in a beautiful residential area with a lot of bushland around them. With the area support they got, they didn't lose a house. They lost a few outbuildings. It was a phenomenal effort by them. I will come back to that fire later.

Also there was the Mount Nardi fire. This was within the Mount Nardi rainforest. At one stage there was a day that was particularly threatening to our community. It was a Tuesday. There was a westerly to north-westerly forecast. It was a hot day with strong winds. The worst-case scenario for the fires on that day was significant. We were looking at potentially losing our communications tower on the top of Mount Nardi, which meant the emergency services themselves would not have been able to communicate with each other. It was bearing towards and around Rocky Creek Dam, which provides the water for our wider region. If it had taken out the water filtration plant, which was potentially going to happen, we would not only have lost our communications tower; we wouldn't have been able to use the water facility. There would have been major towns without water supply. Again, the RFS, with aerial support and retardant, bombarded those facilities before the day and on the day and protected them and saved them.

Another fire was the Liberation Trail fire. This was the one burning further south in the community of the Clarence Valley. It went into the Coffs Coast local government area as well. This is the fire that took out Nymboida. This is where most of the homes were lost in my community. It's a very rural community in the hills, a beautiful part of the world. This fire came through and took out many, many homes. There was lot of gratitude on this one. I went to Nymboida the weekend after, about three or four days after the fire had been through. A lot of people hadn't gone back. People were just starting to go back. The road was cut off to the public, but you could go back in if you were a member of the community. I was allowed back in to talk to the community on the Saturday. I went to the RFS shed. One of the humbling things about that was that there wasn't a local there. The RFS shed was full of RFS volunteers from Sydney. They had been there for days. It was very humbling to know we were getting support not only internationally but from all around the country.

Another front of this fire was threatening communities like Glenreagh and Nana Glen. I went to many community meetings in advance of the fire threatening them about what to do and how to do it. The RFS group in Glenreagh and Nana Glen did a great job informing the community about how to protect your home, what to do when the fire came and very important information.

There is another one I want to mention because it is around what happens with this stuff. The first community that was threatened by fire in my area was in September. There was a fire burning towards the communities of Angourie and Woolookeyah, which are very close to Yamba. There were people evacuating from Yamba. At one stage, there were RFS trucks all along the road to Angourie. The team at Angourie did a great job protecting homes on, I think, the Monday night. And you share the goodwill and spirit of people. Mike and Cheryl, who own the Harwood Hotel, were giving free meals to the RFS volunteers during that week, and a lot of other businesses were helping out and volunteering. The cafe at Angourie was also giving free coffee and food to people who were fighting the fires. Two months later, Mike and Cheryl's own home was threatened by a different fire, and those same RFS firefighters who they were giving free feeds to in September were there helping them save their house. That's just one story—and I could tell many—of the wonderful community spirit that was happening throughout this terrible, terrible tragedy.
The fire went through Rappville in November. I’ve never been so close to a fire as these people have been, so I can only imagine, but try and picture this. You are in your community, and, again, it's a community of 400 or 500 people. You have a great pub, a school and a hall. There's a lovely community spirit there. There's a fire coming, and, before they know it, they're cut off, so they can't leave. At the speed this fire came, they almost weren't given a warning to get out. Suddenly the fire was on the road either side of them, and they couldn't get out. The fire is raging through the town, so they all go to the school. Over 200 people were at the school. Gary—I know Gary's family very well—sat in a tree. Sitting in a tree when a raging fire is coming through your town isn't a safe place to be. He sat in a tree with a hose, and every time an ember landed on the school roof he would put it out. There was a young man named Mitch who knew that there were two old people who hadn't come to the hall. They were sitting in their garage. They thought that would be safe because of the way the garage was structured and built. Mitch went and got them out of the garage and brought them to the hall. The garage burnt down. These are the types of stories of people's heroics throughout this time and of what people did to help save their communities.

I could go on for a long time, but I will give just one example of the support work that has happened post the fires. Rappville lost 300 telephone poles in that fire. They were all up and working within three days, so the work done by Essential Energy was just phenomenal. As well, we have had groups that have come through to help people, such as BlazeAid, Team Rubicon, Samaritan's Purse and others. They have come down and helped people put back fences and rebuild communities very quickly after the fires. There are many other organisations I could mention.

I do want to mention the incident management team, because the recovery in our area was happening very quickly while in other areas the fires were still raging. The incident management teams at both Casino and Ulmarra, like some of the community actions I've seen, were inspiring, and I want to mention some of those personnel now. The incident controller and the head of the RFS in our region, Michael Brett, did a phenomenal job. This guy hardly slept for six months. Boyd Townsend, David Cook and Daniel Ainsworth had a team that I got briefings from regularly. Superintendent Toby Lindsay from NSW Police did amazing work, as did Mark Somers and his team from the SES, Greg Lewis from Fire and Rescue NSW and Michael Edwards from NSW Ambulance. Maryanne Sewell from the health district was there, as were Liz Bolin, Ben Buckland, Bruce Corish, Dan Bligh and Angela Jones from the Richmond Valley Council. Every time I went there, Angela was there; I don't know when she went home. Scott Turner from Lismore council, Tony Lickiss from Kyogle Council and Andrew Logan from Rous County Council were also there. The education department were there because of all of the things that were going on with the schools. National Parks and Marine Rescue were there. In the Clarence Valley, Stuart Watts did an amazing job at the Ulmarra centre with Bryan Daly and Andrew Lugg. There were personnel from council, Peter Davidson from NSW Police and personnel from all of the different departments, including Dan Madden from NSW Health. The recovery effort has been phenomenal.

In closing, these fires have been traumatic. They have caused great distress. We as a government, through many different programs for recovery relief, including the emergency payments and individual grants we are giving to fire-damaged businesses and fire-damaged primary producers, are doing what we can. We will recover. My area, thank God, has had rain more recently, so the grass is starting to grow again, the fires are all out and even the drought has been hit on the head a bit. As was said in this place yesterday and as will be said today, these have been very traumatic times. They have caused great distress, including loss of life and the loss of people's homes. People need a lot of help and assistance, not only physically but emotionally and psychologically.

Through these stories, like the one I told about Woodenbong, we have seen the very best of who we are. I spoke to a mate of mine who really didn't get on with his neighbour. But they do now. This has been a reality call on what's important in life, and what's important in life is your relationships, the people around you and the community around you. While we don't necessarily need to get it this way, it has been wonderful to see the best of our community spirit—the Australian spirit—of helping each other. In a bizarre way, it has been a community-bonding exercise, but, God, I wish we didn't have to have it like this.

I want to thank everyone involved—all the volunteers and everyone who is helping to rebuild our community. As I said, we are out there and we will do everything we can to rebuild from what has been a very traumatic experience and a very traumatic summer.

Mr GILES (Scullin) (10:01): I join the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Labor Party and so many parliamentary colleagues in speaking to this motion of condolence. It is important and it was the right thing that the first day of parliament be set aside to this place responding to an extraordinary, terrible and unprecedented summer. I'm pleased that the Prime Minister responded so positively to the request of the Leader of the Opposition that yesterday be set aside and I was pleased to be in the chamber for the remarks of the leaders of both parties, which I think gave expression to the feelings of not just those of us in the chamber but the wider Australian community.
In making my remarks, I'll seek not to cover ground that has been well said—better said than I can—but to try and make some additional observations. In doing so, I'd like to particularly acknowledge the contributions of yourself, Deputy Speaker Hogan, the member for Eden-Monaro, the member for Macquarie, the member for Gilmore and the member for Gippsland, whose communities were much more directly touched than mine. It has been a privilege to see members from across the parliament doing perhaps our best work in standing up for our communities.

In saying that, my electorate in suburban Melbourne was also touched by fires, unusually—fires that reached Bundoora, which is not even at the outer tip of my electorate. Before coming back to parliament, I visited the site and was struck again by how close fire came to suburban housing in Melbourne. In expressing my gratitude to those responsible for making sure that no property was damaged, I have been reflecting continuously on how changed the circumstances are that we find ourselves in and how much heavier the responsibilities are that we all bear in this place.

Over the summer, we have seen such strength and such resilience across affected communities but also, I think, such strength in our wider Australian community. We've seen our social compact, our sense of our common bond as Australians reinforced through looking at the terrible tragedy affecting some amongst us. I want to express my gratitude to all of those who have fought and continue to fight the fires and all those who have helped and will continue to help in the recovery efforts, including our friends from overseas. This time has demonstrated so many acts of heroism—countless acts of heroism. We've seen Australians at their very best.

It's important to acknowledge that this summer has seen the deaths of 33 people, and my thoughts, and I think all of our thoughts, are at this time principally with all of those in mourning and in grief. Of course, we recognise that the current season is not over yet. Thousands of homes have been destroyed around the country.

In terms of hectares burnt, the fires are the largest to have affected any of the megadiverse countries—larger than the fires in the Amazon and California of recent times. Professor Chris Dickman of the Australian Academy of Science estimates that Australia has lost at least a billion birds, mammals and reptiles this bushfire season—a figure that does not include all the animals likely to have been killed. So we're at risk also of losing a significant proportion of our wonderful biodiversity as a result of these bushfires.

There are various estimates of the financial cost of the fires, but perhaps we can say that the cost to our community is incalculable. In the area I represent are areas which saw the terrible bushfires of 2009 immediately to our north, and I acknowledge so many people whose trauma will have been reignited by recent events. I note the CFA in the City of Whittlesea and the shire of Nillumbik has provided significant effort—in particular, in Epping, which has joined the east Gippsland and north-east Victorian efforts as part of Strike Teams 1421, 1428 and 1436, and also assisted, of course, in the Plenty Gorge fire much closer to home.

I think of the community efforts in the community I represent, looking further afield—in particular, to highlight just one, my dear friends at the Thomastown Mosque who again looked to the community around them at a time of its need, as did so many, from the One Way Lebanese Bakery to sporting clubs like the Epping cricket and netball clubs. I'm very pleased to serve as Labor's multicultural affairs spokesperson, and, in this, I want to highlight a couple of features of the community response to the fire around Australia. I say 'highlight a couple' because it is impossible in any contribution to do justice to the way that Australia's diverse communities, many a long way from the fire front, have reached out to those affected. I acknowledge the leadership of organisations like the Ethnic Communities Council, who have brought people together to coordinate efforts. I acknowledge also the incredible contribution of so many Chinese Australians who, in recent weeks, have been dealing with challenges of their own but have reached out to their suffering fellow citizens, despite their own challenges.

Can I highlight a couple of contributions which I think deserve attention. I think of my friends in the Sikh community, including, I'm very proud to say, those associated with the Craigieburn Gurudwara, who donated $50,000 to efforts, and the Australian Sikh Support group, a group heavily located in Melbourne's north and west who have been almost everywhere they have been needed, reaching out, showing that Sikhism is not just a tenet at a theoretical level; its ethos has been shown every day right across affected communities, from New South Wales and east Gippsland to Kangaroo Island. People have travelled, bringing their aid, their skills, their support, and, very often, their food, which seems to have been a focus in this situation. I note the contribution, that is ongoing, of the Sikh community in Bairnsdale in Gippsland, as recovery continues. I think also of my friends in the Pakistani community, a very prominent community in my electorate, and the Pakistan Welfare Organisation in Australia, who have, similarly, been everywhere. I think also of some people I met from the Hazara community, a refugee community, who have raised enormous funds, despite very limited capacity in their community, giving back to a country that has given them a second chance at life.
As I say, these are partial remarks, but I think it is important to see that we have seen Australia's social compact reflected not just in the strength of individual affected communities, Member for Page, as you so effectively highlighted just moments ago, but in the wider Australian community—people recognising the bonds we share and our common obligation to reach out to one another, the finest evocation of, I think, that core Australian ethos: a sense that a fair go must be provided for when it's not granted.

In conclusion, can I just say this: for those of us who have the privilege of serving in this place, what matters of course is not what we say but what we do—particularly now with the fire season ongoing and the recovery efforts that will take not just days but years to complete, if indeed they are ever to be completed. So let us think about how we in this place can work together. Let us think about some of the contributions that have been made, including but not limited to those that were set out by the Leader of the Labor Party about national coordination. Let us think about how the states, the national government and local governments can work more effectively together. Fundamentally, let us think about how we can quickly, and with resolve, grapple with the extraordinary challenge that is climate change.

Mr JOYCE (New England) (10:10): Back on 9 November Neville Smith was fighting the fire in Tenterfield—next door to your seat, Mr Deputy Speaker Hogan—and he was severely burnt. He spent months in hospital. That was an omen that, quite obviously, this was a fire season that had started early and would be more ferocious. I remember going to Tenterfield and seeing the town isolated. It looked like something from Dante's 'Inferno' as I sat on the hill and pondered how people were dealing with the fires—those on the periphery, those fighting them and those isolated within them. To see fires actually burning through the town was something that was quite awe-inspiring and horrifying. That was merely the start.

I go to three names: Vivian Chaplain, George Nole and Courtney Partridge-McLennan, who all died in the seat of New England—an absolute tragedy. You should never judge a tragedy by numbers. What is too many people to die? One—one is too many people to die. Two were from Wytaiba and one died from an asthma attack brought on by the smoke.

We live, in New England, with the experience of fire. It was so intense that where I lived the spiders were dying in the roof and falling out because, after such a period of smoke, they could not survive. The ramifications of the fire went way beyond where the fire was. If you went to the pool, the pool was closed because the pollution level was unhealthy. You couldn't exercise. It looked hellish. You'd wake up every morning—and I'm sure you saw a lot of the clips on programs like Sunrise—and the sun just rose as a red ball. You knew that that was a sign that other people's lives were hell and they were fighting those fires.

We look at what happened across our nation, but, for the intent of this speech, in my electorate of Nowendoc I talked to mates of mine, blokes I played football with. They would resiliently say: 'My property will go next. It's going to get burnt out. We're trying our best, but we know this is not going to work.' We can look at Ebor, where, unfortunately, a person was back-burning around a marijuana crop—and I say that not in the sense of mirth but to show people the consequences of their actions. By the time that fire had started, there were pyrocumulus clouds that were actually changing the weather. You saw it and you knew once more that there was something like an inferno for miles. From 100 kilometres away, you could see that pyrocumulus cloud. That was the result of a misdemeanour—probably not malfeasance but a lack of thought, a lack of understanding of the consequences, at a time where the whole of our landscape was a tinderbox.

When you see fires and say, 'They won't burn across that ground'—in the right conditions, they will burn across anything. You could see straw just rolling along alight. You could see areas where all the cow pats were alight and smouldering. There were fires at Nundle and Guy Fawkes River National Park and also fires at Moonbi—I say Moonbi because it is one that I was fighting myself. As I drove along the road I heard that message—and I can tell you exactly where I was: I was at Llangothlin driving north towards Tenterfield to try and see what I could do as a politician to assist the people in Tenterfield with their fire—that a fire had just started near the New England Highway at Moonbi. I knew what that meant because I have lived in the area for 50 years. It meant the fire was going to go home. I did a U-turn immediately on hearing that on the radio, and started to go back. I rang the neighbours and said: 'Where do we meet up? How do we do with deal with this? What's the process? What's the drill?' We knew how the fire would burn through, we knew the areas where if it broke out we'd have real problems, and we knew the areas where we could try to engage, burn back and deal with it.

One of the great things of our nation—the stoicism, the ethos to give a guy a fair go and to stand by your mates—is never better encapsulated than when you go to the middle of your neighbour's paddock in the middle of nowhere and there are fire trucks emblazoned with names of towns from all across our nation. They have turned up at your place, at your area, to help you, but they have never met you before in their life, and they are not paid to do it. That describes one of the things that comes out of this. What an incredible nation we are. What an incredible nation that a former Prime Minister of Australia is not doing speaking circuits and not writing books;
he's fighting fires at Drake, he's fighting fires around Tenterfield. He's doing it with his mates and he's doing it over a long period of time. When you talk to him and say, 'Tony Abbott, why are you doing this?' he says: 'I get paid a pension from parliament. I've got staff. I don't feel like I'm doing this for free; I feel like I'm doing this because it's what an Australian does.' It's not what a former Prime Minister does; it's what an Australian does. This is the essence of who we are. This shows our better angels.

We acknowledge the tragedies of Vivian Chaplain, George and Courtney, and our hearts go out to their families. We acknowledge the grief of people such as Mayor Carol Sparks from Glenn Innes, the tireless work of people such as Mayor Peter Petty from Tenterfield, and the ongoing discussions by mayors such as Eric Noakes from Walcha. They were having meetings on Boxing Day. You listen and you think, 'What can I do is so minor compared to what these people are doing: fighting fires right through Christmas.' They're not with their family; they're with their mates—and mates they've never met before in their life, because they're Australian.

So many people do it for free, but other businesses have to get paid. Other businesses that contract have to get paid. We must make sure that we pursue that they get fair compensation for the work that they have done, not as a charity but under contract, and make sure that the issue does not compound the economic crisis in small towns such as Walcha that rely so much on the contracting businesses, hotels, fuel distributors and all the people who are putting their endeavours towards fighting the fires. They can't do it for free, because they have a product they have to sell or staff they have to pay.

On the back of this tragedy and the stoicism and resilience of the Australian people, we have to look forward to how we can do this better in the future. I can't stand the word 'learnings'. I always say 'learning' is a verb, 'knowledge' is a noun, and 'learnings' is a nonsense. From the knowledge that we have gained from this, what can we do better in the future? I want to mention a couple of these issues.

Fighting some fires, some trucks have had to go over 100 kilometres to refill. The fire is in front of you. You've got to understand the terror. When it's night—I can show people some of the photos of my family's place—it is so terrifying to see that silhouette of the hill become emblazoned in red, and you know the fire is getting closer and closer. You unplug all the tanks around your parents' place and you go up and get your firefighting plant—remember, it can't be connected to electricity, because when the electricity goes off the fire plant doesn't work—connect the fire plant up, make sure all the hoses can reach the vital parts, make sure you have an alternative plan to get out if something goes wrong, make sure you have an alternative plan to put the fires out in your house if the firefighting plant goes down, work out the most likely places the house will catch on fire in an ember attack. These are the things you do. And guess what? Just as you're doing them—it is incredible—a truck turns up with two blokes, and they're just mates. They say, 'We heard it was getting close to your place, so we're here.' Then another truck turns up with what they call a shuttle, which is a big water tank with a pump, and they say, 'We're here.' You never ask them to come; they just turn up, because that's what Australians do. And then when you say to them, 'Fellas, I think I'm right; you should go home'—I remember one bloke, and I won't give his name, because he'd be embarrassed, but he said: 'Mate, I'm a bit tired, so I'll just sleep here tonight. Do you mind if I crash on your couch?' Do you know what they're really saying? They're saying, 'You might need help, and I'm not leaving.' Doesn't it just get you, to think that's the essence of our nation? You know when they say they're tired if I crash on your couch?' Do you know what they're really saying? They're saying, 'We're here.' You never ask them to come; they just turn up, because that's what Australians do. Then another truck turns up with two blokes, and they're just mates. They say, 'We heard it was getting close to your place, so we're here.' Then another truck turns up with what they call a shuttle, which is a big water tank with a pump, and they say, 'We're here.' You never ask them to come; they just turn up, because that's what Australians do. And then when you say to them, 'Fellas, I think I'm right; you should go home'—I remember one bloke, and I won't give his name, because he'd be embarrassed, but he said: 'Mate, I'm a bit tired, so I'll just sleep here tonight. Do you mind if I crash on your couch?' Do you know what they're really saying? They're saying, 'You might need help, and I'm not leaving.' Doesn't it just get you, to think that's the essence of our nation? You know when they say they're tired and they want to crash on your couch it's—not a lie, but a statement: 'Don't tell me to go. You need a hand. I'm staying here.'

Let's get back to positive things, because you've got to be positive, you've got to look forward, you've got to look at how you can do things better. We can't travel 100 kilometres to refill a fire truck. Think about that instance. If someone says, 'We're out of water; we're going, and we'll be as quick as we can, but it's going to be about three hours.' Think in your own minds how that would make you feel, with a massive fire coming, and you're trying to do the back-burning, trying to stop the spot fires. If you look at the resource and you look at the people in the yellow uniforms disappearing—not because they want to but because they have to, because they've got to refill—we need central watering points. I propose this as maybe something we can do in a bipartisan way—for the government to give a grant in these areas where there have been fires and say, 'We'll build a dam, and you can use half the water'—farmer, state forest, whatever—and the other half is always ours. And it comes with a licence, that no matter how much water is there in, if a fire starts, it's all ours, no questions asked. That way, we're not travelling 100 kilometres; we're travelling 20, or 15 or 10 or five, and that makes such a difference.

You can't stop a raging bushfire, although you can mitigate, but you can stop small ones, and you can backburn on small ones, and that's where this comes in. You don't wait until the bombers are over London before you start knocking them out of the sky. As soon as they take off, you try to knock them down. So, it is about watering points. What happens in fires when trees are next to the road is twofold. They burn and fall over the road, or they bake the soils, crack the soils, and the soils become unstable and the trees fall over the road. The consequence of that is that if someone, a civilian, is trying to escape from a fire, that's where they stop. And they stop in an area of
The vegetation management laws must be changed so that, without question, you can remove the trees to a space where, if they fall over, people can still get out and fire trucks can get in. It might look quaint having trees next to the road; it might look good. But if they're in a fire area, the safety of people is paramount, and it must be put at the top. Likewise, fuel loads: if you double the fuel load, the speed at which the fire spreads is doubled, and the intensity of the heat is quadrupled. And the radiant heat is what's going to kill you, in many instances, long before the fire gets to you. If you see what happens in a fire, you see the awesome, terrifying power of a fire as it races through the heads of the trees. You hear it roar as it comes towards you. It doesn't come up silently. It roars. And its speed is way beyond the speed of a fire truck or a tractor or anything else. But it has to burn something. You can't stop the fuel load in the trees, but you can mitigate the fuel load on the ground, and you must do it.

Even a bad burn in winter—something that's imperfect, something that does cause smoke damage to clothes, something that does maybe get slightly out of control and burns more areas than you need—is a vastly better alternative than what we just experienced. That is the alternative. If you don't do the back-burning, nature will do it for you, and it will do it for you in such a profound way that it burns out millions of square kilometres and kills people, destroys houses, kills stock and brutally maims and kills wildlife.

I try to convey some of these things so that people will know some of the essence of what happens on a fire ground. One of the first things to move off fire grounds is insects, especially the spiders. When you stand in an area you become very aware that the ground is alive with beetles and spiders—they almost know that something is on, and they're moving out. It's part of this almost apocalyptic feel that it gets; it's the eeriness. Then the smoke comes and you know it's approaching.

In this period of time we must also make sure that we have proper communications. So often now, we all reach for our mobile phone. We don't have the two-way radios of the past. We've got to get proper communications—

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Sitting suspended from 10:25 to 10:49

Dr LEIGH (Fenner) (10:50): Edward Ryan was born at Calvary Hospital on 20 January. A few hours later his parents' car was smashed by hailstones in the hospital car park. As Edward left hospital with his parents two days later, Canberrans were being evacuated from their homes and workplaces as bushfires bore down. When Edward was just a fortnight old, flames framed our southern skies, turning them red, as emergency services battled the Orroral Valley fire—the worst since the 2003 Canberra bushfires.

I spoke with Edward's parents, Renee and Sam, at the climate rally outside yesterday. They were among the hundreds of people who had gathered in the wake of the bushfire crisis. Renee told me how she spent the last month of her pregnancy inside avoiding the smoke—there was an air quality index rating of 4,091 on New Year's Day 2020. That's around 20 times the level considered hazardous. It was the worst air quality recorded anywhere in the world on that day.

In the Canberra Hospital some machines were unable to operate due to smoke. Steve Robson spoke about babies being born in smoky delivery suites and the anxiety of their parents. He said: 'I feel it so viscerally. You deliver a baby and you think, "Wow. Isn't this the greatest moment of someone's life?" And just behind it now there is this apprehension about what this child will face.'

It wasn't just smoke that Renee was avoiding. She stayed inside to avoid record-breaking heat. On 4 January Canberra reached 43.6 degrees, a new top temperature record. Less than a fortnight later, the bush capital recorded four consecutive days of 40 degrees or above—another first. Just four days ago, temperatures in Canberra hit 42.7 degrees, an all-time high for February.

We can't stand here and talk about bushfires without talking about climate change. In 2008 Ross Garnaut's climate change review noted that unchecked climate change would likely lead to more hot days, droughts, extreme winds, hailstorms, thunderstorms and floods. His review cites projections of fire weather, saying bushfire seasons would start earlier and end later and generally be more intense. Many Australians already know this. We've seen their anger and frustration in recent weeks. From the affected regions to the city streets, they march for change. Hundreds gathered on the parliament lawns yesterday to hear from Dr Karl Kruszelnicki and other speakers. These are people who bring us stories of hope, like the ACT Young Australian of the Year, Madeline Diamond, who recently stood alongside the Prime Minister with the words 'climate justice' written across her chest.

We've seen the best of Australia this bushfire season. Canberrans Tom and Phoebe Cadday were stranded on the south coast on New Year's Eve as bushfires neared. They had no cash for the cash-only petrol station and
faced being stuck in the path of the fire with their children. They were saved by another driver, who scraped together all the cash he had on him—$36—and handed it over.

As shadow assistant minister for charities, I acknowledge the outpouring of volunteer effort and donations and the hard work of nonprofits, including the Red Cross, Vinnie's, the RSPCA and WIRES. I know many of the organisations on the ground have emphasised the value of getting cash. It helps local businesses and avoids the problem of unwanted goods piling up in the community hall. To make an in-kind donation, a great channel is givit.org.au, which matches generous donors offering a laptop, washing machine or trampoline with a family that needs it. Many people near bushfire-prone areas have opened up their houses to victims. Last weekend we listed our spare bedroom on Airbnb OpenHomes and hosted a young family who had been evacuated from Narooma.

But individual action isn't enough. We need strong government action too. Australia is the developed economy most at risk from unchecked climate change. It is in our national interest to be a leader in global emissions reduction, not tugging at the shirts of the leaders, dragging them back.

Like Renee and Sam, I don't want my children to grow up in a world where their lives are limited because of a lack of action from those in power. We here in this chamber cannot allow the events of this summer to be forgotten in the chaos of another political year—one per cent of Australia's land area burnt, thousands of homes destroyed, 33 lives lost. As Labor leader Anthony Albanese has said, we honour those who have sacrificed their jobs, their health and, in some cases, their lives to fight the fires. We remember those who have lost their homes and their precious belongings. We share their frustration and anger at those who say it's business as usual. We must use this moment as a catalyst for change.

Mr FRYDENBERG (Kooyong—Treasurer) (10:55): The summer is brutal and tragic for so many Australians. Thirty-three people, tragically, have lost their lives. More than 3,000 homes have been lost and there has been extensive property damage across numerous states. More than 11 million hectares of land has been burnt, and much livestock has been lost.

There are some images from recent months that will be forever etched in our memories—people being evacuated by HMAS Choules off the beaches of Mallacoota; people looking at the sky and seeing only black, even though it was the middle of the day; and then, across places like Melbourne, Sydney and here in Canberra, a constant daily haze of smoke, which also brought with it some challenges for those local communities.

But today we pay tribute to those people who have lost their lives and say to their families that we are thinking of them. In particular, we pay tribute to David Moresi, Geoffrey Keaton, Andrew O'Dwyer, Samuel McPaul, Bill Slade, Mat Kavanagh, Ian McBeth, Paul Hudson and Rick DeMorgan Jr, firefighters who lost their lives. They battled the blazes to save property and lives but tragically paid the highest price.

The Prime Minister recounted the funeral of Geoff Keaton, where his son, Harvey, only 19 months old, placed a mug on the coffin which said, 'Daddy, I love you to the moon and back.' That's how I speak to my son, who is only three years old. I tell him I love him to the moon and back. And now little Harvey is without a father. Geoff Keaton was from the Horsley Park brigade, and he perished with Andrew O'Dwyer, his good friend, whose daughter, Charlotte, almost two, will no longer have a father. This is the human tragedy of these devastating bushfires.

It has been a time when Australians have rallied together, and that is another story from these bushfires. Australians have given generously through the charities, thousands volunteered to be members of their local emergency services and we have all watched on as the ABC have done a wonderful job keeping us up to date with the latest developments. People have opened their homes to provide a bed to those who have lost their homes, and there has been much more support.

The role of the Defence Force has been remarkable. The Defence Force has not only given tangible assistance on the ground, doing what they do best—transporting people to safety, clearing roads, providing medical assistance and using their Chinooks and other helicopters to ferry emergency service personnel into the most difficult terrain; that's what they do best—but also provided a degree of assurance to the nation that help had arrived.

The Prime Minister's decision to call out the reservists with a compulsory call-out—the first time we have seen that—I think made a real difference on the ground. Not only has our operational response been unprecedented but our financial response has been unprecedented. We have established the $2 billion National Bushfire Recovery Fund, led by the former Federal Police Commissioner Andrew Colvin, which is an initial and additional contribution over and above normal payments and allowances that the Commonwealth pays after disasters through the states. We have made significant announcements already, such as $76 million for mental health support, because the scars of these fires will continue not just for days and weeks and months but for years and maybe forever. I was with Sussan Ley out at Port Macquarie Koala Hospital to announce a $50 million package to
support the wildlife, which has been so badly damaged. Many lost their habitat. Our native flora and fauna were badly injured.

Small businesses are going to get help to get back on their feet, with up to $50,000 grants to those businesses that have been damaged, and with up to $500,000 loans, interest free for the first two years and then with an interest rate of half the 10-year Commonwealth bond rate. That will provide these businesses with the working capital to get back on their feet. There are grants of up to $75,000 for primary industries, because, as my colleagues in the chamber know, those primary industries will need a lot of help getting back on their feet after having their crops burnt and their livestock destroyed.

We've also agreed with New South Wales and Victoria on a 50-50 split on the clean-up costs—costs that can run into the hundreds of millions of dollars. By agreeing to a 50-50 split on the clean-up costs, with the Commonwealth and the states stepping in, it means there is going to be more money available to those people who are insured to rebuild. For those who are not insured, the Commonwealth and the states are obviously playing their parts. Family assistance is being provided to help families get their young kids back to school. We have provided individual grants of $1 million to local councils for initiatives in their area. We're providing financial counselling, which is going to be critical in supporting those businesses to get the proper structures and plans for their futures. We've given money directly to some of the charities so that they can provide immediate relief as well. So there are a large number of initiatives that have been undertaken by the Commonwealth. Earlier today I introduced into the House a piece of legislation which will provide tax exemption for the allowances that are paid, as well as for the DGR listing for a couple of important funds that are being established under the leadership of Governor-General Cosgrove and through the Business Council of Australia.

I want to commend the broader Australian community for their generosity and, as Treasurer, I will also appropriately note what corporate Australia has been doing, both in providing in-kind support—getting goods and services out to those communities straightaway—and in providing a strong degree of financial support. I would like to acknowledge the role of the Business Council.

Finally, we are living through a period of hotter, drier, longer summers. Climate change is real. We accept the science. We are doing our part as a country that signed up to the Paris Agreement to reduce our emissions. But there is also going to be a role for mitigation, adaptation and resilience to ensure that when these fires occur again—and they will, just like the floods and the cyclones will—we are able to minimise the loss of human life and the loss of property.

Members of this place, like all Australians, have a heavy heart about what has transpired in recent months. Whatever the political shenanigans have been over recent months around these bushfires, our focus has always been on delivering the support that is needed as fast as possible to those members of the Australian community who have been affected. These people will need our help—physical, emotional, financial and, in some cases, spiritual—and our support to help them get back on their feet. This is going to be a very long journey for them, and I know I speak for all members of this House, across every party political line, in saying that we will continue to provide support long into the future so that these communities can have a better tomorrow after what has been a very, very difficult and terrible time.

