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SITTING DAYS—2014

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FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION—FOURTH PERIOD

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

House of Representatives Office holders
Speaker—Hon. Bronwyn Kathleen Bishop MP
Deputy Speaker—Hon. Bruce Craig Scott MP
Second Deputy Speaker—Mr Robert George Mitchell
Members of the Speaker’s Panel—Mrs Karen Lesley Andrews MP,
Mr Russell Evan Broadbent MP, Mr Alexander George Hawke MP,
Mr Ian Reginald Goodenough MP, Mrs Natasha Louise Griggs MP,
Mr Ewen Thomas Jones MP, Mr Craig Kelly MP, Hon. Charles Christian Porter MP,
Mr Donald James Randall MP, Mr Ross Xavier Vasta MP, Mr Brett David Whiteley MP

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

Party Leaders and Whips
Liberal Party of Australia
Leader—Hon. Anthony John Abbott MP
Deputy Leader—Hon. Julie Isabel Bishop MP
Chief Government Whip—Hon. Philip Maxwell Ruddock MP
Government Whips—Mr Scott Buchholz MP and Ms Nola Bethwyn Marino MP

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

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

Printed by authority of the House of Representatives
## Members of the House of Representatives

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

**PARTY ABBREVIATIONS**

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

**Heads of Parliamentary Departments**

Clerk of the Senate—R Laing  
Clerk of the House of Representatives—D Elder  
Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services—C Mills  
Parliamentary Budget Officer—P Bowen
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Indigenous Affairs</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon. Josh Frydenberg MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister</td>
<td>The Hon. Alan Tudge MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development (Deputy Prime Minister)</td>
<td>The Hon. Warren Truss MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development</td>
<td>The Hon. Jamie Briggs MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>The Hon. Julie Bishop MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Trade and Investment</td>
<td>The Hon. Andrew Robb AO MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Brett Mason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Employment (Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Employment (Deputy Leader of the House)</td>
<td>The Hon. Luke Hartsuyker MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attorney-General</td>
<td>The Hon. Michael Keenan MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for the Arts (Vice-President of the Executive Council)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. George Brandis QC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. George Brandis QC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Justice</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon. Joe Hockey MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Small Business</td>
<td>The Hon. Bruce Billson MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acting Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>Senator the Hon Mathias Corman</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer</td>
<td>The Hon. Steven Ciobo MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Agriculture</td>
<td>The Hon. Barnaby Joyce MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Richard Colbeck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Education (Leader of the House)</td>
<td>The Hon. Christopher Pyne MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Education</td>
<td>The Hon. Sussan Ley MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Scott Ryan</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry</td>
<td>The Hon. Bob Baldwin MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Social Services</td>
<td>The Hon. Kevin Andrews MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Social Services (Manager of Government Business in the Senate)</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Mitch Fifield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Human Services</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Marise Payne</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Senator the Hon. Concetta Fierravanti-Wells</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Communications</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Communications</td>
<td>The Hon. Paul Fletcher MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Health</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister for Sport</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Health</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Fiona Nash</td>
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<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Minister</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Defence</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. David Johnston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Veterans' Affairs</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Michael Ronaldson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Michael Ronaldson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Defence</td>
<td>The Hon. Stuart Robert MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence</td>
<td>The Hon. Darren Chester MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for the Environment</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Greg Hunt MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Simon Birmingham</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Immigration and Border Protection</strong></td>
<td>The Hon. Scott Morrison MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Minister for Finance</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Mathias Cormann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Minister of State</td>
<td>Senator the Hon. Michael Ronaldson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance</td>
<td>The Hon. Michael McCormack MP</td>
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Each box represents a portfolio. **Cabinet Ministers are shown in bold type.** As a general rule, there is one department in each portfolio. However, there is a Department of Human Services in the Social Services portfolio and a Department of Veterans' Affairs in the Defence portfolio. The title of a department does not necessarily reflect the title of a minister in all cases.
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<td>Hon Bill Shorten MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister Assisting for Science</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Kim Carr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister Assisting for Small Business</strong></td>
<td>Hon Bernie Ripoll MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business</strong></td>
<td>Julie Owens MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Cabinet Secretary</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Jacinta Collins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition</strong></td>
<td>Hon Michael Danby MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition</strong></td>
<td>Dr Jim Chalmers MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deputy Leader of the Opposition</strong></td>
<td>Hon Tanya Plibersek MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Development</strong></td>
<td>Senator Claire Moore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Women</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Defence</td>
<td>Hon David Feeney MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC</td>
<td>Hon David Feeney MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs</strong></td>
<td>Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leader of the Opposition in the Senate</strong></td>
<td>Senator the Hon Penny Wong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Trade and Investment</strong></td>
<td>Dr Jim Chalmers MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Defence</td>
<td>Hon David Feeney MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Veterans’ Affairs</td>
<td>Hon David Feeney MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Defence</strong></td>
<td>Gai Brodtmann MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Infrastructure and Transport</strong></td>
<td>Hon Anthony Albanese MP</td>
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<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Defence</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Defence</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Tourism</strong></td>
<td>Hon Julie Collins MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>**Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development and</td>
<td>Hon Alannah MacTiernan MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Western Australia</strong></td>
<td>Hon Warren Snowdon MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Treasurer</strong></td>
<td>Hon Chris Bowen MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Treasurer</td>
<td>Hon Dr Andrew Leigh MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Competition</td>
<td>Hon Bernie Ripoll MP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shadow Parliamentary Secretary to the Shadow Treasurer</strong></td>
<td>Hon Ed Husic MP</td>
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<td><strong>Shadow Minister for Finance</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Manager of Opposition Business (House)</td>
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<td>Hon Mark Butler MP</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Vocational Education</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Minister for Communications</td>
<td>Hon Jason Clare MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Assistant Minister for Communications</td>
<td>Michelle Rowland MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow Attorney General</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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Thursday, 23 October 2014

The SPEAKER (Hon. Bronwyn Bishop) took the chair at 09:00, made an acknowledgement of country and read prayers.

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER
Ottawa: Attack
Parliament House: Security

The SPEAKER (09:01): In light of last night's occurrence in Ottawa, I would like to make a statement to the House. I am sure you were all shocked to hear of the serious incident in Ottawa, Canada overnight. Of significant concern to me as the Speaker is the fact that the parliament building was attacked, with shots being fired within their precinct. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family of the Canadian soldier who was killed as a result of this attack, and we wish the injured a speedy recovery. While details of the attack are still emerging, it is clear that the Canadian parliament building was impacted and that a gunman made it inside the building.

Several weeks ago we enhanced the security arrangements around the parliament to protect us against threats of this very nature. It is important to reassure you all that the security arrangements in the precinct are constantly under assessment, and that the additional measures that we have implemented recently, including enhanced perimeter controls and armed response capability, have been designed to mitigate against threats of the type that occurred overnight. You will notice some increase in the security arrangements this morning. You will also note that we already have a significant armed presence guarding the building, which has recently been boosted with the addition of long-armed weaponry.

Our parliament and its perimeter are very different to the design of the Canadian parliament, and we have appropriate measures to prevent such an attack from succeeding here. We have a number of layers of security measures designed to protect building occupants. The images showing members taking action and barricading themselves into the chamber in Canada are of concern. The range of armed response, security and lockdown arrangements that we have in place means that this type of action will not be necessary here. I am sure you understand that I will not go into details of these measures.

It is timely to remind ourselves and your staff to be vigilant and report any suspicious behaviour to parliamentary security staff. As a result of the enhanced security arrangements that we already have put in place, the President and I are confident, based on security agency advice, that the parliament is a safe environment. I thank members for their concern about these issues and their willingness to report anything that they see.

BILLS
Australian Citizenship and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014
First Reading
Bill and explanatory memorandum presented by Mr Fletcher, for Mr Morrison.
Bill read a first time.
Second Reading

Mr FLETCHER (Bradfield—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Communications) (09:04): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Australian citizenship is something to be treasured. It is a common bond which unites us all, whether we were born here or chose to make Australia our home. Australian citizenship involves a commitment to this country and its people. It is a privilege which should not be taken lightly.

This year, we celebrate the 65th anniversary of Australian citizenship. It is therefore appropriate to review the Australian Citizenship Act 2007 to ensure that it upholds the value of our citizenship. This bill, the Australian Citizenship and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014, supports the integrity and effectiveness of the citizenship program, providing a clear legislative framework to underpin the government's policy.

The bill has a range of amendments grouped into three broad themes:

- strengthening program integrity;
- underlining the importance of connection to Australia; and
- improving decision-making.

The first theme is strengthening program integrity.

Currently under the Citizenship Act revocation may be considered in cases where a person has acquired Australian citizenship 'by application' and:

- has been convicted of making a false statement or misrepresentation in relation to a migration or citizenship application that resulted in them becoming an Australian citizen;
- has committed a serious criminal offence prior to becoming an Australian citizen, failed to disclose it on application, and is convicted of the offence after making an application to become an Australian citizen. A serious offence is one where a person was sentenced to death or a prison sentence of 12 months or more. This provision applies to serious criminal offences committed in Australia or overseas; or
- has acquired citizenship since 1 July 2007 as a result of third-party fraud where the third party who committed the offence has been convicted of the offence.

After one or more of these criteria have been met, the minister then must be satisfied that it would be contrary to the public interest for the person to remain an Australian citizen.

The minister can revoke Australian citizenship where a person acquires it 'by application'. This means through conferral, descent, or adoption in accordance with the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption.

The bill expands the minister's power to revoke citizenship when satisfied that the person became a citizen as a result of fraud or misrepresentation, by allowing revocation without a prior criminal conviction for fraud. Law enforcement agencies and courts have limited capacity to prosecute all cases of fraud, or any other type of criminal behaviour, thereby reducing the ability of the government to ensure that high community expectations of behaviour are maintained in respect of those who obtain Australian citizenship. In line with
other revocation provisions, the government intends that the minister must be satisfied that it would be contrary to the public interest for the person to remain a citizen.

The Citizenship Act has two mechanisms for assessing the character of an applicant.

The 'good character requirement' extends to everyone who applies to become a citizen aged 18 years and over. The bill amends these provisions to require applicants aged under 18 to also be of good character. Character concerns are not limited to adults and indeed the Department of Immigration and Border Protection has had serious concerns about the character of certain applicants aged under 18. In practice, the change will mean that the department may now seek to obtain police clearances for 16-17 year olds. It would also be able to assess the character of youths younger than 16 if the department becomes aware of particularly relevant character issues.

Secondly, the act currently prevents the minister from approving a person becoming a citizen by conferral in circumstances related to criminal offences. The bill promotes consistency by providing that this bar on approval will also apply to applicants for citizenship by descent, adoption under Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption and resumption.

In addition, the bill amends the offence provisions to reflect modern sentencing practices, including where a person is subject to a court order for home detention or when they have not been sentenced to prison but are nonetheless under obligations to a court.

The act currently provides that approval of citizenship by conferral for adult applicants may be cancelled, prior to the pledge of commitment being taken, in certain limited circumstances. The bill amends this provision to meet current challenges to program integrity and extends the cancellation powers to cover applicants aged under 18.

The bill provides that approval must be cancelled if the minister is no longer satisfied of the applicant's identity or if they have become a risk to national security. The bill further provides that the minister may cancel approval if satisfied that the person no longer meets other eligibility requirements.

The bill extends the maximum period of time where the minister can delay an applicant making the pledge of commitment from 12 months to two years, recognising that investigations into whether there are grounds for cancellation can take longer than 12 months.

The bill introduces safeguards to the provision giving automatic citizenship to those whose adoptions are finalised in Australia, by requiring such adoptions to be commenced before the applicant turned 18. This amendment is particularly concerned with preventing clients seeking adoption as adults to avoid being removed from Australia after their visas were cancelled under the Migration Act because they were no longer of good character.

The second theme in the measures in this bill is underlining the importance of connection to Australia.

Most applicants for citizenship by conferral must have been present in Australia for four years prior to making a citizenship application. However, there has been some confusion about when this four-year period commences, leading to different interpretations by the Administrative Appeals Tribunal—the AAT. Therefore, the bill clarifies the start date for this period.
The bill also clarifies the scope of the ministerial discretion to allow overseas absences to count towards the residence requirement for spouses and de facto partners of Australian citizens. It was a guiding principle in the new Citizenship Act in 2007 that partners should qualify for citizenship in their own right, not just as the partner of a citizen. The bill therefore entrenches the policy position that the discretion should only be considered if the applicant has spent at least 365 days in Australia in the four years immediately before application. It is important that applicants spend a sufficient amount of time here to understand what being Australian means. Indeed, they must have a connection to Australia, not just to an Australian. The bill also inserts definitions of spouse and de facto partner, aligning them with the definitions in the Migration Act.

People are eligible to acquire citizenship automatically if they are born in Australia to an Australian citizen or permanent resident parent, or if they are ordinarily resident in Australia until their 10th birthday. The bill limits automatic acquisition of citizenship on the 10th birthday to those persons who have maintained lawful residence in Australia throughout the 10 years, including maintaining a right to return if they travel outside Australia during those years. These amendments will not affect access to citizenship by children born in Australia to New Zealand citizens or children who are stateless.

In addition, the bill clarifies that a child born to a parent who was in Australia with diplomatic or consular privileges and immunities cannot automatically acquire citizenship if they are still living here on their 10th birthday. This amendment reflects the policy position that such children are not considered to be 'ordinarily resident' in Australia but are here for a special or temporary purpose only. It would not apply if the child's other parent is an Australian citizen or permanent resident.

The bill also amends the provision giving citizenship to children found abandoned in Australia so it is consistent with the original policy intent, which is to reflect Australia's international obligations under the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

The bill improves the legal position of citizens by descent who are registered as Australian citizens but are later found not to have been eligible to be so registered. Under the current law, these people are automatically taken never to have been a citizen. The bill repeals this provision and replaces it with a discretion for the minister to revoke citizenship where a person was registered despite not meeting the requirements for registration. This would allow the circumstances of the particular case to be taken into account when deciding if citizenship of such a person should be revoked.

The third theme is improved decision-making.

In line with the Prime Minister's commitment to facilitate adoptions, the bill improves access to citizenship by conferral for children who are granted an adoption visa overseas and whose adoption is finalised overseas, allowing them to enter Australia as citizens. Adopted children can encounter difficulties acquiring a document to travel to Australia if not an Australian citizen.

Most applicants for citizenship have come to Australia as migrants and the Department of Immigration and Border Protection has collected personal information about them under the Migration Act. This personal information is relevant when the person applies for citizenship. Likewise, personal information collected about a person under the Citizenship Act can be
relevant if the department is considering whether to cancel the person's visa after a citizenship application has been refused. To ensure that the use and disclosure of personal information within the department complies with the requirements of the Privacy Act 1988, the bill provides that personal information collected under one act and associated regulations may be used and disclosed for the purposes of the other act and associated regulations.

The bill aligns the merits review requirements for conferral applicants aged under 18 with the relevant requirements for citizenship by conferral to prevent unfounded review applications tying up the resources of the AAT.

On occasion, the minister makes personal decisions under the act. The bill makes it clear that the minister can specify that such a decision is made in the public interest. As it is not appropriate for merits review to be available in respect of decisions that have been made by the minister personally the bill protects them from merits review. Judicial review will remain available.

The bill also provides the minister with a power to personally set aside certain decisions of the AAT if it is in the public interest to do so. The Minister for Immigration and Border Protection is concerned that some decisions made by the AAT have led to outcomes that are outside the community standards that citizenship policy is intended to meet, including recent occasions where the AAT found that people were of good character despite having been convicted of child sexual offences, manslaughter, people smuggling or domestic violence.

These amendments to protect the minister's personal decisions from merits review and to allow the minister to set aside decisions of the AAT in certain circumstances will bring the minister's powers under the Citizenship Act in line with similar powers under the Migration Act.

The bill also provides the minister with a power to make legislative instruments. Such instruments may cover issues such as the currencies and exchange rates for fee payment, eliminating the need to amend the Citizenship Regulations every six months.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this bill will result in more consistent decisions on applications for citizenship, bringing fairness and clarity to clients. The amendments uphold the value of Australian citizenship by preserving the integrity of the program. The amendments will also ensure the connection between the applicant and Australia, helping them to understand the heritage that we share as citizens, an inheritance that is ours to steward, protect and enjoy.

I commend this bill to the chamber.

Debate adjourned.

Dental Benefits Legislation Amendment Bill 2014
Second Reading

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

to which the following amendment was moved:

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

"whilst not declining to give the bill a second reading, the House notes that the bill is one in a range of changes the government is proposing that will increase the cost of healthcare for all Australians."
The SPEAKER (09:19): The original question was 'That this bill be now read a second time'. To this the honourable member for Ballarat has moved as an amendment 'That all words after "That" be omitted with a view with a view to substituting other words'. If it suits the House I will state the question in the form that the amendment be agreed to. The question now is:

That the amendment be agreed to.

Mr SNOWDON (Lingiari) (09:20): I am pleased today to be able to speak on this piece of legislation, the Dental Benefits Legislation Amendment Bill 2014, which, as the Bills Digest reminds us, has as its purpose to:

- specify that the Professional Services Review scheme (PSR), which enforces compliance with appropriate practice, applies to services provided under the Child Dental Benefits Schedule (CDBS)
- waive debts incurred by dentists under the superseded Chronic Disease Dental Scheme (CDDS) before 1 April 2010 due to non-compliance with administrative requirements, and waive debts incurred after this date if a dentist can demonstrate an intent to comply with the scheme
- ensure compliance with the legislative requirements for the payment of dental benefits and
- allow the Minister to delegate powers, insert a definition of a dental provider and allow for protected information to be shared between agencies.

I want to speak to the Child Dental Benefits Schedule. You would know, Madam Speaker, that this program was a Labor initiative under the previous government and commenced on 1 January 2014. It provides access to benefits for basic services to children aged two to 17 years. The total benefit entitlement is capped at $1,000 per child over a two-year calendar period. The CDBS has a means test which requires receipt of family tax benefit part A or a relevant Australian government payment. The bill introduces amendments which will bring the compliance framework for the CDBS into greater alignment with Medicare's compliance framework. The bill also amends the Health Insurance Act 1973 and the Dental Benefits Act 2008 so that the provisions of the Professional Services Review scheme can be applied to any dental services provided under the Child Dental Benefits Schedule. The Professional Services Review is an independent authority that examines expected cases of inappropriate practice referred to it by the Department of Human Services. The PSR can currently investigate cases of inappropriate practice under the Medicare program and PBS. And as the Minister for Health has pointed out, these critical amendments to the Child Dental Benefits Schedule will make the scheme more efficient, ensure that Commonwealth funding is being used appropriately and promote a more consistent compliance structure for both Medicare and dental programs.

We have over recent decades seen an improvement in some areas of dental health, but oral health of children has been declining since the mid 1990s. Almost 20,000 kids under the age of 10 are hospitalised each year due to avoidable dental issues. By age 15, six out of 10 kids have tooth decay—this information comes from an AIHW report—and 45.1 per cent of 12 year olds had decay in their permanent teeth. In 2007 just under half, or 46 per cent, of children under six attending school dental services had a history of decay in their baby teeth. Untreated decay and fillings are similar across income ranges, but if you earn more than $60,000 a year you have, on average, seven more teeth than the poorest Australians. This information has come from the Institute of Health and Welfare; some of it was from 2007, some of it was from 2011. But oral disease is predominantly a preventable condition and there
remains a great opportunity for further improvement. This Child Dental Benefits Schedule is but one measure.

It is evident that treatment alone cannot significantly reduce the enormous personal, social and financial costs associated with oral health problems—and I welcome the Deputy Leader of the Labor Party to the chamber; she was the engineer of the Child Dental Benefits Schedule. A population approach focusing on promotion and prevention is what is required. Oral disease, like other preventable infections in chronic disease, is experienced at much higher rates by disadvantaged groups. In a moment I will refer particularly to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, as they have significantly poorer oral health outcomes than their non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander counterparts. Other groups at risk of poor oral health in our population are very young children aged nought to four, people with chronic illness, the aged, people with special needs, those on low incomes and people living in remote locations.

My electorate of Lingiari covers all of the Northern Territory and Christmas and the Cocos Islands—Darwin and Palmerston excluded—and so it fits the bill for people with poor oral health outcomes. In my case, I represent a large Aboriginal population: around 40 per cent of my constituents are Aboriginal people who mostly live in very remote communities, although some live in urban centres such as Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Gove. I want to now point out what this means, and I am indebted to the Australian Indigenous health review, which in 2011 provided a review of Indigenous oral health. What that makes very clear to all of us is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians have poorer oral health than other Australians. It is very clear that oral disease can cause substantial infection and tooth loss. For those of us who have ever had a toothache or issues with our teeth, we would know that, obviously, it can commonly result in very severe pain and make everyday activities, such as just eating and speaking, very difficult.

But more importantly in a way, oral diseases affect not only the mouth but have also been associated with cardiovascular disease, diabetes, stroke and pre-term low birth weight. Two of the most common diseases that affect oral health are dental caries and periodontal. Dental caries are what we commonly know as cavities or tooth decay, and, referring now to this review of Indigenous oral health:

… are caused by acid-producing bacteria living in the oral environment that proliferate in the presence of sweet and sticky foods.

In the early stages dental caries can be completely reversed. If they go untreated they will cause irreversible damage. I will come to the prevention side of that in a moment. Again referring directly to the review of Indigenous oral health:

Periodontal diseases are associated with bacterial infection of the periodontal tissues causing inflammation. Unlike caries, they are specifically attributed to poor oral hygiene as opposed to a poor diet. Like caries, periodontal diseases are preventable and treatable. Periodontal diseases range in severity from gingivitis (a mild and completely reversible form) to periodontitis (a severe destruction of the tissues that support the teeth).

Periodontitis is modified by systemic factors—these are important; smoking, diabetes, hormonal imbalances, stress and poor diet can greatly exacerbate this illness.

What we now know is that the oral health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians was once better than the oral health of non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander...
Australians. Dental caries and periodontal disease were uncommon in rural and remote parts of this country up until the late 20th century. And then things changed. Dental decay, a disease of affluence that emerged in the 19th and 20th centuries, was not common in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It is now, and it is a real issue of great concern.

I was recently in the community of Ngukurr, which is on the Roper River about 700 or 800 kilometres south-east of Darwin; it might not be quite that far. It is a reasonably large community with a competent health service—the Sunrise Health Service, an Aboriginal community controlled health organisation run out of Katherine which looks after the clinic and other services in and around Ngukurr. I have a very old friend there, a person I have known almost all the time I have been in the Northern Territory, which is now a long time—close to 35 or 36 years. I call this lady old, but she is probably my age, so I guess I am calling myself aged. I certainly do not look it.

Mr Ewen Jones: No! Forty-eight? Forty-nine?
Mr SNOWDON: Close!
An honourable member: Not a day over 90.
Mr SNOWDON: That is right! This wonderful woman, who has been a community leader for many years and very active in the community, has enormous problems with her teeth. She has had these problems for some time. Sadly she apparently will not go to Katherine, which is some distance away, to have it treated because there is no real treatment available in her community. This is one of the key issues which confronts people who live in rural and regional Australia, specifically Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people—the lack of availability of accessible dental services.

That leads to a whole lot of issues which I am sure the deputy leader may refer to; if not, I will at least passingly refer to them. There are huge issues with the dental workforce and with attracting people to work in the bush. I know there are some dentists—some of whom come from Canberra—who volunteer their time working in remote communities. They do a marvellous job, but they are not full time. There is an issue here about how we make sure we have the available workforce to look after this populations.

Sadly, what we have seen from this government so far is cuts to health, and they have not missed the oral health sector. Again, this has direct implications for the health workforce, with $40 million cut from the Voluntary Dental Graduate Year Program, a program that was increasing access to dental services for people in regional areas through workforce support. So the very people who need the greatest input from the dental workforce are those who are now suffering directly as a result of the cuts to this particular program. That is something which is quite shameful, and I am wondering why members of the National Party in particular—and those Liberals who represent regional seats—are not up in arms about this issue, because it directly impacts all Australians who live in rural and regional Australia.

I was also recently with the member for Blair in Pukatja, or Ernabella, in South Australia. There is a story here because one of the issues around prevention is, of course, trying to get people to stop drinking high-sugar-content drinks. They have a program there called Mai Wiru which is about healthy food. What they have now done in some stores in the Bush is take the high-sugar-content drinks off the shelves, or put them at the very back of the shelves.
so they are not in the line of sight of people when they come in. This is a real issue. I spoke to a dentist who runs a mobile dental van for Ngalampa Health Council; I launched the van some 18 months ago. I asked him what the situation was like in terms of the background fluoride levels in the water. He said, 'There is nothing wrong with the fluoride levels in the water; they are very good. The problem is the kids do not drink water or, if they do drink water, they drink bottled water from the store which hasn't got fluoride in it.' There are some real issues here about how we make sure people do the right thing, and that requires leadership not only from the communities but from the people who run the stores.

I would say to those big companies who flog these high-sugar-content drinks to the community: you need to understand the health implications, particularly the dental health implications, of people consuming these products. I also make the point that, while we can change this behaviour, we also have to get people to eat properly. If they eat properly and they are healthy they will not have all these diseases. I commend the bill and support the amendment moved by the shadow minister for health.

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (09:35): Today I am rising to speak to the Dental Benefits Legislation Amendment Bill and the amendments moved by the shadow minister for health, who is doing such an excellent job of informing the Australian community about the importance of dental health and of government investment in it. Not long after I was elected I had a man come to me about a friend and neighbour of his—a woman he had known for some years who had had a very difficult life. She was living in public housing. She had left a violent relationship. She had two children she was doing her very best to look after; she was a beautiful, dedicated mother struggling to bring her kids up right. She was so proud of the fact that her son had won a scholarship to go to a quite prestigious school. She had worked hard to give him a secure background, despite her own difficulties, and her great sadness was that she could not go to school with him on his first day of high school because she had no teeth. Her teeth were so bad she thought, 'If I turn up with this boy on his first day of school, he will be embarrassed by me. He will be ashamed of his mother and I don't want him to start school in that circumstance.' This neighbour of hers came to me and said, 'She's not going because she's got no teeth; can you help?' We were able to help. We had some very generous support and she was able to get dentures sooner than she had expected. She had had her teeth pulled out at the dental hospital because they were completely decayed. The dental hospital was able to speed up the replacement of her teeth with dentures, and she was able to go with him. That story has stayed with me for many years because it is such an important illustration of not only the health consequences of an inadequate dental health system but also the social consequences. It is pretty hard to get a job if you do not have teeth. I have met many people over the years who have said that they are embarrassed and that they cannot smile in public. They have no confidence and when they go into a job interview they do not want to speak. It is impossible to overstate how important it is to have decent dental care, particularly for very low-income Australians who have missed out along the way.

This is one of the reasons we introduced our health package when we were in government, and one of the things I am proudest of, as the former health minister, is the work that we did in dental care. When I was the health minister we introduced a $4.1 billion dental health reform package that followed previous substantial investment of $515 million. This dental
health reform package focused on helping low- and middle-income families, children and those in outer metropolitan, regional, rural and remote areas. The member for Lingiari was speaking earlier about the communities that he represents and how important the investment has been in those communities. The package had a number of key measures, ensuring dental health for young Australians, ensuring dental health for low-income Australians and investing in the dental workforce and infrastructure. Unfortunately, so many of those measures that we implemented are today at risk and under threat—in some cases, already reversed.

The Child Dental Benefits Schedule is a fantastic investment in the future dental health of our children. You will not grow up to have good oral health if you do not start as a kid. It reminds me of another story. One of our previous members of parliament was once a social worker. There was a girl who was about 15-years-old who used to get $2 dollars a day for her lunch; one day she would buy hot chips and the next day she would buy a two-litre bucket of ice-cream. As a social-worker teacher, my colleague said to her—I think her name was Tammy—'Tammy, you really need to look after your health better. Have you been brushing your teeth?' 'No, I haven't been brushing my teeth,' came the reply. My colleague said, 'Well you'd better start brushing your teeth or you're going to lose them.' Tammy replied, 'It doesn't matter if I lose them. I lost the first lot and they just grew back.' So there was not even the most basic level of education in that young woman's home about good oral health. If you do not start life with good teeth then you do not get them as an adult.

We decided to invest in the teeth of our young people from families on middle and lower incomes so that going to the dentist for this generation of young Australians would be as easy as going to the doctor. I am proud of that. So three million kids between the ages of two and 17 would get access to a benefit of about $1,000 over two years so that they could get a check-up, get fluoride treatment and get fillings and a whole range of basic dental work. We hope that that investment at this early age means that they will develop life-long good oral health. We also hope that the number of young people who are hospitalised every year because of avoidable dental issues—20,000—will continue to reduce. There are kids who have a general anaesthetic because they are too young to have explained to them that it is important to sit still and have dental work done. They are under a general anaesthetic having all of their teeth pulled because their teeth are so rotten. You can imagine not only the health effect of that but also the distress that it causes those children and their families.

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 58 per cent of 14-year-olds experienced decay in their permanent teeth in 2009. And I will tell you what: there is a big difference between kids in the poorest areas and kids in the wealthiest areas. Low- and middle-income families have 1½ times the amount of tooth decay and cavities of those in the wealthiest areas.

In the first five months of the Child Dental Benefits Schedule operating around the country, we have seen 1,522,393 services, including 15,000 in remote and very remote areas—the kids that my friend the member for Lingiari was talking about earlier. It is a wonderful scheme, and the thing that worries me is that we have a health minister who is saying now that he has concerns and that he is deeply troubled by the Child Dental Benefits Schedule. In his second reading speech, the minister said:

I put on the record some early concerns about the way in which the Child Dental Benefits Schedule was structured.
Seriously, he is the minister. He has been the minister for more than a year. If he has concerns, maybe he should put some effort into fixing them rather than just flagging what he is planning, which is a future cut to this wonderful scheme.

We also invested $1.3 billion in this same package for around 1.4 million additional services for adults on low incomes, including pensioners and concession-card holders and those with special needs, to grant them better access to dental care in the public system. That is on top of our initial $515 million dental package, which was the original public dental blitz. Around 205,000 additional public dental patients received treatment in 2013 because of that blitz. But, of course, this government has cut funding to this scheme and other dental programs in the 2014 budget. There has been $400 million cut from public dental schemes that were helping so many Australians. The member for Lingiari talked about the importance of workforce measures, particularly in communities like his—remote communities where it has been particularly hard to get a dental workforce. We provided $225 million for dental capital and workforce to support expanded services for people living in outer metro, regional, rural and remote areas. We wanted to ensure that Australians had the same access to dental care no matter where they lived.

This government has cut that program, as well, in the 2014 budget. They cut $229 million from the dental infrastructure scheme, which was helping build vital services in rural, regional and outer metro areas. They cut $15 million from Charles Sturt University's program to establish dental clinics on the Central Coast. They cut $40 million from the Voluntary Dental Graduate Year Program, as the member for Lingiari pointed out. How distressing for people who have been waiting so long for some decent dental care to have this government come in—despite saying, 'No cuts to health'—and cut hundreds of millions of dollars from dental care! We undertook these reforms because the previous—

*Mr Ewen Jones interjecting—*

**Ms PLIBERSEK:** So you support these cuts, do you? Yes, he supports the $400 million cuts.

*Mr Ewen Jones interjecting—*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Goodenough):** Order!

**Ms PLIBERSEK:** I will be telling your electorate that you support these $400 million cuts. I will be telling them; don't you worry. You support these cuts, and I will tell everyone that you do. The Chronic Disease Dental Scheme treated millionaires the same way as those—

*Mr Ewen Jones interjecting—*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order!

**Ms PLIBERSEK:** Designed, introduced and defended by the now Prime Minister, the then health minister, the scheme that was supposed to cost $90 million a year ended up costing $80 million a month. And it did not matter if you were a millionaire; you could have access to that scheme. It did not matter if the work was cosmetic; you could have access to that scheme. Billions of dollars spent on a scheme that was so poorly designed and so—

*Mr Ewen Jones interjecting—*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Herbert.
Ms PLIBERSEK: Throw him out if he does not shut up.

The explanatory memorandum says that this legislation is also allowing debts incurred during the design of the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme to be waived. Some of those mistakes were genuine mistakes. They were genuine mistakes because this scheme was so poorly designed by the now Prime Minister, the former Minister for Health. As I said, it was supposed to cost $90 million a year and ended up costing $80 million a month because of, in some cases, work being done that did not need to be done. There were over 1,000 complaints about dentures that did not fit and about work that was done that was not necessary. Compare that—a scheme costing $80 million a month and so poorly designed—to our targeted scheme investing in public dental services so people on low incomes could get the care and the treatment that they need.

But, of course, this is all part of a pattern. This is a government that said before the last election that it would not cut health—and what has it done? It has cut more than $400 million from dental care—much-needed dental care around the country. The minister is now softening us up for further cuts to the children's dental scheme—a scheme that has, for more than three million Australian children, made it as easy to go to the dentist as it is to go to the doctor.

We have seen these cuts come on top of $50 billion cut from public hospitals. These cuts have come on top of the $7 GP co-payment. They have come on top of up-front costs that used not to exist for diagnostic imaging—costs that the Prime Minister obviously had no idea that his own budget contained, when he was speaking about them in question time yesterday. We have seen it come on top an increased cost of medicines.

The most vulnerable Australians and ordinary mums and dads right across the board know that if their kids need dental care they should get it now before this minister cuts this program. They know, if they are waiting for public dental care, to forget about it. They know, that if they need to go to the GP, it is going to cost them to go to the GP to get a blood test or to get a diagnostic image. When they go to the pharmacy they are going to be paying more for their medicine. But if they turn up at casualty because they cannot afford to go to the doctor anymore, they will be waiting longer because of the cuts to the public health system.

I want to finish on this note, Mr Deputy Speaker: I see in the advisers' box a number of people from the Department of Health who worked extraordinarily diligently on the dental reform package that we took to the people in our time in government. I want to congratulate them for their dedication over many years, the fine work they did and their commitment to the people of Australia to ensure that every Australian can have decent dental health.

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (09:50): It is a privilege to follow the member for Sydney in this debate. I know that, as minister, she was totally committed to ensuring that all Australians had access to quality dental care. She was totally committed to ensuring that all Australians had access to quality dental care. She was totally committed to ensuring that, in Australia, we had proper preventative dental health. It is really sad to see that the reforms that she brought in are being slowly whittled away by a health minister who has absolutely no commitment to dental health for all Australians. This legislation is abrogating responsibility for dentists who did not abide by the regulations at the time. It is not reintroducing the Chronic Dental Health Scheme, because those on the other side of this parliament know that it was a poorly targeted and highly costly scheme. Twenty per cent of the recipients—those who
went along and accessed the Chronic Dental Health Scheme—could well and truly afford to pay for the work that they had done.

It was a scheme that was fraught with problems. There were pensioners on low incomes that actually had problems being able to access the scheme. It was very bureaucratic, and, to some extent, I do understand how dentists could have inadvertently breached the guidelines. When you are looking at dental health and the major dental health initiative being introduced by this Minister for Health, you find it is a measure that will allow those who breached the guidelines of the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme to be absolved from having to pay back the money that they obtained from the government by not correctly following the guidelines.

I want to place on record the need for the government to recognise the importance of dental health to a person's overall health. It has been a traditional approach by those on the other side of this House that wherever they can they abrogate any Commonwealth responsibility for dental health. Dental health is part of a person's overall health and the government needs to learn this, the minister needs to learn this. It really worries me when each and every day we come into this place and we hear about another cut and another attack on our health system.

I strongly argue that the best dental health programs are those that prevent dental health problems, programs like the Child Dental Benefits Scheme, a program that this minister has put on notice, a program that will prevent dental health problems for children into the future. When they are adults, it will reduce the cost to the health system into the future. But this minister does not get it. He does not understand the importance of the Child Dental Benefits Scheme. It shows that he does not understand the issue, unlike the previous Minister for Health, the member for Sydney, who spoke before me in this debate.

When the member for Sydney was the health minister, I was chair of the Committee on Health and Ageing. She asked the committee to do an inquiry into dental health services and the committee brought down a unanimous report, Bridging the dental health gap. When we spoke to the Department of Health during that inquiry, they acknowledged that the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme provided worthy dental services to some persons. It did. I can identify some people in my electorate who were definitely helped by the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme, but it was poorly targeted and had a range of problems with its implementation and administrative requirements. That can be seen partially by the fact that we are here today debating legislation about dental health that will abrogate the responsibility of those dentists who breached the guidelines.

The Chronic Disease Dental Scheme failed the people of Australia and now we have a government that has already ripped $400 million out of dental health and I believe is set to rip more out, instead of making a commitment to the long-term reforms that were put in place under the previous government when the member for Sydney, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, was the Minister for Health. I might go through some of the things that were included in that package: $2.7 billion over six years in the Child Dental Benefits Scheme. That is under threat. The minister signalled it is under threat.

I would like the minister in his summing up to guarantee this House that he will not touch the Child Dental Benefits Scheme, acknowledge in his speech the importance of preventative dental health. I do not think you could have a better targeted program than the Child Dental Benefits Scheme.
There will be $1.3 billion over four years from the national dental partnership. One of the first acts of the Howard government was to rip money out of dental health. Here we are again in this House with a minister that is hell-bent on ensuring that he rips money out of dental health—$400 million already and I am sure that is only a signal of things to come. Previously, the Howard government put money into private health insurance as opposed to putting money into delivering direct dental health services to Australian people.

There will be $225 million over four years from the flexible grants for dental infrastructure in outer metropolitan, rural and regional areas. That was designed to reduce barriers to accessing dental services for people living in those areas. The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Heath and Ageing that I chaired went out to many areas, to rural New South Wales to the electorate of Parkes. When we went to that electorate, we saw how important it is to make sure that those communities had access to dental health services, that those communities had access to dentists. There were $77.7 million for the Dental Relocation and Infrastructure Support Scheme to help doctors relocate into regional and remote areas. The fact that the government is walking away from these initiatives shows their total lack of commitment to dental health.

In relation to the report, I would like to note the assistance and the advice that the committee had from the Department of Health. I know that they were very instrumental in helping the previous minister develop much of that scheme. It is really very sad that we are going to be in a situation in future where things like money to alleviate pressure on public dental health waiting lists will be gone, watered down or reduced, that the capacity to expand the workforce will be gone, watered down or made totally ineffective, that oral health protection activities and the pro bono dental service provision money—all these things are under threat because of this government's actions.

The bill creates a waiver provision for the Medicare Chronic Disease Dental Scheme. It makes a number of amendments to the operation of the child dental benefits scheme. It really demonstrates just how poorly targeted that scheme was, how it failed to address problems in the dental scheme, how public waiting lists, infrastructure, workforce distribution and child dental health suffered. These were issues that the then Minister for Health, the now Prime Minister ignored. These were issues that he failed to address. This Minister for Health is moving to where the Prime Minister was when he was the health minister, ignoring the needs of all Australians, ignoring the need to put in place strong, preventive programs. As I said earlier, I am waiting to hear his reply in which I hope he will give a rolled gold, iron clad commitment that he will, under no circumstance, do anything to whittle away the child dental benefits scheme.

It is so different from the vision that Labor had for dental health when we were in government. We had a vision to implement a better and fairer dental care system for Australians, one that is affordable and focuses on prevention in order to deliver future improvement to Australians' oral health. It is about cutting dental healthcare costs in the future. That is the vision we had when we were in government. This minister and this government have a vision to allow those dentists who were trapped by the unworkable bureaucratic scheme—the child dental benefits scheme, which was put in place when the Prime Minister was the Minister for Health—to abrogate the responsibility to pay their debts.
In the calendar year 2013, over 200,000 public dental patients received treatment because Labor funded public dental health waiting lists. We had a blitz on those dental health waiting lists. I can see that under this government we are returning to the same old approach to dental health—ignore it. There is a failure to acknowledge that dental health is important for the overall health of the person. I call on the minister to make a commitment that dental health will be adequately funded in Australia.

Mr DUTTON (Dickson—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (10:05): I thank the members for their contributions to the debate on the Dental Benefits Legislation Amendment Bill 2014. The bill amends the Health Insurance Act 1973 and the Dental Benefits Act 2008 to allow for better process for waiving debts for dentists under the former Medicare Chronic Disease Dental Scheme. The bill also allows for critical changes for the efficient operation of the Child Dental Benefit Schedule.

The Chronic Disease Dental Scheme was introduced in 2007 by the former coalition government. The scheme provided more than 20 million services to more than one million patients, 80 per cent of whom were concession card holders. It was the most significant dental investment since Federation. It was shut down the former Labor government because it was established by Tony Abbott who was health minister—nothing more and nothing less. The scheme was shut down by the Gillard government for political reasons, not through any other reason that those opposite have been trying to mislead themselves and others into believing. In fact, the arguments proffered by those opposite would seem quite contradictory. On the one hand, they talk about the link between oral health and chronic disease, yet on the other hand they slam a scheme which was established to address that very issue. To make things worse, the incompetent Gillard administration, in their political pursuit of Tony Abbott getting credit for the investment into these dental services vilified dentists across the country. It was a shameful act but one of many by the Gillard government.

The Chronic Disease Dental Scheme included technical reporting requirements which necessitated dentists providing treatment plans to general practitioners, along with a quote and treatment plan to patients before starting treatment. Dentists who did not meet these technical reporting requirements have been pursued for repayment of the full amount of the Medicare benefits paid under this scheme, although in most cases these dentists met all the other requirements of the scheme and provided much-needed services to over one million patients suffering from chronic diseases. These dentists did nothing more than make minor paperwork errors. I made it very clear on several occasions in the House and publicly that recovery of the full benefit was an excessive punishment for a minor technical issue of overlooking a paperwork requirement and, worse still, it was politically motivated.

But, rather than seek to redress this paperwork issue through design changes to the scheme—a proposal for which I offered my full support whilst we were in opposition to the then Labor government—the then Labor government chose to use dentists’ technical oversight as a means of discrediting the scheme, shutting it down and leaving thousands of patients without access to dental treatment; again, all in pursuit of a political outcome.

The Department of Human Services sought to redress the debt issue by applying the Minister for Finance to waive these debts under section 34 of the Financial Management and Accountability Act of 1997. This process has so far been extremely time consuming and
resource intensive. It has also created anxiety and uncertainty for dentists who have been waiting for long periods of time to find out if their debts have been waived.

This bill will relieve the uncertainty for dentists by allowing for faster processing of the waivers. It also does this by allowing the Chief Executive Medicare to waive the debts of those dentists who provided services in good faith but did not meet the paperwork requirements.

As I have clearly stated previously, this amendment will not excuse the very small number of dentists who did not comply with other legal requirements of the scheme or who committed fraud. Fraud happens in every large government program, and we have a zero tolerance for such acts, including in relation to these. Only those dentists who provided services in good faith will be eligible to have their debt waived and, as I have said before, we know that these dentists are in the vast majority.

This bill also amends the Health Insurance Act of 1973 and the Dental Benefits Act of 2008 to introduce crucial changes for the operation of the Child Dental Benefits Schedule. To ensure that compliance audits of the Child Dental Benefits Schedule are more effective and efficient, this bill introduces amendments which will bring the compliance framework for the Child Dental Benefit Schedule into greater alignment with Medicare’s compliance framework. It does so by including the power to compel the provider to comply with a request to produce documents to substantiate the payment of benefits.

This bill also includes a power that will enable the Chief Executive Medicare, or a relevant officer of the Department of Human Services, to give a notice to a provider requiring them to produce documents to a practitioner or another relevant person to confirm appropriate Medicare claiming is occurring.

The bill also amends the Health Insurance Act of 1973 and the Dental Benefits Act 2008 so that the provisions of the Professional Services Review scheme, which can investigate cases of inappropriate practice, can be applied to any dental services provided under the Child Dental Benefits Schedule. These critical amendments to the child dental benefits scheme will make the schedule more efficient and help to ensure that Commonwealth funding is being used appropriately, assisting to promote a more consistent compliance structure for both Medicare and dental programs operating under the Dental Benefits Act 2008.

This government is committed to improving the health outcomes for Australians and ensuring efficient and effective delivery of services. These amendments are in keeping with our commitments and, in commending this bill to the House, I indicate for the benefit of the House that the government will not be supporting the amendment put forward by the honourable member for Ballarat, but I commend this bill to the House.

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

Third Reading

Mr DUTTON (Dickson—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (10:10): by leave—I move:

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

Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation (Abolition) Bill 2014
Second Reading

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

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (10:12): It is extraordinary that in this week of all weeks we find before us a piece of legislation that is quite squarely dealing with the legacy of the Whitlam government. The concept of regionalism and to build significant regional centres was part of the legacy and vision of the Whitlam government from the beginning.

It was always intended that the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation would get to a point where it would be abolished. It was set up for the purpose of providing the investment, providing the injection, with the intention that over time assets would be sold down and, eventually, we would get to this moment—for that to have arrived in this particular week is extraordinary.

At the beginning of the week, I acknowledged the member for Indi was asking a question about acknowledging the boundaries of the previous Medicare Local that stretched across state boundaries to cover both Albury and Wodonga. The concept of these two great cities, either side of a state border, being able to work in a way that state cooperation instinctively has not gone to, has been one of the great parts of the story of Albury-Wodonga.

The concept that was originally put that we would end up with a centre of 300,000 people was not realised, but we did see a centre that started at 38,000 people go to something in the order of 100,000 people. While the project may not have reached the full level of ambition of the Whitlam government, there is no doubt whatsoever that today we can celebrate Albury-Wodonga as being a great success.

Gough Whitlam first raised the idea for the regional development projects in Albury in a speech he gave in Sydney in 1969. He then visited Albury in 1970 for a Rotary conference. I understand he stayed at the Travelodge that night and later boasted that that speech took him from the Travelodge to the Lodge. It then formed part of his Blacktown campaign speech in 1972, in which he said:

A national government which cuts itself off from responsibility for the nation's real life, a national government which has nothing to say about cities, has nothing relevant or enduring to say about the nation or the nation's Future. Labor is not a city-based party. It is a people-based party, and the overwhelming majority of our people live in cities and towns across our nation.

He went on to say:
A Labor Government will have two over-riding objectives: to give Australian families access to land housing at fair prices, and to preserve and enhance the quality of the national estate—the environment.

And then said:
We will set up a Commonwealth-State Land Development Commission in each state to buy substantial tracts of land in new areas being opened up for housing and to lease or sell at cost fully serviced housing blocks.
Today, the parliament is still dealing with the legacy of that 1972 campaign speech.

Upon taking government, a new department and a new function for the Commonwealth was established. We had a Department of Urban and Regional Development, with the great Tom Uren as the minister. This started the Albury-Wodonga National Growth Centre project in 1973, which ultimately became the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation on 21 May 1974, with the hope for it to be a model for similar schemes elsewhere.

The reform program for regional development produced results through direct grants to local government bodies around Australia. Grant programs included flood mitigation, urban renewal, leisure and tourist facilities, and building sewerage systems in unserviced urban areas. Under the Department of Urban and Regional Development, the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation was established on 21 May 1974. Out of this we not only found a vision for Albury-Wodonga; we found the Commonwealth government taking responsibility for entirely new areas of policy that the Commonwealth had previously not touched.