Mrs ELLIOT (Richmond) (11:07): I also rise today to speak on the condolence motion relating to these horrific fires that have affected so many regions right across Australia. Over the past weeks and months, we've seen so much of our nation impacted by these horrific, devastating fires. Tragically, 33 people have lost their lives, thousands have lost their homes and tens of thousands of properties have been destroyed. Our thoughts of course are with the family and friends of those who have lost their lives, including the nine firefighters who died whilst working to keep others safe. These losses are truly tragic and heartbreaking.

I'd like to express my sincere gratitude to all those who have bravely fought and continue to fight these fires right across the country: thanks so much to them. I'd like to acknowledge the remarkable efforts of the Rural Fire Service and the emergency services personnel, including those from the police, fire, ambulance services and the SES. Thanks also to the ADF personnel for their great assistance. I'd especially like to thank the RFS—all those incredible volunteers who have worked tirelessly to protect not only their own communities but so many other communities that they travelled to to assist as well. Thanks to these brave firefighters who put their lives on the line and continue to put their lives on the line to save other people's lives and property during the devastating bushfires right across the nation.

I was speaking with many of the RFS members in my area, many of whom have travelled throughout the state and elsewhere to help out. Thanks to all of them for their incredible work and dedication. The RFS across the New South Wales North Coast and, indeed, across the country have done a remarkable job, and it's important that we have this condolence motion to give us a chance to also note their courage, bravery and public service. I'd also
especially like to thank and acknowledge the outstanding leadership and commitment of the NSW RFS commissioner, Shane Fitzsimmons, and the incredible work that he has been doing over the past months.

I'd also like to note the massive community support for those who have suffered and are suffering—so many people offering assistance to those who've lost so much. This community spirit has indeed been overwhelming across the state, across the nation and even across the world, with some of the very generous donations that are coming in. It is truly inspirational to see the extent of the community spirit and of people coming together to help one another.

Across New South Wales more than five million hectares have burned during this unprecedented fire season. The latest figures from the NSW Rural Fire Service show that 2,400 homes have been destroyed, with 10,000 buildings impacted. In my electorate of Richmond there was minimal damage to property compared to many other areas, but across the entire New South Wales North Coast over 125,000 hectares were burnt and over 800 homes were either destroyed or damaged. Early in the bushfire season, in my electorate of Richmond, the fires around Mount Nardi posed a very serious threat and did cause quite extensive damage. I thank all those involved who worked very hard to contain that fire—for many reasons, but particularly because of a major communications tower that we have on Mount Nardi.

Soon after this time, the opposition leader visited the North Coast. He—along with myself, the member for Page and the state member for Lismore—met with local RFS volunteers at a briefing at their headquarters in Casino. We then went on to meet with locals at the Nimbin Showground evacuation centre and listened to the stories of those who'd been severely affected by the impact of these fires. We later went on to meet with the Nimbin CWA. Of course, our CWA are always there to assist in any emergencies. They do an incredible job, I know, throughout my region and right throughout the country.

The fires we've seen this summer are unprecedented and have had such an extreme and devastating impact, with that tragic loss of life and loss of property. They've also had an extreme impact upon our precious forests, our wildlife and their habitats. In my region, the New South Wales North Coast, rainforests have burned for the very first time. This is truly heartbreaking and something we never thought could happen—that these rainforests would burn. It is horrendous.

I'd also like to acknowledge the recent visit to my electorate by the federal shadow minister for local government, the member for Blaxland, along with the New South Wales state shadow minister for local government, Greg Warren. We met with representatives from Tweed, Byron and Ballina councils to discuss the fire recovery grants and also future planning. We also met with members of the Mullumbimby RFS and thanked them for their extraordinary commitment and courage during this time.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to commend those at ABC Radio who've worked so incredibly hard to provide vital information right around the nation. I'd particularly like to thank my local ABC, ABC North Coast, whose journalists do an outstanding job. They provided bushfire updates and warnings to those fire-affected communities. I know many of them worked very, very long hours to ensure this information was provided.

We do need to look at lessons that need to be learnt and how we plan for the future. We must all work together to achieve that. We need to find practical measures towards a new strategy for disaster preparedness and for our capacity and ability to respond, because this is no longer business as usual. The destruction we've seen throughout this bushfire season is unprecedented in our country's history. We as a nation, particularly in light of this devastation, now need to seriously be looking at working together to tackle climate change. This is vitally important. We know, from scientific experts, that, due to climate change, extreme weather events will only increase in severity and frequency. This just cannot be delayed any further. We have to have action. Without a doubt, 2019 was an extremely tough year, with the ongoing drought and the horrific and devastating fires. We're now seeing these extreme weather patterns continuing into 2020, and the concern does continue.

In conclusion, our nation owes a massive debt to those who continue to risk everything to fight these fires and, again, I commend all of our emergency services and all of those in the RFS and those volunteers and organisations who provided assistance, keeping people safe over this very long and fierce fire season. For many, the fires may no longer be an immediate threat, but there are many challenges ahead for them. As these people and their communities try to rebuild, we have to ensure that they're provided with ongoing support and investment to those affected areas. It will take considerable time, and they need to have ongoing support, since the devastation of these fires has impacted them and also their communities.

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for Health and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Cabinet) (11:15): I want to say that in so many ways this has been a 'black summer' for Australians—the physical darkness, the scarring, the human tragedy, the loss of property and the loss of wildlife which has been raised by so many people and which tears at all of our hearts. All of these things come together. At the same time, it has been a
summer of hope and resilience across Australia—the worst of nature and the best of humanity coming together. We know there are many causes: the traditional Australian landscape—that history is well-known—and the additional impact of climate change, which is real and significant and, as I have said for so many years, decades now, fundamentally important.

There is terrible work of some people—the last figure I saw was over 180 arrests for arson—and the challenges. We have to live up to the royal commission, in Victoria at least, standard of hazard reduction and fuel reduction. All of these things come together, but let there be no doubt as to the impact of additional factors such as climate change on the resilience and adaptation issues which we face as a nation as part of a globe.

But it's the human stories that are the real ones that I want to address here as being the most profound. When the Mallacoota evacuees came to Somerville, in my own electorate, I met many of them and was perhaps most struck by the three young women who had been asked by their parents to leave because of concerns about the impact of the air quality on them and their asthma: Tahnee, Emily and Darcy. Darcy's family had lost their home and this young woman, despite the trauma of that, was remarkably positive. She said, 'We will get through this.' Those are words which have stuck with me and which I have in her honour repeated in relation to coronavirus and the national challenge that we face on that. The words come from Darcy, but they speak for all of us. Although she had a tragedy, she was an inspiration. The girls talked about the work of the ADF and the volunteers and the extraordinary professionalism that we saw with the naval evacuation and the way in which the ADF gave them comfort: 'When we saw the defence forces and the Navy arrive, we felt safe.'

We know that our firefighters—and firefighters from the Mornington Peninsula and from around Australia—have descended on the different fire areas to put their lives forward and put themselves at risk and, tragically, we have lost nine firefighters. We have lost 33 Australians. We've lost over 3,000 homes, and many other people have suffered emotionally as well as physically. Against that background, we offer our tribute and our immense thanks.

Resources have been mobilised and, as part of that, I saw the arrivals not just at Mallacoota but also at HMAS Cerberus. One woman, who migrated to Australia some years ago and married an Australian, said to me that she was so proud to be here. She asked me to pass on her thanks to all those involved: the military; the volunteers; the Red Cross; again, the firefighters—the story everywhere is the firefighters, the firefighters, the firefighters, both professional and volunteer. On that front, one of the things we have been deeply aware of is the mental health impacts of bushfire and trauma on residents who have faced the fires and on first responders around the country. I met with the captain of the Balmoral Village RFS, Brendan O'Connor, and one of the members, Victoria Herrera. Victoria lost her own home in the fires. Brendan faced horrific fires and that RFS unit saved the town. They lost, I believe, approximately 20 homes; they saved more than a hundred. Victoria told a story of being on the radio with her daughter, who is also in the RFS, as is so often the case. She lost contact with her daughter when her daughter was in the midst of fighting the fires and sheltering in the RFS headquarters, because the town had been overwhelmed. The words Victoria heard were, 'Mum, it's filling; it's filling with smoke.' And then it went dead. Her daughter survived, but Victoria did not think so—she thought she had lost her daughter. She said, 'I'm not happy about losing my house, but I'm very happy about saving my daughter.' That puts some of this great tragedy into perspective.

In order to support people who have been on the front line, in order to support the families that have lost, we have worked very hard across the government. I've got to say that the PM said to me, 'We need to work on mental health.' In the earliest days of January, he said, 'We need you to work in the sector. There are so many in the sector who helped. We need you to work on getting us a mental health package.' After meeting Victoria and Brendan, we announced that day support for mental health. Yes, there's a large number, but that's not the thing that matters. It was the counselling support; it was the psychological support; it was the support for communities.

Only three days after that was announced I was in the Upper Murray, in Corryong, and I went out with Helen Haines, the member for Indi, and Bill Tilley, the state member, who was himself a CFA volunteer who was on the front line during many of these fires. He showed me the scars of the land and took me to the places where he and others had fought. He was pleased that they'd been able to help, but I saw the same tears from him for the houses they couldn't save and for the people across the border in New South Wales who had been lost fighting the fires. These scars will run deep for a long while.

What struck me in Corryong, when I spoke with Bill and Helen, when I spoke with Dominic Sandilands, who is the CEO of the Corryong Health, and with Sandi Grieve, who is the CEO of Walwa hospital, and with the mayors and CEOs of Alpine and Towong shires, was the extraordinary resilience. On the way from Wodonga, where we had been at the incident centre, to Corryong, there had been rain only a few days after the fires. Incredibly, in that short period of time there were green shoots along the side of the road—not enough for cattle yet, not enough for livestock, but enough to say that there are green shoots. We have many more fires still to battle but that physical
resurrection, that physical recovery, is in many ways a symbol of the emotional heart of the nation. Our job is to support in every way and to thank all of those who have been there.

I saw the ADF working in the communities. I heard from the communities—people like Cam Jackson, who said the Corryong Man From Snowy River Bush Festival will go ahead in early April and they had put out a video urging everyone to join. That resilience of the land, that resilience of the towns of Corryong and so many others, is the Australian story writ large. It always has been, it is, and it always will be. For that I want to thank, honour and recognise all of those who have contributed in every way to what, whilst it has been the 'black summer' that Australia has faced, has also been a summer of hope.

Ms McBride (Dobell) (11:24): This summer's bushfire crisis has touched everyone. My deepest condolences to the families of those who lost their lives saving others and protecting property. To those 33 people who bravely gave their life, and to the 3,000 people who have lost their homes, all of us are with you. In my electorate of Dobell, the communities of Kulnura, Charmhaven and Blue Haven were directly impacted. Strong RFS and emergency services leadership and brave volunteers saved most of the Central Coast from the devastation experienced in other regions.

I want to recognise our RFS director manager and Central Coast Australia Day Ambassador, Superintendent Viki Campbell, and her team at the Charmhaven fire control centre for their tireless efforts, which continue. RFS Central Coast contained the eastern edge of the Three Mile Fire before Christmas, protecting the coast. Since then, they have helped many other communities across New South Wales battling blazes in their own fire crisis. According to Viki: 'The New South Wales Rural Fire Service Central Coast district has deployed a total of 1,809 firefighters and 76 incident management personnel and specialists to date. Deployment locations include Glen Innes, Armidale, Tamworth, Casino, Grafton, Coffs Harbour, Kempsey, Wauchope, Taree, Foster, Bulga, Lower Hunter, Hawkesbury, Blue Mountains, Lithgow, Warragamba, Nowra, Batemans Bay, Bega and Cooma.' Viki continues: 'We should focus on what an amazing, tireless effort our volunteer firefighters from the New South Wales Rural Fire Service Central Coast district, with our partner fire and support agencies, have been doing for many months to protect the Central Coast and other communities across the state. Every single firefighter, incident management team member and other specialist has made a significant contribution to protecting life and property in some of the worst and most challenging fire conditions ever experienced in New South Wales.'

As I mentioned, the community of Kulnura was directly impacted. Captain Mark Towell of the Kulnura brigade said there was one day before Christmas when every single Central Coast brigade had a team fighting the Three Mile Fire, stopping it breaking its containment lines along George Downes Drive. Several strike teams from Fire and Rescue NSW, the Hunter and Northern Beaches joined these efforts, stopping the fire from spreading to Dooralong, Yarramalong and areas like Jilliby. We are so grateful.

Throughout this crisis, the selflessness and the generosity of Australians has shone through in all communities. I’d like to thank everyone in Gorokan who dug deep for this year’s Santa visit, helping Charmhaven RFS help the Rainbow Flat RFS, who lost their station in the Hillview Fire last November. The people of Gorokan were very generous, as the Charmhaven RFS said, 'Generosity was definitely on the community's mind, with $6,500 being raised on the day.' The Charmhaven brigade was also on hand on New Year’s Eve and New Year’s Day, when a terrifying fire bore down on parts of Charmhaven and Blue Haven in my electorate. A mighty effort resulted in the fire being contained to 335 hectares. Our community is also grateful that Fire and Rescue NSW Station 509 Wyoming escaped injury and made it home safely after their truck was overrun by a fire front south of Nowra.

To each of the RFS brigades in Dobell, thank you. Wamberal, Matcham-Holgate, Berkeley Vale, Tuggerah, Ourimbah, Wadalba, Warnervale, Charmhaven, Yarramalong, Kulnura, Dooralong, Wyong Operational Support Brigade, Wyong Rural Fire Catering Support Brigade and Central Coast Communities Brigade. I want to mention Michael Kennedy, a local seafarer from Long Jetty, who was on board the MV Sycamore, which went to Mallacoota to assist in the rescue. A big shout out to the kids of Anniversary Place in Tuggerah, who were busy and used their pocket money to support the local RFS brigade in Tuggerah.

This summer has seen so many Australians give selflessly to help others—people like Dave of Wyoming. Dave was so compelled to help that he crowdfunded a van and travelled over 2,000 kilometres, taking supplies to Snowy Valley communities. Last weekend he travelled to South Arm, west of Nambucca Heads, to deliver food, water and tents to residents who can’t use their tank water and don’t have town water. Dave has heard and is concerned that this community doesn’t have access to counselling services. I’d liked to finish on this point. I welcome the strong commitment to mental health and bushfire relief that the minister has just mentioned in the chamber. The mental health and wellbeing of all Australians impacted by this crisis must be a national priority. Communities, firefighters, first responders—there are long weeks, months and years ahead, and their welfare must be a priority.
Dr McVEIGH (Groom) (11.29): On behalf of the electorate of Groom, I too wish to make a brief contribution to this condolence motion. Whilst not burning within the boundaries of the electorate of Groom, which I represent, our broader region has been impacted by bushfires in recent months, particularly in the areas of Ravensbourne, Pechey and Millmerran. Millmerran and Ravensbourne are in fact in the neighbouring electorate of Maranoa, but they do look towards my city of Toowoomba as their main regional centre. As I speak of these people I must acknowledge the efforts right across of this nation of the member for Maranoa, the minister for natural disasters and emergency management, David Littleproud. I know that he had the opportunity to visit the evacuation centre at Highfields in Groom to meet with displaced residents, emergency workers and volunteers. Of course, we must all recognise that much of the early events in this fire season were on the Granite Belt, in his own electorate.

I acknowledge all colleagues in this place whose communities have also been significantly affected. But above all I join with all speakers and all members of this House in extending our condolences to the families of those here and abroad who have lost their lives, as has been clearly and rightly acknowledged by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. We pray for those brave firefighters and their supporters who remain in the field.

In our broader region we saw property loss and damage and local economic impacts, but thankfully no loss of life as has unfortunately occurred elsewhere across the nation. The Toowoomba region mayor, Paul Antonio, whose own farming property was under threat such that he couldn't access it or his family there for a few days, has rightly talked of improved landscape management—fire hazard reduction, if you like—and other fire prevention activities in the future. I look forward to discussing those issues from a local perspective with local, state and other federal colleagues in the very near future.

Whilst fires still rage, unfortunately, across the nation, it is an ongoing and very stark reminder of the risk that so many of us could potentially face. My own suburb of Toowoomba was evacuated in the fire season of 2002 under the leadership of then Toowoomba city council mayor Dianne Thorley. Given we are Australia's second-biggest inland city on what has been a very dry escarpment indeed, the risk is as high for us as for anyone else. As local fire experts advise us, a bad fire in our region could easily end up being catastrophic. It is for this reason amongst many others that I support the Prime Minister's foreshadowed proposal for a royal commission into this 'black summer' of fires.

In my opinion, everything should be on the table when addressing the hotter, drier climatic conditions that have led to and increased the risk of fire activities and events such as we've seen, including fuel loads in state forests and other privately held land across our landscape and necessary cooperation between local, state and federal authorities. But, as my dear old dad reminded me just this past weekend, reading as he was about the Stretton 1939 royal commission into the Black Friday bushfires in Victoria, we must ensure we are cognisant of the outcomes and recommendations of myriad reviews over the last century, following those earlier bushfire events. We're experiencing them again now, we'll experience them in the future, and appropriate actions must be taken to mitigate and lessen those risks.

In closing, I acknowledge the efforts of all involved in the fight. Volunteers and supporters, those providing food and a bit of respite, for example, are right across our nation and in regional communities in particular. Some of those in our own community were recognised at a local level on Australia Day. In our case, in the electorate of Groom, our local Defence Force representatives from the Oakey Army Aviation Centre and the Borneo Barracks at Cabarlah have done their bit with logistical support for firefighters locally, and most recently as part of the national response.

In closing, I will share that my eldest daughter's partner is a chopper pilot and has been involved in firefighting for many months now across various states and various fires. He'd be very embarrassed if I just focused on him, so I will simply refer to him as an example of the tireless efforts of so many across our nation. They are, as many other members have reflected, working hour after hour, day after day, week after week—in fact, month after month—and in many cases they are doing that away from home, for weeks on end and with few and in some cases no breaks whatsoever. I acknowledge them, these professionals and volunteers, who continue to work shoulder to shoulder to protect our nation.

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (11:35): On behalf of the people of the electorate of Blair I want to express my deepest condolences, thoughts and prayers for the families and friends of those 33 people who have lost their lives, including the nine firefighters who died keeping individuals and the community safe. This is a national emergency, a tragedy unprecedented—fires across our country, starting in Queensland and New South Wales and going into parts of Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia. The devastation and the carnage inflicted in our country towns across this country and the loss of life, the damage to habitat and the destruction of native fauna, houses, buildings, sheds, sawmills, crops and livestock is unimaginable. With great sadness we reflect on the loss of lives and property, the damage to economies and communities, and the trauma inflicted on residents.
I want to convey my deepest condolences to the victims and all those who’ve been affected directly and indirectly. And while the attention's been turned, rightly, to some of the southern states, it's important to note and remember the impact of the fires in Queensland, my home state, including my electorate of Blair, which has been badly affected by the fires, particularly in the Somerset region—forests and bushlands around Jimna and Linville outside Esk, along the Brisbane Valley Highway and other major highways. Before I continue I want to convey my heartfelt thanks and appreciation to the ADF and the personnel at the RAAF base at Amberley, who have gone way beyond that which they need to do. Every day, almost, in the Queensland Times there are stories of heroism, of help and hope given by those men and women from that place in my electorate, and I want to thank them deeply for what they've done. And my thanks go to our rural fire brigades, the SES, the fire and emergency services across Ipswich and the Somerset and our wonderful police service for their resilience, commitment and bravery. I deeply thank you.

If you drive up the Brisbane Valley Highway in my electorate, up through Wivenhoe Dam and the Somerset Dam not far from there, you'll see great swathes of area affected by bushfires. It's affected families and farms in those areas, and fauna of course—places like Jimna, up in the state forest, having to be evacuated, and places like Linville. Last year I said in this place—I think standing almost in this spot—that I'd received a petition from 250 people from the Linville area in relation to inadequate mobile phone coverage, which prompted me to write to the communications minister, and it got a lot of publicity in the media back in Queensland. We saw that because those country towns in my electorate, including the city of Ipswich, were cut off badly in the floods of 2011 and 2013 as well as being significantly impacted by the fires. I recall sitting and having morning tea with some friends in Esk—Lionel and Doreen Shaw—who were evacuated twice in recent days from Esk because of fires in and around that township. I had been up in Moore, where we did a fundraiser in relation to koala conservation and protection, hearing stories from people in those regions about what they experienced.

So in this country we need to do better. I want to thank the emergency services, who are forced to spend precious time going door to door to evacuate people in these regions in my electorate. I also want to thank very much the rural fire brigades in these country areas. I could mention almost every single one—rural fire brigades like Pine Mountain, Marburg, Fernvale, Kilcoy, Ripley Valley and so many others. They are volunteers who have gone out of their way to help people and who are stalwarts of the local community. They're businesspeople, they're teachers, they're public servants, they're people who've gone way beyond what they are asked to do. They're not there because they want to be; they're there because they feel compelled to be there by their love of their community.

One of the saddest things I have experienced recently was at the Australia Day ceremony and citizenship ceremony in the Somerset Civic Centre in Esk. I heard the story of a Somerset local woman, Glynis Limberg. She and her husband, Ray, had a small cattle farm near Esk which was impacted not once but twice by separate bushfires. Their home was fortunately spared, but they lost their sawmill, their tools and everything they needed for their small wood-turning business. They lost about 90 per cent of their stock, she told me, and their fencing. Glynis described driving away as one of the scariest moments of her life. I was able to help her, showing her through my iPhone what help she could get through Centrelink and the Department of Human Services. My heart went out to her, because she was there as a volunteer helping in one of the local community organisations, and here she was on Australia Day sitting down over a cup of tea and telling me about the issues that affected her. I want to thank St Vincent de Paul, who helped her out enormously.

I thank the Red Cross, the churches, the organisations, the cafes, the businesses who have held so many fundraisers in my area to help local people. I want to thank the Ipswich City Council and the Somerset Regional Council. Of course in Ipswich we had fires around Bundamba. My wife and I put up a local young woman who is a good friend of my eldest daughter, who had to evacuate from Bundamba on the night of the bushfires there. People were impacted. I was in a meeting at Providence, what you and I would describe as a progress association, one night when I received phone calls to say that there were fires lapping up to Ripley in the Ripley Valley. The fire and emergency services, Ripley Valley Rural Fire Brigade and other people stopped those fires at the very fences of those properties. This is a built-up area in Ipswich.

There are a number of people I want to mention, but particularly I want to mention Amy Hartness, who is Ipswich Citizen of the Year. You may not know who Amy is, but she was honoured at the North Ipswich Reserve. Amy followed her dad into the Rural Fire Service. Amy's a wonderful young woman. She's a tireless community volunteer with the Rural Fire Service. She was named Citizen of the Year at the Australia Day awards this year in Ipswich. She joined the Rural Fire Service in 2004 and the Ipswich City branch of the Queensland State Emergency Service in 2003. So this is a longstanding commitment. This is not something she's just done recently. Her astonishing commitment to the Ipswich community is reflected in 2,230 hours of voluntary work for the SES alone over the past 18 years. She was among many people from Ipswich who don't just work in their local...
community but who travel interstate to regional New South Wales to help other communities in areas where they
didn't know that much and they weren't familiar with it. They were there to help them.

I'll be there at the Rotary Club of Ipswich North when we honour local police and fire and emergency services
personnel at the officers of the year awards in May. We expect to be there at the civic centre this year once again.
I thank the Rotary Club of Ipswich North for doing that every year.

I'll finish on this note: one of the most poignant experiences I had was meeting with a young woman called
Phoenix Whitten, who is a member of the Marburg Rural Fire Brigade. I had a quick word with her at an Ipswich
Chamber of Commerce function at Rosewood. I asked her to put her experiences down, and I feel compelled to
read what Phoenix said to me about her experience in coping with firefighting. She wants to make it clear: this is
her experience, not the experience in the Marburg Rural Fire Brigade. She has been fighting fires, and these are
her words.

It's 5:30pm in the afternoon. Just got home from work. The fire pager goes off. Large grass fire some 1hr drive from home.
Called to assist local brigade in that area. Turnout and assist. Get home 2am in the morning. Go back to work 7am in the
morning.

2 days later … Traffic Crash. Two people trapped. Called to assist with extraction of patients. Attend and return home about
Midnight. Back to work 7am …

These events are factual and … a regular occurrence in the life of a volunteer fire fighter. Our current fire season, to use the
word that has been used many times is "unprecedented". It has pushed the Volunteer to the limits and beyond. But you know
what, we keep standing up day after day. Why? To help and protect the community. The seasoned fire fighters in the service
have not seen such volatile conditions before. The brigade has been to Mount Barney to Cunninghams Gap to Esk to Binna
Burra to Bundaberg and everywhere in between and beyond. We have sent personnel interstate to the ACT and NSW and this
still continues as we speak. Sent away from families for 5 days at a time. Going into territory that is not familiar. Working on
vehicles that are different to their own. Not knowing what they are getting into. Dangerous conditions. 12 to 16 hour days. All
this but satisfied in the knowledge we are doing it for someone we don't know. Just a fellow human being who needs our help.
Emotions can be raw. From the elation of saving someone's property to the devastation of not being able to. Saving that little
animal but watching another pass due to it's injuries. Standing in front of heat hot enough to melt the plastic on a truck. All
these things happen and are very real.

How do we Cope? How do we deal with it?

What we do is a very dangerous business and can takes it's toll. It takes dedication and an ability to learn from those of us who
have been in it a long time. A big part of the service is to offer a duty of care to everyone involved. The Rural fire fighter has
around them a team of people that are like family. A shoulder to lean on. Sometimes cry on. Just to talk about what they have
seen, done and achieved. Within their own personal family, they have to have that support for the "all hours of the night" call
out. It isn't for everyone.

Family and Work come first. You need both to survive. Family is the most important thing. When I say family, I don't just
mean your immediate family. The brigade is a family. Close knit and there for us when we need them.

How do we keep going……….we do it for the community. It's that simple.

Thank you, Phoenix. It's well said on behalf of all firefighters across this country and locally in my community.
Thank you very much. Thank you to everyone.

Mr ALEXANDER (Bennelong) (11:48): The bushfire crisis is a national emergency that has resonated deep
in the hearts of every Australian in their day-to-day lives. The bushfire season beginning in September has been
unprecedented and struck tragedy in our homeland. Over the past four months we've witnessed the extent of the
damages that the bushfires have inflicted upon our rural communities, wildlife and environment. Two thousand
and nineteen has been cited as Australia's hottest and driest year, in which a fire of this magnitude has raged
upward of 10 million hectares have been scorched by the bushfires and left unrecognisable. The relentless
burning of bushfires has released huge carbon emissions into the atmosphere. It has also left water undrinkable,
with residents being told to boil their water if it is in fact available. Millions of animals have been killed, injured
or displaced by the fires. Businesses from farms to tourism have already taken a $1 billion hit. This disheartening
situation calls for major reform in our policies in order to mitigate and prepare for natural disaster crises that have
been spurred by climate change.

In the midst of this crisis Australians have come together, as we always do in times of crisis. The efforts that
have been made by resilient Australian communities is something we can all take great pride in. People across the
country have donated money—millions and millions of dollars—as well as time and effort to help those who are
suffering. There are currently over 3,000 mentions of bushfire crowdfunding sites and GoFundMe. The generosity
of Australians who share our nation as their home has been immeasurable and very noteworthy. There's Nick Kyrgios's charity. It was his initiative to get his fellow great players to play a charity event before the Australian Open, raising over $5 million. Local business champions like Leigh Smart—well, no-one is like Leigh Smart; he has been herculean—and local schools, like Meadowbank Public School, have given money and services generously. Even our local pharmaceutical industry has been helicoptering in medicines to make sure that nobody has gone without their treatments, even if the roads were cut.

The resilience and kindness that our communities have demonstrated is a silver lining in this catastrophic event. But the greatest thanks must go to the firefighters. They have stood resolutely in the face of these flames, in some devastating cases making the ultimate sacrifice while trying to save lives and property. There are stories of bravery coming from all corners of the country, and to thank people individually to the level they each deserve would take a very long time. I just want everyone to know the deep respect and thankfulness that we have for all fireys. There are so many kids now who, when they grow up, want to be firefighters.

The elephant in the room, of course, is climate change. Today is a day for commemoration, not politics, but one thing I would like to mention is the need to recognise that these fires are not a warning about climate change; they are climate change. The Leader of the Opposition mentioned that this is not normal. I fear this is actually the new normal. In focusing on saving this country for our grandchildren, we risk forgetting that we need to save it for our neighbours. Obviously we must mitigate future risks and change our ways, but we also must adapt, because these longer, hotter summers will be our new normal. If we are to be a mature nation, we must be proactive in adapting our local infrastructure and the way we live, lest we risk succumbing to this new normal.

Much of the language around fires relates to war. We have been at war. Fires leave casualties, weariness and destruction. Both fires and war leave suffering in their wake, and we fight them with a total community effort. We have fought with our allies, the Americans and our great friends the New Zealanders. As a war hero once said to me, 'It is a great tragedy of war that it's only in war that we find the heroes that live amongst us.'

People have lost their homes, their livelihoods, their dreams and, in some tragic cases, their lives. The news has brought tragic stories of those who have lost, but those pictures on the screen do not do justice to the true horror of being at a fire front—the jet-engine roar of a fire, the unimaginable heat and the fear of tiny embers and fluke winds. Those who have been through this terrifying ordeal will never forget and, while the road to recovery may be long, Australia's tragic history with fires shows us that the trees, houses and towns will regrow. It won't be easy, but Australia is there with you. We are more united as a people than ever.

Mr GORMAN (Perth) (11:54): On this sparsely populated continent, we have been reminded brutally that we are all connected. These connections run deep across Australia, and they are an acknowledgment that wherever we are this beautiful but harsh environment is both our biggest asset and our biggest threat. We are connected not just to the firefighters and professionals who have given so much of their time here in Australia but also to those who had never even been to Australia before and with an hour's notice jumped on planes to come here to help us. Unavoidable too is that the air we breathe, our impact on our environment and our climate are all connected. No nation, especially not Australia, can ever again pretend they're just one insignificantly small part of the international climate change challenge. Australia has been reminded once again that the lessons and connection of our First Australians to this land are essential to our collective survival.

Australia has responded as a family and grieved as a family. We grieved as we saw the image of toddler Harvey, dressed in a mini Rural Fire Service uniform, receive a medal honouring his dad. Harvey's dad, Geoffrey Keaton, was a volunteer firefighter. He was awarded a commendation for bravery and service, having died in the Green Wattle Creek fire. That was the first media report I read that made me cry about these bushfires. Like any parent, any Australian who has seen that picture of little Harvey, I think it will stay with me for life. It reminds us that the things that guide us in this place aren't just rational economic costings or where the next dollar will come from; it's the lessons, the tragedy and, hopefully, the hope of the national project we call Australia.

Thirty-three people have died in these bushfires. That's 33 people who won't return to family, friends or loved ones. On top of that, some 150,000 Australians every year volunteer to protect their communities from the threat of fire. The sacrifice of these brave Australians has saved thousands of properties and thousands of lives. For every one property lost in the fires, some six are saved by our firefighters. So, while it is a time for grieving, I think it is also a time to acknowledge what an amazing job has been done in the protection of life and the protection of Australian assets, and when we think about the estimated one billion animals that have died in this fire, we are again reminded just what an incredible job our firefighters and professionals have done.

Out of every tragedy, people are driven to action. In New South Wales alone, tens of thousands of new volunteers have signed up to become firefighters. That's more than six times the national average. This, Australia's largest national disaster, has tested us and we are reminded that the essence of being an Australian isn't a location,
isn't an accent, isn't a love of beer, isn't being a bogan and isn't yelling a slogan. It's the ability to show compassion for one another, and to help out and do our bit. Every Australian has once again been reminded that we have so much more to do in mitigation and prevention.