Today, we not only put down a marker for the great growth that occurred in Albury-Wodonga; we also acknowledge today that the principles of regionalism and the principles of obligations to people who live in cities and suburbs are something that would be a function of the government of the Commonwealth of Australia.

The technical issues that we deal with today in terms of the technicality of the bill are a bit less exciting than the principles and policy objectives that we celebrate. Effectively, we are at the end of a process which has been happening ever since the 1970s. The government announced in the 2014-15 budget that it intends to abolish the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation, and this bill will cause that abolition, with the remaining functions to be performed by the Department of Finance.

The Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation is responsible for selling a range of residential, industrial and commercial land in the Albury-Wodonga region. While we were in government we were proceeding with the orderly sell-down of much of that land, and the government has been continuing with that. I think we all understand the common-sense of good public policy as to why you need to sell that in a staged fashion, and the government has been doing that. We are now at the point where the land parcels are now few enough that we are able to abolish the corporation itself and allow the Department of Finance to conclude the remaining parts of the work.

The Howard government announced in 2005 that the corporation would exit its land development activities and sell its remaining property assets over what would be approximately a 10-year period, and both sides of politics have made sure that we have kept to that time line pretty much to the day. In February 2013, the previous government extended this period to sell the remaining assets through to June 2021—which is part of the orderly process I referred to. This was to ensure that land sales did not negatively impact the region’s land market through dumping blocks of land on the market to meet a particular time line. One of the worst things that could have happened for the people of Albury-Wodonga would have been for this to have been rushed and, as a result, for people to have lost value in their land, for there to have been a long-term impact on their ultimate sale of land and potentially an immediate impact on the equity they held over their assets. We continued to facilitate the eventual abolition of the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation through continued land
sales, such that the amount of land held by the corporation reduced from 6,387 hectares in
June 2005 down to 1,086 hectares in June 2014.

The bill before the parliament today abolishes the act itself, which facilitates the abolition
of the corporation. The bill also makes consequential amendments to the Freedom of
Information Act and a number of other acts to take into account the abolition of the
corporation. The bill also includes provisions to ensure the effective transfer of activities from
the corporation to the Department of Finance. This is an appropriate measure for the
government to have put in place.

As I said, the corporation was always intended to wind up. We should not view today as
being somehow the end of the Albury-Wodonga project. Rather, today is the end of a
particular phase of that, which was the phase of direct and intense Commonwealth
engagement as part of a vision which was not fully realised. Many of the hopes for
Commonwealth departments to find themselves relocated did not get realised in the way that
the Whitlam government had hoped and, sadly, the great dream of a university that would
straddle both state borders resulted in New South Wales establishing one university and
Victoria establishing the other on either side. So there were some opportunities which we did
not get to, but no doubt what we have seen an extent of regionalism and very much a benefit
to the nation and to the people of Albury-Wodonga which should see the parliament stand
proud.

Ms McGOWAN (Indi) (10:21): I rise today to speak about the Albury-Wodonga
Development Corporation (Abolition) Bill 2014. I would also like to acknowledge my
colleague the Minister for Small Business: how lovely it is to have you in the House. In his
book The experiment: Imagining the Albury-Wodonga National Growth Centre, Bruce
Pennay states, 'On its instigation in 1973, the Albury-Wodonga National Growth Centre
experiment was hailed as a novel and imaginative project.' It was a pilot scheme that was
extended to influence the urban settlement patterns right around Australia. It was a 'bold
venture', a brave attempt, to solve a longstanding problem. It involved three governments
working cooperatively on an 'exciting adventure'.

Today we are about to abolish the corporation; but, before we do that, it is important to
take the time to look back on the history and purpose of the corporation. Most importantly
today, I would like to acknowledge all the good work done by key stakeholders and
individuals in the life and deeds of the corporation. Also, as a parliament we must talk about
how we can continue the grand vision of those parliamentarians of the 1970s.

The story of the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation is a political story. It is also a
community story and, for me, it is a very personal story. Albury-Wodonga is my local
community and its growth and development have in many ways matched mine. I was 21 when
it was established and, 40 years later, it is with a degree of sadness that I stand in this House
and make this speech, because, in saying goodbye, I am not convinced that we have clarity on
the way forward.

As the previous speaker mentioned, on Tuesday in this House we acknowledged the work
of Prime Minister Gough Whitlam. We spoke of his vision and his commitment to regional
development. Together with Tom Uren and Malcolm Fraser, he saw the need for urban
policies and complementary regional policies which would, together, relieve the pressure on
our cities and create demand for regional living. Forty years later, I believe many of the reasons for establishing 'the Corporation', as it became known, still exist.

The corporation may well have been the tool created to drive the experiment, but the Albury-Wodonga growth centre experiment was about stretching hands across a border. It was about people coming together as a community to be more effective and efficient in how they lived their lives. Delivering the vision and the agreement was a community process desperately wanted by our local councils and by the community. As the previous speaker explained, in 1974 a tripartite agreement between the Australian government and the states of New South Wales and Victoria resulted in the creation of the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation. The initial role was to plan and develop Albury and Wodonga into a major inland city by the turn of the century; and, to assist in achieving the objectives, large tracts of land were compulsorily acquired in the Albury-Wodonga region with funds provided by the Australian government. The state corporations held title to the land and were responsible for land acquisition, management and disposal. With the passage of this bill, all the remaining land passes back to the Commonwealth.

In 1989, the partner governments changed the emphasis and direction of the Albury-Wodonga project. The development corporation's new role was to promote and foster growth and development, including economic development, in the region. The Australian government also required the corporation to provide monetary returns on the investment generated by property development on sales acquisition and the disposal of land. So we had to pay our way.

In 1995, the Australian government called for an accelerated rate of return on its investment through the sale of all corporation assets over a period of five years. But, responding to community pressure, in 1997 the ministerial council reviewed the decision to dispose of land and the rate of return was not achievable. The council recognised that market forces would ultimately determine the pace and amount of return from asset disposal. The council agreed that the corporation would retain responsibility for asset disposal. The council also confirmed that the two state governments would seek to withdraw from the project once appropriate legislation could be enacted.

Legislative changes to enable the winding-up of the joint government scheme for the development of Albury-Wodonga and the withdrawal of state governments were finalised in early 2004. The state corporations were dissolved on 1 March 2004 and all their assets, obligations and liabilities were transferred to the development corporation for ongoing management, development and disposal.

In June 2005, the government announced that the corporation would exit its land development activities by completing current work in progress over the ensuing 12 months. The corporation was to then concentrate on the sale of land, with strategic input from an advisory committee consisting of representatives of state governments, local councils, local business and the local community, over a 10-year period. In recognition of its withdrawal from land development activities, the corporation now operates with the business name Albury-Wodonga Corporation.

The Australian Government announced in the 2014 federal budget that it would implement a policy by 1 July 2015 of ceasing the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation, with remaining property management functions consolidated into the Department of Finance.
Now to talk of achievements. The corporation provided significant cash returns to the Commonwealth government. The corporation's 2012-13 annual report lists $100,746,477 returned to the Commonwealth government over the period 2007-8 to 2012-13—not an inconsiderable return on investment. The original land purchases and acquisitions by the corporation totalled approximately 24,000 hectares—9,000 hectares in New South Wales and 15,000 hectares in my state of Victoria.

There are other key achievements which I would like to have recognised by the parliament—and I would like to acknowledge the current CEO of the corporation, Peter Veneris, and also the Parliamentary Library. In its time the corporation developed over 6,000 residential lots in 27 different housing estates. It developed and placed on the market 2,481 home sites in and around Albury and 2,317 in Wodonga. It established nine industrial estates with serviced industrial lots. In addition to the sale of land to the private sector, the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation sold or provided land for a broad range of sites for community, educational, service, sporting and utility uses. It built over 500 short-term urban rental houses on the estates in Albury and Wodonga. These houses were built as part of a transitional accommodation scheme for key employees moving to the area.

The corporation planted over three million trees and shrubs in the area, in one of the biggest urban reafforestation programs ever undertaken in Australia. It transferred approximately 3,700 hectares of land to state and local governments for environmental purposes. Included in these transfers were approximately 1,100 hectares of environmentally sensitive land identified in three threatened species conservation strategies commissioned by the corporation. Having regard to the Australian government's requirement that the corporation dispose of its land assets, the corporation agreed to transfer those lands identified in the threatened species conservation strategies to state and local governments with an agreed level of funding for future management totalling approximately $11 million. The corporation also provided significant in-kind financial support for economic development organisations and various community groups.

At its peak in 1975-76 the corporation employed over 100 staff. I would like to acknowledge the local leadership of the corporation, including current board members Dr Andrew Watson, who is the interim chairperson, Carol Judd and the previous chairperson, Bill Hanrahan. Mr Hanrahan's term as chairperson expired on 31 December 2013 after he had spent 17 years in the role. I would particularly like to note the work of Angela Munro, a mentor to me who gave outstanding leadership to our community. Previous CEOs included Ron Dennis and Brian Scantlebury. In the early years, and prior to adopting the corporate model of a board and CEO, there was a full-time chairperson, Gordon Craig; deputy chairperson, New South Wales, Richard Howell; and deputy chairperson, Victoria, Mel Read. I would like to acknowledge their contribution. There were of course numerous other board members during the past 40 years of the corporation's existence. And to all the Albury-Wodonga councils and shires and their staff, thank you for your work.

As noted earlier in this speech, I grew up with the vision of Albury-Wodonga, and in my professional life became an active player in the development of this region. It is because of the corporation that I eventually chose to make this area my home. I was attracted to its commitment to regional development and the importance of infrastructure, quality education, transport, jobs and manufacturing industries—and manufacturing continues to be the largest
employment sector in Wodonga, employing 13.5 per cent of the workforce—as well as its commitment to parks, bike tracks, landscapes and hills covered in bush, wonderful sporting facilities, community hubs, excellent health services, a fine arts community and a wonderful multicultural society. It makes my life a pleasure to live in Albury-Wodonga.

Talking of a great place to live, this is an aspect of the corporation which I particularly want to acknowledge: its commitment to community engagement and development and building social capital. Some wonderful women taught me and us the skills of community development and community building—how to welcome people and bring them into your community with wonderful welcome packs, how to introduce people to neighbourhood houses and how to use education as a tool of community engagement. These women understood connectivity. They understood belonging. They totally understood that it is people who make a community. To Kath Davies, to Shirley Rutherford, to Liz Waters, a most sincere thankyou.

Strong communities are a feature of Albury-Wodonga and region, and so too is our commitment to preserving and enhancing the environment—the hills, the river, the creeks, the flood plains and the regional parklands and recreational lakes that have been created. For all this, I would like to acknowledge and thank Sue Campbell, an amazing landscape architect. I know others were involved, but, Sue, you and your team have given us a magnificent legacy.

In closing this chapter in the lives of the community of Albury-Wodonga, it is important that I remind this parliament that the work of building the community and building regional Australia is not done. Many of the reasons for this most visionary intervention by government still exist. Our border anomalies are too many to mention. The New South Wales government, to its credit, has employed a commissioner to address these anomalies. I believe it is time for the Victorian and Commonwealth governments to consider matching this appointment so that serious work can be done on the many outrageous red-tape barriers. Our need, as a community, to constantly battle the authorities based in Melbourne, Sydney and even here in Canberra takes up far too much of our time, energy and resources—most recently with the announcement of the boundaries of the Primary Health Networks and my question to the Minister for Health on Monday. We are better than this. We should do better.

I am here to remind all governments that Albury-Wodonga is one community, that the river is not our defining feature and that we expect governments to respect our need and our desire to work collaboratively and cooperatively. And, to the future, what is the legacy we will put in place for the next generation of regional Australians, our children's children? I call on this parliament to begin work on serious policies for regional cities—policies to enhance regional living; a clear vision for a decentralised country linked by excellent transport infrastructure, both rail and road; access to mobile phone and telecommunications coverage so that, wherever we are in the country, we can use our phones; measures to ensure that our educational outcomes are equal to those of our city cousins and that we have strong regional employment opportunities powered by innovation and creativity.

In closing, I put this challenge to the parliament. In the 1970s, it was Gough and Malcolm. Today, can Bill and Tony and Albo and Warren and Barnaby do in 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 what our ancestors did in the 1970s, or will it take more Cathys, Tonys, Robs, Andrews, Rickys and Johns to be elected to this place as Independents for the serious wake-up call to be heard?
Mr McCormack (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance) (10:36): I thank members for their contributions to the debate on the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation (Abolition) Bill 2014. I acknowledge the bipartisanship of the member for Watson in his remarks. He spoke of an orderly sell-down of the land of the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation and the fact that this was good public policy. Both sides of politics, the member for Watson acknowledged, have kept to the time line for the wind-up set by the Howard government in, as he said, 2005. This was, the member for Watson said, an appropriate measure; and, while this bill is being passed today, it is just another phase, not an end to development in Albury-Wodonga. I certainly agree with him on that. The member for Watson spoke of the extent and importance of regionalism—certainly something he can be assured will continue and is indeed happening under the Liberal-National government. I too, like the previous speaker, acknowledge the work of those people who did so much good so diligently and so efficiently for the corporation over the years.

This bill demonstrates the government's commitment to delivering its smaller government reform agenda by abolishing the Albury-Wodonga development corporation. The government has made a firm commitment to reduce the size of government bodies and to ensure that government services are as efficient as possible. The smaller government reform agenda involves the abolition or merger of government bodies where possible to eliminate duplication, to remove waste, to streamline government services and to reduce the cost of government administration for taxpayers. The first phase of the agenda was implemented soon after the 2013 election and reduced the number of government bodies by 40. The second phase of the agenda was implemented in the 2014-15 budget and delivers a further reduction of 36 government bodies. As part of the second phase in the 2014-15 budget it was announced that the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation was to be abolished and its remaining assets and liabilities transferred to the Department of Finance.

This bill provides for the transfer of all remaining functions, assets and liabilities of the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation to the Department of Finance, which currently holds portfolio responsibility for non-Defence property management and divestment. The Commonwealth will continue to sell the remaining landholdings of the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation, with any issues unresolved at the time of abolition to be taken up by the Department of Finance.

This bill necessitated consequential amendments to other legislation in the portfolios of the Prime Minister, the Attorney-General and the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development. The ministers responsible for this legislation have confirmed their support for the amendments, and I do not expect any further concerns to be raised. The date of the abolition of the corporation will be set by proclamation. In the absence of this, it will occur six months following the date the act receives royal assent or by 30 June 2015, whichever date falls later. This approach provides for an orderly wind-up and transition of the corporation's remaining activities. With that, I commend the bill to the House.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a second time.
Third Reading

Mr McCormack (Riverina—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance) (10:40): by leave—I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

Aged Care and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014

Health and Other Services (Compensation) Care Charges (Amendment) Bill 2014

Second Reading

Cognate debate.

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr Neumann (Blair) (10:41): I rise to speak on the Aged Care and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014, to which I will seek to make amendment at the end of this speech, and the Health and Other Services (Compensation) Care Charges (Amendment) Bill 2014. In relation to the latter bill I want to state Labor's support for what is a common-sense amendment. Together these bills overcome the impediment to recovering past care costs for home care provided to a care recipient who received a compensation payment. This simply brings home care into line with existing arrangements in residential care, and Labor will not stand in the way of common-sense amendments such as these. Likewise the amendments to the Healthcare Identifiers Act. We will support the implementation from 1 January 2015 of stage 2 of the aged-care gateway known as the My Aged Care website. That amendment will allow for the collection, use and disclosure of relevant data for use on My Aged Care.

The gateway is a key component of Labor's Living Longer Living Better aged-care reform package, which we brought in in the last parliament. Living Longer Living Better ensured the aged-care system was fit for the 21st century—a century which will be defined by an ageing population. Living Longer Living Better ensures aged care remains sustainable as more and more Australians require that care. The gateway ensures older Australians will have access to up-to-date information, greater choice and more flexibility as we transition to consumer directed care.

The Aged Care and Other Legislation Amendment Bill is part of a budget measure. Those opposite made it clear before the election that they had no intention of honouring Labor's commitment to developing and giving fair reimbursement to aged-care workers—workers in the aged-care sector who are amongst the lowest-paid workers in the country. This bill reflects decisions made and removes reference to the aged-care workforce supplement from the list of supplements provided by the subsidy principles. The amendments which I will move address the impact of those and other changes which threaten to undermine the viability of Labor's reforms—reforms which once had bipartisan support, reforms which were supported widely by the aged-care sector, consumer groups and the general community.

The Abbott government has made unnecessary cuts to aged care in spite of the fact that Labor had done the heavy lifting in ensuring the sustainability of the system through the long-
term implication and implementation of Living Longer Living Better. The Abbott government made unnecessary cuts which were never mentioned to the sector, to consumer groups or to the community prior to the last election. The Abbott government did this in spite of its assurance that it would be a government of no excuses and no surprises. While the Liberals and the Nationals flagged their disdain for the workforce supplement prior to the election, what they failed to do was come up with any ideas, any solutions or any alternatives to the workforce crisis facing the country which will only exacerbate into the future.

The aged care workforce in this country is under tremendous pressure. Aged care is becoming more and more complex as we deal with the intricacies of dementia and other age-related chronic diseases and issues. The workforce supplement was introduced by the former federal Labor government to assist and address some of the issues in aged care, particularly the low pay, the limited professional development and the limited career advancement opportunities for those who worked in the sector. The workforce supplement gave additional funds to the sector to enable the sector to invest in their workers and improve its profitability.

The 2010 Intergenerational report outlined that the nation would see a 300 per cent increase in workers needed to care for an ageing population by the middle of the 21st century. The Abbott government has no plans in relation to addressing that challenge, but they did act with speed and a certain dexterity to remove the workforce supplement upon coming to power. This is in contrast to the slow and apathetic way it has handled dementia care. Within 18 days of coming to power, the Liberal-National Party government opposite had its minister axe the workforce supplement—18 days it took. The supplement had only been in operation for 86 days. It was a $1.2 billion provision and they got rid of it by legislative instrument. They could not prevent $100 million being claimed by the aged care sector.

We sought in the Senate to disallow this instrument in December last year. However, on 10 December 2013—and this is really important and relevant to the bill—the Abbott government suspended standing orders to push through an allowance motion which prevented any payments of the workforce supplement for aged care workers. It took just 32 minutes to rip $1.1 billion away from some of the lowest paid workers in the country. More than that, they gagged debate, preventing Labor members on this side of the chamber from telling the stories of their constituents. The minister himself did not have the courage to come into the chamber and left it to an assistant minister who does not even have responsibility for the area to move the necessary motion in the House. That is what happened on 10 December last year in relation to the workforce supplement, the subject of the legislation before the chamber.

That was the week that the Abbott government had abandoned Holden workers. It was the week they ripped away money that was provided by the former federal Labor government for child care workers. A one, two, three punch to the head of the lowest paid workers in the country, some of them. It was a mean spirited hat-trick that ended that week by abandoning aged care workers in the country. In the lead-up to Christmas 2013 we saw the Abbott government acting like the Christmas Grinch, giving Australian workers no hope, no support and no future in three sectors.

There has never been a worse time to abandon the aged care sector or aged care workers. For the first time in our nation's history we have more people turning pension age each year than turning working age. This has placed enormous stress on the system. The current government needs to outline its plans to ensure a well-equipped, appropriately reimbursed
workforce. But to date it has not done so. Unfortunately, the Abbott government prefers to play politics than addressing the serious issues in relation to the aged care sector. One of the things the government could have done but did not was ensure that the repurposed aged care workforce supplement of $1.1 billion was used strategically. Instead, all they did was simply top up subsidies with no conditionality nor any expectation that those funds could be used for workers in their wages, in their conditions or their professional career development. I understand and appreciate that about 70 per cent of aged care expenses to the sector are salaries. But with no conditionality there is nothing to ensure that that money is available and will go towards the challenge of making sure the lowest paid workers in the country get the necessary wages and conditions they deserve.

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation reported that nurses working in aged care are generally paid less than those working in hospitals. In fact, for a registered nurse level I there is a difference on average of almost $210 per week or 17 per cent nationally. The aged care workforce is one of the largest service industries in the nation, employing over 250,000 people and catering to the needs of over one million older Australians. It accounts for one per cent of GDP in terms of Commonwealth funding alone. It is an industry that will continue to grow. It will grow faster than the mining sector, faster than the resource sector, faster than manufacturing, faster than tourism.

As shadow minister I hear from constituents across the country on a whole range of issues in relation to aged care. One of the biggest issues raised constantly is staffing. But not one of those people opposite have talked about this issue. I have been to many, many aged care facilities across the country, from the APY lands in northern South Australia to the suburbs of Adelaide, to my home state of Queensland—all over the place—and I have seen the most wonderful, dedicated, compassionate and caring people. Many people have told me this: they do it because they love the people; they don't do it because of the money. They treated like a vocation or the missionary calling. But it should not have to be that. It is unfair to penalise our aged care workers because of their loving commitment to serving and caring for vulnerable Australians.

I trust the minister has taken the time to speak to the Council of the Ageing, Alzheimer's Australia or Palliative Care Australia. They are not trade unions. They do not represent nor do they purport to represent workers; they represent also often the oldest and most vulnerable Australians. They will tell the minister, as they have told me—and they will tell any member of this chamber—the importance of the development of a suitable workforce. Liberal and National party members will try to tell us, of course, that the market will sort it all out. It reminds me of the words of The Castle's Darryl Kerrigan—'Tell 'em they're dreaming'—because it will not happen. We need action at a federal government level. We took action when we were in government, and those opposite need to. They need to do it, but they will not. They think the market will solve the problems.

The sector has been hit with a horror budget. It has undergone major changes, particularly in the way that the care is financed. Understandably there is some angst in relation to residential and home care funding because the changes took place for many in the sector from 1 July this year. But from 1 July 2015 there will be major changes to home care. As I mentioned before, while these changes have caused some angst and concern and worry, they have not been surprised. Since 2012 the sector has had to deal with the challenges of Living
Longer Living Better. The process of reform when we were in government involved extensive consultation and collaboration with some of the peak bodies I mentioned before—

Mr Champion: Indeed!

Mr NEUMANN: indeed—and cooperation with older Australians, National Seniors, LASA, the community, aged care providers—big providers like Domain, Opal and HammondCare, Blue Care et cetera—and other organisations. We consulted with organisations like these.

Given the massive changes, you would have thought the new minister and assistant minister would have been available and would have consulted with the sector. In May this year in the budget, what did we see? Cuts that were never flagged in the Real solutions blue document—the bible of the coalition; cuts that were never flagged when they came to power. We saw cuts that the sector were not consulted about, cuts which placed an even greater burden on the sector and which led to more expensive aged care for all Australians. And the budget saw the slashing of $653 million to the aged care payroll tax supplement. This is in spite of the assertion before the last election that they would be a government of no surprises—it was a great surprise to the aged care sector, I can tell you!

The Commonwealth government, regardless of which side of politics was on that side of the House, had for 40 years committed to the concept of competitive neutrality and the provision of some sort of aged care payroll tax supplement. Why? Because we wanted to make sure that the providers who are in the for-profit sector were not disadvantaged compared to the not-for-profit sector. In a single stroke this government erased all of that and put more pressure on the sector. The Aged Care Financing Authority's report on funding and financing of the aged care sector in July 2014 reports that the average net profit before tax margin across the sector is just 4.3 per cent. Most businesses, whether accountants or lawyers or doctors, would be horrified by such skinny margins. It is 4.3 per cent, but it is actually getting worse because in ACFA's inaugural report it was 5.6 per cent. So the margins are shrinking, the profitability of the sector is shrinking. And of course what this government does is hit this sector, it hits them really hard—$653 million in cuts.

What they did not do is talk with the sector before this happened. What the sector needed was assurance and certainty. They needed to make sure they had the necessary finance to develop that workforce that I talked about, and they needed to be profitable. Those opposite always talk about their experience in private enterprise and the need for a profit, but they made sure the sector did not have the profit to provide the wage increases and better conditions the workers needed. Daily expenses for residents have grown by six per cent even though the average revenue per resident increased by 4.6 per cent. Axing that supplement is a slap in the face for the industry, which expected that it would have that money to make further investments in important refurbishment and infrastructure improvements as well as providing improved wages and salaries. Leading Age Services Australia estimates the axing of the aged care payroll tax supplement will see revenue losses of $2,600 per resident each year. No wonder the sector is up in arms and furious with the government; these cuts undermine the sector's ability to invest in the workforce.

On top of this, after the May budget in 2014—after the sector had developed its plans, its staffing arrangements and all of that—the Abbott government, those opposite, announced the axing of the dementia and severe behaviours supplement. To continue a familiar theme: no
consultation, no warning and the sector had no idea it was about to happen. The dementia and severe behaviours supplement was introduced by the Labor government on 1 August 2013. It was part of the measures from Living Longer Living Better, which was designed to assist with people who were worse off—the most severe cases of dementia. A $16-a-day supplement provided additional financial assistance to approved providers in recognition of the additional costs of caring for people with dementia and severe behaviours associated with a diagnosis of a relevant medical condition. There is a neuropsychiatric assessment; clinicians and the department were involved in the design; it had bipartisan support. The supplement had been operating for six months, however, before the government realised that the sector had been engaged in oversubscription. It took another four months before the government let the sector know what was happening—and that is right, guess what? They axed the supplement: no consultation, no warning and no idea how to dress it.

Then they claimed it was all our fault. They had been in power, by the way, for months and months and months and months and months. Surprises and excuses from the government, which they said they would never do. They shocked the sector. The assistant minister even went so far as to claim this was a problem not entirely of the government's making. I am unsure how the oversubscription during the last 14 months of supplement introduced a month before the change of government, with bipartisan support, could be anything other than the current government's responsibility. It is not for the Labor opposition to engage in the monitoring and overseeing of a supplement. They are in power; it is their responsibility. They have an assistant minister to do this. The job fell on those in the current government, but they have this born to rule mentality; they get into power and do not do anything except, of course, make it harder for workers.

So we have a situation where those who care for the most vulnerable Australians in aged-care facilities do not have the funding to provide the additional resources and care they require. Effectively they are paying the price for a government marked by incompetence, inattention and inaction. How do we know this? We know it because of the FOI documents. We know it because we were asking questions of the government in relation to this. And guess what? The assistant minister did not even have an adviser in his office during this time. If we had not raised the issue, the current government would not even know about it.

The axing of this particular supplement in relation to dementia means that families and loved ones of those suffering from dementia in residential care will have to step in and provide support, where the funding was meant for residential aged-care providers to provide the diversionary support and personal care that was necessary. The funding was there as a top up to make sure they had the necessary ability, financially, to do so. I know there was oversubscription—it cost about $100 million. But this is a government that thinks it is okay to spend $22 billion on a Paid Parental Leave scheme. That is $100 million for the supplement compared to $22 billion for a Paid Parental Leave scheme.

Aged-care providers consider this a body blow. It is a body blow to the sector, with lame excuses and nasty surprises. This is a government which has no interest in the area of aged care. The sector has undergone major changes. We talk about $13.3 billion of Commonwealth expenditure each year in relation to the aged-care sector, but the government has taken its eye off the ball. They have no minister for ageing. They have an assistant minister whose major responsibility is the NDIS. They have an assistant minister who did not even have an
departmental aged-care adviser in his office until March this year. Seven months after the election he finally gets an adviser in his office, and the government finally realises, after we ask questions, that there is a problem. The government did not realise there were issues with this implementation because of its own incompetence and inattention to monitoring. They are in government; they are in office; but they must not be in power. The government only realised this when Labor's shadow parliamentary secretary, Senator Polley, asked about the uptake of the supplement during the Senate estimates process. What the government came to learn was the dementia and severe behaviours supplement had blown out tenfold under their watch. It had been estimated that this supplement would be used to support just one per cent of dementia sufferers in residential aged care—about 2,000 people per year who exhibited the worst, and often the most violent, behaviours—at a cost of $11 million in the first year. The figures show the aged-care providers were receiving supplements for about 22,000 people, which is about the number of people expected to have severe dementia, at a cost of over $100 million in 2013-14.

Rather than blame Labor, the Abbott government should thank us for drawing this to their attention because clearly they had not even noticed it. They were not engaged with the issue. The department then went out to engage in a review. There was a review—we know this from the FOI documents—at which they said they would consult with the aged-care sector about it. But no-one I know knew about this review. It happened out of the minister's office with the department's assistance. No-one that I have spoken to was consulted by the government before they axed the supplement.

This lackadaisical approach is clearly evident in another factor: the undersubscription of the dementia and cognition supplement in home care and the veterans' supplement in home care. These are supplements given to veterans, and those at home, suffering from dementia. The previous Labor government, as part of its $268.4 million package to tackle dementia had introduced supplements to address dementia for those in the home. Some of these supplements were undersubscribed by $34.2 million. They were undersubscribed because there was a machinery of government change. The department has not been focused and the minister has no attention to detail. The dementia and cognition supplement in home care had a budget allocation of $42.1 million, yet providers had only claimed $12 million. We have not heard a peep out of the minister in relation to that. What is going on? The money has been available to the sector for those people at home with dementia who need help; the money is available but it is not being rolled out. Talk about incompetence, inattention and apathy from the minister. What is happening with the department in relation to this? Why isn't the money going to those people in their homes who need it? Again, it shows a lack of oversight and monitoring.

If the Abbott government was committed to aged care they would not have axed the dementia and severe behaviours supplement and left nothing in its place. They have no plans to deal with that. What they should have done is improved validation and audit, consulted with the sector and addressed training and communications. They should have discussed all of that, and done all of that; but none of it was done and we know this because of the FOI documents. We know they did none of that. They just axed it.

This is an incompetent assistant minister who is heartless when it comes to axing the workforce supplement and incompetent when it comes to the issue of dementia. They are
underfunding it when they need to fund it. They are not getting the money out when they need to. They are not arguing the case with the ERC and the cabinet to get the extra money necessary for the dementia and severe behaviours supplement. Talk about taking your eye off the ball!

They should not have axed the payroll tax supplement. That has major implications and the sector is up in arms. There is no strategy to deal with the workforce. The workforce supplement has already been axed and is gone. What is happening with this bill is the cleaning up of any reference to the workforce supplement, the history of which I have outlined in this speech. I cannot let it pass without moving an amendment. I move:

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

‘whilst not declining to give the Bill a second reading the House notes that the government has failed to:

(1) provide alternative assistance in meeting the demands of the aged care workforce;

(2) ensure repurposed funds be utilised for workforce pay, conditions and development;

(3) consult with or inform the aged care sector of Budget cuts including the axing of the $653 million Aged Care Payroll Tax Supplement;

(4) consult with or inform the aged care sector of the axing of the Dementia and Severe Behaviours Supplement until after the 2014 Budget; and

(5) oversee the management of aged care funding as evidenced by the over-subscription of the Dementia and Severe Behaviours Supplement and under-subscription of the Dementia and Cognition and Veterans’ Supplements.’

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

Mr Gray: Yes it is.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The original question was that this bill be now read a second time, to which the honourable member for Blair moved as an amendment that all words after ‘That’ be omitted with a view to substituting other words. If it suits the House I will state the question in the form ‘That the amendment be agreed to’. The question now is that the amendment be agreed to.

Mr HUTCHINSON (Lyons) (11:08): It gives me pleasure to rise to speak on the Aged Care and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 and the Health and Other Services (Compensation) Care Charges (Amendment) Bill 2014. I wish the member for Blair every bit of luck with the amendment that he has moved. Indeed, he referenced the Living Longer Living Better initiatives by the previous government. If I remember rightly they were a response to a Productivity Commission report on the aged-care sector called Caring for older Australians. The tragedy is that, whilst Australians are living longer, it is no thanks to the Living Longer Living Better proposals that were put forward by the previous government. The Productivity Commission's Caring for older Australians report was a fine review. Unfortunately, the previous government dropped the ball on their initiatives.

There was a lot of time spent by the member for Blair talking about the Aged Care Workforce Supplement, but much of the workforce supplement was nothing more than a union drive. On this side, we have put the money that was allocated for the workforce supplement back into the hands of the providers. We have put that $1.5 billion back into the hands of the providers, because it is in our DNA to believe that the local providers at the local
level tend to know what is best. It is not up to government to be dictating who should be getting what. The quantum of money is there, and we believe that those at the coalface, the people working in the sector, are best placed to decide how that money is to be allocated. That is exactly what we have done. One and half billion dollars was allocated by the previous government to their workforce supplement, which was, for all intents and purposes, a flawed and inequitable system, with the clear objective of coercing union membership within the sector. Unlike Labor, we do not believe in a central planning system. It has been proven around the globe not to work. Indeed, allowing those providers to allocate the funds in the way that they see fit is a far better alternative.

I want to touch on a number of aspects of these bills before the House, and on the dementia supplement in particular. As to the dementia supplement, and the shrill cries from those opposite in terms of the changes that we have made: this was akin to and of NBN proportions; it was akin to pink batts; it was akin to the Australia Network. It was a program—well intentioned, no doubt—that blew out tenfold. The incapacity of those opposite! And to be lectured by those opposite about managing money really is quite farcical.

But the bills at hand are important bills and the changes that are proposed are far-reaching and go to the demographic challenge that we face as a nation, because Australia's population is ageing rapidly. We are all looking to develop a fairer and more sustainable system. It is the responsibility of government, in the context of the funds that we have available—funds that come from the taxpayers of Australia—to make sure of planning, and that we develop a sustainable system that is able to be funded into the future.

I would like to touch on the area of the ageing population and the changes that we are seeing in our nation. These things are true nowhere more than in my home state of Tasmania. Indeed, Tasmania has the largest and most rapidly growing aged population of all the Australian states. We are talking here about how to address this issue, as we age.

I reference also the good work that has been done by Natalie Jackson, formerly the chief state demographer, at the University of Tasmania; Brendan Churchill; and also Lisa Denny, who is undertaking the work previously done by Natalie. They have conducted extensive research into the challenges that Tasmania's ageing population presents us with, and that has led to an informed conversation on how we tackle this. And there are not necessarily negatives but opportunities that come with those changing demographics that we are all about to be confronted with. It is happening right across the country. In a relatively short period of time, Australia has transformed from a comparatively youthful population to an accelerating ageing population, resulting in a growing level of government dependence and support.

Countries like Australia have enjoyed a period of economic prosperity led by the social and economic changes of the post-war baby boom. Our society was transformed into wealthy, healthy, educated and prosperous communities, due mostly to the young age of the largest sector of our community. But, as the baby boomers enter retirement age, the advantages that that generation provided us with are starting to be reversed. In 1960 there was one person aged over 65 for every 10 people of working age. Today, it is roughly five people of working age for every person aged over 65, and it is predicted that by 2050 there will be only 2.8 people of working age for every person aged over 65. These are challenges, but they also opportunities. Spending on health and ageing as a proportion of GDP is projected to rise from 22 per cent in 2015-16 to 27 per cent of GDP in 2049-50.
Lisa Denny and her Tasmanian demographer colleagues have a far more positive outlook on the challenge of this ageing population than some others. Indeed, Tasmania and Australia will need more people in the workforce and increased productivity. We should be encouraging higher skilled migration numbers to boost the workforce. But there are also demographic and economic opportunities for young Tasmanians—and other Australians, as well—facing the challenge of dealing with our ageing population. Within seven years, the last of the baby boomers will start to leave the labour market. But the effects of that huge loss to the workforce and the economy will be tempered by the arrival of the new baby boom of the mid-2000s. We should never forget that the baby boomers will continue to consume. They will continue to be an opportunity. They will continue to be, as they have for all of their lives, a major economic driver for our country.

Remember, the generation born in the early- and mid-2000s—this other little hump that is an anomaly if you look at the declining birth rates in this country—will be bigger in total than all the baby boomers. It makes for a very interesting context, if you consider it. It is an opportunity that, as a nation, we just cannot miss. Between 2003 and 2012 there were some 2.85 million children born in Australia, representing an increase of 13 per cent over a decade. This generation will enter a workforce demanding tertiary educated and highly skilled professionals to stem the economic and fiscal impacts of population ageing. They will enter a workforce not only waiting for but celebrating their arrival. That is why the changes that our Tasmanian state government is making in high school education are so important, encouraging more young people to continue on from year 10 and into year 11 and year 12. It is why the changes that the Minister for Education, Christopher Pyne, is proposing around deregulation of the higher education system in Australia are absolutely critical to the opportunities for our country over the next 20 and 30 years.

I want also to highlight one of the real success stories in my state of Tasmania, and I have mentioned it before in this place. The work done by the University of Tasmania is an absolute example of where universities are going to be able to compete in this space—that is, when they identify a gap in the market and when they respond to that appropriately. The University of Tasmania offers a Bachelor of Dementia Care, and it comes off the back of a MOOC—a Massive Open Online Course—that it offers in dementia care. It sets all of the records. It breaks the records for the completion rate, as far as MOOC is concerned, because there is no cost and it can be accessed by anybody. Generally speaking, MOOCs only have a very small completion rate. In the case of the dementia care course offered by the University of Tasmania, the completion rate of the MOOC is almost 50 per cent. The conversion from those that do the MOOC to the Bachelor of Dementia Care, which now has over 1,800 students studying the bachelor course at the University of Tasmania and is the third largest course in terms of enrolments at the university, is off the charts in terms of what typically happens for these sorts of conversions.

Women born after World War II tended to wait until their children grew up before they returned to the workforce. Young Tasmanian women are returning to the workforce much sooner after the birth of their children—and that is true right around Australia. The generation which will need to look after our post-World War II baby boomers will have the opportunity to become highly educated and to meet the demand of aged-care services. The potential for this new generation to alleviate the economic challenges of an ageing labour market is great.
This is our challenge but it is also our opportunity, with that demographic bump that we see in the mid-2000s. It will be the responsibility of the existing and future governments to invest in this still-untapped resource of people, particularly during their years of further education and training.

The government reforms, such as we are debating in this place today, are, indeed, of immense importance, and lay the groundwork for that. The bill seeks to make amendments to the Age Care Act 1997 to reflect the implementation of the 2014 budget measures to re-purpose the aged care workforce supplement. I think I have explained why we need to make these changes. The key elements cover a range of areas in terms of residential care. In this debate, of course, there always is a very big focus on residential care, but the reality is that only about five per cent of Australians use residential care. The majority of Australians surveyed—I think, 70 per cent—would choose and would prefer, given an opportunity, to stay in their own homes. I think that is very understandable. That is why it is important that the policy around aged care also focuses on a whole range of other services that older Australians might access, including in-home care and other things.

First and foremost, nothing changes for those people that are in residential aged care at the moment. We are asking those people that can afford to contribute to the cost of their residential aged care to do so. Nobody would think that unreasonable. It is important, also, to remember that there are caps within the system—the annual cap being $25,000 and the lifetime cap for anybody being $60,000. Those contributions to that lifetime cap include contributions that were made to home care—any time spent using home care services. If, in future years, somebody decides to go into a residential aged care facility, that lifetime cap of $60,000—in terms of a contribution to their own care—will be those credits. The credits for the payments that they have made in home care will be able to be used. Fairer assessments in terms of means-testing capacity to pay is an important part of this legislation, and there is greater choice. On this side of the House, we believe that people should have the choice. One of the benefits of a consumer driven system is improved choice. This is the direction that we would like to see aged-care going. In the same way that you see with the NDIS and the fine work that Minister Fifield is doing in this space, it is about giving consumers choice. This is fundamentally what we believe is the best thing, that local providers not big government are the ones that can make the very best decisions about what people need increasingly as they age.

Ms CHESTERS (Bendigo) (11:23): Whilst Labor do not oppose the Aged Care and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 and related bills, what I think is important in this debate is to highlight the unfair cuts that are going on in the aged-care sector by this government. Labor oppose funding cuts to the sector—cuts which are also another broken promise. These cuts mainly go to the development and retention of the workforce, a workforce which is going through significant change to try to meet the demands of the sector, a workforce which at the moment is largely low paid yet has high skills.

This sector is in a workforce crisis at the moment because there is no retention system in place to ensure that quality aged-care staff stay in the sector. The staff say that it is not because of a lack of love for the job because they love working in the sector; it is the low pay that they receive that becomes a disincentive to stay. The staff also say that the workload
Central to the former Labor government's plan for the Living Longer, Living Better package was a $1.2 billion workforce supplement to improve the pay and conditions, and enhance the training and career structures of those working in the sector. It was aimed at addressing a growing need for workers in the aged-care sector, which suffers from a high turnover, low pay and poor work conditions, and faces increased demand for staff in the future. This is an issue that is not just relevant to the metropolitan areas; it is across the whole of Australia. Some of our regional electorates will be hit the hardest by these cuts because it is the regions where we have high proportions of our residents becoming older and where fewer and fewer of our young people are staying to live. The challenge to get people to live in the regions, just like in every other care sector, continues to be a major problem.

The aged-care workforce has had a very high turnover and features some of Australia's lowest paid workers. These are not just my words; this is the research and the basic facts. The $1.2 billion workforce supplement was going to deliver pay rises for some of the 350,000 aged-care workers, people who earn very little—nurses who are paid less than those who work in hospitals, people who dedicate their lives to ensuring that our older Australians have the quality care and the dignity that they deserve in their final years.

The new aged-care workforce compact that was introduced by the former Labor government was an important step to ensure that Australia had a professional workforce, essential to building a quality aged-care system for older Australians. Labor acknowledged in government that if you want to have a quality aged-care sector that met the demands of the community, you needed a well-paid, well-funded, aged-care workforce. From 1 July 2013, aged-care workers employed by providers who met the conditions of the aged-care workforce compact were going to receive better pay and conditions through an associated workforce supplement. It was the former Labor government that acknowledged that governments have a role to play in partnering with the sector and the community to ensure that the people working in that sector were high quality and well paid. Whether it be a hospital, an aged-care facility, a child-care facility or a school, government needs to acknowledge it has a role to play in ensuring that staff are well paid and well trained, and that there are well-funded facilities for them to work in.

The compact was a good start for those working in the sector and it supported some of the most vulnerable workers, up to 90 per cent of whom are women and over the age of 45 and working part time. The reform by the former Labor government and the workforce supplement was going to help some of our lowest paid workers—women over the age of 45, part time, the very same demographic that this government is hitting in other parts of the budget. Again, it is another broken promise by this government.

The former Labor government worked with industry and the community to ensure that they had jobs that they could count on for women working in this sector. Yet what we have seen from this government is not only an attack on their working conditions but also an attack on almost every other aspect of the household budget. Whether it be fuel, family tax benefit or any number of budget measures introduced by this government, they are going after the exact same workers who will be affected as a result of funding cuts this government will make to the sector.
The aged-care workforce is one of the fastest growing sectors of our economy, as our ageing population continues to grow, particularly in regional areas like my electorate of Bendigo. But over this decade, Australia faces a shortage of just over 100,000 aged-care workers. The core problem has been poor wages and working conditions for this profession. Melanie O'Gorman, an aged care worker and United Voice member, said:

As aged care workers, we're dealing with people's lives and their families. We want to give our clients the dignity they deserve but it's hard with high staff turnover, low pay and poor working conditions.

I love my job and I want to be respected for the important work I do. This Compact is a step in the right direction.

These are Melanie's words. She loves the job, she loves the sector, yet because of low pay, her colleagues have considered leaving the sector, as has she. There are other attacks from this government in this year's budget. Axing the aged care payroll tax supplement is another blow for for-profit aged care providers. The sector is reeling from the cessation of the aged care payroll tax supplement from 1 January 2015, worth $653 million over four years. This government is so narrow sighted. They just think of their own bottom line; they do not think of the impact their cuts will have within the broader community. The affect will be that providers will need to recoup this saving by increasing accommodation charges. Pressure will be put on bargaining outcomes for a workforce that is already suffering from high turnover. Further the cuts will erode the capacity of the sector to increase staffing levels and pay and conditions for some of the nation's lowest paid workers. This is just a silly decision. In many ways it is a tax on workers and it is a tax on jobs.

The workforce continues to be in crisis. In Bendigo, we had a recent example of what is going on in one of our facilities. Health Workers Union members recently rallied at the 50-bed Golden Square aged care facility. They protested with family members, raising their concern about AdventCare leaving residents with unqualified staff providing medication to residents during the night shift. The workers say that this is because of funding cuts, because the facility is trying to break even and simply cannot afford to hire the qualified staff they need. This sector will be in crisis if we do not address funding and the need for a well-qualified and well-paid workforce.

The solution is not 457 visas or overseas workers. Some have suggested, 'That's fine. We'll just bring in overseas workers.' More and more Australian nurses and midwives will be left without jobs because of the loosening of restrictions for overseas workers, which this government is planning to introduce. Recently, The Australian reported that 457 visa foreign workers, including nurses, would be able to be employed on salaries of up to 10 per cent less than the salary of Australians working in the sector. That is not going to lessen the crisis we have in aged care. We will improve the aged care crisis not by bringing in cheaper overseas exploited labour but by funding the sector properly, ensuring that workers in the sector receive decent pay and conditions, lifting this sector to be a quality sector which is on par with our hospitals and with the health and ageing sector.

The ANMF does not support the use of temporary migrant labour at the expense of Australian nursing graduates who are not only fully qualified but are ready, willing and able to work. I agree with the ANMF. We need to ensure, if we have qualified staff ready to work that yes, there is a position available to them and yes, it will be at an appropriate wage with
appropriate conditions. Australian nurses should be offered the jobs first before bringing in overseas workers. Furthermore, I agree that we should not be creating the competition in the workplace where an organisation has the option of either hiring an Australian nurse or an overseas worker at 10 per cent less.

If this government wants to make it easier for employers to hire overseas workers on cheaper wages, we will see the creation of an underclass of workers receiving less for doing the same work. That is fundamentally unfair and it should not be allowed to happen. If graduates walk away from nursing, Australia will suffer an entire lost generation of highly-educated health professionals. It will continue to be a problem for this country. This is just unacceptable.

The solution goes back to one of the points I made at the beginning. Central to the Living Longer Living Better package is a well-paid, qualified professional workforce. We have people going into nursing degrees who will come out qualified and ready to work. We need to ensure that the jobs available for them are respectful of their skills and qualifications and receive pay at an appropriate rate. For aged care facilities to do that, government needs to partner with them to ensure they have the funding.

I would like to highlight other concerns which have been raised with me. Recently, a number of people have spoken to me about problems they are experiencing as advocates in the sector. Home care packages and the government's changes mean clients are given more choice, which is a good thing, improving flexibility and improved services for the clients. They said that while this is a good thing, the problem that they were experiencing locally is that because of cutbacks in Centrelink and DHS services they cannot get their applications assessed. They have people in our electorate, in Bendigo, waiting and wanting and ready to go into aged care spaces where there are beds available but they are stuck in the processing of their applications, they are stuck in the Centrelink queue. This is a problem that can only be resolved by increasing the number of people working in DHS to resolve this backlog. They talk about the need for government to continue to partner when it comes to building new facilities and making sure that we have that co-investment available. These are just some of the local issues that have been raised.

The Australian population is undergoing a profound change. Yes, we are all living longer. Yes, there is a baby boom about to retire; and yes, they say it will fall to my generation to pick up the tab. I disagree. We can legislate in this House now. We can invest in funding now to ensure that we are ready to meet those challenges. That means restoring the workforce supplement. That means investing in the people whom we require to work in this sector for the long term.

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (11:38): I rise today to speak on a matter of great importance to my electorate of Ryan: the Aged Care and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 and the Health and Other Services (Compensation) Care Charges (Amendment) Bill 2014.

The electorate of Ryan, which I am honoured to represent, has 13 nursing homes and care facilities within its boundaries. As you can imagine, this high number of care facilities makes nursing homes a valuable and necessary part of the community in Ryan, and this bill seeks to address a shortfall in wages for this sector by reprioritising $1.5 billion in the Aged Care Workforce Supplement.
Since it was introduced by Labor, this supplement was only paid to those workers who were covered by an enterprise bargaining agreement; with those workers who were not covered by such an arrangement left out in the cold and more or less forced to join a union in order to access a better pay rate. This is yet another example of union bullying of workers—many more cases of which have been outlined at the Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption. Join the union, pay your fees and get the pay rise—which will just cover the cost of the union fees, leaving workers in the same position they were before the supplement was paid. Yet again, Labor and their union masters are looking after their own nests and turning their backs on the real workers—the party for the workers having a party on the workers.

However, the coalition government believes all workers should be given the opportunity to access better wages in the aged-care sector, regardless of whether they belong to a union or not. This is why it is vitally important to reinstate this money stripped away from some workers and packaged as a wage supplement when all it really was is a way for the union to get paid out of the government coffer.

And of course, where does that money end up? In the campaign war chests of Labor candidates all over the country—

Ms Butler interjecting—

Mrs PRENTICE: like those interjecting now. And how do we know this is where this dubiously appropriated money came from? The political donor registry kept by the AEC.

In the year before the introduction of the supplement, United Voice, the union for aged-care workers, spent more than $214,000 for their Labor mates. In the year after the introduction of the protection racket called the Aged Care Workforce Supplement, that figure increased a staggering 513 per cent. Yes, Mr Acting Deputy Speaker Broadbent, you heard that correctly: 513 per cent, to more than a million dollars—all money funnelled from aged care funding via a clever little device called the aged care workforce supplement tied to union membership. Those opposite care so little for the real workers of this nation that it beggars belief that they can even mouth the words 'party of the workers' when evidence like this is tabled in this place.

Fortunately, the workers in the aged-care sector have a good friend in Minister Andrews who is looking to make a real difference to the actual wages of those in the front line of aged-care delivery. By returning the supplement money to the general revenue stream for aged-care providers, an extra $1.5 billion dollars will be available for wage increases up to 2018.

While we have seen unions bleat about the inequity of this measure—no doubt because their bottom line will take a hit—aged-care providers have applauded the move as necessary to better wage outcomes for all aged-care workers. But of course this money for the supplement had to originally come from somewhere. This wasn't new money allocated to the sector by the reckless spending of the former Labor governments. No, it was ripped from the care provisions for older Australians. That is right: the Labor Party actually took money from those in need of quality care in order to funnel it back into their own campaign funds by intimidating aged-care staff into joining a union or otherwise they would not get the pay rise.

The best word I can use to describe this act is despicable. It is not enough that they held a gun to the head of workers; at the same time they were dangling older Australians off a cliff. I
am reminded of the valiant and hardworking horse, Boxer, in Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, who, after years of hard work, was sent to the knackers rather than into the happy retirement he had been promised by the pigs. That is the promise given to workers by those opposite: if you work hard, you can enjoy your later years, but they will not hesitate to take away the money for your care to distribute amongst their cronies by whatever means necessary to make sure they are looked after first. Perhaps in Orwellian tradition we should amend the names of the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Opposition to Napoleon and Squealer.

Under the amendments proposed by this bill, aged-care workers will be better off in actual real terms with more money in their pay packets and with no need to pay protection money to a union. No wonder unions oppose these amendments. Their relevance is again being brought into question as they seek to fleece the Australian taxpayer.

In short, Minister Andrews is at the forefront of fighting for workers in aged care to get the pay rise they deserve by stopping a supplement that channelled money into unions and Labor. Now that money will go into the pockets of the workers who very much deserve it.

Coupled with the Aged Care and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 are minor changes to the Health and Other Services (Compensation) Care Charges (Amendment) Bill 2014 which make it easier for the Commonwealth to recoup expenses for the care of people in their own homes should that person receive a compensation payment. This already occurs if a person is in a care facility but not if they are in home care. This change seeks to address that imbalance.

To each individual, the cost of this reimbursement of government funds is not paid for by them but by the party paying the compensation. It will be incumbent on solicitors and legal firms representing their clients to ensure the cost of this recovery is accounted for in their final claim. While the amount of savings is only small—$500,000 to a million dollars per year—this is about addressing the inequity of people in a care facility having to pay the costs of their care while those who are cared for at home do not.

In closing, I can understand the groans from those opposite at the thought of their campaign funds being $1½ billion worse off. But, of course, those groans are not out of concern for the aged-care workers, nor indeed for those residents of an aged-care facility, because those opposite are concerned not with the wage outcomes for workers or quality care for older Australians but with feathering their own nests and the nests of their puppet masters. The sensible changes in these bills will benefit those who need it the most—the aged-care workers of Australia. I commend the bills to the House.

**Ms Butler (Griffith) (11:45):** I rise to speak in the debate on the Aged Care and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 and the Health and Other Services (Compensation) Care Charges (Amendment) Bill 2014 and to support the second reading amendment that was moved by the member for Blair, as a very sensible and wise second reading amendment. I also take the opportunity in so doing to correct some of the unfortunate errors in the talking points that have apparently been provided to members from the government side of the House. We just had a contribution from the honourable member who spoke previously that suggested that somehow the workforce supplement was tied to union members—which of course is absolutely incorrect. You could not get a more incorrect assertion in the House, I do not think. This suggestion that the supplement was tied to union membership is utterly, utterly wrong.
I would say, with respect, that it is quite galling to hear members of a political party which has complete form on tying funding to workplace relations policies come in here and lecture Labor members about promoting collectively bargaining and suggesting that collective bargaining is not good for the 'real' workers—whatever that is supposed to mean. In fact, that is quite untrue; collective bargaining promotes better pay and conditions for workers. It clearly does. That is why, I would submit, with respect, that the Liberals and the Nationals hate collective bargaining so much and have always used workplace relations policies to promote individual bargaining—in other words, the old divide and conquer mechanism aimed at keeping workers less able to exercise power to get better pay and conditions for themselves.

During Work Choices we had some pretty awful provisions in the industrial relations legislation that were about prohibiting content that could be agreed to between workers and employers in enterprise agreements. But, even going beyond those provisions, the Building Code and the implementation guidelines under the Building Code had even more prohibited content and even more restrictions on what employers and employees could agree to in enterprise agreements, and it was, of course, a condition for getting government procurement jobs to comply with those implementation guidelines—not to mention in the higher education sector funding for universities being tied to those universities implementing the then Howard government's radical anti-collective workplace relations agenda aimed at dividing and conquering staff and preventing them from negotiating for better pay and conditions.

So to come in here and somehow suggest that any government that is trying to undermine collective bargaining is the friend of the worker is not only wrong but also offensive. We know that you do not have to be a member of a union to have a collective bargain. Contrary to what the previous speaker just said, you do not have to be a union member to have a collective bargain in this country. The legislation explicitly provides for collective bargains where people are not members of unions. So to suggest that this workforce supplement was somehow connected or related to union membership or that it was a condition of getting the supplement that your workforce by in the union is utterly, utterly incorrect and misleading. The government and the staff who have put together the talking points for members opposite might want to go away and rethink those talking points, because they are wrong and they ought not to be relied upon further.

What we actually know about the workforce supplement is that it was the central part of the Labor Living Longer Living Better package. That Living Longer Living Better package was a 10-year strategy for reform of our aged-care system designed to provide older Australians with the aged care that they want and need no matter where they live and no matter their financial means—in other words, classic Labor policy; Labor policy that cares for people no matter how rich they are, in accordance with their needs. Part of that LLLB package, as it is called—the Living Longer Living Better package—was the $1.2 billion workforce supplement which was aimed at improving pay and conditions and enhancing training and career structures for those working in the sector.

It is important that we actually address workforce planning issues—as the second reading amendment says, we need to deal with workforce pay, conditions and development—because we have, as has been said here today, an ageing population. In fact, members would be well aware of the document, *Blueprint for an ageing population*, created by a panel led by Everald Compton, in cooperation with Per Capita—the think tank—which looks at some of the
opportunities for the ageing population. That blueprint talks about the shift in our demographics towards becoming an older Australia and having a higher proportion of people over 65—having people living longer.

We know that the population generally is ageing and we also know that the workforce in aged care is ageing. I was privileged to hear a presentation from demographer Bernard Salt last year where he told us that, on his review of the census from 2006 and 2011, there had been a change towards an older workforce of registered nurses in aged care. He said to us that, as at the 2011 census, 49 per cent of aged-care registered nurses were aged 50 or older. That is quite an ageing profile for a workforce in itself trying to grow to meet the increasing demands for aged-care services in this country. So we know that there is going to be more demand for aged care, because of the ageing population. We know that we need to do something about workforce planning in aged care, because the workforce is getting older and, because of the pay, conditions, training opportunities and career opportunities, there is a high turnover. One example: if a registered nurse can get paid more in a hospital than in an aged-care facility, the incentive to change is obvious.

We know that aged-care workers work incredibly hard in incredibly difficult and challenging jobs. In my previous life as a lawyer, I represented people in the aged-care industry and so I heard firsthand of some of the pressures, the struggles and the burdens on them. Of course, working in aged care, they are very caring people. It is a lot to take on to go into aged care. We know that there will be more demand, and the Productivity Commission's report *Caring for older Australians* predicted that we will need three times the existing aged-care workforce by 2050. So the high turnover, the low pay and the increasing demand meant that it was obvious to Labor that we needed to do something to improve pay and conditions in the aged-care workforce. That is why we introduced the $1.2 billion workforce supplement, which was to deliver pay rises for some 350,000 aged-care workers—people who earn very little as it is and who are dedicated to caring for the elderly. Everyone in this chamber will have a grandparent or a parent who needs aged care, and one day we will all need it ourselves, if we are lucky enough to live to an old age. We are quite concerned with the redirection of the $1.2 billion workforce supplement funds. The funds will now be given directly to providers, with no guarantees or conditions that that money will support workers through pay increases, improved conditions or professional and career development.

We know there is no silver bullet with respect to aged-care reform, but we can be certain that cutting aged-care funds, as this government has done in its budget, is certainly not going to help. We are going to continue to hold this government to account about what it is doing to deal with those workforce planning issues for the aged-care sector. Of course, this government is doing all it can to make it harder for people to, for example, get a higher education but rather are making it more expensive to get a higher education. The idea of real interest on university degrees will mean that if you go into a lower paid occupation rather than a higher paid occupation, it will take you longer to pay off the same degree, because it is income contingent—depending on your taxable income. Also, because you are taking longer to pay off the same degree, you will pay more because of the higher interest rate—in some cases substantially more. So it is yet another imperative for graduates when they leave university to take the highest-paying job that they can. That is going to contribute to workforce planning issues for the low-paid industries, like the caring industries. People
already take a penalty for going into lower paid industries. They already take the penalty of lower take-home pay. To make that worse by making it more expensive to have the same degree as someone who might go into the same type of occupation in a higher-paid workplace is reckless. It is contrary to good workforce planning proposals.

Given that there are already difficulties for aged-care providers in terms of workforce planning—high turnover of staff in the sector—it is quite disappointing that there are other measures that are going to affect aged-care providers. The first budget of this government, of course, provided a surprise hit for the for-profit aged-care sector. It is reeling from the cessation of the aged-care payroll tax supplement from 1 January 2015, which is a cut of $653 million over four years. We know that the aged-care sector is not exactly known for massive profits. The Aged Care Financing Authority reports that the average net profit before tax margin across the sector is just 5.6 per cent. So it is a slender profit margin as it is. This hit, with the $653 million cut in the budget, is going to cause some difficulty for profitability for the sector. It is obviously going to mean higher prices for consumers as providers scramble to recoup. It may have other ramifications as well.

I was at a meeting of community carers, including aged-care sector providers, last week convened by the Camp Hill Healthcare practice, a multidisciplinary practice led by GPs in my electorate in Camp Hill. The community nurses had convened a round table, and I have got to say there was a lot of discussion about some of the pressures facing aged-care providers today and some of the confusion that this government’s approach has been causing. There are a number of issues, but one of the issues that was raised was the difficulty in providing respite beds in caring facilities. With slender profit margins, with some very, very uncommercial things that aged-care providers would like to be able to do—such as provide respite care—it is something that is crucial but quite uncommercial for providers, as I understand it. The last thing that governments should be doing is making it harder for aged-care providers to turn a profit, and that is why it is a disappointment that this massive cut is being levied on aged-care providers in the budget.

Labor has expressed concern not just with the cut in the budget with respect to aged care but also with what has happened since the budget with the cut to the Dementia and Severe Behaviours Supplement. We introduced the supplement on 1 August last year as part of the Living Longer, Living Better package to tackle dementia. We all know that dementia is quite a challenge for aged-care providers, and those of us who have family members who have been affected will know just how much of a challenge it can be for the family. The Dementia and Severe Behaviours Supplement provided additional financial assistance to approved providers in recognition of the additional costs of caring for people with dementia and severe behaviours associated with a diagnosis of a relevant medical condition. Approved providers could claim an extra supplement of $16.15, annually indexed per day in respect of an eligible care recipient. But, on 26 June 2014, the Assistant Minister for Social Services announced during a dorothy dixer question in question time that the supplement was ceasing as of 31 July 2014. So not only was it a surprise—a post-budget announcement—but it was a surprise that had no consultation and was announced with very little notice to the sector. In spite of the assurances that he had consulted with the industry, providers had been kept in the dark and were really shocked with the decision. I know that people in my electorate have been concerned about this change as well. As I understand it, there has been only one roundtable
discussion about the issue but no resolution. The Prime Minister's ministers could have been working with the Department of Social Services and aged-care stakeholders to address the issues around the original design or compliance and validation of the assessment instrument for the supplement, but they just axed the supplement, after the budget process, in a complete surprise move.

It really gives the lie to the pre-election promise to be a no surprises and no excuses government. We should not be surprised about that because before the election the now Prime Minister said basically whatever he thought it would take to get him elected. We heard him say that there would be no cuts to health, no cuts to education, no changes to the pension and no cuts to the ABC and the SBS. None of those promises has been honoured; not a single one of them has been honoured. It is very disappointing to see a first-term government bring in a budget that not only is an attack on the living conditions of Australian people but is going to make medical assistance more expensive. *(Time expired)*

**Mr PITT** (Hinkler) (12:00): I rise to speak on the Aged Care and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 and the cognate bill. The previous government's workforce supplement compact was a flawed and inequitable system with a clear objective of coercing union membership in the sector. It dictated how aged-care providers could spend the funding. Repurposing the workforce supplement was a coalition election commitment to increase the basic subsidy provided to aged-care services for residential care, home care and flexible care. The coalition government suspended applications for the supplement in September 2013 and consulted the sector to ensure the supplement was flexible and allowed providers to target their areas of greatest need. Unlike Labor, the government does not believe in central control and command and believes that those who deliver care are best placed to know where investment is needed. We have returned the previous government's workforce supplement into the general pool of aged-care funding so that providers can spend the funds in their greatest areas of need. Between 2013-14 and 2016-17, $1.1 billion will flow to providers. This includes a 2.4 per cent increase on top of normal indexation of care funding for eligible aged-care programs from July this year. All programs previously eligible for the workforce supplement will receive this funding.

Aged-care providers in regional, rural and remote areas will receive a $54 million boost in funding through a 20 per cent increase to the viability supplement. This funding boost will help improve the capacity of over 950 services in these areas to provide quality aged care. The government is also reviewing current employment and training initiatives in the aged-care and disability services systems to develop an aged-care workforce development strategy.

The most common complaint from consumers and their families is how hard it is to find information on the services they need. So this bill implements stage 2 of the My Aged Care gateway from 1 January next year. My Aged Care gateway is a national website and contact centre. It provides information and support to older people and their families as they consider their aged-care options. The website will empower consumers through greater transparency and the ability to compare options and prices. For the first time, all accommodation prices will be published in one place. It will help consumers locate services in their local area and provide referrals to assessment services and service providers. The My Aged Care website also features a fee estimator, which is an online tool that allows people to enter some information about their income and assets and receive an estimate of the fees they may be
asked to pay by an aged-care provider. This will be an invaluable tool to help older people and their families plan and prepare for entry into aged care.

Only five per cent of Australians over the age of 65 live in residential aged care. We know that most people want to remain living in their own home for as long as possible, which is why we are increasing the number of home care packages. There will be an additional 80,000 over the next 10 years. Making the decision to enter residential aged care is difficult for anyone at the best of times, but the complex web of services, subsidies and eligibility criteria can seem at times almost impossible to navigate. What can be even more frustrating is the waiting time for assessment and bed shortages.

In the Wide Bay aged-care planning region, which includes my electorate of Hinkler, as at 30 June last year there were 2,856 allocated residential care places and 2,226 in operation. In other words, there are 630 beds that are funded by the federal government but not yet built by providers. The department has determined that the beds are required, but for various reasons providers are not investing. However, in my local Bundaberg NewsMail, a local newspaper from the northern end of my electorate, there is good news. In the coastal town of Bargara construction has commenced of a $25 million facility with 160 beds besides the Palm Lake Resort. The dozers are on the ground as we speak. This is good news for the residents of my electorate. I congratulate the Palm Lake Resort group CEO, Manuel Lang, who said:

Bundaberg is a prime example of where there's very, very limited aged care places.

But what we've found since we've launched Palm Lake Care is that it not only serves as a benefit to our residents, it also services a much broader benefit to the wider community.

Palm Lake Resort manager Ann Finn was also on site. I congratulate her on being so successful to achieve this.

The ratio for operational residential care places in the Wide Bay region is 66.2 for every 1,000 people aged 70 or over. That is compared to the Queensland ratio of 81.4. For operational home care places that ratio is 26 compared to 27.8. So the operational residential care places are 17 per cent under the state average. This situation is simply not acceptable. I will be seeking a meeting with my state and local government counterparts to see if together—and I emphasise 'together'—we can attract further investment to the region to get these beds built and services provided.

There are lots of things governments can do to encourage providers to expand or establish services in Wide Bay and my electorate of Hinkler. Providing land, reducing red tape and expediting development approval processes are just a few. Providing 630 beds and delivering 100 home care places across the region would not only reduce the waiting list for people who deserve to live out their remaining days with dignity but also stimulate the construction industry and the local economy more broadly. It would create jobs and training opportunities in nursing, allied health, pharmacy, administration and retail.

Economists often talk about the impact our aging population will have on productivity, but few talk about the opportunities it will create. According to demographer Bernard Salt, between 2006 and 2011 the fastest growing job was aged and disability carer. Given the oldest baby boomer is still only 66, he calls aged care the 'space to be in'. I am with Bernard. The glass is half full. Hinkler has an older than average population and is a renowned retirement hub. While there will be some challenges, I look forward to seeing what opportunities it brings in the next 10 years.
Mr STEPHEN JONES (Throsby) (12:07): It was said earlier by the member for Blair, in his fine contribution to this debate on the Aged Care and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014, that the motto for Labor in government when it came to aged care was 'Living longer, living better.' That motto encapsulated the various policies and the spending priorities of Labor when it came to aged care. If we were to collect all of the policies and initiatives of the Abbott coalition government under one banner in its one year in office, the true and accurate slogan—which should be emblazoned across that banner—would be 'Working longer and you are on your own.' If you look at the lamentable facts about the Abbott government's contribution to the aged-care sector after one lonely year in government, it is a very sorry record indeed.

What have they done? They have cut pension benefits, to start with. They have changed the method of indexation. We know, through independent research, despite the protestations of the Prime Minister, that this initiative alone is going to see the average pensioner worse off over the next 10 years by around $80 a week. They have cut benefits for people who are residing in aged-care facilities—and I will have something more to say about that in a moment. They have cut benefits for people who care for people in aged care. If that was not enough, they have cut the agency which plans for workforce issues when it comes to health and the aged-care workforce in this country. It is an absolutely atrocious record after one short year in government. We can only begin to contemplate the horrors that beset the sector if this is allowed to run for another two years.

We do face some challenges in the sector; there is absolutely no doubt about it. We know, as every speaker in this debate has identified, that we have an ageing population. That is actually a sign of success. It is a sign of the success of our healthcare policies and of Australia as a country that we have one of the greatest life expectancies of any country in the OECD. Australians born today can expect to live nearly 25 years longer than those who were born at the beginning of the last century. Close to 15 per cent of Australia's population is now over the age of 65. That is expected to be about 24 per cent by mid-century. We know that we have some significant issues that we have to deal with when you put all of these demographic facts together.

Seized of the issue, Labor in government did what any responsible government would do: we went to the experts in the area and commissioned some research. The starting point for any analysis of aged care and aged-care policy has to be the excellent report of the Productivity Commission Caring for older Australians, which was commissioned by the Labor government and tabled, including in this House, in June 2011. I take the trouble of going to some specific parts of the Caring for older Australians report, because they are very pertinent to the legislation before the House today. I am particularly reminded of some of the observations that are made at page xxvii of the overview of that report where the Productivity Commission observes that:

The aged care workforce will need to expand considerably at a time of 'age induced' tightening of the overall labour market, an expected relative decline in family support and informal carers, and strong demand for workers from other parts of the health and disability systems.

What the Productivity Commission is putting up in lights is that we have an issue here. We have an ageing population. We have a tightening of the labour market. We have a demand for carers and professional staff within the sector and tight competition within the sector,
particularly because of demand from other parts of the aged-care and healthcare workforce in health and disability. They go on to say later in the report:

As the number of older Australians rises and the demand for aged care services increases, there will be a commensurate increase in demand for a well-trained aged care workforce. The Commission anticipates that the aged care workforce will need to more than quadruple by 2050, at a time when the overall employment to population ratio will be declining.

They then give some pretty clear instructions for what a responsible government needs to do, working hand in hand with the industry, to ensure that we meet these challenges. They say this:

Improved employment terms and conditions are the foundation for building a larger supply of workers in the aged care sector.

It is worth repeating:

Improved employment terms and conditions are the foundation for building a larger supply of workers in the aged care sector. The most notable shortcoming is the low wage rates for personal carers and the long standing disparity between the wages paid to nurses employed in the aged care sector compared to those employed in comparable settings, such as the public health system. The fiscal impact of increases in wage rates would be felt equally on the current system or the reformed system as proposed by the Commission.

But wage increases alone will not be enough to set the industry on a sustainable path. A coordinated approach to improving the attractiveness of the aged care sector is necessary …

And the commission goes on to make a range of other observations. It is a very clear instruction to a responsible government about what is needed to meet the impending challenge of aged care in this country. They could not be clearer:

Improved employment terms and conditions are the foundation for building a larger supply of workers in the aged care sector.

Seized of this information, you would think that a responsible government would act. But I have to say, Mr Deputy Speaker, that you would be hard pressed if you went back over the last 110-odd years since Federation to find a bigger collection of members on that side of the House who are committed to the rare arts of the ostrich in sticking one's head in a bucket of sand when confronted by a problematic situation than what we find in the 44th Parliament. That is exactly what those opposite are doing.

Collectively, they are putting their heads in a bucket of sand and denying the obvious steps that need to be taken to deal with the impending problems that we face in the aged care sector. One of their first acts when given the opportunity to confront this issue was to axe the $1.2 billion aged care workforce supplement. What is the history of this supplement? Quite simply, it was one of the many measures put in place by the Labor government in response to the Caring for older Australians report. We focused our attention on the recommendations of the Productivity Commission, knowing that addressing employment terms and conditions was the foundation of improving the workforce and therefore services in the aged care sector. We put this in place, amongst other measures, as part of our Living Longer. Living Better reforms.

When confronted with this proposition, and scrabbling around for an argument to justify their egregious attacks—their mindless cutting of this important workforce initiative—what are we met with? Their opposition comes in two lines: firstly, there is a risk that people who are union members might benefit from better wages and conditions in the aged care sector. So
if somebody who might be a union member is facing the prospect that they may benefit from this, it must be bad! Nothing blinds like bigotry, and speaker after speaker have stood in this place and tried to justify these egregious cuts on the basis that somehow providing a benefit to somebody who may or may not be a union member somehow equates to compulsory union membership in the aged care sector. Never has a more ridiculous notion been put before this House to justify these egregious cuts. They do not know their own legislation; they simply do not know their own legislation.

The second proposition I have heard put in justification really does not fall very easily from the mouths of these Liberal members of parliament. I heard it from the member for Lyons and I heard it from the member for Ryan. They say, ‘Well, we are not taking money out of the sector; we are merely giving it to the aged care sector so that they can distribute the additional money as they see fit.’ I have to say that this does not fall very well from the mouths of coalition MPs who, in the very same budget, removed the education bonus because in the mind of the Treasurer and other members of the government there is the risk that people may not be spending that money for educational purposes. That is to say, that they could not guarantee that that money was going to be spent for educational purposes. These are the people who say we should just hand the money to the sector without strings attached. That is their justification. Well, if the sector were able to meet the needs of the labour market and if wages were sufficient to attract people into the industry and retain people in the industry then the Productivity Commission in its 2011 report would not have made the observations that it did and we would not be facing the labour market crisis in aged care that we are today.

So it is a nonsense argument. They know it is a nonsense argument. It is a product of their blind bigotry, that a benefit provided to a sector which may or may not benefit somebody who is a union member must automatically disqualify it as somehow illegitimate. It just goes to show that there is nothing which is cohesive, nothing which is based on evidence and nothing which is fair about the changes that are being proposed as part of the Liberal government's approach to the aged care sector.

We are talking about aged care, and the shadow minister has proposed a second reading amendment to the motion before the House. I want to take the opportunity to address an issue which is contained in that amendment, because the parliament needs to know about it and the Australian people need to know about it. It goes to the dementia and severe behaviour supplement. It was a supplement introduced by the former Labor government in August 2013 and it provided $16.15 per day as a supplement to approved aged care providers in recognition of the additional costs of caring for people with severe symptoms of dementia.

We all know the statistics; we all know the fact that dementia is one of Australia's fastest-growing diseases and that there are currently somewhere in the vicinity of 330,000 Australians living with the disease, that by mid-century there will be close to a million people living with the disease and that he aged care sector and families throughout the country are struggling with the caring needs of people living with dementia. So, against that backdrop you have to ask yourself, 'If you are committed to improving the caring needs of older Australians and meeting the dementia challenge, why would one of your first acts be to remove this payment?' When put together with the other cuts we see in this budget, what is quite clear is that whereas Labor's approach to this was to ensure that as a nation we are living better and
living longer, the coalition's motto is 'work for longer and when you are getting older, you are on your own.'

Mr TEHAN (Wannon) (12:22): I stand here today and will be relatively brief on this bill, the Aged Care and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014, because there are other members on our side who would also like to discuss this important change to how the aged-care sector will be able to manage itself. I will start by saying that we on this side understand the importance of aged care to regional and rural communities in particular. The idea that you can grow up in a community, spend your life in a community and then spend those last years in that community is incredibly important to this side of the House. We have all seen, and still see today, the contribution that the not-for-profit sector makes to small rural and regional communities when it comes to providing aged-care facilities. Many of those facilities are still run by volunteers from the community. Many of those facilities have been built on the basis of voluntary contribution by those communities, and it is incredibly important that those facilities can continue to operate in our regional and rural communities.

This bill will help in that regard. Obviously it makes consequential amendments to the Aged Care Act 1997, but it does so in one particularly significant way. It repurposes the workforce supplement. This was a coalition election commitment, because we did not want our aged-care facilities run under a central command system. The previous speaker, the member for Throsby, referred to there being nothing as blinding as bigotry. I could not quite work out what he was referring to when it comes to this bill, but I say to the member for Throsby: nothing blinds like self-interest. The sad thing is that in the dying days of the Gillard government all we saw from that government was it trying to do everything it could to support the only people who were really remaining loyal to it: the union bosses. Sadly, this was another initiative that had nothing to do with helping aged-care facilities on the ground. I spoke to numerous aged-care facilities around this time, and they did not like the idea of Canberra centrally controlling what they should or should not be doing with their budgets. As a matter of fact, they saw it as a complete throwback to some old Soviet-style system. So I would say, with due respect, to the member for Throsby that I think it was self-interest on their side that was dictating this policy.

These are important amendments. But so, too, are other initiatives that the government is making towards the aged-care sector. We see a 2.4 per cent increase in care funding for eligible aged-care programs from 1 July 2014. Importantly, we see a $54 million funding boost for aged care providers in regional, rural and remote areas from 1 July 2014 through a 20 per cent increase to the viability supplement. Also, the government is undertaking a stocktake of workforce initiatives to inform an aged-care workforce development strategy as well as future education and training priorities. This review will also consider where activity can benefit the aged-care and disability-service systems—very good methodical, common-sense ways to try to assist the aged care sector.

Obviously the sector is facing challenges at this time. We are seeing people staying in their homes longer, and, when they are using aged-care facilities, the time they spend in those aged-care facilities is shorter. This is placing increased pressure on these facilities. The government is determined to work through these issues with the sector, but it will do it in such a way that it will not be saying, 'Here from Canberra we know best and we will dictate how every dollar in ever instance is going to have to be spent.' We are going to use the completely
opposite approach: we want to free up and give more flexibility to each aged-care provider so that they have the flexibility to look after their own long-term interests. So, I commend these amendments to the House, and I commend the government's policies and approaches to the aged-care sector.

Ms CLAYDON (Newcastle) (12:28): On indulgence, I would like to begin by acknowledging Merewether Public School, who are joining us in the gallery today. They had a lot of very sensible questions that they put to me earlier on, and it is a delight to have them here seeing debate in progress.

I rise today to support the amendments by the member for Blair to the two bills that are currently before the House: the Aged Care and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 and the Health and Other Services (Compensation) Care Changes (Amendment) Bill 2014. The amendments by the member for Blair clearly outline the failure of this government to adequately support the aged-care sector. In particular, the amendments note that the government has failed to provide alternative assistance in meeting the demands of the aged-care workforce—an issue I will return to later. The government has also failed to ensure that repurpose funds be utilised for workforce pay, conditions and development; to consult with or inform the aged-care sector of budget cuts, including the axing of $653 million in aged-care payroll tax supplement; to consult with or inform the aged-care sector of the axing of the Dementia and Severe Behaviours Supplement until after the 2014 budget—one of the cruelest cuts this government has wreaked on the aged-care sector. Finally, those amendments also note the government's failure to oversee the management of aged-care funding as evidenced by the oversubscription of the Dementia and Severe Behaviours Supplement and the undersubscription of the Dementia and Cognition Supplement and the Veterans' Supplement.

While Labor are not outrightly opposing these bills, we do not support the unfair nature of the cuts and the dismissive treatment of aged care by this government since coming to office. A central part of Labor's Living Longer Living Better package was the introduction of the $1.2 billion Aged Care Workforce Supplement to improve workers' pays and conditions, to enhance their training, and to better structure career pathways for those working in the sector. The sector, of course, has a high turnover of staff, low pay and poor conditions, and the supplement was aimed at addressing a growing need to broadly improve employment for workers today and to ensure that the sector is still seen as a viable career option, because demand for staff will greatly increase in the future.

I would take issue with the previous speaker—and, indeed, with most of the members opposite who have made a contribution to this debate—who declared that Labor's concern in this area as an act of self-interest, or the old fallback position which members opposite often arrive at, to attack unions or those who dare to stand up to give voice to those who are vulnerable in a workplace, who are on low pay, who are battling constantly with the increased casualisation of the workforce and the vulnerability of working shifts. So, it is a shame to hear that argument being progressed in this chamber. It would be a strong message for this government and for the opposition to deliver bipartisan concern for the health and wellbeing of the aged-care workforce and sector.

Clearly, the demand for more staff in the aged-care sector is going to be extremely significant. The Productivity Commission's report, *Caring for older Australians*, has predicted
that we will need three times the aged-care workforce than we currently have by 2050. The $1.2 billion workforce supplement was going to deliver pay rises for some 350,000 aged-care workers who are, as I said, some of the lowest paid workers in Australia. Labor is concerned with the redirection of the workforce supplement funds. While the extension of the funding is, indeed, welcome, the funds will now be given directly to providers with no guarantees or conditions that it will support workers through pay increases, improved conditions or professional and career development. Preparing our aged-care system for the future requires vigilance, political will and real investment, all of which this government is sadly lacking. While Labor support the continued rollout of our Living Longer Living Better reforms, we will continue to hold the government to account to help ensure that older Australians get the strong and sustainable aged-care system they deserve.

This Prime Minister and Treasurer's first budget has been widely criticised for very good reason. Some five months on and it is still the stinking carcass around the government's neck, and the way it unfairly targets low- to middle-income earners is especially worrying. One of the many surprises it delivered was a blow to the for-profit aged-care providers. The aged-care sector is hardly known for massive profits with the Aged Care Financing Authority reporting that the average net profit, before-tax margin across the sector is just 5.6 per cent. The sector has been left reeling from the ending of the Aged Care Payroll Tax Supplement from 1 January next year, which is a $653 million hit over four years. It is the flow-on effect and the cumulative impact, which cuts like this will have, that hit our families and our communities hardest. In this case, effective providers will need to recoup this impost by increasing accommodation charges, and it will erode the capacity for the sector to increase staffing levels, pay and conditions for, as I said, some of the lowest paid workers in the country.

The cut was a sudden blow for the sector at a time when it must continue to grow. A number of large providers had planned significant investment over the coming years, but are now being forced to rethink their plans based on the cessation of the supplement. The Minister for Social Services cut this funding with no consultation and with no prior warning. The so-called 'open for business' government continues to spring surprises on business sectors that need to grow. Instead these businesses are now forced to slam on the brakes due to the shock policy announcement and massive funding cuts. The Abbott government clearly has not considered how the demand for some 75,000 additional aged-care places that will be required over the next decade will be met. In contrast Labor did the heavy lifting in aged-care when in government. Our Living Longer Living Better reforms provided fairness and equity for older Australians while ensuring longer term sustainability for the sector. These reforms were undertaken with extensive sector and community consultation, collaboration and cooperation—indeed, as it should be. It is a strategy that, regretfully, this government refuses to engage in. Labor joins with the aged-care sector in expressing disappointment at the disregard given to aged care in the budget and the lack of prior consultation with the sector.

Perhaps the cruellest of all cuts to the aged-care sector has been the axing of the Dementia and Severe Behaviours Supplement. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, last year, it was estimated that 322,000 Australians have dementia and, based on projections of population ageing and growth, the number of people with dementia will reach almost 400,000 by 2020 and around 900,000 by 2050. One in 10 Australians aged over 65
have dementia, three in 10 over age 85 have dementia, and 50 per cent of permanent residents in Australian government funded aged-care facilities have a diagnosis of dementia.

Dementia is a growing issue in our country, in particular in my community in Newcastle. The New South Wales branch of Alzheimer's Australia estimates that the Newcastle and Hunter region have some of the highest dementia prevalence rates in the state, and prevalence rates in the region are forecast to increase by up to 438 per cent by 2050. Aged care providers in my electorate are very concerned about the prospect of a service shortage as the population grows and ages. They already have massive waiting lists and demand will grow exponentially in the next 30 years. Its impact on those living with dementia, their families and their carers and workers in the sector cannot be ignored.

Labor introduced the Dementia and Severe Behaviours Supplement on 1 August 2013 as part of the Living Longer Living Better measures to tackle dementia. The supplement provided additional financial assistance to approved facilities in recognition of the additional costs of caring for people with dementia and severe behaviours associated with a diagnosis of a relevant medical condition. Approved providers could claim an additional $16.15 per day, indexed annually, in respect of an eligible care recipient.

On 26 June this year, the Assistant Minister for Social Services announced that the supplement was being cut in one month's time. In spite of his assurances that he had consulted with the industry, providers were kept in the dark and were shocked and horrified at the decision to cut the supplement. To date, there has been just one roundtable discussion about the issue but there have been no solutions, alternatives or investigations. All of this is from a supposedly no-surprises, no-excuses government.

As I mentioned earlier, as our population ages and dementia affects more and more Australians, we need to do more, not less, to address dementia and support those affected by it. The previous Labor government did that heavy lifting to make aged care sustainable and fairer, with wide community and sector support. In contrast, the Abbott government's legacy will be the dumping of the Dementia and Severe Behaviours Supplement; the slashing of more than $650 million from the aged care payroll tax supplement; cuts to pensions, which will affect aged care sector revenue streams; the demolition of the $1.1 billion aged care work supplement; and the abolition of Health Workforce Australia. Older Australians in residential aged care, and those who will need care in the future, deserve better.

Australia's population is growing but it is still ageing. More of us are living longer. For the first time in our nation's history there are now more people turning pension age each year than there are turning working age. Our aged care system has struggled to keep pace with the needs and expectations of our ageing population. As our population continues to age the pressure on our system will continue to increase. That is why federal Labor invested $3.7 billion in a new aged care system fit for the future.

In the single biggest investment in aged care in a generation, Living Longer Living Better is a ten-year strategy for reform of our age care system, designed to provide older Australians with the aged care they want and need, no matter where they live and not matter what their financial means are. It is a strategy that helps to lift the quality of care for those in aged care facilities and allows more people to get care in their own homes. It is about current and future generations of older Australians.
Federal Labor remains committed to building a new age care system built on the principles of respect, dignity and choice that will have capacity to provide quality, affordable, accessible and appropriate care to a rapidly growing population of older Australians over the coming decades. Senior Australians and, indeed, all Australians deserve nothing less. It is time the Abbott Liberal government stood up to the task ahead. The aged care sector knows well there is no time to lose.

Mr VARVARIS (Barton) (12:42): I wish to thank the House for the opportunity to speak on this bill today. These two bills together form an important piece of legislation that the coalition is implementing to assist with Australia's changing demographics. There are three important aspects of these bills.

Firstly, important amendments to the Aged Care Act 1997 reflect the coalition's 2014 budget measure of the aged care workforce supplement under which residential care, home care and flexible care providers in the aged care category receive an increase in basic subsidy. This increase is the coalition's investment and commitment to ensuring our aged care workforce is looked after through increasing the pool of aged care funding. This was contained in the coalition's budget released earlier this year.

Secondly, the bill amends the Healthcare Identifiers Act 2010, to support the implementation of the aged care gateway, an online information portal to store changes in aged care, maintain crucial aged care client records and sustain the integrity of Commonwealth systems.

Thirdly, the two bills together amend the Health and Other Services (Compensation) Act 1995 and Health and Other Services (Compensation) Care Charges Act 1995 to overcome existing impediments to recovery of past care costs for home care provided to a care recipient who received or receives a compensation payment such as workers compensation. The latter aim to remove inequity between home care and residential care, as well as overcome likely delay in entering residential care until compensation payments are settled, thereby minimising financial loss to the Commonwealth.

Through a 10-year aged care reform package the Australian government continues to build an aged care system that will offer choice and flexibility for older people living in community and residential care. Indeed, our population is living longer due to increased health awareness and better health care. This does not make our ageing population impervious to ailments, and whilst they may not suffer serious illness, they may be less able to be maintained in their households, which means assistance is necessary.

We are fortunate that our aged care system is world class and our senior citizens are given provisions to choose a level and type of care most suited to their needs. Indeed, our current government spends more than $14 billion a year on aged care, and this is projected to increase to about $17.5 billion by the end of 2017. Reforms over this 10-year span are being implemented progressively and will give consumers more choice, easier access and better care. It serves to build a better and more sustainable aged-care system.

Equally important, our aged-care health providers are given funding to continue to do the important work that they do and look after current and future generations of the ageing population. I am pleased to announce that this government is committed to have increased funding of 2.4 per cent of their basic subsidy from 1 July this year. The government will
provide $1.5 billion into the general pool of aged-care funding. The Australian government pays for the bulk of aged care in Australia, but, as with all aged-care services, end users may be asked by their service provider to contribute to the cost of their care.

In Barton alone, there are 30 residential care providers, ranging from low care to high care. Some are religiously focused, some are tailored to certain ethnic backgrounds and others appeal to the general population. These customised services demonstrate the various requirements of our ageing population and suit people's preferences and circumstances. As with all consumers in society, the ability for people to choose the level of autonomy afforded in the decision-making process, and transition to the next phase of their lives in dignity, is pivotal in ensuring we truly look after subsequent generations of Australians.

True autonomy is a valued component in Australian life. As discussed earlier, the move towards an integrated online information portal, in our digital age, also reflects autonomy. Transitioning from a previously paperwork driven culture to one that is efficient to manage allows participants and end users control in record management. All this, combined with redirecting the $1.5 billion being directed into the general pool of aged-care funding, is important reform to help providers run their businesses more efficiently and effectively and address the needs of their users.

Today's two bills together form an important piece of legislation the coalition is implementing to assist with Australia's changing demographics. I trust that both sides of parliament support the three important areas this legislation represents. As I mentioned before, our amendments will mean that providers in the aged-care category will receive an important increase in basic subsidy to ensure our aged-care workers can continue to do the fantastic work they currently do. I also mentioned that the crucial $1.5 billion in funding distributed over the next three years will be allocated into the general pool of aged-care funding so that providers can work effectively to ensure the needs of our ageing population are met.

The coalition's 10-year reform plan for aged care will also oversee changes to how information is collected, collated and managed for participants and end users. The introduction of My Aged Care, an online information portal, will ensure important changes to patient information records are maintained and sustained in an efficient manner within our systems.

As Australia sets to face enormous changes in our demographics over the next few decades, we must ensure our social policies aimed at the ageing population work fluidly to address the complex needs of those affected. For Australians, whose values are centred on freedom of choice and social autonomy, our services must equally reflect these values so that our population can age with dignity in the next important stage of their lives. I commend the legislation to the House.

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (12:48): I rise today to support the amendment moved by the member for Blair to the second reading of the Aged Care and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 and the Health and Other Services (Compensation) Care Charges (Amendment) Bill 2014. While the amendment legislation before the House is supported by the Labor Party, the second reading amendment moved by the member for Blair highlights some of the key issues that need to be included.
It was interesting to hear the previous speaker talk about the coalition's 10-year plan for aged care. It was actually Labor that brought in, after significant consultation, the biggest aged-care reform we had seen in a significant time, and that was the Living Longer Living Better aged-care reforms. They were critically important reforms which expanded aged care and the availability of aged care, not just in residential facilities but also at-home packages, the ability to get support in the home, to ensure that people could age in place. The previous minister, the member for Port Adelaide, worked very hard in delivering that important reform and certainly needs to be commended.

While Labor will support this package of bills, I have to say that, although the coalition continues to support some elements of the Living Longer Living Better package, there are critical elements that have not been supported. While part of this legislation does inject funds that Labor committed into the area of aged care, one of the key parts of our Living Longer Living Better package was the workforce supplement. That was $1.2 billion to improve the pay and conditions, and enhance the training and career structures, of those working in aged care.

Anyone who has visited an aged-care facility in their electorate and talked to the staff would know that it is a very low-paid job for enormous caring responsibilities. I take my hat off to aged-care workers, who work so hard, with so much compassion. When I talk with them, they say they do not do it for the money. They say that they could go and work in a bar or somewhere else and get better money, but they do it because they love it. They do it because they believe in what they are doing. That really needs to be recognised. That is why the workforce supplement was brought in under the Living Longer Living Better package. This was designed to deliver pay rises to some 350,000 aged-care workers. It was a partnership between the sector and the government to improve the wages of so many of our very poorly paid workers who do a great job.

While the government has committed—and we certainly welcome the commitment—to continuing to put money into the aged-care sector, and we note that there is $1.1 billion going in as part of this, we note that this money will go directly to providers and there is not a guarantee that it will be used to improve the wages and conditions of the workers. That is why the amendment before the House really talks about ensuring that these funds are invested in our workforce. We have already seen that, because of the hard work, often injury and other things associated with it, there is a huge turnover in this industry. Even though people say they would like to continue working in it, they just cannot either physically do it or make ends meet. So I really hope this money is redirected into the workforce, and that is why the amendment calls for that.

The amendment also in part 3 says 'to consult with or inform the aged care sector of Budget cuts including the axing of the $653 million Aged Care Payroll Tax Supplement'. This is an incredibly important part. In June this year the government abandoned both the aged-care payroll tax and the dementia and severe behaviour supplement. These two supplements were incredibly important for the aged-care sector. They were so important in ensuring that the financial assistance was given, recognising that providing aged care is a tough environment. It is difficult to ensure that you can deliver high-quality service, which is why the aged-care payroll tax supplement was so important in recognising that they are not in a competitive market where they can just let the market rip. They are providing a critically important social
service. But the dementia and severe behaviours supplement was also critically important in assisting aged-care facilities with caring for our most vulnerable. Because of this cut of the dementia and severe behaviour supplement, aged-care providers will no longer collect the $16.15 per day for each eligible care recipient.

It sounds like a very small amount, doesn't it? But it goes a long way with assisting with the ongoing care and support of Australia's most vulnerable citizens, and that is those who suffer from dementia. This cut has seen nursing homes re-evaluate their capacity to hire specialist staff, to plan for new facilities and to support new resources. Of course this was never mentioned before the election; this was foisted on the aged-care sector as a surprise without any consultation—probably not a very good surprise but a surprise to the sector nonetheless. I know that thousands of people have signed Labor's petition to bring this supplement back, to not punish. We talk about this budget and how it punishes the most vulnerable, and in so many ways it does. When it comes to those suffering from dementia and the care that they need, you cannot get much more vulnerable than that. Thousands and thousands of Australians have seen just how mean-spirited this cut is and have called for this to be reversed, have signed Labor's petition to reverse this mean-spirited decision.

I have also mentioned the cut of $653 million from the aged-care payroll tax supplement from 1 January 2015, and in my electorate I held a seniors forum in which a number of aged-care providers came. They are very concerned about what this means for them. They are very concerned about how this will affect their ability to provide good-quality services. This cut will force aged-care providers either to wear increasing costs or to recoup this impost by increasing accommodation charges or putting off or cancelling increased staff levels. We already know, as I mentioned previously, that staff in aged care do a fabulous job, so putting more pressure on them by having lower staff levels or increased accommodation costs for those who can least afford it is once again punishing some of the most vulnerable in our community.

In closing, while Labor does support the continuing funding of the workforce supplement, we also remain deeply concerned about the lack of transparency as to where this funding will go, what impact it will have on aged-care workers and whether it will actually make it to those aged-care workers who so desperately need to be recognised and paid appropriately. We also, of course, oppose wholeheartedly the mean-spirited cuts to aged care that have been put in this mean budget.

And this is a mean budget. It is an incredibly mean budget that hits our most vulnerable. Whether it is through the cuts to the severe dementia supplement or the aged-care payroll tax, the outcome will be putting more pressure on aged-care providers who are already working very hard in quite tough operating environments—extra pressure that will then lead to those residents not getting as high a quality of service. I know that those aged-care providers out there want to do their best, but they need support from government. We really are urging the government to stop cutting and start actually listening to the sector, start visiting aged-care facilities, start talking to those living in aged-care facilities, see how these cuts will significantly hurt older Australians and the aged-care providers who are doing their best to support the older Australians in our communities.