In Western Australia, we saw the Stirling Ranges burn for a week. The Goldfields fires disconnected Western Australia from South Australia for 12 days. In our metropolitan area, communities in Rockingham, Lesmurdie, Kalamunda, Yanchep, Bullsbrook and others have had scares and sleepless nights, but we know that Western Australia has been lucky this bushfire season, so far. But, like many Western Australians, I look at the Darling Ranges which run along the back hills of the Perth metropolitan area. These hills are an ever visible presence across Perth. One day I fear the hills will face the same fate as we have seen in New South Wales in recent weeks; an out-of-control fire on the edge of the Perth metropolitan area is our shared nightmare. Hoping these things won't happen is not enough. We must continue to invest in our fire services and prevention measures so that the only red glow we see over the Darling Ranges is the rising of the sun every morning.

In my electorate of Perth, we saw the compassion of Australians for our brothers and sisters in the vast expanse that we refer to as 'the eastern states': kids running bake sales, completely unapologetic for their aggressive pricing strategies; small businesses donating their daily profits—Maylands Amcal Pharmacy and Picabar, a beloved bar in the heart of Perth, just to name two; and my and Jess's local pub, the Rosemount Hotel, will be hosting a 'with love from WA' concert, with a line up of more than 50 acts on Sunday 16 February, with all profits going towards bushfire recovery.

I also commend the Perth Mosque for the event they hosted in Hyde Park, with guest of honour Governor Kim Beazley, raising funds for bushfire recovery. Of course I also note that 555 Western Australians were sent to New South Wales and the great state of Queensland to support the fire services, including firefighters and logistic support.

I can't deny that the images seen on international television and the front pages of international newspapers have been of a devastated Australia. I was struck by the sincerity and extent of the condolence that were passed on to the Australian delegation at the Asia Pacific Parliamentary Forum which was hosted here in Canberra just a couple of weeks ago. It reminded me that we do need to send an international message that Australia will be, and eventually is, in recovery mode and that international visitors are still welcome—indeed international visitors are needed for our economy and for our communities. Send the message that Australia is back in business.

I encourage the government and the foreign minister to consider a tour of the diplomatic corps to communities as they recover and of course at the appropriate time. This will allow the nations of the world, through their high commissioners, ambassadors and consulates, to see that Australia is back in business. A model for this already exists. In 2011, following the Queensland floods, the Gillard Labor government did exactly this. I travelled with then Foreign Minister Rudd and representatives of some 80 countries as we shared the message that Queensland was back in business. It's now time to send the message that Australia is back in business.

I want to take the time to thank those countries who have offered aid—too many countries to list. I got an exhaustive list from the Parliamentary Library. Many, many countries offered assistance, but I do want to pass on thanks to the Canadians, Americans and New Zealanders who came here—many of whom are still here—to assist Australia and the 350 international personnel of international military support that have assisted Australia at this time.

We didn't want or need these fires. We didn't need them to remind us of the dangers of climate change. Again, the science tells us that the severity, frequency and intensity of such fires is one of the outcomes of global warming. Acting on climate change is in our national interest. I commend the comments from the member for Bennelong: he said that we can't say that this is a warning; this is a reality. Acting fast before other countries is how we build a safer Australia. Over the summer, those who deny climate change have become the quiet Australians, but people have been contacting me, and in the hundreds of emails I have received this summer about the fires there has been anger, anxiety, tension and a desire that we do more in this decade than we achieved in the last one.

Carol from Bassendean wrote:
The fires have to be the biggest wakeup call the country has ever had.
Laura from Bayswater in my electorate wrote:
My family do a lot to limit our carbon footprint: we commute by bike, we have solar panels on our roof … But without a sensible national policy, these personal actions, especially in light of the recent bushfires, seem insignificant.

Jane from East Perth wrote:
Deep and impactful policy that tackles climate change on multiple fronts is the only way we can avert further environmental degradation and extreme weather events.
Again, I will just add my condolences to everyone who has been impacted by this horrible disaster and say that it's been a privilege to be in this Chamber to hear so many beautiful speeches on both sides of the House as we collectively grieve as a parliament and as a nation. Thank you.

Mr O'DOWD ( Flynn—Deputy Nationals Whip) (12:03): Both sides of the House recognise the total destruction of properties and lives, businesses, tourism and the economy, and that overall it's been a devastating six months for most of Australia. No state has actually not been involved in fires with the destruction of properties but, more importantly, lives have been lost. It's been a tragedy.

I'd like to thank the police—this is across the nation and my electorate, but it applies to everyone—the SES; Rural Fire Service; rural and urban brigades; charity clubs; the Salvos; the QCWA; Anglicare;—who are very important in helping to fix destruction on properties—the international firefighting services, as mentioned by the member for Perth, from New Zealand, Canada and America; the ADF; and of course the RSPCA. They've all played vital roles. People in the communities have also lent their hand wherever they could, not just in my electorate, as I said, but across the nation. A special thanks goes to our local mayor, Matt Burnett, in the Gladstone council. He was in constant contact with our office, providing updates on a regular basis about the fires at Lowmead, Mount Maria and Tableland Road.

In 1904, in her poem 'My Country', Dorothea Mackellar wrote 'I love a sunburnt country' and about 'droughts and flooding rains'. She didn't mention fire. But bushfires aren't uncommon. In my research I found a clipping off the front page of the Sun, which was printed on 19 January 1909. It tells the story of 62 people who died in bushfires in and around New South Wales. The temperature rose to 113.6 degrees Fahrenheit and, if my calculations are correct, that's about 45.33 degrees Centigrade. It just goes to show that these bushfires are not a new phenomena. But we must take a new approach to reducing the risk of these fires happening again.

There have been several royal commissions over the years in relation to the 1851 Black Thursday, the 1898 Red Tuesday and the 1939 Black Friday fires. More recently, there have been royal commissions into fires in recent decades. However, we have not listened to the suggested remedies for bushfires, and this must not happen again.

Bushfires will occur with the build up of leaves on the forest floors. It is heartbreaking, I know, to see the loss of animals and the loss of human lives. We've got to do something and do it now.

Thirty-three people, including nine firefighters, have lost their lives, over 3,000 homes have been destroyed, and 12 million acres have been burnt. In my state of Queensland, we have lost 6.6 million hectares of land. Forty-nine houses, 68 sheds and five commercial buildings were destroyed. There were 72 aircraft utilised. Some 35,000 QFES personnel have been working tirelessly to put these fires out. I speak to the people of Flynn, and they tell me about their resolution to have this scourge of bushfires stopped in its tracks. I hear many different views and ideas from people from all walks of life. More waterbombers and firefighters are not necessarily the total answer. Some ideas out there make a lot of sense. Man has managed land for thousands of years, and we should also listen to the traditional owners of this land. It would be a great start in reducing these fires.

The land must be kept in a manageable state. A friend of mine, Mick Duff, who is no longer with us, was the owner of DiDi station in the Proston area. He burnt his property every year. Fifty per cent of the property was burnt one year, and the other 50 per cent the next year. This way he controlled the fires on his large cattle-grazing property. We could investigate the introduction of a vehicle used in the USA, a five-axle heavy-offload vehicle with a capacity of 20,000 litres. That would be a help. It's an all-terrain truck. That should be investigated.

Providing road maintenance and cool burns earlier in the year, as we know, will better prevent the fire potential. Giving landholders the permission to clear more land around their homes and sheds would be a definite plus — so that there are bigger firebreaks in place, just as there are with powerlines. If you look at powerlines across Australia, they are all cleared on both sides of the powerline, and the maintenance is kept up on a regular basis. This should be adopted on main roads and fire protection roads where fire trucks can be used in these terrible conditions of fire. The fire trucks must be able get in and get out safely.

We need better breathing apparatus and equipment for our rural fire brigades. The days of having virtually a paper towel over your nose when you go in to fight a fire should be over. It's not good enough. Rural fire brigades should be equipped with the proper breathing apparatus that our urban firefighters have.

The responsibility for firefighting needs to be national, and state governments should work closely with the federal government in developing a plan to eradicate bushfires. The process for getting permits to burn must be quickened up before we change the conditions under which farmers and graziers can burn off when the conditions are right.
We don't want to see fires of this magnitude happen again, but they will happen if we don't take this action. Remember, fire is a great servant but a terrible master. There have been several royal commissions, but, as I said before, little action has been taken, resulting in nothing being done. This cannot happen again.

Ms PAYNE (Canberra) (12:12): I rise today to speak on this condolence motion about the bushfire disaster that has gripped Australia over this summer. It's clear that the scale of this disaster is unprecedented, with fires starting in September and many still burning today, with more of the fire season remaining. Eleven million hectares have been burnt, so much of that in national park and wilderness areas. Around 3,000 homes have been lost, and 33 people have lost their lives.

So many Canberrans—in the hundreds—have written to me expressing such deep concern about this disaster. Canberra knows fire. The fear, the shock, the devastation and the loss of 18 January 2003 are marked deeply on the consciousness of Canberrans. I speak on behalf of my electorate to say to those who have lost their loved ones, who have lost their homes and their businesses, that the hearts of your nation's capital are with you. For those who have lost those they love, no words can do justice to what you have lost. To the families of the firefighters who were killed bravely defending communities, including the three American aerial firefighters so far from their homes, and particularly to the children who will grow up without their fathers: I want you to know that our nation will never forget their names, and you should know that they are heroes.

These bushfires have been truly terrifying—megafires creating their own weather systems, fire tornadoes, flame heights of 90 metres, darkness, noise and unbreathable air. For those of us lucky to have only seen this in videos, it is hard to fathom the incredible courage of our firefighters in taking that fight on, to protect life, property and our environment so selflessly. We can never thank you enough, but thank you.

There has been immense devastation in the region surrounding Canberra. Canberrans love the South Coast, a second home to many of us and a place where many Canberrans have deep connections and own property. It has been truly heartbreaking to see the suffering and destruction there this summer—scenes that can only be described as apocalyptic, which have been seen around the world—and to see people sheltering on beaches, with nowhere to turn but the sea. We stand with your communities—economies that have been decimated. A point of light were the call and answer videos on social media: the smooth sound of Batemans Bay's 'Canberra, come back' and Canberra's response, sung to Savage Garden's 'Truly Madly Deeply'—'I want to lay like this forever.' And we will be back. I know Canberrans will relish an additional reason to get to your beautiful towns, beaches and forests and book them out with an empty esky. Canberrans have been so keen to pitch in and help. I was really pleased on Saturday night to attend a trivia night organised by the Campbell's communities care group, who have conducted an amazing effort to raise around $50,000 for the devastated community of Nerrigundah, where two lives were lost and the majority of homes were destroyed.

I want to acknowledge my colleagues and friends who represent these neighbouring regions: the member for Eden-Monaro and the member for Gilmour. They have worked tirelessly for their communities through this period. They have spent each day in their communities, standing in solidarity, requesting practical help and solutions, travelling long distances and just being there with people. I also want to acknowledge the member for Macquarie, in the Blue Mountains, who I know has been attending daily fire briefings since October and who knows firsthand what it's like to lose your home to fire and to rebuild. Our leader, the member for Grayndler, Anthony Albanese, I know has spent each day in the community too this summer, calling for practical solutions to support our firefighters and people affected by fire.

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Sitting suspended from 12:17 to 12:29

Ms PAYNE: The ACT has been affected by fire this season too. On 22 January the Beard fire threatened the community of Oaks Estate and the Beard industrial estate within my electorate. The Oaks Estate community faces more challenges than most in Canberra, and it was terrifying to hear that afternoon, within about half an hour, the warnings escalate from the need to urgently evacuate to the need to take shelter in your home. Thankfully, and thanks to the brilliant efforts of our emergency services team, it was brought under control that evening. But the following day conditions flared again, and we saw it join with a second fire in Pialligo, which caused our airport to close and saw scenes of flames lapping at office blocks.

Then a fire began in the Orroral Valley in Namadgi. We've seen devastating damage to Namadgi, with around 50 per cent of that national park being burnt. This is a beautiful place and home to so many animals. The area burnt by this fire represents almost a quarter of the ACT. It has been estimated that over a billion animals overall have been killed in these fires, and I'm really proud that Labor has called for a full ecological audit into this. A positive was that the Yankee Hat rock paintings in Namadgi, which are Aboriginal art and a very significant site, have been protected.
These fires saw a state of emergency called for the ACT last weekend, and the communities of Tharwa and the southern suburbs of Canberra were facing a very tense and anxious wait, with extreme heat and wind conditions in the context of our tinder-dry and drought-stricken bush. Thankfully, this time the Canberra suburbs avoided fire, but sadly homes have been lost in our neighbouring rural communities over the border.

I want to say a special thank you to ACT Emergency Services Commissioner Georgeina Whelan, fire and rescue chief officer Mark Brown, the head of the Rural Fire Service, Joe Murphy, our Chief Minister, Andrew Barr, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Mick Gentleman, and everyone who worked in our emergency services through this period. Their tireless work helped us in Canberra to feel prepared and brought us calm. I also want to thank the ABC, whose role was incredibly important throughout this disaster. When the internet went down, people had their radio to let them know what was going on. It's vital that we resource our ABC properly to continue this and its many other important services.

The real crisis in Canberra over this summer, though, has been our air quality, and I think it's safe to say that this has been a health crisis in its own right. On 9 December our air quality was defined as hazardous for the first time, and since then we have had 34 hazardous days. To put that in context, the advice on a hazardous day is for people to avoid being outside and for anyone who might be particularly affected, such as young children, the elderly, pregnant women or people with health conditions, to relocate to a different place. There were many days over this period that Canberra actually had the worst air quality in the world. On 1 January, the air quality rating peaked at 5,185—200 is classified as hazardous.

Over this period, people stayed indoors and checked the air quality on our apps on an almost hourly basis. Business suffered greatly as people couldn't leave their homes. It became normal for people to be wearing masks, which shops sold out of. Our postal service stopped, flights were cancelled, and our shops and national institutions were closed. Childcare centres were closed. I had so many emails particularly from parents so deeply worried about the impact of this on their children and about how we might not see the impact of it for 20 to 30 years, which is what the research shows. I can relate to that, as the mother of an almost two-year-old, and also to the challenge of trying to find indoor activities to keep them amused over that period.

I had letters from pregnant women who were fearful that with every breath they were doing harm to their unborn child, powerless to do anything about it. Of course, there is a social justice element to this crisis, in that those with the lowest incomes are less able to adapt to it. I had many emails from people who talked about the practicalities of living with a disability on a pension, unable to air-condition their home, with the heat exacerbating their disability, unable to afford masks and unable to afford air purifiers, which became another common thing that many Canberrans were buying this summer. I will talk a lot more about these issues in the parliament.

The people in my electorate and around the country are afraid, and they're crying out for leadership. We are already experiencing the dangerous impacts of climate change. We absolutely need to adapt to deal with this and be better prepared for situations like this next time. But I do not accept that this will be the new normal. We cannot accept that. My electorate have lived through this situation this summer, and I will make their voices heard in this place. They're also asking for this to be beyond politics. This is not about beliefs; it is about science. It is about our future. I join others on my side of the chamber who have been reaching out for bipartisan action on this from government. We desperately need action on climate change now. If there is one positive to come out of the crisis that Australia has lived through this summer, it is that it is a wake-up call. It is time to act. This summer is not over yet. I hope that we can avoid further losses, but we must never forget this summer.

Mr WOOD (La Trobe—Assistant Minister for Customs, Community Safety and Multicultural Affairs) (12:36): I pass on my condolences to the member for Canberra and to her electorate for what they've experienced and also all the other members of parliament whose electorates have been heavily affected, including the member for Gippsland and the member for Eden-Monaro, who gave a very touching speech.

I still recall, when I was 16 years of age, leaving Ferntree Gully Technical School on the bus and looking over to see a plume of smoke coming from Belgrave South. At the same time, unbeknownst to me, other fires were going on in the Cockatoo area. That was nearly 37 years ago. Tragically, in La Trobe in Upper Beaconsfield, 12 CFA volunteers lost their lives in two trucks when they were caught in the fire. Townships such as Belgrave South—which is no longer in my electorate, but Cockatoo, where they have an amazing memorial, is—were absolutely devastated. The reality is, even though it's 37 years on, those who were impacted by the Ash Wednesday bushfires will never forget. The locals are still haunted by what they experienced. In Cockatoo, they sheltered in a kindergarten where they survived a night of hell.

Today I speak with a heavy heart as a result of what I have witnessed over the summer—initially, fires in Queensland, New South Wales and Tasmania, and obviously those that have occurred in Victoria. Speaking as the
assistant minister for multicultural affairs, I thank the multicultural community for what they have done. We have seen Australians unite together in this awful situation where, tragically, good people—CFA volunteers and firefighters and the New South Wales rural firefighters—lost their lives defending us. The sad reality is that some of the children—one of the mothers is expecting in May—will never know how brave their firefighter family members were. I’d also like to acknowledge the devastation on Kangaroo Island in South Australia. These bushfires are unprecedented. As well prepared as our firefighters may be, they can't manage and fight the fires which have swept across Australia's south and east and parts of Western Australia, burning 11 million hectares of land.

Sadly, millions of wildlife have been killed. They’re saying that the figure could be up to one billion. The koalas can only escape by going up trees. There has been devastation when it comes to the superb lyrebird. In some areas up to 50 per cent have been killed.

Then there are the farmers who have lost all of their stock and the people who have lost their livelihood. The Australian government—and I know the opposition—feel for the people who faced the brunt of the fires. Our thoughts will always be with them. As people who have experienced fires before have told me, they don’t just need support in the three months, six months or year following; it is in the years to come. Sadly, for those who have lost a loved one, every Christmas and birthday is not a celebration of hope; it's a memory of the loved one they have lost, which is always very sad.

I’d like to speak about the multicultural community. Right across the country this is one thing that has absolutely inspired me. Those communities are not expecting from outback Australia a member of the Sikh community with a turban to give them food. Some of the ladies from the Muslim community travelled for hours to feed firefighters and help those people. It has been absolutely incredible. Every multicultural community I’ve come across has donated in some way, even some of the less established communities. The South Sudanese community in Cardinia raised a couple of thousand dollars to support them. I want to name the groups I’ve worked closely with.

The hardest thing to do was control them in the sense of not letting them go into the fire areas. All they wanted to do was provide food and water bottles. At the time of the Gippsland fires, going down to Mallacoota was rather dangerous so they ventured to Bairnsdale. I would like to thank Kartik Arasu and Krishna Ganugapati. A massive campaign was organised to donate food, drinks and water to those impacted. They went to Bairnsdale. Brijal Parikh; his wife, Diwani Parikh; Omar Salim; Jagtar Singh; Chiran Singh Sodi; Tariq Butt; Fakhar Anwar; and Reehan Hameed in particular did amazing work. Brijal put out an SOS and people came to his place. In a very short time everyone was donating food and water, and then they ventured down to Bairnsdale.

Malimage Suganda Fernando made a very substantial contribution to the Healesville Sanctuary. That was something I got behind. I'm very passionate about wildlife. I've worked with Zoos Victoria. They ran a campaign with the multicultural community to support wildlife. They went on the ground at the Healesville Sanctuary. They had three triage areas set up. They were sending their vets to do this incredible work. When I visited Healesville they already had I think 15 koalas going through. People would not realise—they don't—even the simple task of changing the bandages on a koala takes three staff. It has to go under anaesthetic. It was incredible to see their dedication and how hard they worked.

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Mr WOOD: I would like to pass my thanks to the Gurudwarra Baba Budha Sahib Ji in Pakenham. It was an incredible effort. One night they cooked food and took it down to Bairnsdale and supplied food to the CFA volunteers. It was also great to have Defence personnel up there. The Keysborough Sri Lankan Buddhist Temple community, in particular Gaya Dissanayake, Noushad Usef, Arjuna, and Duasha Perera, incredibly donated 35,000 bottles of water that they took down to Bairnsdale. The Australian International Islamic College: I was with the member for Moncrieff, Angie Bell, and it is incredible that the young students raised $1,000 for the bushfire appeal. This is actually on the Gold Coast. Maulana Al-Shaikh Afeefudeen Al-Jalani donated financially to Healesville Sanctuary. I thank him very much. The Ahmadiayya Muslim Association of Victoria branch at Berwick donated over $10,000. They are only a small community. A big thank you to Sikh Volunteers Australia. We all have seen the Sikhs go out on social media. They are just everywhere and they have been absolutely incredible. The Dandenong Sri Lankan Buddhist Temple and its congregation took truckloads of food, water, dry rations and clothing. I thank their chief priest, Akarawita Sangananda Thero, Suganda Fernando, Don Thuthitha, Kumari Kulatunga, Priyantha Balasooriya Chalindra, Sachini and the whole Dandenong Sri Lankan Buddhist Temple and all the Sri Lankan community. Sri Durga Arts Cultural Education Centre—Kulwant Rai Joshi and his team—tirelessly raised funds and also made a contribution to the Healesville Sanctuary. Bandu Dissanayake from
the Sri Lankan Society of Australia, together with 20 other associations, got together to put their hands in their pockets to help out. I was at their event on Saturday night. Susan Gin and the team at EWC community, organisation were involved in raising thousands of dollars for bushfire assistance. There was Malik Zaveer and the Lions Club of Lyndhurst and District, and the United Sri Lankan Muslim Association of Australia.

I did an event with Minister Alan Tudge with the multicultural community. We had the Chinese, the Israelis, the Filipinos. It was just incredible—all these communities donating their time and efforts. As I said to them, in a time of need it's everyone helping out. So on behalf of the whole government and all the members of parliament, I thank them very much.

In conclusion, I want to thank all the CFAs in my electorate of La Trobe. On Australia Day we had awards for them. Obviously, a lot were out fighting fires. There has been this incredible turnover of volunteers. I just can't thank them enough. As I said before, we haven't got the fires in La Trobe. In fact we have been pouring out wheelbarrow loads of water, which is the bizarre thing, because La Trobe, where it covers the Dandenong Ranges, is probably the most fire-prone area of Australia, yet we haven't got fires there—we have had rain pretty much each week. I know that it is raining in Melbourne this week, where we reside. I'd like to mention Berwick Fire Station, Narre Warren Fire Station, Narre Warren North Fire Station, Clyde CFA, Officer CFA, Upper Beaconsfield CFA, Beaconsfield CFA, Pakenham Fire Station, Toomuc CFA, Pakenham junior CFA, Menzies Creek Rural Fire Brigade, Emerald CFA, Clematis CFA, Gembrook CFA, Cockatoo CFA, Nar Nar Goon Fire Brigade, Tynong Fire Brigade and Koo Wee Rup CFA. Again, I thank all of those people involved in the CFA who may not be fighting the fires but are in those important roles in the feeding stations, going out and giving incredible support. On behalf of my electorate of La Trobe, we very much sympathise with communities right across the country that have been devastated by fire.

Mr THISTLETHWAITE (Kingsford Smith) (13:00): On behalf of the people of Kingsford Smith, I pay tribute to and honour those Australians who lost their lives as firefighters and as victims of Australia's devastating bushfires. We offer sincere commiserations to those families who have lost loved ones as a result of this unprecedented 'black summer'. I offer wholehearted support to those communities throughout the country that are being affected by the devastation, and a special tribute to those whose lives were taken as they battled the fires—the volunteers who unfortunately paid the ultimate price for volunteering their time to save the property and lives of others. These are heroes. They represent the greatest of humanity. Many of the families of those who unfortunately lost their lives as firefighters were in the gallery yesterday in the main chamber and it struck me that many of them were young families—children who will never know their father but will forever know that their dad was a hero. To them we pay such respect and tribute today.

I also want to thank those who volunteered to help others. It was great to see Shane Fitzsimmons, the head of the Rural Fire Service, in the audience yesterday. I want to thank each and every volunteer firefighter, the professional firefighters, the surf lifesavers, the welfare groups, the churches, the multicultural groups and, indeed, everyday Australians who volunteered their time to help others during this catastrophe. I wish to thank you. You represent the best of our country and the great Australian notion of having a go. Your efforts made us all proud as Australians.

Our thoughts are with all of those Australian businesses, particularly the small businesses, that are affected by the fires. We urge the government to act quickly to provide support to ensure that businesses can get back on their feet as quickly as possible. Indeed, I join with my colleagues in encouraging other Australians to holiday in, and visit, the affected areas and, importantly, to buy local in order to support the affected communities.

I wish to thank all Australians who donated to the many bushfire appeals throughout the country. Your generosity is inspiring. In our community, Kingsford Smith, a number of bushfire appeals were put on by organisations. The Matraville RSL Club held one a few weeks ago. The community of Maroubra came together two weeks ago at the Maroubra Bowling Club to support a bushfire appeal. I congratulate all of the organisers and those who performed at that particular benefit concert. I will be attending another benefit night at the Hillsdale Bowling Club this Saturday evening. Particularly, special thanks and mention go to Brooke McHatton and her husband, Brenton, or BJ. Early in January, Brooke brought our community together at the Coogee Beach Club and, over a weekend, encouraged locals to turn up to donate food, water, goods and funds. The response was simply overwhelming. The community came together to donate truckloads of material. I thank those who drove that material down to the South Coast to support those communities. So, I pay special tribute to Brooke and BJ and to Andrew Stewart, Leigh Webster, Derek Milton Paul, Robyn Crawford, Ben Lawson, Turgay Yusuf, Sam Rutherford, Luke Rutherford and David Brownhill, who were all instrumental in that benefit being successful and those truckloads of goods being donated and transported to the South Coast.

Unfortunately, this is an unprecedented catastrophe, and an ecological catastrophe: 33 people have been killed and 11 million hectares of bushland has been burnt out. It is estimated that over a billion animals have been killed...
as a result of the fires. Six thousand buildings, including 2,800 homes, have been destroyed, and we've all experienced the smoke haze in numerous cities throughout Australia over the course of this particular inferno.

Climate scientists have been warning for over a decade that this would happen. They've been saying, for over 10 years now, that the effect of climate change is going to be that we will get extended droughts that will fuel increases in loads for bushfires, we will get a longer bushfire season and we will get more severe bushfires. In fact, the Garnaut report, that was issued almost a decade ago, exactly pinpointed these symptoms and said that they would begin to occur in extreme situations from 2020 onwards. And that's exactly what's happened. But the Abbott, Turnbull and Morrison governments have ignored these climate scientists' pleas for stronger action to reduce carbon emissions and tackle climate change. They've ignored the pleas for a national approach to climate change management and to the bushfires and cyclones that are going to become ever more frequent in Australia in coming years.

The time has come. Australians now understand the severity of the impacts of climate change. The time has come for this government to accept the science, to accept the advice of those experts and to accept that this government is not doing enough to tackle climate change and to reduce carbon emissions. I encourage the government to work cooperatively with the opposition and other parties in the parliament to reflect the views of the Australian community, who want stronger action on climate change. The time has come for the government to stop using climate change action and policy as an issue that is campaigned on and used for political advantage against the opposition and against other parties. The Australian people are sick and tired of it. They want our political leaders to unite around this issue, to bring Australians together and to develop policies that reflect stronger action on climate change, so that Australia is doing its bit. At the moment, we're not doing our bit, internationally, to reduce emissions. They want us to unite around this common purpose for stronger action on climate change, because we are all in this together.

Mr PITT (Hinkler) (13:07): Lives have been lost across the country, as the previous speaker has said. Some 11 million hectares have been destroyed by fire. Individuals have lost businesses and livelihoods. They have lost all of their property, all of their holdings, many of their stock—many animals across the country have been affected or killed. There is no doubt that this has been a tragic and difficult fire season, and it is not finished yet.

I know my colleagues have been far more affected than my electorate. We have had some fires, one in particular at the little seaside community of Woodgate. There but for the grace of God—and the Rural Fire Service—go I. They have done a fantastic job right across this nation, and I can only thank them. What more can we do but put forward our words of thanks for the people who volunteer their time, put forward themselves for risk, and fight these fires which are very difficult to fight.

But what we must also look forward to are the challenges of making change. Because fundamentally—and this has been brought to my office now for many years—we must in this country allow landowners to manage their land, not continue to override their needs with bureaucracy. The idea in Queensland that you can only clear a firebreak from your property or structure, of just 20 metres, without a development approval—this is absolutely ridiculous. These are individuals who have their own staff, massive landholdings and heaps of equipment, and they have always managed their own land. This has been a complaint that I have continued to hear not only from them but from my colleagues in terribly affected areas.

The national broadcaster reported on 8 January 2020 that in Queensland, in terms of the fire hazard reduction program, in 2016 the state had planned 242 burns and completed 122. In 2017 they'd planned 225 burns and completed 131. In 2018, 177 were planned and 69 completed, and in 2019, 168 were planned and 117 burns were completed. Now, anyone who is involved with land management or fire knows that you cannot always get the perfect conditions on the day that you choose. The weather makes up its own mind. But what we have heard consistently over and over and over from our firefighters, from our volunteers and from our landowners is: give us back control of how we manage our land. I've got some examples here that I want to put on the record.

As I said, in the township of Woodgate the fire closed the road for approximately two days. I went down and spoke to the individuals who were parked on the side of the road who were separated from their loved ones, and these were challenging circumstances—a father whose wife was still at Woodgate and couldn't get out; individuals who had elderly parents on one side of the fire break and they were on the other. These were very, very difficult times, and the Woodgate Rural Fire Brigade were single-handedly awarded the volunteer organisation of the year by the Woodgate community on Australia Day. Can I say, there are no more deserving recipients. Many of them are retired, and they spent literally days fighting this fire.

I want to go to another report by the national broadcaster where they interviewed volunteer firefighter and farmer Roger Draper. Roger said that the new regulations in Queensland had had a major impact on how they
tackled the Walkers Point blaze. Walkers Point is a small community at Woodgate—it is in the same location and was the same fire. He said:

All the new rules mean the firies have to sit on the break and wait for the main front to come to them before they can put it out.

Mr Deputy Speaker Zimmerman, I'm not sure what your experience is in fighting fires, but when there's a 40-kilometre-per-hour wind up the backside of these things and it's 60-, 80- or 100-feet high, that is incredibly risky and incredibly brave.

In the remainder of the report, Mr Draper said:

… that fire eventually jumped into the council area, and because we could not back-burn that Wednesday evening it created another two days of extra work to stop the fire on the western end.

We have to give local control back to the individuals who are on the ground. These are fast-moving situations. Certainly there is always a need for oversight, but as a former canefarmer—and many canefarmers used to burn an awful lot of their product every single year—I can say that there are particular periods when you get a small gap to do something substantial. These individuals waited 2½ hours for an approval to back-burn to defend the Woodgate community. This fire would have basically been controlled if they were allowed—and in their view they were stopped from doing just that.

My community has been very fortunate to date. I'm advised it's raining there right now, and I hope that continues. But we live in a nation of extremes. This has been a tragic fire season, and we need to put forward practical responses that actually make a difference. Regardless of what level of government is responsible, we need to get our heads down, get our heads together and deliver for the people we represent, because they are the ones who lose their lives and their properties, and there are all those other issues associated with natural disasters. Thank you.

Ms MADELEINE KING (Brand) (13:13): Yesterday and today we have heard in this place some very harrowing stories, and no doubt we'll continue to hear stories of loss and sadness for some time to come. We have also heard stories of incredible courage, resilience and humour in the face of the extraordinary fires that have caused such destruction along the east coast of this nation from Queensland to New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and of course South Australia. I, for one, will never forget the very moving speech yesterday by the member for Eden-Monaro, who spoke so directly from his heart, as of course this summer he has been at the very heart of this unbelievable catastrophe which has made our country quite unrecognisable.

We've all seen the images of a charred and blasted Kangaroo Island in South Australia—wildlife and livestock burnt and confused, wandering aimlessly around the bushland—and those unforgettable warlike images of thousands of Australians huddled on the beaches at Mallacoota and Eden as the fire crept towards them from the dunes. These images have been seen around the world. They are unforgettable and of course they will stay with us forever. They show the world the human and ecological catastrophe of the Australian bushfires of the summer of 2019-20.

I'd like to take the opportunity in this condolence motion to pay tribute to the families of firefighters Geoffrey Keaton, Andrew O'Dwyer and Samuel McPaul—brave members of the NSW RFS who died in the line of duty this summer. To the families of Mat Kavanagh, Bill Slade, members of the Forest Fire Management Victoria team, I am so very sorry for the loss you have suffered. These men gave their lives serving their communities and their country under extreme, terrible and unimaginable conditions. I would also like to acknowledge the loss of Dick and Clayton Lang, two men of Kangaroo Island, who gave so much to their community. Of course, on top of this, there's the three US servicemen who died in the heartbreaking Hercules crash: Captain Ian McBeth of Great Falls, Montana; First Officer Paul Clyde Hudson of Buckeye, Arizona; and Flight Engineer Rick A DeMorgan Jr of Navarre, Florida. These American men died helping the people of Australia. We are forever in the debt of the families of these brave men. In all, 33 lives have been lost in these fires. To all of the families and friends, I cannot imagine your grief, but in this place I acknowledge it, knowing our words are little consolation for the enormous loss you have suffered and will continue to suffer for the rest of your lives.

All of Australia is grateful for the firies coming to our aid in our time of need from countries as far afield as France, the US and Canada. All of us here and all of us around the country have grieved and are deeply saddened for the loss of life, for the thousands of homes and livelihoods destroyed and for the many millions of hectares of beautiful bushland of this country that is now burnt to the ground and even beneath the ground.

Western Australia has not been immune from these disastrous fire conditions, although it has been far more fortunate this summer compared to our friends here on the east coast. Nonetheless, throughout the summer there have been blazes ripping through the south-west in Stirling Range, in Collie and in my own electorate of Brand, especially in areas of Baldivis and Kwinana, and in the lovely bushland settings like the Spectacles.
I’d like to pay tribute to the many Western Australian Department of Fire and Emergency Services volunteer brigades who have given up their time to ensure the safety of our communities this summer. A number of volunteers from the Rockingham Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service have deployed to the east coast disaster zone since October last year. I thank the Secret Harbour Volunteer Fire and Rescue Services and the Karnup Volunteer Fire and Emergency Services volunteers who recently travelled out to regional towns, such as Collie, to assist local brigades there. The Baldivis Volunteer Fire and Emergency Services have had a very busy few months battling a number of blazes in both rural and urban Baldivis. The Kwinana South Volunteer Bushfire Brigade, ably led by Brigade Captain Eddie Mouna, has been assisting locally as well as regionally out as far as Norseman in the Goldfields. Eddie has rightly and publicly called for more members of the public to stand up in their communities and volunteer their time and effort to their local fire service. His call to action should not be ignored. I implore my community to join with Eddie and his comrades in the bushfire brigades to help in any way you can.

I’d also like to thank Kwinana Volunteer Fire and Rescue and, of course, the wonderful Mandogalup Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade. As well as fighting fires, they’ve been fundraising for their sisters and brothers on the east coast, recently raising over $10,000 at the Perth Motorplex in Kwinana for families who have lost loved ones fighting these fires.

I’d also like to thank the cities of Rockingham and Kwinana for keeping people informed while these scrub fires and semi-rural fires have taken off in our electorate. They’ve supported residents affected by the fires, especially the City of Rockingham, having set up an evacuation centre at the Mike Barnett Sports Complex. I commend the mayor, Barry Sammels, and his team for all the work they’ve done to help local residents.

I would especially like to commend the WA emergency services minister, Francis Logan, for his cautious and sensible approach to the fire emergency that closed the vast Eyre Highway near the Goldfields in the town of Norseman for 12 days. That fire destroyed more than 500,000 hectares of land. For those unaware, the Eyre Highway is Western Australia’s only sealed road into South Australia, and one of only three land based links from Western Australia to the east coast.

It is at times like this, when highway No. 1 is cut off and it becomes impossible to cross the Nullarbor, that we become so very aware of the vastness of the continent, how distant Perth is from here in Canberra and how easily we can become isolated. The WA economy is reliant on Eyre Highway and the access it provides. The impact on the state is significant when these routes are blocked, preventing our truckies from getting their goods from the east and travelling across to us.

Hundreds of Australian travellers make the trek across the Nullarbor Plain and they were stand stranded in towns like Ceduna and Norseman. Some were stranded in the roadhouses of Caiguna, Cocklebiddy and Madura, but they made do, in good humour, playing car park cricket to pass the time. Very importantly, towards the end of the closure of the highway a helicopter was able to drop in some much-needed toilet paper to the roadhouses, so I congratulate Emergency Services on dealing with a very real need for those stranded.

While those people were passing the time patiently, dozens of firefighting teams battled the blaze and won, with the highway opening on 10 January, luckily with no loss of life. That was because we learned from past mistakes, and at this time we remembered the dark tragedy of the 2007 Boorabbin bushfires, when three truck drivers died in a firestorm as they drove along the Great Eastern Highway.

I want to thank all our emergency services personnel, particularly the WA DFES Commissioner, Darren Klemm, who has been at the forefront of the efforts with the Norseman fire and, of course, all around the state. I also pay tribute to the New South Wales Rural Fire Service Commissioner, Shane Fitzsimmons, who has been the public face of the firefighting community and their efforts around the country. I thank him for his commitment to public service at this time.

There have been a few good stories in this disaster. One that really captures my imagination is the effort of the National Parks and Wildlife Service firefighters and the specialist firefighters of the New South Wales RFS who worked together to save the last remaining grove of 200 Wollemi pines, which are an incredible living monument to the history of our land but also the world. The Wollemi pines survived the dinosaurs, but there was every chance they would not survive this summer, so I’m grateful for those who put in that effort to save a remarkable part of our ecology.

Lastly I want to thank the ABC, whose exceptional coverage during and after the fires has brought a sensitive and compassionate insight into the lives of people affected by this catastrophe. Most importantly, I want to acknowledge the critical role the ABC plays as the emergency broadcaster during times of disaster, especially in bushfires. People trust the ABC. They believe the alerts. They listen and they listen carefully. As such, it is an irreplaceable resource for emergency and disaster management in this country. It deserves the funding it gets, and it particularly needs adequate funding to serve the rural, regional and urban communities affected by fire so they
can know exactly what is happening, when they need to go and when they need to be aware and can do their best to be safe in these times of tragedy. I commend the motion that was put to the House yesterday and support it wholeheartedly. I urge all Australians to stay safe, be alert, be aware, be fire ready and be prepared to act when you are required to over the course of the remaining summer and bushfire season.

**Ms FLINT** (Boothby—Government Whip) (13:22): Each and every summer, residents in the Mitcham Hills area of my electorate are on high alert for bushfires, and none more so than our Sturt CFS Group volunteers. The reason people love living in areas like Belair, Blackwood, Glenalta, Bellevue Heights, Eden Hills and Lynton is the beautiful bushland, which is the same reason they need to be on high alert for bushfires each and every summer. We are fortunate to have not been directly affected by the terrible fires that have devastated the Adelaide Hills, Kangaroo Island, the south-east and Yorke Peninsula this year and so many other parts of Australia over recent months. Our hearts go out to those who have suffered great tragedies, with 33 lives lost, including those of six volunteer firefighters; homes and businesses destroyed; and wildlife and native bushland ravaged.

In these unprecedented and tragic bushfires, nature has shown us its very worst, but Australians have shown us their very best. Some of these Australians include my local Country Fire Service volunteers, and I wish to acknowledge and commend all the members of the Sturt group for their contributions. The group, led by Group Officer Dale Thompson and Deputy Group Captains David Sims and Chris Smith, have coordinated our local volunteers to support firefighting efforts across South Australia and interstate. Many volunteers from the Sturt group battled fires in New South Wales and on the Yorke Peninsula in South Australia late last year, and I reported their significant efforts to the House just before Christmas. Since then, the Sturt CFS Group volunteers have not slowed down. The Blackwood brigade, led by Captain Jamie Emsweiler; the Belair brigade, led by Captain Mark Brooks; the Eden Hills brigade, led by Captain Ben Gloy; the Coromandel Valley brigade, led by Captain Rowan Clark; and the Cherry Gardens brigade, led by Captain Lawrie Lingood, have assisted to fight and contain fires interstate and in South Australia. During the Cudlee Creek fire in the Adelaide hills, the Sturt CFS brigade provided eight full rotations of strike teams, which translated to 272 personnel, five appliances, one bulk water carrier and command vehicles. The Sturt CFS Group also sent 84 personnel to Kangaroo Island, as well as three appliances and a specialist compressed air foam system. I would like to commend the entire Sturt CFS Group for their bravery, selflessness and sacrifice. Their tireless work has saved countless lives, animals and bushland.

Elsewhere, many local Defence Force reservists, including those based at the Warradale Barracks in our electorate, answered the call to assist. We know this is a very unusual deployment for them and they have faced very difficult conditions. I want to acknowledge their incredible efforts and those of our full-time Defence Force personnel supporting communities in the most desperate of need. I also want to acknowledge the businesses and local community groups in Boothby who have assisted. The Brighton Walk to Support raised funds for the Australian Red Cross disaster relief and recovery fund. Traders on Jetty Road Brighton came together to support the walk and fundraising efforts by donating a portion of the entire day's trade to the bushfire effort. Together they raised $3,150 on the day and $7,325 when combined with online donations.

At the other end of the electorate, the Blackwood Football Club, thanks to Franca Williams, President Kris Winchester and members, held a bushfire fundraiser for those affected by the Adelaide Hills fires, raising an incredible $23,000. And it doesn't end there. A bushfire relief quiz night fundraiser organised by Gail Miller will be held at the Belair Community Centre on 22 February, with 100 per cent of the funds raised going directly to support those impacted by the Kangaroo Island and Adelaide Hills fires. The Boothby community has generously assisted their fellow South Australians in their time of need. Finally, I want to acknowledge my colleagues the members for Mayo, Barker and Grey and their staff and all the other colleagues around Australia who have worked so hard to support their communities through these terrible fires.

All Australians can support the South Australian recovery effort through SA Tourism's #BookThemOut campaign, by booking out accommodation, restaurants and other businesses impacted by the fires. If you've been thinking about visiting the hills or KI, there is no better time to do so. Even if you weren't thinking about visiting these regions, there is still time to do so. If you can't visit, then please get online and buy some local produce instead.

In closing, I want to again commend the outstanding work of our first responders, Defence reservists, Defence personnel and of course our volunteer firefighters for their tireless and invaluable efforts, and I send my thoughts and prayers to all communities affected by these terrible fires across Australia.

**Ms STANLEY** (Werriwa—Opposition Whip) (13:28): I would like to start by acknowledging the lives lost to bushfires this season and provide my sincere condolences, and those of our community, to everybody who has been touched all over this nation by fires around the country. I'm sure there's no-one in this House who has not been glued to the ABC coverage of fires, especially over the Christmas-New Year period. At one point it seemed
from the New South Wales Fire Service's Fires Near Me app that the whole of the east coast was ablaze. All of us have waited in disbelief as family and friends anticipated fire fronts approaching them, hoping that they heeded the advice to leave. I have seen the devastation and I am constantly amazed at how the fires spared some properties and not the ones next door. It shows the fickle and unpredictable nature of fires and why they must be treated with the utmost respect.

I want to acknowledge all the volunteers in Werriwa who have assisted at many levels and in different areas around the country. I particularly thank Turbans 4 Australia. They've been around the state cooking for RFS volunteers, delivering donations and supporting local communities on the South Coast with barbecues. This is the Australian spirit at its finest.

The electorate of Werriwa is served by two Rural Fire Service brigades, Middleton and Casula. Around 60 volunteers from these brigades have been working since as early as September all around Australia. They've protected, lives, property, livestock and wildlife for months. I had the opportunity to visit the brigades a couple of weeks ago, in the calmer weather, to thank them for what they've been doing as volunteers in our community. They mentioned to me that all the agencies involved in fighting these fires—including New South Wales police, fire and rescue; New South Wales ambulance; the interstate volunteers and international volunteers; and our defence personnel—have been wonderful colleagues. To all those agencies and volunteers, we thank you.

These brigades are families. This is something we see right around the country: lots of volunteer firefighters being families to each other. I want to give particular thanks and support to Casula Rural Fire Brigade Captain David Collins. Mr Collins has been fighting fires around Australia and during the Christmas period with his team. Nearby, in my electorate, in the suburb of Voyager Point, homes came under immediate threat from a sudden explosive bushfire on 5 January. The brigades responded to this fire, and Mr Collins was incident controller. Unfortunately Mr Collins was injured in this fire and is currently recovering. Speaking with Mr Collins and his brigade, I was told that they consider each other their extended family. They come from all walks of life, different ages and different backgrounds: NRMA mechanics, retail sales people, bodybuilders and the unemployed. They told me how incredibly supported they have been by their employers, ensuring that when they returned to work they were rested, and never quibbling about requests for time off. Of course, this is in the large companies. For those who are self-employed or unemployed, volunteering comes at great personal cost, both to them and to their families.

Our volunteers are the best of Australia. They are the true fabric of our community during our hardest and toughest times. During our discussion I was told by both brigades that they work closely with the Horsley Park Rural Fire Brigade. This is the brigade that firefighter volunteers Geoffrey Keaton and Andrew O'Dwyer, who terribly and tragically lost their lives on the night of 19 December, belonged to. On the day that it happened I contacted Dr Hugh McDermott, the state member for Prospect, who is also a member of the Horsley Park brigade, to convey my condolences and those of our community. Hugh, like his colleagues, has continued to fight fires and was on the fire ground this weekend.

The members of both the Middleton and the Casula rural fire brigades are grieving for their colleagues and their friends. While I can't truly express the sympathy in my heart for all Australians who've lost loved ones, property, livestock and livelihoods, I do send you my deepest sympathy and will do everything possible to ensure that you get what you need to recover as soon as possible. I thank the House.

Sitting suspended from 13:32 to 15:44

Mr BUCHHOLZ (Wright—Assistant Minister for Road Safety and Freight Transport) (15:44): Ordinary people in my electorate doing extraordinary things: that's how I best describe the volunteer firefighters and the people who put their shoulder to the wheel to fight the fires, and some of them are still doing that today. We in the seat of Wright experienced our first fires back in September, so we in the seat of Wright have experienced every process, every part of the grievance and every part of the rebuilding that is still in front of those regions that have only just now experienced a fire.

I'll give you a sense of where we are. The Gold Coast hinterland has some of the most beautiful and pristine natural rainforests. They are normally immune to these types of fires. The moisture content normally acts as an inhibitor, and properties are traditionally safe. They weren't safe this time. The moisture levels were far lower than in previous fires. We are no stranger to bushfires. They predominantly start in national parks through acts of God, through lightning strikes. It happens. We know that aerial bombing to try to extinguish the isolated ignitions in very rugged terrain is only effective if you can get rural firefighters on the ground to do what they refer to as mopping up. You can bomb all day, but it's never going to be 100 per cent effective unless you can mop it up.

Unfortunately, our area was part of the 108 small fires from the Gold Coast hinterland through the back of Canungra, Lamington National Park, Mount Barney and upper northern New South Wales and around the Granite
Belt into Stanthorpe and Warwick, which borders the seat of Maranoa. We know only too well that the aerial bombers and those people on the ground need to work collectively.

Old-timers who have fought fires in years before predicted this. They said that the fuel levels in the national parks were, as a result of policy positions years ago, much greater than they had been. Today is not the time to reflect on that. There will be inquiries where they'll be able to give evidence around fuel loads. They did talk about how they used to manage it in the past. They had cattle in the parks. They spoke about their preferred option to control burn in winter. The reason for control burning in winter is that you have a heavier dew and cooler days. They burn only in the afternoon so that, if it gets away, it can burn through the night. Their intent is to take only the top of the grass off. The intensity of this fire took not only the top of the grass off but the root systems of the grass beds out. There will be erosion from that and it will take many years to rebuild.

We all know what erosion can be done by unprecedented rainfall. When rain falls from the sky and takes the topsoil off this country it can have devastating effects. In a fire you get the same type of erosion, but you don’t get it from the rain; you get it when the inside of trees burn out and they fall to the ground. The larger ones, because of their weight, act as bulldozers as they come down the side of a hill and dislodge the rocks that have been there for centuries. The grass around them helped to support the upper foundation. So you end up with, for want of a better word, avalanches in a dry environment.

Our roads were cut for many weeks and the effect on businesses is still felt today. I speak of Aratula at the bottom of Cunninghams Gap, a small community that relies on traffic to come through their community. There's a pie shop; there's a pub; there are three service stations, a butcher and a couple of cafes. I find myself going out there regularly, trying to eat them back into economic prosperity! There are only so many pies I can consume to try to help that economy, but my shoulder is to the wheel! I try to help the economy that way.

Now to the Salvation Army. We had firefighters come from all around the country—because we were the first up. Then, everyone was fresh. Once our own internal firefighters had fought to the point of exhaustion, we had a second lot of cavalry come and offer assistance. We had two major central communication points because of the vastness of the front of the fire. One was at Canungra and the other one was at Boonah. At one stage there, I think we managed 77 fire fronts. You can imagine the number of units that would have taken and the support needed on the ground. So to watch the central command really take hold was nothing short of impressive, and not only for its military precision. As to the logistical movements that were happening at the front line, I come from a transport and logistical background and I felt, 'My God! These people are extremely special people.' Some of them were paid—as they should be. But today I want to acknowledge those people who gave their time freely.

Those people who gave their time freely fought in the front line or, if they couldn't do that, they may have sat behind at one of the 15 different rural fire facilities, sheds. They may have worked during the night to get failed motors or pumps on trucks recommissioned. They may have been so old that they didn't have the strength any more—the years did not allow them—to go and fight fires. But their commitment to their community was so great that they would go down and fill tanks all night, because that was something that their age would allow them to do—to stand there next to a water tanker so that someone could get another couple of hours sleep; they'd relieve them from their shift.

My staffer wrote, in his opening comment, 'In the ashes of the fire rose a phoenix of a community.' I thought that was the most powerful part of witnessing the absolutely devastating impact that these fires have had across the community. How it unites a community is something that I can’t describe. It’s the people who make a contribution who seek no accolade, who do it not because they want to grandstand or to seek the attention of a camera crew when they roll into town—the people who get out of bed and, if they've got six pieces of bread left in their cupboard, put together a couple of sandwiches, throw some gladwrap over them and send them down to the hall because they know someone's going to be looking for a feed. Their contribution should be equally commended, as with those who donned a yellow uniform and took to the front lines.

I said this is not the first fire we've had. And it won't be our last. But I know that from this fire, from this event, we will learn. We will learn, and we'll become more resilient and we will put greater infrastructure in place. We're already talking now on the million dollars that our shires have been given. In the higher country, we created these mobile bladders, roughly half the size of this internal part of this room, to be a place where water tankers would just shuttle water into. They were made out of plastic. Water tankers—mostly council tankers, and some private operators—would shuttle water into there, and then the yellow trucks would come back and get it out at that point so that they weren't losing valuable time going all the way into town to get water. Work is now afoot to make sure that we have permanent water infrastructure in place to fight the fires that will be in front of us in the years to come.
For the people who lost homes, livestock and sheds, I want to start with those who have lost everything. Words cannot describe how you must feel. I try and put myself in your position and think to myself, 'Oh, my God.' And then that feeling is only amplified if the question enters your head: what would've happened if I had lost a child in the fires? Fortunately, we didn't have that—God blessed us in that space. But there was a period of absolute fear when people were evacuated at two o'clock in the morning by a police officer with a torch, knocking on their door saying, 'Get out. Get out now. You've got half an hour.' This is what happened in the Binna Burra area.

They were evacuated in basically the clothes they were wearing. They were shuttled to an evacuation centre. Most in the early hours of the morning found solitude with friends and families elsewhere. But there was a period of time watching the news cycle, listening to the media, hearing of the devastation, hearing reports that houses had been lost and words like 'unprecedented fires' and 'catastrophic results', and not knowing whether or not your house was in that space. The fear and the unknown in the hearts and minds of the members of those local communities at that particular time, I can't imagine. But I saw it, and from that they grow and they become more resilient.

We lost in Binna Burra a place that some Australians may know called Binna Burra ecotourism lodge. It was an amazing property. I assume it was about 30 years old. It was in a pristine rainforest with a beautiful big driveway and A-frame log cabins. People would get married there. Conventions were held there. It was just an iconic property in our part of the country. When you look at the photos or you go onsite now, the only thing that remains is the bitumen circular driveway. Everything else was floored.

I opened my comments by saying that we had the disaster in September. We had more fires. We fought fires until November, but it would be disingenuous of me not to share with Australians and report to the House that more recently we have had landscape-transforming rain. We've had between five and eight inches across some of this country, and it seems a world away now when you see the photos. I know even at my own place: two feet of green paddock across acres and acres. The rain has brought with it prosperity. The rain has brought with it a sense of hope and a new beginning, a sense of rebuilding and future.

In our community we have the army warfare training centre. And I want to acknowledge—I don't want to dedicate this speech to personnel that have suffered, but I do want to make a particular point about Colonel Arran Hassell, who just was amazing in the community. While the rest of Australia was not on fire, he, as a community leader with resources, first went into action and he made the warfare training centre, Canungra army barracks, available to house the many hundreds of volunteer firefighters who travelled from South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales to make a contribution to fighting our many fires. He housed them and, in addition to that, he was just there when we needed helicopters, water trucks, information, commns. I didn't have a great understanding of what they did before that, but I and the community will be forever in their debt for the way they conducted themselves. On behalf of the community, I will make sure that his superiors are aware of the contribution they made.

The Binna Burra Lodge is being rebuilt. The community have put their arms around the Binna Burra foundation. They're currently working out of Beechmont, the old schoolmaster's house, which is a cafe. We will render them every assistance we can to rebuild, but, for those who have a philanthropic heart and want to make a contribution to the Binna Burra Lodge foundation as they rebuild: I think they were drastically underinsured, so there's going to be a massive shortfall there. The iconic nature of that property should be preserved for years to come.

I want to thank the Prime Minister—although he cost me a trip to Tokyo; I had wanted to go up to the rugby to watch the World Cup. He said: 'I'm coming up to your electorate. We're going to go for a look.' And we did that. That was very early in the piece. His presence on the ground was felt by all. It wasn't all positive. The majority of it was. It would be disingenuous for me not to say that after his visit a lady wrote to me and said: 'The Prime Minister should not have come and raised the awareness of the fires. He should have stayed at home, and the money should have been better utilised and sent up here for the rebuild.' I took that letter and circulated it to the chamber of commerce and other community groups, Rotary clubs, the fireys. It was a lone voice. The presence of the Prime Minister in a time of need—I think it was one of the original places where he thought, 'We need to get in and offer assistance here.' I think a lot of those programs came out of that initial meeting.

I want to acknowledge some of the people in our community that jumped up and down. One of them was the editor of a paper. Her name's Wendy Creighton from The Fassifern Guardian. That little local paper, which comes out weekly, is celebrating 125 years. She made a very salient point about the $300 reimbursement for primary producers—and most of my people who fought the fires were primary producers, defending their own blocks. To meet the eligibility criteria you had to prove that you had lost up to $300. The reality is—and Wendy made the point most saliently—that, as a result of the devastating drought, most of these people have not received income for the last three years. They haven't been able to sell cattle, so they weren't able to prove through any type of
audit trail that they had lost that revenue. After consultation with David Littleproud's office—which has been, in the words of the Leader of the Opposition in his opening address, 'Exceptional to deal with and returned every call'—Mr Littleproud then implemented a $200 reimbursement for primary producers to assist them through this process, without them having to provide any proof that they'd lost revenue.

I spoke about Kaye Healing, the incident controller, in my opening comments. Thank you, Kaye; our community is so fortunate to have you. The corporate knowledge you have—basically, where every tree is in our many hundreds and hundreds of square kilometres of forest—is nothing short of impressive.

I'm going to finish by recommending something for those rebuilding our communities to consider. A lot of those who border onto national parks and have lost fences are disadvantaged. If I, Mr Deputy Speaker, have a property next to your property, and the fire takes out our fence, there's an obligation that I'll pay half for its reconstruction and you'll pay half. Unfortunately, if your neighbour happens to be a national park, there is no such obligation for the national park to make a contribution, thus amplifying the cost of reconstruction. I accept that that's a state government responsibility, but I will continue to feed that in, because I think it offers a disadvantage for those people who are eligible for some of the grants that are out there, which should be skewed a little bit more to those people who are trying to rebuild.

I have 20 different rural fire brigades in my electorate. I seek leave to table that rather than taking up too much more of the room's time.

I'm going to finish where I started. In my electorate, I'm fortunate to represent ordinary people doing extraordinary things.

Mr BUCHHOLZ: I'll finish where I started. In my electorate, I'm fortunate to represent ordinary people doing extraordinary things.

Mr BRENDAN O'CONNOR (Gorton) (16:06): I thank the member for Wright for sharing with us the devastation that he has listened to people talking about within his electorate, amongst his communities. It just reminds us how far and wide the bushfires have spread and how they have affected so many lives in this country. I'm glad and fortunate to say, as the member for Gorton, that we've not been directly affected in the way that the member for Wright describes, but of course all of my constituents are shocked and have been watching the television over summer and of course have been donating in response to the many invitations to provide support to those who are directly affected.

It perhaps has not taken the nation by surprise but it really has had people sitting up and taking notice about the extent and nature of these fires. I agree with the member for Wright about mitigation and preparation. We need to follow the facts. We need to take advice from those who've been fighting fires for many a year. We need to ensure we mitigate the potential risks. We have to do all of those things. We have to be prepared in a manner that perhaps we are not always prepared. There is no doubt we have to do that.

But the firefighting seasons are getting longer. That's the truth of it—in both hemispheres, which is one of the reasons why some of the assets that were to be deployed to Australia were held up, because we now have overlapping fire seasons between, for example, the south-east coast of Australia and California. That in itself is quite a remarkable thing.

According to the firefighters I spoke to on Kangaroo Island, the flames are getting higher and moving faster, and the wind is wilder, the heat more intense. We have to listen to those firefighters—the former chief firefighters, the ones who have been fighting fires for years—because they're telling us what has happened. Of course, the scientists told us what would happen. It's all there in the 2008 Garnaut climate change review, which talked about temperatures rising, the increased incidence and duration of drought and, of course, the potential for worse fires. Unfortunately, the forecast in that review of 12 years ago has been realised, and it's likely to get worse.

We've had these debates around climate change, and there is a correlation, we would argue. Certainly Labor argues that, and I think most members of the parliament agree. But I think it's important to note that, even if we do everything that scientists say we should do to tackle climate change, temperatures are going to continue to rise, and we will have to deal with these fires. Temperatures will rise for a considerable period. Even if we put in place everything in the scientists' handbook about tackling climate change, we're not going to see the end of temperatures increasing. We'll be lucky to see the plateauing of rising temperatures. This is going to be with us for many, many years, even if the world takes better action and more effective action to tackle climate change. We must remember that. You only have to look out the window of this parliament to see the haze or walk outside to breathe in the smoke. I was flying to Canberra on Monday morning, over bushfires south of Canberra, and noted that they are still continuing.

I also note this—Anthony Albanese, the Labor leader, has already made this point, and I think it's important to reinforce—we're still two days off the 11th anniversary of Black Saturday. Black Saturday, in 2009, commenced on 7 February, when we were last in government. I can recall that vividly because the then Prime Minister Kevin
Rudd phoned me to ask where these small towns were. I happened to be elsewhere—I wasn't in Victoria that evening. He wanted to know. It was just before, really, the fire took hold. He, to his great credit, travelled down to Victoria very early the next morning—4 am, I think—to meet with John Brumby, the then Premier. And of course, unfortunately, it was devastating for the state of Victoria: 173 deaths, 414 injured people and countless people that are still suffering the scars and the mental anguish of that event. But that was on 7 February, and we are here at 5 February, so we can't forget that we're still in the summer season. Temperatures are still very high, and fires are still continuing, and that's not something we should forget.

I mentioned the 173 deaths, which was just an extraordinary number, and which took everyone aback. It's fair to say that one death is one too many. But if we've got something right, we've certainly improved the way we respond to fires in terms of evacuating areas more effectively. Because despite the fact that many more hectares have been burnt and homes lost in this crisis, the scale of the deaths is not as large, fortunately. Of course it's still very, very tragic.

We need to continue to learn how to respond to the bushfire seasons and the fact that they're likely to become increasingly intense and go for longer. There'll be multiple inquiries arising out of this bushfire season. There'll be coroners' reports and there's going to be an inquiry, as the government's made clear. We need to determine the facts. We need to comply with recommendations that are made by the experts, and that's absolutely critical.

I found myself planning a holiday in the second week of January, but I'd made the decision to go to Kangaroo Island before the fires started. I made that decision in December. And then I realised that I might not be able to travel there because it would be too dangerous or because I'd be getting in the way. But I was advised that it was safe to travel and that the businesses there, certainly on the east side of the island, were hoping people would continue to go. So my daughter and I travelled over to Kangaroo Island, met with the small businesses in Kingscote and Penneshaw and talked to them about what has happened as a result of the devastation. It's a story of two islands. The west coast has been devastated, with parts of it incinerated by the intensity of the fire. There were many, many homes lost and two tragic deaths. Livestock and fauna were devastated. The east side of the island hasn't been touched, physically, at all. But of course it has now been commercially hit to the point where at least 75 per cent of the accommodation bookings for the year—not for January-February, but for the year—have been cancelled, domestically and internationally.

You can see the direct impact of the fire on the west side of the island. I thank Dion and Linda Buick, friends of mine, who showed me around the west side of the island to see the scale and extent of the sheer devastation. I talked to farmers who had lost their stock. I talked to a potato farmer who had lost all of his machinery and his home. I spoke with their daughter, Lilly, who, along with her partner, Josh, had lost their home and had made a makeshift home in a caravan that was donated to them by a stranger, which is a lovely reminder of how people can act in these circumstances. They're obviously trying to rebuild their lives. Most of the people I spoke to were insured, but there'll be issues around whether they're underinsured.

Then there are the businesses on the island. Michelle Peacock is the general manager of the store at Vivonne Bay. The store is still there, but the area was evacuated and there is no trade. It's predominantly summer trade. It was going to be a bumper season for the island. She had to lay off all the staff. She gave away the food to the volunteers where she could. Of course, she has now got bills and no revenue. Unfortunately, in the circumstances she's in, she's not in a position to get a direct grant. Those are confined to businesses directly affected by the fires themselves. She has to consider whether she will access the loans. Commercial landlords might waive or reduce costs of tenancies or energy suppliers might waive or reduce energy costs which will make it easier for businesses on Kangaroo Island, on the south coast of New South Wales or in the Blue Mountains, which I visited last week, to survive. We know that these businesses rely on cash flow. If the cash dries up, often they don't have much collateral or back-up to continue. We need to do everything we possibly can to make sure those businesses continue for the business owners themselves, the workers who are employed by them and the communities that rely upon them.

I would like to thank Leon Bignell, the state member who represents Kangaroo Island. He did a wonderful job getting generators to people who didn't have electricity. He is a Labor member—not a government member—in South Australia. He has been working tirelessly. I pay tribute to him, as I do to all of my federal colleagues, starting with Anthony Albanese, who has been working throughout the entire summer. In the government, I pay tribute to the minister in particular. I also pay tribute to Susan Templeman, the member for Macquarie, Fiona Phillips, the member for Gilmore, and Mike Kelly, the member for Eden-Monaro, who made great contributions to this debate and who really have been working tirelessly for their communities. We need to be with them and work with them over the days, weeks, months and years ahead. Our job as representatives is to respond when things like this happen. We need to immediately respond to the needs of the people who have been most affected. We need to be there to provide support, but also we need to put in place better mitigation, better preparation to
fight fires in the future and, ultimately, policies that will reduce temperatures globally so that, in the foreseeable future, Australia, the hottest continent, is less likely to experience the devastation that we witnessed this year.

**Mr TEHAN** (Wannon—Minister for Education) (16:19): Can I commend all members, starting with the Prime Minister and from there on, for their contributions on this important debate. I would like to start by recognising all those who have lost their lives during this summer of bushfires. To their families, loved ones, friends, communities, I offer my sincerest, heartfelt remorse for the loss of life that has occurred. Can I recognise those who died in the line of duty, sacrificing their own lives to save others. What they have done, I think, exemplifies the true spirit of humanity. I once again offer my deepest, deepest sorrow to their loved ones, their families and their communities.