I commend the amendment of the member for Blair to the House and urge the House to support his amendment.
Mr COLEMAN (Banks) (12:58): It is good to have an opportunity to speak on this legislation. I am pleased that there is bipartisan support for it. We have a number of speakers who are interested in speaking on this matter, so I will keep my remarks brief, but I did want to comment in particular on two aspects of aged-care policy and the very important differences between the government and those opposite.

One is in relation to a matter we have heard a little bit about today, which is the dementia and severe behaviours supplement. Of course, we are all supportive of initiatives that seek to reduce the impact of dementia and increase care for people with dementia in our community, but you can only take those caring initiatives if you are able to manage them in a sensible way. It is important to have the compassion and to have the heart that motivates you to help people in need. But it is also very important to have the presence of mind—the common sense, frankly—and basic administrative capacity to actually deliver things. The previous government got this horribly, horribly wrong.

The dementia supplement, the previous government said, would cost less than $12 million a year and they thought that about one per cent of people would be eligible to apply. What actually happened was dramatically different. It was not one per cent of people who were granted the funding; it was actually 15 per cent. It was 15 times more. As a consequence, what was meant to be an expenditure of less than $12 million was headed to $110 million, almost a tenfold increase. If you want to deliver compassionate services, you need to have the common sense to actually budget for them, plan for them, do the hard work, do the detailed work that enables you to deliver in a sensible way. The previous government did not do that.

Remarkably, what those opposite say is: 'Just continue on. Even though it was 10 times more expensive, just continue on.' That would cost $800 million over the forward estimates period, over the next five years—completely unsustainable. It would be like budgeting $30,000 to spend on the family car, you get to the dealership, it is $300,000, and you say, 'We'll buy it anyway. We'll just borrow the other $270,000.' That is not common sense. We must be compassionate in our dealings in the aged care sector—and this government certainly is; it is maintaining levels of funding—but you have to be sensible about how you do it. This opposition was absolutely appalling in its mismanagement in this area.

Then we have the aged care workforce supplement. This was industrial tactics by stealth—not so much stealth, because it was pretty obvious. If you actually looked at the rules under which people could obtain this aged care workforce supplement, if you had more than 50 employees, you could only get access to the supplement if you had an enterprise agreement. And if you had an existing enterprise agreement, it had to be updated to comply with various rules under these provisions. Now, of course, in practice, that means you have to do a deal with the union. That was the only manner in which you could obtain this supplement if you had more than 50 employers, which, of course, most larger aged care facilities do. That industrial activity by stealth is just not appropriate in this sector. As Catholic Health Australia Chief Executive Martin Laverty said:

Using a government contract to force an industrial outcome was not in the best interests of those who would miss out on pay rises where their workforce did not have an enterprise bargaining agreement in place.

If the goal was to help the aged care sector, why would you tie it to an industrial outcome? It doesn't make any sense. It betrays the real motivation of those opposite in this area. We will,
of course, reallocate that funding to the aged care sector. We will maintain the level of funding—indeed, we will provide additional increases of over two per cent in various areas of aged care—but we will not do so in a fashion which demands any particular industrial outcome from any aged care provider.

This is important legislation. Some of the technical matters here we agree on. Some of these broader matters of management, we certainly disagree on, because we have a very different approach. These are good amendments, this is good legislation and I commend it to the House.

Ms HALL (Shortland—Opposition Whip) (13:04): I think the government's convictions about aged care and its commitment to delivering quality aged care can be shown by the length of the speeches presented from the people on the other side of this parliament.

The former government legislated major reforms to aged care with its Living Longer Living Better legislation in the last parliament. It was legislation that changed the face of aged care in Australia. It was the biggest revamp of aged care in over 20 years. It was legislation that put the person at the centre of aged care. The numbers needing aged care will increase into the future, so it is really important that aged care be person centred.

Mr Laming interjecting—

Ms HALL: I can hear noise from the government backbenches, where they are saying they don't agree that aged care should be person centred. They don't believe that aged care should be about the needs of the person. When Labor was in government we were committed to ensuring that aged care was about the person—aged care was person centred; that preferably it would be delivered to the person in the home but, when older people needed to access aged care in an aged care facility, that aged care facility would be able to look after them in the appropriate way, would be appropriately funded and would have the appropriate workforce—a well qualified, well-resourced, well-paid workforce. Listening to the contribution from the member on the other side of this House it is something that government members are not committed to. They do not acknowledge the fact that workers in aged care deserve to receive a reasonable recompense for their work. The legislation that we introduced when in government was about ensuring that those workers did receive adequate remuneration for their work. Each and every day in this House we see this government moving to attack the conditions and the pay of workers.

Aged care is a very special industry. It is an industry that looks after some of the most vulnerable people in our society and we need to make sure those people have the training, the qualifications and the skills that they need to work in the industry. We need to make sure that once they do have those skills and training they will remain in that industry. Workers in the aged care industry were receiving significantly less than other workers in similar occupations in different parts of the healthcare sector. As I mentioned, these workers are looking after the most vulnerable people in our community—frail, aged people who have made enormous contributions to our nation. They have made Australia the country it is today, and the least we can do as a country is ensure that those older Australians are properly looked after in their later years.

The legislation before us today amends the Aged Care Act 1997 to reflect a measure to reprioritise the aged care workforce supplement introduced under Labor's Living Longer
Living Better supplement. It was a $1.2 billion supplement going into the general pool of aged care funds, and it was a coalition election commitment. The supplement was abolished through a legislative instrument in September 2013. This legislation also makes amendments to the Healthcare Identifiers Act 2010 to support the implementation of stage 2 of the Aged Care Gateway, something that was established under the Labor government's Living Longer Living Better legislation, and minor clarifications and technical amendments to aged care related legislation. Reprioritising the aged care workforce supplement fund into the general pool of aged care equates to an investment in Australia's aged care workforce. The aged care supplement was effectively implemented through two legislative instruments, which addressed the funding arrangement.

The one issue I have to emphasise over and over again is that we need to properly remunerate workers within the aged care sector. We need to make sure we do not walk away from that. We need to make sure that any changes really do not lead to a further whittling away of the wages of those workers and leading to more workers leaving the aged care sector when it is a growing sector. It is a sector that we will be depending on more in the future as we have an ageing population, as has been mentioned already this morning. At this particular time we have more people each year receiving the pension than are entering the workforce. That shows we have an ageing population in Australia; that shows we need to make sure that we have the right sort of care provided for people as they get older. Across the industry there is a consensus that workforce issues are a priority. Unless the government truly tries to address that, rather than looking at ways it can save money, looking at ways it can lead to lower wages being paid to workers in the aged care sector, then we will have a workforce crisis.

It is, as I said, imperative that pay and conditions are maintained. The Productivity Commission report *Caring for older Australians* predicted that we would need three times the aged care workforce that we have now. There tends to be a very high turnover in the aged care workforce. It features some of the lowest paid workers, as I have already mentioned, so it is important that we get this right. On this side of the parliament we are committed to supporting the continued rollout of the Living Longer Living Better reforms. I hope the government does not move away from them.

I want to quickly touch on the aged care payroll tax supplement that was abolished in this year's budget. That was very important to providers of aged care. I was talking to one aged care provider this morning. That aged care provider—it is a smaller provider—told me that it means $10,000 a month to them, so for bigger providers it will mean even more to them because they will lose greater amounts. So $10,000 a month equates to $120,000 a year, which can really impact on the quality and the care that will be available for people because those aged care providers will have fewer resources available to them.

The aged care sector is not an industry. People working in the aged care sector do not make a massive profit. Most of the people involved, most of the organisations involved in aged care—be they not-for-profit, public or private—are dedicated to ensuring that older people are cared for properly and the cessation of the payroll tax will, in essence, be a cut in funding to the aged care sector.

**Mr Laming:** That's not true and you know it!
Ms HALL: Members on the other side make a lot of noise, but the facts speak for themselves. This government is about cutting and making things harder for anyone that looks to government for support. We have seen that time and time again in the House this week, with this mean-spirited government constantly making cuts across the board—affecting pensioners, families and students. Before the election they promised one thing; now they are in government they are delivering something else. They promised to be a government of no surprises and no excuses. That was the kind of government they said they would be; instead they have been a government that said one thing before the election and says another thing after the election—a government of broken promises. At the head of those broken promises is the Prime Minister of this country, Prime Minister Abbott, who does not blink as he comes in here and avoids answering questions or telling the truth to Australians about why he is breaking his promises.

One of the worst things this government has done is remove the dementia and severe behaviours supplement. In relation to that, it is really important that we look at what is happening in the area of dementia. In the last parliament I delivered a report from the Health and Ageing Committee that looked at dementia. Dementia is one of the biggest health issues facing Australia today. We have to make sure that adequate resources are going into providing care and services for people who are living with dementia. It has been called a national crisis and it is looming as a health disaster. There is not enough money going into research in this area, and currently there are 330,000 Australians living with dementia. Each week, more than 1,700 people are being diagnosed with dementia. The figure is set to rise to 7,000 a week, or a total of one million people, by 2050. These numbers are huge. It is a tragedy for our society and for the families of these people, and it is a tragedy that this government has removed the dementia supplement which was put in place to ensure that aged-care facilities had the proper resources to care for people living with dementia.

I would like to refer to some comments that have been made in this area. One is in relation to research. Only $22 million was spent on dementia research in 2012-13, in comparison to the $162.4 million that was spent on cancer research. Cancer research is very important but these figures show that this government is not prepared to invest in ensuring that people living with dementia are properly cared for. I would like to quote the CEO of Aged and Community Services Australia. He says the dementia supplement is a 'very necessary supplement' and that losing it will have an enormous impact.

This government is selling older Australians out. This government said one thing before the election and does another thing after. Its approach to aged care—ripping, as it has, all the money out of aged care—puts the most vulnerable people in our society at risk. Instead of supporting older people, who have given so much to our country, it is walking away from them.

Mr LAMING (Bowman) (13:19): Apologies to all in Australia who are listening in to the debate today for the last 15 minutes of debate; that is 15 minutes many of us will never get back. If we were to distil what happened in the last quarter of an hour, most of us would agree that we could pretty much sum up the debate right now and just have a vote.

I want to repudiate a couple of inaccuracies that snuck through in that 15 minutes for those of you who did not fall asleep. The first is that this payment of $1.1 billion—which was effectively used as a union recruitment tool in aged care—will be in full and 100 per cent
repurposed into the aged-care funding pool. The indexing of 2.4 per cent that accrues in the aged-care sector is recognised to have occurred early this year. This repurposing of the payment we are debating today is over and above indexation. It is a very clear message to Australians out there in aged-care facilities that the money is fully available to providers now, and they will not be told how to spend it.

It must be very difficult being a member of the Labor Party when uttering the phrase 'pay and conditions, pay and conditions' continues to get you preselected, but takes you no closer to the heart of the economics of running an aged-care facility. It is only one lever, and you cannot keep pressing the pay and conditions lever and ignore everything else—partly because that might be your ideological choice and partly because the economics of aged care is a little bit too complex. It is much easier, in that context, to pay a workforce supplement to try to push up wages and not worry about the ancillary effects that flow from that.

In reality, for those of us who run a small, medium-sized or big business, or a hospital, an aged-care facility or anything in between, we know there are numerous inputs that control the quality of what we create. That is, of course, the service. Looking after our seniors is not just about who pays what salary; it is actually about the technology we deliver to ensure that work is of the highest quality. It is about the training we impart so that those who work in our services are as effective as possible. Lastly, it is about the managerial decisions that ensure that over the long term the service is viable.

Wages are just one input. It is the Labor Party input that occupies every preselection debate and that they come and stand in this chamber to talk about, but we know it is way more complex than that. When we pay for good people and we get the best people that we can within the market, we then have a broader concern about the quality of the service that is delivered and the use of technology, and of course those labour to capital ratios. And that is a far broader debate that aged-care facilities are thinking about. What they know is that they get all of that money and more, they get the indexation and they have more flexibly about how that money is spent.

We know that in regional and rural areas occupancy may not always be at the same high levels and, potentially, there can be fluctuations in service requirements—and if you cannot get services in that town or to get them you have to pay more then, in many cases, viability really can be quite threatening in those situations. Fifty-four million dollars of viability payments is a very important contribution to make sure that Australian seniors can retire and have aged-care facilities in the towns where they have grown up, where they have worked and where they have given their lives. That is very important. I also note many seniors from regional areas, in a very dispersed population like Brisbane's, increasingly come down to outer metropolitan areas to find aged-care places. That puts an enormous stress on our services to respond to those demands.

Thirdly, in this series of minor, technical and consequential amendments, there is an arrangement to ensure that costs can be recovered from people who have care at home, as they can be with residential care. That makes complete sense, and it is only fair to treat people who have at-home care in the same way as those who have residential care.

Lastly, and with some credit to the previous government for embarking on the My Aged Care website and the services that have been provided, there is the acknowledgement that it will be stepping up in the middle of next year and that individuals will be able to develop their
own personal aged-care profiles. That makes complete sense and is consistent with the move, that we are having in both health and hospital provision, increasingly to not only collect data but also make sure that that data is available, because if you cannot mine the data and use it then the great threat is that that data, having been so expensive, is not at all utilised. I know that there is significant work now occurring in the US—led by GE, no less—to effectively form control towers around the management of health and hospital data. At the moment, we have a highly reactive hospital and aged-care system. We set our staffing ratios weeks in advance; we wait, often unable to predict patient flows and arrivals; and we have the 5 o'clock referral from aged-care facilities to hospitals when staff there are not confident that they can look after complex and high-needs patients over a weekend when staffing levels and experience are sometimes lower. We need to plan for that in advance. We need a highly intelligent system that could pull together multiple forms of information in health and aged care. I think that forming these profiles in the My Aged Care website is one way of doing that.

Keep in mind that a hospital and an aged-care facility are very complex environments. You have your staff flow, patient flow, use of consumables, and staff time in individual tasks. At the moment we have a very slowly responsive system that cannot actually respond when required to changes in that system, leading to blockages—obstruction within the system—and, ultimately, poor functionality. So whether it is in outpatients or whether it is an individual patient record, or whether it is in aged care with our own profile, we are determined to help Australians through that sometimes very traumatic time of finding a suitable aged-care place. It is something that the coalition government is committed to.

**Dr GILLESPIE (Lyne) (13:26):** The Aged Care and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 makes consequential, technical and other minor amendments to various measures in aged care. Aged care in the Lyne electorate is a very important sector of the economy and delivers care to thousands of nursing home residents. That is why this legislation is so important. In fact, one of the growth engines of the Lyne economy is the aged-care sector. Health and aged care are by far the greatest employers in the Lyne electorate, and changes to the legislation to make it a more robust and better functioning part of the healthcare and aged-care system are going to be very beneficial.

There are three main consequences of this legislation. The first is the repurposing of the Aged Care Workforce Supplement. The amount of money involved in this supplement will be retained within the aged-care and the My Aged Care space, and it will be used much more efficiently by the aged-care providers. The initial rollout of this supplement was used to entice people into union membership, and it really did not sit well with the industry or the recipients of care. It also represented a misuse of Commonwealth funds, in my opinion, and this redirection into the aged-care space at the discretion of the providers seems eminently reasonable.

In my home town of Wauchope we have a huge aged-care facility, and I am sure they will be very pleased to hear of these changes. Similarly, in the town of Gloucester there is an aged-care facility which is really quite ageing and ill-designed for the purpose for which it is used. I have been fighting to get some help to get a new aged-care provider into the town of Gloucester. We are hoping that Nambucca Valley Care, which runs extremely professional nursing homes on the mid-North Coast, will move into that space, and we look forward to that coming to fruition. Similarly, in the town of Taree we have several large aged-care facilities,
and I am sure they will appreciate being able to apply this aged-care supplement in a way that benefits the residents and the delivery of care, rather than being an incentive for a worker to join a union.

The My Aged Care stage 2 rollout is also going to be facilitated by this. It allows the system of enrolment and information to be centralised. The first stage of it was very helpful for people entering their parents or relatives into the aged-care system. This will help complete that process. It is a very user-friendly system, at least in the first stage, and we are looking forward to the second stage being rolled out. The third thing about the way the system works that is most important is that it equates the way the system works for aged care in the home-care setting as opposed to the residential setting. That discrepancy was very inefficient and unequal. Also, the recovery of past care costs is very important. If someone is in aged care as a result of misadventure or an accident, there is often compensation reached but that legal process can take months and years. *(Time expired)*

Debate interrupted.

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

**STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

**Budget**

Mr HUSIC (Chifley) (13:30): The evidence is mounting: the Abbott government's first terrible budget is carving up a social divide, disgracefully, along social and political lines. A study by the University of Canberra's National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling—NATSEM—has found that 16 of the 17 seats hardest-hit by the Prime Minister's budget are electorates represented by the opposition. On the national hit list, Chifley ranks as the fifth-worst affected electorate, with families to lose an estimated $806 a year due to this budget.

By contrast, how do families in the Prime Minister's and Treasurer's north shore electorates fare? According to NATSEM—and, remember, this is NATSEM's work not the Labor Party's—families in the PM's seat of Warringah will be $145 a year worse off. In the Treasurer's electorate of North Sydney, families will be $139 out of pocket. The seat best protected from a budget in which we were told we would all have to suffer is the seat of Wentworth held by the communications minister, Malcolm Turnbull. Over there, families will only be $69.50 worse off annually. So, $70 if you live in Wentworth; $806 if you live in Chifley.

People in Wentworth might be a couple of dollars short each week due to the Abbott government budget, but the hit on families in our area would roughly equate to three or four weeks' groceries for some. The Prime Minister promised, hand on heart, a 'no surprises' government, but this budget is turning out to be an absolute shocker for Western Sydney families.

**Cootamundra Shire Council**

Mr TAYLOR (Hume) (13:31): Congratulations to Cootamundra Shire Council on winning the rural category of the AR Bluett Memorial Award for local government. Winners were announced at the Local Government NSW conference earlier this week. Cootamundra
council has been praised for its planned progress over a number of years and strong engagement with the community. Council’s recent achievements have included the completion of a regional arts centre and theatre, which I was delighted to open in March this year. The federal government committed $93,000 to the project and council contributed $163,000.

Council has also overseen the completion of a new indoor heated swimming pool, public toilet upgrades, subdivision developments, a joint soil decontamination venture, as well as the gasworks rehabilitation and the protection of a World War II aircraft fuel depot. Special mention goes to Mayor Jim Slattery, Deputy Mayor Dennis Palmer and General Manager Ken Trethewey for their leadership.

I look forward to working closely and collaboratively with council to push for federal support for further infrastructure projects. The federal government has recently announced just under $2 million—in fact, $1.857 million—in Roads to Recovery funding for Cootamundra through to 2018-19, and $326,000 of that will be allocated this financial year. Roads to Recovery payments to councils, including Cootamundra, double next year, which is a tremendous windfall to all councils.

Budget

Mr GILES (Scullin) (13:33): This government, through this budget, is seeking to entrench a deep division in Australian society—in Australia and between Australians. This budget, in essence, is a road map towards a less equal Australia. People in Scullin are saying that they want a fair go. This is not a plea for special treatment—in fact, far from it. The stark divide demonstrated by the NATSEM modelling, referred to by my friend the member for Chifley a moment ago, shows that this Sheriff of Nottingham government is compounding disadvantage wherever it finds it. Elsewhere in the world, governments are tackling inequality; here, these guys are the biggest fans of inequality—they are boosting it.

The modelling shows that families in the electorate of Scullin will be around $676 a year worse off. And it gets worse. From 2017-18, low-income families will be, on average, $2,700 worse off. But this is not just about numbers; it is about families in Scullin feeling the impact of drastically curtailed day-to-day choices. This budget makes for a more limited, less hopeful world, and a less hopeful future for the children in these families.

Let’s compare that to the negligible impact in seats like Warringah and Wentworth. This is political in the most naked sense, as well as ideological. It is asking those with the least to do the most. This budget has defined current politics in Australia, but people in Scullin should know that Labor members will not allow the budget to confine the future of people in Scullin.

Robertson Electorate: Volunteers

Mrs WICKS (Robertson) (13:34): Today, I rise to honour the more than 19,000 people who, in one way or another, volunteer in our local community and in my electorate of Robertson. On behalf of our local community, I express our gratitude and appreciation to the our local residents who give of themselves tirelessly, year after year, month after month and day after day. They quietly get on with the job of serving others with their time, their skills and their care. They rarely call for recognition, but today I want to honour them. In particular, I want to honour those who won awards at the 2014 Volunteer of the Year awards on the Central Coast. Fred Leake, of Woy Woy, assists at Woy Woy South Public School. He has
dedicated the past decade to assisting students and teachers in the classroom. He is passionate about education and our young people. At the age of 90, he was acknowledged as the Central Coast volunteer of the year and, also, senior volunteer of the year.

The student volunteer of the year award went to Aidan Morley, also of Woy Woy, who volunteers with HammondCare. Aged at just 15, he is caring for his community by supporting dementia patients and also by aiding the Red Shield Appeal, 40 Hour Famine and the Coast Shelter. Clint Pressley, of the Rural Fire Service, was also recognised. It was humbling to meet these award recipients at the Central Coast Leagues Club. I thank Gemma Rygate, the Centre for Volunteering's CEO, for the invitation.

Australia has always been a nation of volunteers. Their work, each and every day, makes our country a better place.

Budget

Mr CLARE (Blaxland) (13:36): When I was a kid, the big football battle was between Wests and Manly—yes, Max Krilich versus Tommy Raudonikis, the beach versus the 'burbs, the fibros versus the silvertails. I thought those days were gone, but they are back in this budget. We have been saying for months how unfair this budget is, and now we have the evidence that proves it. This NATSEM report shows that the poorer you are, the more you have to pay. If you have a look at the report you will find that in the Prime Minister's electorate, in Manly, the average family is $144 worse off. But in my electorate, in Western Sydney—not far from Lidcombe Oval, where those great battles used to take place between Wests and Manly—the average family is $990 worse off. That means that the people in my electorate are seven times more worse off than the people of Manly. This mob on the other side say that that is fair. I represent some of the poorest people in this country and they are hardest hit by this unfair budget.

We have the Treasurer saying everybody has to pull their weight, but that is not what is happening. They are slugging the people of Western Sydney, they are slugging the people of my electorate—the Howard battlers, Tony's tradies; they are the people that this budget is kicking in the guts. So I issue this challenge to the Prime Minister and to the Treasurer: if you have the guts, come to my electorate and look the people in the eye and explain to them why this budget is fair.

O'Connor Electorate: National Anzac Centre

Mr WILSON (O'Connor) (13:37): I rise today with a good news story and a positive story—that is, the completion of the National Anzac Centre in Albany. The city of Albany and the RSL hosted a preview with a soft opening last week and I am pleased to announce that it surpassed all expectations. Visitors can embrace the virtual view of the first and second convoys, which gathered on the seaward side of Ataturk Channel, or sit in silent reflection by the remembrance pond, through which the 41,000 names of the brave Anzacs who left these shores slowly and respectfully scroll.

Upon first entering the National Anzac Centre, visitors are given an identity card, allowing them to walk in the boots of one of the 32 different Anzac characters, from nurses to servicemen of all ranks, ages and backgrounds. Each personal story unfolds through an interactive multimedia display accompanied by a personalised audio commentary. Every visitor has their own individual experience of the First World War, relived through the eyes
and stories of their very own Anzac. Starting with recruitment, their journey is followed through training and embarkation to engagement in the conflicts in the Indian Ocean prior to their arrival in Egypt then on to Gallipoli, Palestine and the Sinai, and across to the Western Front.

The centre will be officially opened by the Prime Minister on 1 November 2014 to mark the centenary of the Australian and New Zealand troop convoy departure from King George Sound in Albany to the First World War. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the city of Albany, the WA state government and the federal government and the RSL for working collaboratively to deliver this project on time and on budget, and welcome everyone across Australia to come and experience Albany's contribution. (Time expired)

Budget

Mr HAYES (Fowler—Chief Opposition Whip) (13:39): There is much to be proud of in my electorate. It is the most multicultural electorate in the whole of Australia. The people work tirelessly to provide opportunities for their kids. But how do you think they felt when they read the papers the other day to see the latest NATSEM study that shows that families in my electorate will be $741 worse off per year. They knew that they were going to be worse off out of this budget, but they then compared that to the families in the Prime Minister's seat of Warringah and found out that they would be five times worse off than the average family in Warringah. In the electorate of Wentworth, the average family will be only $69 worse off per year. Compare that to the $741 per family in my electorate who will be worse off out of this budget. This is because of the measures that will be implemented out of this budget, even before we start talking about winding back the schoolkids bonus.

There are many hardworking people out there trying to do the right thing and make a difference for the better for their families to give them a future. Many in my electorate ask why it is that this government is prepared to make people in working-class areas that I represent have the heaviest burden in paying for this government's broken promises.

Corangamite Electorate: Broadband

Ms HENDERSON (Corangamite) (13:40): I rise to celebrate the news that telecommunications provider, iiNet, is upgrading its cable broadband service across the Geelong region. Geelong is one of few centres in Victoria to have cable broadband, formerly known as neighbourhood cable. This technology, hybrid fibre-coaxial or HFC, was first deployed in Australia by cable television providers but is now widely used to deliver broadband services. iiNet's HFC technology can deliver speeds from 12 megabits per second up to superfast speeds of 100 megabits per second. iiNet has announced this week it is doubling its capacity to around 50,000 premises in Geelong, including large parts of suburbs in the Corangamite electorate—Grovedale, Belmont, Highton and Waurn Ponds.

After the southern suburbs of Geelong were left off the NBN roll out by Labor, our government's NBN which embraces a multitechnology mix encourages companies like iiNet to keep on investing in its network. I have taken up the case of many Corangamite residents who have struggled with poor broadband or no access to ADSL. For local residents looking for a better service, I would urge them to investigate the iiNet option. It may not be part of the NBN network at this point in time, but iiNet's cable broadband is delivering an NBN-like service right now in our great city.
Budget

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (13:42): We did not need the recent NATSEM modelling to know that the Abbott government's shameful budget was unfair. It screamed it from the dispatch box on that very night—attacks on the low paid, pensioners, families, people on disability pensions, veterans and anybody under the age of 30. We on this side knew it was unfair and the people knew it.

Mr Hutchinson interjecting—

Ms OWENS: But if there was anyone out there, including the member interjecting, who had any doubt at all, the NATSEM modelling lays it all bare. Tony Abbott's vision for our nation is that the poorer you are, the more you have to pay. It is no accident either that 16 of the 17 electorates that are worst affected by this budget are Labor electorates. They have not imposed the savage cuts on the people they represent; they have imposed it on the people that I represent.

In the Prime Minister's electorate on average a person will be $144 worse off in 2017, even after you take into account the abolition of the price on carbon. In my electorate of Parramatta, it will not be $144 or $244 or even $444; they will be over $640 worse off—4.5 times more again than people in the Prime Minister's electorate, even though the median income in my electorate is $400 a week less than that in Warringah. This budget is unfair and we on this side of the House will fight it to the end.

Australian Red Cross

Mr O'DOWD (Flynn) (13:43): This year marks 100 years of service in Australia for the Red Cross. The Red Cross is one of the oldest and largest humanitarian movements in the world. The centenary milestone is a time to celebrate the achievements of the Red Cross and thank them for their support and generosity to the community. Responding to the outbreak of the First World War, the Red Cross began operations in Australia on 13 August 1914. It began as the Australian branch of the British Red Cross Society at Government House in Melbourne.

Today, there are one million Red Cross members, volunteers, donors, staff, blood donors, recipients and supporters across Australia. Many local branches were established throughout the country, many throughout the electorate of Flynn, including Gladstone, Biloela, Emerald and Gayndah.

Over the years, countless volunteers have generously given their time, energy and resources to help others. For many families, the Red Cross volunteers have supported parents and grandparents in past wars. They provided support for soldiers and their families, including the preparation of care packages. Red Cross volunteers have provided invaluable support to communities faced with disaster here and abroad. During the floods in Central Queensland at the beginning of 2013, Red Cross teams called on flood-affected households in the Boyne Valley and Banana Shire, visiting towns from Dululu in the north to Monto in the south, providing great assistance. Well done and thank you.

Budget

Ms ROWLAND (Greenway) (13:45): It has been said of the Australian people, 'They will respond to an argument for change and reform but they want two requirements. They want to
be satisfied it's in the national interest, because they have a deep sense of nationalism and patriotism. They also want to be satisfied it's fundamentally fair.' Those are not my words; those are the words of former Prime Minister John Howard in a clear rebuke to the Prime Minister and Treasurer for this budget. This budget is neither in the national interest or fair. When I listen to Greenway residents in their homes in The Ponds, doing the morning commute at Quakers Hill Station or going about their business at Lalor Park Shops, their anger about this government and this budget is visceral. They are angry because they know that 'fairness' and 'equality' are not in this government's vocabulary—not when research recently released by NATSEM shows that, under this budget, my electorate of Greenway is experiencing over four times the cuts than the electorates of the Prime Minister and Treasurer are experiencing.

Greenway families will on average be over $1,600 worse off each year because of this shameful budget. Let us be clear how overwhelmingly disproportionate this is. If we were to combine the financial impact of the budget on the electorates of the Prime Minister, the Treasurer, the Minister for Communications and Minister for Foreign Affairs, they would still be $150 better off per year than the people of Greenway. This government has no conscience when it comes to targeting Greenway residents. (Time expired)

Capricornia Electorate

Ms LANDRY (Capricornia) (13:47): Recently, I had the privilege of hosting the Prime Minister in Capricornia. The Prime Minister attended a community afternoon tea at Rockhampton Girls Grammar School. The event acknowledged the hard work of groups that make a huge contribution to our community such as Red Cross, Meals on Wheels, SES volunteers, Bushfire fighters, schools, the Salvos and many other proud community groups. Talented students from North Rockhampton High, Rockhampton High and Girls Grammar provided background music for the event. During his address the Prime Minister talked up the need for dams, calling on the nation to 'get over' its dam phobia.

I have been lobbying hard for Connors Dam between Sarina and Moranbah, the Fitzroy Corridor and the Urannah Dam to benefit Collinsville. I am pleased these projects were mentioned in the green paper on agricultural competitiveness. While in Capricornia, the Prime Minister added his support to Australia's coal industry which, despite a current downturn, is a vital part of Central Queensland's economy and a significant contributor to national GDP.

Finally, during his stopover the Prime Minister shopped at Georges, an iconic Rockhampton clothing store run by Catherine George. The family retail brand started with her grandfather in Rockhampton back in 1899.

Budget

Ms VAMVAKINOU (Calwell) (13:48): The recent report by the University of Canberra's National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling details the impact of the federal budget on electorates across the country. The report has finally exposed beyond doubt this government's real intentions and twisted priorities and lack of commitment to the overall welfare of the Australian community. Through its budget of broken promises and unfair cuts, this government is hurting my constituents the most, putting families under pressure, pensioners under pressure and young people under pressure. Calwell is the most adversely affected seat in Victoria and in the top 16 most affected nationally.
As a fair-minded Australian representing one of the most socioeconomically disadvantaged electorates in Australia, I am appalled that this budget offers little hope and encouragement to my constituents but rather dishes out plenty of blame and lots of punishment. My constituents are among those who can afford it least and they should not have to prop up those who can afford it most. I am not on a whinge fest, nor am I peddling class envy. I am simply pointing out an obvious discrepancy in the impact of the federal budget that goes to the core of this government's value system—slug the poor and let the wealthy off the hook.

It is no coincidence that, when you compare the results of the NATSEM report, it shows that 15 of the 16 most affected seats are safe Labor seats. Compare that to the other least affected seats, which are coalition seats, and one needs say no more.

Cancer

Mrs McNAMARA (Dobell) (13:49): With one in two Australians diagnosed with cancer before the age of the 85, we have all experienced the sobering reality of a loved one affected by this disease. For 14 years, the Central Coast Cancer Council's Relay For Life has brought the Central Coast community together to recognise and celebrate cancer survivors, patients and their carers to honour and remember loved ones lost to cancer and to raise money to help save lives. Held at the Mingara Recreation Club, Relay For Life is an inspirational and moving overnight experience that unites local communities to fight cancer. Commencing at 3 pm last Saturday week and running nonstop until 9 am the next morning, the relay raises vital funds the Cancer Council's research, prevention, information and support services.

This year I had the great honour of officially launching the relay, which saw close to 2,000 participants from 130 teams aiming to raise $422,000. Mingara was awash with enthusiasm and a festival atmosphere we relay participants of all ages were joined by family and friends. One team, Team Kea, raised an amazing $16,488 to honour the wishes of Kea Alexander, who unfortunately passed away in May 2009 at the young age of 23.

These people are driven by wanting to help find a cure for cancer. I would like to thank Sara Russell and the team from the Cancer Council Hunter Central Coast region and the wonderful army of volunteers led by Glenys Rowe who were responsible for the success of this year's Relay For Life. I look forward to joining next year for another successful fundraiser for cancer research.

Budget

Mr BOWEN (McMahon) (13:51): A political party which campaigned on cost of living at the last election has delivered a blow in their budget to Australia's earning below average incomes and the Australian people know it. It is a budget built on fundamental unfairness and above all built on prejudice against working people, prejudice against people who dare to vote for the Australian Labor Party.

That is what we saw from the government in their budget. In Western Sydney we see it. In capital cities right across Australia we see it, and in rural and regional Australia we see it. And the Liberal Party and National Party are not standing up to people on low and middle incomes.

In my own electorate of McMahon in Western Sydney, we see the impact of this budget on the people—$596 worse off as a result of this Prime Minister and this Treasurer. This Prime Minister and this Treasurer have bought down a budget which is not hard at all on their own
electorates. They are tough on the weak but they are weak when it comes to standing up for fairness in Australian political life.

They are full of rhetoric about lifters and leaners, but we know who they think the leaners are: the leaners are the working families of Australia who dare to vote for the Australian Labor Party; the leaners are the workers of Australia who commit no crime but save for their future through superannuation. This is a government built around prejudice—prejudice against working people.

75th Anniversary Bicheno Primary School

Mr HUTCHINSON (Lyons) (13:53): There is nothing fair about stealing from my children, nothing at all—the Bicheno Primary School on Tasmania’s beautiful east coast recently celebrated its 75th birthday. For a small country school of nearly 100 students, it was a big day made possible by the dedicated school association: president Phil Sliskovic, secretary Alison Oliver, vice president Kate de Boer and treasurer Allison Whelan spent a number of months organising the anniversary school fair which I was most pleased to be asked to officially open. It was a huge success, with nearly 500 people turning up to the school’s activities and cake cutting.

Mrs Oliver has been associated with the school for a long time. Both she and her husband Ricki are former students, and their children, Aaron and Ria, also attended to school.

Bicheno opened as a school in 1939 after Mr Aub Bailey and a couple of helpers relocated an unused schoolhouse at Runnymede. It remained a one-teacher school until the late 1950s.

Local bus driver Bill Bailey was given the first contract to transport children to Bicheno from the nearby Llandaff school after it closed. A new school was built in 1957 to accommodate a steadily increasing number of students.

Lisa Neubecker is the current acting principal and presides over a primary school now complete with kindergarten and prep classes also co-located with the Little Penguins Child Care Centre.

Congratulations to the community at Bicheno and the school association on what was truly a wonderful community event supported by the east coast community.

Budget

Dr CHALMERS (Rankin) (13:55): The Prime Minister and the Treasurer should come to my community of Rankin. They should go door to door and explain to the good people in my area why they deserve to pay almost four times more for this unfair budget than the people in their own electorates of Warringah and North Sydney. The average slug in my electorate is $533 a year; in the Prime Minister’s electorate, it is only $144 a year.

My community is the hardest hit in Queensland, and that is because this budget rests on a brutal truth: the most vulnerable people in our community and in our country pay more for this budget; they carry the can for this government’s heartless ideology.

This is not an accidental or unavoidable outcome of this budget. They are dividing people in our nation, not by accident but by design. They are hurting people in my community, not by accident and not by design. They are tearing and ripping at the social fabric of Australia, not by accident but by design. They should stop pretending this budget is about anything other than that.
It is my electorate in Queensland which pays for their broken promises. They pay more for the doctor, for uni, for petrol, for medicine, and to get their cancer imaging done; and they get less in return: less payment, less for their schools and less for their hospitals.

This is the most divisive Prime Minister with the most grubby and divisive budget since Federation. If he thinks my community or our communities will forget it, he has got another thing coming.

**Barker Electorate: Agricultural Shows**

**Mr PASIN** (Barker) (13:56): I rise to advise the House that it is currently agricultural show and field day season in my electorate of Barker and, as such, I have enjoyed the opportunity of attending a multitude of shows in the electorate over recent weeks.

Agricultural shows and field days promote the best of what local communities have to offer and provide an invaluable chance for regional families to exchange ideas and to socialise with those who hold common interests. Coming from a farming family, I appreciate how important these events are in strengthening regional communities.

Each of these shows regularly attracts crowds in the thousands, and it gives me a terrific opportunity to relocate my electoral office for a day or two and to hear about issues affecting rural constituents.

In particular, I wish to pay tribute to the organisers of the 98th Annual Pinnaroo Show and Field Day, in particular president Mr Jeremy Schutz; the organisers of the Keith and Tintinara District Show, in particular president Mr Glen Simpson; the organisers of the Naracoorte Show and Ute Muster, in particular, president Chris Higgs.

I also want to congratulate the Agricultural Societies Council of South Australia for continuing its Rural Ambassador program. This exceptional program is not only securing the future of agricultural shows in South Australia but also providing participants with invaluable experiences.

Well done to Cassie Ryan of Keith and Pinnaroo's Luke Nuske on their successful selection as Rural Ambassadors via that program. I am sure they will serve their communities with distinction during their respective terms, and I look forward to working with them.

**Budget**

**Ms RYAN** (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (13:58): According to NATSEM, families in the Prime Minister's own electorate will be $144 worse off every year because of his unfair budget; but families in my electorate of Lalor will be $578 worse of every year.

The 60,000 families of Lalor earning an average of just over $2,000 a week will be $578 worse off while the 40,000 families in Warringah earning on average just over $3,000 a week—that is $3,000 compared to $2,000—will only be $144 a week worse off.

This stark contrast shows us clearly that the Abbott government is privileging the privileged and punishing the rest of us. The young, the old and the families in Lalor ask me: Joanne, is it just that the Liberals don't know anyone like us or is it that they just don't care?

Not only this: Lalor families will be hurt by all the other cruel budget measures—the cuts to schools, the cuts to pensions, the cuts to child care, the introduction of the toxic GP tax, and the cruel youth job seeker measures.
Contrary to what those opposite say, this callous inequity will not assist our economy; it will stymie economic growth. I rise with my colleagues today to tell the Prime Minister: We are not leaners; we are— (Time expired)

McHappy Day

Mr TONY SMITH (Casey) (13:59): Like many members in this House, I was pleased to participate in McHappy Day last Saturday at the Lilydale restaurant in my electorate of Casey. Lilydale McDonald's has been a big supporter of McHappy Day and last year raised the second highest of any store in Victoria.

This year's McHappy Day was run by Riley Walsh and the dedicated team. I pay tribute to them on raising nearly $10,000.

STATEMENTS

Ottawa: Attack

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:00): As we all know, overnight there has been an attack on the Canadian parliament. A soldier has been killed and others have been wounded following the terrorist murder of a Canadian soldier the day before.

Apart from New Zealand, no country on earth is more akin to Australia than Canada. We are both multicultural federations with British institutions. They speak our language and they share our heritage and our danger. More than 100 Canadians are believed to be fighting with the ISIL death cult and other terrorist groups in the Middle East and more have been infected with Godless fanaticism.

Today, more than ever, Australians and Canadians are family. We feel Canada's shock, pain and anger. I have been in their parliament. I have been at their War Memorial—as have so many of us. I regard Stephen Harper, their Prime Minister, as a friend and almost a brother. So an attack on their parliament is an affront to this parliament too. So today we stand shoulder to shoulder with our Canadian comrades in defiance and resolution. We stand for freedom and for the right of all people in all places to choose their way of life and their way of worship. We always have and we always will.

Finally, I note the presence in our parliament today of Canada's High Commissioner. I hope that he finds some comfort on this day in the solidarity of our parliament with his.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:02): On indulgence—I thank the Prime Minister for updating the House, and on behalf of the opposition I too welcome the Canadian High Commissioner to our parliament. I would ask him to pass on our thoughts in particular today to the family of Corporal Nathan Cirillo, the Army Reservist killed whilst standing watch at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and to the Parliamentary Security Officer who is recovering in hospital. The eyes of the world are upon them and they are in Australian hearts today. The reservist was from the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, a regiment affiliated with the Royal New South Wales Regiment. Like all reservists, he was a patriot and proud to serve his country.

The footage that has rolled across our television screens today captures something of the fear and confusion that gripped all of the innocent people in the Canadian parliament and those paying their respects at the Canadian War Memorial. It must have been especially
confronting today for all the diligent and dedicated staff of our building and our War Memorial and their families. They serve this parliament with honour and they care for our War Memorial—which John Curtin called 'Our nation's great treasure house'—with dignity and respect.

In a broader sense, all Australians will feel affected by today. Australia and Canada share so much—a rich indigenous tradition, a Commonwealth history, military service together, multicultural societies, a love of peace, a vast and beautiful environment and an optimistic, reverent people of talent and vision. Because of all we share, it is only natural that the two buildings attacked in Canada carry an instant feeling of the familiar, and that amplifies our surprise.

But today should not be cause for fear. Australians should continue to draw comfort and confidence from the professionalism and skill of all those who work to keep us safe. In our free nation, our parliament, our War Memorial and our public buildings are open to the public—they belong to the people. Today will not change that. Nothing will change that. As Prime Minister Harper said today, 'Let there be no misunderstanding. We will not be intimidated.' Australia, as the Prime Minister said, stands with Canada today. We will never surrender to hatred, violence or extremism.

I conclude with a point I have made before. When it comes to fighting terrorism, we are in this together. It is important that we have a bipartisan approach—we have and we do. Tom Mulcair, the leader of Canada's New Democrats, said an hour or two ago:

These acts were driven by hatred, but also designed to drive us to hate.

There is more than enough hate in the world today. We need to be careful not to create any more by our words or our actions. We need to be as tough and unrelenting as necessary, but we also have to remember to preserve the lifestyle and freedom we love so much. That is what we are bipartisan about.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

The SPEAKER (14:05): Your Excellency, Mr Michael Small, High Commissioner, can I say to you on behalf of this chamber and indeed the parliament—and I acknowledge the presence of the senators in the chamber with us—that we echo as a parliament the sentiments just expressed by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition and we ask that you convey to your parliament that we as parliamentarians stand shoulder to shoulder with your parliamentarians in determining that we will always stand up for the rights of our people and that we will always protect the freedom of which our leaders have spoken. We appreciate your being in the chamber today.

As a mark of respect, I invite honourable members to rise in their places.

Honourable members having stood in their places—

The SPEAKER: I thank the House.

MINISTERIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:06): I inform the House that the Deputy Prime Minister will be absent from question time today attending to personal matters. The Minister for Foreign Affairs will answer questions on his behalf and the Minister for Trade will answer questions on behalf of the Treasurer.
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Ebola

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:07): My question is to the Prime Minister. In the last 24 hours we have heard conflicting accounts of the government’s preparedness to respond to the Ebola crisis from: one, the Chief Medical Officer; two, the head of the health department; three, the head of the foreign affairs department; four, the Defence Force; and, five, the immigration minister. Prime Minister, Australia needs leadership on this issue. Just who is in charge and are we ready?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:07): We are ready and obviously I take ultimate responsibility for our readiness and for what we do in response to the Ebola disaster now unfolding in west Africa. I can say that Australia has already responded very significantly to the Ebola crisis in west Africa. First we committed $1 million, then we committed $7 million, most recently we committed $10 million to the UN fund and, after we responded immediately to that particular request, UN spokesman Nabarro praised Australia and said that we had responded in a swift and effective manner and he invited other countries to do likewise.

While we are responding in west Africa, as we should, our priority inevitably is here at home and in our region. I can advise the House that the NSC has discussed Ebola on at least six separate occasions—I am advised by the health minister—most recently yesterday. The Chief Medical Officer is in almost daily contact with the state chief health officers to ensure that in every state there is an adult and a children’s hospital which is the designated Ebola response institution should an Ebola case turn up on our shores.

We are ready to respond in our region. We have a team of 20 healthcare workers—four doctors and 16 nurses—who have been specially trained in the care of Ebola patients and the use of high-level personal protective equipment at the national critical care trauma centre in Darwin. They are fully vaccinated, fully acclimatised to work in the heat of our region, and this group could be deployed immediately out of Darwin for a four-week period. So I am pleased to have the question from the Leader of the Opposition. This is a very important topic. Australia is determined to be a good international citizen on this subject, as on all subjects, and we continue to carefully monitor the situation in west Africa and to talk to our friends, partners and allies about an appropriate response.

National Security

Mr HOWARTH (Petrie) (14:10): My question is addressed to the Prime Minister. Will the Prime Minister please inform the House on action the government is taking to strengthen our national security?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:10): I do thank the member for Petrie for his question. As we have been reminded yet again overnight, the terrorist threat to our people, to our institutions and to our way of life is real. It is real here and it is real in other similar countries. As I have said before, in a peaceful democracy we are reluctant to reach out to conflicts overseas, but those conflicts are reaching out to us. There are at least 60 Australians, that we know of, fighting with ISIL and other terrorist groups in the Middle East. There are at least 100 that we know of supporting them with recruitment and funding. Almost 70
Australians have now had their passports cancelled to prevent them from joining terrorist groups overseas.

Last month an extremist fanatic attacked two policemen in Victoria, and this week we have had two attacks in Canada. The ISIL death cult has declared war on the world, not because of anything that we have done but because of who we are and how we live. It is important that we respond effectively. The government has provided an additional $630 million over four years to our security agencies. We are strengthening the laws on agency powers and, in the parliament over this sitting period, on foreign fighters. Again I wish to thank the Leader of the Opposition for his strong bipartisan support.

Importantly, we are significantly upgrading security here at Parliament House as we have in our community more generally. Following a review six weeks ago, there are now armed officers in this building at all times, and there are lockdown procedures in place if required. Importantly, the Australian Federal Police are in charge of security both outside and inside this building, which is as it should be. I want to thank you, Madam Speaker, and the President of the Senate, for the way you have handled this matter. I want to assure everyone working in or visiting this building that your safety is paramount. As always, this government will do whatever is possible to keep our people safe. All our efforts are directed against terrorism, not religion, and I urge Australians to live normally, because the objective of the terrorists is to scare us from being ourselves.

Ebola

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:13): My question is to the Prime Minister. Yesterday the Prime Minister spoke to the US President and they discussed Australia making additional contributions to the Ebola crisis response. The UK Prime Minister has also called for Australia to send personnel to west Africa. Indeed, today in Senate estimates the Department of Foreign Affairs revealed that specific requests for Australia to send personnel were made by both the US and the UK governments in September. Now that these requests from our close friends and allies are public, how will the Prime Minister respond?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:14): I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for her question. She is absolutely right. Yesterday I did have a quite lengthy discussion with President Obama about a range of subjects: about the situation in the Middle East, about the upcoming G20, about matters in our region, and also about the Ebola crisis. Yes, our partners and allies would like us to do more, and we are carefully considering those requests. I do point out, though, that there is a world of difference between people volunteering to assist—and I salute their selfless humanitarianism—and people being ordered into a difficult and dangerous region.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence on my left!