Can I say how pleased I was that on Australia Day the government announced that the National Emergency Medal would be declared for the 'black summer' of 2019-20. Those who lost their lives in the line of duty will be posthumously awarded the National Emergency Medal. Not only that, this medal now will be awarded posthumously to those who lost their lives in the line of duty more broadly. Although, ultimately, these are decisions for family members, I think that recognising all those who serve and all of those who give their lives serving is something that we as a nation should do. With this in mind, I recall back in my electorate a tragedy that occurred in which two surf lifesavers, Andy and Ross Powell, lost their lives not so long ago while seeking to rescue someone off the shore at Port Campbell. Although a medal will never, ever be able to deal with the grief and sorrow that families suffer from the impact of losing those who give up their lives serving, I think being able to recognise them posthumously, through the National Emergency Medal, is a very significant step that has been made by the government.

The fires that have ravaged South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, parts of the ACT and parts of Western Australia have had a huge impact on communities. I think it is fitting that we are stopping to recognise the impact the fires have had. The fact that these fires occurred in so many states, and some of them very much at the same time, had an enormous impact on our resources for fighting the fires. In my electorate we had two reasonably serious fires and then another serious fire. We also had numerous fires from lightning strikes, which have been put out and, fortunately, haven't caused a large amount of damage. But one of those fires, the Budj Bim fire in my electorate, was burning at the same time that the fires in New South Wales and Victoria were burning. There is no question that the resources we normally throw at fires were thinly spread during that time. I think that is why what the government did was so significant, and the paradigm shift that occurred under the leadership of the Prime Minister in not only calling out the Army Reserve but also in making sure that the federal government took a forward posture in dealing with these fires. I remember talking to the local incident control manager of the Budj Bim fire, who said that in the normal course of events while they were fighting that fire they would have had significantly more resources to throw at the fire, and would have, if it weren't for the fact that those resources were in the east of Victoria and in southern New South Wales. As a matter of fact, their capability was down to one-third of what it normally would have been to fight that fire. I think from now on all governments are going to have to adopt the protocols and policies that our government has put in place when it comes to the bushfire season.

I commend the Prime Minister for taking a forward-leaning posture not only in how we're going to deal with these fires now but also in how we're going to recover from them, because once again there has been a significant paradigm shift in how we will deal with recovery in bushfire areas. For someone who is a passionate advocate for rural and regional Australia, the reality is we need the federal government to be forward leaning not only when it comes to dealing with fires but also when it comes to dealing with the impact of bushfires. Sadly, a lot of the services that state and territory governments would normally be able to provide have been hollowed out over time. The federal government has had to step in to replace those. I know now—and this has been the case for some time—that rural and regional communities look more and more to the federal government to be there for them. They look to them to provide the leadership and to provide the resources and services more than they ever have because of the hollowing out of those services across the board in rural and regional Australia. That is why out of this devastation the one thing that gives me heart is that we have set a strong precedent as to how a Commonwealth government will react when it comes to these disasters. I think that is one positive thing that all communities in rural and regional Australia will take heart from.

In terms of the fires in my electorate, as I mentioned, one was the Budj Bim fire, burning in a national park that is significant for our nation. The Budj Bim National Park has cultural heritage aspects which date back over 20,000 years. There are agricultural practices there which are some of the very first ever conducted in the world. It is an area that we need to protect. One of the most significant things about the way that that fire was dealt with was how the local Indigenous community, local fire services and local professional firefighters—whether they are from lands or from the state firefighting services—all worked collaboratively and cooperatively together to make
sure that those historical artefacts and historical sites were protected. I commend everyone for that because those sites and artefacts are extraordinarily significant.

The other thing that came out of that was talking to the local Indigenous community about how keen they are to practice cultural burning in the Budj Bim National Park. They are looking for help and support with resources to be able to do that. Given the nature of that park and the rocky landscape that exists there—an old volcanic landscape—they need help and support to be able to do that. I call on the state government to help and support in that regard, and I am also hopeful that the federal government, through a redesigned ranger program or something similar to that, might be able to give resources and support to the local Indigenous community to practice cultural burning throughout as much of the year as possible in the Budj Bim National Park. That would also be relevant to the Grampians, where there are other historical sites of Indigenous significance and global significance.

If we could get more of that happening, it would be a wonderful way to ensure that connection to the land continues with Indigenous Australians. There are also wonderful employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians, the more we can develop cultural burning practices. It would help deal with the one major thing which was raised with me wherever I went discussing fires, and that is the need for us to ensure that we are dealing with vegetation in our national parks and dealing with vegetation on our roadsides. We have to manage our vegetation to make sure that we are dealing with those longer, hotter, drier summers that we are seeing as a result of climate change. We have to do that. That has to be an absolute priority.

The wonderful community of Lexton in my electorate was also threatened by a very serious fire just before Christmas. We lost one primary residence, four sheds, 48 kilometres of fencing, over a thousand sheep, 92 hectares of cropping and total pasture of 1,123 hectares. The bravery of those who stood in the way of that fire to protect the town of Lexton should never be forgotten. Those who have helped with the recovery shouldn't be forgotten either. I want to make particular mention of our local CFA volunteers, who are extraordinary with what they do, but also other local community groups.

In particular, I want to mention an organisation called BlazeAid. BlazeAid were in my electorate for over six months, helping with the clean-up after the St Patrick's Day bushfires of nearly two years ago. They did an extraordinary job of not only helping farmers repair their fence lines but also being there with them to assist in how they recovered. There is obviously a lot of trauma that our farmers in particular have to deal with as a result of fires, especially when livestock, fences and some of their key infrastructure are lost. BlazeAid is there not only to help them repair their fence lines but to be with them through that journey. They'll turn up to community events like Anzac Day to be there with the community. They'll go down to the local pub and sit and have a beer with farmers. They are there not only to help with rebuilding but to help with the trauma impact. I had the great pleasure of doing half a day's fencing with BlazeAid in Lexton, and it is inspirational to see what they are doing, how they go about it and the communities they bring together to rebuild.

There were some wonderful young backpackers there—some young Belgian backpackers and a young Welsh backpacker. There are old grey nomads who come from far and wide, and they all set up camp and they are all part of the community. One of the things I am hopeful we will be able to do as a government—I've spoken to Minister Tudge, and I know he's looking at this very closely—is to change our visa arrangement for those backpackers who come and volunteer for BlazeAid, so that that could count towards them getting a second year's stay here in Australia. I think that will help us deal with the thousands upon thousands upon thousands of kilometres of fencing that needs to be repaired across the nation.

I also thank the President of the Council of International Students Australia, who came and volunteered with me fixing the fences, because he wanted to help send a message to international students that, although Australia has been ravaged by bushfires, our international education market is still very much open. As a matter of fact, international students could come and arrive early and help, volunteer and support, whether it be helping the wildlife that have been burnt, fixing fencing or any other community activities that would help. That was just before the coronavirus hit, and obviously that has put another impact on our international student market. But, Ahmed, thank you for coming and volunteering to repair fences in my electorate.

We also had the Wade Junction fire near the Lower Glenelg National Park. I just make the point that a lot of timber workers, especially in Gippsland, parts of my electorate and southern New South Wales, have also helped in dealing with bushfires and supported the recovery effort. I thank them for their efforts as well.

The government is determined to be there right the way through the recovery process with communities that have been impacted by bushfires. When it comes to education, we're determined to do that as well. Once again this is extraordinarily inspirational. I've been in contact with the principal of St Peter's in Broulee—and I hope to visit next week. That school was heavily hit by the bushfires, but that school, like all schools that were impacted, was so determined that the teachers and the principal would be there for those students as the school year started.
so that they could have the normality in their lives of going back to school and having that routine in place. Everyone was of the view that that was absolutely needed, especially to help all the young Australians who have been impacted. I was very pleased to be able to work with the Prime Minister and to provide, as part of the $2 billion bushfire package, extra counselling services there. We're able to work with Beyond Blue to do that and to offer the states and territories extra money for counselling through chaplaincy. There are other initiatives, including helping the non-government school sector and the childcare and preschool sectors that were impacted to rebuild.

It's so important that we are there standing by communities and helping them to recover. This has not stopped and it will not end. Sadly, since I've been in this place I have had to deal in my own electorate with floods and fires. One of the key lessons is that, once the media attention disappears, the impact on the community is still there and it lasts a long time. We all need to understand that. We all need to make sure that we remain supporting those communities for a long time after.

We're nearly at the second anniversary of the St Patrick's Day fire. Some of the communities impacted by that fire are still hurting. There is still trauma there. We still need to be there assisting them, as we are going to have to be there assisting those communities that have been devastated over this summer period. I'm proud to be part of the government that has put forward a package that means that we can be there for the long term to help those communities.

As education minister I want to make sure that we continue to support the childcare centres, the schools and the higher education sector, which opened their dormitories and student accommodation for firefighters, police and others. They did it out of the goodness of their hearts. They have done all sorts of other things. We've obviously now offered scholarships for regional and rural students in bushfire impacted areas, and they will be prioritised.

We have to make sure that through our education system we are there for young Australians, particularly for the children who have been impacted by the fires, and there is the counselling and support that they need. We can help them and support them through their school journey and through their life education journey. That's an absolute key way that the government can help and support those young Australians who have been so severely impacted by these bushfires.

I'll end it there. There is a lot more that I could say, but I will end by saying two things. Thank you to everyone who has helped, supported and contributed to all communities right across this nation to deal with the impact of the bushfires. We have seen the best of Australia. We have seen the best of Australians, and nothing gives me more joy than the stories I come across. There is one which will stick with me: a farm that was burnt in the St Patrick's Day fires two years ago in my electorate had hay donated by a farmer in Gippsland and, two years later—we've been very fortunate: we've had two very good seasons—that farm was able to repay the service by getting a truckload of hay and delivering it to the farm that had helped it two years ago. It's just remarkable to see how Australia works in that regard: community to community, farm to farm, just helping each other.

The second point, and the last point, is once again: can I just express my deepest sorrow and commiserations to all those families and loved ones who are dealing with the loss of life that occurred as a result of these fires.

Ms ROWLAND (Greenway) (16:41): I rise today to extend my condolences to all those impacted by this unprecedented bushfire crisis. I'm sure I speak for all Greenway residents when I say how deeply moved we are by your experiences and how devastated we are, having seen the impact of these fires. But I also say this: we stand with you and are prepared to support you so you can get back on your feet as soon as possible.

I had but a glimpse of the aftermath of the devastation caused by these fires on a visit to the electorate of Macquarie with my good friend Susan Templeman. It was so confronting to see homes destroyed, small businesses empty and the environment absolutely scorched. But what moved me more was the spirit of the local residents who had survived these fires. They were open, generous and welcoming, despite everything they had been through. They were optimistic about the future and determined not to be broken.

I remember, in particular, going to the home of Billy and Sarah in Mount Tomah. They had a beautiful garden that was absolutely scorched. Their home, thankfully, survived, largely thanks to their preparation but also because where they were the fire had literally stopped, so theirs was the house that survived. The garden around them was completely destroyed but, while we sat in their lounge room with a few of their neighbours talking, we all started looking out the window because all of a sudden out of nowhere beautiful coloured parrots started appearing in their garden. They'd started putting out seed for these parrots, and it was like we were seeing the seeds of new life. We all went outside and carefully watched and tried to take photos of these parrots. They absolutely lifted our spirits.

These communities are something special, and we must never forget that. I want to acknowledge the many local residents from Greenway who have helped to support those people who have lost so much. It moves me to...
know that our community is compassionate, generous and selfless without fanfare or recognition. It's impossible to mention everyone locally, but I would like to thank the members of a couple of groups, including suburb based Facebook groups like the Glenwood community group, the Stanhope Gardens and surrounding suburbs group and the Quakers Hill and surrounding suburbs group. These groups coordinated countless food hampers and clothes drop-offs to bushfire affected areas. These are ordinary people doing extraordinary things. These groups are utilising technology and connections to change the way that communities organise and grow. The volunteers who run these groups put in so much work to create that sense of community, and I extend my gratitude for everything you do.

I also acknowledge the many Australians outside of my electorate who donated generously to bushfire relief: Australians like those at the Grassy Head caravan park on the mid-north coast who, when my daughter Octavia, largely coordinated by her friends and our extended family, held a mini fete—including a cordial stand, hair braiding and massages—raised over $2,000 for the Yarrahapinni Stuarts Point RFS. Together, Australians like these have raised millions of dollars to support survivors and the RFS, and for that I say thank you.

It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge our amazing charity sector. Before Christmas I visited the Foodbank New South Wales processing centre in Western Sydney and saw its fantastic volunteers in action. They were busy then and they are even busier now. They are continuing to deliver relief to those people on the ground who need it most. Thank you to Foodbank and to every single charity that has risen above and beyond in the face of this crisis, and, of course, to their donors and supporters.

I want to offer a similar acknowledgement to people from a variety of faith and cultural backgrounds who have pulled together to offer hope and support—organisations like Turbans 4 Australia, which organised a convoy of trucks to deliver food to the South Coast of New South Wales under the motto ‘Mates helping mates’. I also want to acknowledge the Sydney Murugan Temple and Kamban Kazhagam Australia, who raised over $20,000 for the New South Wales RFS at their respective fundraising dinners. Special mention should also go to the Kerala Friends Club Northwest Sydney, who sponsored with Foodbank to collect non-perishable items across locations in Stanhope Gardens, Kellyville Ridge, Riverstone, Schofields, The Ponds, Quakers Hill, Marayong and Blacktown—such a tremendous effort. I thank all of you for showing your leadership during this time.

I also commend the work of our media sector in providing emergency broadcasting, information and extensive coverage of the bushfires over these difficult months. Print and online media made bushfire related coverage freely available. Television broadcasters delivered live Auslan interpretations of up-to-the-minute emergency information. And radio broadcasters provided vital warnings and updates, including when all other means of communication were down as a result of fire damage to infrastructure such as powerlines and mobile phone towers. The tireless efforts of our public broadcasters, the ABC and the SBS, and our community broadcasters as well as local commercial radio stations have been, and continue to be, central to the emergency management effort.

Local radio stations, in particular, support their communities before, during and after the threat of fire. They provide the latest updates from authorities and advise which roads are closed and which shops remain open. They reconnect families who become separated. They become drop-off points for donations and they host community fundraisers. Interestingly, ABC Friends National recently released the interim report of a survey of ABC emergency broadcasting in bushfire affected communities, which found that over 90 per cent of respondents said that this coverage was important to them during the crisis. We pay tribute to the many staff and volunteers in the media sector for their service to the nation.

I want to acknowledge the significant commitment of the telco sector, including Telstra, Optus, NBN Co and Vodafone. They have worked tirelessly over the bushfire season to restore the availability of networks across the country and help communities regain access to essential telco services. As is often the case with natural disasters, these unprecedented bushfires—in both their duration and intensity—have had a significant impact on infrastructure and service availability. I acknowledge the industry for their efforts to provide updates about network impact and thank them for the constructive discussions we have had in recent weeks, in particular, about the issues and learnings which can inform future preparations.

The member for Macquarie and I visited various communities across the Blue Mountains and the Hawkesbury who had to grapple with mobile towers and local exchanges losing power, and instances where infrastructure had been destroyed and would require a rebuild. At Telstra's global operations centre in Melbourne, I saw firsthand the professionalism and sophistication with which Telstra mobilises resources and assets across the company to manage natural disasters. There is undoubtedly room for improvement in making telecommunications networks more resilient and ensuring that services for the community are restored more quickly. Nonetheless, it must be said that Australia is fortunate to have a telecommunications sector with such an embedded commitment to public safety during times of natural disaster.
I want to conclude by acknowledging the tireless efforts of the emergency service personnel, volunteers and Australian Defence Force members and reserves. You are truly heroes. You gave up time with your own families to keep at-risk communities safe over Christmas and the New Year. You put yourself in danger and, in some instances, abandoned your own properties to defend those of your neighbours. Your selfless service and willingness to defend complete strangers in some of the most horrifying conditions make us all proud to be Australian. Thank you in particular to the Schofields Rural Fire Brigade in my electorate, which last year celebrated its 75th anniversary. For all that time, you have been keeping Western Sydney safe. We are deeply grateful for all that you do, and you are truly the very best of Greeneway.

Finally, to those firefighters who lost their lives keeping us safe: we are forever in your debt. On behalf of my community, I extend my condolences to the families and loved ones of these brave heroes. Words cannot describe the pain and heartache you must feel, but I hope you take some comfort in the knowledge that we grieve together as Australians. The heroism of your loved ones will never be forgotten.

Mr HAWKE (Mitchell—Minister for International Development and the Pacific and Assistant Defence Minister) (16:49): For 60,000 years that we know of, two things have dominated our continent's destiny: drought and fire. We must never forget that our continent is covered in eucalyptus, an ancient tree, an incredible species born from fire and a tree that not only burns but explodes. It burns the air itself, through its flammable oil, and even regenerates through fire. How could anyone ever put our Australian story better than Robert Hughes, in his epic work The Fatal Shore, when he said:

*Bushfire and drought are the traditional nightmares of bush life. A bushfire driven by a high wind through dry summer forest is an appalling spectacle: a wreathing cliff of flame moving forward at thirty miles an hour, igniting treetop after treetop like a chain of magnesium flares.*

Aboriginal people knew all of this before Europeans came. They learnt to manage our beautiful land, and they still know it today. It's one of the greatest failings of not reconciling with Aboriginal people that we've failed to listen to them, failed to learn from their incredible stewardship of this continent and their deep understanding of it.

Today, in 2020, we again face the trials, the tragedies and the devastation of our dual fates: drought and fire. When a fire hit Box Hill in my electorate of Mitchell last week, it was a lightning-fast response: 100 fireys and local RFS volunteers who sprang into action to help quickly bring the fire under control. But it was also a bunch of builders working nearby, just local people, and local residents too. They picked up buckets. They ran for hours, back and forth, taking water from the local swimming pool and dousing the fire in 40-degree heat, to protect homes and protect lives. Thankfully this fire was brought under control quickly, with no damage to personal property, but it was close.

This devastating season of drought and fire is a testament to our humanity, our decency and our strength as a country. Without doubt, it is the superhuman efforts of our volunteer firefighting services that shine the brightest amongst the bright. But precious and treasured lives have been lost, so many properties have been damaged or lost, and unbelievable amounts of country and wildlife have been burnt, scarred and blackened. We mourn too many, and we grieve for those who are left behind. But the hardest thing of all was the noise of those young children that echoed in our chamber of parliament yesterday—the children who've lost their fathers, the children who are too young to even know yet that their fathers are gone. It breaks our hearts, it hurts our souls, to know the suffering and the sacrifice those men endured to protect us all from harm.

We say to the children who were there yesterday, as a parliament and as a people, that, when they're old enough to hear it, the bravery and the sacrifice of your fathers will stand for all time. Your dads were the best amongst us, and they remind us at all times that we are truly our brothers' keepers. From this great sacrifice come so many reminders of resilience and the commitment that we have to each other. It's estimated that in this 'black summer' one in two Australians have put their hands into their own pocket and made a donation to help others in need. Over half a billion dollars has been raised, and more is still coming in. The amazing feats of the volunteers of our Rural Fire Service who have done the impossible—they've saved so many, they've saved so much—are a testament to the true spirit of our humanity.

These are volunteers who are best summed up by a couple I met at the Wilberforce Fire Control Centre last month. Imagine a husband and wife, maybe 60 years old, standing side by side in their ash-covered yellow uniforms. They must have been married for 50 years. They'd been together fighting the fire for months in the Gospers Mountain fire—in their spare time—the husband continuing to work and somehow both in impossibly good spirits when I met them. But they were tired. When I said to him that it must be so tiring to have to go to work every day, the wry Australian reply that I got, with a cheeky smile, from this 60-year-old man, with his wife standing next to him, was, 'Mate, I go to work to get a rest!' Would anything sum up this service—the quality of our people—more than this husband and wife and their example to us?
Our volunteers have been joined by the Australian Defence Force, with almost 6,500 men and women serving in the bushfire efforts. For the first time in our history the government has enacted a compulsory call-out order. The ADF Reserve brigades, with about 3,000 reservists, have been there for our community. Our proud military tradition is one of the citizen soldier, and this tradition continues with the Reserves of today, serving our own people and our own country. And we are so proud. In fact, thousands—hundreds of thousands—have volunteered to fight fires. They've volunteered to help, they've volunteered to care, and they've volunteered to do something to help people and land recover.

Our businesses are donating goods and services. Our multicultural communities: new migrants are heading into communities with their meals, their hearts and their hopes. And all of our charities are working so hard to ensure a proper and sustained recovery from so much devastation. This is the greatness of Australia, the strength of Australia—the way we treat and take care of each other. We choose to ask, 'What can I do?' and 'What can we do for each other?' When tragedy strikes, through great sadness, together we can look to the horizon and emerge a stronger nation.

We also get by with a little help from our friends. We all need our friends, and the nation is no different. We must never forget that through the trials that we have faced, assistance has flooded in from all corners of the planet, especially from our Pacific family. Australians have been so touched to see the scenes in villages in Vanuatu and PNG of people with wheelbarrows collecting money from people who don't have very much—for us—donations for us from people, from churches, from villages.

To see our New Zealand family, our Papua New Guinean family, the Fijian defence forces—all of them—working so hard on the ground in our country to assist us with bushfire recovery, bringing with them the love of family, the help of friends and the hope that comes from the compassion and the faith, the great faith, of Pacific people. This is what family means—being there for each other when it counts. To our American friends who came to fight our fires: we can never say thank you enough for your loss. To the people of the Pacific: Australia will never forget what you have done for us.

Our destiny as a continent has always been and always will be shaped by drought and fire, but our destiny as a people is to learn the lessons we must learn: to listen to our Aboriginal people and the ancient lessons they have for us, to understand our continent better and our changing climate but also, vitally, to stay together through this time of trial. To our Pacific family, we say: vinaka, kia mihi, fa'afetai, tenkyu tru, thank you. To the army of volunteers, donors, service personnel, bureaucrats, workers, public servants everywhere: thank you. And to anyone who asked the question, 'What can I do?' and did it, we as a parliament say thank you.

Mr BUTLER (Hindmarsh—Deputy Manager of Opposition Business) (16:58): It's a great and solemn privilege to be able to contribute to this motion, a motion of condolence particularly for the 33 lives lost so far over the course of this summer in unprecedented fires impacting pretty much every jurisdiction in our wider Commonwealth. Thirty-three lives have been lost, including the lives of nine firefighters who bravely put their lives on the line to protect in most cases their community and in some cases other communities—communities of which they weren't themselves a member.

We're having this debate—a heart-wrenching debate in many instances—at a time when we understand that the emergency is not over. The nation's parliament, even as we debate this motion, is again shrouded in smoke, as it was over the last couple of days. We know fires are still burning in the Monaro region. As a South Australian, I well understand that my state and the state of Victoria, which don't get the benefits of the summer rains that the more northern jurisdictions do, are really only coming into the peak of the fire season. We know in the southern states that the worst fires in our history have generally been in February. I well remember the warning sirens sounding on Ash Wednesday at my high school, Unley High, at the foot of the Adelaide Hills—the worst fire South Australia has ever experienced. I think that was the worst fire that Victoria had experienced, until Black Saturday in 2009.

This emergency is by no means over, as I think we in this House all understand. Others much more directly impacted, or whose communities are much more directly impacted by these fires than my own in Adelaide, have spoken just so eloquently through this debate. The Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition spoke beautifully yesterday in the chamber, but particularly members who have been working, day in, night in, day out, night out, right through the Christmas and New Year period, spoke so beautifully, so touchingly: the member for Gilmore, the member for Eden-Monaro and the member for Macquarie on our side of the House, but also the member for Gippsland and the member for Monash. I remember the member for Monash's contribution during the debate back in 2009; it was a powerful contribution, and the power of his contribution then was matched by the power of his contribution yesterday.
I don’t intend to go through the horrors, the unprecedented horrors, of the fires that have impacted other states. They’ve been well detailed by members across the chamber who’ve spoken—and by those who’ve spoken, I gather, in the other place as well—about the impact of the fires, particularly in New South Wales and Victoria but also in Queensland and Western Australia. But my own state of South Australia has also been impacted by fires—by some that started as early as September, but most particularly by the fire at Cudlee Creek in the Adelaide Hills in December and the fire at Kangaroo Island, an utterly dreadful fire that burned for a very long period of time through January as well.

The Cudlee Creek fire took in a substantial area of the Adelaide Hills. That vibrant community, particularly known for its extraordinary wines and also its tourism, was devastatingly impacted by the fire. Eighty-six homes were destroyed. Five hundred sheds and other outbuildings were razed. Thousands of vehicles, livestock, pets and crops were lost. More than 25,000 hectares were burnt, just at the outer edge of the Adelaide region. There were hundreds of brave CFS volunteers battling the blaze along with, obviously, property owners themselves. The fire is thought to have destroyed up to a third of the vines that provide grapes for the vibrant, world-renowned winegrowing region of the Adelaide Hills, and the bushfire zone indeed covered about 30 per cent of the region we describe as the Adelaide Hills wine region. Most tragically, we lost a very well-known member of the community, Ron Selth, who died defending his home in Charleston in the Adelaide Hills. I want to put on record my deepest condolences to his family, to his friends and to his community.

After the Cudlee Creek fire, the Kangaroo Island fire also took hold and burned for a very long time indeed, burning over 200,000 hectares of land on that island, destroying 89 houses, about 300 outbuildings and hundreds of vehicles. Tens of thousands of livestock were killed through that fire, and as many as 25,000 or even more koalas were killed. Kangaroo Island is an incredibly important habitat for koalas, and many, many thousands of those koalas were killed. Experts have also expressed concern over the survival of a couple of endangered species on the island, including the dunnart, which is a mouse-like marsupial, and also the glossy black-cockatoo, which may well have been pushed into extinction by this extraordinary fire event.

Again, I’m very sorry to say, tragically, lives were lost in the Kangaroo Island fires, as the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition mentioned yesterday. Dick and his son Clayton Lang, two very prominent members not just of the Kangaroo Island community but of the broader South Australian community, lost their lives after fighting fires for a number of days on Kangaroo Island. Dick was a very well-known aviator, and his son Clayton was a well-known surgeon in the South Australian community. Their funeral was attended by hundreds back in Adelaide. Again, I place on record my deepest condolences to their family and to their friends and to their very wide ranging community, which they were such proud and loved members of.

With those fires substantially under control in South Australia, and some across the rest of the country, our challenge is to remain vigilant over the remainder of this season. As I said in my earlier remarks, in South Australia we are only just reaching the peak of the fire season traditionally. There is still substantial danger ahead, as there is for many other parts of the country as well. Our other challenge is to help those communities that have gone through such trauma over recent weeks or recent months—to help those who have lost so much, whether it was property, loved ones, livelihoods or livestock—to recover but also to help those regional economies remain resilient. So much of that was spoken about yesterday, particularly by the local members representing the communities impacted by fire.

The state government, to their credit, launched the campaign #BookThemOut to encourage people to visit, to tour and to spend money in the Adelaide Hills region and the Kangaroo Island region. It was an announcement very strongly supported by the Labor opposition. I strongly support it as well in South Australia. I’m really pleased to say that on the day of the announcement of this campaign there were more visits to the local tourism website, southaustralia.com than there have ever been before—a really resounding indication of the intention of the South Australian community to support those regions.

At a very high level, we had the T20 Showdown on the weekend between Port Adelaide and the Crows. There were footballers trying their hands at cricket. It raised over a million dollars and, to put some icing on that cake, Port Adelaide won as well, as I’m sure you’d be pleased about, Deputy Speaker Georganas.

At a more local and individual level, one example in my own community in the western suburbs of Adelaide is a hardworking mum, called Karen, who started a program called Backpacks For Bushfires, asking for donations to fill backpacks for kids who’d lost everything but were returning to school, as they did last week. It’s been an incredibly successful program. I’ve been really happy to help as a location for people to drop off their backpacks to be distributed to those kids. It’s got great buy-in.
Regis Aged Care in Marleston, an aged-care facility in the western suburbs, had all of their residents contribute money and goods and pack the backpacks and deliver them to my office. There have been those sorts of local and individual efforts right across Australia, including in my great state of South Australia.

I want to commend the extraordinary effort shown by Australians in this most awful of summers, which unfortunately is not over yet. Obviously, the most startling contribution has been through our thousands of volunteers, particularly our firefighter volunteers but all of those volunteers around them, who create that ecosystem of love and bravery that keeps so many of us safe. Like every person in this chamber, I want to pay my enormous respect and gratitude to volunteers and, also as the previous speaker indicated, to our proud ADF personnel, including the reservists. Across the coast in Adelaide we've seen the Chinook helicopters going regularly from the Edinburgh base down to Kangaroo Island. There are ADF personnel and reservists right throughout our country supporting the effort of those many thousands of community volunteers who are keeping us safe and then, after the fire has receded or hopefully even ended, helping those regions recover. I pay my respects and my gratitude to them as well.

In closing, as the spokesperson for climate change for the opposition, it behoves me to make a few remarks about how climate change fits into this current emergency. As distressing, as destructive and as, in many cases, tragic as this long summer has been, in many senses the unprecedented nature of the fire emergencies should have come as no real surprise, because we have been hearing the lessons and receiving the warnings of our leading scientists from the Bureau of Meteorology, from the CSIRO, from the Academy of Science and from all of their equivalents around the world, that the Forest Fire Danger Index, a scientific index, which, as the name suggests, tracks the danger of forest fire—an index developed by a CSIRO scientist here in Australia in the 1960s—has been rising steadily now for many years in line with the rise in average temperatures. It's reported every couple of years through the State of the climate report, which is published jointly by the Bureau of Meteorology and the CSIRO. I remember in their 2016 report, for example, them showing that the FFDI, the Forest Fire Danger Index measurement, around Melbourne airport, which is one of the measuring stations—very close to the member for Lalor's electorate—had increased by around 50 per cent since the 1970s, in line with increases in average temperatures.

We have been receiving the warnings for many years now that the fire season would start earlier; that it would be longer; that when fires came they would be more intense; that they would come more frequently; and that areas of the country that had not traditionally burned would be burning. We have seen all of that come to pass. It does behove us, as the Australian Academy of Science has said over recent weeks, to start to come together and consider stronger action on climate change, because what we've experienced over the last summer is not necessarily the new normal. If average temperatures continue to climb, the new normal will be significantly worse than what we have seen in the course of this summer.

Mr VAN MANEN (Forde—Chief Government Whip) (17:11): It is indeed an honour to rise in this place and speak in support of this motion, which—as outlined by the member for Hindmarsh—was very eloquently spoken to by the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and many others.

I'm pleased to say at the outset that, fortunately, my electorate has been spared the horrors of the fires we have seen not only in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia but earlier in the season in parts of Queensland as well. I would like to extend my deepest sympathies to the families of the 33 Australians who lost their lives in these fires—not forgetting that, importantly, in many places these fires continue.

I would also like to recognise and acknowledge and pass on my condolences and sympathies to the families of the six volunteer firefighters who tragically died in the line of duty. I also extend my deepest condolences to the families of our American firefighter friends and colleagues who came to this country to help us out in our hour of need and perished, fighting those fires in southern New South Wales. Equally, I address my colleagues in electorates that have been affected by the fire. Over summer I spent an amount of time speaking to many of those colleagues just to touch base and see how they're going. I think it's right that we should mourn and commiserate with these families and these communities. It's right that we take the time to express our condolences in this manner, through this motion.

If there's one thing that this summer of fires has demonstrated yet once again, it's the resilience of our communities—the help that our fellow Australians will provide in time of need. With that, I want to take the opportunity to thank all our brave firefighters, emergency services and Defence personnel and the medical staff for giving their everyday support to these fire impacted communities right across the country. As I said in my earlier remarks, this is something that started back in September-October in Queensland and has progressively moved south. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our local rural fire brigades at Ormeau, Chambers Flat, Cedar Creek and Greenbank—and also nearby at Logan Village which is in the electorate of Wright. But equally, I would like to thank our metropolitan brigades at Beenleigh, Waterford West and Browns Plains. When there has
been the odd small outbreak in my patch, they have been very quick on the scene to deal with those outbreaks. They have also been very readily available to help where needed.

Whilst my electorate has not been directly impacted, the impact of these fires has certainly been felt and has touched many across my electorate. I've spoken to locals who have had loved ones lose property and livelihoods across New South Wales and Victoria. And I know from the calls to my office that people are still looking at ways and means by which they can be of assistance. This is, again, a great tribute to Australia and Australians—that in a crisis our people are ready to pull together and support each other. Fortunately, now in Queensland we are seeing plentiful rain, and I hope that continues to move further south to bring some relief not only to the fire areas in New South Wales but also to some of the drought affected areas in central and western New South Wales.

Over the past few months, I've had the honour of witnessing businesses, organisations and individuals from all over my community—from Park Ridge to Pimpama, Carbrook and Upper Coomera, and all areas in between—who've come together to help our fellow Australians in their darkest hour. People like Louie Naumovski, from Logan House Fire Support Network who, with many other local stalwarts, organised and coordinated a mass bushfire recovery donation drive.

In total, our community donated over two tonnes of food and personal care items as well as over 3,000 bottles of water to rural and urban fire brigades across the south-east and to bushfire affected communities in New South Wales and Victoria through Food Bank. None of this would have been possible without Shane Drew from Drew's Sign It, who, together with his son, Ashley, and daughter, Tiffani, collected hundreds of donations from individuals and organisations across Logan in their vans every day and dropped them off at the Bethania Community Centre for our volunteers to sort, organise and pack into hampers. These were distributed to our local rural fire brigades, who offered their support to their counterparts and communities interstate.

People like Darrell Dharams offered his IGA stores in Loganholme and Boronia Heights as drop-off locations for contributions, and also the team from Bunnings at Bethania supplied the boxes necessary to pack up the donations. And let's not forget the wonderful ladies from Sewing for Charity who threaded and sewed over 100 cooling wraps for the SES volunteers and Robyn Eadie from Upper Coomera who made custom cards to distribute to bushfire victims with messages of love, hope and support. Just this weekend, I had the pleasure of being at Bunnings at Bethania, where the Marsden Lions Club were putting on a barbecue fundraiser for bushfire relief.

As we know, we still have over 50 fires burning across the country. Almost 3,000 homes were lost and over 10 million hectares have been lost this bushfire season. The devastation our country has faced is unprecedented in living memory, and many aspects in the subsequent road to recovery will be protracted. But, importantly, this government—and I think everybody from their contributions across this chamber on this motion—recognises that the long-term effort of planning for recovery and rebuilding is critically important; that once the news of the fires disappears from the front pages that we do not forget these communities; and that we are here for that long journey of building and recovery to ensure that they can rebuild their lives and once again take, pursue and follow the opportunities, dreams and goals they have as individuals and families. Whether it's in business or in other activities, we need to see these communities rebuilt and regain the strength that they once had—for our primary producers and our farmers for the contribution they make so importantly to our economy. I think we can safely say that all in this House are committed to ensuring that this occurs and we have demonstrated in the past that we have the capacity to do so. I wish all of those communities affected every success and support for the future as they face now the long journey of recovery.

Mr HILL (Bruce) (17:20): I endorse the comments of most of my colleagues that I've have heard over the last day or so, and I'll try and be very brief. We were asked to keep it to four or five minutes if our electorates weren't directly affected, and I've seen some contributions that run over 30 minutes from people whose electorates were not affected.

Many other members here do represent communities that have been profoundly affected, and I particularly pay tribute to their words. I've heard many moving contributions from government members, but particularly on the Labor side the members for Gilmore, Macquarie and Eden-Monaro. Of course the member for Macquarie lost her own house just some years ago in the last bushfires in her electorate. The member for Gilmore is a newly elected member and she has been certainly thrown in the deep end beyond anything any of us would wish to experience. She's been out there every day visiting her communities, travelling, absorbing people's pain, empathising and fixing all of the problems that she can. The member for Eden-Monaro is a legend in his own community and has certainly been responding well despite his health issues.

I want to add a few words from the perspective of my community in south-east Melbourne. We are a multicultural suburban community, and it is fair to say, like others, that the fires haven't directly affected our lived area. Except like millions of Australians we have been watching in shock and horror at what our fellow...
Australians have been going through and we pay tribute to those who've lost their lives, particularly of course the firefighters who died in the service of others.

The loss of property is still being calculated. There is the loss and impact to our natural environment, to see areas never before in our continent being burnt—ancient rainforests. There was an article a couple weeks ago that really touched me to hear that ancient rainforests from the Gondwana times, before this continent was even in its modern form, had never been burnt or under threat with over a billion native and domestic animals with many now pushed to the edge of extinction.

The catastrophe over summer hasn't just shocked the nation; it's shocked the world. Images of red skies and smoke-filled choking air in what is supposed to be the world's most liveable cities were flooded around the world, changing people's image of Australia. As we know—and I'll touch on climate change briefly—those images, when contrasted with our appalling stance internationally on climate in international forums, have certainly provoked comment from other governments and neighbours.

But, of course, standing here in Canberra, the crisis isn't over. In the last few days when you walk outside you still choke from the smoke and your throat gets sore, reminding us that the crisis is still going on outside. Indeed, in my community in Victoria the CFA in the east of Victoria down in Gippsland has now been told that they're on standby and are rostered on until the end of May. I've got people in my electorate who help out in the CFA and have been seconded to those brigades who have said that this has never happened to them before: that the fire season is now going until the end of May.

In terms of my community, as I said we're not under threat but the smoke and all the other impacts that so much of the nation has experienced have been felt. However, we do pay tribute to the firefighters—many of whom do come from suburban electorates to help out and get seconded—for their courage, dedication and resilience. Of course there's the ADF's contribution.

The other thing that I've detected that I do think I need to reflect on—and sometimes I saw earlier in the debate when you say this some people accuse you of making political points; I don't believe this is political—has been the shock and fear emerging in the community about the impact of climate change. I believe that, from what I've heard at community gatherings in the last couple of months, the public are now way ahead of so many people in this place. People are joining the dots and they're thinking about it and talking about it, and there is deep shock and fear about climate change. As the shadow minister who spoke before me from this side outlined: if temperatures continue to rise, if the scientists are right—not the member for Hughes—then the new normal will be far worse than what we have seen this summer, and that's not a future we can accept.

There's also debate about the government's performance: questions about the adequacy of preparation and the response which will play out in the coming days and weeks. We heard in question time only today the debate about the Prime Minister's arrogant refusal to listen to expert advice, to accept advice that additional aerial firefighting capacity was needed and to pay any serious attention to the forecasts. The experts and scientists had said that all of the conditions were there for the horror that we have seen. As some people who were being perhaps kind to the Prime Minister in criticising his performance said, maybe he is just having a bad summer. I don't believe that to be the case. I see many character traits have emerged—I won't name them lest I be accused of offending the standing orders. I believe that many of the traits which Australians are now seeing from his performance are those we have seen day in and day out in the parliament. People will join the dots and realise that's actually who he is.

I do want to record the community's concern about climate change and the link between bushfires and climate change and the expectation of action. A very clear message that many of my constituents have sent me over the last couple of weeks has been, 'You have to speak up in support of greater action on climate change.' Yes, of course, adaption and resilience have to be part of that. The hypocrisy of the Prime Minister, as the Treasurer, to cancel the adaption fund a few years ago, and now to stand up and tell us that adaption is everything! We must not give up on mitigation. It is not acceptable to the people we represent that we say it's all about adaption and resilience and then say: 'We give up. There is nothing we can do. Things will go to hell in a handbasket, and we'll just make the best of it.' We have to do more as a country. We can do more as a country. We can be a good international citizen and encourage and demand that others do more. These are things that my community are saying.

I also hear the other stuff—the climate change denial stuff, most of which seems to circulate on social media, driven by the member for Hughes. That's a debate which we need to continue to have. The other point I would make, when we think about experts—it's funny, isn't it, the selective listening to experts. We heard in question time and over the last week in response to the coronavirus crisis that the government is listening to experts. Whenever they take a piece of action, they are very careful to say, 'That's because the Chief Medical Officer told
us so,' or, 'That's because the chief state health officers told us so,' or, 'We've paid attention to the World Health Organization.' That's what they are saying. Why is it so different on climate change? The government is prepared to listen to expert advice, to follow it, to largely get the response right, to take tough and firm decisions and have the guts to stand up and try to explain the need for those decisions to the nation, to our neighbours and to people around the world. But they are not prepared to do that and to listen to scientific expertise on climate change. We know the reason for that is political because any leader of the Liberal Party that choose to act on scientific evidence on climate change, as opposed to internet conspiracy theories, will be ripped down and torn apart by their divided party. The country should not put up with this.

The other thing I will just touch on briefly is with regard to recovery. As many members have remarked, governments and communities must support recovery. I have some experience of this from over 10 years ago, when I worked in the Victorian government alongside the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority after 2009. I know what a long hard road it is. There are psychological stages, the community decision-making and economic damage. I hope that all governments will work collaboratively together and not politicise the recovery process.

The final thing I want to do is briefly pay tribute to some people and organisations in my community. I am just going to mention a few; this is not a comprehensive list. We have played some small part, and I am so proud of so many people in my community who've played some small part to the best of their ability. We are not a wealthy community overall. The council that makes up the majority of my electorate is the most socioeconomically disadvantaged in the whole of Melbourne, and the second-most disadvantaged municipality in Victoria. That's why the government gave us no election commitments. We didn't get any sports grants or anything like that. We got zero dollars out of the government, because we are the most disadvantaged. That gives you a sense of their priorities.

Despite the lack of attention from the government and the fact there are so many people who are doing it tough, so many people have been generous. One in two Australians, we understand, have put their hand in their pocket and made some sort of donation, to a total now surpassing more than half a billion dollars. I particularly want to call out the Cambodian community. I am proud to represent a wonderful, vibrant Australian Cambodian community. I was down at the temple as part of the cheque presentation for over $50,000 they raised on the day. There is also the Victorian Vietnamese community. More than 12 per cent of my electorate speak the Vietnamese language at home. They are the largest single cultural or ethnic group in the electorate. They have been leaders in helping to raise more than $1 million across Victoria from the Vietnamese community, which was talked about at the Tet festival and celebrations last week. I was down at the Omar Farooq Mosque in Doveton—it is predominantly an Afghan mosque—to receive a cheque for $20,000. I will put on the record that they gave me the bank cheque and insisted I carry it away. It is made out to the bushfire authority. We are sending it off and getting a receipt. It was a very generous effort by the Afghan mosque. We received a cheque for $18,000 in this presentation ceremony from Reza Andesh and the Afghan Hazara community.

On Saturday night I attended a dinner with the member for La Trobe. It was a very bipartisan event. I think it was the largest multigroup gathering of Sri Lankan community organisations I have been to. There are many Sri Lankan community organisations in Victoria. We had 17: every organisation working together for a very large dinner to raise money for the bushfire appeal. They are still totalling up the money—there was an auction, this, that and the other. I pay tribute to them for their collaborative effort. Many of the local temples, like the Dhamma Sarana Vihara temple in Keysborough, were first out of the blocks collecting water bottles. They collected 30,000 water bottles and sent them down to the fire affected areas to help out the CFA volunteers. The Tamil senior citizens group raised money and presented that recently. On Saturday week, like so many others, I am going to the Bangladeshi community of Australia to an appeal in Keysborough College and speaking there.

There are two particular efforts of direct work that I want to call out and praise. Firstly, the incredible Sikh Volunteers Australia. These people are amazing. They are out there every week, week in week out, practising their religion and their culture, the custom of langar and the community kitchen and giving free vegetarian meals and water bottles to anyone. They went en masse down to Bairnsdale in Gippsland at the height of the fires. They camped there for over two weeks and fed the locals and SES volunteers and firefighters, working with some of the local Sikh and Indian restaurants but continuing that supply chain back from our part of Melbourne. It was an incredibly beautiful effort. The Sikh Sewaks of Australia took hundreds of meals up to Wangeratta and have done collections and donations and so on.

One of the most difficult things by mid-January was fielding the calls from so many locals who wanted to help and having to explain to them that it was not going to help to drive up to a fire front with cars full of stuff. The last thing they needed, the locals told us, was more things to clog up the halls where they were trying to make critical
decisions. We actually had to talk so many groups out of that and explain to them that there would be a time for those things, but it wasn't now. I am sure that many people will continue to be part of that recovery.

The final thing I would say is thank you to everyone who has contributed in my community and nationally. It does show the very best of the Australian spirit. Thank you.

Mr VASTA (Bonner) (17:32): It is with great sorrow that I rise in the House today to share my deepest condolences to the families who lost loved ones during this devastating bushfire season. While families lost mothers, daughters, fathers and sons, Australians lost brave, selfless heroes. It is so fitting that we dedicate today and yesterday to honouring and thanking those who have so courageously served our communities through the ongoing bushfire crisis and, importantly, those who have lost their lives. While the homes, roads and bridges can all be replaced, nothing can bring back the 33 people, including the six brave firefighters we lost. As a father myself, I can only imagine the pain of loss that these families are feeling. My thoughts are with you all as we grieve in this tragedy. To the families who lost a loved one, Australia grieves with you. To the families of the fallen firefighters, Australia grieves with you. The deep gratitude that we have for their sacrifice will never be forgotten.

Through these tragic times, however, we have also witnessed an unprecedented outpouring of love, support, courage and generosity—the traits that continue to underpin the true Australian spirit. Every time Australians are knocked down in times of tragedy or natural disaster, our neighbours are there to pick us up. It is the selfless acts of donating goods, opening up your home or volunteering to help out that lifts our spirits and encourages us to carry on.

Late last year Moreton Island in my electorate of Bonner was impacted by bushfires. On 16 November a large electrical storm rolled in and sparked a fire that rapidly spread to the northern parts of Moreton Island. While a number of residents’ homes were under threat in the Cowan Cowan and Bulwer townships, they were spared, thanks to the tireless efforts of firefighters and local residents. While homes were saved, the same couldn't be said for much of the wildlife, bushland and camping grounds loved by so many. I would like to offer my sincerest thanks to the Queensland fireys, Queensland Police and volunteer firefighters from the Kooringal, Cowan Cowan and Bulwer townships of Moreton Island, who prevented this fast-moving fire from becoming a complete disaster. The amazing staff at Tangalooma Island Resort also ensured the ongoing safety of residents, guests, staff and displaced campers. Their Aussie spirit shone through as they offered free shelter, blankets, pillows, bathroom facilities and a barbecue dinner for over 300 people displaced in the event. I want to thank them for their outstanding efforts.

Back in September, Queensland was suffering with more than 50 fires burning across the state. We lost the historic Binna Burra Lodge in the Gold Coast Hinterland. Beautiful national parks burned and more than 1,500 homes were lost. The drought-affected Granite Belt, a region already struggling with water restrictions, suffered horrific bushfire conditions and, as a result, seven structures, including three homes, were destroyed in the area. Raging bushfires impacted Stanthorpe township and the surrounding areas of The Summit and Applethorpe, with the New England Highway being cut off. There were no words to describe the devastation in that region as we fellow Queenslanders watched on. Power was cut, water was already scarce and the dry landscape just lit up. It stirred a lot of emotion for many people in my electorate who are connected to our rural neighbours. The popular region is well known and many of my constituents wanted to help.

Leading up to Christmas, I decided to support the Granite Belt region with the Ross Vasta Christmas Appeal for Stanthorpe, to give people in my electorate of Bonner the opportunity to help out. Partnering with online charity GIVIT, I was so proud and humbled by the amazing donations received. We managed to raise more than $5,000 to help bring some Christmas cheer back to the region. It inspired people of all ages in my electorate to help. One donation that stood out was from eight-year-old Charlotte Mews of Wynnum State School. Charlotte held a bake sale with the Moreton Bay Girl Guides, raising $123, which she gave to our Christmas appeal. She recently visited her grandparents in Stanthorpe and decided she wanted to help farmers struggling through the drought. We also made sure that donations received were spent at local businesses in the area to further support the region. Stanthorpe's St Vincent de Paul Society branch identified a number of families in need, to ensure that the donations from my electorate of Bonner went to those who needed it the most. Thank you to everyone who donated to this appeal. You have helped to bring so much joy and relief to those who really need it. We had barely driven out of the city when Lee Stroud from St Vincent de Paul Society Stanthorpe called to say that she had already given some donations to a local family in need. The mum was so overwhelmed that she initially became speechless. She was so grateful.

To receive such warm-hearted responses from the community made it so apparent how much people in the bush are struggling and how much they value our help—big or small. As a nation, we are as strong as we are united and as weak as we are divided. The spirit, courage and mateship shown in times of crisis unite us and define us. Thank
you to everyone who has united to support the families, businesses and communities completely devastated by the bushfires. Together, we will get through it and we will come out that much stronger.

Mr KHALIL (Wills) (17:38): To those who have lost family and loved ones during this horrible bushfire season, of course our deepest sympathies are with them. One life lost is one too many and we have lost far too many people this summer. To our tireless emergency service workers and volunteers, we all have thanked you for your dedication, your care and your heroism over the course of many, many months. We have heard so many remarkable stories of courage and selflessness. We know that were it not for those tireless and selfless people, many more lives would have been lost in these fires. There are those who, as we speak today, are still working to protect our communities from fires that are still burning. We all know that the threat isn't over and that we have a long way to go before this threat is over.

The devastation of these fires has affected so many across Australia and we've heard from so many members and senators about the impact on their communities. While my electorate is in the inner north—the suburban north of Melbourne—many of my constituents have written to me and shared their experiences, whether they themselves have had to evacuate or had family and loved ones who were under threat. Everyone has been touched by this, wherever they are in Australia. Over the past month, the people in my electorate of Wills, like so many communities around Australia, have come together to do what they can to support those directly devastated by the fires. Some people may consider this is very small, in the larger scheme of things, but the small efforts all add up. I want to say a special thanks to the people in my community who have made an effort to reach out, provide support, raise money and donate resources to the people who have been affected.

The staff at Wild Timor, the local coffee shop just near my electorate office, have donated all their tips to Foodbank Australia and Wildlife Victoria. The Coburg Market held a barbecue fundraiser for the Victorian bushfire recovery effort. The Pascoe Vale RSL raised money for the people of Mallacoota. The Fawkner Bowling Club went up against the Fawkner RSL in a bowls challenge to raise funds for bushfire recovery. There was even a yoga class fundraiser at Joe's Market Garden at CERES and a film fundraiser at the Coburg drive-in—yes, we still have one in my electorate. A bush dance at the Spotted Mallard in Brunswick raised funds. A barbecue and social tennis game and tennis class at East Coburg Tennis Club raised funds, and $1 from every pint sold at the Post Office Hotel in Coburg throughout the months of January and February will go to the bushfire recovery.

Each small act of generosity, each gift of time or money and each local event organised with those directly affected by this fire season add up and make a difference. In times of crisis, that's what we do: we band together, all of us, regardless of our backgrounds. We are, I think, reminded of what we share and what we have in common at these times. That Australian spirit of community, giving back and lending a hand has been on full display in my local community and, of course, in communities across the country.

As discussion inevitably turns to recovery and rebuilding, we must not forget that we are still in the middle of this. The bushfire season is not over, and communities are still under threat. We must acknowledge also that this bushfire season, extreme as it has been, has not been an anomaly. We know that climate change has impacted the length and the intensity of our bushfire seasons. That's why we must act in a unified way as a nation with urgency. I thought the member for Eden-Monaro's speech in the chamber yesterday really captured the essence of that call. The pleas that he made to those on the other side of the chamber were touching because it is about that spirit of unity and coming together to do something to tackle these issues, address climate change here at home and get to zero emissions. Only then can we take a leadership role on the global stage to urge other nations to reduce their global emissions. In the coming weeks and months, my hope—as we've all hoped in the last day or two—is that, as a parliament in this place where we work, we can not only honour those who have lost their lives by being there for the people and communities in their recovery but also work together in a spirit of bipartisanship for the betterment of our nation.

Mr RAMSEY (Grey—Government Whip) (17:43): I rise to speak on the bushfires condolence motion today. It has been a challenging time particularly for much of eastern Australia, but right across Australia now as Western Australia is struggling with fires. It's unsurprising that we've had some fires in my electorate of Grey, since it covers over 92 per cent of the state. We are pretty well in drought across a lot of it, and I must say that, by comparison, we haven't had the incredible tragedies we have seen in the eastern states and to our south in South Australia on Kangaroo Island. I will touch on Kangaroo Island in a little while. But let it be said that we have had our challenges.

On 11 November, two homes were lost in Port Lincoln. A number of buildings and 280 hectares were burnt out. It is a concern that that was in an area on the outskirts of the city where we've had, I think, the third fire in about 10 years. That really does bring into question some of those things about local management, I think. It's like Kangaroo Island. It's very dense scrubland. It's pretty inaccessible and, of course, it supports a pretty good fire. I
think it's going to be an issue for urban communities within the regions—to clear areas around their towns. We are going to have to have a serious conversation about it after this year.

It was, in fact, on lower Eyre Peninsula in 2005 that we had the Wangary fires, which razed 93 houses and 316 farm sheds, and burnt 78,000 hectares. There were 150 injuries and nine fatalities. As a ray of hope to those that have been burnt out, let me tell you: you would hardly know it if you went there now. The farms have been repaired, the houses have been rebuilt and, largely, the landscape has been restored. But I can tell you: the human scars remain. It is always particularly close to the hearts of those that have lost family and friends, but it is also the property losses, the grieving—I think it probably goes on for most of their life. They've readjusted and they're getting on with their life and all those things, but you know it's always there somewhere.

Then we had 20 November last year. That was a dreadful day. We had two fires on Yorke Peninsula and another one on the northern end of Yorke Peninsula at Port Wakefield. The worst was down at Yorketown—the fire at the southern end—where 5,000 hectares of cropping land was burnt. The crops were valued at about $1.3 million. Mercifully, no lives were lost, but 11 homes were destroyed. I have to say that, having driven around the fire scene a couple of days later with the mayor, Darren Braund, meeting volunteers and some locals, not all of the 11 homes were the first residence on the property, if you like. Some of them were older homes; they might have been rentals or whatever. But it occurs to me that it doesn't matter if you're renting a house and it doesn't matter whether one house or 100 were burned: if yours is the house that's burned and you've lost all your belongings, it's just as big a tragedy as if 100 of them burned. Eleven houses were lost down there.

I've got to say, as many others have said, that certainly the district has rallied around those people. And the local farmers—I rate the farmers on their farm appliances very highly. They are often the quickest, the first, to a fire. They're very valuable and make an enormous difference. Then, with their appliances, the CFS, the SES, the ambos and the Salvos were all there, and the community was generally working together, unsurprisingly. It is what we expect, but it is also what we see.

Then, barely a month later, we were back at it again, this time at Maitland, about 80 or 100 kilometres north of Yorketown. Once again, it was the great work of the fire units and the CFS that averted disaster. Only 1,700 hectares were burnt, but it was a long stretch, with a high potential for breakouts on a number of fronts when the wind shift came through. It took quite a bit of controlling. No homes were lost. The property losses in total were low; however, one farmer was substantially affected, even though his house was saved. I spoke with him recently. He was well insured and will spring back from the experience, but it was clear he was very moved by the help and offers of assistance that had come forward.

During this period we had a fire interstate in Western Australia, near Norseman. It cut the Eyre Highway, which is the main road between Sydney and Perth. It goes through my home town of Kimba. Cars were piled up at Ceduna, Border Village and other places for two weeks, so it was pretty disruptive to the national economy and pretty disruptive to people trying to go about their daily lives—and it was pretty disruptive for people trying to get to work. The effects have been felt there.

Then we had the Kangaroo Island fires. Kangaroo Island, of course, is not in the electorate of Grey; it is in Mayo. But there are many families from my electorate that own properties and operate properties on Kangaroo Island. Some manage them from the mainland, and others have family members down there living on the island. Such is the case with some of our friends. As of a couple of days ago, my friend had spent all but three days of the last month away from home, down on the island, battling the fires that just keep breaking out on the property from smouldering embers—from pastures, in fact, that keep smouldering. You get a bad day, up goes a puff of smoke, and he needs to be there with his workers. Over a long period of time friends who came down from the mainland brought their fire units and were ready to douse those flames when they came up. He contacted me and asked me to come over and have a look and give a hand. He was a bit concerned about some local management issues. I let Rebekha Sharkie know that I was going onto her patch. He thought that maybe there were some lessons to be learned. I visited his property for a couple of days to give a bit of a hand. It was after the second catastrophic day they'd faced down there. We had a big burn out on the western end and it turned around on the second catastrophic day about a week later and was bearing down on the middle of the island. The damage on Kangaroo Island is of a different scale to what we have seen in Grey this year, more like those fires at Wangary in 2005 that I mentioned.

Mercifully, perhaps luckily, on Kangaroo Island there were just two lives lost as a direct result of the fire. A famous gentleman, outback pilot and pioneer tourist legend Dick Lang and his son Clayton, who was one of South Australia's leading plastic surgeons, tragically lost their lives on the road adjacent to Flinders Chase on the western end of the island. I'll come back to that in a moment, because I think there's a lesson to be learned there. Dick had been a great gift to South Australia as he opened up the outback and made excursions for city lovers.
possible to look at the wonderful things there are in the outback of South Australia—the outback of Grey, I must say.

So, to come to these lessons, this is what my friend wanted me to come over to the island and see. He said, 'Properties here on the island are generally livestock orientated, and they are crisscrossed by laneways.' Farmers want to be able to get their sheep in and out of the shearing shed and from one paddock to another, so they put in these 20 to 25 metre wide laneways within their properties. It became quite apparent to him—they've been there a number of years now—that farmers as a general rule of thumb turn their sheep out into the pastures in spring and eat down the spring flush. As they work their way through summer and as feed supplies get low then they'll graze their laneways. He said, 'It could be as simple as grazing the laneways first and doing a bit of light cultivation down the side of the tracks. We would have a crisscross of firebreaks across all these properties on the island.' It's such a simple message. Yet you can see it's not being done at the moment. I raise these as constructive comments. I'll round it up in a moment when I get there.

Another thing he talked about was that the road corridors carry heavy vegetation. In fact, this was confirmed by a friend of mine who is a CFS volunteer and who has worked on fires all around Australia. He is one of those blokes who put his hand up and said, 'Yes, I'll go.' He's a sector commander. He's worked his way up. My friend would be likely to be in charge of four, five or six fire trucks on the site. It's his job to make sure the trucks go to the right place to fight the fire and that his people are safe. He came away after the second stint over there, a three-day stint with the fireys, and said, 'This is the worst one I've ever faced.' The country over there is more inaccessible than any he had faced before. He said, 'I think I'm getting too old for this.' I doubt that he is, but he was exhausted by the process. He said, 'The gullies are so deep that you can't get the dozers across them.' Of course the gullies are where the heavy vegetation is, down along the creeks. On Kangaroo Island—it's one of the things that makes it so beautiful—you drive down the road and you wouldn't know that there is a paddock on the other side of the scrub not more than 20 metres away, because it is so dense. My friend said that in fact they've discovered about five or six farmhouses around their property that they didn't even know were there, because now they can see through the scrub because it's burnt. Then he went on to say that, unlike where I come from and he comes from, they don't have big machinery, so a gate on a farm on Kangaroo Island is typically five metres wide—an iron gate. Where I come from, we would have a 12-metre wire gate, because we have to get decent sized machinery through. If you've got a five-metre gate, you only need about a six-metre or seven-metre break off the road through this dense scrub land to get your sheep, your ute, your dog and your motorbikes in and out of the paddock. Consequently, the canopy still joins over. As these fires are coming down the road they're like fingers. They burn with great velocity and there is no way of stopping them. Then, when the wind turns or the road turns, they break out into the farmlands again. He said, 'It would be so simple, if we had some 20- to 25-metre breaks at each of these gates.' Some of them have been pushed in, I must say. People have taken things into their own hands in recent times. When I was talking to my friend, the sector controller, he came up with exactly the same answer. He said, 'If every half a kilometre we had a 50-metre break on one side of the road and down a bit further, about 500 metres, we had another 50-metre break on the other side of the road, that wouldn't stop the native wildlife getting around—that wouldn't stop the koalas; they could easily walk across that little bit—but it would give the firefighters a place to stop the fire, which doesn't exist at the moment.' These are the conversations we have to have now.

I said I wanted to talk about Dick Lang again. While I was over there we took the drive through Flinders Chase out to Cape Borda on the western end of the island. I hadn't really thought about where Dick had perished, and we came across the site. The police had painted on the road. You could see where they panicked. They were trying to get through the smoke and the car had veered here and there, and then Clayton must have jumped and run and they both perished. The tragedy of it was that they were only 25 metres from an open paddock, but there was no way they could get there because of the dense scrub that was alight. If there had been a hole in the roadside vegetation, they probably would have got through it, but we'll never know, of course.

The reason I bring these things up is I think what we need now on the island is for someone to bring in particular the farmers but also other land managers together now to actually go and have a look at what worked and what didn't work. What are the lessons we can get out of this to try and make sure that this kind of conflagration does not happen again?

There's another opportunity. When my friend brought this second farm about six years ago, the old bloke he bought it off said, 'You'll have a fire there in six years.' And it has been six years. My friend said: 'Why? How do you know that?' and the bloke said, 'Because there was a fire there seven years ago and it burns every 13 years.' My friend said, 'Why's that?' The bloke said, 'There's an oily acacia that grows up the creek lines and it burns right out. For 12 years it's too green to burn, and then it's ready.' If something is that predictable, there must be something we can do about it. What I want to see is the community get together over there now and go through

FEDERATION CHAMBER
those things that can make a difference. I’ve spoken to the member for Mayo about this, and I will give any assistance I can to her. It’s obviously not my electorate, and so it’s not my place to go rummaging around all over the place, but whatever I can do through my farming contacts to try and bring that community together to have that kind of conversation I will do. At least at the end of this terrible fire season, with the loss of life—and my heart goes out to all of those—we can take some positive land management steps forward. We can say: ‘Well, it doesn’t have to be like this. We can actually alter the way we live within our environment to make sure we can protect our people, property, family and friends.’ Thank you.

Ms BIRD (Cunningham) (17:58): Summer is an evocative word for Australians. We anticipate Christmas functions with family and friends gathered; holidays at the beach on golden sands and crisp, blue waters; caravan parks full of kids on bikes; backyards taken over for riotous cricket games; and sizzling sausages on barbecues in the evenings. This summer, across our nation, we were watching emergency apps over Christmas. Our beaches were either on fire or blanketed by smoke and covered in the blackened remnants of fires burning elsewhere, sometimes hours away. We couldn’t sit outside for a meal as smoke choked us in our towns and our capital cities. It was nothing like we had ever seen before. It was unprecedented and so was the extraordinary response of communities across the country as people desperately wanted to do something to help, and this included my community.

I tried to keep up with sharing social media posts about fundraisers and donation points, and I just couldn’t, as there was so much going on. I just want to share a sample of these with the chamber to indicate how deeply moved my community was and how they rallied to help. On Sunday 22 December, locals supported the Southern Highlands bushfire appeal by collecting and packing hampers in Russell Vale. The Russell Vale Connect Facebook group organisers were kept very busy organising and delivering toys, books, crayons, board games, gift cards, nappies, toiletries and non-perishable food items. Members of the Illawarra RFS region, including Mount Kembla, Mount Keira, Austinmer, Otford, Stanwell Park, Helensburgh and Darkes Forest in Cunningham, had been at so many fire fronts outside our area, fighting for communities in the mountains and along our coast, and indeed many of them are off today to the Cooma area. At the same time, local brigades such as Helensburgh, Austinmer and Mount Kembla were holding information sessions to ensure that our local community was bushfire ready, particular those along our escarpment and near our national parks, as well as providing one-off assistance to elderly, infirm or disabled residents living in bushfire risk areas to make sure that their properties were well prepared.