Mr ABBOTT: Where personnel, such as military personnel, are being—

Mr Conroy interjecting—

Honourable members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence on my left! That includes the member for Charlton.
Mr ABBOTT: deployed into any particular region, it is vital that risk mitigation strategies be in place—

Mr Dutton interjecting—

Honourable members interjecting—

Mr ABBOTT: I love the assistance of my colleagues, but I would like some silence if that is okay.

The SPEAKER: There will be silence all round. The Prime Minister has the call.

Mr ABBOTT: Where it is proposed by the Australian government to order personnel into harm’s way, it is absolutely critical that appropriate risk mitigation procedures be in place. As both the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Health have pointed out on numerous occasions, we are a 30-hour flight away from west Africa. It is impossible safely to evacuate personnel from west Africa to Australia, and as yet there are no facilities in-country which we believe could adequately handle Australian personnel who had been ordered to the area. Australia has initiated a number of conversations with our friends and partners. Those conversations are ongoing, and we are determined to do what we can to help, but the safety of Australian personnel must be paramount, the security of our region must be paramount and the security of our people must be paramount. And that is something that is my duty, and it is a duty that I am determined to discharge.

National Security

Mr HAWKE (Mitchell) (14:16): My question is to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Will the minister update the House on the government’s cooperation with key security partners on counter-terrorism and its efforts to combat the threat posed by foreign fighters?

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin—Minister for Foreign Affairs) (14:17): I thank the member for Mitchell for his question. In expressing our solidarity with the people and the parliament of Canada, may I also add that I made contact with Foreign Minister John Baird at 4 am, Canberra time, this morning. I was concerned to find out where he was in the world, as foreign ministers tend to travel, and also whether he was safe. He responded by informing me that he had in fact been just metres away from the gunman in the parliament and that he was, at that moment, barricaded within the building. I expressed our deep concerns for his safety and that of his fellow parliamentarians and the people in the vicinity. I also spoke with High Commissioner Michael Small this morning and extended our sympathies to the people of Canada and, specifically, the family of the Canadian Armed Forces member who was killed at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

Like Australia, Canada has a number of citizens who have taken up the fight with this murderous terrorist organisation ISIL. Canada estimates that it has about 130 citizens who are supporting or fighting with ISIL in some way. Australia estimates about 160 Australian citizens, as the Prime Minister indicated. Canada is also part of the international coalition to support the Iraqi government in combating ISIL, taking back territory and destroying the infrastructure and the organisation that is carrying out these brutal killings in Iraq. We are working closely with Canada but also with countries in our region—Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaysia in particular. We are also working very closely with a number of nations in the Middle East, through counter-terrorism networks. Our security, intelligence and...
defence organisations are working very closely, with this common, united view that we must combat ISIL, or Daesh, as it is called in the Middle East.

The chilling video of a young—17-year-old—Australian threatening his country as he takes up arms with ISIL shows that we must take immediate steps, a strong response, to counter this threat. Under the foreign fighters legislation, I will have the authority to suspend passports of those who we believe pose a security risk to this nation. I am currently able to cancel passports, or refuse to issue passports, and at this stage 70 passports have been cancelled on the grounds that the holder poses a risk to this nation. The government is taking all necessary steps to combat terrorism, all necessary steps to keep this country safe.

Health Care

Ms KING (Ballarat) (14:20): My question is to the Prime Minister. Yesterday during question time the Prime Minister said:
The propositions that are being put by members opposite are simply false. They are simply false. How is the Prime Minister's information different to that of the Australian Diagnostic Imaging Association, which says that general patients could pay up to $2,207 in up-front costs to have liver metastasis diagnosed? Does the Prime Minister not understand the pain that his unfair and chaotic budget is inflicting on Australians, or does he just not care?

The SPEAKER: The Prime Minister has the call and will ignore the last part of the question, as it is argument and out of order.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:21): As the member who asked the question would well know, in the end what people are charged is a matter for the doctors. That is a matter for the doctors.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: There will be silence while the question is answered!

Mr ABBOTT: But the same support will be in place for doctors who charge a $7 co-payment as is currently in place for those who bulk-bill patients.

Hobart: Macquarie Point

Mr WILKIE (Denison) (14:21): My question is to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, representing the Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development. Minister, I helped secure a $50 million grant to refurbish Macquarie Point in Hobart and unleash $1 billion in investment. This is the largest brownfield site left in any capital city, but the state government is now talking about using it for a woodchip pile. Minister, surely this is at odds with any agreement with the Commonwealth, in which case will you immediately quash this plan?

Ms JULIE BISHOP (Curtin—Minister for Foreign Affairs) (14:22): I thank the member for Denison for his question. I am advised that there was a project agreement for the remediation of the Macquarie Point rail yard signed in June 2012 between the former federal Labor government and the former state Labor government. I am also advised that the proposal relating to another use of land does not relate to the scope of this agreement. Therefore, the state Liberal government is fully compliant with the agreement.
National Security

Mr ALEXANDER (Bennelong) (14:23): My question is for the Minister for Justice. Will the minister inform the House what measures federal law enforcement agencies are taking to keep all Australians safe and our public buildings secure?

Mr KEENAN (Stirling—Minister for Justice) (14:23): I thank the member for Bennelong for that question. I would like to reiterate the words of the Prime Minister and the foreign minister that the news from Canada last night is very disturbing and a very real reminder to us all of the threats that we face and the threats that our allies face. We need to be mindful in Australia of the heightened security threat environment, but Australians also need to be reassured that the government is committed to ensuring their safety and the security of our public buildings. It is vitally important that this building as well as other significant national buildings remain open to the public. We live in a free society, and I think that every member of this House will join me in our commitment to preserving that.

Madam Speaker, you and the President in conjunction with the government six weeks ago commissioned a security review of this building, and as a result we have deployed more armed AFP officers both inside and outside Parliament House. We have enhanced our tactical response capabilities. We have increased our dedicated protective security and liaison teams based at Parliament House and we have enhanced screening measures for those entering the building. These measures create an additional layer to the normal patrolling and response measures that have been in place for some time. Madam Speaker, you, the President and the government remain confident that we have taken the necessary steps to ensure the safety of this building.

The risk of such an attack on home soil is something this government remains concerned about, but we are taking every possible measure to equip our law enforcement and intelligence community with the resources that they need to deal with this threat. That is why we have invested $630 million, $64 million of which will enhance the ability of federal law enforcement to combat the threat. The major component of this investment is for an AFP led multiagency disruption group. This group is a dedicated unit focused on both traditional and non-traditional ways of disrupting extremists and their support networks. Law enforcement will be going after extremists in whatever way they can. They will prosecute extremists and disrupt them under any offence possible to keep them off our streets. These methods could include the cancellation of their Centrelink payments, proceeds of crime actions, cancellation of passports or even taxation compliance checks. This will be bolstered by the establishment of an AFP diversion team which will work hand in glove to identify persons at risk of criminal behaviour and divert them before they are radicalised and go down the wrong path.

This requires the unprecedented cooperation across government. That is why the national disruption group will have the ability to co-opt any arm of the federal government which may be able to contribute to the disruption of extremists, be it law enforcement, the Taxation Office, immigration or human services. We will deploy every available resource to make sure that we are combating and disrupting foreign fighters and keeping the Australian community safe.
Budget

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:26): My question is to the Prime Minister. At Senate estimates yesterday the Department of Health confirmed that, because of the GP tax and the Prime Minister's decision to cut the bulk billing incentive, there will be around 680,000 fewer diagnostic imagine services in 2015-16 and almost one million fewer by 2017. Was the Prime Minister aware of these consequences when he made the decision to cut bulk billing and does he understand the consequences of his decision?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:27): The short answer is yes and yes. We were advised in the lead-up to the budget that, as a result of the decision by the government to charge a modest co-payment or to seek to have a modest co-payment for visits to the GP and visits to the diagnostican, there could be a one per cent reduction in the total usage of these services. At the moment, there are well over 100 million GP visits a year, and about a one per cent reduction to these services was the estimate we were given.

Ms Macklin interjecting—
Ms Butler interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Jagajaga will desist. The member for Griffith will desist.

Mr ABBOTT: But this line of questioning is not new. The last time a modest co-payment was imposed, a Prime Minister was asked about the consequences for patients.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order on direct relevance. The question goes to whether or not people will be diagnosed with sicknesses like cancer.

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

Mr ABBOTT: As the Manager of Opposition Business should know, I have said that we have been advised by the department that there will be about a one per cent reduction in the use of services.

Ms Macklin: You don't care.

The SPEAKER: The member for Jagajaga is warned.

Mr Perrett interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Moreton will also desist.

Mr ABBOTT: A previous Prime Minister who imposed a co-payment—someone who should be well known and well loved to members opposite—was asked about the impact on cancer patients of the co-payment. He said:

Is anyone seriously suggesting that, in the circumstance you're talking about, where there is the possibility of breast cancer, that is going to stop them going to the doctor? I mean, that is emotionalism being played at the lowest level.

Let me repeat the words of Bob Hawke in response to questions of the type members opposite are now asking:

... that is emotionalism being played at the lowest level.

Bob Hawke was a leader. Bob Hawke was a reformer. Bob Hawke was a great Prime Minister.

Mr Perrett interjecting—
The SPEAKER: The member for Moreton is warned!

Mr ABBOTT: I am not without respect for the Leader of the Opposition and I am not without gratitude to the Leader of the Opposition for his statesmanship and bipartisanship on matters of national security. But when it comes to economic security he really should lift his game.

Ebola

Mr TEHAN (Wannon) (14:30): My question is to the Minister for Health. Will the minister update the House on the steps the government is taking to ensure we are prepared in the event of a confirmed the Ebola diagnosis in Australia?

Mr DUTTON (Dickson—Minister for Health and Minister for Sport) (14:30): I thank the member for Wannon very much for his question. I want to quote from Labor Senator Jan McLucas, who said last night in Senate estimates:

I want to confirm from my perspective the domestic preparedness is as it should be for a first world country, and that is great.

Even Senator Di Natale, the Greens senator, said:

I think, to be frank, Australia is in one of the best positions anywhere in the world to respond to a domestic outbreak.

Jan McLucas went on to say:

I reaffirm my view that our domestic preparedness is fantastic.

I think that is the case and I think Australian is are hearing a lot at the moment by way of scare campaigns, but I want to provide this reassurance: we have one of the best health systems in the world; we have a workforce which is trained to the highest standards in the world; and if we have a presentation of an Ebola case on our shores coming through the ports or presenting at an emergency department, we have the best capacity to deal with that case and deal with it we will. We have doctors and nurses and allied health professionals trained as tertiary hospitals around the country, as the Prime Minister pointed out before. We have the ability to trace people with whom that patient has had contact, and we can provide testing on a rapid basis to confirm whether or not that person has the virus. That is what you would expect from a developed nation like ours. It is in contrast to some of the terrible images and outcomes that people are seeing in West Africa at the moment. It is the case in Nigeria, for argument’s sake, that they have been able to contain the virus and they have been able to remove themselves from the list which would see their country in the same circumstance as perhaps somewhere like Sierra Leone might. The situation in those countries obviously is very different for a number of reasons, including low standards of training within health care facilities. The ability for us to deal with it in this country is very, very different than what people are seeing playing out on their television screens in West Africa.

I want to also say to the House that I am very concerned about some of the scare campaign than is being run at the moment by those opposite. This is an issue where there should be a bipartisan approach. I think if you contrast the words of the Leader of the Opposition, he has tried, as best he can, to be a little more responsible than the left of his own party. It is regrettable that health workers around the country—

Ms Butler interjecting—

CHAMBER
The SPEAKER: The member for Griffith is warned!

Mr DUTTON: It is regrettable that health workers around the country are being questioned by those opposite. At least when Craig Thomson was in this place he pretended to reflect the interests of people within hospitals around the country. He might have had other failings, but he did not bag health workers out like these people opposite are. We will not stand for it. We will defend the level of training of our doctors and nurses in hospitals. We have the best response capacity in the world. We will provide support to those doctors and nurses. We will not stand by and see Labor trash the reputation of health workers in this country. They should provide support on a bipartisan basis and stop their political nonsense.

Opposition members interjecting—

The SPEAKER: Silence! Before I call the honourable member for Ballarat, there will be silence in the House. We will not have that wall of noise again; otherwise there might be a whole group of people who will be asked to leave under 94(a).

Health Care

Ms KING (Ballarat) (14:34): My question is to the Prime Minister and it follows his previous answer. Now that he has admitted that he was aware that there will be around 680,000 fewer diagnostic imaging services in 2015-16, did you ask how many diagnoses of cancer would be missed as a result and the health consequences of those missed diagnoses?

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:34): I simply repeat the answer which I have given to the same question that was asked by the Leader of the Opposition. The advice we had was that there would be a one per cent reduction in the usage. When Bob Hawke, the well-loved and well-respected leader of the Labor Party, was asked a similar question, he said:

… that is emotionalism being played at the lowest level.

I say to the member who asked the question—

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

Asylum Seekers

Mr SIMPKINS (Cowan) (14:35): My question is to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection. Will the minister update the House on the savings to the budget of regaining control of our borders. How have these savings been put to use in increasing our border protection?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (14:35): I thank the member for Cowan for his question. He is not alone on this side of the house, because on this side of the House one of the key differences is, when those opposite sat on this side of the House, we are reunited team on border protection. Everyone on this side of the House stood there and went to the last election and we said one thing amongst many, and that is: We are going to stop those boats. To a person we have stood here in the face of the critics, whether they are there, although there, or they are outside of this chamber. We have stood resolute with the policies that have worked.

Those opposite may like to be reminded that last year

Opposition members interjecting—
Mr Conroy interjecting—

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

The member for Charlton then left the chamber—

Mr MORRISON: Those opposite may like to be reminded that last calendar year there were 300 illegal maritime ventures that came to Australia. This year there has been one solitary venture. What that has produced is, through the success of our policies, savings of $2½ billion to the budget. In addition to that, in the closing of the centres that that chaotic mob opened when they ran a border chaos agenda, it has saved an additional $283 million. There are 600 fewer children in detention today under this government than when this government came to power. And there will be another 460 fewer if the Labor Party joins with the crossbench in the Senate, who are already supporting, through the Palmer United Party, our bill to ensure the temporary protection visas are put in place. If they ensure that turn backs continue under stronger measures, it will enable us to release another 460 children out of detention. That mob over there, they are voting against it. Together with the Greens, they are voting against it. It was their policy that as a boat arrived the only thing they would do was send people to Nauru. That was all they would do. They would not do turn backs. Yesterday in this place every single one of them voted against turn backs, and in so doing showed that their policy is to add and add and add to the cost of detention and to put more children in detention offshore processing centres rather than stand up and implement the policies that work.

Success in policy is its own advocate, and when it comes to border protection success in policy has a strong advocate. We have stood as a united team for a decade for the policies of this government on this issue, while those opposite have fought amongst themselves. They have been unable to get to a consolidated position and have learnt nothing from their errors as almost 1,200 people died on their watch and as they crammed the children into detention, and they still stand resolute in their failure. (Time expired)

Minister for Immigration and Border Protection

Mr BURKE (Watson—Manager of Opposition Business) (14:39): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection. Can the minister please advise the House the extent to which his portfolio carries expertise relevant to the work currently performed by the departments of foreign affairs, health, defence, Attorney-General, agriculture and Prime Minister and Cabinet?

The SPEAKER: The question is out of order. The minister will resume his seat.

Ms Plibersek: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order: the minister obviously wanted to answer, he was prepared to answer.

The SPEAKER: I said the question was out of order; the member will resume her seat.

Carbon Pricing

Mrs SUDMALIS (Gilmore) (14:40): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for the Environment. Will the minister inform the House how repealing the world's biggest
carbon tax has reduced costs for Australian families and businesses, which has been so important in places like Gilmore? What would be the impact of the carbon tax if it was reintroduced?

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for the Environment) (14:41): I particularly want to thank the member for Gilmore, who voted for lower electricity prices for her constituents, whether they were in Nowra or Shellharbour or Kiama. The member for Gilmore yesterday received the news that—

Ms Butler interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Griffith has been warned! Once more and she will leave under 94(a).

Mr HUNT: each and every one of her constituents was part of the largest drop in electricity prices on Australian record. But not just on Australian record—more than that it compares with what occurred under Labor. You may ask yourself what was the record of the Labor Party on electricity prices? Under Labor electricity prices went up over six years, according to the ABS consumer price index, by 101 per cent. So prices are actually dropping under us. They went up under Labor by 101 per cent.

But for the Leader of the Opposition 101 per cent is not enough. He wants more. Not only did he vote to keep the carbon tax, now that it has been repealed he wants to reintroduce the carbon tax. His policy is absolutely crystal clear: they want a carbon tax back; they are going to take it to the next election and they are going to call it something else. It does not matter what you call it, if it works like a carbon tax, if it increases pain like a carbon tax and if it increases electricity prices like a carbon tax, then it is a carbon tax.

Mr Shorten interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition will desist.

Mr HUNT: Do you know the problem? They will not be honest with the Australian people. But we were, and we are. We said that electricity prices would drop, and they did. As a consequence of that, in the member for Gilmore's electorate what we have seen is a decrease in prices for her EnergyAustralia customers of 8.9 per cent, a decrease in prices for her Simply Energy customers of 10 per cent, a decrease in prices for her Simply Energy small business customers of nine per cent and a decrease in prices for any commercial and industrial customers of Origin Energy of 15½ per cent. It is very clear: on their latest modelling, when in government, the carbon tax on a floating basis was not going to be $25, it was going to be $38. So not only do we get all of the reductions put back onto the bills, but we also get an extra 50 per cent. We are for lower electricity prices and they are— (Time expired)

Mr Pyne: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I did not wish to interrupt the minister's answer to the question but during the answer the Leader of the Opposition consistently used unparliamentary language which he should withdraw. I am not prepared to repeat it. He knows what it was and he should withdraw it in the interests of the House.

The SPEAKER: I ask the honourable Leader of the Opposition to withdraw.

Mr Shorten: I am more than happy to oblige. I withdraw.
Tourism Australia: Marketing Campaign

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (14:44): My question is to the Minister for Trade and Investment, in his capacity of responsibility for tourism. Is it the case that a restaurant in which the minister has a pecuniary interest has benefited from a taxpayer funded international marketing campaign undertaken by his own agency, Tourism Australia?

Mr ROBB (Goldstein—Minister for Trade and Investment) (14:45): This is typical Labor: when you are losing the political debate you turn to muckraking. Muckraking is all this is. In regards to mud-slinging: if this is the best you can do, the member for Grayndler, you are losing it. This is pathetic and grubby.

Opposition members interjecting—
The SPEAKER: There will be silence for the answer.

Mr ROBB: For 12 months the member for Grayndler has been asserting to anyone who will bother to listen to him—

Ms King: Answer the question!

The SPEAKER: The member for Ballarat.

Mr ROBB: that we do not have a minister for tourism. Now, today, he is accusing me, via a journalist, of having a conflict of interest as the minister for tourism.

Dr Chalmers interjecting—
The SPEAKER: The member for Rankin is warned.

Mr ROBB: Make up your mind. Are you going to sling mud or are you going to be active in the tourism business?

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr ROBB: You sit down too. This is grubby. This is very grubby.

Mr Dreyfus: You are the grub! You should answer the question.

Mr Burke: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I simply ask that the minister address his comments through the chair.

The SPEAKER: Resume your seat. Before I ask the minister to resume the call—and I will listen to the Leader of the House in a moment—this is a serious question that is being answered and I expect some respect from the chamber, and from that end as well.

Mr Pyne: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member for Isaacs is also using unparliamentary language—unparliamentary language which I have been asked to withdraw in the past. I would ask him to withdraw it.

The SPEAKER: I ask the member for Isaacs to withdraw.

Mr Dreyfus: I used the same term as the minister and I withdraw, as should the minister.

The SPEAKER: Minister, it would assist the House if you would withdraw the term used.

Mr ROBB: Madam Speaker, I said it was a grubby business.

The SPEAKER: That is quite parliamentary.

Mr ROBB: Grubby business is what I said. Is that parliamentary?

The SPEAKER: That is parliamentary.
Mr Husic interjecting—

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

Mr ROBB: As far as the specific issue that was raised, I fully disclosed the extent of my interest and my involvement in the Boathouse cafes when I was given my current responsibilities 12 months ago. That was fully disclosed. As such, the only relevant issue here is whether I have sought to influence in any way or at any time the approach of Tourism Australia towards this business. The answer to that question is an emphatic no.

Carbon Pricing

Mr VASTA (Bonner) (14:48): My question is to the Minister for Small Business. Will the minister inform the House of how the repeal of the carbon tax is benefiting small businesses and consumers in my electorate of Bonner and elsewhere?

Mr BILLSON (Dunkley—Minister for Small Business) (14:49): I want to thank the member for Bonner for his question and for hosting me in his electorate last week. Scrapping the carbon tax is an important part of the government’s Economic Action Strategy and of our plan for a strong and prosperous economy and a safe and secure Australia. We are seeing the benefits of scrapping the carbon tax starting to filter through. We have seen the most substantial reduction in the price of electricity since records were collected reported this week as a result of scrapping the carbon tax. To give people an idea of this significant achievement, it was in 1980 that these numbers started to be collected. Some people might remember that as the era of big shoulder pads, big perms and the big style statement of the linen pastel jacket. Not since then have we seen a reduction of this size in our electricity bills.

On a serious note, these are serious savings. In Queensland, householders will see up to a 9.4 per cent reduction in their power bills. For small businesses it is up to 9.1 per cent. For commercial and industrial consumers, there is up to a 15 per cent saving on their electricity bills. I was with the member for Bonner last week in his electorate and pleased to partner with him on a small business forum. It was great to hear feedback from those small businesses. They know the member for Bonner and everyone on this side of the House has been working hard to deliver the election commitment of scrapping the carbon tax and ensuring the savings are passed through. They all know that if that side of the House, Labor and Mr Shorten’s team, had their way they would reintroduce the carbon tax and see price increases burdening their households and their businesses again.

Terry, who runs the Springfield Lakes IGA, shared with us how the removal of the carbon tax is already saving his business around $700 a month. That is over $8,000 a year of cost savings on energy alone. Elsewhere other major retailers are passing through those savings. This is what we promised to do; this is exactly what we have done. Australian consumers and small businesses are experiencing the benefits. They are seeing this largest reduction in electricity prices delivered to them. It has been a really positive week for Australian small businesses—proof that the abolition of the carbon tax means delivering real benefits for them. The red-tape reductions are delivering back time and reducing compliance costs. The changes we have announced to employee share ownership schemes; the focusing of EFIC to better support our small to medium-sized enterprises and the announcement of ASBAS funding—what a really positive week for small business. It is another example that the Abbott government is working hard to deliver real benefits for Australian consumers and businesses.
government is working as hard for the success of Australian small businesses as the people working in those businesses are. It is a great week for small businesses.

Tourism

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (14:51): My question is again to the Minister for Trade and Investment, and I refer to his previous answer. Has the minister promoted the Restaurant Australia campaign overseas as the Minister for Trade and Investment?

Mr ROBB (Goldstein—Minister for Trade and Investment) (14:52): The member for Grayndler has spent the last 12 months talking down tourism in his responsibilities.

Mr Dreyfus interjecting—

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

Mr ROBB: I have done the opposite. I have been promoting all our programs, including this one, overseas.

Mr Dreyfus interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Isaacs then left the chamber.

Building and Construction Industry

Mr TONY SMITH (Casey) (14:52): My question is to the Minister for Education representing the Minister for Employment. Can the minister inform the House why it is important to restore law and order in the construction industry, and can he further tell the House who is standing in the way of this?

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (14:53): The member for Casey would have been as appalled as I was, as I am sure were all members on this side of the House, by the story that was carried by 7.30 last Thursday about corruption and infiltration by organised crime of the CFMEU in New South Wales. It was a report that should, quite frankly, frighten all right-thinking people around Australia.

A very courageous whistleblower called Andrew Quirk gave evidence to 7.30 and I quote from it:

There have been reports of corruption, association with murderers, association with gangsters, association with terrorists, money being paid to union officials, union officials intimidating other union officials, union officials being forced out of their jobs and their careers and the silence is deafening.

Well, not from this side of the House. From the government's side of the House, the silence has not been deafening. Since we were elected a year ago, we have passed legislation to introduce a Registered Organisations Commission to protect good union officials and bring bad union officials to justice. We have passed legislation in this House to establish the Australian Building and Construction Commission to put a tough cop on the industrial beat. We have established a royal commission into union thuggery and corruption, and we have attempted to change the union right-of-entry rules. On the other side of the House, all of those measures have been opposed by the opposition—a refusal to cooperate; a refusal to pass this legislation in the Senate; a refusal to hold corrupt union officials to account for their actions. Why is Labor so quiet on this issue? Why did Daniel Andrews welcome back the CFMEU into the Victorian Labor Party? Why didn't the Leader of the Opposition stop the CFMEU from being reintroduced into the Victorian Labor Party? Why doesn't he shun them?
Mr Shorten interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition will desist.

Mr PYNE: Why did the shadow Attorney-General, the member for Isaacs, criticise our extension of time for the royal commission into union corruption and thuggery? I think the answer lies in the fact that the CFMEU is one of the biggest donors the Labor Party has ever had in its history. Since 2000, it has given $10 million to the Labor Party in donations. The CFMEU has such power over the ALP that they will not act. Hawke, Keating and Rudd would have acted against the union. This Leader of the Opposition is too weak to take the action that he knows he should take.

The SPEAKER: The minister has concluded his answer.

Mr Bowen: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

The SPEAKER: It had better be a proper one.

Mr Bowen: The minister imputed improper motives. The Practice and the standing orders are very clear about the form such accusations should take, and it is not at question time.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Renewable Energy

Mr SHORTEN (Maribyrnong—Leader of the Opposition) (14:56): My question is to the Prime Minister. In May, Keppel Prince Engineering in Portland warned of uncertainty created by the government's approach to renewable energy. Sadly, today, Keppel has announced the loss of 100 jobs in Portland as a direct response to the uncertainty created by the government's push to reduce the renewable energy target. Is the Prime Minister concerned that these 100 jobs will turn into thousands of jobs because of the government's approach to wrecking renewable energy?

Mr Nikolic interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Bass will desist. The member for Bass is warned.

Mr ABBOTT (Warringah—Prime Minister) (14:57): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question and I can inform the Leader of the Opposition that this government supports a 20 per cent renewable energy target—a real 20 per cent renewable energy target. The problem is that, because of changes to electricity demand, the current 41,000 target is going to amount to more like 27 per cent than the 20 per cent that it was supposed to be. We are very happy to sit down with the opposition to deal appropriately with this, in what we hope will be a constructive bipartisan spirit.

I deeply regret any loss of jobs. I do regret the loss of jobs that the Leader of the Opposition referred to. The member for Wannon has been raising this matter with me because that is what a concerned local member should do. I am further advised that the business in question has a further 160 people employed at the Portland aluminium smelter, and one of the reasons we are determined to get the renewable energy target appropriately reduced and adjusted is to protect jobs at the Portland aluminium smelter.

Ms Plibersek interjecting—

The SPEAKER: The member for Sydney is warned.
Mr ABBOTT: We are most determined to protect jobs. Jobs are our prime concern. As the Leader of the Opposition should know, the best way to ensure that overall we protect jobs is to ensure that the renewable energy target is appropriately adjusted. I am happy and the Minister for Industry is happy to sit down with the opposition to try to ensure that we can give not only certainty to our power generators but also certainty to the workers of Australia that their jobs are safe, because this is a government that wants to keep power prices down.

Vocational Education and Training

Mr RANDALL (Canning) (14:59): My question is addressed to the Assistant Minister for Education. Will the minister outline what the government is doing to help develop the next generation of Australian innovators and job-ready graduates? What has been the reaction of the stakeholders?

Ms LEY (Farrer—Assistant Minister for Education) (15:00): I thank the member for Canning for his question, acknowledging his experience as an educator and his interest in this issue. As part of the government's competitiveness agenda, the Prime Minister announced recently that we would trial P-TECH, an innovative approach to education having regard to the Pathways in Technology Early College High School.

In the US, P-TECH is an approach that involves industry. It allows students to undertake vocational education while at school and supports them to gain a post-school qualification—usually in science, technology, engineering or maths. An Australian pilot is an important step to determine how Australian students can gain the same advantages as P-TECH students do in the US. A great thing about P-TECH is that there is a job opportunity for everyone—no matter whether it is vocational learning or higher education.

There has been a great response to P-TECH. I think it is fair to say it is a fairly new initiative. There has been a great response. President Obama, in his State of the Union address in 2013, described it as a collaboration between New York public schools, the City University of New York and IBM—the industry partner—and said:

We need to give every American student opportunities like this.
And we believe we need to give every Australian student opportunities like this.

It has been supported by the Business Council and, also, by Senator Kim Carr, who was a previous industry spokesperson. In fact, Senator Carr said last week, 'It is important we have good connections with real-world economics. So I support notions of encouraging industry to be more engaged in the education system.'

Unfortunately, not every Labor shadow minister or member shares this view. What does the member for Adelaide say? The member for Adelaide, the current shadow minister, describes this as privatising or outsourcing schools. The member for Adelaide even said that schools 'aren't sweatshops for churning out entry-level workers'.

If you take away the rhetorical flourish in that remark, you have what you always have from Labor—a mindset—

Mr Shorten: Nothing like a good sweatshop!

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition will desist! The minister has the call.

Ms LEY: Labor might call this corporatisation but it actually recognises that it is a model where employers have skin in the game. It is not privatisation; it is a partnership. It is not
outsourcing; it is collaboration. Member for Adelaide, it is not a sweatshop; it is a pathway. It is a pathway from school to work—the most important pathway of all. *(Time expired)*

**Serana (WA) Pty Ltd**

**Ms MacTIERNAN** (Perth) (15:03): My question is to the Prime Minister. In a speech to the Asia Society in March, the Prime Minister lauded the exports of biotech company Serana (WA). Given the Department of Agriculture's bungled investigation into this company has lead the company to announce it will now move offshore, will the Prime Minister order an independent inquiry into this chaotic investigation? And will he order the minister to go to Bunbury to fix this mess and to persuade this award-winning regional business to stay in WA?

**Mr JOYCE** (New England—Minister for Agriculture and Deputy Leader of The Nationals) (15:04): I thank the honourable member for her question. There are investigations into a number of organisations, including Serana. What this pertains to, of course, is the fact that we have to make sure that we keep our nation free of such diseases as foot-and-mouth disease. With the material that is being imported, there is the capacity if there is not traceability, that this could—

**Mr Shorten:** That's disgraceful.

**The SPEAKER:** The Leader of the Opposition will desist or leave—one or the other.

**Mr JOYCE:** be the vector that brings foot-and-mouth into this nation. The issue is currently being investigated by the department. It is not just Serana. It has not come from one of the competitors, as has been alleged.

**Ms MacTiernan:** This is a witch hunt, and you have caused this!

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Perth has asked her question, and will remain silent.

**Mr JOYCE:** It has come from an extremely reputable organisation that is Australian based. We have to follow the proper process if we are to keep our nation foot-and-mouth free.

**Ms MacTiernan:** That’s what we want. We want a proper process. Will you come to Bunbury?

**Employment**

**Mr PITT** (Hinkler) (15:05): My question is to the Assistant Minister for Employment. Will the minister update the House on the Relocation Assistance to Take Up a Job program? How is this program helping to change the lives of long-term unemployed Australians?

**Mr Pyne:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The minister could not possibly have heard the question given the din coming from the opposition. I would ask him to repeat the question.

**The SPEAKER:** I absolutely agree. I could not hear it, either.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**The SPEAKER:** I know it is Thursday. I know some people like an early mark to get an early plane, and I am only too willing to assist.

**Mr Champion:** Not me!

**The SPEAKER:** Oh, to the contrary! The member for Wakefield is the champion, and if he really wishes to add to his title today, I am happy to oblige. Then his colleagues might
Mr Pitt: My question is to the Assistant Minister for Employment. Will the minister update the House on the Relocation Assistance to Take Up a Job program? How is this program helping to change the lives of long-term unemployed Australians?

Mr Hartsuyker (Cowper—Deputy Leader of the House and Assistant Minister for Employment) (15:06): I thank the member for his question, and let me say that the member for Hinkler is a member who understands the importance of work and what it can do for individuals, and the importance of creating opportunities for our job seekers. The cost of moving can be a barrier for many job seekers in taking up a job in a distant location, especially when that job seeker has been unemployed for an extended period of time. That is why the government introduced the relocation assistance program to help job seekers who have been unemployed for 12 months or longer to move to where a job will be. It is a very important program. Under this program, job seekers can receive up to $6,000 to move to a regional area, up to $3,000 to move to a metropolitan area and for those with a family there is up to an additional $3,000 available to assist with the cost of moving.

I am pleased to report to the House that progress on the program is good with some 145 people taking up the opportunity to move to a job opportunity through the assistance of this program. It is particularly pleasing to see that many of the people who are taking up the program, some 44 per cent, have been unemployed for two years or longer. I think that all members in this House would agree that securing a job after two years of unemployment has the ability to be a life-changing opportunity.

I can further inform the House of the success of a constituent of the member for Hinkler who moved, with the assistance of this program, to take up a job after being on unemployment benefits since 2006. They were able to move into a job with all the opportunities that a job can bring with the assistance of this program.

Some 69 per cent of job opportunities that people have been able to take up through this program have been in regional areas and they have been in a diverse range of industries such as forestry, fishing, manufacturing, food services and accommodation services. So there is a range of opportunities that people have taken up through the assistance of this program.

The relocation assistance program is an example of this government delivering on our election commitments, delivering on our commitment to create jobs and opportunities, delivering on our commitment to ensure that as many Australians as possible have the opportunity to get into work and receive the benefits that work can bring. It is a benefit to job seekers, it is of benefit to our broader community and the program is going well so far.

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

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

Mr Morrison (Cook—Minister for Immigration and Border Protection) (15:09): I wish to make a personal explanation.

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

Mr Morrison: Yes.

The Speaker: Please proceed.
Mr MORRISON: In a report broadcast on ABC AM earlier today and repeated in further reports on ABC News 24, it was stated that a proposal for discussion at the National Security Committee of cabinet regarding mandatory quarantine measures for anyone arriving in Australia from Ebola affected regions of West Africa was brought by me to that body for discussion. It said that the approach flagged could be best run by my existing Operation Sovereign Borders team. It claimed that there was a split on this proposal and that I was frustrated, allegedly, by the approach of the Chief Medical Officer.

This report is completely and utterly false. No attempt was made to verify this report with me or my office. I can inform the House that both the Minister for Health and I are completely in agreement on the way that arrivals from West Africa are being handed on border protection.

COMMITTEES

Membership

The SPEAKER (15:10): I have received advice from the Chief Government Whip and the Chief Opposition Whip that they have nominated members to be members of certain committees.

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (15:10): by leave—I move:

That:

(1) Dr Gillespie be discharged from the Joint Select Committee on the Australia Fund Establishment and that, in his place, Mr Pitt be appointed a member of the committee;
(2) Mr Smith be appointed a supplementary member of the Standing Committee on Economics for the purpose of the committee's inquiry into the review of the Reserve Bank annual report 2014 (First report); and
(3) Mr Hayes be discharged from the Standing Committee on Procedure and that, in his place, Ms Ryan be appointed a member of the committee.

Question agreed to.

DOCUMENTS

Presentation

Mr PYNE (Sturt—Leader of the House and Minister for Education) (15:11): Documents are presented as listed in the schedule circulated to honourable members. Details of the documents will be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Family Day Care

The SPEAKER (15:12): I have received a letter from the honourable member for Adelaide proposing that a definite matter of public importance be submitted to the House for discussion, namely:

The government making life harder for Australian families by cutting funding to family day care.
I call upon those members who approve of the proposed discussion to rise in their places.

More than the number of members required by the standing orders having risen in their places—
Ms KATE ELLIS (Adelaide) (15:12): On this side of the House, we know that not just for years but for decades family day care has been a vital part of the support networks which Australian families rely upon in order to balance work and family. We know that there are literally hundreds of thousands of Australian families and Australian children who have received quality early childhood education and care over the decades from family day care. We stand in this matter of public importance to say that Labor will stand up against the Abbott government taking an axe to that sector by slashing their funding and the devastating consequences that that will have for the sector, for the children and for the educators who work each and every day.

Every day we come into this place we cite another example of a broken promise from this government, another example of this government saying very specifically to the Australian public before the election about what they would do if they were elected and then coming into this House after the election and doing the exact opposite. Sadly, today is no different. Just before the election Tony Abbott wrote to every single childcare centre in the nation and stated:

I am determined to help make child care more accessible and affordable for parents.

He also promised flexibility. The first two sentences of their childcare policy explains:

The Coalition believes Australian families deserve greater choice when it comes to child care.

Our child care system should be responsive to the needs of today's families and today's economy, not the five-day, 9am to 5pm working week of the last century.

Well, haven't we seen something completely different since those opposite were elected. Since those opposite were elected, we have seen over a billion dollars in cuts to our childcare sector, impacting on the affordability for each and every family relying on assistance from government.

Sadly, when it comes to the family day care sector, we have seen that the Prime Minister's budget delivered to $157 million in cuts to family day care services. There is a long list of childcare services which have already been cut back or abolished completely by this government. They have already ripped $450 million out of outside school hours care. They have already cut support to help parents complete study to get back to work. They have already completely cut the program that was in place to increase childcare places in areas where parents face lengthy waiting lists. We know they have cut all of the funding from Indigenous child and family centres. We know they have reduced the funding for the childcare rebate by $105 million, that they still have plans to cut $230 million out of the means tested child care benefit and, of course, now we focus on the $157 million being stripped out a family day care services.

Let us in this place make absolutely no mistake just to match that is going to hurt sector and, importantly, hurt the parents who rely upon the services each and every day. Based on information which has been provided by the government, we now learn that the cut will mean that over 80 per cent of the family day care services are likely to have their funding cut next year because of this one cruel attack. According to the most recent figures, there are 761 family day care services around the country. This means that over 600 of them will have their funding cut from next year. We know that in Western Sydney 100 per cent of family day care services will have their funding cut next year. We also know that instead the government...
seems determined to make family day care more expensive, less accessible and even harder for families to choose this as their flexible form of care.

Family Day Care Australia has outlined exactly what this will mean the sector and for parents when they said that these cuts will mean that family day care fees will be estimated to increase by $35 a week just to cover this one budget cut. In fact, CEO Carla Northam said:

Costs will ultimately have to be passed on to families, most of whom are already struggling to afford childcare fees. Without this funding it will be impossible for many family day care services to remain viable.

So those opposite who, before the election, promised, directly from the Prime Minister, every childcare centre in the country they would make child care more affordable, have left just two doors open for these family day care services. They can hike their fees and slug parents $35 more per week or they can close their doors. We on this side of the House so that neither of those options are acceptable, that this government needs to get on with delivering what they said they would do not just be railroaded by the Treasury, having each and every one of their programs cut, equalling over $1 billion already.

Members and senators on both sides right around Australia would have received hundreds of letters and cards from parents urging them to stand up against these cuts, to review the proposed changes to this funding program. In most cases, we know that family day care services will be forced to increase their fees, but we also know that some are reconsidering the viability of their service. Cape York family day care at Weipa wrote to inform the government that its service was unsustainable without this funding. They stated in their media release:

Due to this impossible funding reduction the Weipa Community Care Association Management Committee—
who auspice the family day care scheme—
has determined to close the service as of 31st December.

Those opposite promised the world to parents and to the childcare sector but they are overseeing the shutting down of services. Last week I visited Aussom Family Day Care at Newington and talked with one of the educators, Helen, who told me she was really worried that her families will not be able to afford the inevitable fee hikes. Fairfield City Council says that families living in Fairfield include some of the most disadvantaged within the metropolitan area and:

Should these changes take effect in their current form and time frame, council will be required to make the difficult decision that may include significant fee increases to families, reduce support to the family day care educators and possibly even the closure of the services.

I hope those opposite feel proud about that. I hope those opposite feel proud that they promised one thing and they are doing exactly the opposite—they are cutting the vital services that all of these families rely upon. We know that family day care is a unique model of care, which allows the greater flexibility than many other sorts. Family day care does not need to be stuck in the hours nine to five. It has a flexibility that can help and match parents' working hours. In fact, when those opposite claim that they want to see increased flexibility—and we know that they are obsessed by nannies and au pairs—family day care has the capacity to deliver this increased flexibility but not if it is gutted first by the Abbott
government and by the assistant minister who is consistently rolled to the point that she has now lost a billion dollars out of existing childcare programs. Isn't that something to be proud of?

We know that there is a pattern of attack from the Abbott government. Low- and middle-income families are doing the heavy lifting for this government in their unfair and heartless budget. We know that those opposite asked the Productivity Commission to completely redesign Australia's childcare system, promising all things to all people but only guaranteeing that there would be no additional money. The government simply cannot meet all of these expectations, but we know that the Productivity Commission has provided a draft report and just this week released analysis which shows that families earning as little as $40,000 you would you will solve under the PC's preferred model. This government which promised that child care would become more affordable have already cut a billion dollars, have already seen a system where $157 million being ripped out of family day care will see many services having to hike their fees by $35 a week and now they have set up a review which will is recommending changes which will see families on as little as $40,000 have their assistance cut.

It is time to end their magic pudding statements and promises and for this government to level with the Australian public. It is time for those opposite to guarantee that they will not accept any proposals that will make child care less affordable for Australian families. They have said one thing and we will now hear from those opposite that they are actually unable to do anything other than point the finger at the Labor Party—blame it on me; blame it on Labor—but a billion dollars has been cut from the program under their watch and $157 million has been cut from family day care in their budget on their watch that they must justify.

Ms LEY (Farrer—Assistant Minister for Education) (15:22): I cannot stand here as minister and be lectured by the previous childcare minister who saw under her watch childcare costs go up 53 per cent in six years and out-of-pocket costs for families go up 40 per cent in four years. This is the test by which the Labor government when in government will be judged.

Ms Kate Ellis: How much do you pay now?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Adelaide, you have had your opportunity.

Ms LEY: I want to make some remarks about the Community Support Program, which is the program under which the support for family day care has been delivered in the past and will continue to be delivered in the future. The purpose of this program is to help services in unviable areas, such as disadvantaged, regional and remote communities. But, unfortunately, this program has become yet another example of Labor's legacy of debt and financial mismanagement.
The overspend in its budget allocation was $200 million over three years. Here we have a program, which is meant to help every single type of child care—family day care, out-of-school hours, long day care—that has blown its budget by over $200 million. Seventy per cent of that entire budget is going to one single type of child care. The point is this: the Auditor-General highlighted this to the member for Adelaide, as the minister, in 2012 and made specific recommendations contained within a performance audit. They said, 'Seventy-one per cent of community support funding is going to family day care, which accounts for just 10 per cent of children in care'—and Labor does nothing to fix the problem.

The changes we are making to the eligibility criteria bring this type of child care into line with other types of child care. A budget is blown by over $200 million, an Auditor-General warns the member for Adelaide as minister and, of course, she sits on her hands while out-of-pocket costs go up for families by 40 per cent.

The member for Adelaide also mentioned in scoop-up of apparent cuts that we have made something that she made as minister—or her government made—which was the change to the childcare rebate. Remember the childcare rebate indexation pause—something announced by the Labor government but they did not have the guts to legislate it. They did not have the guts to carry it through, and they left it to us to pick up when we came into government—to fix up their mess. This is no different to all of the other Labor messes that we have inherited. The legacy of Labor is this messy concoction of red tape, band-aid solutions and, ultimately, the final test—it costs parents more. It is another example of Labor continuing to put politics before parents.

While we are talking about promises and legacies, let's consider the hallmark policy of the member for Adelaide, who brings forth this motion—the Early Years Quality Fund; the dodgy slush fund designed to drive union membership in the sector; a short-term pay rise for just 15 per cent of the entire workforce, designed to shore up this member and the Labor Party in an absolutely shocking, dirty deal never before seen by anyone on either side of this House. That is the hallmark policy of this member for Adelaide as minister—completely irresponsible at the moment, as she was completely irresponsible in government.

The member for Adelaide raised concerns about the family day care sector, and I want to address those in all seriousness. I want to make clear that as minister, I support the family day care sector. I have used it as a mum, albeit many years ago. I visit family day care providers, educators and coordination units all around the country every day, every week.

I am in touch with the educators. I am in touch with their services, and many come to my office to talk about the challenges that are before them. I do not downplay that in some cases there will be challenges; but let's remember an important feature: what we are doing is bringing this program back into line with its original intention. Seventy per cent of the funding of which the member Adelaide speaks, funding designated for disadvantaged rural and regional communities, ended up in our major cities, in major urbanised competitive markets. A funding stream designed to support market failure, if you like or rural, and regional and remote—an area I am very familiar with, as we all are on this side of the House—ended up landing and being paid to services in our major cities. Remember: the budget was well blown before this.
What we are doing is bringing this back under control and, from 1 July next year, services will be able to apply for this funding. If they are experiencing those exceptional circumstances and if they are disadvantaged, there is every chance that they will receive it.

The other important point I want to make—and I want to reassure families who might be listening to this broadcast who might be caught up in the scaremongering nonsense from the member Adelaide—is that the Community Support Program is not a fee assistance program. It is not money paid to educators. It is not money paid to parents. It does not alter the amount or the ability of parents using approved services to claim the childcare benefit and rebate. In fact, families using family day care still get the childcare benefit. They still get the childcare rebate—in fact, they get a childcare benefit that is 33 per cent higher than that of parents who use long day care. So they already recognise that there are additional supports for the parents who use these services.

We have to recognise that, in making changes to the family day care sector, we are supporting the sector to put it on a more sustainable footing for the future.

Ms Kate Ellis interjecting—

Ms LEY: The member for Adelaide mentioned Weipa. After the article from which she quoted appeared in the press, it was in fact brought to my attention by the member for Leichhardt, who asked me to travel to Weipa, which I did at relatively short notice. I spoke to the centre involved—I also spoke to one at Cooktown on the way, and I have to say that there was a pretty amazing family day care educator there, as there are everywhere—and I said, 'We need to make changes to a system where the coordination unit has only one or two educators attached to it. We may not be able to continue making the same level of payment to a coordination unit designed to support a greater number of educators, but we do want family day care to continue in Weipa.'

I worked very closely—and I am still working closely—with the member for Leichhardt. In order to help the sector adjust to this change we are rolling out business advice across the country through the family day care peak bodies, because they have recognised that these are important changes that services may need to make to ensure that they are sustainable into the future. That business advice will be made available to the Weipa service and to every other service that puts up its hand and says, 'Look, we might need help.'

There are lots of different ways that you can run this model. Remember: a family day care educator in their home is a home based business, and the coordination unit, which does a great job in supporting them, can have a differing set of arrangements with them as we move forward into a new era for family day care. Let's not forget that family day care was recognised by the Productivity Commission inquiry, and is recognised by us in government, as a vital sector for the future. The member for Adelaide is quite right: the flexible care that families demand is often provided by family day care.