Surf Life Saving Illawarra were on standby several times during the fire at Sussex Inlet. Together with lifesavers from Sydney, the Northern Beaches and the South Coast, they had 14 inflatable rescue boats as well as defibrillators, oxygen and first aid kits ready to deploy. So many locals who work for organisations such as the SES, other state emergency services and federal agencies, such as Centrelink, were deployed in a wide variety of ways to provide support to the affected communities. The Illawarra Aboriginal Medical Service established a South Coast Fires Indigenous Response page to coordinate efforts in southern New South Wales and collect donations of cash, food and other essential supplies. Lifeline and headspace in our local area regularly reached out to bushfire affected communities and volunteers. Both Lifeline and our local headspace provided vital mental health advice on social media. Organisations such as Greenacres Disability Services also used social media to ensure that people who are NDIS recipients and who were affected by the fires had information and knew where they could go to get assistance. Illawarra Retirement Trust and Warrigal care acted to provide support to residents in their aged-care facilities in the affected areas and to provide information for their families, many of whom are in my area.

Local families and community organisations were active over our community in raising funds, collecting donations and helping however they could. I will just give some examples. Unanderra Public School put out a call for back-to-school packs for South Coast students. They were soon joined by Woonona East Public School, Corrimal Public School and Figtree Heights Public School. The team at Tradies Helensburgh also got in and backed the fundraiser. Figtree Heights Public School also collected books in a partnership to help Mogo Public School. My office and the offices of my state colleagues, Paul Scully and Ryan Park, helped collect donations for this effort.

The Maritime Union of Australia, including our local branch at Port Kembla, put out a call for a fundraiser and collected cash and non-perishable food, including pet food, toiletries and clothing. Over 100 locals turned up to the Thirroul bowling club to participate in a sewing day for injured wildlife at the Shoalhaven Bat Clinic & Sanctuary/Wildlife Rescue South Coast. Many who couldn't sew contributed blankets and towels to be used to make pouches for joeys. Other sewing groups, such as those at the Warrigal care facilities, did the same. In Mangerton, Riley Hart, Lennox Gripton, Jude Smith, Sage Dawson, Ginger Smith, Blake Gripton and baby Alba...
Dawson, all primary school students, held a lemonade stand to raise money for the local Rural Fire Service, and it was wonderful to see them there. They looked so proud of their efforts.

In Towradgi, Jett Cervoni and his family and classmates held a lemonade and cupcake stand—so the stakes were rising—to help endangered animals affected by the South Coast fires. Jihad Salem and the Iman Foundation have been taking their barbecue to fire affected Indigenous communities. They partnered with Ripe Mentoring to raise $3,500 for the Indigenous crisis response and recovery. Local businesses donated directly. They helped raise donations. They provided raffle tickets and prizes for events. There are just far too many to name.

I do want to give an example of how wide participation by our local businesses was. Jania, George and Elie at Thirroul Fruit Barn donated fresh produce, including many boxes of sweet potatoes, to Wildlife South Coast to help feed the many animals affected by the fires. They are still taking donations and organising activities. Local Thirroul resident Michael Lavilles organised local Thirroul cafes to give away free coffee and other items to customers who made a cash donation to the bushfire appeal. That included Saffron's Milk Bar, Leading Edge Video—as an aside I want to offer best wishes to John and Marian Wallace, who have been running that business for 40 years, on their imminent retirement—Cucina Cafe, Black Market Cafe, Two Mountains Merchants, Seafoam Cafe, the Old School Cafe—there's a very strong cafe culture in Thirroul so, if you're ever in town, drop by and see these wonderful businesses—Revive 2515, Buck Hamblin, Finbox Cafe, Blackbird Cafe and Honest Don's cafe. Chase Murray, the owner of Alexander's Cafe at Dapto, raised $30,000 and gathered 300 weekly scoop lunch packs and 30 school bags with stock and supplies for kids to start the year at school.

Ash Fisher, owner of the Art House Cafe at Port Kembla, collected bottles of water, clothing, toiletries and other items. The cafe also hosted a 'Live and loud for the fireys' event, with performers Grace Mae, Marley Fox, Estelle, Emily Koumakis, Jamie Walsh, Dear Violet, Zayden Spinelli and Kayla Shea. They raised $2,500 for the New South Wales Rural Fire Service. Wollongong Music Foundry and Mark Lenzo did a similar event—a 'Playing for fireys' concert—and raised about $5,000. Our local Rotary clubs, Lions clubs and sports clubs helped neighbouring communities in the South Coast through assistance and donations. Rotary Clubs of the Illawarra held a community collection at Wollongong City Council's New Year's Eve celebrations and donated $3,162 to the Rural Fire Service. Twenty thousand dollars was raised at a special charity football match at Kembla Grange, organised by Football South Coast, the Wollongong Wolves and Albion Park City FC.

This week there was a fundraising golf day called 'Illawarra codes combine', with the Wolves, St George Illawarra Dragons and the Illawarra Hawks. Figtree Bowling Club donated $2,000 to the Mount Keira brigade. You could buy lemonade, you could buy cupcakes, you could buy raffle tickets, you could go to a concert, and you could go and watch a sports event. Our community was so creative in the many, many ways they found to enable people to come together to help those who were affected and that they were so concerned about.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the critically important role our local media played in supporting affected communities by providing fire information, sharing information about community fundraising activities and helping raise spirits with amazing and heart-warming stories. I saw this in the pages of the Illawarra Mercury. I heard it on the radio from i98FM and Wave FM and I saw it on our local WIN TV and Channel Nine news. But I want to give a special mention to the amazing people at our ABC locally, across our region and indeed the national team. Their professionalism and compassion were on display day after day—and continue now.

My community would want me to express their deepest condolences to the families of the firefighters who lost their lives in this battle, to the community members who died fighting to save their homes and to the wonderful three aerial firefighters from America, killed when their plane went down while helping fight our fires.

Lives have been lost, properties destroyed, businesses smashed, communities gutted, wildlife lost in unimaginable numbers and the land deeply scarred. We must learn the lessons of improved response. We must put all effort into support during rebuilding. We must listen to the local people about their experiences. We must heed the knowledge and deep understanding of land of our First Australians. We must come together to rebuild but also to ensure we are protecting our land for the future—by listening to the science, acting on climate change and giving our beautiful land and animals and our amazing people a future that doesn't see these unprecedented fires as business as usual.

Mr DRUM (Nicholls—Chief Nationals Whip) (18:10): It is a period over the summer months—that we've just been through—that has been incredibly trying for everybody, because we have that sense of duty to our people but also to the people that our friends and colleagues represent. For the vast majority of the time over the summer, I've been incredibly lucky and grateful that the seat of Nicholls has been able to avoid any major fires, predominantly because it's a very, very flat area—mainly pastured land. When fires do break out, the fire trucks are normally able to get to them and simply put the fires out, with good access right across the electorate. We do have areas to the north, around Barmah, that are heavily forested—and we were lucky that we had no fires there—and also to the

---

FEDERATION CHAMBER
south of the electorate, around Broadford and Seymour. It's a heavily forested area there again. We were lucky that we didn't have any outbreaks there.

I was able to keep in contact with my good friend Darren Chester—certainly the worst affected electorate in Victoria, where so much of Gippsland and so many communities were severely damaged. When you were talking to Minister Chester, it was really quite worrying because you knew that your good friend wasn't coping very well and that the situation that he was dealing with day after day was really troublesome, when it affects the MPs in the way that it was. I had exactly the same response from my good friend in the Victorian parliament, Tim Bull, the member for Gippsland East—again, the sheer trouble in their voices when you're ringing to ask how they're going, and they simply say: 'No, not good. This is horrible. Our people are being put through an absolute entree into hell here.'

It wasn't until I had the opportunity to travel up there, along with a group of other National Party members, to see if we could help for a few days. On 13 January we took off for a few days and went past Bairnsdale, into Gelantipy and up near Buchan—which is normally famous for the Buchan Caves. We went up to a few places seldom seen. We went nearly up to the New South Wales border, where we were able to help a few farmers there roll up some old, burnt out fences. It's heartrending work for the farmers to do this recovery work. To have a handful of pollies trying to help in the best way we could for a few days was well received, I think. Again, it was not our patch; it was the patch of our colleagues.

Until you actually go there and witness it, you don't realise the predicament that these farmers are left with: 200-odd cattle on a farm that doesn't really have any fences. So, how do you build a makeshift stockyard and a makeshift ramp—because the previous one's been burnt out—and how can you do that in such a way that's going to enable you to round those cattle up? They're big strong cattle, so how are you going to be able to round them up and put them on trucks to get them to another farm?

It was Paul Sykes's farm that we were actually working on to rebuild the stockyard. I've never seen such ingenuity. They say that there's not much that wire and a bit of duct tape can't fix—but to see a temporary stockyard get thrown up within a couple of hours, the cattle fed and then the cattle loaded and taken away. The ingenuity of these guys was very impressive. They had been put through the wringer, with the fire going through their property and burning thousands and thousands of dollars worth of hay. You could see the generosity, with a couple of hay trucks coming in to help them get through.

While we're talking about hay trucks, I want to thank my brother Des Drum from Shepparton and his mate Howard Phillips. In conjunction with the Katandra Men's Shed, they've been raising money around the district and taking donations of hay and sending them up towards Corryong. Four trucks have gone up there with hay worth about $20,000. I know that right around Australia there are so many people like that who have gotten off their backsides, raised money and put it to productive use. It was great to see people from around Shepparton, which wasn't touched, contributing in such a fulsome way to people 300 or 400 kilometres away. When we were up there we saw the absolute necessity of the hay trucks that were turning up. There were no questions asked. Obviously people know that the stock are there, they are alive, they need something to eat and there is nothing there for them at the moment. It has enabled these farmers to persevere.

It really is incredible to see the loss. We drove through the Buchan and Gelantipy area. Clifton Creek lost their stock and quite a few houses. We talked to some of the landowners there. The sense of loss is quite astonishing. Again your heart goes out to these people who have lost their houses and have had to struggle through. The other thing we have to look at is the amount of people who have been in business—from hoteliers to cafe proprietors—and understand how much income they have lost. They had already gone through some very tough seasons and have had this on top of all of their previous drought problems. It really has knocked so many businesses in. I know some may not recover from that.

I'd also like to mention a Goulburn Valley fruitgrower who has expanded his operation beyond the Goulburn Valley up into the Batlow area. Some 20 or 30 farmers up there are growing some of Australia's best apples. There was a combination: some orchardists were somewhat lucky and lost 30 per cent of their crop while others, such as Billy Barolli, lost their entire crop plus the posts, netting and fencing. It was a total wipe-out for some of the growers.

There's going to be an enormous amount of work for the New South Wales government, with the criteria they've put in place, to see who's going to be able to receive what type of assistance. We're going to have to have that criteria fully tested to make sure the right people get assistance. That's going to be a very complex piece of work for the New South Wales government and the Victorian government, which are going to be in control of putting in place that criteria. I don't want to talk too long on this condolence motion because, as I said, my area wasn't affected and I only visited the affected areas for three days.
A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Sitting suspended from 18:18 to 18:30

Mr KEOGH (Burt) (18:30): The bushfires that we have seen rage across New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Queensland, Western Australia, and here in our nation's capital have been nothing short of horrific. Thirty-three people now have lost their lives in this disaster. These include Australians who put themselves in harm's way as volunteers, as firefighters, and those simply trying to defend their own homes. That includes five firefighters from New South Wales and Victoria, as well as three firefighters who came out here from the United States to lend their hand in our fire effort. That includes 25 people, most of whom were defending their homes and their farms, who now will never come home. More than 2,000 homes have been lost across Australia since these fires began. I think I speak for us all when I say that our thoughts are with the families and friends of those who have lost loved ones. Our thoughts are also with those who are part of the volunteer and professional fire services as a whole, as well as with those in our parks and wildlife services.

I wish to thank not only the various fire services from around our country and around the world who have lent their support but also our Australian Defence Force and, indeed, the defence forces from other nations that have come to help us in our time of need. The impact the ADF has made in the fire effort is extraordinary, and they continue to work tirelessly in the clean-up effort. What we have seen during these fires is the value of deploying our Defence Force and reservists and the need to ensure that the mechanism for their deployment in such domestic emergencies be examined further. We must ensure that should we be confronted with such disasters again, as I am sure we will, our ADF can be quickly and appropriately mobilised to anywhere they may be required across our vast country, with all of the equipment they may require in such circumstances.

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Sitting suspended from 18:32 to 18:52

Mr KEOGH: As I was saying, we must ensure that, should we be confronted with such disasters again, our ADF can be quickly and appropriately mobilised to anywhere they may be required across our vast country, with all the equipment they may require in such circumstances. Our thanks must go also to our civil mariners who helped with evacuations, providing essential supplies and sheltering those in need of refuge from the fires.

There have been many words spoken in this place, yesterday and today, of the pain and suffering that has been experienced by thousands across this country, and we know that the effects of that will continue to be felt for some time. I join in the contributions of my fellow members to this motion, and, in the interests of brevity, I will only make some brief points.

The experience of these fires is something familiar to my community in Perth's south-eastern suburbs, having been subjected to many fires over the years, most memorably—at least, for my family and community—the 2011 Kelmscott fires, where my parents were subsequently out of their house for two years, and many of our neighbours' homes were decimated. Then, imprinted on the mind of every Western Australian, there is the Yarloop fire of 2015, which left the entire town flattened. And there have been so many others.

These fires all over the country have been burning for months, including the Yanchep fire in the north of Perth, the Baldivis fires just south of my community, and the Nullarbor Plain fires, which cut WA off from the rest of the country by road for nearly two weeks. Together, all of these fires this season have burnt over 18 million hectares.

Before this season's fires, so many small businesses were already suffering, due to the already floundering state of the economy. It's the industries in many areas affected by fire, the small businesses and tourism operators, who rely on the summer holidays to bolster their annual incomes. They were relying on the summer break to strengthen and fill their coffers. The loss of the usual trade and tourism opportunities they traditionally rely on because of the fires will leave an impact on these communities long after the vegetation itself has regenerated. That's why last week I, along with the shadow minister for small and family business and the member for Macquarie, met with small business representatives in the Blue Mountains in New South Wales. Yesterday we also met with members of the Bilpin community to hear their stories. We heard how many visitors have stayed away from these areas during what is usually their very busy time of year. This impacts business; it reduces employee hours; and it means that these employees then have less money to spend in their community. We heard from small business owners whose businesses survived the flames but are floundering nonetheless, as town centres remain empty of local and visiting customers. They told us that the economic conditions they now face feel worse than the global financial crisis. Some businesses have already been forced to close their doors, and many are at risk of the same fate if they don't get cash soon—not just loans that they can't even apply for yet. Together we can and must continue to work to support our fellow Australians, including these businesses, not just now but for the long haul.
This summer we saw extreme weather events, from hail to flames, flood to dust, on the back of record-breaking droughts. So we must act to mitigate the increases of such extremes. We cannot ignore, as some insist on doing, the impact of human caused climate change on the increased frequency and severity of weather events. We have to stop having this fight about climate change, because it is real and human activity is contributing to it. We can't keep burying our heads in the sand, especially when 195 countries in Paris agreed that it was so. We need to take collective action, not continue to have political argument; action that is real; action that protects and creates even more opportunities for growth; action that everyone is proud of now and in the future.

From these fires we've also seen some fantastic demonstrations of solidarity across our country, from mind-blowing fundraising efforts to grassroots community campaigns, even in my electorate of Burt. For instance, the Armadale Mosque, the Australian Arab Association, and even Sienna, a 10-year-old from Piara Waters in my electorate, who sold cupcakes at a stall outside her house over the holidays to raise money for the victims of these fires. My community couldn't get much further away from these east coast bushfires and, frankly, they really don't have much to give either. But they get it. They know the horror all too well, as do so many other Australians. In response to these bushfires, still raging, we see the solidarity that is the foundation of our nation. Firefighters from my community and many other communities in WA volunteered to uproot their lives, leave work and leave their families to travel to fire zones in the east to support the fire effort there over the summer. And they know that fireys in the east would do the same for us. For we all have that shared humanity, that sense of mateship which arises within us and surfaces across Australia in times of crisis like this.

So together we must and we do pay tribute to those who we have lost and to those lives that will never be the same again. And our help must not just be now, but ongoing. Reconstruction and the emotional effects will last for years, and it is important that all of us, as I know we do in this parliament, stand together with all those affected. Our hearts, our prayers, our thoughts are with all of you, and we will continue to do our best to ensure that your lives in the future are better than what you are suffering now.

Mrs MARINO (Forrest—Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Territories) (18:59): In starting my remarks today the first thing I want to do is acknowledge how Australians are so affected by the 33 people who lost their lives during the fires that we've seen in Australia over the summer period. Our deepest sympathy goes to their families, their friends and their communities, and equally for the three US firefighters who also lost their lives.

The extraordinary day in, day out efforts and courage of volunteer and career firefighters, the parks and wildlife people, the local people who helped each other, the Australian Defence Force, the animal rescue groups and all of the organisations who have and are helping communities—I want to acknowledge and thank them all. I want to thank those who are still out there fighting fires and those who will spend weeks and months after the fires patrolling the fire affected areas. It's a massive part of our firefighters' work that is often overlooked, and this is where so many of our volunteers spend so much of their time after a fire.

I want to acknowledge the local people in the fire affected regional communities, who've worked so closely together to support each other and their communities, for their resilience, courage and strength to face this challenge and deal with the rebuilding of communities and the long haul ahead.

I acknowledge the businesses, particularly small businesses in regional towns, who've supported and encouraged the volunteer firefighters. Several very serious fires have occurred in my electorate over the past 10 years or so, most recently the Yarloop fires around Yarloop, Waroona and Cookernup and several in our south-west. There have been other fires this year as well over the summer: in Nannup and Kemerton—just two. They were fires that were well controlled due to the efforts of our volunteers and career firefighters.

But no matter what the crisis is, Australians step up to help each other, even if they're suffering hardship themselves, and often taking the view that there's always someone worse off than they are. A wonderful example of this has been the Harvey Hay Run. It was instigated by Belinda Hall and her husband Joe from Cookernup—one of the communities that was so badly affected in those dreadful Waroona-Yarloop fires of 2016; in fact, those communities are still recovering four years on. The plan was to take hay from the south-west of WA nearly 4,000 kilometre to the Cooma area in New South Wales to provide feed. It was almost like one dairy area to another. The process started on 3 January and, as happens in our rural communities, word spread really quickly and soon there were eight road trains pledged to do the trip within about four days. Donations of hay ranged from a single bale—some of the big rolls and big squares—through to one company that donated 52 bales. There was hay in all forms. There was really generous support from individual local farmers—those who were so badly affected by the 2016 Yarloop-Waroona bushfires, those whose businesses and communities are still recovering from the fires four years on. These donations came from a farming community in our south-west in the middle of what is a really dry season that comes on the back of successive dry years where stockfeed, hay and silage are all in short supply and are very expensive. So they've committed their hay to those on the east coast that are worse off than they are.
We've recently seen significant increases in dairy pellet feed prices in the last two weeks as well, and this just shows you the generosity and genuine willingness of our local farmers to support their fellow Australian farmers who are so much worse off, 'They're 4,000 kays away but let's do our bit,' and that's what they did. This is the spirit, the courage, the resilience and the compassion that makes Australia a country that we are truly proud of—the country we celebrate and acknowledge on Australia Day.

Cash donations were also pledged to the Harvey Hay Run: $5,000 from a company; a $4,000 anonymous personal donation; and a lot of support from the people of Yarloop who lost their own homes from the fires four years previously. Phil and Paul Curulli offered their Cookernup property as a hay drop-off point—you had to get it together. The practical coordination, loading and logistics efforts mostly happened at Tommy Rose's farm in Roelands. Now Tom was really quick to volunteer his truck. He's a long-term farmer. He volunteered his time to be the driver. He volunteered his property and whatever practical support was needed to make this happen. Considering the various shapes and sizes of bales that were donated, Tom made sure they were all rebaled into squares that would fit on the back of those trucks. They were road trains, and they had to fit to travel well. His farm at Roelands was a hive of activity in those days and nights leading up to the run. We shared a few phone calls at the time. There was no doubt that they were all tired. They took an extra day and they had a barbecue and got together. I want to thank those who sponsored and supported the food and refreshment for those drivers and the people who supported them on their trip.

Eleven road trains left early on 18 January. It had taken just 15 days, basically, from the time that this was thought of to the time the trucks got on road. The drivers and trucks included professional haulers, transport and logistics companies—those who deliver every single day around Australia. And I've frequently said, as you know, Deputy Speaker Hogan, that Australia runs on the back of a truck, particularly for those of us in rural, regional and remote Australia. There were owner-drivers who put their hands up to deliver the hay, local farmers with their own trucks.

I want to thank each and every one of those drivers who donated their time and effort. I know the wear and tear on a truck from that distance. They were—I want to mention them; I think it's worth it: Joe Hall, Tommy Rose, Sandy MacPherson, Danny Jaimeon, Tim Bowman, Shane Tyson, Brett Catalano, Trent Cole, Rob Muldoon, Tom Skudder and Phil Slattery. What a great job they did to drive that 4,000 kays. There were a total of 22 trailers in that convoy, including 21½ trailers of hay, which was over 300 tonnes. What a great effort. Another half of the trailer had a range of other supplies and other donations that had been given.

When you think about it, the fuel costs were around $100,000. That was the expectation. A lot of donations were needed to fund this, and I thank everyone who donated. They received a lot of support along the road. Almost everyone driving with a CB radio offered their congratulations and support across the Nullarbor and beyond. They got a really massive fabulous reception in Wagga Wagga. The kids were along the streets, waving signs, waving to them, and there were streets that were closed just to allow them access, given that these were road trains.

I talked to Tommy Rose straight after this, and he said the drivers were all emotional at this point because they realised what it meant locally and because they were seeing the damage that had been done. They knew their efforts were really, really appreciated at that local level, and that meant the world to them. Given that they were heading towards the end of the drive—and they were tired, as you would understand—that really meant a lot. So to all of the people who turned out to welcome them along that trip: thank you. It meant so much to the drivers. I know they were really emotional about it and really appreciated that support.

There were streets around Canberra that were shut down. They had expected to have to skirt Canberra but were given an escort by police. The emergency services and plenty of other vehicles drove through Canberra. We were told that this was the first time that road trains had been driven through Canberra and on the Hume Highway. They had a police escort. There were around 40 or 50 police officers escorting this convoy from Narrandera to Cooma. I really want to thank the officers involved because they were so much a part of what these drivers, these road trains were able to deliver. The officers knew that they were there to support these people to get the hay to those that really needed it. I want to thank those who helped deal with the state regulatory issues, the NHVR and Scotty Buchholz, the minister.

They reached Cooma on 22 January. It had taken 19 days at that point, from the concept to the hay landing for the farmers to pick up. Seven of the road trains headed back the following day—those with just single trailers—and some of the hay was distributed by a south coast rural relief group. Four trucks, including Tommy Rose's, stayed on to deliver hay to various locations. They actually got to meet the farmers—and that was a profound experience, seeing those who broke down when the truck rolled in with some hay for cattle that they didn't have any feed to feed. I know what this meant to my farmers in Yarloop.
As I said, these guys had travelled nearly 4,000 kays. The four remaining trucks were escorted out on Wednesday. Belinda and Joe got home on Saturday. They saw their 17-month-old daughter for the first time in two weeks. Tommy Rose and some of the others got home the day before yesterday. We had a chat. He's now working on delivering some more hay. More donations came through while they were on the road as people were following their trip. They bought another 58-odd bales with the money that has been donated, and they're looking at how efficiently they can get this hay through to the drought- and fire-affected areas.

I'll just repeat that the drivers were profoundly affected by the warmth of the reception they got when they drove through and when they got to their destination, but mostly they were affected by the response of the farmers who were so desperate for that feed to feed their cattle. They will never forget the faces and the gratitude. Often it's what you can't say; it's the look on your face. That's what they saw, and they were really grateful for that response. I know that Belinda, Joe, Tom and all of those drivers wanted to thank everyone who helped out—not just those who made donations but also those who supported them with food and other support as they made their way across, their support crew, people who helped by fundraising and donating, and those who supported them by saying, 'Just go and get it done.' And that's really what we wanted—to just do it and to make this happen. I spoke to the wife of one of the drivers who got home on Friday. Courtney said Brett was just catching up on some sleep. What a good fella!

What our communities know only too well, through our experiences with fire, is that all of the affected communities will take a long time to recover and rebuild. This will also require really dedicated, capable local people who are listened to and who are committed to the long-term recovery process—local people who best understand how their communities work, what's needed and in what order, and how much can and should be delivered by local tradespeople and businesses.

I want to acknowledge the work of the PM, Minister Littleproud, Minister Hunt and Stuart Robert and all the agency people across the board who've made things happen quickly. They've done a fantastic job. We've heard that there is consideration of a royal commission. The PM has talked about this and is consulting with the states. We've heard repeatedly—I think everyone has—about the need for a range of measures including fuel and hazard reduction measures that draw on the practical knowledge and experience of local Rural Fire Services, volunteers and foresters—those who really understand what's needed in that space—and draw on Indigenous practices as well.

Finally, I offer my sincere thanks to all of the firefighters—volunteer, career and other—around Australia. I thank them for everything they have done and everything they'll continue to do. And I give a special thanks to our ADF men and women.

Mr DAVID SMITH (Bean) (19:12): I too rise to share my most heartfelt condolences to members of the Australian community impacted by this terrible ongoing season of bushfires—to a mother or father who has lost a son, to a grandchild who has lost their grandparent, to a son or daughter who'll grow up never knowing their dad, to those aunties and uncles who lost a nephew, to a friend who lost a great mate, and to a volunteer or workmate who lost a comrade. These fires have had an enormous effect on their families and their communities across Australia.

As the member for Bean, I represent the southern part of the Australian Capital Territory. It's a beautiful part of the ACT, with Namadgi National Park within its boundaries and the Murrumbidgee River flowing through it. Every day of parliament, we acknowledge the First Nations people on whose land we meet: the Ngunawal and Ngambri people. Their land is on fire and will be burning for some time to come. In this sitting period, this is something we should reflect upon during that acknowledgement. The smoke that you can feel and taste that has been choking this city for more than 40 days first came from the horrific South Coast and Snowy Mountains fires but now comes from the Orroral Valley fire in beautiful Namadgi National Park—an area rich in our First Nations history, our settler history and our connection to space travel in the 1960s and beyond. This fire has burnt through a third of the ACT and caused spot fires across the border into Bredbo that have resulted in the loss of houses. The fires moved from 'advice' to 'watch and act' to 'emergency' and back again constantly over the past fortnight. This is also the region that lived through the devastating 2003 Canberra bushfires, which spread from Namadgi up into the southern and western suburbs of Bean.

But we are also part of a broader region, part of the Capital region. I know that when our region is impacted, our community here is impacted. Last week I spoke with Karl from Banks as he and his neighbours prepared for fires to potentially come through to his southern Tuggeranong suburb. It was only weeks before that he had been protecting his parents' home in Malua Bay. His is a classic story repeated across our region. We are deeply connected.
It was in this region, in the Peak Hill area up in the Monaro high country, that we lost the American aerial firefighters. They were part of an effort to protect property and bushland against a raging fire fanned by strong winds, bushland that included a koala sanctuary set up by a former Canberran. Tragically, those efforts were not able to hold back the fire, taking the Two Thumbs Koala Sanctuary. As a small gesture to help heal and recognise that tragic loss, three rescued koalas from the area have been named after these brave men.

This has been a long summer for the Bean community. Not only have we felt the anguish of our region, we have faced the impacts of fires across the territory. Our community has dealt with air quality readings 23 times the hazardous level, at times the worst air quality of anywhere on the planet. During the period of 15 December to the end of January, the Monash station down in Bean has recorded hazardous levels of air quality on 27 days. On the other days since mid-December we have gotten away with merely poor air quality. This acrid smoke saw the closure of businesses around the ACT—the Department of Home Affairs; the National Gallery shutting its doors and engaging in measures for the protection of artworks from the pollution; the university campuses; child care and other community facilities; organised sports; and even the closure of Canberra Airport. With community anxiety rising across the region, we actually ran out of P2 masks and air purifiers. We don't know what the effect on health and the economic impacts of this exposure to hazardous air quality over such a sustained period will be. Also, in the last fortnight the southern villages and suburbs have been under attack from a bushfire that is now a third the size of the ACT—now over 80,000 hectares.

The ACT community, though, has gotten through this because of our collective efforts. There are many to thank and commend for that collective effort, but I would like to start by thanking our volunteer and professional firefighters of the ACT RFS brigades, and their New South Wales colleagues, and everyone across our emergency services; the ESA; the SES; the ambos; ACT Fire and Rescue; ACT Parks and Conservation; the AFP and the ADF; those manning the air traffic control towers hour on hour; those community members who fundraised to bring in P2 masks; the Vikings club down in Bean, for hosting the very well-attended and important community forums; the families of our key workers; ABC 666, here in the territory, and all of our local media for the amazing job they have done in ensuring that we have been kept up-to-date with what is happening. And thanks to our great volunteer networks, including ones like Slabs for Heroes that are relatively new, through to our school communities like Holy Family Gowrie and St John Vianney’s, which have all played an active role in helping people not just in the immediate ACT but also in communities across our region.

I would also like to note the great contribution of the leadership of our emergency organisations. Their efforts throughout the summer to keep the community informed, to prepare for each sudden weather change and provide calm, sober advice to our community, have been nothing short of outstanding. I also want to acknowledge the efforts of our local emergency services minister, Mick Gentleman, and Chief Minister Andrew Barr. Most of all, my humble gratitude goes out to the members of my community for your endurance, generosity and support of your fellow Australians.

My community has a determination to get through this, but this cannot become the new norm. If it is, then we have abrogated our responsibility not just to the people we represent but to the following generations—not just to our children but to their children. With a third of the ACT burnt, our community want to see governments work together across all levels. Our community is demanding that it is now time not to just listen but to act on expert advice. It is time to put away the arguments not based on evidence. It is time to listen to our agencies, it is time to listen to our experts and, as the member for Eden-Monaro said, it is time for facts and then acting.

Finally, I finish where I started. Thank you to those who are the reason for this incredibly sad condolence motion. This parliament will never forget you, and my community will never forget this summer.

Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson—Minister for Industry, Science and Technology) (19:20): It is difficult to put into words the devastating impact of the fires that so many Australian communities have experienced this season. The eerie blanket of smoke that has engulfed cities and suburban areas of our nation meant we had a daily visual and physical reminder of the depth and breadth of the natural disaster that so many of our fellow Australians were dealing with. The smoke that managed to stop international tennis and cricket matches was of course just a transient and minor representation of a much more serious situation. It continued to be a constant sign of the daily fight, and, more than ever before, Australians feel connected to those on the front line of the response. This condolence motion is an opportunity for each of us in this place, as representatives of our local communities, to give voice to the care and concern that the people we represent have felt for our fellow Australians.

As I said at the beginning, it is difficult to put into words. The scope of the loss feels too big to capture with phrases. The depth of the emotion we have all felt this summer is too immense the sum up with a sentence. Words feel terribly inadequate. But let me say on behalf of southern Gold Coast residents: I extend our very deep and sincere sympathy to those who have lost loved ones. Our thoughts are with you in this incredibly difficult time. On behalf of southern Gold Coast residents, I convey our ongoing concern for those who have suffered trauma.
and loss of property, pets and livestock, and are now facing the rebuilding and recovery process. We know that the aftermath of the fires will be felt for months and years to come, and we stand ready to help.

Let's not forget that the threat has not passed. There are still fires being fought, communities on alert and hot conditions ahead as we face another month of summer. We all hope the worst has passed, but we can be certain there is still more to come. So, on behalf of Gold Coast residents, I also thank our brave firefighters and their support crews for their dedication and effort. While words feel inadequate, we know at this time that actions count. On that note, I thank many Gold Coasters who have made generous donations, who have supported the RFS, and particularly those locals who are part of the RFS. I also know that while my electorate has been spared extensive bushfire damage, neighbouring Gold Coast Hinterland areas were among the first to experience bushfires this season, with fires in September claiming the historic Binna Burra Lodge and with blazes throughout the region and nearby Scenic Rim.