But I come back to my main point. We cannot stand here as the Liberal and National parties, understanding rural and regional communities as we do, and do nothing when this program, designed to support disadvantaged rural and regional communities, has overspent its budget by $200 million. The Labor Party were warned by the Auditor-General—who did a performance audit of this program—that this really was out of line, and they did nothing about it. They were too frightened to take action. They were too frightened to make the tough
decisions, and they handballed it to us, just like all of the other decisions that were handballed to us, as we came into government. We are bringing that program back under control. We will continue to support the services for which the program was originally designed.

But remember this: under Labor, childcare costs went up 53 per cent, flexibility went down, affordability went down and availability went down. We inherited a system close to breaking point. This Labor party could not even support our Productivity Commission inquiry. They could not even say, 'Yes, it is a good idea to have a look at future arrangements and make changes for the benefit of families.' This Labor Party is a disgrace.

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (15:32): I would like to take up a few points that the Assistant Minister for Education just made, and I have to say that they are quite extraordinary. She said that she supports family day care. Well, not in my electorate and not in Western Sydney, where every single family day care service has been told that its funding will be cut—every single one. We know that many of those will be forced to close as a result of it. If that happens to even one family day care service, 1,700 families will be without a place. So how can the minister say that she supports family day care when in all of Western Sydney she is cutting it completely?

She says that, if there are people with genuine disadvantage, there will be family day care services for them. I suggest that the minister get out more. How can she possibly think that there are not casual cleaners in Western Sydney who need the flexibility of low-cost, affordable, quality family day care that starts at five in the morning? I know that a number of family day care providers in my electorate do just that. I fact, some of them even pick the children up at five in the morning because the parents work shiftwork. To assume that that does not happen in Western Sydney and to actually cut the funding from family day care and leave those families in the lurch and then you say you care is quite extraordinary.

A new era in family day care, which the assistant minister spruiks, is actually a loss of family day care. I want to talk about what it is actually worth in my community, because it is not just about affordability and flexibility in time in the area of Parramatta. In the community of Parramatta we also have family day care services that specialise in one language or another. For example, we have a group of Korean family day care educators who speak to their charges in Korean, because in those early years of their life their parents have made the choice as parents to have their children initially speak the language of their great-grandparents. Korean families do that quite frequently. We have women from the African community who have had themselves educated into this field and now operate family day care services in various African languages. We now have a group of 20 Hazara women who have put themselves through training so that they can work in this field and educate young children under the age of four in the language of those children's great-grandparents.

This is an extraordinary thing. We have families in Parramatta who choose to have their children educated through this system because it allows the flexibility. These are not well-off parents. They are quite often working as casual cleaners, as nurses, as aged-care workers and are shiftworkers, who need the flexibility and have found a way to make a choice as parents to ensure that the culture of their children survives through the next generation and the next generation after that. That is a great gift to this nation. As the world becomes smaller, this is a major part of what they do.
We have families in my community who have dietary requirements. I have Hindus who are very strict—do not eat chili, garlic or onion. I have people who are vegetarians and I have people who eat halal. You name it, I have it. We have family day care providers in Parramatta who actually provide the flexibility to match the services they offer with the working hours of the parents and the cultural requirements of the child and the cultural decisions of their parents. I cannot imagine, as we look at Australia moving into the future, that this is the program that you would cut. Of all the things we do that prepare our children for the future world and what the world will look like, I cannot believe that this is the program that you cut.

I cannot believe that you can do this to people who are increasingly casualised, who do not have the certainty of working hours that we used to have, who cannot guarantee that they can get their child and keep their child in a standard nine-to-five five-day-a-week place. This service provides them with certainty. As their working hours shift from day to day, this provides them with the certainty of good quality care for their children. It provides parents with the flexibility they need when it comes to cultural diversity, including dietary requirements. Children who have hearing impairments or visual impairments can actually have family day care service providers who talk to them in Auslan or teach them braille.

This is the service that you want in modern Australia, and this is the service that we want as we prepare our children for the future. This is not the one that you would cut. It actually deserves the support of the minister and it deserves a new era. In Western Sydney it deserves a better one. (Time expired)

Mr NIKOLIC (Bass) (15:37): This MPI could easily have included words like 'sanctimony' and 'hypocrisy', given Labor's record on the economy and in policy areas like child care. Consider that we have an MPI that talks about how hard life is for Australian families when we remember that those opposite gave Australian families the carbon tax and, on average, $550 costs on each and every Australian family.

The member for Adelaide had the audacity to talk about magic puddings—but we remember that those opposite, from 2008 to 2013, produced an economy that had $200 billion in achieved deficits, $123 billion of projected deficits across the forward estimates, and peak debt rising to $667 billion. So please do not talk to us about magic puddings, Member for Adelaide, when you have that sort of record to draw on.

The member for Adelaide also had the audacity to talk about promises relating to child care. I know you will be familiar, Mr Deputy Speaker, with the promises made during the 2007 election by Mr Rudd, who became Prime Minister. He talked about grand aspirations. There was GroceryWatch to make your groceries cheaper, there was Fuelwatch to make fuel cheaper, there was child care that was going to make childcare cheaper. Everything was going to be cheaper, better, brighter, more 'Kevin'. But, as we found out, it was a government long on aspiration and very, very short on delivery. Despite promising affordable child care, childcare fees skyrocketed by 53 per cent under the Labor government. There was $73 a week extra in fees, or around $3,500 more each year for a family, using the average hours of child care. What they left behind was grossly inefficient. I have seen it firsthand. I have seen that 1,200-kilometre screwdriver here in Canberra, with the member for Adelaide turning the screws on the childcare operators, who stand there filling in regulatory forms unnecessarily rather than doing their primary jobs. As I have gone around the childcare centres, they have
told me a very different story to the one we heard from the member for Adelaide here today. We saw 21,000 new regulations under Labor, many of those impacting the childcare sector.

The member for Adelaide, who brought on this MPI, failed to discuss the elephant in the room. I have an article here from The Australian. It is headed, 'Rudd government scraps promise to build 260 childcare centres'. The member for Adelaide had a wonderful little media release which said that they were going to stop at 38. The lesson that I draw from that is that you take what the member for Adelaide says, you divide it by seven, and you are somewhere close to the truth—when you think about 38 achieved and 260 promised.

When it comes to promises by the member for Adelaide and her colleagues, what we find is that Labor cut millions in funding for occasional care from July 2010. This was a cut that hit rural and regional areas particularly hard—including in my home state of Tasmania, where occasional care is often needed because of those seasonal work imperatives like harvesting and shearing. Labor pandered to their union mates, as you have heard from the minister, by creating a $300 million Early Years Quality Fund with taxpayers' money, which turned out to be nothing more than a union membership recruiting drive for United Voice. Now Labor continues their irresponsibility in opposition, blocking their own promises to pause indexation on the childcare rebate, despite banking $105 million of savings in their own election promises. They were eventually shamed into supporting their own budget measure; however, as we all know, they continue to block many, many other key savings measures across the government and particularly in the childcare portfolio. So spare us the sanctimonious MPI, Member for Adelaide, and reflect on the appalling mess that you and your colleagues have left.

I will finish by thanking the minister for repeatedly visiting northern Tasmania to consult and discuss these issues with childcare providers. Some family day care schemes have told us that they know Labor's magic pudding money would never have continued and that they are making transitional arrangements. They are listening to the minister's advice about a business development package that the government is developing for family day care services in partnership with the sector's peak bodies, and the minister is out there every day explaining how Labor's mismanagement caused this problem and what we are doing to fix the appalling mess left to us by the former government.

Mr GILES (Scullin) (15:42): I say to the member for Bass: thank you for that enlightening contribution. Thank you for that history lesson. One of the most interesting elements of the history lesson was the airbrushing out of Real Solutions. Rightly so. I would be embarrassed by its content and by the shameless way in which this government and its members have walked away from the promises contained within it. Let us never forget all the broken promises of our Prime Minister.

Ms Ryan interjecting—

Mr GILES: It's a contract, the member for Lalor reminds me. He promised to raise standards of public trust. Of all his broken promises, that is the most egregious. We are one year into this government and the member for Bass had nothing to say about its work. We heard supercharged rhetoric, as we have come to expect, about sanctimony and hypocrisy. These are terms that he should understand well. He talked about promises in the childcare space. I thought that was interesting—not the promises made by the then Leader of the Opposition, the now Prime Minister. Funny that.
There is one thing I should touch on before going to the substance of this matter of public importance. The way in which members of this government treat our early childhood educators with contempt never fails to disappoint me. These are hardworking people doing important work. They can have a go at us; they can have a go at our policies, but the manner in which these workers have been treated by many members of this government is just shocking. This is a matter of public importance, and I am pleased to join the member for Parramatta and the member for Adelaide in arguing for family day centres and recognising the role they can play in making life easier for working families and doing great work in terms of the development of the children in those families.

Earlier today, Labor members spoke about the NATSEM modelling. The thing that struck me most about the NATSEM modelling was what it shows about the medium-term impact on low-income families, particularly single-parent families.

Ms Scott interjecting—

Mr GILES: It's funny, I understand? I am staggered by the contempt for working people that we get from members opposite.

On Monday, the member for Charlton moved a motion that called on the government to reverse its cuts to the area of family day care. In that debate, I was again disappointed by the contribution of government members, who just hid behind a couple of furphies—the furphy that, because there apparently have been rorts, we should bring the whole thing to an end and the furphy that this is not a cut. Well, I do not think we need detain ourselves too long on that point.

Child care is vital for over one million Australian families, including my own. I was struck, as members on this side were, by the Grattan Institute's recent research findings that investment in child care is twice as effective in boosting employment participation as paid parental leave, the signature policy of this government. I am sure the legislation will be just around the corner! It is in this context that we see the government's promises and priorities at large, where PPL again is a significant priority, while promises to improve affordability and accessibility of child care have fallen away. Within this broader context, we note the savage cuts that are impacting on family day care—a $157 million broken promise, putting services at risk and asking hardworking families tough questions that they do not have good answers to, in many cases.

The impact on Scullin will be very significant. There are nine centres operating, all of which are deeply concerned. I have been talking to parents to find out what family day care means to them, how it works for them, and I have been visiting centres. I was deeply affected by visiting Boori Children's Services in Epping, operated by the City of Whittlesea, facing an $85,000 cut. I would like to share with the House what that service being at risk means to the families there as well as to the 26 hardworking professional educators. One of them, Karen, has been there 20 years. She started as a parent herself and has maintained a close connection with all those families in the Epping community, giving them the benefit of the flexibility as well as the close relationship and the high-quality professional care and education that these educators can offer. These are so important to people in outer suburban communities like many in Scullin, including Epping and South Morang.
Family day care has to be a critical part of meeting our childcare challenge. It has been for 35 years. Doing the best for all working families to have choices in respect of child care is fundamentally important to the wellbeing of those families now and to the future prospects of their children. (Time expired)

Ms SCOTT (Lindsay) (15:47): Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the Assistant Minister for Education, who is here in the chamber with us today. The Assistant Minister for Education, I would like to advise the member for Parramatta, is actually no stranger to Western Sydney. In fact, the Assistant Minister for Education has been to Western Sydney on many, many occasions both before and after the election. I have taken her to childcare centres. I have actually had two lots of roundtable forums with the minister, before the election and after the election. She has met with childcare service providers right across the region. So the minister has been very helpful in this space. The minister truly understands the childcare concerns of the people in Western Sydney. Once again, Minister, I would really like to thank you for your encouragement and your support. The minister has worked very hard in that space. The minister has got together with the Productivity Commission on child care.

Do you know what the people of Western Sydney demand? They demand affordable and flexible child care. Under those opposite, we saw an increase of 53 per cent in the costs for child care. Two-thirds of the workforce of Lindsay have to commute for work every single day, in peak hour traffic there and peak hour traffic back. These are things that concern the people of my electorate of Lindsay. Fifty-three per cent increases in childcare costs do not help working families in Western Sydney—not at all. Those opposite are so sanctimonious about this. They are actually hurting the people of Western Sydney. Those opposite brought in 21,000 new regulations, many of them applying to child care. That hurt the people of Western Sydney.

I have a letter here today from Steve Robinson, who runs a childcare centre in my electorate of Lindsay. Let me quote:
Since the Abbott government came to office, Little Cottage Pre-School are achieving 100% bookings every day for the first time in living memory.

Steve Robinson advises that they even have advance bookings and a wait list. This is ensuring Steve can have a full complement of staff every day. It is a family owned and operated childcare centre which employs local people. I have visited this centre. Under those opposite, Steve actually worked for free at night to meet the demands of regulation that those opposite imposed on this childcare centre. The proximity of this childcare centre to the CBD of Penrith enables parents who work there to have easy access to their children. They can drop their kids off, get to work and come back again. In Steve's opinion, the assessment process instigated by the minister has been thorough and professional, delivering a childcare model aimed at assisting the industry to flourish and prosper. Steve's preschool is a lot more settled now and looking to a bright and long future providing care to children for parents who live and work in the Penrith region.

One issue he did raise was the threats of unions to take strike action to have wages raised in the sector. Currently the payment guidelines help to ensure core costs are within a range that most people can afford. Any rise in wages would obviously have a massive impact on childcare costs and potentially a negative effect on the ability of some families to afford
legitimate professional child care. That is directly from a service provider in my electorate of Lindsay who is caring for children every single day.

Ms Owens: Not a family day care provider.

Ms SCOTT: Those opposite can sit there and harp on, but at the end of the day they are solely responsible for a 53 per cent increase in cost of child care over the last six years.

In regard to further operational matters of family day care services, this is not a fee assistance program and is not paid directly to educators or parents. Labor really took their eye off the ball when it came to the Community Support Program. The budget blew out by $200 million. This included Labor ignoring the 2012 Australian National Audit Office report highlighting the growing problem with the Community Support Program and recommending its eligibility guidelines be reviewed. The Australian National Audit Office report further noted that family day care was receiving 71 per cent of the total Community Support Program budget despite only caring for about 10 per cent of the children. This is completely unsustainable, completely irrational and goes to show that those opposite had taken their eyes off the ball and were not providing true support for the people of Western Sydney.

Ms RYAN (Lalor—Opposition Whip) (15:52): I relish the opportunity to speak this afternoon on this matter of public important. I am honoured to follow the speakers from this side who have spoken before me, because on this side of the chamber, as you can hear today in this debate, there is a passion for child care—a passion that is sorely lacking on the other side of this chamber. It is to do with the way Labor develops policy—what drives us and motivates us when we develop and implement policy.

I want to talk today a little bit about a link back to the past. We heard in question time a lot of links back to the past—our past, Labor's past, celebration of Labor's achievements—and we have done a lot of that this week. Gough Whitlam's government changed the paradigm of tertiary education. Under the Whitlam government, we remember, free university education was introduced. It was introduced to shift people's thinking, to radically change the way people thought about tertiary education. It opened up that education system. It made it affordable. It created aspiration. It created access. It changed Australian in doing to. It meant an increased number of women. It increased participation rates of women. It increased participation rates of, critically, mature-age students who were women, and that changed children's lives.

Gough Whitlam's government changed lives and, like that, what the previous Labor government did in the childcare space was aiming to do a similar thing, to change that paradigm, to change child care from the cheap, cheerful model that those opposite would like us to have to one that is educative, where children get care and learning. It was huge. And what do we have today? We have an MPI where all they are talking about over there is money and all we are talking about over here is quality.

We introduced the quality framework and understand on this side of the chamber—and have done forever—that to change a paradigm you might need to kick in with some funding. We have lots of negatives from the other side of the House about budget blow-outs. You cannot change a paradigm without increasing participation in a program. The budget blow-out, as they call it, reflects increased participation from women in the workforce, something we celebrate on this side of the chamber.
We changed the way the service operated. Recently in my electorate I went to visit family day care centres like all of us have over here. We have 33 providers in Lalor, all of which have been told that they may be at risk of losing their funding. That is 33 providers across an enormous number of educators. When I went to visit a few of them, what struck me was how the sector had shifted. I was someone who used family day care when my children were young. I saw a marked difference. I met people who were running family day care in their homes who were incredibly proud of the work they had done in quality frameworks, who were incredibly proud of their qualifications, who talked as educators about the children they were looking after, who were able to take me to a visual that showed me what those children had been learning in the last three months and to plans for what they were going to put in place for each child into the future. That is what you call shifting a paradigm. That is not a cheap and cheerful model; that is the model we need for modern Australia.

I think one of the important things we have to note in this MPI is, of course, money. We have to talk about money because we have to talk about the fact that Labor built a changed expectation. Labor built aspiration. Labor provided money to family day care that allowed in my electorate shift workers like those who work in the prison system to have their children in family day care. I heard from families whose wives had been employed because they found this model locally. Family day care operators were working specifically with shift working families.

But we have had the cuts. We are going to pull this back because Labor builds and those opposite tear it down. The cuts they are introducing to child care will tear down this sector. We hear a lot about the unionisation of the workforce as if somehow that is a negative. The unionisation of the childcare workforce is about women—mostly—in the workforce collectively bargaining for a better deal for themselves and for the children they care for.

Mr WILLIAMS (Hindmarsh) (15:58): Let me start off by saying that we all care about child care. I find it offensive—and so do my colleagues—for the member for Lalor to say that we do not. We have children. The member for Corangamite has children. The member—my fine colleague here has children.

Mrs McNamara: Dobell.

Mr WILLIAMS: Dobell—thank you very much, Member for Dobell. Much more memorable than the previous member; how could I forget!

But, in all honesty, we are committed to child care and care deeply about children's development. Yes, we may differ on policy. Yes, we may have better ideas for execution and, as we have seen, we generally get the execution far better than those on the opposite side. We can go into history, because it is important to understand why we are in this situation at the moment. We know that Labor did not manage things well when they were in government. When I was out in the electorate for many months leading up to the last campaign I continually heard that they had been the worst government for many decades. They performed poorly across so many areas, and this is just another area where they did not get the execution right and let things get out of control. And it is not just us saying this; there were reports done by the National Audit Office, as we have heard before.

We also heard about NATSEM a far bit this week. I want to go back to the NATSEM comments in their report from June this year, where they mentioned childcare affordability in
Australia in issue 35. This report highlighted Labor's failure to address the issue of child care during their six years in government:

... it is hard to escape the conclusion that they have also helped drive up prices and the cost to government. The higher prices go, the more financial assistance families will require and so the cycle continues.

Yes, they can go on about NATSEM modelling in the 90 second statements and the MPIs and everything else, but let us take on board what NATSEM said just a few months ago. Labor fail to do the work needed to fix the child care challenges and even refused, as we know, to undertake a Productivity Commission inquiry. Instead, they kept topping up child care assistance on the nation's credit card and helped drive up prices, as NATSEM has informed us.

We have had plenty of figures thrown around, as usual, by the Labor Party. But let us take a look at a few figures that they need to take stock of. The $1 billion of interest repayments per month. We know how many child care centres and schools that could buy. The take no responsibility. There is no accountability for the financial mess they left. Yes, if you want to go to more figures, we have got over $30 million a day in interest repayments. Let us talk about support. What sort of support can that buy? This is where your debt and financial mismanagement hits the road. This is where it affects individual families, individual communities. This is something they just do not get.

Let me go onto the CPS in a broader sense. We know that it provides good assistance to families in establishing and maintaining services in areas where they might otherwise be unviable or otherwise unable to meet the requirements. We have heard some of the merits of the changes that we are implementing so that those in regional, remote or disadvantaged communities can be better off in this respect. I know this point was made by the minister, who visited my electorate and went to a child care centre in Grange and was warmly received. This is a valid point about how we are helping the market more broadly—how we are helping communities across the state, across our great country.

This sensible and fair measure brings support for family day care services into line with other types of child care such as long day care and outside school hours care. Just in closing, a few comments about early childhood education. I do agree with him member for Scullin on this point. We know children's development and the transition to school in those early childhood years are extremely important. There are significant reasons to support those early years, not just at home but also in a more formal sense with experienced educators, because there are significant benefits for when they get older in terms of development and their vulnerabilities. Naturally there is support required and costs money. Australian government funding is going to around $7 billion per year, covering two-thirds of the early childhood education and care costs. This is a significant investment and significant commitment to early childhood development, notwithstanding the comments of our friends opposite. In closing, let's be honest about this: we all care about child care, we are all committed to it. Let's just find the money to get on and do a good job.

Ms O'NEIL (Hotham) (16:02): I am very proud to stand in the chamber today and add my voice to those who are fighting against these savage cuts that the coalition is making to family day care. As part of $1 billion in cuts to child care in this country, $157 million is being slashed from family day care. These cuts are very serious. We had those on the other side of
the chamber crowing about $550 a year difference in family budgets because of the carbon tax. Do you know the impact on the average family of these changes and child care cuts? Somewhere between $1,500 and $1,800 a year, serious dollars for those in my community who really have to watch every dollar.

Ms Owens: That is for one child.

Ms O'NEIL: That is for one child, exactly. Family day care is an absolutely essential part of the overall child care puzzle Australia. About one in seven children who are in child care in Australia are in child care in a family day care centre. My family has been one of them. We had our little one in family day care in East Bentleigh, right in the heart of my electorate, earlier this year and we got these great benefits of a small group, an educator that we loved and the important thing—that flexibility.

What we hear on the other side of the House is so many different and confusing messages. I am not sure whether it is hypocrisy, as the member for Scullin has suggested, or whether it is just rank confusion, cluelessness—I am really not sure. But what we hear is that flexibility and affordability are the big things that we need in child care. As a working mum, I 100 per cent agree. So we have the government making all the right noises. They have even gone to the trouble of initiating a Productivity Commission inquiry that is meant to look into this exact issue of how to get more flexible and affordable child care. Yet at the very same time the government is cutting $1 billion from child care and especially focusing on the most affordable and the most flexible program that there is available for working families in Australia. For families that can afford nannies—and we know this is going to be very much the focus of what the government goes towards—they are just in a very different situation. They are going to have a much greater level of flexibility. But for most of the people that we represent in their electorates on this side of the House, they are not going to be able to afford an au pair or nanny no matter what type of government program is put together over there.

Family day care is a really important piece of the puzzle here and instead of talking about how expensive it is getting, could we just note that the demand for this family day care program has skyrocketed. I know that in the December quarter of 2013 demand for family day care rose 11 per cent in one quarter. What we read from this—not talking about budget blow-outs like these guys on the other side—is that Australian families want family day care. They are getting a lot out of the flexibility and affordability of the arrangements.

We talked a little bit about confusion and hypocrisy—these kinds of mixed messages that we are getting. I want to go to this issue about female workforce participation, because this is really right into the heart of the problem. Again we have got a very expensive Productivity Commission inquiry looking into the question of how we can help women in Australia who want to work more be able to do that. But we know that the biggest driver of women's decision to work is the child care costs. There are some very simple economics at work here. If there is nothing else you remember from what I say today, just let it be this. A woman in Australia who works full time on the minimum wage takes home after her child care costs $4.55 an hour. We know that there are women right around the country who are doing the simple maths and saying that, in the face of that, it is not worth it for them to work, especially if they have several children. I will just say to those on the other side of the House: what we know is that this has lifelong impacts for women. It is absolutely understandable and I respect the decision of women who want to stay at home, but for women who do want to work, if
they spend three years at home with kids, we know that they going to earn about 40 per cent less through their lifetime as a consequence of their decision to do that. We on this side of the House want to give Australian women real choices, and that means affordable and flexible child care. That is exactly what family day care is providing. But what makes all of this so much more outrageous is this: we have this issue on the other side of the House being raised about $157 million—that is, how this program is just so expensive and we have to cut back on costs. Yet, at the very time, this government is introducing a gold-plated paid maternity leave scheme that will see the wealthiest women in Australia get paid $2,000 a week to have a child. One year of funding for that program would make up the funding shortfall for family day care for about 35 years. I would just say this: check your priorities, guys; women in Australia want flexible, affordable child care and that is exactly what family day care gives us.

Mrs McNAMARA (Dobell) (16:07): I am proud to be speaking against this MPI motion today because I feel that in my role as not only a politician but also as a supporter, a mother and a previous user of childcare services, it is my responsibility to address the incorrect and irresponsible statements made by those members opposite. Both sides of this House acknowledge and deeply care about child care. This issue is not about cutting funding to family day care; it is about being a fiscally responsible and sustainable government while providing help and services to those people who make our community what it is.

I know the value of childcare providers, especially family day care services, because I have utilised these services. As a working mother of two boys, my sons were cared for from the age of six months until they went to school—not by a private nanny, but by quality childcare centres and family day care providers. Then they went on to attend before and after school care services. I was like most working women who rely on these services. I have nothing but respect and admiration for our childcare providers. I deeply admire the dedication, patience and enthusiasm of childcare staff. Their genuine love for their chosen profession meant that I knew my children were in safe hands. And this is all that parents want. When you are away working, you need to know that your child is safe and in a nurturing environment, and that is what these dedicated providers of child care provide to us working mothers and fathers.

I am a strong advocate and supporter of family day care in my electorate of Dobell and on the Central Coast, where we have more than 30,000 commuters leaving the region for work every day. I understand the need for reputable and reliable childcare services and family day care networks. It is the family day care network that makes up a huge part of these services. The intent of the Community Support Program funding is to provide operational support to organisations to assist them to establish or maintain services in areas where the requirements of the community are unable to be met. It was never designed to be used as an income stream to prop up unsustainable services. The changes meant that equity and fairness for all providers is experienced across Australia. A 2012 audit showed that more than 70 per cent of Community Support Program funding was going to family day care services, despite them caring for only 10 per cent of the children in approved care. Some may say this is unfair. What it is not is a level playing field for operators, especially since funding was developed for operators in regional and remote areas and the majority of family day care services are in metropolitan regions and not in regional areas such as Dobell, which has experienced, since 2011, a decline in the operators who provide this type of service.
Families can still apply for childcare benefit and the childcare rebate when using approved family day care providers. Users of approved family day care will also continue to receive childcare benefit assistance, and these parents actually receive one-third more than those using other care. This change in funding does not impact a service operator's ability to open or expand a family day care service, nor does it impact on the ability for a service to provide care for families. This funding is not received by the educators or the parents, but by the operators of the services. Funding is still available; however, it is capped to ensure fairness. It also aligns the family day care sector with other service types such as long day care and outside hours' school care, which are required to adhere to more stringent and rigid regulations.

As usual, it is up to the coalition to come in and fix the mess left behind by the previous Labor government, in turn impacting on my local community. I recently met with Child and Family Services Wyong Shire, who informed me of the impacts that the changes in this federal funding would mean to their business. This is an organisation that provides an important service to my electorate of Dobell. This business is well supported, diligently operated and proactive in ensuring its financial sustainability. To ensure that they continue to be sustainable following the changes to the Community Support Program, they have been proactive and they have been assertive in making hard choices and making changes to their organisation to ensure their continued success, and for that I commend them. In my role as their elected representative I aim to do as much as I can to support them with these new changes and be a voice for them when needed and provide practical solutions for the way forward.

This is about accountability, and once again it is left to this government to explain to the community that all of this has come about due to the incompetence of the former Labor government. In this instance, it ignored an Australian National Audit Office report in 2012 that highlighted this growing problem. This certainly was not a wise choice, nor was failing to review the eligibility guidelines to ensure that the areas that needed the funding most were receiving it. It is essential that we have a strong robust family day care sector if we are to successfully deliver a childcare service. Family day care is an essential service that I will continue to support, especially for my electorate of Dobell.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): Order! The discussion has now concluded.

BILLs

Aged Care and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014

Health and Other Services (Compensation) Care Charges (Amendment) Bill 2014

Second Reading

Cognate debate.

Debate resumed on the motion:

That this bill be now read a second time.

to which the following amendment was moved:

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

"whilst not declining to give the Bill a second reading the House notes that the government has failed to:"
provide alternative assistance in meeting the demands of the aged care workforce;
(2) ensure repurposed funds be utilised for workforce pay, conditions and development;
(3) consult with or inform the aged care sector of Budget cuts including the axing of the $653 million Aged Care Payroll Tax Supplement;
(4) consult with or inform the aged care sector of the axing of the Dementia and Severe Behaviours Supplement until after the 2014 Budget; and
(5) oversee the management of aged care funding as evidenced by the over-subscription of the Dementia and Severe Behaviours Supplement and under-subscription of the Dementia and Cognition and Veterans’ Supplements.”

Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (16:13): The Aged Care and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 amends the Aged Care Act 1997 to reflect a budget measure to reprioritise the aged care workforce supplement, introduced under Labor’s Living Longer Living Better aged care reform package. The previous Labor government introduced the workforce supplement as part of Living Longer Living Better to address workforce pay and conditions for some of the lowest paid workers in our country. These workers are scattered from Coolangatta to the cape; they are in northern Australia, in Tasmania—all over Australia we have aged care workers doing great service to our elderly.

These workers who do essential work caring for our seniors turn out to be some of our most vulnerable people. The government’s decision, this despicable money grab, is a huge blow to the 350,000 workers in the aged care sector—workers like Heather. I want to give you an example of the sort of people we are talking about. Heather works for Blue Care as a personal carer. Prior to the change of government in September last year she was looking forward to receiving this 1.25 per cent boost to a wage that is, so some would argue, very meagre; certainly I am yet to meet anyone in the aged-care sector who is living a life of luxury. It is a tough job. This supplement to her income would have made a huge difference for Heather. These jobs are physically demanding jobs—bathing people, feeding seniors or cleaning their houses. It is not only a physically-demanding job, it is also very emotionally draining. That is the nature of the job that people like Heather do.

Sadly, because of the change in government, the LNP government has decided not to let this wage increase flow through to people like Heather. I would point out that these physically-demanding jobs may be okay for someone in their 20s but these jobs get tougher and tougher by the time you are in your 30s and 40s, especially now the coalition government has said that Heather will have to work until she is 70. The physical demands of jobs like this make them particularly difficult for people like Heather.

This decision by the coalition government is a huge blow to Heather and her 350,000 co-workers. With this bill, the government has failed to meet the demands of the aged-care workforce—demands that need to be met immediately. There are particular challenges in the aged-care sector. It is coming under increasing pressure as a result of demographic, social and economic changes. In the early seventies, 31 per cent of our population was aged 15 or younger, with only eight per cent aged over 65. Jump forward a few decades to the turn of the century and the proportion of the population aged over 65 had increased to about 13 per cent. Now, one in five Australians are over 65 and that percentage will continue to increase.

Our population is ageing and, sadly, beginning to do so quite rapidly. While I am always an optimist, you cannot hide from the fact that an ageing society creates challenges. According to
the Productivity Commission, by 2050 we will need one million aged-care workers. There is no hope of building that workforce from the current 350,000 to one million unless the problems of inadequate wages and unrealistic workloads are fixed. Turnover in the aged-care industry now runs at 25 to 45 per cent annually. This is a crisis. It is estimated the cost of that between now and 2050 will be $5.39 billion.

Labor had allocated $1.2 billion to address these issues in the aged-care sector through the aged-care workforce supplement. It was effectively a 1.25 per cent boost for people like Heather. But this workforce supplement was going to deliver pay rises for some 350,000 aged-care workers. I stress that these are people who earn very little as it is—nurses who are paid less than their colleagues, who are similarly trained, in the hospitals down the road. These are people who are dedicated to caring for the elderly—for our parents and one day, hopefully, for us. That is the reality of the human brief.

The supplement the Labor Party brought in was also designed to improve pay and conditions—to enhance training so that there would be a better career path and subsequent career structure for those working in the sector. With this physically-demanding and emotionally draining job, and the realities of the human body, it is important to have career structures which mean that experience can stay in the sector rather than people having to leave because they are too frail to do their job.

The supplement was in the process of being rolled out to people like Heather. Sadly only two national aged-care providers had signed up when the member for Warringah was elected back in September last year and decided to take us all back to 1962. The supplement was aimed at addressing a growing need for workers in the sector because of that high turnover of staff, the low pay and poor conditions and the need for increasing numbers to care for more senior Australians in the future. Approved aged-care providers that signed up agreed to a pay increase of 2.75 per cent with the government providing an additional one per cent, giving workers a 3.75 per cent pay increase over all. Only a few had signed up and my understanding is none in Queensland had, so Heather has not been able to access this.

When I think of someone like Heather and the hard work she does caring for senior Australians, I particularly condemn this despicable, heartless act. Nevertheless, if the government is committed to doing this—to making Heather's life a bit more miserable—the government needs to ensure these recovered funds are utilised and pumped back into the sector so that conditions improve and stronger career paths develop for people like Heather. Decisions to provide inadequate wages will undermine the quality of services for our youngest and oldest Australians, with workers forced to leave the sector as a result of low wages. There is often a disconnect—people go into the sector, then find there is no pathway by which they could save up enough money to maybe buy a home. It is not dissimilar to what we see in the early childhood sector. In fact, if you compare it with our early education system, the aged-care sector has many of those same struggles. They cannot attract and retain a quality workforce even though training has to be provided. That is dead money for employers, basically, because they have to train people up to meet certain workplace health and safety standards and when there is such a turnover that is an extra red-tape cost to business. We need to do more to ensure that older Australians get the high standard of care that is their right. These are people who have paid taxes and fought through World War II and other battles on our behalf. We should be doing all we can to support them.
Sadly, this aged-care system we currently have in Australia was designed for another era—that golden year of 1962 the Prime Minister seems to be fixated on. We are now living in a modern Australia in 2014 and we need to be fair dinkum about how we support people in aged-care facilities and in their homes. Too often older people and their carers are missing out on the support they need and deserve to help them live at home or they have no choice but to move into residential care when they do not need to. Often this means they are removed from their family and friends at a time when they need them most. I have seen it often enough at the aged-care facilities in my electorate when talking to people. I will say, 'Why are you here?' and they tell me that they have to take whatever position is available, and often that has meant leaving behind their friends, family and community—all those things that nourish us and make us happy citizens.

This coalition government has failed to consult with the aged-care sector. If they had, they would have discovered that too many aged-care workers are leaving the industry because their work is undervalued and underpaid, and then the employers are having to pay dead money to train new employees to replace the ones who have gone off seeking more money. If the coalition government had consulted with the aged-care sector, they would have discovered the severe negative impact of axing the $653 million aged-care payroll tax supplement. On top of this, the government failed to consult with or inform the aged-care sector on the axing of the dementia and severe behaviour supplement until after the 2014 budget. There was no mention of it before the election but then it was cruelly rolled out, and it was a complete surprise to those people who do have dementia and who have relied on that money. Despite the promise before the election from this 'no surprises' so-called adult government, they have surprised us every single day and they certainly have not demonstrated that they can claim to be adults. It is more like they aspire to be juveniles.

The increasing prevalence of dementia and other age-related chronic illnesses is projected to result in growing demand for complex aged-care services. At the same time, a relative fall in the number of informal carers as people become more insular will result in older Australians being more reliant on the formal aged-care system for the care and support they need. Dementia is both a public health challenge and a social issue. Many commentators have warned that there is a huge wave of trouble and challenges coming our way. There is an urgent need to address not only the conditions of workers in the industry but also the quality of dementia care within residential aged-care facilities. We need to ensure that the basic human rights of people with dementia are protected.

Improved quality will not come via decreasing conditions. If you look at any workplace or any sector, lowering wages will not—almost as an economic rule—increase productivity; that is not an economic reality. A consumer's report from Alzheimer's Australia 2012 stated that aged-care facilities often do not have the staff or the training to provide quality care to individuals with high needs such as those with behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia. Having had meetings with my dementia support group in Sunnybank, I know how incredibly hard that journey is, particularly when the person you love is there but as a husk of that person with none of the attributes that drew you to love that person in the first place.

The dementia and severe behaviours supplement was paid to approved aged-care providers to assist with the additional costs of caring for people with severe behavioural and
psychological symptoms associated with dementia. The coalition government has irresponsibly axed this payment.

It is a refrain that many people on this side of the chamber have mentioned, but I will say it again: the Australian people were not told about these cuts going into the 2013 election but then the cuts were cruelly delivered, as part of that most horrible budget—surely the most horrific budget visited upon the people of Australia. It is a budget attacking the very core of what makes this nation a great nation, by attacking principles of equity and opportunity for all. The Australian people, at the next election, will not let it happen.

Every year I host a number of seniors' forums across my electorate. In the past few weeks I have hosted forums at Sunnybank Hills State School, at Annerley in the Marymac Community Hall and at Oxley in the Oxley community sports club. I especially thank Lindsay Hill and his crew from Oxley for looking after the seniors that were there. Constituents came from across Moreton and many raised concerns about the need for improved focus on the aged-care industry and services as people start to contemplate what it will mean for them. I had some lawyers there talking about making individual decisions, and also there was a big need for people to talk about aged-care facilities. Sadly, the member for Blair could not come along because he had fallen over and broken his wrist. He will have to come to the next one and speak in more detail.

My constituents raised concerns about the lies told by the Liberal and National parties going into the 2013 election. People are fearful that as our population ages their children and grandchildren will not receive adequate care when they reach the stage in their lives where they will require aged-care services. This is why Labor is concerned with the redirection of the $1.1 billion workforce supplement funds. We need to attract workers to the sector to meet the growing demand. By ignoring these needs this coalition government could put the future of aged care in very difficult circumstances.

While the extension of the funding is welcome, the funds will now be given directly to providers with no conditions or guarantees that it will support workers through pay increases, improved conditions or professional and career development. Only Labor has a positive plan to ensure the best care for older Australians, to substantially increase aged-care places and to build a stronger aged-care system with more choice and easier access. Preparing our aged-care system for the future requires continued vigilance and political will—which the government sadly lacks—and real investments, not just hollow words. While Labor supports the continued rollout of our Living Longer Living Better reforms and the aspects of them that have been usurped by those opposite, we will continue to hold this government to account to help ensure that all older Australians get the strong and sustainable aged-care system that they deserve.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott): The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (16:28): Mr Deputy Speaker, given the hour, and given that I only have about a minute to go before the adjournment—

Government members interjecting—

Mr ZAPPIA: I can assure the members opposite that I am quite keen to make my contribution on the Aged Care and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014, but, given that
the members who are speaking in the adjournment debate are already in the chamber, I seek leave continue my remarks, perhaps next week when the debate resumes.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott) (16:29): Order! It being approximately 4.30 pm, I propose the question:

That the House do now adjourn.

Serana (WA) Pty Ltd

Ms MacTIERNAN (Perth) (16:29): Recently, I alerted the House to the unethical treatment by the Department of Agriculture of Serana (WA) Pty Ltd, a burgeoning biotech company in Western Australia's south-west. In December last year, a posse of eastern-states departmental officers headed to Bunbury, stormed the premises of Serana and froze their business with an unlawful search warrant. Notwithstanding all 64 tests clearing the company, they continued to undermine their business for the next six months.

Last week, I went down to Bunbury to talk to the employees of Serana, who have now been told the company will close down in Western Australia and move its operations to Germany, as the principals have no confidence that they will receive ethical treatment from the department and because their reputation has now been trashed. These employees were devastated by the destruction of this company which had provided them with great jobs. They were proud of being part of creating a new industry.

Not only will 16 West Australians have lost their jobs but the company was three-quarters of the way through an expansion that would have seen another 20 people employed as the company continued to develop innovative new products. The CEO of the Bunbury CCI, Ray Philp, told me that Serana had won numerous industry awards and was precisely the type of business that the south-west wanted to attract—21st-century sunrise industries providing skilled jobs. Even better, Serana leveraged off local agriculture.

Serana has reason to believe that a senior employee of GE Healthcare was providing information to the department. Indeed, in the Federal Court proceedings the judgement assumed that it was a competitor supplying the information. GE Healthcare is a multinational company who bought into the Australian market a few years ago and is in direct competition with Serana. I have a statutory declaration from another industry player attesting he had a cold call from Brian Hood, of GE Healthcare, at the height of this investigation, falsely claiming that Serana had lost its export license. But it gets worse. Just yesterday we learnt that once the investigation had pushed Serana onto the ropes it appears GE systematically went about approaching Serana's serum suppliers, and is now entering contracts to capture all of the supply.

People say to me that they do not believe that this could happen in Australia—that the public sector could be used to improperly advance the interests of a rival—but there is at least prima facie evidence that this may have happened. But even without the improper third-party influence, we need to have a full and independent investigation as to how this 'Operation Fides' witch hunt was allowed to get so out of control, where affidavits were sworn with reckless indifference to the truth, leading to the unlawful issue of a search warrant; where serum was held under quarantine for more than two months without any testing; where every
month saw random acts of harassment, including holding up routine imports of supplies for weeks on end; where employees were subject to harassing home visits; where principals of the company were subject to extensive personal searches at airports; and where their clients and business associates were warned off dealing with Serana. And all of this occurred when every test of their serum product showed that it originated in Australia and New Zealand.

This company has been audited by Western Australian AQIS officers for the past five years. No issue has ever emerged. If there were concerns, why wasn't another audit simply commissioned? Biosecurity is incredibly important; so is probity of our government agencies. We need an independent investigation here to restore our faith in them.

**Braddon Electorate: Industrial Dispute**

Mr WHITELEY (Braddon) (16:33): Job creation and job security is my priority and it is certainly the priority of this government. We know that to create jobs and to protect the ones that we already have it is often the case that government needs to get out of the way of business and allow them to do what they do best—that is, to stimulate economic growth and create jobs. Destructively, unions take a very different approach to business—and often at the expense of workers, their families and the local economy. This is certainly the case presently with Simplot—one of the largest employers on the north-west coast of Tasmania, which is at a critical juncture in the future of its Devonport processing plant.

At a time when this company has been honest and upfront in publically stating its difficulty in ensuring its Devonport plant remains financially viable, the AMWU and ETU have launched an extraordinary campaign against Simplot and the majority of workers. Despite a slowing in wage growth throughout the country and example after example of businesses closing their doors due to the wage inflation and outrageous union demands, the unions have rejected Simplot's pay offer and opted for industrial action.

The most extraordinary part of this union campaign is its lack of support, I believe, amongst the workforce. Out of a total workforce of 891, only 575 are paid-up members of the AMWU and the ETU. But, interestingly, of that membership of 575, the AEC reports that only 388 ballot papers were counted. Yet, the union organiser declares that everybody is livid—absolutely livid—about the company's offer to them. But only 388 of 575 of 891 workers, in fact, took the time to fill in a ballot paper. That is 67.5 per cent of the union membership but only 43 per cent of the total workforce. Further, up to 84 union members of the 388 voted against some form of industrial action, meaning that only 34 per cent of the total workforce supports industrial action that could, in fact, eventually lead to the closure of this plant.

Despite only having the support of 34 per cent of the workforce, the unions have taken it upon themselves to put 100 per cent of the jobs in Devonport, in particular, on the line. That is why I took the unusual step a few weeks ago to publish an open letter in the local paper to all Simplot employees on the north-west coast, imploring them to reject industrial action and to work with Simplot in order to protect their jobs, the financial security of their families, the farmers and the local economy.

This current negotiation is not about the power and influence of unions; nor is it about a multinational company trying to take advantage of its workers. It is about the long-term viability of a very strategic business in the vegetable food chain of our region. I make this
plea again tonight in this parliament: cease, please, your industrial action immediately; sit down with Simplot and find a solution to this dispute. The north-west coast, my electorate of Braddon, cannot afford Simplot to go the way of the paper mill, the carpet factory, the weaving mill or McCain. That would be a terrible but wholly avoidable disaster.

Simplot has been working diligently to implement its plan for a sustainable future for its Devonport processing plant and has commenced a significant investment program that will ensure it remains competitive in an extremely fierce global market.

I take my responsibility as the local federal representative for Braddon very seriously. It is my responsibility to do everything I can to protect the local jobs. We currently have local jobs and I want to keep local jobs. I want to help build the economic and regulatory environment that will encourage existing and new businesses to employ more people. That is what this government is about. I make no apology for standing up for the entire Simplot workforce, their families, local farmers and the local economy. I am calling on the unions to immediately cease its job-destroying campaign against industry in the north west.

I respect the workers at Simplot. They do a great job, many of them skilled in the areas that they work. But they currently earn above normal award wages and their conditions are definitely not from the last century. There is a truism that we all know: a good day's work for a good day's pay. It is certainly true, but it is very hard to have a good day's work and earn a good day's pay if you do not have a job.

Blair Electorate: Medicare Locals

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (16:38): I wish to congratulate West Moreton-Oxley Medicare Local on the publication of its Comprehensive needs assessment 2014-2015 report. The West Moreton-Oxley Medicare Local has provided the highest possible service to the Ipswich and Somerset Region during its tenure and I commend them for their wonderful partnership with me and many other people in our community. WMOML, as it affectionately called, works in partnership with the community and provides primary health care, including GPs, pharmacies, practice nurses and allied health professionals, and has improved the availability, accessibility and appropriateness of care.

WMOML have delivered better health services to my electorate, to Oxley, to Ryan and to Wright, delivering better access to after-hour GP services, including Fernvale's first after-hours service, delivering better access to mental health support through local management of the Access to Allied Psychological Services, the Medicare Better Access and the Partners in Recovery programs and delivering better support to local primary health providers.

Crucially, WMOML's work is data driven, identifying current and future areas of health need. This commitment to data is apparent in the needs assessment report, the most complete assessment of the health needs of our community ever undertaken. It highlights the challenges we face now and those we will face in the future. It underlines that we are a rapidly growing region. The population of our region is projected to increase by more than 90 per cent by 2031, well above the Queensland average. Most of this growth will occur in the Springfield, Ripley Valley, Rosewood and the eastern-Ipswich corridor. That growth will place demands on the health services in the region.

The needs assessment report highlights our relative social disadvantage compared to other Medicare Local regions. This is apparent on measures of unemployment, high school
completion rates, median income and the number of people receiving income support. Of the 61 Medicare Locals, we rank 12th nationally for the number of families with children who are welfare dependent, 14th in unemployment and it goes on. We rank 14th highest nationally in terms of obesity with 71 per cent of adults in the region obese or overweight and we rank sixth poorest for physical inactivity. The needs assessment report is damning. We have real challenges in terms of high-level priority areas, including mental health, child development, chronic diseases, population growth and the health of our Indigenous people and those with disability. That is why WMOML's work is so important.

That is why it is so shameful that the current Prime Minister said, 'We are not shutting any Medical Locals.' He promised no cuts to health. He has cut $50 billion from hospitals. He promised no new taxes. He wants $7 for a person to visit a GP. He wants to increase the PBS co-payment and the PBS safety net thresholds.

The needs assessment report notes that the availability of GP services varies across our region but our region only has 82 GPs per 100,000 population, lower than the Queensland average of 92 per 100,000 population. This drops to as low as 48 per 100,000 in the Somerset region, which I represent. The Abbott government has no plan to address this shortfall. Shamefully, it abolished Health Workforce Australia, created to remedy the Howard government's systematic health workforce planning failures as identified by the Productivity Commission.

What of the Prime Minister's promise he wouldn't shut any Medicare Locals? All 61 will shut from July 2015, to be replaced with 30 new health bureaucracies, Primary Healthcare Networks. This is a blow for primary health care in our community and a blow for the budget. It is estimated it will cost $200 million just to close down Medicare Locals and create these new health bureaucracies. What a waste of money. In my region, the proposal is grossly inadequate and inappropriate. It covers an enormous region—south from Goondiwindi, north to Nanango and to the west of Miles. That will be the Darling Downs West Moreton PHN—totally inadequate. It is much bigger and out of touch compared to WMOML. I urge the government to reconsider its position.

I want to congratulate Sue Scheinpflug, CEO of WMOML, and her terrific team on the Comprehensive needs assessment 2014-2015 report and for their tireless work in our region. I wish them well. I hope they do bid for the opportunity to run the PHN in collaboration with Darling Downs. I think the government's attitude in this area needs to be reassessed.

Economy

Mr WILLIAMS (Hindmarsh) (16:43): The only constant in our lives is change. The best businesses, the best countries and the best communities all adapt to change. Australia is facing another period of change, especially our economy which is in transition in many sectors. Just as we have before, we will prevail and we will adapt. Our economy has diversified over the years with services like education, which is our third largest export with an annual value over $15 billion per year. The Minister for Education is doing a great job in making it an even better sector. Congratulations to him. Health care and tourism are also other services sectors which have increased over the years.

Sections of our economy are in transition. Energy and resources have done well and agriculture presents some real opportunities in terms of agribusinesses and supplying food
and beverages to the growth sectors in the Asian middle class. With the rise of Asia as an economic powerhouse, by 2025 half of the world's output will come from Asia. Asian incomes have doubled over 10 years, which is far greater than in the United Kingdom where it took around 50 years during their periods of industrialisation. The Asian middle class want to purchase more Australian wine, hopefully from my state of South Australian or the member for Braddon's state Tasmania. Asians want to travel to our great countryside in Tasmania, in South Australia and around our great nation.

The economic storm clouds ahead with the decline of manufacturing present numerous challenges, with automotive manufactures departing Australia over the last two decades—Nissan in the 1990s and Mitsubishi in 2008, Holden, Ford and now Toyota. Australia is not alone in facing these economies transitioning. The US and Europe have been through it. I would like to go through a couple of interesting case studies. Sheffield in the United Kingdom suffered an economic decline from the 1970s when large steel firms failed to adapt to the changing economic landscape as the country began to deindustrialise. Of the 1,000 largest UK firms, those with headquarters in Sheffield fell from 22 in 1976 to just 13 in the late 1980s and unemployment soared to 16 per cent. Sheffield bounced back, however. Collaboration between the University of Sheffield and Boeing was the signature development in a new advanced manufacturing research centre and biomedical and health care were other niche areas which brought new jobs and new economic activity.

In the car industry, Torino in Italy was at the forefront with their engineering sector until the 1980s when the Fiat car company shifted production out of Italy to other places around the world. It once had 100,000 industrial jobs lost, including over 40,000 from the car industry alone. Political and industry leaders got together and promoted research and industrial innovation, capitalising on Torino's universities whose fed into industries. Business incubators were set up and entrepreneurism promoted. In 2006, things turned around. Torino was at its lowest ever rate of unemployment at 4.1 per cent and SMEs played a greater role in the economy, which had diversified.

Governments, local business and community leaders will always have some influence in the regeneration of cities and local economies. Last week the Prime Minister and the Minister for Industry made a major announcement on industry in Australia and an action plan for Australia's future. With the innovation and competitiveness agenda and industry growth centres, $190 million dedicated to the areas where we are competitively advantaged, where we do have some strengths—food and agribusiness, mining equipment, medical technologies and advanced manufacturing. Business SA in my state commented that we are well positioned to take advantage of future growth opportunities across these five sectors. And Business SA rightly stated that industry must lead growth. These industry growth sectors will foster better use by industry of Australia's world class researchers, so we will see better returns from the $9 billion annual Commonwealth investment in research.

Employee share ownership schemes are another great initiative. An entrepreneur in Adelaide who is a member of Entrepreneurs Organisation SA told me earlier this year that he is 'very supportive of share incentive schemes'. Our state in particular needs more entrepreneurs like the drivers of Clipsal, Deborah Rathjen of Bionomics, Tim and Glenn Cooper of Coopers, Maurice Crotti of San Remo, Tammy May of MyBudget and Richard Turner of ZEN. Only pro-business governments will provide the necessary incentives for
entrepreneurs to emerge and create jobs. Unfortunately the South Australian Labor government, with its high-taxing ways, is no such government, but the federal government has made tracks. We have reduced taxes and provided a better business environment. Change will always be there. Industry needs to adopt. We need community leadership and business leadership to get us through.

Digital Economy

Mr HUSIC (Chifley) (16:49): I would like to turn the attention of the House to the growing concern becoming evident within the digital economy sector at the indifference of the coalition government. Time and again we see evidence of either a lack of care, a lack of effort or outright belligerence from this government. It is not, to be completely frank, being spearheaded by the Minister for Communications or his parliamentary secretary. They are quite aware of and sympathetic to the issues facing the sector but what is becoming clear to people within the sector is that these two individuals are not calling the shots. The whip is being well and truly cracked by the Prime Minister's office and they are cracking it in the face of the sector. The sector does not like it and now they are starting to speak out. On 29 September in the Sydney Morning Herald in an article written by Sylvia Pennington titled 'Federal government accused of neglecting the digital agenda', the Australian Information Industry Association had basically matched up action against a claim in coalition policy and their CEO said:

The government had failed to appoint an ICT advisory board, progress its plans to offer most government services online by 2017, produce a dashboard for government ICT performance and investment, improve the transparency of its technology spend or provide an update on teleworking targets.

In fact, the CEO of that organisation said:

It's a year of nothing that is transparent and obvious to us to.

That is from the sector. Then you go on to cloud computing and what the government is doing or not doing in that space. OzHub, which represents the cloud computing sector in this country, said:

Basically we've been in the starters' hands in the race for the take-up of cloud computing for too long. On 8 October, their chair Matt Healy said:

The updated Information Security Management Guidelines released today by the Attorney-General—not the Minister for Communications—may not promote cloud adoption.

The United Kingdom has a goal of shifting half its new government IT spending to cloud based services by 2015, yet in Australia only a tiny proportion of the federal government's annual ICT budget of nearly $6 billion has been spent on cloud projects. So you see data retention proposals being put forward by the Attorney-General, another person who is now championing copyright reform, again the Attorney-General, not the Minister for Communications, and in terms of data retention the government wants to turn the telcos in this country into a massive external hard drive and make them pay for it.

On industry policy, which is supposed to support innovation it actually ignores the innovators. It does not even target the technology sector. The only thing they did is that they finally got around to addressing the employee share ownership program. We had kicked off
the review in government to start that process of change. They talked for ages about doing it but did not do anything in the budget. Finally they got around to it. But then you look at for example, the crowd source equity funding issue—and this issue is something that we again in our national digital economy strategy said we needed to get moving on. We authorised CAMAC, the Corporations and Market Advisory Council to look at this issue and to start putting in the rules. We had a report that was handed up to the government in May to legalise, to allow for start-ups to get access to capital through crowd sourced funding.

I have met with organisations, start-ups, who are moving to New Zealand because they do not have the regulatory framework to allow them to raise that capital. These start-up entrepreneurs are innovators. They are creators of economic wealth. They are not criminals. They should not be exiles; and yet we have a government that is dragging its feet on putting in a regulatory framework on crowd sourced funding for this sector.

What they have done is they have flicked it to Treasury. You can imagine what Treasury is going to do. They will slow it right down, be as conservative as they can, and we are going to be waiting for ages to see something happening on crowd sourced funding.

The sector is actually calling for a statement from this government saying: ‘Tell us where we are at in terms of fixing up the regulatory framework on crowd sourced funding. Stop talking, stop giving us promises, and stop giving us the words that we are in the innovation statement—we only had one paragraph and total inaction.’ This government says it is pro small business. It says it is pro entrepreneur; yet its actions continue to fail to live up to expectation and our small businesses, our entrepreneurs and our digital economy are the worse for it.

Maritime Defence Capability

Dr HENDY (Eden-Monaro) (16:54): I am rising today to make some brief comments on the issue of maritime defence capability, in particular the forward program in terms of the submarine fleet. I know, Madam Speaker, this is a topic of interest to you as a former Minister for Defence Science and Personnel.

Earlier in my career, I was the chief of staff for the Minister for Defence. In that position I was heavily involved in work to ensure that the Collins class submarine program remained on track and provided the best possible maritime defence capability that was humanly possible.

It involved many hours of frustrating work. It was one of the most difficult policy and administrative issues I have dealt with in my career, which has spanned senior levels in both the public and private sectors. Ensuring the Collins class submarines operated at their maximum efficiency, were actually in the water doing their job and were properly integrated in terms of combat, command and control systems was the task at hand. It appeared to be a particularly fraught issue.

Unfortunately, at the time—and here I am talking about 2001—the minister was being bombarded with contrary opinions from the Department of Defence and the uniformed experts. It got to such a stage that the minister requested me to convene a special meeting in his office of all the relevant internal stakeholders. I did so and all the relevant top brass, the department secretary and the deputy secretaries were present—in fact, seven people were present.
Unfortunately, as the meeting, chaired by the minister, proceeded it was apparent that there were some seven different and conflicting views on how to deal with the issues at hand. Worse than that: it was apparent that the individuals would not be reconciled. This was the end result of years of bad decisions. It became very hard to extract ourselves from the vested interests.

I do not wish to see a similar result occurring in terms of the submarine program when we get to the replacement for the Collins class. It is not hard to find credible commentators that believe that the original sin in the case of the Collins class was the former Labor government's guarantee to build the subs in Adelaide. That was a decision more based on regional policy than military strategy. I would like to think that 10 years ago the Howard government saved the Collins class, and its remediation policies have meant the submarines have been able to largely fulfil their assigned role.

The coalition promised at the last election that the new submarine project will be centred on Adelaide. Any more specific commitment than that would have been grossly irresponsible in defence strategy terms. We need to ensure that the best capability is purchased, not simply have an industry policy propping up one region of Australia. I think that whatever decision is made there will be plenty of contracts and jobs for South Australia. This can be done without jeopardising the overriding priority of good defence policy.

I note that the Leader of the Opposition did the exact opposite in his recent speech on the topic. His speech, promising amongst other things that, under Labor, the submarines would be built in Adelaide without first doing the proper due diligence harked back to the protectionist, xenophobic unionism that we all thought had been relegated to the past—obviously, not.

And to add insult—literally, in this case to our Japanese allies—to injury, the Leader of the Opposition was a senior member of the last government that failed to advance the replacement submarine decision. They were happy to say in the Defence White Paper 2009 that they would buy 12 new submarines, but never explained where the money was coming from or any details on this important acquisition project.

Now the coalition government must fill a capability gap that will be created when the Collins class is retired.

Of course we will need to rely heavily on foreign technology to build the submarines. That is the case with the planes the RAAF fly and the tanks that the army operate, let alone much of the other equipment. To do otherwise would negligently endanger Australia's defence posture.

Having had some personal involvement in this issue a number of years ago, I am particularly heartened by the Prime Minister's statements in terms of the sensible priorities on this issue. I also want to congratulate Senator David Johnston on doing a very good job in an incredibly demanding portfolio. I hope that they stay the course and make the correct decisions on the future submarines for the good of all Australians.

**Illawarra Business Awards**

Ms BIRD (Cunningham) (16:58): I would like to put in a big plug for the Illawarra Business Chamber's Illawarra Business Awards that are on tomorrow evening. There are 52 finalists out of 100 nominations. Hundreds of local small businesses will be participating. It is a wonderful event.
I know everyone in this House celebrates their small businesses on these sorts of occasions. I want to congratulate the Illawarra Business Chamber on what is a great annual event and give my very best wishes to all the participants and those competing for the awards that will be given out tomorrow night.

House adjourned at 17:00
Thursday, 23 October 2014

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. BC Scott) took the chair at 09:30.

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS
Calwell Electorate: Sayegh, Dr Dorette

Ms VAMVAKINOU (Calwell) (09:30): I rise today to speak about my constituent Mrs Dorette Sayegh, an exceptional woman who recently celebrated her 80th birthday. Dorette lives in Greenvale Lakes in my electorate, and I was honoured to have been invited to share this very important milestone with her and her family. Dorette's elegance, her calm and her inspirational zest for life were palpable on that day. She not only has the distinction of being the first woman to qualify as a dentist in her home town of Basra, Iraq, but has also recently overcame breast cancer.

Dorette's family is typical of the many Iraqi families that live in my electorate. Overall, this well-qualified and loving family consists of six children, 10 grandchildren and a great-granddaughter named Josie. There are three doctors, a dentist, a chemist and a secondary school teacher amongst them. Although Dorette's story is individual and unique, it also has a common thread that runs through the emerging Iraqi Chaldean migrant communities she represents. This gracious lady's story begins in Basra, southern Iraq, where she was born to a Chaldean mother and an Anglo-Indian father. Dorette's father, Abdulmaseeh Samueal, passed away when she was six months old, and her mother, Regina, remarried years later but never had any other children.

The family, especially her mother and aunt, who were both nurses, always encouraged Dorette to get an education. It was this encouragement that saw her become the first female dentist in Basra.

Dorette worked long hours in the public hospital system and saw up to 60 patients on any given day, but she was always very proud to be of service to her community. It was during that time that she met and married Afram, a doctor she met at college and who later became the director-general of the military hospital in Iraq. The couple had six children, three boys and three girls. For a while, life did seem to be on track, until the war broke out in Iraq and the uncertain future of the country forced them to flee and literally scatter across the globe—to New Zealand, to Sweden, to Canada and to America. Dorette's daughter Raghad and her husband, Dr Iamir Maloka, came to Australia in 2005 under the skilled migration program and settled in Melbourne. Worried about the welfare of their parents, Dorette and Afram, in Syria, Raghad and Iamir sponsored the elderly couple under the humanitarian visa program to come to Australia in 2009. For Afram and Dorette, their arrival in Australia was like arriving in paradise. They were overcome with how safe the streets were, the peaceful communities that they now lived amongst and, above all, what they perceived to be the government's very caring attitude towards them.

This family is a wonderful example of the calibre of people who are coming here from Iraq, mostly under the refugee and humanitarian program. I have on many occasions through my work on the Migration Committee drawn attention to the need for us and the government to recognise overseas qualifications and the importance of enabling capable people to make a contribution to Australia.
National Schools Chaplaincy Program

Mr HUNT (Flinders—Minister for the Environment) (09:33): I want to speak in strong support of the National Schools Chaplaincy Program. Next week, 30 October marks the eighth anniversary of the commencement of the program. Last week I had the privilege of attending a function in my electorate, in Hastings, which brought together chaplains from across seven different Western Port schools and to hear the testimonials of students, parents and others about the value of this program to their lives, their work and their wellbeing.

There are some who would denigrate the National Schools Chaplaincy Program as some sort of religious frolic. It is anything but that. It has a deep and profound impact in terms of the way in which students are affected. But let me just give the testimonials, because nothing speaks louder. One local mother said that the school chaplain had helped her through a difficult time:

In a twelve month period I lost my job, my daughter was very ill, my mum died and my brother-in-law died.

I was up at the school one day when I ran into the school Chaplain. She could tell straight away that things weren't good and she took me into her office.

I wasn't coping with all that had happened and after speaking with the Chaplain over a few months I was able to come out the other end.

I can honestly say the Chaplain saved my life and I am forever grateful.

That is a quote from a mother at Baxter Primary School.

Another primary school student said:

I spent three months in Hospital very sick and away from my school friends and reality. After my return to school I started seeing the school Chaplain regularly to talk about what I had been through.

I also experienced a time of sadness when my best friend moved to New Zealand. Thanks to the Chaplain I was able to get through it.

I hope Chaplains stay in schools so they can help other students like I was helped.

That is a from a student from Baxter Primary School. Another student, at Western Port Secondary College, wrote this:

I just wanted to say thank you! You may have only been in my life for a short time, but you have helped me out more than anyone who has been trying for years. I feel it's only right I say thank you somehow.

I don't think you will ever be able to understand how grateful I am for all your help. Sometimes it may not seem like it's as big of a deal as I'm making it out to be, but it's because of you that I know I can trust people.

In short, what these testimonials say is that the chaplains are about protecting and helping young people with their lives, as well as their parents and the school community. I want to thank all of those who were involved in the establishment of this: David Price, Peter Rawlings, Jeff Harvey, Dale Stephenson and so many others. It is a great program, and I commend it.

Charlton Electorate: Hunter Volunteer of the Year Awards

Mr CONROY (Charlton) (09:36): Last week I had the great honour of attending the 2014 Hunter Volunteer of the Year ceremony. This annual event, run by the Centre for Volunteering, recognises the efforts of volunteers from across New South Wales. It also
presents a great opportunity to say thank you to those dedicated individuals who give so much to our community, and I was certainly very pleased to be able to do that.

I would like to mention the following people from the electorate of Charlton who were nominated for efforts throughout the year: Esther Siebel, of Wangi Wangi, and John Thirkell, of Wallsend, who volunteer with the Starlight Children's Foundation; Carolyn Brown, of New Lambton Heights, who volunteers with UnitingCare Ageing; Angela Chorusch, of Woodrising, who volunteers with Mums' Cottage; Steve Dewar, of Toronto, who volunteers with Lake Macquarie Landcare; George Ditz, of West Wallsend, who volunteers with the Sugar Valley Neighbourhood Centre; Adam Heine, of Maryland, who volunteers with St John Ambulance Australia; Margo Humphries, of Cardiff South, who volunteers with Hunter Arts Network; John Cater, of Wallsend, who volunteers with Fort Scratchley Historical Society; Kevin Stokes, of Toronto, who volunteers with the Hunter Region Botanic Gardens; and Brian Taylor, of Croudace Bay, who volunteers with the Cerebral Palsy Alliance.

Volunteers were recognised across five categories: student, youth, adult, senior and team. The winners from each category will represent the Hunter region at the 2014 New South Wales State Volunteer of the Year Awards Ceremony, to be held on International Volunteer Day, Friday 5 December.

I pay particular tribute to Angela Chorusch, who not only was awarded the Hunter Adult Volunteer of the Year Award but also was the overall winner on the day, receiving the 2014 Volunteer of the Year Award for the Hunter region. Angela works with Mums' Cottage at Holmesville, which offers companionship, guidance, education and assistance to local women and families, often at their most difficult times. They provide access to mentors, disability services, case coordination, legal guidance, financial guidance, health care, educational services, parenting programs and workshops and also host a range of family events throughout the year. Angela works as a case manager and disability coordinator at Mums' Cottage. She was also instrumental in establishing the centre's program for children aged three to 16 years who are autistic and on the Asperger's spectrum, of which she has some personal family experience.

I was fortunate enough to visit Mums' cottage earlier this year and cannot praise more highly the work of Angela, Sister Helen Anne and the other tremendous volunteers at the centre. Their work inspires me, and it was a great privilege to spend a morning with them, understanding their activities and how they help a great local community. It gives me great pride to have this opportunity to wish Angela and the rest of the Hunter's representatives all the best for the state awards and to pay tribute to each of the nominees, award recipients and the organisations they represent for everything they do to make our area a better place.

Stewart, Ms Macey

**Braddon Electorate: Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day**

**Mr WHITELEY** (Braddon) (09:39): At 19 years of age, Macey Stewart from Devonport has a great future ahead of her in the sport of cycling. Last month Macey became the Junior Women's Individual Time Trial World Champion at the UCI Road Championships in Spain. This was her third championship jersey after she won gold in both the omnium and team pursuit at the 2014 UCI Juniors Track World Championships in South Korea in August. As part of the Pure Tasmania and Deloitte Cycling Team, Macey started cycling at the age of
nine after her father and brothers took up the sport. Since then she has won numerous titles throughout her career, showing persistence, resilience and a dedication to the sport.

At the 2012 Under 19 Road National Championships here in Canberra, Macey had a major crash involving 10 riders. It resulted in Macey suffering two skull fractures, a chipped vertebra and bruising to the front of her brain. Macey did not let this stop her, bouncing back to on-road racing once the doctor gave her the all clear, and training on a stationary bike in her living room in the meantime.

A young woman of many talents, Macey is a talented singer and dancer, which she decided to put on the backburner to focus on cycling. As Devonport's Young Citizen of the Year in 2012 and having received, at the age of 12 in 2008, The Advocate newspaper's IGA Junior Sports Award, Macey is a great role model to young people in our community.

Macey will be at the senior women's track training camp in November in the hope of being picked for the senior women's track world cup in London, which would be her first competition in the senior division. Macey's ultimate goal is to compete at the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio, at which I believe she has a red hot chance. But first she will back in Braddon as this year's ambassador for the Christmas carnival series. On behalf of the electorate of Braddon, I would like to congratulate Macey on her success so far and wish her all the best for all her future competitions. Macey, you do our electorate proud.

International Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day was last week on 15 October. It is a sad fact that in Australia one in every four women have lost a child through miscarriage, stillbirth or postnatal causes. This special day enables parents and families across Australia to honour their babies who have passed away and help them on their grief journey.

I was pleased to be in attendance at the Gateway Community Care at the Gateway Church last Saturday, in conjunction with a lot of other organisations, where they hosted the White Butterfly Remembrance Service to support individuals and families through the trauma of losing a child before birth. One hundred women, men and family members lit candles and released balloons in memory of their little ones while also hearing from a number of people who have travelled the grief journey. The work that these groups do to support families in grief is to be praised, and I give them thanks for the service they provide to our community.

Queensland: Health Services

Mr SWAN (Lilley) (09:42): For the last 2½ years, the community I represent on the north side of Brisbane have suffered greatly from the Liberal and National parties' savage cuts to health services, particularly front-line health services, on the north side. We have seen the virtual destruction of the Eventide Nursing Home and the pain that it has caused the local community. In fact, last Saturday morning I was with 50 or 60 local residents talking to them about the systematic destruction of that facility and the uncertainty about its future. There is a double whammy happening on the north side: it is not just the cuts from the Newman government but also the cuts from the Abbott government. The north side is home to two very significant hospitals: the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital and the Prince Charles Hospital. There is probably no other area of Queensland that has a higher proportion of health related workers than the north side of Brisbane, and they are feeling these cuts very keenly.

The Newman government has shut down facilities and beds at the Eventide Nursing Home, closed 30 beds at the Prince Charles Hospital, slashed 420 jobs at the Royal Brisbane and
Women's Hospital and sacked 250 people from Prince Charles Hospital. These cuts from the Newman government are now going to be added to by cuts from the Abbott government, which is going to cut $50 billion from health across the nation, over $10 billion in Queensland over a decade and over $2 billion in Brisbane's Metro North Hospital and Health Service. That is right: something like a staggering $2 billion of cuts over the next decade from Brisbane north in health services alone. That is the equivalent of sacking one in five nurses and one in three doctors and closing one in 13 hospital beds. That is what I mean by a double whammy—the combined impact of both the Newman government's cuts and the Abbott government's cuts. We have seen this surface in the chaotic administration of Brisbane metro north, which is now seeing a number of very senior officials stood aside, and we simply do not now have the clear administrative direction that a hospital of that size deserves. All of this can be laid very squarely at the feet of the Newman government.

We had another disturbing event last week, where Prince Charles Hospital senior medical professionals wrote to the health minister to complain about the lack of service and capacity of the new paediatric department. This is an essential facility for families on the north side. I wrote to the health minister in these terms: 'We wish to draw to your attention the precarious position of the Paediatric Accident and Emergency Department at Prince Charles Hospital.' The letter goes on, 'This is, indeed, quite alarming and quite concerning for any parent on the north side.' I think it is emblematic of the cuts—not just here in the paediatric department but more broadly—having a devastating impact on the peace of mind of the community who value this hospital, value its facilities and value its workforce.

### War Memorials

Mr PITT (Hinkler) (09:45): Last month a new memorial wall dedicated to Australian service nurses was officially unveiled in Bundaberg by Governor of Queensland Paul de Jersey. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend due to duties in Canberra, but my wife, Allison, and daughter Ruby attended on my behalf.

The dedication ceremony was held to coincide with the 100th anniversary of when the first contingent of Army nursing sisters departed Queensland for World War I. The memorial park is the first of its kind in Australia. Only First World War nurses who served with the Australian Army Nursing Service are recognised at the National War Memorial in Canberra, so the special commemorative plaque that was unveiled recognises women from all units and organisations who provided medical aid during the Great War.

Recently, I was also very fortunate to attend a very moving dedication ceremony at Hervey Bay's Freedom Park for the Centenary of Anzac Memorial. It was attended by Rear Admiral Ken Doolan AO (Retired), the National President of the RSL; and Jean-Luc Bodson, the Belgian Ambassador; John Kelly; Ted Sorrensen; and Anne Madden. I would like to make special mention of Con Souvlis. Con is a World War II veteran and a well-known local businessman, who made a substantial donation towards the memorial. The event was also attended by Senator James McGrath.

The federal government contributed $50,000 towards the expansion of the Freedom Park war memorial in Hervey Bay, under the Anzac Centenary Local Grants Program. The Hervey Bay RSL sub-branch has used the funds to help purchase a bronze statue of a light horseman. I must say that it is an absolutely fabulous memorial. The light horseman in full charge over the parapet, sword in hand, is something to behold.
The dedication was conducted by three chaplains but I would like to make special mention of the RSL chaplain Vic Burgess. In the time remaining, I would like to put into Hansard part of his requiem for the day, which is made up from a range of different areas, including the light horse poems. He read:

No one will weep for you my War horse,
No letter home,
They’ll be No mention in dispatches, No Memorial
For you are just an animal,
Sacrificed on the altar of man, left to rot in Flanders field
But for those precious minutes, he was more than man,
This day, of all days, he kept his bond, did not flinch,
Though death was all around,
Galloped blindly through the death rattle of the guns, face on,
No retreat, Onward, Onward,
The magnificence of the horse, No equal, never forget,
For it is the shame of a nation, a sin of mankind,
To undo the hand of god
No glory here, only an empty cup left on the altar of insanity.

For I will weep for you,
My noble friend,
My War Horse, You Magnificent Beast.
Amen.

Multicultural Services

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (09:48): Recently, I was contacted by Sydney Multicultural Community Services about an important issue: the shortage of services to help older people from non-English speaking backgrounds remain in their homes. Like so many of the dedicated non-for-profit associations who support ethnic communities in this country, this organisation has a long and proud record of serving and advocating for migrant communities.

My electorate of Grayndler is, in many ways, the heart of multicultural Australia. Generations of migrants have come from Greece, Italy, Portugal, Vietnam, China, Lebanon, Syria and every continent on earth to make the inner west of Sydney their home. Together we have built a tolerant, harmonious and vibrant community. That is why it is so important that the people who built our nation are not forced out of their homes because of a lack of support.

In-home services for older people with limited English work best when they are provided by someone who can speak their language and understands their culture. The relationship between aged-care workers and their clients is built on trust, and rapport can only be established through communication and understanding. The sad truth is that, in Grayndler and across the country, when older migrants cannot access culturally appropriate services they often cannot access any services at all. While it is acknowledged by all that the population is ageing, we need to ensure that older Australians from multicultural communities are properly
catered for. As people age, they are more inclined to use the language of their birth and lose their second language. It is important to acknowledge that there is a genuine need for home-care services to be available to people whose first language is not English. The waiting lists for home-care assistance are growing. For those from multicultural communities the need is even greater. Simply put, without appropriate care the health of these people is compromised. Governments should do all they can to make sure that the citizens who have given so much to Australia are not isolated in their homes or institutionalised and separated from their families and communities unnecessarily—especially not when there are dedicated, professional and reputable organisations already working in local communities and wanting to expand their operations.

In government, Labor made aged-care more accessible and fairer, and more sustainable into the future. We understood the challenges of an ageing population and the impact that that would have on aged care. The government should commit to increasing home-care packages to multicultural-specific aged-care.

In the inner west of Sydney there is now a severe shortage of packages for Italian, Spanish and Portuguese speakers in particular, and only a small number of packages allocated for other languages. As I have said, many people in my electorate from non-English-speaking backgrounds have contributed a great deal to this nation and to our community. I call on the government to do the right thing by them and commit more funds to multicultural home care.

Ms LANDRY (Capricornia) (09:51): Today I urge all men in Australia to give their walnut-sized prostate a name and take him to the doctor for a health check. This is a novel concept that I launched in my electorate of Capricornia. The aim is to raise the profile of prostate cancer, which kills more men than breast cancer does women. The idea is to kick-start a conversation amongst Australian men to crack open what is a taboo topic. I will explain more about this radical idea shortly.

But, firstly, the reason I raise the topic is because I am pleased that the Australian government is now funding the services of a new specialist prostate cancer nurse for the Rockhampton region. Nurse Judy Cornick will work with patients at Rockhampton base hospital. The new position will help to ease the confusion and fear associated with being diagnosed with prostate cancer.

The Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia reports that nine men a day, or 3,300 a year, die in Australia from prostate cancer, while 20,000 men a year are diagnosed, making it one of the biggest causes of male deaths in the nation.

The prostate is about the size of a walnut and is located immediately below the bladder. As I said earlier, if you are a bloke, I challenge you to name your 'walnut'. Give yours a name, get it out and get it checked. If every bloke took his Walter, Wilbur or Wally to the doctor for a PSA or a blood check-up, they might be able to identify signs of life-threatening prostate cancer a lot sooner.

Rockhampton insurance agent Peter Peirano is a prostate cancer survivor who named his walnut 'Old Bitey'. Recently, Peter joined me to welcome Nurse Cornick at Rockhampton base hospital and bravely spoke about his experience to the media. A week or two later, a man stopped Peter at the Rockhampton airport and thanked him. He had read Peter's story in the...
local newspaper and had taken his walnut to the doctor for a health check. His medical tests came back positive, and the man was waiting for his flight to Brisbane for immediate treatment.

To generate more conversation about this topic, I challenge every male MP and senator in Parliament House to name their walnut. Christening your Walter or Wally may kick-start a conversation that could well save your life—something for which all your family will be grateful.

**Prostate Cancer**

**Electorate of Sydney: Housing Affordability**

Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (09:55): Can I just agree with the previous member on the importance of prostate testing. Indeed, my own father died of prostate cancer, and he got a call when he was first diagnosed from the member for Lilley, who has done such great work in raising awareness of this issue as well.

But I will speak on another issue today. It is an important issue and it comes, in part, from our reflections on the legacy of Gough Whitlam and his government. Forty years ago the Whitlam government, with the fine Minister for Urban and Regional Development, bought the Glebe Estate, to protect it from the bulldozers. They were going to put a freeway through the Glebe Estate and displace a community that had lived there for many years. Instead, Tom Uren, as the then minister in the Whitlam government, bought the Glebe Estate to protect it for future generations. And we still have a thriving and vibrant public housing community there today.

Sadly, the same is not true of Millers Point, where the state government is determined to sell almost 300 homes. So far, six properties have been sold for a total of $15 million and another 293 are to go. But, sadly, it is not just the houses being sold off; 100 people have moved already from the area. That contradicts a social impact assessment report to the New South Wales government which recommended that the older people in Millers Point who had longstanding ties to the community be allowed to live—and I quote—’live out their lives’ in Millers Point.

This comes, again, on top of a decision by the New South Wales government to end the peppercorn rent being charged to Darling House, an aged care home, so that Darling House is likely to close in March next year. Every level of government is responsible for helping to provide affordable housing for our most vulnerable Australians: local government, state government and federal government. At the moment we see a state government attack by the New South Wales Liberals on affordable housing and public housing and we also see the federal government cut $44 million from homelessness—all of the new building money. There is no certainty for the program money beyond June 2015. They have killed the National Rental Affordability Scheme—another 10,000 affordable dwellings would have been built under that; they have abolished the Prime Minister's Council on Homelessness; and they have abolished the COAG Select Council on Housing and Homelessness, and it concerns me that we now have a state government and a federal government both ripping funding out of housing affordability measures—tearing money out of public housing—and, in the case of Millers Point, selling the homes of people who have, in some cases, been there for generations.
Queensland Health

Mr Pitt (Hinkler) (09:57): Thank you for the unexpected opportunity, Mr Deputy Speaker! Unfortunately, I sat through the member for Lilley's contribution and I thought that it could not go without a response. His statements about Queensland Health were just utterly outrageous and incorrect.

Simply, the facts are these: 60,000-plus patients were on the long dental waiting list when the LNP government came into power. Do you know how many people are on that list now, Mr Deputy Speaker? Zero—not one. They have halved the long waiting list for surgery. Minister Lawrence Springborg is doing an incredibly good job. He has actually had a very difficult portfolio to inherit, with things like the Queensland payroll system for health, which has cost over a billion dollars. A billion dollars for a piece of software! We had people who were not being paid, who were being paid incorrectly and who were getting bonuses they should not have. It was an absolute debacle. So I congratulate the minister on doing such a fabulous job in the time that he had available in their first term. It is just an incredible result.

They were left with $80 billion of debt. It is one of the highest levels of debt for a state government ever, so the people of Queensland were right when they threw out the former Labor state government. The Queensland government, the LNP government—the Campbell Newman-led government—are getting on with the job. They are doing a wonderful job. They have sorted out long dental waiting lists. And as someone who comes from Bundaberg, where we had the Dr Patel scandal—‘Dr Death’ as he was well known by the media—I can report that the Bundaberg Hospital is now amongst the top four on performance criteria across the nation. They are doing a fabulous job. They provide a great service to the people I represent. I am very pleased that the LNP government is still in control of Queensland Health and I hope that continues. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Hon. BC Scott): Order! In accordance with standing order 193 the time for constituency statements has concluded.

Adjournment

Mr Pitt (Hinkler) (09:59): I move:

That the Federation Chamber do now adjourn.

Wakefield Electorate: Balaklava Cup

Mr Champion (Wakefield) (09:59): I am going to report to the House about a very important event—the Balaklava Cup. It is a great race day, held in my electorate of Wakefield. Over 10,000 people are making their journey to Balak for a great racing occasion, held on 3 September this year. This is a great day of racing and community activity. It is where people can have a good time at a reasonable cost. I have to thank the Balaklava Racing Club Committee and the officials: CEO Doug Hall; administration officer Lee-anne McCracken; chairperson Wayne Henson; and deputy chairperson Trevor Sampson. Also, all the committee members: Richard Green; Harold Lane; Ian Ravenscroft; Andrew Manuel—who is a good friend of mine—Don Triggs; Craig Wissell; and Kym Hume.

It is important that we acknowledge that it was Doug Hall's 14th event. It is not easy to organise a race day and to have such a successful one. I note the headline on the front cover of the Plains Producer, 3 September, is 'Our big day'. The Plains Producer is a great paper for
the Adelaide Plains. It reported about Doug Hall and his very important role, taking over the reins in May 2001, and successfully building this event over that time and making it such an important event for the local community. Doug came off a farm near Grace Plains. He is one of those very Australian characters; living a very Australian life. Another headline is 'Last of the scallywags our cup's hallmark'. It certainly tells a story about a very important event and a very important man, doing a great job for the local community. I would like to congratulate him and the committee on what will be a continuing great event for Balaklava.

When we talk about Balaklava it is also important that we also acknowledge the retirement of Mayor James Maitland, who was mayor of the Wakefield Regional Council for 17 years, which is certainly a long innings in anybody's experience. He has had 27 years experience of local government. James was a farmer, living near Blyth, for the whole of that time. He is a very upstanding individual of the community and very well respected. I have certainly relied on him for his advice on one or two occasions. We also had great success in opening a water pipeline that goes from Auburn down to Balaklava. That is James's legacy to the area, amongst many other things. That initiative will help to fund growth in Balaklava for years to come. I congratulate Mayor James Maitland. Interestingly, he has moved to Tanunda, with his wife Pru, who should also be acknowledged, but he has not given up on local government. He is going to run for the Barossa Regional Council. So that is a big effort.

When we talk about the Barossa council, one has to talk about Mayor Brian Hurn OAM, who is retiring after an epic 37 years in local government. He spent 10 years as chairman of the Angaston council. He joined it at a time when there was just a CEO and at a time when, as he described it, a couple of ladies ran the council. It is now a much bigger organisation in Tanunda. Brian Hurn became the mayor in 1997. There are so many things I could say about Brian. He is not only a great footballer, a great state cricketer for South Australia but also was a great mayor. I have worked with him on things such as the Gawler to Tanunda bike track facility, which is a great facility. He created a community facility with a pool and recreation centre that is now used by 20,000 people every month. He hands a terrific legacy to the Barossa. He should indeed be acknowledged as a great citizen of the Barossa.

**Lyons Electorate: Community Projects**

**Mr HUTCHINSON (Lyons) (10:04):** This morning I would like to mention two unique community projects which were officially launched at Brighton in the southern end of my, by Tasmanian standards, large electorate of Lyons last week. The projects are Brighton Council's Community Blitz and the Jordan River Service's Waterbridge Food Co-op Project. Unfortunately I was not able to attend the launch but, having worked closely with the Jordan River Service and the council on day-to-day matters, I was made aware of it and I wanted to mention it today.

Both projects have been brought to fruition in these low-SES areas of my electorate with the help of federal government funding through the Tasmanian Medicare Local. Community Blitz is a partnership program of Brighton Council; Workskills Inc; Tasmania's now world-famous Museum of Old and New Art, or MONA, and its 24 Carrot Gardens; Bridgewater LINC (Library); Bridgewater Trade Training Centre; the Jordan River Learning Federation; Colony 47, Red Cross; and other local community people. The aim of the program is to engage local businesses, community groups and local residents to provide local community
people with learning opportunities encouraging involvement in the community and projects to beautify the Brighton municipality.

Those taking part in Community Blitz will work on expanding MONA's 24 Carrot Gardens to three local schools. Those involved will work with vulnerable families across the Brighton Community. Mark Boonstra, who is the chairman of the Community Blitz governance group, said the initiative would create opportunities for job seekers, volunteers and community members to be involved in projects that provide skill and training opportunities while at the same time making a real difference in their communities. The group has outlined a strategy that will leave a 20-year legacy in the community once the two-year project is completed. I think that is a really important measure of any project that has federal funding—the ongoing benefits to the local community of being able to sustain these things themselves.

The Waterbridge Food Co-op project is a partnership project between Jordan River Service; Colony 47; SecondBite; Centacare Evolve Housing’ Workskills Inc; the Heart Foundation; and Urban Farming. The plan is to increase access to healthy and affordable food by developing the existing community garden at the Bridgewater Community Centre and establishing a smaller community garden at the Gagebrook Community Centre. Both of these are excellent facilities serving those communities, and I look forward to welcoming Minister Marise Payne at the Bridgewater community centre in a few weeks time.

Helen Manser, from the Jordan River Service, said the new government funding through the Tasmanian Medicare Local meant that the Waterbridge Food Co-op would be significantly expanded. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the work that Helen does within her community. She is a fine example and she runs a wonderful facility at the Gagebrook community centre in the south of my electorate. She is totally dedicated to that community. She uses initiative and she does wonderful work there for the people in that part of Tasmania.

Apart from the expansion of the gardens the kitchen and pantry facilities will be expanded at Bridgewater and Gagebrook to enable the preparation of nutritious and affordable food, food education and training, and pop-up kitchens and markets. The project is situated within Brighton's most disadvantaged communities of Bridgewater, Gagebrook and Herdsmans Cove. In addition to the general community, it will target at-risk groups and seek to bring together a wide range of individuals of different ages and life stages such as single parents, children, mature-aged, unemployed and young people. It will be about the power of the garden. It is a place where conversations happen, as people dig, that they might not be able to have at any other time. It is truly a wonderful thing. I have seen firsthand the garden they have established at the Bridgewater community centre, and Chelsea does a great job there. Staff and volunteers from all the partner organisations and community members will be involved in building up the food co-op over the next two years.

I offer my congratulations to all the people involved in developing this project. It truly is a team effort in a part of my electorate that does have challenges in its low-SES communities. The work that is being done by the Brighton Council, the community centre at Bridgewater and Gagebrook, and the other community organisations is to be congratulated.
Mr MITCHELL (McEwen—Second Deputy Speaker) (10:09): Today I rise to talk about the disgraceful impacts of the Abbott government's budget, which will have impacts in communities in my electorate of McEwen. Recently, in the *National and regional analysis of the 2014-15 federal budget*, the University of Canberra's National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling reported on the yearly hip-pocket impact on families in our local area by this budget. I would like to list just how much families in each of our communities will be out of pocket because of this cruel and heartless budget.

People in Craigieburn will be out of pocket by $823 per annum; in Sunbury South by $614; in Wallan by $600; in Sunbury by $534; in Whittlesea by $525; in South Morang by $508; and in Kilmore-Broadford by $481. People in Romsey will be affected by $410, the people of St Andrews by $348 and the people of Gisborne by $329. Compare those figures with those of the electorates of Mr Abbott and senior ministers Mr Hockey and Mr Turnbull, which engulf some of the wealthiest suburbs in Australia. Yet they will be the least affected by this budget. I think that last point bears repeating—the wealthiest suburbs in Australia will be the least affected by this budget. For example, in the electorate of North Sydney the average household will be out of pocket by $155. In Mr Turnbull's electorate of Wentworth it ranges from $118 up to $170, and in Mr Abbott's own electorate of Warringah the out-of-pocket figure is a measly $125. Even those opposite should be capable enough to see the stark inequity in that.

Instead of a GP tax on the sick, perhaps they should cut the tax break for superannuation accounts with over $2 million in them. Instead of cutting $5.8 billion out of universities, perhaps there should be a bigger crackdown on multinational tax avoidance. Treasurer Hockey said this budget was to even out the lifters and leaners in this country, ensuring that everyone partakes of their share of the heavy lifting. But I think the NATSEM report clearly shows who is doing the heavy lifting—it is the least well-off Australians, while the richest Australians barely bat an eyelid. This budget is putting more pressure on pensioners, more pressure on low- and middle-income families and more pressure on our young people. The report takes into account the specific budget measures such as cuts to pensions, family payments and youth allowance. It takes into account the Abbott government's removal of the schoolkids bonus and important supplements for those struggling to make ends meet. These factors alone have led to the estimated out-of-pocket amounts that I mentioned before. What this does not take into account is the impact of the GP tax, the impact of the petrol tax and the impact of the $80 billion cuts to health and education.

What we have is individuals in communities in McEwen having up to $823 less in their pockets because of this callous budget, and also facing the additional burden of having to pay $7 each time they go to the doctor. People in regional areas have the additional burden of paying more at the bowser as punishment for where they live—even the now Deputy Prime Minister acknowledged that. What we have learned from the Deputy Prime Minister's words is that the Nationals are all yappy when they are in opposition but are quiet as church mice when they get into government. Parents have the additional burden of wondering whether their children will have the same access to education as those in more wealthy suburbs. Students have the additional burden of forking out up to $100,000 for their tertiary education.
Carers have the additional burden of worrying if their loved ones will still be cared for now that important supplements like the dementia supplement have been scrapped.

It is insulting for the Prime Minister and the Treasurer to be spruiking this budget as an egalitarian way to share the heavy lifting of this country. The callous budget is putting the entire burden on low- and middle-income families—students, pensioners—while their millionaire financers are not being touched. It says everything about the Liberal Party’s twisted priorities. It shows how out of touch the Liberals are when it comes to Australian families. It is a disgraceful, iniquitous budget that is just another example of this government being driven by their tea party ideologies—only looking after their mates and completely shafting real and hardworking Australians. I and Labor will continue to fight this cruel and heartless budget. We have fought these measures tooth and nail, which is why the government had to withdraw and split the bills tabled in the parliament. But of course—as is typical of this arrogant government—they shut down the debate and ran the bills through right at the end of sitting. We will continue this fight because the people of McEwen deserve better than a cruel and heartless Liberal Party.

Such, Dr Bob

Dr SOUTHCOTT (Boothby) (10:14): I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to one of the nice guys in politics, the member for Fisher, Bob Such, who recently passed away. Dr Such, who battled a brain tumour for six months, passed away aged 70. He left high school and 14 to do farm work but returned to school to study. Before entering parliament, he was a lecturer and researcher at what is now the University of South Australia.

Bob was a local resident since birth and attended Coromandel Valley Primary School. I remember him being a regular attender at events in Coromandel Valley, including the community fair and the 175th anniversary celebrations, Coro Alive! Bob could always be found at The Hub Shopping Centre in Aberfoyle Park—that is a new part of my electorate—and, whenever I was holding a listening post, Bob would pass by and see what was going on.

I remember him being elected on 25 November 1989. It was a state election which was very much dominated by high interest rates and people struggling with their mortgages, and Fisher was a classic outer-suburban mortgage-belt seat, and still is, with families, mortgages and people who are trying to get ahead. He served as Minister for Employment, Training and Further Education; Minister for Youth Affairs; Deputy Speaker; Chairman of Committees; and Speaker of the House of Assembly. He introduced numerous bills, including antihoon bills and spent conviction laws. He always had many motions before the parliament, including law reform of traffic infringement, and men's health and women's health issues. He had some interesting niche issues as well. He proposed a scheme whereby people could have natural burial—something which is done in the UK and he was proposing that it be available in South Australia.

Bob was a kind and thoughtful man who dedicated his life to public service. He had a strong passion for politics and he was a parliamentarian of great dignity and principle. South Australia has lost a great thinker, a motivator and, most of all, a great man. He represented his southern suburb seat for almost 25 years and locals held him in the highest regard. Whenever I went around Aberfoyle Park and Happy Valley prior to the last election, I would often hear residents say, 'I've been to see Bob about this.' He was very much the first person who people
would turn to. I would like to pass on my sincerest condolences to Dr Such's wife, Lyn, his family and friends.

Ms CLAYDON (Newcastle) (10:17): This week, with the passing of one of Australia's most venerated politicians, we have been reminded of the enormous honour and responsibility that comes with public office, not just the achievements. For Gough Whitlam, politics mattered. It was an honourable profession and the parliament was a worthy instrument for change. Devoting one's life to public service and to the people you have been elected to represent is indeed an honour. With this honour comes enormous responsibility. Today, I wish to bring to the House's attention the very real consequences for those who fail to take seriously their responsibility to act with honour and integrity—what this means for democracy and governance and, most importantly, what this monumental breach of trust means for the people of Newcastle.

This is a story that has been very publicly exposed following forensic investigations over many months. It is not a story that has been voluntarily told. It is a story of betrayal and dishonesty—betrayal of the people of Newcastle through a series of dishonourable and seemingly illegal actions. Bit by bit, this betrayal has been revealed at the New South Wales Independent Commission Against Corruption. It has emerged that the former, now disgraced, Lord Mayor of Newcastle, Jeff McCloy, gave illegal cash donations to a number of state Liberal candidates in the lead-up to the 2011 New South Wales state election. Evidence before the ICAC made clear that it was Jeff McCloy—a multimillionaire property developer, who, under New South Wales Law, was very much a prohibited donor—gave large envelopes containing thousands of dollars of cash to Liberal candidates Andrew Cornwell and Tim Owen during the 2011 state election. This cash was undeclared. Both men won their seats and Jeff McCloy, who famously described himself as a 'walking ATM', followed in their footsteps to become the Lord Mayor of Newcastle. Their rapid rise to power was matched only by their spectacular fall from grace soon after. All three resigned midway into their first term of office.

But the web of deceit did not stop there. ICAC hearings revealed that Jeff McCloy also gave cash to the current member the Swansea, Garry Edwards, who has subsequently stood aside from the Liberal Party but has refused to resign. He joins a long list of former Liberal government MPs who now sit on the crossbenches. The member for Port Stephens, Craig Baumann, has also stood aside from the Liberal Party after revelations that he failed to report donations from property developers back in 2007 and his admissions that he directed a sham invoice be issued from his company Valley Homes to one of his donors. It was revealed that Mr Cornwell received a second prohibited donation from another property developer, Hilton Grugeon. The details of this donation are shrouded in the contrasting stories of Mr Cornwell and Mr Grugeon about how the money came to pass between them. However, there is no denial that thousands of dollars passed hands.