As I said, today's debate is important, but the Australian people know it is action that counts. It would take more time than we have to run through the list of assistance and support being coordinated by the National Bushfire Recovery Agency, which is a $2 billion investment from our government to ensure individuals and communities get the help they need to rebuild. I would like to briefly run through some of the work being done within my portfolio, particularly by the CSIRO, Australia's world-class science and research agency.

As I said recently, science holds the solutions to meeting the challenges of a changing climate. CSIRO has led bushfire research for close to 70 years, providing knowledge to firefighters on the front line and managers planning for bushfire preparedness and resilience. Right now CSIRO scientists are supporting the analysis of the amazing efforts of our brave firefighters to combat the overwhelming force of these fires. We need to know what more we can do on the front line to manage fires in future, to continue to limit the kind of devastating damage we have witnessed this season. CSIRO's scientific analysis of bushfires forms the basis for many advice guides and warning systems currently used by our fire agencies. CSIRO trains fire authorities in fire behaviour and prediction and has world-class facilities and models to understand, predict and manage fires under future climate conditions. Just one example of what CSIRO science can do to help firefighters on the ground is Spark. Spark is an app for use in the field, which links together methods and models to understand fire speed and spread over different terrains. Tools like Spark enable authorities to prioritise efforts to suppress new and running fires according to their potential to cause loss. CSIRO science has also helped to develop technology to protect firefighters, so that they can do their work as safely as possible when they are out in their trucks fighting raging bushfires. The bushfire burnover protection system installed in fire trucks was co-developed by CSIRO with fire agencies, and it has undoubtedly saved lives this fire season. As the Minister for Industry, Science and Technology, I'll continue to work with our scientists, researchers and businesses on solutions to the challenges our nation faces now and in the future.

But primarily, in the context of this motion, I want to express the gratitude of the Gold Coast community to our firefighters, our best and most hopeful wishes to those engaged in the recovery and rebuilding process and our condolences to the families of those who lost loved ones. Nothing can reverse the loss and the trauma of this bushfire season, but we hope there is solace and comfort in knowing that your fellow Australians, no matter where they live, feel for what you are going through and have pitched in to help whenever they can. Among the worst conditions imaginable, we have witnessed the very best of the Australian spirit. Over and over we have seen acts of kindness, bravery, empathy, generosity, care and optimism. For that we are a very grateful nation.

Ms WELLS (Lilley) (19:27): On behalf of the people of Lilley I extend my condolences to the 33 families who have lost loved ones over this summer's bushfire crisis—lost souls who stood and fought the fires. Some ran into the fires. They saved countless other countrymen from fires, and we honour them. On 25 January I marched with my community for Survival Day, which is a day about resilience. We finished at Koobara, a kindy in Zillmere which works with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families on the north side of Brisbane. Speaking with local elders, we began talking about the land we are all charged with a moral duty to care for, and of karrikins. Karrikins are a family of small organic compounds found in smoke that can stimulate germination of dormant seeds in the aftermath of bushfires. Karrikins can also make seedlings more responsive to light and adapt to grow in new conditions. The name is derived from the word 'karrik', which means 'smoke' in the Indigenous language of the Noongar people in WA. Different plant species have different reactions to bushfires. Some plants are completely lost. Others survive but their leaves are incinerated or their bark becomes charred. However, from the charcoal littered soil, plants will continue to grow after the havoc ends and eventually new green emerges. After this devastating bushfire season I hope that all Australians can take some heart from the resilient purpose and way of the karrikins.

It is hard to fathom the level of destruction these bushfires have inflicted. Thirty-three people have lost their lives, thousands of people had to abandon their hopes, over one billion animals have perished, and Indigenous
communities who have a strong cultural attachment to the land have once again been displaced. We will remember the ripple effect that bushfires can have and we will make sure that firefighters, emergency workers, volunteers and affected families have access to proper health care and counselling for the trauma, grief and loss that they have suffered.

No-one wants to see their national parliament play party games at a time such as this, but they do want to hear, see and feel true leadership from those of us gifted with the honour of representing them in the federal parliament. I am not here to try to score political points, but I will not shy away from an honest and robust debate about how we got here and what we must do now. These bushfires have decimated the economies of too many Australian communities. We cannot go on as we have before, because this summer has shown, more starkly than ever, that the cost of not acting to protect our people, our flora and our fauna from our harshening climate is a cost that we should not and cannot bear any longer.

Every Australian has been impacted by the bushfire season. Tangalooma is just off the coast of my electorate of Lilley and is the gateway to Moreton Island. Its stunning national park is a quiet and serene relic of what the world was like before humans inhabited the land. It is home to a wild world of native wildlife, including 36 types of reptile, 14 species of mammal, 11 species of amphibians and 11 native terrestrial mammals. On 16 November a devastating fire rapidly spread through the northern parts of Moreton Island. Parts of this ancient relic have now been lost. The fires affected many of the native animals, who had to flee their homes as trees around them burned. Tangalooma served as an evacuation centre for displaced travellers and locals who were seeking shelter from the fire and from the smoke. Thankfully, due to the indefatigable effort of firefighters, no homes were lost.

But too many Australians elsewhere have been devastated by fire with loss of life and the destruction of property. Australians have come together to help those who are suddenly without. Some donated food, water and blankets and some donated money, knowing what the measurable cost of rebuilding would be. Some, including emergency service workers, dedicated their time to coordinate efforts to evacuate communities and fight the bushfires.

The comradery and bravery of emergency service workers and volunteers cannot be praised enough. They work for exhausting hours in conditions that push human strength to the limit to keep our communities safe. As the member for Lilley, I would like to highlight the work of the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services personnel at the State Disaster Coordination Centre in Kedron, at the southern point of our community. The centre has been activated during this bushfire season as a watch desk and communications centre to create an agile and advanced response to disaster. The men and women at the centre have been, and still are, dedicating countless hours of their time to ensure that fire and rescue services are working efficiently with other emergency stakeholders.

To all of the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services workers who operate the State Disaster Coordination Centre in Kedron: thank you for your service. To the approximately 134 Queensland Fire and Emergency Services personnel who have left their families to fight fires across our borders: thank you for your courage and your bravery. To the many Australians who are looking at what the bushfires have left them with and wondering how they're going to begin again: I assure you that, like Australian karrikins stimulate the dormant resilient seeds of our ancient land, we will recover, rise and thrive again.

Mr WALLACE (Fisher) (19:33): The Sunshine Coast is not synonymous with bushfires, although there have certainly been fires around the Sunshine Coast in the 27 years that I've called it home. But, like in so many parts of this great brown land, this year's bushfires have been very different. There are many reasons for this, including drought, a changing climate, the fact that there are now many more homes being built in bushland areas, high fuel loads through a reduction in hazard burns, and that this year there have been many acts of arson. The fact that some people could deliberately light fires beggars belief. Those people should be prosecuted and dealt with by the courts and they should suffer the maximum penalties available under the law. Just the other day I was following a vehicle whose driver threw his cigarette out the window. You just cannot believe the intelligence of some people!

The fires in my electorate of Fisher, by comparison with many parts of the country, have paled into insignificance. There've been no lives lost and minimal property damage. In the neighbouring seat of Wide Bay—thanks to the courageous efforts of our firefighters—the fires which began in Peregian Springs were quickly contained, resulting in the loss of just one home. As devastating as that would be for the affected family, but for the efforts of our emergency services personnel it could have been far, far worse. At the Kawana fire station, along with the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister Littleproud, I was fortunate to meet a number of the fire crews which had battled those blazes—some of whom had worked for 18 hours straight. We thank them for their dedication and their selflessness, particularly the volunteer firefighters who give up so much for so many out of a spirit of generosity and ask for nothing in return.
I do want to give a shout-out to Tony Abbott. I spoke with Tony on several occasions over Christmas, and every time I spoke with him or communicated with him he was working on the fires—on the trucks. It's not lost on me that a few years ago he was pilloried for being on the trucks, and now he's a hero—go figure.

I also want to give a big shout-out to John and Simon McDermott of McDermott Aviation. They run Australia's largest privately owned helicopter company that provides a lot of helicopters to act as water-bombing aircraft. I was in constant contact with both John and Simon over the holidays. They unfortunately lost a helicopter during the fires due to an accident. Fortunately, the pilot walked away. But those are the sorts of hazards that are involved in this line of work.

Like all Australians, my constituents have seen the images and heard the stories of loss and destruction from all over the country. I know that everyone in Fisher would join me in sending our condolences, our thoughts and our prayers to the families of the 33 who have been lost this summer. It's been shattering for all of us to see lives cut short, communities destroyed and our environment laid to waste.

But with those images, we've also seen the best of what it means to be Australian. Alongside our firefighters, we've seen 6,000 ADF reservists and regular personnel called out to help: ordinary men and women who choose to stand ready to defend and protect their fellow Australians at home and overseas. We've seen millions of others donate money or hold fundraisers for firefighters and affected communities, offer their houses and their businesses to accommodate those whose homes have been destroyed or travel to fire affected areas to offer their skills where they're needed most. We should be grateful to each of them and we should remember their example.

Our volunteers and our community spirit achieved incredible things this summer, but there are consequences of destruction on this scale that only the resources of government can alleviate. The terrible impact on the mental health of thousands of people is one such consequence. To evacuate one's home is one such consequence or to leave your community, to see it destroyed, to lose your livelihood—or worse, to suffer the loss of a loved one. These are experiences that would leave the most resilient amongst us in need of support. I was pleased to see the government step in and provide not only more than $70 million so far in disaster recovery payments to support affected Australians but also $76 million for mental health support.

Another consequence has been the destruction of vital community assets like roads and utilities infrastructure. Once again, these are things that only a government can step in on, and that's what we did, with 41 $1 million grants to local councils. The Sunshine Coast Council was one council that received those funds. Already, we're seeing these funds being used around Australia to help get these communities back on their feet.

We must also recognise the tragedy of the broadscale loss of our fauna and flora during these fires. Prior to Christmas, I was very proud to announce the funding of $1 million to the Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital, to go to assisting the rehabilitation of our koalas. The Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital is one of the largest providers of emergency care and rehabilitation of our koala population. They've treated more than 800 koalas each and every year, and that was before these bushfires arose. Despite the tragedy of the fires, it was good to see the federal government support the hospital, along with similar financial commitments to the RSPCA and the Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary. I want to thank the environment minister and the Treasurer, when he held that portfolio, and I was working with him back then to see funds going towards the care of our koalas. Since these fires began, the government has committed a further $50 million to protect affected wildlife and to restore habitats, and I am sure that the zoo's wildlife hospital will be heavily involved in informing and executing this work.

In the 21st century, it has become all too easy for us to feel like we have everything under control. Great tragedies like this 'black summer' shake us out of our complacency. They show us once again how vital it is that we all get to be involved and stand ready to do what we can to support one another in difficult times. Life is both precious and precarious. The people we have lost can never be replaced. But I know that, as a nation, we will pull together and we'll rebuild devastated communities so that they can become stronger than ever. As we do so, we should keep in our hearts the stories of the many who sacrificed so much to keep us safe, and resolve to always do what we can do to help one another in good times and bad.

Mr BYRNE (Holt) (19:42): Thank you for your forbearance, Deputy Speaker. And I see my friend the member for Canning is here as well, which is good, particularly for what I'm about to say. I do so basically speaking to my constituency, who have been pretty profoundly affected by the bushfires—not directly, in the sense of 'by the bushfires themselves', but by the smoke haze. Also a number of people who were in my constituency provided the essential firefighting relief and firefighting services and emergency services that helped to keep people out of harm's way and to literally save lives. I will take this opportunity to speak on this condolence motion that was moved by the Prime Minister in the other place and to make a few remarks with respect to that. Again I thank you, Deputy Speaker, for your forbearance in allowing me, at this late hour, to speak to this motion.
I think it was summarised best on Australia Day. We celebrated that in Hampton Park with the Hampton Park Day of Nations, where we have people from every walk of life, from every country, basically, on earth, come together to celebrate what's best about Australia on Australia Day. On that day, we honoured a number of people who provided services to people affected by the bushfires. I'll touch on that later, but what I said then and I'll say now to those people is that our country's had a shock. Our country's had a profound shock. We've seen vast tracts of our land burnt and singed beyond recognition—millions and millions of hectares. We've had the tragic loss of life, including the loss of life of those who were fighting to keep us safe from these fires, these awful infernos.

Importantly, too, for Australians, we've seen our places of holidays, of happy times, of fond memories, obliterated. We've lost so many of our national symbols, which are recognised around the globe: our koalas and kangaroos and other marsupials—so much of our distinctive wildlife, and our beautiful habitat.

Then, as I've said, our cities have been choked for days by the resulting bushfire haze, which has affected millions of Australians. I listened with interest to Deputy Leader Richard Marles yesterday, and he gave voice to the sheer number of days where people—particularly those here in Canberra, and I was thinking very much of the staff who look after us so well in Parliament House—were affected by the bushfire haze in Canberra. Richard was making note of the number of days of bushfire haze—an often choking haze—in our capital cities. Melbourne, he said, has had nine days, Brisbane's had 20 and Sydney's had 28 days of bushfire haze. Canberra has had 49. If you add today, that is 50 days. When I came up in early January, shortly after the really acrid, choking smoke—and I was there before the Asia Pacific Parliamentary Forum—people were quite knocked around. Subsequent to that there were the hailstones literally the size of grapefruit, smashing through everything. Many people in my constituency—and, I think, up here—were basically looking over their shoulders for the next event.

But I want to talk about the Australian response. The quintessentially Australian response to these calamities was best summarised by a very good friend of mine—a local senior sergeant policeman who has worked in counterterrorism and who, unfortunately, I can't name, for obvious reasons. He is a very close mate of mine, and he said something really significant to me. That very good friend of mine was at Bairnsdale and was being choppered from township to township by the Army—who did great work—to evacuate people. The work that he did, as it always does, literally saved lots of lives. He said something to me that I absolutely agree with. He said: 'Mate, we've been smashed to our knees, but we're rising up. We're rising up together.' I was kayaking with him on Sunday. Mate, you couldn't have said it any better. You symbolise what is best about Australia. Again, I thank you for the work you did to keep our country safe and our community safe. I wish I could name you. One day down the track, when we don't have the threat of terrorism hanging over us, perhaps I will.

The tragedy of the inferno, the bushfire haze and the smog brought us together. It didn't matter where you came from. I related this at the function at the Hampton Park Day of Nations. We weren't people who came from India, Afghanistan, Vietnam or Malaysia. We all felt the same horror, as Australians; we grieved together, as Australians; and we rose together, as Australians—Indian Australians, Afghan Australians, Vietnamese Australians and Malaysian Australians. We rose together, as Australians, to confront this. Again, that says a lot about our national character and our sense of inclusion. We do this. We have done this in the past, we always do and we always will. I like to think about that, and I use the term 'mateship'.

The member for Canning, who served our country with great distinction, literally on the battlefield, would know about that. I talk about it in a broader sense as well. For me, mateship is not gender specific. I would say, in this place, that the member for Canning is a mate, but the term can also be used in a broader sense. To me, it's a term of community, collective responsibility, egalitarianism and equality. It doesn't matter where you came from, who you are and what religion you follow. I would say that we're all equal in the eyes of God, but we're also all equal under the norms and the laws of this land and our country. Our mateship has no religion, it has no race and it has no creed. What we've seen, I think, is people coming together in that spirit of mateship, doing great deeds and putting their lives on the line to save others and to provide support—people like the Sikh volunteers; Fiona and Colin Crane; the St John of God hospital, and Kim Warlond, a midwife who works there, who decided to put together a water bottle drive and, in the space of 24 to 48 hours, collected something like 600 pallets of bottled water—15,000 bottles. She is a midwife who wanted to do something because she was delivering kids in smoke-filled rooms at hospitals. She wanted to do something and she did it, and that's the Australian way. That's what we do. I want to mention her specifically.

I want to say again that what I think we can do best in this place is to respectfully disagree—and we will, as time goes on, about how we might deal with the bushfires. But the key thing, and what I commit to—as I do in my work on the Intelligence and Security Committee with the member for Canning in a bipartisan way in difficult circumstances—is: the Australian people crave bipartisanship in our response to these bushfires. We're going to have to be very careful. Everyone in this place is going to have to be very careful in the future about how we address this issue, because I'm not hearing about this thing or that thing, or how it was caused or whatever. What
I'm hearing is: 'We need help. We need support. We need you to be a government and to be an opposition. We need you to face this problem together.'

So my call to all of us here—and I know this will be mirrored by the member for Canning—is that we address this issue in a spirit of bipartisanship, otherwise we will lose the faith and the confidence of the Australian people and we can't afford to do that. They've been knocked around too much. We owe it to them collectively to respond in a way they want, which is to focus on them and get them the support, the encouragement, the leadership, the maturity and bipartisanship that they need. I will finish by acknowledging that in two ways. Andrew Colvin is an excellent appointment as the head of bushfire recovery. He is a good man. He is a man that feels passionately about this and I know he will do a good job.

There's one more person I want to mention, who doesn't get mentioned often, and that's my good friend Andrew Shearer, the cabinet secretary who works for Prime Minister Morrison. It's a great thing in this country that I can pick up a phone and speak with or meet with a cabinet secretary and mention something about a problem in Bermagui and something is done within 24 hours. It says a lot about this country. Andrew and I have worked together—and the other Andrew—we've worked together closely in national security, but it should give people confidence that I was able to do that. It says a lot about cabinet secretary. Andrew Shearer, I wanted to say a specific thanks to you for the support, the updates and the briefings I've received.

This has gone way over time and everyone knows we could keep on talking, but thank you to the Australian people. Your resilient spirit that runs through the heart and the soul of this nation will overcome the very worst of what we have seen. It's here where we need to give you that ongoing encouragement and support; it's here that we need to think about you every day. I will. I know the member for Canning will and everyone else here will. We will work for you, we will make sure that you get the services you need. We will rebuild and we will become a stronger, better nation. As I said, we have faced challenges and adversity in the past. It's what we do. It's who we are. It's in our DNA. We will prevail. Thank you.

Debate adjourned.

Federation Chamber adjourned at 19:52
QUESTIONS IN WRITING

Accenture Australia Pty Ltd
(Question No. 205)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Foreign Affairs on 14 October 2019:
In respect of Contract Notice CN3627312 published on Austender on 12 September 2019:
(1) What components for information technology or broadcasting or telecommunications will Accenture Australia Pty Ltd provide to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) under this contract.
(2) How many units or items of each type of component will be provided.
(3) How will these components support DFAT's activities.

Mr Morrison: The Minister for Foreign Affairs has provided the following answer to the honourable Member's question is as follows:
(1) This contract relates to services provided by Accenture for the provision of a managed services relating to a cloud-based platform.
(2) As this is a managed service, this question is not applicable.
(3) DFAT does not have the internal capability to manage the cloud-based platform and as such, this has been outsourced to Accenture.

Digital Transformation Agency
(Question No. 218)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Foreign Affairs on 17 October 2019:
In respect of Contract Notice CN3627825 published on Austender on 16 September 2019 by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT):
(1) What software is being provided by Digital Transformation Agency ICT under this contract.
(2) What functions does the software perform.
(3) What DFAT activities or operations will utilise this software.
(4) Did DFAT's publication of this contract notice on 16 September 2019 breach the requirement in paragraph 7.18 of the Commonwealth Procurement Rules for agencies to report contracts on Austender within 42 days of entering into a contract valued at or above the reporting threshold; if so, why were the Commonwealth Procurement Rules breached.
(5) Why was this procurement carried out by limited tender from another Commonwealth entity rather than by open tender.
(6) How did the DFAT officials responsible for the procurement satisfy themselves that it achieved a value for money outcome.

Mr Morrison: The Minister for Foreign Affairs has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
(1) This procurement activity relates to the whole-of-government Microsoft Volume Sourcing Arrangement (VSA4).
(2) Microsoft provide DFAT with Microsoft Common Cloud Commitment (Microsoft 365 E3) Enrolment License Software Assurance.
(3) Microsoft 365 is part of the DFAT Standard Operating Environment.
(4) No.
(5) DTA have mandated that non-corporate Commonwealth entities must use the Microsoft Volume Sourcing Arrangement (VSA4) when buying Microsoft products.
(6) DTA negotiated on behalf of the whole of Commonwealth volume discounts not available under individual agency agreements.

Hall and Partners Pty Ltd
(Question No. 226)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Foreign Affairs on 21 October 2019:
In respect of Contract Notice CN3625405 published on Austender on 3 September 2019:
(1) What are the details of the market research to be provided by Hall and Partners Pty Ltd.
(2) What subject matters will the market research cover.
(3) What methodologies will be used in the market research.
(4) Why has the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade commissioned this market research.
(5) If the market research relates to a government advertising campaign, what are the details of that campaign and what phase of the campaign will the market research support.
(6) Why were these services procured by limited tender rather than open tender.

(7) How did the department satisfy itself that the procurement would achieve a value for money outcome.

Mr Morrison: The Minister for Foreign Affairs has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

In respect of Contract Notice CN3625405 published on Austender on 3 September 2019:

(1) What are the details of the market research to be provided by Hall and Partners Pty Ltd?

The Government's Guidelines on information and advertising campaigns by non-corporate Commonwealth entities requires the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) to commission benchmarking, tracking and evaluation research services for development of phase V of the Smartraveller advertising campaign.

(2) What subject matters will the market research cover?

The research will measure awareness, attitudes and behavioural changes as a result of campaign advertising. It will test and monitor the campaign's ongoing effectiveness.

(3) What methodologies will be used in the market research?

Hall and Partners will use a combination of quantitative and qualitative online surveys to gauge key attitudes and behaviours and to assess reach and response to the creative.

(4) Why has the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade commissioned this market research?

To ensure compliance with the Guidelines on Information and Advertising Campaigns by non-corporate Commonwealth entities.

(5) If the market research relates to a government advertising campaign, what are the details of that campaign and what phase of the campaign will the market research support?

DFAT manages the Smartraveller campaign to help Australians make informed decisions about their security, safety and wellbeing when travelling overseas. The campaign has been ongoing since 2003, and is currently in Phase V.

(6) Why were these services procured by limited tender rather than open tender?

Hall and Partners is the mandated single whole-of-government provider for benchmarking and evaluation of advertising campaigns with total budgets above $250,000 per financial year.

DFAT engaged Hall and Partners through a limited tender in accordance with the Commonwealth Procurement Rules.

(7) How did the department satisfy itself that the procurement would achieve a value for money outcome.

DFAT had previously conducted benchmarking and evaluation services and was able to assess the procurement value against the services provided. DFAT also consulted with the Department of Finance to ensure value for money would be achieved.

Talent International Pty Ltd

(Question No. 235)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Foreign Affairs on 24 October 2019:

In respect of Contract Notice CN3635253 published on AusTender on 18 October 2019, what components for information technology or broadcasting or telecommunications is the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade procuring from Talent International Pty Ltd under this contract.

Mr Morrison: The Minister for Foreign Affairs has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

This procurement was for ICT Personnel for a Citrix Administrator, engaged under Talent International Pty Ltd.

Ebola

(Question No. 244)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Foreign Affairs on 25 November 2019:

In respect of pages 1 to 6 of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Humanitarian Aid Quality Check for West Africa Ebola Emergency Response 2014 report, what were the overall rating numbers determined by the department for this investment's: (a) relevance; (b) effectiveness; (c) efficiency; (d) monitoring and evaluation; (e) connectedness; (f) protection; (g) gender equality; (h) risk management; and (i) innovation.

Mr Morrison: The Minister for Foreign Affairs has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:

The overall Humanitarian Aid Quality Check rating numbers for the West Africa Ebola Emergency Response 2014 are:

Relevance 6
Effectiveness 5
Efficiency 4
Monitoring and Evaluation 4
Connectedness 4
Protection 4
Gender equality 4
Risk management 6
Innovation 4

A rating of 6 is defined as "Very good; satisfies criteria in all or almost all areas".
A rating of 5 is defined as "Good; satisfies criteria in most areas".
A rating of 4 is defined as "Adequate; on balance satisfies criteria; does not fail in any major area".

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
(Question No. 249)
Mr Conroy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Foreign Affairs on 25 November 2019:
In respect of Note 1.1E to the department's 2018-19 financial statements, (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade: Annual Report 2018-19, page 151), for each act of grace payment that was an expense in 2018-19: (a) when was the application for the payment made; (b) when was the decision to authorise a payment made; (c) what was the amount of the payment; (d) was the payment made to an individual, a company, an organisation or another entity; (e) what are the details of the circumstances which made it appropriate to authorise the payment.

Mr Morrison: The Minister for Foreign Affairs has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
a) The application for an act of grace payment was made on 6 January 2017.
b) The Minister for Finance approved the act of grace payment on 10 April 2019.
c) The amount of the payment was $3,902,830.77.
d) The payment was made to an individual.
e) The payment was authorised by the Finance Minister who holds the power to authorise an act of grace payment under section 65 of the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013.

Australian Government Actuary
(Question No. 255)
Mr Conroy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Foreign Affairs on 25 November 2019:
With reference to Contract Notice CN3640615 published on AusTender on 14 November 2019: (1) What actuarial services will the Australian Government Actuary provide to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade under this contract.
(2) To what Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade program, measure or project do these services relate.
(3) How do these services relate to the subject of development finance.

Mr Morrison: The Minister for Foreign Affairs has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
(1) The Australian Government Actuary is engaged to value the department's leave liabilities in accordance with Australian Accounting Standard Board (AASB) 119.
(2) The service relates to preparation of the financial statements and is reported under program 1.1 Foreign Affairs and Trade Operations.
(3) This contract is for actuarial services and is not related to development finance. The contract description has been updated accordingly.

Sapere Research Group
(Question No. 272)
Mr Conroy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Foreign Affairs on 4 December 2019:
In respect of Contract Notice CN3643527 published on AusTender on 27 November 2019: (1) What are the details of the market research to be provided by Sapere Research Group.
(2) What subject matters will the market research cover.
(3) What methodologies will be used in the market research.
(4) Why has the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade commissioned this market research.
(5) If the market research relates to a government advertising campaign: (a) what are the details of that campaign; and (b) what phase of the campaign will the market research support.

Mr Morrison: The Minister for Foreign Affairs has provided the following answer to the honourable member's question is as follows:
(1) As part of the Australia European Union (EU) Free Trade Agreement negotiations, the EU has asked Australia to protect a list of terms known as geographical indications. The market research is to analyse the extent to which terms on the EU’s list are being used in the domestic market or are being exported by Australian based entities.

(2) Geographical indications.

(3) Analysis of available product data, including direct source information from producers, industry groups and other relevant intermediaries or sources.

(4) To inform the Department of the extent to which the EU geographical indications terms are being used in the domestic market or are being exported by Australian based entities to inform our EU FTA negotiations.

(5) The market research does not relate to a government advertising campaign: (a) nil response; and (b) nil response.

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

(Question No. 273)

Mr Conroy asked the Minister representing the Minister for Foreign Affairs on 4 December 2019:

In respect of Contract Notice CN3643519 published on AuTender on 27 November 2019, what are the details of the building construction, support, maintenance and repair services to be provided under this contract and to which buildings, facilities, properties or assets will these services relate.

Mr Morrison: The Minister for Foreign Affairs has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question as follows:

The contract awarded is to construct a new chancery in Washington DC.

Bomana Immigration Centre

(Question No. 276)

Ms Sharkie asked the Minister representing the Minister for Foreign Affairs on 5 December 2019:

(1) Does the Government have any role or control over the operation of the Bomana Detention Centre in Papua New Guinea.

(2) Have there been any Australian public servants involved in the operation of Bomana; if so, how many.

(3) Have any contractors or subcontractors involved in the operation of Bomana been paid by the Government; if so, how many, broken down by category.

(4) Has the Government paid for training of any Bomana staff; if so: (a) how many people have been trained; (b) what is the total number of participant hours of training; and (c) what was the total value of that training; if not, why not.

(5) Can a copy be provided of the agreement or agreements made between the Australian and Papua New Guinean governments regarding Bomana; if not, why not.

(6) Did the Australian Government contribute to the: (a) construction of Bomana; and/or (b) ongoing operational costs of Bomana; if so, how much (in tabular form by financial year, including projected costs over the forward estimates).

(7) Is the Government aware that multilateral and not-for-profit organisations have been denied consistent access to Bomana; if so, has the Government made any representations to the Government of Papua New Guinea to encourage access; if not, why not.

Mr Morrison: The Minister for Foreign Affairs has provided the following answer to the honourable member’s question as follows:

The operation of the Bomana Immigration Centre is a matter for the Government of Papua New Guinea. Questions relating to Australian engagement with the Bomana Immigration Centre are matters for the Minister for Home Affairs.

Indigenous Australians

(Question No. 278)

Ms Sharkie asked the Acting Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs, in writing, on 5 December 2019:

1. Is the Minister aware that all states and territories have mainstream interpreters that provide for a vast array of international languages, however the quality and supply of interpreters for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages varies significantly across the states and territories.

2. Given the important role that language interpreters play in ensuring culturally and linguistically diverse people have full access to vital information when receiving health care and social support, why are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language interpreters not available on the national Translating & Interpreting Service.

3. Does the Government have any plans to add Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages to the national Translating & Interpreting Service; if not, why not.

4. What progress has been made in working toward a national framework, since a draft national framework aimed at improving the supply of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language interpreters and increasing the demand for their services was prepared with a long term goal of an integrated national arrangement with a single phone line and cross-border
arrangements and was taken to the Council of Australian Governments, but was not implemented due to a lack of consensus among jurisdictions.

5. Given that the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet wrote to the Northern Territory and other jurisdictions to reopen discussions to progress the framework in September 2016, why is it that three years later this national framework still does not exist.

6. Given that The National Indigenous Languages Survey Report 2005 states that a lack of equality in providing interpreting services for Aboriginal people can have 'life threatening consequences in health care', why are some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians being denied face-to-face and/or free translation services, in particular during the provision of health care.

7. In respect of the Commonwealth Ombudsman's 2011 report, Talking in Language – Indigenous Language Interpreters and Government Communication in response to complaints to the Ombudsman's office that Aboriginal language interpreters were not always used when they should have been, what has the Government done to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interpreters are being used where necessary.

Mr Tudge: The answer to the honourable member's question is:

1. The Department of Home Affairs has noted the recommendation in the 2016 Commonwealth Ombudsman's Accessibility of Indigenous Interpreters Report, that agencies should co-operate, where possible, with other agencies and non-government organisations to share resources and coordinate their use of, and support for, interpreter services.

2. Commonwealth translating services began in 1947 as a result of the post-World War II migration program. As new migrants settled in Australia the need for language services emerged. In response, the Red Cross and the Commonwealth government began performing translation functions to fill this need. These services were consolidated into the Commonwealth government language services in December 1958 when the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (known then as the Department of Immigration), took responsibility for these functions. Today this service is known as TIS National.

TIS National's mission is to connect government, business and communities, through the provision of credentialed, cost-effective and secure language services addressing the needs of migrants. Therefore it has never been the remit of TIS National to provide support to indigenous communities.

3. The Government encourages agencies to engage indigenous interpreters from two organisations:

- The Aboriginal Interpreter Service in the Northern Territory, which also delivers a cross-border service into the South Australian Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands and the Western Australian Ngaanyatjarra Lands; and
- Aboriginal Interpreting WA (previously known as Kimberley Interpreting Service).

The National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) is responsible for assessing Translating and Interpreting credentials in indigenous languages. Its 2018/19 annual report notes that NAATI awarded 97 credentials in 30 indigenous languages that year.

4. Question 4 Should be referred to Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP, the Minister for Indigenous Australians
5. Question 5 Should be referred to Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP, the Minister for Indigenous Australians
6. Question 6 Should be referred to Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP, the Minister for Indigenous Australians
7. Question 7 Should be referred to Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP, the Minister for Indigenous Australians