These are but a few of the shocking details that have emerged through the inquiry by ICAC, with a final report and findings to be delivered early next year. The dishonourable actions of these men have left the city of Newcastle and our region in a state of representative disarray. Having gone months without an elected representative or voice in the New South...
Wales parliament and no Lord Mayor of Newcastle, Novocastrians are facing three by-
elections in the coming weeks, the first two of which are to be held this weekend.

The by-elections will come at a significant financial cost to the state, but the social cost to
the Newcastle community is even greater. The betrayal of trust, along with the untold damage
to Newcastle's reputation, will take years to heal and repair. The people of Newcastle have
every right to feel angry, hurt and betrayed. It is not just the deceit that hurts; it is the
arrogance that was displayed throughout the inquiry and beyond that adds salt to the wounds.

The utter lack of remorse is truly astonishing and was again on display at a party to
celebrate Mr McCloy's birthday earlier this month. When presented with a cake in the shape
of a large brown paper bag overflowing with $100 bills, a photo of him rubbing his hands
together with the look of glee and delight was posted on a Facebook page of the party's venue
that he himself owns.

Corruption undermines democracy and governance. It erodes public confidence, leaving
communities with little faith that governments are, indeed, acting in their best interests.
Constituents are left dismayed that those they elected to represent them in parliament have not
acted with the utmost integrity, respect and diligence. Regrettably, the Liberal Party have
taken a cowardly route of not running candidates in the upcoming by-elections, denying the
people of Newcastle an opportunity to judge them at the polls. The Liberals call it atonement,
but the people of Newcastle are not fools. They know it is a cop-out—a further betrayal of
democracy. Rather than face the public in person or at the polling booths, the Liberal Party
have deserted Newcastle.

Mr RANDALL (Canning) (10:22): About two Saturdays ago I was pleased to be asked to
be involved in the opening of what is called the Karragullen Field Day in my electorate.
Karragullen is an area in the Hills in my electorate, and the field day was hosted by a group
called HOIG, which means Hills Orchard Improvement Group. This group is led by an
enthusiastic and talented young gentleman by the name of Brett Del Simone, ably supported
by his father Bruno Del Simone and the committee of HOIG that fiercely advocate for the
Hills Orchard Improvement Group and the orchards and the industry that is in the Perth Hills.
It provides fresh stone fruit and apples, and it provides Western Australians with an export
market into near Asia and other markets.

Unfortunately, this group has had to fight long and hard because the federal government,
through the APVMA, have brought in a ban on the only spray that deals with Mediterranean
fruit fly in stone fruit. That spray is called fenthion, otherwise known as Lebaycid. This ban
will see the prospect of the demise of this industry. It will not exist after fenthion has been
withdrawn, because it is the only known spray that can intervene in the life cycle of the fruit
fly maggot right from egg to adult.

There are alternatives, and they have been successfully rolled out in other parts of Australia
and the world. That is what they call areawide management where you clean up your orchard,
you bait your orchard and you generally keep the hygiene of your orchard. But all these
management tools require a cover spray. In South Australia, they eradicated Mediterranean
fruit fly because they bred sterile male fruit flies, which saw the demise of the fruit fly in that
area. Perversely, these male sterile flies were bred in Western Australia and then shipped to
South Australia. We as Western Australians did not get the use of those sterile male flies. However, the South Australian government has gradually withdrawn funding. We are now seeing threats to the stone fruit industry in South Australia as result of this. The state government, through the agricultural department, has been very remiss in not putting resources into the stone fruit industry and the pome fruit industry in this area. Unfortunately, because they are small in number, they do not necessarily attract the attention that other industries in agriculture might.

The APVMA, which I have described here before as essentially an out-of-control activist group in this particular environment, has been infiltrated by activist scientists who are hell-bent on withdrawing fenthion. Fenthion has not caused one recorded incident of health problems anywhere in the world during the 60 years it has been produced. However, the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee did a survey on this issue after the APVMA said there were hundreds of incidences all over the world which would require fenthion's banning. They admitted that they could only come up with one non-peer reviewed article published 35 years ago in America. That was the only one they hung their hat on to destroy this industry. They also said the APVMA's decision is in part based on conclusions that a young child eating certain fruits and vegetables could—I stress, could—be exposed to residues of fenthion that are higher than the public health standards allow. It has never happened. They have banned this spray—the only effective spray.

I am disappointed that federal Minister Barnaby Joyce did not take a stronger hand with the APVMA. There should be an inquiry into the APVMA and its activist behaviour. This group needs greater support from all of us here. The only thing that mitigates this is that Bayer, the producers of fenthion, are going to stop producing fenthion. This is not because of its threat but because of successful alternatives elsewhere in the world. Samurai is an alternative, but it is not a replacement for fenthion.

**Social Ventures Australia**

**Dr LEIGH (Fraser) (10:27):** It was my pleasure on 21 October to host a regular meeting of a group of Canberra social entrepreneurs in my Parliament House office. We were there to discuss common challenges for social entrepreneurs working in the nation's capital and to hear from Michael Traill, the founding CEO of Social Ventures Australia, who stepped down this month after 12 years at the helm. I commend Michael Traill for his work with Social Ventures Australia. The group of Canberra social entrepreneurs greatly benefited from his wisdom.

The group that gathered were Matt Stimson, Maddeline Mooney, Bradley Carron-Arthur, Lucianne Attard, Jovan Pejcic, Stephen Collins, Michael Miller and Rikki Blacka. We covered a range of important issues including: how to use the internet to improve the quality of mental health service delivery; how to improve healthy eating among schoolchildren; how to improve the quality of Australian public debate; how to create co-working entrepreneurial spaces; how to boost volunteering; and how to better inspire community groups. Michael Traill spoke about the importance of focusing on evidence and what works, drawing on his experience in the private equity sector. The emphasis was on long-term results, as indeed it is in the private equity world, where the best firms can take five to 10 years to produce strong results. There was a discussion of whether the sector should be known as the 'not-for-profit sector', a sort of
definition by exclusion, or the 'social purpose sector', which Michael Traill argues is a better depiction of what the sector does.

Among the challenges for social entrepreneurs were avoiding what one participant referred to as 'special snowflake syndrome'—the notion, 'everyone is unique but I'm somehow more unique than everyone else'; recognising the value of bringing in others who can add to the organisation; the challenge of saying 'No' politely to those who want to help out; and building a space for social entrepreneurs to think long term. One of the participants noted that entrepreneurship is a solo journey but does not need to be a lonely journey and that the quality of leadership and team building is absolutely vital even more so in the social purpose world than in the business world. Attendees were united in the need to use social entrepreneurship to improve the quality of outcomes in disadvantaged areas.

The quality of the government's support for charities is an issue that concerns me in my portfolio of shadow Assistant Treasurer. One of the campaigns that I have been running in that space is to encourage the federal government to listen to the community sector and to support the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission. We know already that this commission is supported by four in five charities, a number that has not changed in the year that the Abbott government has been committed to scrapping the charities commission. It is a rare regulator which has such strong backing from its sector, but the ACNC has that. An open letter signed by charities across the ideological spectrum has called on the Abbott government to rethink its ideologically driven decision to axe the ACNC.

This is the second so-called 'red tape repeal day' and a reminder, if one were needed, that the government has gone no further in its attempt to scrap the ACNC, a measure brought down on 'red tape repeal day' No. 1. This is ironic, of course, given that the ACNC acts as a one-stop shop, reducing the duplication of reporting at state and territory levels. Sensible jurisdictions like South Australia and the ACT have recognised that the benefit of the ACNC is that they can work together to reduce the paperwork burden on charities, allowing charities to spend more time helping the most vulnerable.

Fourteen thousand nine hundred and twenty four signatories have called on the government to keep the ACNC. Nearly 15,000 Australians believe that the charities commission should stay. I call on the Abbott government to support evidence based policy in the charities space rather than allowing the blinkered ideology of Tony Abbott and Kevin Andrews to prevail. I call on the government: listen to the sector and keep the ACNC.

**McPherson Electorate**

**Mrs ANDREWS (McPherson) (10:33):** When we come to Canberra, every member of this place has a variety of tasks and demands, whether in our party rooms, on the various committees we serve, on the Speaker's panel or parliamentary duty roster, or through portfolio related responsibilities. But in today's debate I want to focus on the highest duty we each have, and that is being an effective local member for the people in our electorates. I want to reflect on some of the feedback I have received, particularly last week, when I hosted a series of listening posts throughout my electorate.

Most months, I conduct a monthly listening post at one of my local shopping centres, The Pines Shopping Centre at Elanora. They are extremely valuable to me and, I believe, to the community so that we can stay in touch and I can get reactions to the latest announcements.
For this more extensive series of listening posts, I set aside two days and advertised where I would be in my electorate-wide newsletter. We started at the beautiful Burleigh Heads beach at 7 am on Wednesday and went through to Mudgeeraba, then Elanora, Coolangatta and Tugun and finished at 8 pm on the Thursday at Treetops shopping centre at Burleigh.

The reaction was tremendous and I thank the many people who specifically came out to discuss their concerns with me as well as the many others who stopped by for a quick chat while going about their daily business. As MPs, we are always talking to the community—at functions, at meetings, at special events, in appointments in our offices and at a variety of other opportunities—but there is nothing quite like listening to our communities.

And there is nothing that matches the interaction you have when you are on a street corner at a listening post. Where better can you gain a real understanding of the need to improve sightlines at the pedestrian crossing on the corner of Griffith Street and Dutton Street in Coolangatta than when you are standing 10 metres from it? Where better can you gain a real understanding of the need for more accessible public toilets or how helpful a jetty or pontoon would be at the park on the corner of Bayswater Avenue and Grenada Court at Varsity Lakes for those locals who like to go recreational kayaking on that stretch of water?

Whilst many of these are council issues that I will be raising with my local councillors, I also had the chance to discuss issues as diverse as the NBN rollout, digital radio, securing Australia's food bowl, the indexation of British service pensions, disability support pensions and the review of the national curriculum—just to name a few of the topics that were raised with me. I was also pleased to discuss how our new Stronger Regions Fund might benefit a local project that has been some time in the planning.

I met a gentleman who was busking with his violin out the front of the IGA in Tugun. He told me that for him and many of his friends times were tough. It was a very real reminder of the imperative to improve our nation's economy and restore growth and prosperity. Then there was the delightful gentleman who was out for an early morning walk at Burleigh. He did not want to interrupt when I was talking to someone else so told my staff to ask me to pass on the message to the Prime Minister—'Don't back down.' In all it was a very productive experience and a much-needed complement to the round of parliamentary sittings, committee hearings, round table consultations and meetings that seem to crowd our calendar. Every time I do a series of listening posts it provides me with a renewed sense of purpose and determination.

I also want to mention today what a privilege it was for me to address the Gold Coast Association of Independent Retirees earlier this month on a range of different issues. They were particularly concerned about the Senate being obstructionist and the challenges the government faced in trying to repair the budget in that climate. Not surprisingly, these retirees understand the importance of balancing the budget and planning for the future.

Next month I am hosting two special seniors morning teas that once again are aimed at providing a forum for discussion and listening to concerns. These morning teas will provide information on a range of services but, most importantly, they will give local residents a chance to raise their concerns and have their questions answered. As an alternative to the very large seniors forum that I had co-hosted with the member for Moncrieff in previous years, the seniors morning teas are a more community-based and personal way of catering to the special needs of our seniors in a less formal, local setting. I am looking forward to meeting with and listening to our McPherson seniors at these morning teas. I anticipate that they will become a
regular fixture on my calendar, just as the listening posts have become a vital part of the way I serve our community.

Manufacturing

Mr BYRNE (Holt) (10:37): I want to speak today about Australian manufacturing in the 21st century and in particular in my electorate of Holt. My federal electorate of Holt is located in the middle of south-eastern Melbourne's manufacturing belt. The electorate has, according to the 2011 census, the nation's highest proportion of the workforce employed in manufacturing at 19.3 per cent. It has been that way for some period of time—in fact, when I came into parliament it was 33 per cent. I have an electorate which in many ways is at the cutting edge of technology and innovation in manufacturing. It is vital that we support and create 21st century manufacturing hubs across Australia in locations like south-eastern Melbourne, and I will say why in a second.

South-eastern Melbourne is one of Australia's most dynamic manufacturing regions. I know the member for Lalor has a lot of manufacturing in her electorate, but south-eastern Melbourne is known as the golden river of manufacturing. Hundreds of companies provide tens of thousands of skilled jobs and investment in critical research and development. South-east Melbourne generates 44 per cent of Victoria's manufactured product. Industry provides 17 per cent of south-east Melbourne's 549,000 jobs. According to local manufacturing group SEMMA, more than 300 exporters are based in the region with companies such as Jayco, Coolon LED Lighting, Bombardier, Spa Industries and Icon Plastics demonstrating the strong international links that have been forged and reflecting the international competitiveness of our local manufacturers.

South-eastern Melbourne is a vital manufacturing hub in Australia. I think in many ways it is symbolic of our need to take action to put Australia at the forefront of 21st century manufacturing, because we have the people. At present a loosely connected manufacturing hub exists in the south-east of Melbourne however more work, in my view, needs to be done to create a fully fledged manufacturing hub in Australia in the south-east of Melbourne. A fully fledged manufacturing hub involves bringing together companies and universities to develop cutting edge technology, train workers to use that technology, and then make sure that the research is translated into real-world products made by Australian workers. It is interesting to note that Germany has 60 manufacturing hubs. The United States is creating four of these hubs. Australia, in my view, needs at least one, and my contention is, quite clearly, that it should be in the south-eastern suburbs of Melbourne. I would say that, wouldn't I?

Australia is uniquely positioned to benefit from the growing economy and trade in the Asian region. According to 2011 modelling by the Asian Development Bank, Asia's GDP will increase from, currently, 17 trillion in 2010 to 174 trillion in 2050. It will then be half of the global GDP. Australia cannot afford to just watch countries like Germany, the United States, Japan and South Korea be the manufacturing leaders in the 21st century. We have the people, the knowledge and the expertise to join them. It is possible for us to be a manufacturing leader, but it will not happen unless we all fully embrace the new economy of the 21st century.

The new economy of the 21st century, for an industrialised country like Australia, involves envisaging what the world will be and then building and asking the question: how does
Australia build on the Industrial Revolution and the digital revolution to create manufacturing products for the 21st century. I do not contend that Australia does not make things. One of the things that really makes me angry when I hear that is when I see so many Australian companies right at the forefront of cutting edge manufacturing technology and they are not recognised in the media or in the community, and they should be. It is likely that to build the world of tomorrow Australia will need to manufacture new 3-D printing products, biotechnology products, advanced metal products, renewable energy products, electric car products, and space and aeronautical products in the coming years. To succeed, as I said, we need to build new manufacturing hubs.

Obviously companies like Ford, Holden and Toyota have decided to wind up their operations in Australia, but that should not automatically mean that we do not have, or should not have, an automotive industry. One view that I would like to put to this chamber is that Australia should be inviting new, innovating companies, like Tesla Motors, to build electric cars in Australia. The Europeans and the Americans look at Australia as being a jumping board into Asia. My view would be that we should embrace companies like Tesla and SpaceX, and innovators like Elon Musk, who is the CEO of Tesla, and encourage them to come to this country. I do believe that we can make great products for the 21st century, and we need to give companies the incentive in order to do that, particularly in the south-eastern suburbs of Melbourne.

**Woorabinda Aboriginal Community**

*Mr O'DOWD (Flynn) (10:43):* Last week, on 15 and 16 October, I hosted a visit to my electorate by the Minister for Indigenous affairs Senator Scullion. We visited other locations in my area, but I want to talk about the visit we had to Woorabinda. Woorabinda is an Aboriginal community located on Mimosa Creek. It is a self-governing Aboriginal community with a Deed of Grant in Trust and has a population of around 1,000 people. It is 170 kilometres south-west of Rockhampton and covers an area of 392 square kilometres. Woorabinda means 'kangaroo sit down' in the Aboriginal language. Woorabinda was established in 1927 and the community was practically maintained and sustained through stock work on cattle stations which led to the formation of the Woorabinda Pastoral Company run by the council with a board of directors.

The Woorabinda Local Government Shire consists of five parcels of land with a total area of approximately 39,000 hectares, which are held by the council under a Deed of Grant in Trust, DOGIT. These properties are known as: Woorabinda of 21,900 hectares; Foleyvale of 10,700 hectares; Sorrell Hills of 1,245 hectares; Zamia Creek of 2,822 hectares; and Duaringa Block of 2,173 hectares, which total to up around 39,000 hectares of land, which is quite considerable. Workers accommodation on these properties is virtually non-existent or very limited, which is an issue which the mayor and his deputy mayor raised with us on our visit. The council owns a freehold block at Stoney Creek, near Foleyvale, and the area of that is 4,800 hectares. It also has a small acreage in the township of Duaringa of about one acre.

In 1927 the camp in Taroom was near the site of the Nathan Dam project—Nathan Dam was talked about even back in those days, in 1927. The Aboriginals were forcibly removed from Taroom and sent to Woorabinda, and that was the start of the Woorabinda township. In 1942, some people came from Cape Bedford in Far North Queensland and some of those people did return to their homeland in 1949, and it was then named Hopevale.
Woorabinda is a stand-alone, self-governing community. There are approximately 52 clans represented in Woorabinda, with a vast number of language groups throughout Queensland. We accompanied the Indigenous education staff on an attendance walk as part of the remote school attendance strategy. This scheme is working very well in Woorabinda. It means that some kind-hearted ladies of Aboriginal descent in Woorabinda walked from house to house to make sure that the kids were out of bed and on their way to school. We walked with them for a few kilometres. The system does work very well and the attendance is over 85 per cent, which is a big improvement on what it was before we started the scheme. The school motto is 'proud and deadly', and you have to love it. There are six classes, from prep to grade 7. Of course, grade 7 finishes in Queensland this year and then it moves to high school from here on in.

Wadja Wadja is an independent, non-denominational community private high school and it runs in conjunction with the other primary school. The school has developed a number of partnerships with organisations such as Griffith University, Central Queensland Indigenous Development and the Australian Red Cross. Each morning the Department of Communities run a nutrition program which provides students with breakfast, morning tea and lunch. They have a great outdoors program and everything seems to be functioning pretty well.

There is a problem in that it is a non-alcoholic township but, of course, somehow or other drugs and alcohol still seem to get into that community, which is a concern for Terry Munns, the mayor, and his deputy, William Gulf. They are more concerned about the drugs and the gambling that goes on unsolicited in the town. One lady on the council was quite emotional about the effects and asked us if we could please try and help them do something about this issue. I could go on with a lot more. (Time expired)

Richmond Electorate: Kingscliff Foreshore Master Plan

Mrs ELLIOT (Richmond) (10:48): I rise today to speak in support of an application for federal funding made by the Tweed Shire Council in my electorate of Richmond. At the Tweed council's October meeting, held last week, they resolved to nominate the Kingscliff Foreshore Master Plan as their application for financial assistance to the government's National Stronger Regions Fund. I strongly request that the government look favourably at this application and fund this. Make no mistake about it: this is an outstanding project and it will significantly add to the economic growth of Kingscliff, the Tweed Coast and, indeed, the entire Tweed Shire. I also strongly commend the council for their decision to submit this application for a very worthy project. In particular, I would like to recognise the vision and enthusiasm of Mayor Gary Bagnall and I take this opportunity to congratulate him on his recent election as mayor.

Kingscliff is a thriving coastal village on the New South Wales North Coast and this prime tourist location will be greatly enhanced with the completion of this fantastic project. The master plan includes a three-stage, $20.4 million upgrade to the Kingscliff foreshore to, firstly, construct a sea wall to protect the beach and nearby facilities and replenish sand supplies on the beach; secondly, complete a major upgrade of the Kingscliff Beach Holiday Park; and, thirdly, create the Kingscliff central park, including the refurbishment of the Kingscliff amenities hall. All of these massive improvements will create a boost to the local tourism industry, which is of course the centre of our economy on the New South Wales North Coast.
This project has a wide variety of benefits. It guarantees security for the Kingscliff foreshore; it provides new open space; it enhances and sustains the profitability of the holiday park; it protects the main commercial precinct and the many shops fronting the foreshore; and it will assist in maintaining the beach and foreshore, which are a major economic driver and tourism attraction of the area. It also creates a more functional community centre in the middle of town and creates additional parking capacity to support local businesses and the foreshore park.

I note that the government announced earlier this month that applications were open for the first round of grants through their National Stronger Regions Fund, and I understand that the fund will provide dollar-for-dollar assistance for the construction of new infrastructure or the upgrade of existing infrastructure which brings sustainable economic benefits. I am advised that the Tweed Shire Council’s application meets all the criteria required, and it is shovel ready. For this project the council are seeking federal funding of nearly $10 million to match their contribution.

This is a project that the government must fund. Its completion is vitally important for our growing economy. The project provides such an array of benefits to really improve this area. As I said, the master plan will boost economic activity and employment during its construction, and there is widespread community support for this project. I note that the Kingscliff & District Chamber of Commerce president, Jayne Henry, has said the application and master plan were ‘a supreme priority’ for her business group. Jayne went on to say:

We are a prime tourism destination of the Tweed and we need to protect our main asset, which is our beach. There could not be a bigger issue for us than this development …

I congratulate Jayne for her advocacy on this program, on this particular project, and for others relating to the Kingscliff area.

Also, the general manager of the Kingscliff Beach Bowls Club, Phill Kelley, has said:

More turnover at the holiday park and greater activity at the foreshore means increased business for everyone, including more business for us with meals and entertainment …

As a federal MP I am very proud to have worked with my community and represented their concerns here in the federal parliament. This has resulted in more than $1.5 billion in federal funding for my electorate. I will list some of those great achievements that we have got together through working with the community: $7 million for the South Tweed GP superclinic; $5 million for the Arkinstall Park Regional Sports Centre; $1.5 million for the Murwillumbah Community Centre; $1.8 million for the Jack Evans Boat Harbour; $566 million for the Tintenbar to Ewingsdale Pacific Highway upgrade; $349 million for the Pacific Highway upgrade at Banora Point at Sexton Hill; $3.3 million for the upgrade of Kennedy Drive; $9.5 million for the Byron community sports and recreation centre; $2.7 million for the Lennox Head cultural and leisure centre; $2.6 million for the Surfing Australia High Performance Centre, at Casuarina; and $1 million for the fabulous Margaret Olley centre at Murwillumbah.

Our community has a very proud record of working together to secure federal funding, working together with all levels of government, all community groups and all business chambers to get great results. I have outlined some of those fantastic results to you today, and I call on the government now to commit funds to this great project that I have spoken about:
the Kingscliff Foreshore Master Plan. It is vitally important for the future growth of our area around Kingscliff and the Tweed Shire on the New South Wales North Coast.

Cowan Electorate: Kingsway Little Athletics Centre

Foley, Mr Kalin

Mr SIMPKINS (Cowan) (10:53): Last Saturday, 18 October, I attended the official season opening of the Kingsway Little Athletics Centre. The centre consists of five clubs all within the boundaries of Cowan. These are Ballajura, Greenwood, Landsdale, Wanneroo and Woodvale.

As I have previously said in parliament, Little Athletics is an intense sporting organisation. Obviously it is about the athletes, but it is also renowned for the high level of dedication shown by the volunteers who are required to keep it all going. I pay tribute to the officials and the administrators for being able to make multiple events happen all at one time. I do not, of course, just turn up on the day of the official opening. My experience in the years that I have attended ordinary competition days is that it all appears to go like clockwork—the athletes get ready, the announcements are made and the guns start races. It all seems so smooth. Of course, I know that it is only that smooth because of hard work and the experienced, enthusiastic volunteers at every level from the clubs up to the Kingsway Centre making it happen.

I pay tribute to the centre committee for the 2014-15 season and thank them for what they do to give hundreds of young athletes the chance to compete and enjoy themselves. Thank you to the president, Carole Hale; the secretary, Bec Miller; the treasurer, Debbie Lees; and the registrar, Lee-Anne Jones. Thank you also to the more specifically technical members of the committee: Tracey Gartlan, Helen Hahn, Allan Savage, Paul Bennett, Simon Warner, Claudia Klaassen, Sean Gartlan and Angela Arbuckle.

I would also like to thank the club officials from Ballajura: president, Fraser Griggs; secretary, Cheryl Peak; Treasurer, Michelle Choules; registrar, Kerryn Weir; and manager, Kylie McVee. From Greenwood: president, Jason Kelly; secretary, Jenny Bennett; Treasurer, Marelle Titterington; registrar, Bron Waeftford; and manager, Cathy Vosshage. From Landsdale: President, Des Lees; secretary and manager, Paul Arvidson; Treasurer, Sarah Atkinson and registrar Gina Hill. From Wanneroo club: president and manager, Shane Miller; secretary, Carolyn Butler; treasurer Bec Miller; and registrar Donna Wilson-Adams. And from Woodvale: president, Claudia Klaassen; secretary, Gail Styles; treasurer, Katherine Redden; registrar, Lee-anne Jones; and manager, Lois Crake.

To all those leaders at the centre and the clubs I say thank you for everything that you have done and all that you will do throughout the season. The athletes appreciate you, and I appreciate you for your efforts to build an even better community through the great organisation that is Little Athletics. Of course, I also wish the athletes a good season, where personal bests are always being achieved. May the odds be ever in your favour!

It was a good day and I only wish it had all been about the joys and successes of an excellent sporting organisation and the achievements of dedicated individuals. However, it is not a perfect world, and on Saturday the centre mourned the loss of Kalin Foley from Wanneroo. Kalin was 15. In June 2012 he was diagnosed with alveolar rhabdomyosarcoma, a
soft-tissue-cell form of cancer. He was a dedicated athlete, and after a two-year battle he succumbed to the cancer on 22 September this year.

In a moving tribute attended by his parents, Paul and Brigitte, his brother, Logan, and sister, Jemma, who are both athletes at the centre, balloons were released by the athletes and the entire crowd clapped for a minute. It was a great and appropriate tribute to a young man who was liked by all who knew him and who was highly regarded for the courage he showed in this adversity.

Kalin was a dedicated Swans fan, and it was nice that Jude Bolton, of the Sydney Swans, supported Kalin. In fact, the Swans hosted Kalin and the family on several occasions and have included a tribute to Kalin on their website.

Whilst listening to the tribute to Kalin I thought about his fight, and it was a reminder that sometimes there is no justice in the world. It is so important for us to pursue medical research, and I hope that in the future the fight against these cancers can be won. Every time I hear or meet people in Cowan in connection with these diseases—and particularly where children are afflicted—I look forward to the implementation of the successes of our Medical Research Future Fund. The generation of $20 billion to fund the research to fight against sarcoma and other diseases is an ambition that I am determined to pursue it. Every day I think about how fortunate I am that my children are healthy, but I have met enough people to know that families and children throughout Cowan—and, in fact, throughout the country—are not as lucky as I am. I am dedicated to pursue better medical research for them.

My condolences go to the Foley family and their many friends for the loss of Kalin—lost to them, but never forgotten.

Petition: Environment

Ms BURKE (Chisholm) (10:58): It gives me immense pleasure to table a petition of students, teachers and affiliates of Huntingtower School in my electorate of Chisholm. It has been to the Petitions Committee, is in accordance with standing orders and has been approved.

Huntingtower is an amazing educational facility in my electorate. It is a school community with an enormous heart whose greatest desire is to do good for all. The school motto, 'Know thy true self' is reflected in the terrific students I have dealt with over the years at Huntingtower and, most particularly, the members of the current school prefect committee. Naomi Lee, of her own volition, asked if I would visit the school to receive a petition that she and other school prefects had been collating. This initiative is by the students alone, with no teacher or parental involvement.

Many teachers and parents have signed the petition, but this initiative was driven by concerned young people who have a greater appreciation of our environment than the current environmental minister possesses. These students are also currently undertaking VCE and the role of prefects in their school, so they are already carrying a heavy load. But they were so concerned about the issue that they have research the impact and come up with a viable solution to address the problem.

The subject of peak oil was discussed in their VCE studies and it captured their imaginations and concerns. So instead of just filing it away and rallying against politicians
who do not seem to care, they did something: they put together a petition and presented it to me, and now I have the pleasure of being able to table it in this place.

The petition read as follows—

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

This petition of: students, teachers and affiliates of Huntingtower School, Mount Waverley VIC

Draws to the attention of the House: the dwindling unrenewable resources of crude oil. This resource, which is forecasted to run out in 40 years at the current consumption rate, is essential for a multitude of reasons. All plastics and pharmaceuticals are manufactured from this resource, yet 40% of crude oil goes towards fuelling transport. In order to save crude oil for the manufacturing of more essential and everyday items, we propose the alternative of biofuel, which is grown from sustainable sources such as corn or sugarcane. These biofuels run at the same efficiency as diesel, in all capacities, and can be used in diesel engines without modifying the vehicle. It is efficient and existing modes of transport running on diesel do not have to change to use biofuel. This makes this form of energy a great stepping stone towards the implementation of more forms of sustainable energy.

We therefore ask the House to: provide funding to State Governments under Section 96 of the Constitution for use, for increased productivity, awareness, research and widespread implementation of biofuels.

from 426 citizens

Petition received.

Ms BURKE: In a week when we have seen the Abbott government announce a cut to the renewable energy target of more than 40 per cent, which will ruin the renewable energy industry, cost thousands of jobs and see investment move offshore, I am pleased the future leaders in my electorate have a greater insight into the need for urgent action on climate change and the desire to achieve more sustainability for all of us.

On top of this, the Abbott government has already created great uncertainty in the biofuels sector, with its decision to abandon the commitment made to retain the effective excise-free status of renewable biofuels until 2021. Biofuels Association Australia was deeply disappointed at this short-sighted saving measure, which has put at risk over $100 million, which had been invested into the industry based on the policies in place. Biofuels still represent a genuine opportunity for Australia to diversify its liquid fuel supply. As the BAA puts it:

Whilst everyone recognises that a strong economy is important for our future, just focusing on cutting costs will not get us there. We also have to invest in sustainable industries of the future.

An opposition member interjecting—

Ms BURKE: Hear, hear! The students of Huntingtower get this! The so-called environment minister does not have a clue. He is stuck in a false belief that lower electricity prices are more important than a sustainable future. He views any reduction in a power bill as the saviour of tomorrow. It is a pity that electricity prices are not coming down in most households. I have been told of a bill where the saving was proudly trumpeted as 29c!

Action is needed for a sustainable tomorrow in Australia and that is why I am pleased to present this petition today. The Abbott government has tried its hardest to destroy the renewable energy industry with its politically motivated Warburton review. We need to do more. We need to ensure that the RET, which was actually introduced by the Howard government, continues to have bipartisan support. We need to have renewables into the
future. The students in my electorate know that we need action to diversify our energy and fuel sources. It is a crying shame that the Abbott government does not have a clue. Full marks to Naomi and the students at Huntingtower and a complete 'fail' to the Minister for the Environment and his short-sighted government for not taking the sustainability of our future more seriously.

Quarantine

Mr COULTON (Parkes—The Nationals Chief Whip) (11:03): I would like to speak today about Australia's biosecurity capabilities and about the need to ensure that our quarantine capabilities and border biosecurity are kept separate from Border Force.

Biosecurity is a different focus. It has a different set of skills than general border security. We need to maintain that edge. Australia suffers many disadvantages being an island and being a long way from many of its markets. But its greatest advantage is the fact that we are free of many of the diseases that plague our competitor nations. There has been some discussion of weight of the need to combine Biosecurity with Border Force.

There have been inquiries in the past, as recently as 2008 with the Beale review and that was followed in the same year by Mr Rick Smith's review. These reviews showed no indication that there was any advantage in merging the two. To give you an example, while it is good to identify and contain a suitcase full of contraband at the border—whether that is illegal cigarettes, firearms or, quite frankly, drugs—a pair of muddy shoes that go through the same border has the potential to have a far greater devastating effect on the economy and the wealth of our nation. Whenever I travel and come back to our country, I am very careful to clearly identify where I have been and identify any products that may need further scrutiny, and I certainly make very clear if I have been in any farming areas and have my clothing and footwear thoroughly cleaned. If a disease such as foot and mouth were to come into this country—and that could be as easy as someone smuggling a bit of their grandfather's home-made salami into the country on a return visit from the motherland—and it got into our livestock, particularly considering the population of feral pigs that we have right across this nation, it would be crippling, not only for the livestock industry but for our economy.

Arguments could be based that biosecurity could be the fifth pillar of our economy. Quite frankly, many of our exports rely on markets that insist that the products come from Australia because of the clean, disease-free nature of our industries and produce. Many of the biosecurity risks managed at the border potentially have huge financial consequences for Australian agriculture. The risks are generally not visible and require specialised management systems. It goes back to what I was saying earlier. A pair of muddy, soiled boots from visiting a farm in a country that might have bluetongue, foot and mouth or a disease such as that could be a far greater threat to the security of this nation than some more sinister contraband. We know that if this happened it would destroy whole communities, not just the livelihoods of the producers. The impact would be felt right throughout the supply chain and would severely affect our economy. For instance, fire ants have cost the government $281 million over the last 12 years. (Time expired)
Greenway Electorate: Blacktown Regional Economic and Employment Development

Ms ROWLAND (Greenway) (11:08): I would like to start by quoting from a letter of 14 February this year. It reads:

Educating young people and preparing them for work and life beyond school is a responsibility shared by schools, business and the broader community. Working alongside educators, business has a critical role to play as active partners in the learning and development of young Australians.

It is only by working together that schools, businesses and the broader community can improve student outcomes, create a more agile and responsive education and training sector, and develop young people who are qualified and work ready. Engaging businesses as active partners in education who contribute and influence the learning and development of their future workforce is central to this goal of improving student outcomes.

I doubt anyone here could dispute those words. What I just quoted from was a letter from Carmen Auer, chair of the Partnership Brokers National Network, to the Prime Minister before the budget was handed down, pleading for some of these very successful programs, which are being conducted exactly along the lines that I mentioned, to be maintained in our society.

I bring this to a local level. BREED, Blacktown Regional Economic and Employment Development, is a program in my area, with Stephen Frost as managing director and a great team, including Sandra Ongley. Their programs include the School Business Community Partnership, structured workplace learning, the Transitioning Youth program and the BREED business centre. They have asked a very valid question: ‘With youth unemployment at unacceptably high levels, can the government advise what evidence base was used to inform it that axing all youth transition funding in the budget would be a saving into the future?’

The reason for asking this question is that one of BREED's programs—and I only want to mention one of them today—has an axe over its head. BREED unsuccessfully attempted to get it included in the federal budget as part of its campaign, including the letter I have just quoted from. That was backed up by more than 600 businesses supporting the programs that it provides. Federally funded via the Department of Education is the School Business Community Partnership program, referred to as the Partnership Brokers program, which is now only funded until 31 December this year. This program is an adaptation of the Howard government’s Career Advice Australia program launched in 2006. There has been funding of a variety of youth transition programs dating back to at least the Hawke-Keating years and this has continued under successive governments—until this budget.

Locally BREED employs four partnership brokers on the program, including Sandra Ongley. They have significant community partnerships. Two examples from Lalor Park, which has parts of some of the more disadvantaged communities that I represent, are the Woodturners and the Lalor Park Trust Bus. Between 2010 and 2013—here is the evidence—BREED assisted 15,400 local young people with career direction, often re-engaging them in school with a career focus or into employment. The cost per student engagement dropped from $203 in 2010 to $150 in 2013 due to economies of scale and industry support. An independent government funded evaluation demonstrated that there was a $5.50 return on every dollar of government money invested in the Partnership Brokers program due to...
industry and the community partnering with schools to deliver outcomes identified in consultation with schools and youth.

To put it simply, high levels of youth unemployment are having a devastating impact on young people and our economy. Locally, in my electorate of Greenway, youth unemployment in June this year stood at 17 per cent. It was seven per cent only two years ago. The need to do everything possible to enhance the employability of young people has become more crucial than ever, not only for getting a job but for providing long-term career opportunities. It is here that the youth transition programs that organisations such as BREED have put into action, supported by the community, have made real inroads into turning young people's lives around. They have given them exposure to the world of work and connected them to employment opportunities. I would like to quote the words of a young man enrolled in a small motors course that was conducted collectively by Youth Connections, TAFE Outreach, Marist Youth Care and BREED. He said:

Most of us teens on the street—
without this program—
we'd be screwed. If we weren't doing these courses, we'd be breaking into houses and earning money on the street.

(Time expired)

**Higgins Electorate: Social Services**

Ms O'DWYER (Higgins) (11:13): I recently had the privilege of hosting my colleague and very good friend the Assistant Minister for Social Services, Senator the Hon. Mitch Fifield, to a day in my electorate of Higgins in Melbourne. This day was shared between three very special groups—children with life-threatening conditions, the elderly, people living with a disability and their carers.

Higgins is home to the first children's hospice in Australia, Very Special Kids, which remains the largest of two such facilities operating in Australia servicing the needs of 825 families across Victoria, providing flexible family support programs including respite for families with children with life-threatening illnesses and planned and emergency end-of-life care for children. VSK has an operating budget of just over $5.6 million per annum. Incredibly, it generates 70 per cent of that through its highly successful piggybank appeal, donations, trusts and community and corporate events. The remaining 30 per cent is provided by the Victorian government.

I am, therefore, always delighted to advocate to my federal colleagues on behalf of VSK and was pleased that the minister was able to visit Very Special Kids to see the extraordinary work that is being done there and how much more could be achieved with a little more assistance. The truth is that Very Special Kids is, without any pun intended, a very special place. It is a place of love and care, led by the most professional and dedicated of teams, both paid and voluntary, headed up by their founder and patron, Sister Margaret Noone, and run by the incredible CEO, Dr Sarah Hosking.

Back at my electorate office, Minister Fifield participated in two roundtable discussions. The first was a discussion on aged care. I was delighted that so many organisations were able to participate in this roundtable, including Alzheimer's Australia Victoria, BlueCross, Bupa Care Services, Glenloch Homes for the Elderly, Kiverton Park aged care, mecwacare, Regis
Group, St. Michael's aged care facility, the Villa Maria Society and The Armitage Assisted Aged Care. These organisations work with our elderly every day, caring for their daily needs, both physical and mental, and supporting them at their later stage of life, which, as we all know, like many stages of life, is not without its difficulties. The minister and I were able to discuss issues and receive invaluable practical feedback on the impact of changes to home care from mid-2015, reforms to residential aged care, including workforce training and support, and the current review of the dementia and severe behaviours supplement. Their feedback raised the pressing issue which our whole society faces around the ageing of our population and the measures we need to address in government to plan for this known challenge.

The second roundtable was on disability issues, once again with local representatives from Ashburton Support Services, Better Hearing Australia, Blind Sports Victoria, the Craig Family Centre, the Prahran Mission, Vision Australia and Belonging Matters. Each of these organisations provides varied and important services throughout Higgins to this day. They are incredibly diverse in both the services they provide and, indeed, the people they provide those services to. Discussion focused on the rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, concerns about how small providers would fit within the scheme, transitioning arrangements as part of the NDIS including the impact on those organisations currently receiving block funding, employment opportunities for people with disabilities, respite care for families and carers, the importance of maintaining mental health and wellbeing for people with physical disabilities, and payments to people with disabilities over the age of 65 years.

I would like to acknowledge and thank all of the participants at both the disability and aged-care roundtables and Dr Hosking for hosting us at Very Special Kids. It was a very full day but a very productive one. While I am constantly out and about in my electorate talking with people and community organisations, I nevertheless found these discussions very informative, particularly as to the focus that we had on practical issues facing these community related organisations. I would also particularly like to extend my sincere thanks to the minister for his interest and support in visiting my electorate, including his ongoing assistance with helping Higgins constituents.

Families and individuals dealing with disabilities face a daily challenge to their lives and in living those lives with meaning and dignity and in full. At the end of the day in Higgins, I reflected to Minister Fifield that his portfolio was undoubtedly one of the most difficult. His response was that his role was not difficult but the life journey of people with disabilities, and that of their families, was extremely difficult and that, while their lives would always include hardship, his job as minister was to make it, wherever possible, just that little bit easier. I thank the minister and I thank the House.

Social Cohesion

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (11:18): I want to inform the parliament of some sad events that are taking place in my electorate, but first let me note also my sadness about the events that we hear have happened in Canada overnight and, sadly, also reports of violence closer to home in Victoria. My thoughts are with the families and friends of those who are affected. Whilst we are still learning all the full details of the situation in Canada, the latest tragedy suggests again the terrible consequences of people becoming disconnected from the place that they call home. I think everyone of us hopes beyond hope that this never happens here.
Right now, when we are hearing news each day of deaths and conflict abroad, our community should be coming together as one. Political leaders and every member of our community should be making sure everyone feels that they have a place here—that they belong, regardless of their religion or ethnicity or any other difference. Sadly, over recent weeks Muslim Australians, and especially women, have been telling me that they are being harassed and assaulted. Over the last months, there have been reports of Australians being abused based on their religion, their ethnicity and their appearance.

In my own electorate, I and my office have heard stories of my constituents being abused. In Carlton, a woman who was wearing a hijab was returning home; as she was walking, a carful of young men drove past her, yelling insults. In Richmond, a woman who lives in public housing has experienced aggression from one of her neighbours for a while, but the aggression has now become targeted on the basis of her Muslim identity, with abuse being hurled at her on the basis of her faith. In North Melbourne, a woman walking down the street was told she should go back to where she came from—and this is a woman who is from Australia; she was born here, not far from where this incident happened. These are people's real stories—their real experiences.

I have heard that now many women are feeling anxious, and hesitate to take public transport. A woman in the Somali community in Flemington has been driving other women around because they are not willing to get on public transport. And there are women who are now choosing to leave the house only the bare minimum and only when required. A Greens member recently knocked on the door of someone in Richmond who said she was barely leaving her home, out of fear.

Sadly, I have also heard reports of physical aggression. In late September, we heard that a woman on a train just outside of my electorate was verbally abused, and then had her head pushed into the side of the carriage by another woman. She was then pushed out of the carriage at a nearby station.

This abuse is unacceptable. The violence and the threats must stop. Everyone has the right to feel safe in this country and to be treated with respect.

A Facebook group, Islamophobia Register Australia, has been set up as a space for people to record incidents, and on this group there are many more stories from people across Australia describing the abuse that they have experienced in the past month. I encourage people to visit this group and report any abuse they experience or any incidents they may see.

I also urge anyone who feels unsafe or who experiences abuse or sees something happen to report it to the police, by calling the Police Assistance Line on 131444. My office is also available.

In times of adversity, communities come together to provide strength, love and support. It is only some members of the community, and a minority, who are driving this division, perpetuating fear and committing abuse. The majority are coming together as one. That is why we in the Greens are pushing for a national focus on social cohesion.

Australian women of all religions and ethnicities have created WISH—Women in Solidarity with Hijabis. These women are standing in solidarity with Australian Muslim women by wearing a hijab and posting a photo with their message of support on their Facebook page. In less than a month, this group has swelled to almost 30,000 members.
Our political leaders loudly, and rightly, condemn terrorism. Now it is time for all of us to just as loudly condemn the attacks on people here at home.

To the Australians of all backgrounds who are uniting and living out values of acceptance, respect, compassion and equality: thank you. To those experiencing discrimination and abuse: you are not alone. Many are standing with you.

**Barton Electorate: St George Hospital**

**Mr VARVARIS** (Barton) (11:23): I rise to speak today about one of the important areas in my electorate that regularly features in the local news, and one that I know many Australians can relate to, whether they work in it, work to represent it or simply use its services. I want to speak about St George public hospital in Kogarah.

Australia's healthcare system is world-class, and I know that no-one in this chamber would dispute that. What sets us apart is only how our public health system is funded, managed and maintained. It is truly a privilege for every Australian citizen to benefit from outstanding medical care. But, unfortunately, most of us will undertake a trip to the hospital at some point in our lives.

Having been a St George resident for all of my life, and having a young family of my own, and representing the growing population of Barton, St George public hospital is of critical importance to me. The hospital is one of the most iconic and valued service providers within my electorate and has an immensely proud history, starting from 1894 when it became the cottage hospital. Over the years it has quickly developed into other medical departments, drawing specialists and patients from all around Australia. St George public hospital's emergency department is now one of the busiest in New South Wales, taking in more than 68,000 people each year, about 25,000 of whom are admitted. Unfortunately for St George hospital, the number of emergency patients awaiting treatment has not been reflected in the way the hospital has been funded.

For as long as I had been a mayor and councillor of Kogarah City Council, and even more since being elected to the 44th Parliament last year, constituents, friends and even strangers have lamented the poor state of St George Hospital. Up until recently, it was difficult to believe that St George Hospital could be considered world-class. The staff had always been exceptional in their treatment and care of its patients, but the conditions in which they worked in a First World economy and world-class healthcare system were questionable at best and appalling at worst.

When I was initially invited to visit the hospital by a senior member of New South Wales Health, I was utterly shocked at the deteriorating conditions the hospital was facing. It would be nothing short of a lie to say the hospital was neglected and in a condition unfit for the complex and life-saving procedures its specialists undertook on a frequent basis. Years of continuous neglect by the previous New South Wales Labor government had taken its toll on the facilities and infrastructure of the hospital. The hospital had been rated poor and in a state of code red. What I saw on our detailed tour of the facilities were cramped, outdated facilities with some departments operating solely out of demountables and patients suffering from toilet shortages. In fact, the maternity waiting room was a threadbare space with six awkward plastic chairs in nothing more than a hole-in-the-wall space.
In addressing the flood of concerns from my constituents, I can only describe the truth, in that I witnessed firsthand that St George Hospital was in a state of absolute shambles. It was absolutely appalling and heartbreaking to see my constituents having to face this as their only option in the St George area. The need for a rebuild of St George Hospital has been known for some time by the state government, and the truth is that absolutely nothing happened until the New South Wales state Liberal government came along. The shamefully inactive New South Wales state Labor government has been nothing less than dreadful, and it has been inexcusable.

There is simply no plausible reasoning the New South Wales state opposition can use to justify the 16-year-long neglect that St George public hospital has had to endure. The hospital was left to languish term after term after Labor re-election until the New South Wales Minister for Health came along, the Hon. Jillian Skinner MP. History demonstrates that nothing more would need to be done. There was no lack of funding that would justify the state the hospital was kept in. How can the New South Wales state opposition claimed to promise a rebuild of the hospital and have the people of Barton trust them when time and time again they have failed to do so?

Remarkably, in four years, the New South Wales Liberal government has committed $41 million for the St George public hospital, starting with the emergency department. I witnessed the opening of the long-awaited emergency department, and whilst it was exciting it was also bittersweet. It served to remind me that my constituents waited more than 16 years after continuously dashed hopes under New South Wales state Labor for the hospital to begin building the necessary infrastructure it deserves. Despite those opposite who criticise the Liberal Party, I stand before this House today to confirm and remind everyone that it is the current New South Wales government which committed $41 million to the St George public hospital within its first term. It was an election commitment and it has been kept. I commend the New South Wales government for addressing and prioritising the needs of the St George residents.

Question agreed to.

Federation Chamber adjourned at 11:28